

The Role of Employee Engagement in Mediating the Effect of Talent Management on Employee Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and analyze the role of employee engagement in mediating the effect of talent management on employee performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police. The study employed a quantitative approach with a population of 115 employees from the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police. A saturation sampling technique was used, meaning the entire population was included as the study sample. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire using a Likert scale. Data analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results indicate that talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a path coefficient of 0.203, a t-statistic of 3.554, and a p-value of 0.000. Talent management also has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, with a path coefficient of 0.300, a t-statistic of 4.893, and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a path coefficient of 0.562, a t-statistic of 10.568, and a p-value of 0.000. The results of the indirect effect test indicate that employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the effect of talent management on employee performance, with a coefficient of 0.169, a t-statistic of 4.614, and a p-value of 0.000. The R-squared value for employee engagement of 0.090 indicates that talent management explains 9% of the variation in employee engagement, while the R-squared value for employee performance of 0.425 indicates that talent management and employee engagement together explain 42.5% of the variation in employee performance. The research findings confirm that objective, targeted, and sustainable talent management can improve employee performance both directly and indirectly by increasing employee engagement.

Keywords: Talent Management, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance.

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Introduction

Human resources are a strategic element that determines an organization's success in achieving its goals. In public-sector organizations, the quality of human resources influences the accuracy of task execution, administrative effectiveness, service quality, and the organization's ability to respond to changes in the work environment. Therefore, it is not enough for an organization to simply have an adequate number of employees; it must also ensure that each employee possesses the competencies, potential, commitment, and engagement aligned with the organization's needs.

Employee performance is a key indicator in assessing the effectiveness of human resource management. Performance reflects the extent to which employees successfully carry out their duties and responsibilities based on standards and targets set by the organization. Good performance is demonstrated through the quality of work output, the quantity of work completed, timeliness, adaptability, initiative, accountability, and employees' contributions to achieving the organization's goals. Conversely, poor performance can lead to work delays, a decline in service quality, poor decision-making, and reduced organizational effectiveness.

The North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau is a unit that plays a strategic role in supporting personnel management within the regional police force. This unit handles various activities related to personnel administration, employee placement, career development, education and training, competency development, performance evaluation, and personnel services. Given this scope of duties, the performance of employees at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau will influence the accuracy and effectiveness of human resource management within the police organization.

Based on the results of the preliminary observation, the performance of staff at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau has not yet fully met the expected targets. Several performance indicators remain below the 90% target. The timeliness of task completion was recorded at 76%, the quality of administrative work at 80%, the quantity of work completed at 78%, the ability to adapt to a digital-based work system at 74%, coordination among subdivisions at 79%, initiative in problem-solving at 72%, and work discipline and responsibility at 82%.

These data indicate that performance issues are not only related to the ability to complete work but also encompass employees' adaptability, initiative, coordination, and sense of responsibility. The lowest score was recorded for the indicator of initiative in resolving work-related problems, at 72%. This suggests that there are still employees who are not fully motivated to contribute beyond the minimum job requirements. Low levels of initiative may also indicate that employees' commitment to their work and the organization has not yet been fully established.

One approach that can be used to improve employee performance is talent management. Talent management is a strategic process for identifying key positions, identifying employees with high potential and performance, developing competencies, placing employees in appropriate positions, and retaining employees who can contribute to the organization. Collings (2021) explains that talent management encompasses the identification of strategic positions, the creation of a talent pool, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture so that key positions are filled by competent and committed employees.

Talent management is relevant to the North Sumatra Regional Police's Human Resources Bureau because this unit not only serves as the administrator of personnel affairs but also plays a role in supporting personnel planning and development. Mapping employee potential, planning career development, conducting training, making competency-based placements, and preparing employees to fill strategic positions are crucial components in ensuring the organization's sustained performance. Proper talent management enables the organization to secure employees who meet the requirements of each position.

The implementation of talent management can also provide employees with clarity regarding the direction of their career development. When employees feel that their abilities

and potential are recognized, that they are given opportunities to grow, and that they are placed in roles aligned with their competencies, they will be more motivated to improve the quality of their work. Conversely, talent management that lacks objectivity can create the perception that opportunities for development and job placement are not based on potential or performance. Such conditions can diminish employee morale, commitment, and contributions.

