



The role of creative engagement in competence and career development toward performance



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Orientation: Creative engagement is the process of involving employees in creative activities of innovation, creativity and active participation in work. Competence and career development have an impact on employee performance. In addition to this, employee creative engagement has a role in mediating the influence of competence and career development on employee performance.

Research purpose: The aim of this study is to test and analyse the influence of competence and career development on employee performance. This study also examines the mediating role of employee creative engagement on the relationship between competence and career development with employee performance.

Motivation for the study: This research provides ideas to improve employee performance and organisational performance. By conducting further research, competency and career development variables are expected to improve employee performance with creative engagement as a mediating variable.

Research approach/design and method: This study applied an explanatory survey method with a cross-section technique from 120 respondents.

Main findings: Employee creative engagement provides a significant mediating role in the influence of competence and career development on employee performance.

Practical/managerial implications: Employee development policies can consider employee creative engagement in mediating the influence of competence and career development on employee performance.

Contribution/value-add: Career development has essentially been proven to enhance employee job performance. This research adds the abstraction that employee creative engagement mediates the influence of competence and career development on employee performance. The value-add can provide policy direction for employee development management.

Keywords: competence; career development; employee creative engagement; job performance; human resources.

Introduction

Human resource management discusses employee activities and behaviours and their relationship to individual performance and organisational performance in a particular organisation. Human resource practices have a significant impact on organisational performance (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). Employee performance is the result of the quality and quantity that has been carried out in employee work related to their duties and responsibilities to achieve organisational goals (Darmawan et al., 2020). Regarding this theory, it can be explained that employee engagement in organisational activities can encourage the success of individual employee performance and organisational performance (Truss et al., 2013). Employees are capital for organisations to provide support in organisational activities to achieve organisational goals (Pudawawan & Sutarlan, 2018; Sundaray, 2011). Competence is the ability and skills in the form of knowledge, understanding and skills that are manifested in acting and behaving (Epstein & Hundert, 2002). Career development is the process of developing and improving individual abilities, skills and knowledge to achieve desired career goals (Sun & Wang, 2012). Research by Santalia & Syafaruddin (2024) reports that workplace characteristics influence the quality of career development. Thus, employee career development is an important part of increasing employee status or level in the system applicable in the organisation. The quality of employee creative engagement is the level of involvement and active participation of employees in work processes that involve creative

thinking. Contextually, if employee creative engagement increases, work performance will improve.

Previous studies on employee performance reported that aspects of employee ability and behaviour are related to competence, career development, creativity and engagement. The results of Esthi's (2022) study stated that competence has a significant effect on performance. The results of Martini et al.'s (2024) study stated that competence has a significant effect on employee work creativity. The results of Petriah and Herminingsih's (2023) study stated that competence has a significant effect on employee engagement. The results of Muchibi et al.'s (2022) study reported that career development has a significant effect on employee engagement. The results of Yee et al.'s (2014) study stated that employee creativity has a significant effect on employee performance. The results of Simanungkalit and Suharsono's (2024) study stated that competence can increase employee creativity. The results of Saglik and Yilmaz's (2016) study stated that career development has a significant effect on employee work creativity.

In line with the description above, the study of job performance associated with creative engagement factors, employee competence, creativity and career development in organisational activities is essential to understand performance development. The results obtained a lucid strategy for developing employee competence carefully according to employee talents and skills. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of the study is compiled based on the results of previous research studies, namely that the relationship between the variables of competence, career development and employee creative engagement with performance can be displayed in the conceptual framework of the study.

Research conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this research can be observed in Figure 1.

The conceptual framework of the research in Figure 1 is a model of the relationship between exogenous variables of competence and career development and the endogenous variable of job performance, mediated by creative engagement. Therefore, the mediating role of creative engagement needs to be tested for its effect on job performance.

Based on the entire conceptual framework of the study, the following research questions can be presented:

- Does employee competence have a significant positive effect on creative engagement?
- Does employee career development have a significant positive effect on creative engagement?
- Does employee competence have a significant positive effect on job performance?
- Does employee career development have a significant positive effect on job performance?

