

Increasing Employee Loyalty through Career Development and Engagement: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in Five-Star Hotels in Greater Jakarta

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Abstract: Employee loyalty remains a critical challenge in the hospitality industry, where high work pressure and dynamic service demands often lead to high employee turnover. Although career development and employee engagement have been widely recognized as drivers of employee retention, few studies have examined how these factors influence loyalty through job satisfaction in the context of five-star hotels. This study aims to analyze the effects of career development and employee engagement on employee loyalty, with job satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from employees working in five-star hotels in Greater Jakarta between January and March 2025 and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal significant positive relationships among variables. Employee engagement exerts a strong influence on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.468$), which, in turn, enhances employee loyalty ($\beta = 0.444$). In contrast, career development shows the weakest direct effect on loyalty ($\beta = 0.153$), indicating that emotional engagement and daily work experiences play a more prominent role in shaping employee commitment than long-term career advancement opportunities. Furthermore, job satisfaction is confirmed as a mediating mechanism that translates organizational investments in career development and employee engagement into sustained employee loyalty. These findings contribute to hospitality management literature by emphasizing the central role of psychological and emotional engagement in strengthening employee loyalty. From a practical perspective, hotel management should prioritize strategies that foster employee engagement, recognition, and positive workplace experiences to enhance job satisfaction and build long-term employee commitment.

Keywords: Career Development; Employee Engagement; Employee Loyalty; Five-Star Hotel; Job Satisfaction.

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Introduction

The hospitality industry is one of the sectors that relies heavily on employee performance to deliver high-quality services to customers. In this context, employee loyalty (EL) is a critical factor in determining organizational sustainability and long-term success, particularly in five-star hotels where service excellence is a primary competitive advantage. Loyal employees contribute to service consistency, improve customer experiences, and support organizational profitability. In the hospitality industry, employee loyalty is increasingly important because it can reduce employee turnover and improve service quality (Fan et al., 2021). Employees who demonstrate strong loyalty also tend to contribute more significantly to organizational productivity and maintain higher retention rates, thereby reducing turnover costs that frequently challenge the hospitality sector.

However, employee loyalty does not emerge automatically. It is influenced by several organizational and psychological factors that shape employees' workplace experiences. One of the most important factors is job satisfaction (JS), which reflects employees' evaluation of various aspects of their work environment. Previous studies indicate that job satisfaction plays an im-

portant role in strengthening employee loyalty and often functions as a mediating variable between organizational practices and employee attitudes (Amin et al., 2024; Cinnioglu, 2024). In addition, career development (CD) and employee engagement (EE) are widely recognized as key factors that influence employee attitudes and well-being in service industries, including hospitality (Hosen et al., 2024).

Career development represents an organizational effort to provide employees with opportunities for learning, skill improvement, and career advancement. When employees perceive that their organization offers clear career pathways and professional development opportunities, they tend to feel valued and motivated to remain with the organization. This issue is particularly relevant in the hospitality industry, where high employee turnover is a persistent challenge due to demanding job characteristics, including long working hours, stressful service interactions, and limited opportunities for career advancement, which negatively affect workforce stability and retention. Recent empirical evidence confirms that the hospitality sector consistently records higher turnover rates than many other industries, reflecting both intrinsic job demands and scarce progression pathways that undermine employee retention (Dogru et al., 2023). In addition to career development, employee engagement has also received significant attention in human resource management literature. Employee engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling work-related psychological state in which employees feel emotionally connected and committed to their work, resulting in higher energy, dedication, and lasting involvement in organizational goals (Qi et al., 2023). Highly engaged employees tend to demonstrate greater commitment, stronger motivation, and higher performance.

Despite the well-established importance of career development and employee engagement, prior research has yielded inconsistent empirical results regarding their impact on job satisfaction and employee loyalty. Some studies suggest that career development has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction and employee loyalty (Katharina & Dewi, 2020), while others find no such relationship (Natsepa & Saladin, 2025). Similarly, although employee engagement is often identified as a strong predictor of job satisfaction and employee loyalty (Sudiarta et al., 2025; Wardana et al., 2024), its effect may vary depending on contextual factors such as organizational culture, work pressure, and industry characteristics (George et al., 2020). These mixed findings suggest that further empirical investigation is needed to clarify the relationships among these variables.

The empirical gap becomes particularly relevant in the context of five-star hotels. Compared with other hotel categories, five-star hotels operate with more complex organizational structures and higher service expectations, including personalized guest experiences and premium service standards. As a result, employees often face higher emotional and physical demands in their daily work. Under these conditions, career development and employee engagement may not automatically translate into employee loyalty unless employees experience stable job satisfaction. In this context, job satisfaction can function as a psychological mechanism that balances work demands with positive work experiences, thereby strengthening employee loyalty (Jung & Takeuchi, 2018; Robbins & Judge, 2024).