The impact of talent management on performance is not always immediate. The success of talent management also depends on the extent to which these policies can foster employee engagement. Employee engagement reflects a positive psychological connection between employees and their work, roles, and the organization. Highly engaged employees do more than simply show up and complete tasks; they also demonstrate enthusiasm, energy, a sense of belonging, a willingness to go the extra mile, and a desire to help the organization achieve its goals.

Employee engagement is a critical factor within an organization because employees who are emotionally and cognitively engaged tend to pay greater attention to the quality of their work. Such employees are willing to take initiative, solve problems, collaborate, and maintain high work standards. Conversely, employees with low engagement tend to work only to fulfill formal obligations, show little initiative, and do not fully associate their personal success with the organization's success.

In the context of the North Sumatra Regional Police's Human Resources Bureau, employee engagement can be seen in employees' willingness to give their best effort, a sense of accomplishment in completing tasks, pride in the organization, and a willingness to recommend the organization as a good work environment. Such engagement is essential because work at the Human Resources Bureau demands precision, speed, coordination skills, responsibility, and initiative in addressing various administrative and personnel management issues.

Talent management is expected to enhance employee engagement by providing employees with a more positive work experience. Processes such as identifying potential, developing competencies, appropriate placement, career opportunities, and recognizing contributions can make employees feel valued and needed by the organization. These feelings foster a stronger emotional bond between employees and the organization.

Employees who see opportunities to learn and advance their careers will find it easier to build trust in the organization. They will also view their work as a means to achieve personal and professional growth. These conditions can increase engagement, a sense of accomplishment, and a willingness to go the extra mile. Therefore, talent management is not merely a tool for employee placement but can also serve as a means to strengthen the relationship between employees and the organization.

The relationship between talent management and employee performance has been demonstrated in a number of studies. Systematic talent management can help organizations place the right employees in the right positions, develop their competencies, and improve their readiness to meet job demands. However, such management does not necessarily result in maximum performance improvement if employees do not feel engaged in their work and their organization.

Employee engagement can explain the mechanism linking talent management and employee performance. Talent management implemented objectively and consistently can enhance employees' sense of being valued, their opportunities for growth, and their confidence in their future careers. These conditions, in turn, increase employee engagement. High engagement subsequently motivates employees to work with greater focus, demonstrate initiative, complete tasks on time, and produce higher-quality work.

Based on previous research, talent management has been found to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance and employee engagement. Employee engagement has also been found to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Furthermore, employee engagement mediates the effect of talent management on performance.

These findings indicate that talent management can improve performance through two pathways: directly by enhancing the alignment of potential with job requirements, and indirectly by fostering employee engagement.

Nevertheless, research on the relationship between talent management, employee engagement, and performance has primarily been conducted in business organizations. Public organizations, particularly police institutions, differ in terms of hierarchical structure, work procedures, career systems, staffing patterns, and organizational rules. These differences may lead to varying results regarding how talent management shapes employee engagement and improves employee performance.

This study offers contextual novelty because it was conducted at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police—a unit responsible for human resource management within the police environment. This study not only examines the direct impact of talent management on performance but also analyzes employee engagement as the psychological mechanism that mediates this relationship. This focus is important because the success of talent management cannot be assessed solely by the availability of development programs, but also by the ability of those programs to foster engaged employees who are willing to give their best.

In practical terms, the results of this study are expected to provide input for the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau in developing talent management that is more objective, targeted, and sustainable. Organizations need to map potential, develop a talent pool, provide opportunities for competency development, establish clear career paths, and place employees based on their abilities and job requirements. These policies should also be aimed at fostering employees' sense of appreciation, belonging, engagement, and pride in the organization.

Based on the above discussion, research on “The Role of Employee Engagement in Mediating the Effect of Talent Management on Employee Performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police” is important to conduct. This study aims to examine the effect of talent management on employee performance, the effect of talent management on employee engagement, the effect of employee engagement on employee performance, and the role of employee engagement in mediating the effect of talent management on employee performance.

Literature Review

1. Employee Performance

a) Definition of Employee Performance

According to Nurfitriani (2022), employee performance is the work output achieved by an individual in carrying out their responsibilities. In the context of the Human Resources Bureau within a government agency, its functions include handling human resources administration, personnel transfers, employee welfare, employee development, and functional positions, while the management of civil servant performance also encompasses the formulation of technical policies, monitoring, evaluation, and performance reporting. Thus, in the context of the HR Bureau, employee performance can be understood as the degree to which employees successfully carry out HR management tasks in accordance with their responsibilities, work targets, and organizational standards.

b) Employee Performance Indicators

According to Nurfitriani (2022), employee performance indicators include motivation, job satisfaction, stress levels, working conditions, and compensation. Based on these indicators, within the context of the HR Bureau, these five indicators can be operationalized as follows.