- Does employee creative engagement have a significant positive effect on job performance?
- Does employee competence have a significant effect on job performance through employee creative engagement?
- Does employee career development have a significant effect on job performance through employee creative engagement?

Literature review

Employee creative engagement

Creative engagement is a synthesis of creativity and engagement theories. Creativity is the ability to generate new, original and innovative ideas that can solve problems or increase the value of an aspect (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Meanwhile, engagement is the level of involvement, participation and commitment of an individual in an activity, process or relationship within a particular organisation (Pincus, 2023). Based on these perspectives, employee creative engagement *can be conceptualised* as the extent to which employees are involved in performing their work tasks through the application of creative thinking skills.

Indicators of creative thinking according to Torrance (Munandar, 2009) are fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration. Indicators of employee engagement include aspects of creative engagement including vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, 2012). Based on this, creative engagement indicators can be described in these points: (1) enthusiasm for carrying out work smoothly, (2) flexible dedication to work tasks, (3) focus on producing original ideas for institutional development and (4) actively contributing suggestions through analysis and evaluation for work progress.

Competence and employee creative engagement

Creativity as a complex attribute contributes to the nature and quality of a person's involvement in their activities and professions (Reid & Solonides, 2007). Strong competence will optimise the ability to think creatively and innovatively. With good creative engagement, employees will find creative and effective solutions. Several previous studies have provided an explanation of the influence of competence on creative engagement. Martini et al. (2024) reported that employee competence has a significant effect on employee creativity. The results of Tyas et al.'s research (2020) stated that employee competence has an effect on employee engagement in

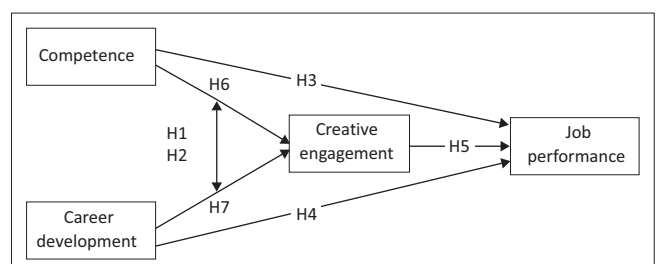


FIGURE 1: Research conceptual framework.

organisational activities. Likewise, the results of Oloboh and Gabriel's research (2022) stated that competence has a significant effect on employee engagement in organisational activities. Thus, the hypothesis of this study can be described as follows:

H₁: Employee competence has a significant positive effect on creative engagement

Career development and employee creative engagement

Career development is the process of developing an individual's knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve their desired career goals. The characteristics of career development can help individuals understand the career development process and create appropriate plans to achieve their goals (Daryanto, 2014). The stages of career development include exploring talents and interests, establishing a foundation, developing skills, establishing a career position and transitioning to a new career position (Vilela & Casado, 2023). Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between career development and creative engagement. The results of Safariningsih et al.'s research (2025) stated that career development has a significant effect on engagement. Thus, the results of Judijanto et al.'s research (2024) stated that career development has a significant effect on employee creativity. Furthermore, the results of Semwal and Dhyani's research (2017) stated that career development has a significant effect on employee engagement. Thus, the hypothesis of this study can be described as follows:

H₂: Employee career development has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement.

Competence and employee job performance

Employee competence is a person's ability indicated in knowledge, understanding, achieving skills and attitudes to act to carry out activities in the context of organisational goals (Alsabbah & Ibrahim, 2017; Salman et al. 2020). The dimensions of competence according to Mota and Cilento (2020) include knowledge, expertise and attitudes. Competence indicators include motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills (Wibowo, 2017). Sukmawati's (2020) research reports findings that align with this study: Competence, in terms of knowledge, ability, and skills, is necessary to improve service quality. Work performance is the quality and quantity of output produced by employees in an organisation with the most efficient time possible (Mangkunegara, 2017). Another definition explains that employee performance is the result of all employee activities that have been carried out for the organisation (Robbin & Judge, 2016). The dimensions of work performance include ability, motivation and opportunity (Sinambela, 2016). Performance indicators include the amount of work, quality of work, punctuality, attendance and ability to cooperate (Wibowo, 2017). One of the competency studies on employee performance, such as the study by Siddiq et al. (2023), reported that employee competency has a significant effect on employee performance. Wijayanti and Sari's (2023)