To explain these relationships, this study adopts Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the theoretical framework. Social Exchange Theory proposes that relationships within organizations are built on reciprocal exchanges in which individuals provide contributions in exchange for valuable returns, whether psychological, social, or economic (Blau, 2017). Support, fair treatment, and opportunities for professional growth are key factors in fostering positive employee attitudes such as satisfaction, engagement, and loyalty. Recent studies show that when employees perceive fairness and support, they are more likely to exhibit higher job satisfaction and commitment, which in turn promotes loyalty (Lahlou-kassi & Eddakir, 2025). When employees perceive that the organization invests in their career development and supports their involvement at work, they are more likely to show stronger commitment and loyalty to the organization (Aristana et al., 2022).

Employee loyalty is viewed as a multifaceted attitudinal and behavioral construct that encompasses an employee's psychological attachment to and supportive behaviors toward the organization, including a strong desire to remain and contribute to organizational goals and perfor-

mance outcomes (Lourenco & Rodrigues, 2025). In service industries such as hospitality, employee loyalty has been linked to positive employer-employee exchanges. It plays a crucial role in fostering service quality, satisfaction, and organizational success by strengthening employee commitment and reducing turnover intentions. Previous research indicates that employee loyalty is influenced by various organizational factors, including workplace relationships, organizational culture, reward systems, and career opportunities (Anukampa & Ranga, 2021; Chang & Busser, 2020; Hosen et al., 2024). In the context of Social Exchange Theory, loyalty emerges when employees perceive that the organization provides sustainable benefits and fulfills their expectations for career growth and professional stability (Blau, 2017).

Career development, therefore, becomes an important organizational practice that supports employee competence and long-term career advancement. Career development includes training programs, skill development, and promotion opportunities designed to prepare employees for greater responsibilities (Noe et al., 2022). From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, such initiatives represent organizational investments that encourage employees to reciprocate with positive attitudes toward the organization (McDonald & Hite, 2023). In the hospitality industry, particularly in five-star hotels, career development opportunities are highly valued because employees often aspire to achieve managerial positions, international certifications, and professional recognition. When organizations provide clear, meaningful career pathways, employees are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their work and demonstrate greater loyalty. Based on this reasoning, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Career development positively affects the employee loyalty of five-star hotel employees.

H2: Career development positively affects the job satisfaction of five-star hotel employees.

Employee engagement also plays an important role in shaping employee attitudes and organizational outcomes. In recent research, employee engagement is described as a multidimensional psychological construct that captures employees' emotional ties, enthusiasm, and deep involvement in their work roles, reflecting how strongly they are committed to achieving organizational objectives and contributing positively to performance outcomes (Coetzee et al., 2025). Employees with high engagement tend to display vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work, showing strong passion and focus that not only supports job performance but also contributes to overall organizational success (Ghani et al., 2023). As such, employee engagement is consistently linked with higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and lower intentions to leave, making it a key factor in sustaining human capital in competitive environments.

In service industries such as hospitality, employee engagement is particularly important because frontline employees directly influence customer experiences and service quality. Previous studies have demonstrated that higher levels of employee engagement are associated with increased job satisfaction and stronger employee loyalty (Book et al., 2019; George et al., 2020; Nirinjan & Thomas, 2018; Taware & Bodla, 2022). Employees who feel engaged with their work are more likely to perceive their work environment positively and remain committed to their organization. Based on this theoretical perspective, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: Employee engagement positively affects the employee loyalty of five-star hotel employees.

H4: Employee engagement positively affects the job satisfaction of five-star hotel employees.

Job satisfaction refers to an employee's positive emotional evaluation of their overall work experiences and aspects of their job, reflecting how employees feel about the meaningfulness, conditions, and rewards associated with their work (Bennouna et al., 2025). In the hospitality industry, recent studies suggest that social factors such as supportive supervisors, positive coworker relationships, and perceptions of organizational justice play an important role in shaping job satisfaction in hotel settings (Saito et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2023). These factors are particularly important in five-star hotels where teamwork, coordination, and emotional stability are essential for delivering premium service experiences.

From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, employees who experience high levels of job satisfaction are more likely to reciprocate positive organizational treatment by demonstrating stronger commitment and loyalty (Babakus et al., 2017). Employees who experience higher levels of job satisfaction are more likely to exhibit lower turnover intentions, as satisfaction reduces the desire to leave an organization and enhances retention (Salahudin et al., 2025). Therefore, job

satisfaction may function as an important mediating variable that explains how career development and employee engagement influence employee loyalty. Based on these theoretical arguments, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: Job satisfaction positively affects the employee loyalty of five-star hotel employees.