1) Motivation

Motivation reflects an employee's internal drive to perform duties diligently, achieve work targets, and deliver the best results in HR administrative services. Within the HR Bureau, this indicator can be observed through employees' enthusiasm in managing personnel data, handling transfers, processing promotions, facilitating career development, and performing other administrative tasks.

2) Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects employees' positive feelings toward their work. Within the HR Bureau, this indicator can be observed through employees' level of comfort with task assignments, working relationships with supervisors and colleagues, work systems, and opportunities to develop competencies in HR management.

3) Stress Level

Stress levels indicate a state of workplace tension that can affect employees' ability to perform their duties. In the context of the HR Bureau, this indicator can be observed through employees' ability to cope with administrative workloads, document completion deadlines, changes in personnel regulations, and pressure from internal organizational services. Due to its negative nature, this indicator is typically scored on a reverse scale in research instruments.

4) Work Conditions

Work conditions relate to work situations that support task performance. In the HR Bureau, this indicator can be measured through the availability of work facilities, workplace comfort, clarity of procedures, support from the personnel information system, and the smooth coordination between departments in the delivery of HR services.

5) Compensation

Compensation refers to the rewards employees receive for their contributions to the organization. In the HR Bureau, this indicator can be assessed through employees' perceptions of the appropriateness of their salaries, allowances, incentives, and awards, as well as their sense of fairness regarding the compensation received in relation to their workload and job responsibilities.

2. Employee Engagement

a) Definition of Employee Engagement

According to Qualtrics (2024), employee engagement is an employee's connection to their work, role, and organization, expressed through behaviors that contribute to the organization's success. Qualtrics also emphasizes that employee engagement is not a single metric, but a composite measure that captures how employees think, feel, and act in the workplace over time.

b) Indicators of Employee Engagement

The indicators of employee engagement, according to Qualtrics (2024), are as follows.

1) Recommend

Indicates an employee's willingness to recommend the organization as a good place to work to others.

2) Accomplish

Indicates the extent to which work provides employees with a sense of personal accomplishment.

3) Motivate

Indicates the extent to which the organization encourages employees to go above and beyond what is typically required to complete their work.

3. Talent Management

a) Definition of Talent Management

Collings (2021) explains that talent management is a strategic process that involves the systematic identification of key positions that contribute differently to the organization's excellence, the creation of a talent pool comprising high-potential and high-performing employees to fill those positions, and the development of a differentiated HR architecture to ensure that those positions are filled by competent individuals who remain committed to the organization.

b) Talent Management Indicators

Talent management indicators according to Collings (2021):

- 1) Identification of strategic or pivotal positions
This indicator reflects an organization's ability to recognize the positions or roles that are most critical to achieving organizational goals. In the context of the HR Office, this refers to the office's ability to identify positions that significantly impact personnel services, competency development, workforce planning, and the quality of HR governance.
- 2) Talent pool development
This indicator reflects the organization's efforts to cultivate a pool of high-performing, high-potential employees to fill strategic positions. In the context of the HR Bureau, this indicator is reflected in the processes of mapping potential employees, career development, training, promotion, and preparing successors for key HR roles.
- 3) Differentiated HR Architecture
This indicator shows that the organization does not manage all employees in the same way, but tailors HR practices so that strategic positions are filled by the right people and their commitment is maintained. In the context of the HR Bureau, this can be seen in the existence of placement, development, evaluation, reward, and retention systems that are designed in a more targeted manner to support key positions.

Conceptual Framework

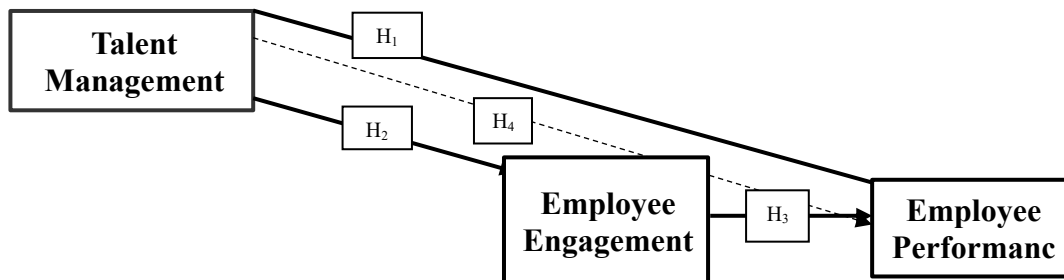


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

- H₁: Talent management has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau.
- H₂: Talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
- H₃ : Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
- H₄ : Employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the effect of talent management on the performance of employees at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau.