research states that employee competency can improve employee performance in the company. Based on this, it can be interpreted that competency has an impact on employee performance. Thus, the hypothesis of this study can be described as follows:

H₃: Employee competence has a significant positive effect on employee job performance

Career development and employee job performance

Career development is a process of developing and improving abilities, knowledge and skills to achieve desired career goals (Gyansah and Guantai (2018)). The dimensions of career development include skills development, career development, personal development, professional development and organisational development (Gottfredson, 2005). Employee adaptation in career development results in employees' ability to adjust to organisational development conditions so that they can carry out activities well (Cianni & Wnuck 1997). Several previous studies have studied the effect of career development on employee performance. The results of Firman's (2021) research state that career development has a significant effect on employee performance. Likewise, the results of Nasution et al.'s (2018) research state that employee career development can increase employee job performance. The hypothesis for this can be stated as follows:

H₄: Employee career development has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.

Creative engagement and employee job performance

Creative engagement can improve employee job performance. Previous studies on the relationship between creativity, engagement and job performance variables show that the results of employee creative engagement research have a significant effect on job performance (Anwar et al., 2022). Performance improvements can be influenced by multiple factors, particularly self-efficacy, creativity, and the strengthening of engagement (Syukran, et al., 2025). Likewise, the results of Ximenes et al. (2019) have reported that employee creativity has a significant effect on employee job performance. Thus, the hypothesis of this study can be described as follows:

H₅: Employee creative engagement has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.

Employee creative engagement as a mediator in the relationship between competence and employee job performance

Competence is the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes of employees that are manifested in real activities (Salman et al. 2020). Thus, employee competence is the capital that employees have had when they became employees in a particular organisation, institution or company. The results of Mustaqim et al.'s research (2024) stated that competence has a significant effect on employee

engagement. The results of Zhang and Bartolet's research (2010) stated that employee creativity has a significant effect on job performance. The results of Hassan et al.'s research (2013) stated that competence has a significant effect on employee performance. Thus, the hypothesis of this study can be described as follows:

H₆: Competence has a significant positive effect on job performance through employee creative engagement.

Employee creative engagement as a mediator in the relationship between career development and employee job performance

As creative engagement is a synthesis of creativity theory and organisational theory, employee creative engagement can provide exposure to employee involvement based on creative attitudes and thinking in planning, decision-making and the realisation of the implementation of these activities to achieve organisational goals. Specifically, creativity is an attitude grounded in a person's divergent thinking when dealing with facts or phenomena (Sawyer & Henrikson, 2024), while engagement is the activity of a person's involvement in organisational activities starting from planning, decision-making to implement organisational activities (Chukwuemeka, 2020).

In organisational activities, employee career development plays an important role as an encouragement to carry out work creatively in the organisation (Collin et al., 2021). Logically, high creative engagement can encourage active and creative involvement for employees in organisational activities. It is right if Du et al. (2016) envisions that active and creative involvement is expected to improve employee performance.

Pradhan and Shrestha's (2021) research reported that career development has a significant effect on employee engagement. In line with this research, Zhou et al. (2022) found that career development has an effect on employee creativity. On the other hand, Ullah et al.'s (2022) research concluded that employee creativity has a significant effect on employee job performance. Anitha's (2014) research results stated that employee engagement has a significant effect on employee job performance. Based on this, it can be interpreted that employee creative engagement is related to career development variables. The hypothesis of this study can be described as follows:

H₇: Career development has a significant positive effect on job performance through employee creative engagement.