H6: Career development positively affects employee loyalty through job satisfaction.

H7: Employee engagement positively affects employee loyalty through job satisfaction.

Methodology

This study investigates the impacts of CD and EE on EL via JS at five-star hotels in the Greater Jakarta area, using a quantitative, survey-based approach. Greater Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, is a bustling metropolis and the country's primary hub for business, government, and commerce. As one of the busiest urban centers in Southeast Asia, Jakarta attracts a wide range of domestic and international visitors, generating significant demand for accommodation services. The hospitality industry, particularly in the five-star segment, is highly competitive, where hotels are expected to maintain exceptional service standards, operational efficiency, and workforce stability.

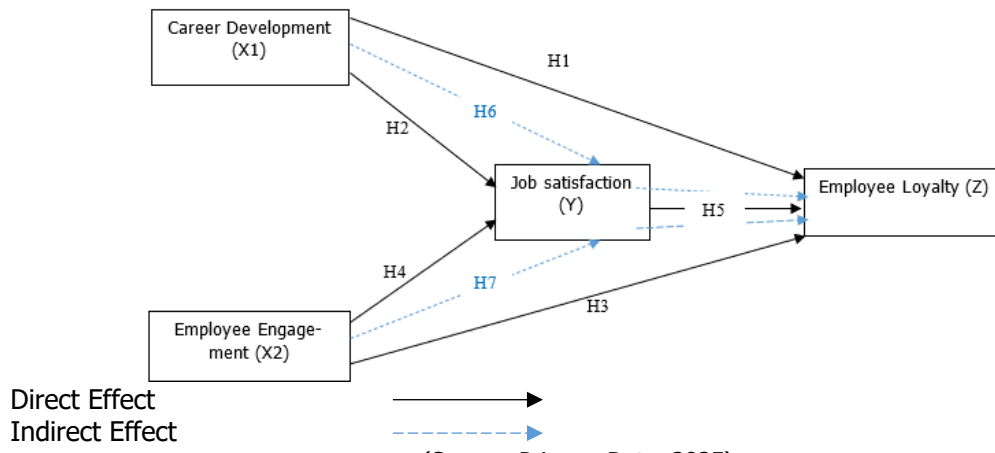
This approach enables the assessment of correlations between variables using numerical data that can be statistically analyzed (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). This research is descriptive and explanatory, where descriptive aims to describe the variables involved, while explanatory explains the link between variables in terms of cause and effect (Bougie & Sekaran, 2020). The conceptual model is a mediation model, with JS mediating the relationship between CD and EE on EL.

The study's population consisted of all employees at five-star hotels in the Greater Jakarta region. Purposeful sampling was used to select workers who had been with the company for more than a year and had participated in training or career development. The sample, comprising 100–150 respondents, met the requirements for path analysis using SmartPLS (Hair et al., 2022). This study involved 300 five-star hotel employees in Jabodetabek who met these criteria.

A questionnaire measuring CD, EE, JS, and EL was used as the study tool. A five-point Likert scale was used, with one representing strongly disagree and five representing strongly agree. A scale developed by McDonald & Hite (2023) with categories for training, promotion, and skill development was used to quantify career progression. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) from Schaufeli et al. (2006), which has three dimensions: vigour, devotion, and absorption, was used to quantify employee engagement. Karatepe and Uludag's (2007) indicators gauge job happiness. These indicators include overall job satisfaction, contentment with supervisors and coworkers, organizational policies, support, pay, prospects for advancement, and customer relations. A scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) that incorporates affective commitment is used to gauge employee loyalty. Normative commitment and continuity commitment

An online survey was used to gather data, and 30 participants' instruments were examined to ensure validity and reliability. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess reliability, and SmartPLS outer loadings were used to test validity (Sarstedt et al., 2022).

PLS-SEM from SmartPLS was used to analyze the data. Because PLS-SEM can handle complex models with comparatively few samples, it was chosen (Hair et al., 2022). Path coefficients and p-values were used for hypothesis testing; an inner model test was used to examine the relationships among the variables; and construct validity and reliability were evaluated using an outer model test.