Research Methodology

Type of Research

The type of research used is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research is defined as a method grounded in the philosophy of positivism, used to study a specific population or sample; sampling techniques are generally conducted randomly; data collection uses research instruments; and data analysis is quantitative/statistical in nature, with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses. This quantitative research was conducted to examine the influence of talent management and the learning organization on employee performance through employee engagement as an intervening variable at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

Research Location and Timeframe

The research was conducted at the North Sumatra Regional Police Headquarters, located at Jalan Sisingamangaraja Km. 10.5 No. 60, Timbang Deli, Medan Amplas District, Medan City. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from May to August 2026.

Population and Sample

According to Sugiyono (2025), a population consists of all objects or subjects that share specific characteristics identified by the researcher for study, from which conclusions are subsequently drawn. Based on this definition, the population in this study consists of all 115 employees of the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

The sample in this study consists of all employees of the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police, totaling 115 people. The sampling technique used is saturation sampling, which involves selecting the entire population as the research sample.

Research Data Sources

The data source used in this study is primary data.

Results

Outer Model Analysis

The *Outer Model* analysis, using the *PLS algorithm*, yielded the following results:

Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings Values

	Employee Engagement	Employee Performance	Talent Management
X1.1			0.854
X1.2			0.698
X1.3			0.887
Y.1		0.715	
Y.2		0.833	
Y.3		0.782	
Y.4		0.845	
Y.5		0.810	
Z.1	0.861		
Z.2	0.814		
Z.3	0.888		

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, the results of the outer model test using factor loadings/outer loadings show that all indicators for each variable have loadings ≥ 0.60 . This indicates that each indicator is measured validly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire meet the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

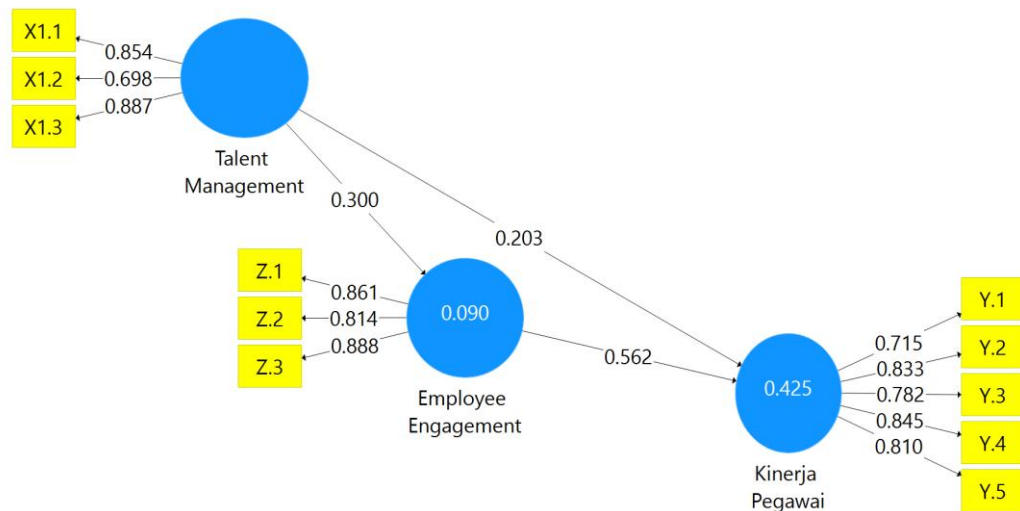


Figure 1. Outer Loadings

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Engagement	0.817	0.838	0.890	0.730
Employee Performance	0.857	0.866	0.897	0.637
Talent Management	0.754	0.803	0.857	0.668
Employee Engagement	0.817	0.838	0.890	0.730

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70, and the AVE values are above 0.05. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Therefore, the research instrument is deemed reliable and suitable for use in structural equation modeling.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