Research design

Population and sampling

Population is a group of individuals, objects or units that are the focus of research and serve as a source of research data (Hossan et al., 2023). The criteria for respondents in this study are (1) being employees of the Jember district education office and (2) having the status of civil servants or

employees with an assignment letter in accordance with the work agreement. The sampling technique used in this study was a census approach. A census approach is a sampling method that involves all members of the population being studied. In a census, the entire population is sampled, ensuring more accurate and representative data (Burakauskaitė & Čiginas, 2023). The number of research subjects as respondents is 120 employees.

Research method and data collection

Sugiharto et al. (2025) explain that explanatory quantitative research aims to examine the influence between variables. This type of research aligns with this study in terms of methodology. The study was designed as a quantitative confirmatory survey study with the aim of testing a theoretical model to explain the relationship between relevant variables in this context, namely competence, career development, creative engagement and employee job performance. To achieve accurate analysis results, this study applies a quantitative confirmatory survey method with structural equation modelling (SEM)-partial least square (PLS) analysis. Data were collected using a questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents who had been selected using population techniques. By using a quantitative confirmatory survey method with SEM-PLS analysis, this study is expected to contribute to the understanding of competence, career development, creative engagement and performance and provide practical implications for stakeholders.

Research instrument

This research instrument uses a questionnaire technique. The instrument is used to measure the research variables of employee competency, career development, creative engagement and job performance. The questionnaire used in this research was adapted from Riduwan (2015), whose validity and reliability were verified during the publication process. Questionnaire items were selected based on their suitability to the research variables to be examined. It is used to measure competency, career development, creative engagement and job performance. The Likert scale is used to measure the level of agreement using statements on a 5-point scale with indicators: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. In this section, respondents are asked to answer questions that are divided into 4 parts, namely competency 6 items, career development 6 items, creative engagement 6 items and performance 6 items.

Analysis design

This study applied quantitative analysis with SEM-PLS. As mentioned by Wang et al. (2024), statistical analysis can be performed using PLS-SEM. Smart PLS software version 3.0 was used to analyse the relationship between variables in the indicators. Structural equation modelling equation analysis based on variance is designed to solve multiple regression when certain problems occur in the data, such as small study

sample size, missing data and multicollinearity. In the PLS method, the analysis technique used is the analysis of the outer model in the form of indicators or instruments related to latent variables, testing the inner model, or structural model, using *R*-square for the dependent construct of the *t*-test and the significance of the structural path parameter coefficient (Sarstedt et al. 2021). All variables are measured using a five-point Likert scale. A construct is considered valid if it has a Cronbach's alpha value >0.6 . Another measure used is average variance extracted (AVE), which shows the variance value obtained from each latent variable. The required value is >0.5 . The higher the AVE value obtained, the better, as it shows the variation of indicators contained in a construct. In addition to AVE, to determine the reliability of each construct, composite reliability measurements can be used. The limit value used to assess the acceptable level of reliability is >0.6 .

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Jember, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Faculty of Education (Ref: 7061/UN25.1.5/SP/2025).

Results

Outer model test results

Structural equation modelling-partial least square analysis is preceded by an assessment of the outer SEM model that represents the measurement results both reflectively and formatively. The outer model test is used to determine whether the research instrument can meet the requirements of good research data, namely valid and reliable data (Sarstedt et al., 2017). The results of the outer model test are presented in Table 1.

Referring to Table 1, it can be stated that all research indicators meet the criteria of convergent validity, where the loading factor value is greater than 0.5. The composite reliability value of each variable is greater than 0.70, and the AVE value is greater than 0.50. The SEM-PLS structural image is represented in Figure 2.