(Source: Primary Data, 2025)

Figure1 . Conceptual Framework

Results and Discussions

Results

Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study reflects the diversity of characteristics crucial to understanding the work context and its influence on employee loyalty in five-star hotels. The following table presents the details regarding gender, age, education level, job position, work experience, employment status, weekly working hours, and the frequency of career development training attended by the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Characteristics Respondents	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	M	140	46.7
	F	160	53.3
Age (Years Old)	18 to 25	73	24.3
	26 to 35	126	42
	36 to 55	76	25.3
	>55	6	2
Highest level of education	High School/Vocational School	197	65.7
	Diploma (D1/D2/D3)	65	21.7
	Bachelor's Degree (S1)	31	10.3
	Postgraduate	7	2.3
Position/Job Title	Front Office	90	30
	Housekeeping	69	23
	F&B (Food and Beverage)	107	35.7
	Management	22	7.3
	Others	12	4
Years of Experience (Years)	2 to 4	44	14.7
	5 to 7	140	46.7
	>7	116	38.7
Employment Status	Permanent Employee	213	71
	Contract Employees	61	20.3
	Internship/Training	26	8.7
Average Number of Working Hours per Week:	0-40	152	50.7
	41-50	103	34.3
	> 50	45	15
	1 X	106	35.3

Characteristics Respondents	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Career Development Training Attended:	2-3 X	109	36.3
	4-5 X	53	17.7
	>5 X	32	10.7

Based on demographic data, most respondents were female (53.3%), with males comprising 46.7% of the sample. This distribution shows gender diversity among employees of five-star hotels in Greater Jakarta. Regarding age, 42% of respondents were aged 26-35, reflecting a productive age group with sufficient work experience. A total of 24.3% of respondents were aged 18-25 years, and 2% were aged 55 or older.

Most respondents had a high school or vocational education (65.7%), followed by a diploma (21.7%), while those with a bachelor's degree (S1) and a postgraduate degree accounted for 10.3% and 2.3%, respectively. Regarding job positions, 35.7% worked in the F&B sector, 30% in the Front Office, and 23% in Housekeeping. Only 7.3% held managerial positions, while the remaining 4% held other positions.

Most respondents had 5-7 years of work experience (46.7%), 38.7% had more than 7 years, and 14.7% had 2-4 years. Employment status showed that 71% were permanent employees, 20.3% were contract employees, and 8.7% were interns or trainees.

Most respondents work 0-40 hours per week (50.7%), followed by 34.3% who work 41-50 hours, and 15% who work more than 50 hours. Regarding career training, 36.3% of respondents attended training 2-3 times, 35.3% only once, and 10.7% more than 5 times.

This data provides an overview of the characteristics of five-star hotel employees in Greater Jakarta, most of whom have adequate work experience and stable employment status. The diversity in age, education, position, and working hours provides important insights into career development, engagement, and factors influencing employee satisfaction and loyalty.

Measurement Models

In this section, the measurement model used to assess the constructs involved in this study is described in detail. The measurement model was evaluated for validity and reliability to ensure that the indicators accurately and consistently measure the constructs. The following table presents the measurement model for this study, including the outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable.

Table 2. Measurement Models

Variable	Measurement Item	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
CD	CD1	0.845	0.944	0.955	0.781
	CD2	0.872			
	CD3	0.868			
	CD4	0.885			
	CD5	0.880			
	CD6	0.949			
EE	EE1	0.857	0.961	0.969	0.840
	EE2	0.876			
	EE3	0.927			
	EE4	0.895			
	EE5	0.969			
	EE6	0.969			
JS	JS1	0.746	0.958	0.966	0.804
	JS2	0.919			
	JS3	0.889			
	JS4	0.852			
	JS5	0.960			
	JS6	0.961			
	JS7	0.931			

	EL1	0.902			
	EL2	0.913			
EL	EL3	0.938	0.963	0.970	0.843
	EL4	0.938			
	EL5	0.894			
	EL6	0.922			

The outer loadings for each indicator exceeded the 0.7 threshold, indicating good convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). Additionally, all variables had AVEs greater than 0.5, indicating that each construct accounts for more than 50% of the variance in its indicators, further supporting convergent validity (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for each variable exceeded the 0.7 threshold, indicating high reliability (Hair et al., 2022). These results demonstrate that the measurement model has robust validity and reliability, making it appropriate for further analysis in this study.

The Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is a widely accepted criterion for assessing discriminant validity, as it evaluates the correlations between distinct constructs. In this study, the HTMT values were calculated for the constructs of CD, EE, EL, and JS. The results indicate that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, suggesting that discriminant validity has been adequately established among the constructs. Recent literature in PLS-SEM confirms that HTMT values below 0.85 or 0.90 indicate satisfactory discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2022). These findings demonstrate that the constructs are empirically distinct and that there are no critical multicollinearity issues among the latent variables.