When evaluating a model using PLS, the analysis begins by examining the R-squared value for each latent dependent variable. The table below presents the estimated R-squared values obtained using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R-Square Results

	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Employee Engagement	0.090	0.085
Employee Performance	0.425	0.419

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 3 shows the R-squared values for both dependent variables. For the employee engagement variable, the R-squared value is 0.090; this means that talent management and the learning organization account for 0.090, or 9%. The remainder is attributed to other variables outside the model. The R-squared value for employee performance is 0.425, meaning that talent management, the learning organization, and employee engagement account for 0.425, or 42.5%; the remainder is attributed to other variables outside the model.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Effects Between Variables

Direct effects between variables can be seen in the *path coefficients*. The data analysis results show that the direct effects are presented in the following table.

Table 4. *Path Coefficients* (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
Talent Management -> Employee Performance	0.203	3.554	0.000	Accepted
Talent Management -> Employee Engagement	0.300	4,893	0.000	Accepted
Employee Engagement -> Employee Performance	0.562	10.568	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Table 4 shows the following direct effect values:

1. Talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a t-statistic of 3.554 (above 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that talent management has a significant effect on employee performance because the significance level is below 0.05. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Masrurroh et al., 2023).
2. Talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, with a t-statistic of 4.893 (greater than 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (less than 0.05). This means that talent management has a significant effect on employee engagement because the p-value is less than 0.05. These findings are consistent with previous research, which found that talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (Sinisterra et al., 2024).
3. Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a t-statistic of 10.568 (above 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that employee engagement has a significant effect on employee performance because the p-value is below 0.05. These findings are consistent with previous research, which indicates that employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Kurniawan & Kusumawardani, 2024).

Indirect Effects Between Variables

The indirect effects between variables can be seen in the *specific indirect effects* values. The data analysis results show that the indirect effect values are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. *Specific Indirect Effects*

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Talent Management → Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	0.169	4.614	0.000	Accepted

Source:
Smart
PLS,
2025
Table 5
shows

indirect effects between variables, namely: talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through employee engagement, with a t-statistic of 4.614 (above 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that employee engagement acts as an intervening variable between talent management and employee performance.

Conclusion

1. Talent management has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau.
2. Talent management has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

3. Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on the performance of employees at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau.
4. Employee engagement positively and significantly mediates the effect of talent management on the performance of employees at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

Recommendations

Based on the research results and conclusions obtained, the following recommendations can be made.

1. Talent Management

The Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police is advised to strengthen the implementation of *talent management* by identifying strategic positions, mapping employees' potential and competencies, and establishing a *talent pool*—all conducted objectively and on an ongoing basis. Employee assignments should be aligned with their competencies, potential, experience, and the requirements of the position so that every strategic role is filled by the right person. The organization also needs to provide career development programs, education, training, mentoring, and succession planning for employees with high potential and performance.

2. Employee Engagement

Organizations are advised to boost *employee engagement* by providing meaningful work, clear goals, recognition for contributions, and opportunities for employees to participate in decision-making related to their work. Leaders need to foster two-way communication, provide regular feedback, and create working relationships based on mutual respect. Employees who feel involved, valued, and have opportunities to grow will be more motivated to give their best to the organization.

3. Employee Performance

Improving employee performance must be carried out in an integrated manner by setting clear, measurable, realistic work objectives that align with each employee's responsibilities. Performance evaluations should be conducted periodically, taking into account the quality and quantity of work output, timeliness, effectiveness, adaptability, initiative, and accountability of employees. The results of these evaluations should be followed up through mentoring, training, recognition, or adjustments to employee assignments as needed by the organization.

4. For Future Researchers

Future researchers are advised to expand the scope of their research to include other work units within the North Sumatra Regional Police, other regional police forces, or public sector agencies with different characteristics. Expanding the scope and sample size can help improve the generalizability of the research findings.

Future researchers may also include other variables that could potentially influence *employee engagement* and performance, such as leadership, organizational culture, organizational support, career development, digital competencies, work motivation, job satisfaction, work environment, and organizational commitment. This is necessary because *talent management* and *the learning organization* account for only 31.5% of *employee engagement*, whereas *talent management*, *the learning organization*, and *employee engagement* together account for 49.2% of employee performance.

Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Interviews and observations can be used to obtain more in-depth information regarding the implementation of talent management, organizational learning processes, employee engagement, and factors that influence performance. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to observe changes in employee engagement and performance following the implementation of talent development or organizational learning programs.

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