Direct effect testing

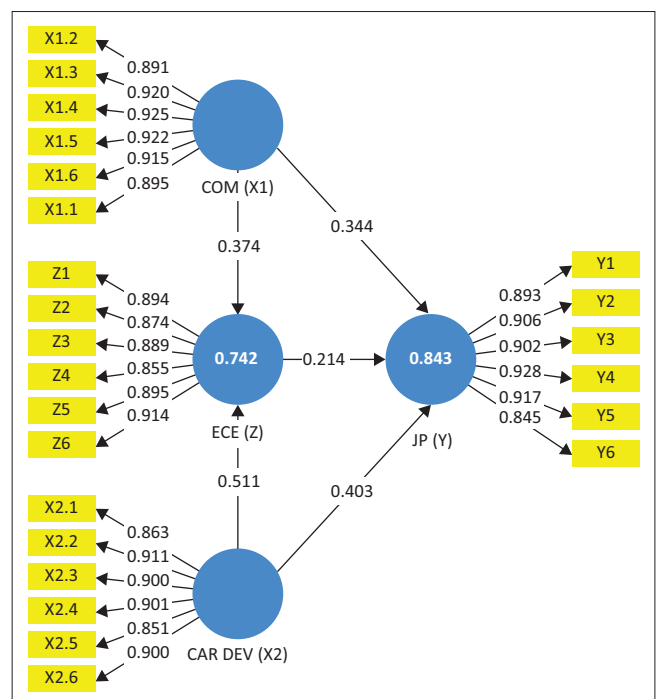
This section describes the path analysis model. The path coefficient values can be seen in Table 2.

The direct effect test found that competence has a significant effect on employee creative engagement with a path coefficient of 0.374 ($p = 0.001$). Career development has a significant effect on employee creative engagement with a path coefficient of 0.511 ($p = 0.000$). Competence has a significant effect on employee performance with a path coefficient of 0.344 ($p = 0.003$). Career development has a significant effect on employee performance with a path coefficient of 0.403 ($p = 0.001$). Employee creative engagement has a significant effect on employee performance with a path coefficient of 0.214 ($p = 0.022$).

TABLE 1: Validity and reliability test results (Outer loading).

No	Variable or Indicator	Loading factor	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha
1	Competence (X1)	-	0.83	0.97	0.95
	X1.1	0.89	-	-	-
	X1.2	0.89	-	-	-
	X1.3	0.92	-	-	-
	X1.4	0.92	-	-	-
	X1.5	0.92	-	-	-
	X1.6	0.91	-	-	-
2	Career development (X2)	-	0.79	0.96	0.94
	X2.1	0.86	-	-	-
	X2.2	0.91	-	-	-
	X2.3	0.90	-	-	-
	X2.4	0.90	-	-	-
	X2.5	0.85	-	-	-
	X2.6	0.90	-	-	-
3	Creative engagement (Z)	-	0.79	0.96	0.94
	Z1	0.89	-	-	-
	Z2	0.87	-	-	-
	Z3	0.89	-	-	-
	Z4	0.85	-	-	-
	Z5	0.89	-	-	-
	Z6	0.91	-	-	-
4	Job performance (Y)	-	0.81	0.96	0.95
	Y1	0.89	-	-	-
	Y2	0.91	-	-	-
	Y3	0.90	-	-	-
	Y4	0.93	-	-	-
	Y5	0.92	-	-	-
	Y6	0.84	-	-	-

AVE, average variance extracted.



COM, Competence; ECE, Employee Creative Engagement; JP, Job performance.

FIGURE 2: Full model structural analysis image.

Indirect effect between variables

An indirect relationship occurs between the exogenous latent variables of competence (X1) and career development (X2) on the endogenous latent variable bound by employee

performance (Y) with the intervening endogenous variable employee creative engagement (Z). A summary of the indirect influence of these variables can be seen in Table 3.

Employee creative engagement does not act as an intervening variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance with a coefficient of 0.080 ($p = 0.074$). That is the result of the indirect influence test. Thus, creative engagement does not significantly mediate the influence of competence on employee performance. Employee creative engagement acts as an intervening variable in the relationship between career development and employee performance with a coefficient of 0.109 ($p = 0.042$). Thus, the influence of creative engagement significantly mediates the influence of career development on employee performance.