Following the HTMT analysis, additional procedures were employed to evaluate discriminant validity in the measurement model. As recommended in recent PLS-SEM literature, discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct with its correlations with other constructs, and by examining cross-loadings and HTMT criteria (Hair et al., 2024). The results showed that each construct's AVE square root exceeded its inter-construct correlations, confirming that discriminant validity was satisfied. These findings provide robust support for the validity of the measurement model in this study.

Cronbach's Alpha and CR for each variable are both higher than 0.7, suggesting high reliability, according to the reliability test results (Table 2) (Hair et al., 2022). According to the findings of the outer model test, the measurement model has strong validity and reliability overall, making it suitable for additional study.

Structural Model Evaluation

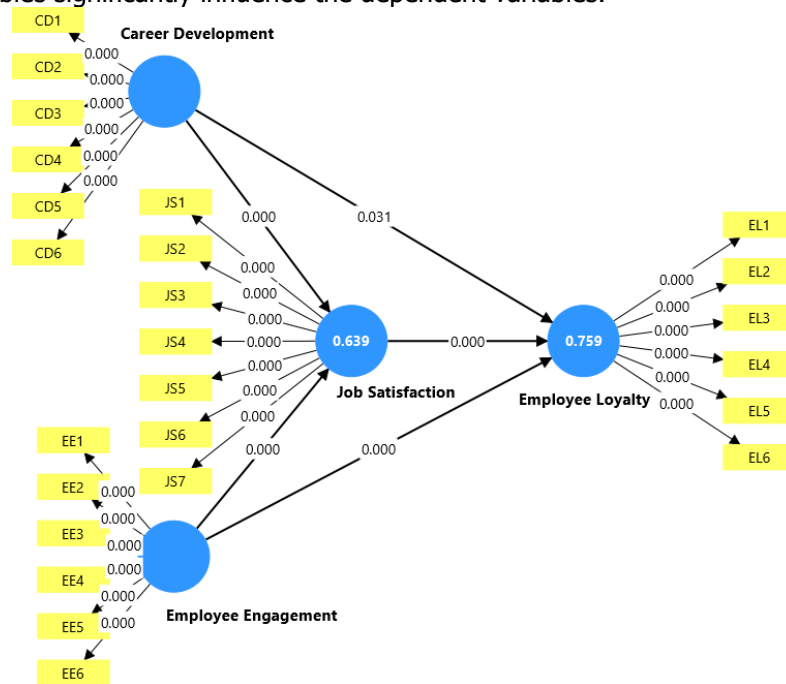
Based on the inner model test results from this study, several important indicators of the quality of the structural Model are R-squared, multicollinearity among latent variables (Inner VIF), F-squared, and hypothesis testing.

The R-squared values for both the EL and JS variables, 0.759 and 0.639, respectively, indicate relatively high levels of explanatory power. Recent guidelines in PLS-SEM suggest that R-squared values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 can be described as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively (Hair et al., 2022). Therefore, the R-squared value for employee loyalty (0.759) can be considered substantial, while job satisfaction (0.639) falls within the moderate-to-substantial range. These results indicate that the independent variables in this study explain a significant proportion of the variance in both EL and JS, suggesting strong predictive power and meaningful relationships among the constructs.

Regarding multicollinearity, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the latent variables are all below 5, indicating no serious multicollinearity issues within the structural model (Hair et al., 2022). Specifically, the VIF values range from 2.769 to 3.534, suggesting that the relationships among the latent variables are within acceptable limits and that there is no excessive dependence among them.

Regarding the F-square values, which indicate the magnitude of the independent variables' influence on the dependent variables, the analysis shows a moderate to strong effect. For example, the F-square for EE on JS is 0.207, indicating a moderate effect, while the F-square for JS on EL is 0.296, indicating a strong effect. According to Hair et al. (2022), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15,

and 0.35 are considered small, medium, and large effects, respectively, confirming that the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variables.



(Source: Primary Data, 2025)

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Direct and Indirect Effects on Employee Loyalty

Following the structural model results illustrated in Figure 2, the overall model fit and predictive capability were further evaluated to ensure the robustness of the proposed model. In this study, model fit was assessed using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and the Normed Fit Index (NFI). Additionally, the model's predictive capability was examined using predictive relevance ($Q^2_{predict}$), along with Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) and Mean Absolute Error (MAE).

The results indicate that the proposed model demonstrates acceptable fit. As shown in Table 3, the SRMR value of 0.039 is below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating good alignment between the empirical data and the structural model (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Additionally, the NFI value of 0.908 suggests satisfactory model fit, as values closer to 1.0 indicate a stronger fit between the theoretical model and observed data (Hair et al., 2024).