Coefficient of determination

The R -square value describes the variability of changes in exogenous variables that can be explained by endogenous variables. The test results related to the R -square value can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that the R -square value of the employee creative engagement construct is 0.742 and the R -square value of the employee performance construct is 0.843. The R -square of 0.742 can be interpreted to mean that 74.2% of the variability of changes in employee creative engagement can be explained by the competency and career development variables. The R -square of 0.843 can be interpreted to mean that 84.3% of the variability of changes in employee performance can be explained by the competency, career development and employee creative engagement variables.

A summary of research hypothesis testing results

A summary of the results of the research hypothesis testing is presented in Table 5.

Discussion

The effect of competence on employee creative engagement

The results of this study show that competence has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement.

TABLE 2: Direct effect test result.

Effect	Estimate	SE	p	Result
Competence → Creative engagement	0.37	3.43	0.001	H1 accepted
Career development → Creative engagement	0.51	4.64	0.000	H2 accepted
Competence → Job performance	0.34	2.96	0.003	H3 accepted
Career development → Job performance	0.40	3.48	0.001	H4 accepted
Creative engagement → Job performance	0.21	2.29	0.022	H5 accepted

SE, standard error.

TABLE 3: Indirect effect test result.

Effect	Estimate	SE	p	Result
Competence → Creative engagement → Job performance	0.08	1.79	0.074	H6 rejected
Career development → Creative engagement → Job performance	0.11	2.04	0.042	H7 accepted

SE, standard error.

The meaning of this understanding is that the higher the employee's competence, the higher their creative engagement. This is also explained in Boyatzis's (2024) human resource competency theory, which states that competence and competency development in an organisational context are important to improve the quality of human resources. The results of a study by Bandhu et al. (2024) stated that individuals engage in certain activities because they find them personally interesting. This means that employees with high competence tend to have the ability to think creatively and innovatively, thus they have better creative engagement (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Likewise, employees with good competence can solve problems more effectively, so they are more likely to find creative and innovative solutions (Brophy, 1998). On one hand, employees with good competence can solve problems more effectively, so they are more likely to find creative and innovative solutions (Brophy, 1998). On the other hand, it can also be explained that employees with good competence can adapt to changes and new challenges, thus improving their creative engagement (Cruickshank et al., 2017). The findings of this study are consistent with those of several previous studies. Furthermore, research by Suryawati and Nugraha (2024) reported that competence significantly influences employee engagement. Research by Fitriah and

TABLE 4: R -square value.

Variable	Variable name	R -square
Z	Creative engagement	0.74
Y	Job performance	0.84

TABLE 5: Summary of hypothesis testing results.

Number	Research hypothesis	Result
1	Competence has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement.	H ₁ accepted
2	Career development has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement.	H ₂ accepted
3	Competence has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.	H ₃ accepted
4	Career development poses a positive and significant effect on employee job performance.	H ₄ accepted
5	Employee creative engagement has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.	H ₅ accepted
6	Competence has an insignificant positive effect on employee job performance through employee creative engagement.	H ₆ rejected
7	Career development has a significant positive effect on employee job performance through employee creative engagement.	H ₇ accepted

Soehari (2024) also stated that competence significantly influences employee creativity. The conclusion is that creativity and engagement are aspects that can be influenced by a person's competence. Based on this description, it can be interpreted that strong competence will increase the ability to think creatively and innovatively. Through strong creative engagement, employees will find creative and effective solutions.

The effect of career development on employee creative engagement

This study found that career development has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement. Therefore, better career development leads to better employee creative engagement. John Holland's career development theory (Adlya & Zola, 2022) emphasises the importance of an employee's personality, talents and interests in career development. Furthermore, it can be explained that career alignment with an individual's personality and interests in choosing a suitable career will facilitate an employee's career. In fact, when employees perceive that the organisation cares about their career development, they are more motivated to contribute and engage in their work tasks (Hirschi et al., 2013). This also applies to the phenomenon of career development, which can improve employee abilities. This makes them more capable of creative and innovative thinking (Ismail & Rishani, 2018). From a value perspective, career development can increase employee loyalty. This is represented by employees being more active in continuing to collaborate and contribute to the organisation (Olga & Nurraihan, 2025). The results of this study are relevant to several previous studies. The results of a study by Bai and Liu (2018) reported that career development has a significant influence on employee engagement. This can also be observed from the research results of Saglik and Yilmaz (2016), which state that employee career development can increase employee creativity.

The effect of competence on employee job performance

This study found that competence has a significant positive effect on employee job performance. Conceptually, employees with high competence have the ability to carry out assigned tasks effectively and efficiently (Hsieh et al., 2021). Likewise, competent employees can increase work productivity, allowing them to complete tasks more quickly and accurately (Otto et al., 2008). Another rationale is that competent employees can adapt to changes and new challenges, thus improving their performance in dynamic situations (Shet et al., 2019). Several studies on the effect of competence on employee performance have been conducted by previous researchers. The results of a study by Siddiq et al. (2023) stated that employee competence has a significant influence on employee performance. The results of a study by Wijayanti and Sari (2023) stated that employee competence can improve employee performance in companies. Based on this, it can be interpreted that competence has an impact on employee

performance, which is confirmed by the results of several previous researchers.

The effect of career development on employee job performance

This study found that career development has a significant positive effect on employee job performance. This can be explained by the fact that career development can foster knowledge and skills that support employee work. Career development can increase employee motivation to perform better and achieve goals (Pillay et al., 2015). Career development can increase employee self-confidence, making them more likely to take responsibility and initiative in their work (Danahauer et al., 2019). Furthermore, career development can increase employee loyalty, making them more likely to continue working together and contributing to the organisation (Fadhila & Sulistiani, 2021). Thus, career development can help individuals improve their ability to create and innovate, thereby improving performance and achieving better goals (Sulistiyorini et al., 2025). Several studies have examined the effect of career development on creative engagement. The results of a study by Safariningsih et al. (2025) stated that career development has a significant effect on engagement. Similarly, the results of a study by Judijanto et al. (2024) stated that career development has a significant effect on employee creativity. Furthermore, the results of research by Semwal and Dhyan (2017) stated that career development has a significant influence on employee engagement.

The effect of employee creative engagement on employee job performance

The results of this study prove that creative engagement has a significant positive effect on employee performance. Creative engagement can increase innovation and creativity in their work, allowing them to find new solutions and improve performance (Rao, 2016). Good creative engagement can increase employee motivation to work better and achieve goals (Bibi & Afsar, 2018). Furthermore, creative engagement can increase employee job satisfaction, making them more likely to work better and achieve goals (Fahrnunisa & Adhiatma, 2014). Creative engagement can increase employee motivation to work better. With better motivation, employee enthusiasm for innovation also increases. The results of research by Anwar et al. (2022) stated that employee creative engagement has a significant influence on job performance. Likewise, the results of research by Ximenes et al. (2019) stated that employee creativity has a significant influence on employee job performance. Based on the given description, creative engagement has a strong impact on employee job performance.

The effect of competence on employee job performance through employee creative engagement

The results of this study found that creative engagement did not significantly mediate the effect of competence on employee

job performance. This can be explained by the fact that creative engagement may not be directly related to employee competence, thus not mediating the effect of competence on performance (Budiprasetya & Lo, 2021). This also occurs when other factors, such as motivation, leadership or organisational culture, may be more dominant in influencing employee performance than other variables (Ng et al., 2020). The results of research by Febriantina et al. (2021) stated that leadership influences organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). This means that employees are more willing to help the organisation without considering their competence. Furthermore, employee creative engagement does not always act as an intervening variable in the relationship between competence and employee performance. Employees with high competence can naturally perform well, even without high levels of engagement. Moreover, low levels of employee engagement do not have a significant impact on performance. In some types of jobs, such as highly technical jobs or jobs requiring a high level of specialisation, competence is the main determinant, so employee engagement may not have a significant mediating effect. Several studies on the relationship between competence, creativity, engagement and job performance have been conducted by previous researchers. The results of Mustaqim et al.'s (2024) study stated that competence has a significant impact on employee engagement. The results of Zhang and Bartolet's (2010) study stated that employee creativity has a significant impact on job performance. The findings of Hassan et al. (2013), along with those of several other studies, indicate that competence has a significant impact on employee performance and creative engagement. Moreover, employee creative engagement has an influence on performance. However, creative engagement does not have a mediating impact on the influence of competence on job performance. Thus, there are other factors that are more dominant in influencing job performance, such as motivation, leadership and organisational culture.