Table 3 . Model Fit and Predictive Relevance Evaluation

Indicator	Construct	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
SRMR	Model Fit	0.039	< 0.08	Good Fit
NFI	Model Fit	0.908	> 0.90	Acceptable Fit
$Q^2_{predict}$	Employee Loyalty (EL)	0.680	> 0	Strong Predictive Relevance
$Q^2_{predict}$	Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.631	> 0	Strong Predictive Relevance
RMSE	Employee Loyalty (EL)	0.571	Lower is better	Acceptable Prediction Accuracy
MAE	Employee Loyalty (EL)	0.423	Lower is better	Acceptable Prediction Accuracy
RMSE	Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.614	Lower is better	Acceptable Prediction Accuracy
MAE	Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.473	Lower is better	Acceptable Prediction Accuracy

To further evaluate the model's predictive performance, the $Q^2_{predict}$ values were examined. The results show that the $Q^2_{predict}$ values for EL and JS are greater than zero, indicating that the model possesses strong predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs model (Hair et al., 2022). Additionally, the RMSE and MAE values were assessed and found to be comparatively low, suggesting that the model provides accurate predictions of the observed outcomes, consistent with contemporary predictive evaluation practices in PLS-SEM (Troville et al., 2025).

Overall, these findings confirm that the proposed structural model demonstrates good fit and strong predictive capability, supporting its robustness and reliability in explaining the relationships among career development, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty within the hospitality context.

The following table presents the results of the hypothesis testing, which assess the relationships between CD, EE, JS, and EL. The path coefficients and p-values indicate the strength and significance of the direct and indirect effects among the variables. All hypotheses were tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), and the results provide valuable insights into the role of job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationships between career development, employee engagement, and employee loyalty.

Table 4. Testing Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Statement	Path Coefficients	P-Value	Description
H1	CD \rightarrow EL	0.153	0.031	Accepted
H2	CD \rightarrow JS	0.372	0.000	Accepted
H3	EE \rightarrow EL	0.342	0.000	Accepted
H4	EE \rightarrow JS	0.468	0.000	Accepted
H5	JS \rightarrow EL	0.444	0.000	Accepted
H6	CD \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EL	0.165	0.000	Accepted
H7	EE \rightarrow JS \rightarrow EL	0.208	0.000	Accepted

The analysis shows that all hypotheses were supported, with CD, EE, and JS significantly influencing EL. CD exhibited the weakest effect ($\beta = 0.153$), which aligns with evidence that employees with 5–7 years of experience value daily emotional support and relational conditions more than long-term career prospects (Noe et al., 2022). According to Peter Blau's Social Exchange Theory (2017), employees respond more strongly to immediate, meaningful benefits. In contrast, EE displayed a stronger mediating effect through JS, supporting arguments by Schaufeli et al. (2006) that engagement enhances vigour, dedication, and ultimately satisfaction and loyalty.

Discussions

The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that all hypotheses are true and that there is a significant correlation between the variables. Hypothesis H1, which states that career development (CD) affects employee loyalty (EL), is proven to be significant. This result is consistent with earlier research that indicates a strong relationship between CD and EL in the hospitality sector (Hosen et al., 2024; Katharina & Dewi, 2020; Majid et al., 2017; Sukmana et al., 2021). Recent studies demonstrate that CD programs in the hospitality industry are positively associated with EL and performance. In addition, CD is found to improve employee competence and adaptability to job demands in this sector (Hosen et al., 2024). The relatively low direct effect of CD on EL ($\beta = 0.153$) can be attributed to respondents' demographic characteristics. Most respondents (42%) are in the 26-35 age group, a stage where career progression may feel uncertain, and 65.7% have a high school or vocational education. Many respondents hold operational roles, such as in Food and Beverage (F&B), Front Office, and Housekeeping, which often offer limited immediate promotion opportunities. These roles may cause employees to prioritize daily work conditions, emotional rewards, and recognition over long-term career advancement. Employees in operational roles often value job satisfaction and immediate recognition more than career growth, as they may not perceive structural career paths as attainable or impactful in the short term (Noe et al., 2022). Therefore, the emphasis on emotional satisfaction and job stability helps explain why Career Development has a weaker effect on loyalty in this study.

Hypothesis H2, which tests the effect of career development on job satisfaction (JS), is accepted, in line with the theory that CD opportunities increase employee JS (Anukampa & Ranga,

2021; Hakuduwal, 2021; Katharina & Dewi, 2020; Kaur & Bhanage, 2020; Saputra, 2022). Garavan (2021) states that structured CD programs can increase employee JS and performance by empowering and valuing employees, thereby increasing their job satisfaction.