The effect of career development on employee job performance through employee creative engagement

This study shows that career development has a significant positive effect on employee job performance, mediated by creative engagement. Career development fosters higher levels of intrinsic motivation, which encourages creative engagement and consequently leads to improved performance and goal realisation (Feldman & Ng, 2008). Career development can enhance employee capabilities, thus making them more capable of engaging in creative engagement and improving their performance (Merchant, 2010). Furthermore, creative engagement can increase employee emotional engagement, thus making them more likely to perform better and achieve goals (Akkermans et al., 2015). Referring to these results, it can be stated that employee creative engagement acts as an intervening or mediating variable in the relationship between employee competence and performance. Employee creative engagement is employee involvement based on creative attitudes and thinking in planning, decision-making and implementing these activities to achieve organisational goals. The results of research by Pradhan and Shrestha (2021) state

that career development has a significant influence on employee engagement. The results of research by Zhou et al. (2022) state that career development influences employee creativity. Meanwhile, the results of research by Ullah et al. (2022) stated that employee creativity has a significant influence on employee work performance. Research by Anitha (2014) found that creative engagement significantly influences employee work performance. This means that employee creative engagement is related to career development variables. Likewise, employee creative engagement is related to work performance variables. Therefore, it can be interpreted that creative engagement plays a significant role in influencing career development on employee job performance.

Practical implications

The findings of this study provide practical implications, namely that the Jember Regency Government, through the Jember Regency Education Office, is required to be able to manage aspects of competence, career development and employee creative engagement. These three aspects will be important for the Jember Regency Education Office to encourage employee performance (job performance) optimally. The most important aspect of this study is the focus on creative engagement, which significantly mediates the influence of career development on job performance. These findings and analyses conclude that district-level education offices need to focus on career development, with creative engagement as a mediating variable, to improve employee performance.

Theoretical contributions

This research provides a theoretical contribution by examining the mediating role of creative engagement in relation to competence, career development and job performance. The mediating role of creative engagement in the relationship between career development and job performance is significant. Thus, creative engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between competence and job performance can be both novel and theoretically beneficial.

Limitation and future research

The limitation of this study concerns the research object, which is only limited to employees of Jember Regency Education Office, so the generalisation of the results has not been achieved. Further research can be conducted with broader objects (regional or national). This research has limitations in the instrument variable of creative engagement. This variable, in this research, is a synthesis of creativity and engagement variables. The points of the instrument variables were developed based on the synthesis of these two theories. For future research, the creative engagement instrument should be developed with a more established concept or theory based on broader research studies. As for the theoretical implications, this study opens up opportunities for future research agendas to develop

existing concepts related to organisational behaviour, especially employee creative engagement and employee performance.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion, the conclusions can be drawn as follows:

- Competence has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement.
- Career development has a significant positive effect on employee creative engagement.
- Competence has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.
- Career development has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.
- Creative engagement has a significant positive effect on employee job performance.
- Competence has an insignificant positive effect on job performance through employee creative engagement.
- Career development has a significant positive effect on job performance through employee creative engagement.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

S.B. conducted the conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing of the original draft, visualisation, data curation, project administration, writing-review editing and funding acquisition. S.W.L.H.S. conceptualised and conducted the formal analysis, investigation, software and resource acquisition.

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Data availability

The datasets generated and/or analysed during this study are available from the corresponding author, S.B., and at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11H9jzZArTl-OFPL_PZwIcoNxbvYo1Gb8?usp=sharing.

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