Hypothesis H3, which tests the effect of employee engagement (EE) on employee loyalty (EL), shows significant results. This finding confirms previous research showing that high EE can increase EL, as employees feel more attached to the company (Book et al., 2019; George et al., 2020; Nirinjan & Thomas, 2018; Taware & Bodla, 2022). Saks (2019) also found that EE significantly affects EL. High engagement improves performance and strengthens employees' commitment and loyalty to the organization, as they feel valued and emotionally connected to their work. Recent empirical research has shown that higher levels of employee engagement are associated with greater job satisfaction and can contribute to stronger employee loyalty, as engaged workers tend to develop closer psychological bonds with their organization and exhibit more positive work attitudes that support long-term retention and commitment (Presbitero et al., 2025).

Hypothesis H4 examines the impact of EE on JS and is accepted, in line with research showing that engaged Workers are more likely to be content with their positions (Anukampa & Ranga, 2021; Kaur & Bhanage, 2020). EE has been shown to enhance employees' intrinsic motivation and psychological involvement in their work, which in turn contributes to higher levels of JS (Presbitero et al., 2025). Employee engagement conceptualized as a psychological state involving emotional attachment and cognitive focus on work responsibilities, has been shown to positively influence job-related attitudes such as job satisfaction, as employees who feel more emotionally and cognitively invested in their work report higher levels of satisfaction with their job experience (Coetzee et al., 2025).

Hypothesis H5, which tested the effect of JS on EL, was supported by a path coefficient of 0.444, consistent with research showing that JS is an important predictor of EL (Katharina & Dewi, 2020; Ogbeide, 2020; Thi Kim Phuong & Trung Vinh, 2020). High JS increases employee commitment and loyalty, as employees are more likely to remain in organizations they find satisfying (Salanova et al., 2020).

In addition, hypotheses H6 and H7, which test the mediating effect of CD and EE on EL through JS, show significant results. Hypothesis H6, with a mediation effect of 0.165 (p-value 0.000), confirms that JS mediates the relationship between CD and EL, per the partial mediation theory (Hayes, 2022). Hypothesis H7, which shows the mediation of EE on JS and loyalty, is also proven to be significant with a mediation effect of 0.208 (p-value 0.000), supporting the partial mediation theory (Hayes, 2022).

The stronger mediating effect of EE on EL ($\beta = 0.208$) compared to CD ($\beta = 0.165$) can be attributed to the unique characteristics of the five-star hotel industry, where emotional labor is crucial. In this setting, daily emotional interactions and psychological appreciation have a more immediate impact on JS and EL than long-term career prospects such as promotions. Schaufeli & Bakker's (2004) Work Engagement theory highlights that emotionally engaged employees exhibit greater vigor, dedication, and absorption, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and loyalty. Employees who feel valued are more committed and loyal to the organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

While CD is important, its effects tend to be long-term. According to Blau's (2017) Social Exchange Theory, loyalty arises from reciprocal exchanges between employees and organizations. However, in high-contact service environments like five-star hotels, emotional recognition and daily positive feedback are more influential than career advancement opportunities. Noe et al. (2022) note that more experienced employees often shift their focus from long-term career growth to immediate emotional rewards, which explains why CD has a weaker mediating effect on loyalty.

Thus, in five-star hotels, where emotional labor and personal interactions are key, EE plays a more significant role in driving job satisfaction and loyalty than CD (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

In essence, in high-contact service environments like five-star hotels, where the quality of daily interactions and employees' emotional well-being are paramount, Employee Engagement plays a more significant role in fostering job satisfaction and employee loyalty than career development initiatives. This underscores the importance of creating a work environment that nurtures

emotional connections, recognition, and engagement, while also providing career advancement opportunities.

The mediation effect of EE through JS ($\beta = 0.208$) was stronger than the mediation of CD through JS ($\beta = 0.165$). This suggests that emotional and psychological attachment to work plays a more substantial role in retaining employees than long-term career promises. In high-contact service environments such as luxury hotels, employees' daily emotional experiences, such as feeling energized, appreciated, and absorbed in their tasks, tend to have stronger immediate effects on satisfaction and loyalty. This pattern aligns with engagement theory, in which Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) assert that vigour, dedication, and absorption enhance job fulfilment and long-term attachment. Given that service encounters in five-star hotels rely heavily on emotional labour and consistent service excellence, emotionally engaged employees are more likely to reciprocate through loyalty, demonstrating that engagement-driven satisfaction contributes more strongly to EL than CD-driven satisfaction.

Overall, the results of this hypothesis test confirm the important role of CD, EE, and JS in increasing EL, both directly and via the JS mediator. The study's findings strongly resonate with Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET posits that employees reciprocate the benefits they perceive from the organization (Blau, 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). With a high explained variance for EL ($R^2 = 0.759$), the results indicate that employees display loyalty as a reciprocal return for the organisation's investments, whether in training, support, meaningful work experiences, or emotional acknowledgement. EE and JS appear to serve as the psychological channels through which employees internalize these investments and respond with loyalty behaviours. Thus, the high employee loyalty can be interpreted as a direct reflection of the positive social exchange they experience in the workplace.

Clear, structured career development is crucial to enhancing employee loyalty and job satisfaction in five-star hotels. Training programs and internal promotions can reduce turnover and boost employee commitment, aligning with findings that show career development positively impacts loyalty and job satisfaction (Hosen et al., 2024; Katharina & Dewi, 2020). Employee engagement also influences loyalty and satisfaction, so managers need to create an environment that supports employees' emotional and cognitive engagement, such as recognizing their contributions and providing opportunities for decision-making participation (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). High job satisfaction, influenced by factors like recognition and personal development, plays an important role in strengthening employee loyalty (Saks, 2019).

This study enriches social exchange theory by showing how career development and employee engagement create mutually beneficial relationships that enhance employee loyalty and performance (Blau, 2017). The findings support partial mediation theory, with job satisfaction serving as a mediator between career development, employee engagement, and loyalty, consistent with Hayes's (2022) approach. Additionally, the study contributes to the employee engagement literature by underscoring that emotion-related work processes and employees' emotional investment play an important role in shaping positive work outcomes, including job satisfaction and employee loyalty, thereby extending engagement theory in the hospitality context (Shulga & Busser, 2024).

In the premium hospitality industry, where consistent service standards, exceptional hospitality, and emotional readiness are required, frontline staff must deliver personalized, warm, and professional service in every guest interaction. Consequently, emotional engagement becomes vital for maintaining service quality stability, which explains why Employee Engagement (EE) contributes more strongly than Career Development (CD) in shaping employee loyalty.

Overall, the discussion affirms that loyalty in five-star hotels is driven less by long-term structural career pathways and more by emotional bonds, immediate psychological rewards, and the quality of daily work experiences. Strengthening EE and JS while providing accessible skill-development opportunities will be essential for hotel managers aiming to build a stable, committed, and high-performing workforce.

Conclusions

This study examines the relationships among career development, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty within the context of five-star hotels. The findings confirm

that both career development and employee engagement play important roles in shaping employees' job satisfaction and loyalty. However, employee engagement appears to exert a stronger influence on employee loyalty. This finding indicates that employees who feel emotionally connected to their work, are valued by their organization, and are actively involved in workplace activities are more likely to develop stronger commitment and loyalty to their organization.

In addition, the results demonstrate that job satisfaction serves as an important mediating mechanism linking organizational practices to employee loyalty. Job satisfaction enables organizational efforts, particularly those related to career development, to be translated into stronger employee commitment and long-term loyalty. In other words, career development initiatives are more likely to yield meaningful outcomes when supported by a work environment that fosters employee satisfaction and positive work experiences.

The findings further reveal that employee engagement plays a more dominant role in shaping employee loyalty compared with career development. This result highlights the importance of emotional and psychological factors in fostering loyalty within the hospitality industry. Employee engagement, reflected in employees' daily emotional connection to their work and their sense of psychological appreciation from the organization, appears to be more effective at strengthening loyalty than career development, which is often perceived as a longer-term organizational investment. This condition may also be influenced by respondents' demographic characteristics, who are predominantly employees aged 26 to 35. At this stage of their professional careers, many employees experience a career plateau, a situation in which opportunities for advancement may seem limited or progress more slowly. As a result, employees may prioritize immediate emotional satisfaction, workplace relationships, and day-to-day work experiences over long-term career advancement.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the hospitality and human resource management literature by integrating career development, employee engagement, and job satisfaction within a comprehensive framework to explain employee loyalty in the hotel industry. The findings demonstrate that these factors not only influence employee loyalty individually but also interact to shape employee behavioral outcomes in a service-oriented work environment.

From a managerial perspective, the findings emphasize the importance of implementing holistic human resource management strategies. Hotel management should not only focus on structured career development opportunities but also on creating a supportive work environment that enhances employee engagement and job satisfaction. Initiatives such as fostering a positive organizational culture, recognizing employees' contributions, and encouraging active employee participation in organizational activities can strengthen employees' sense of belonging. These strategies can ultimately enhance employee loyalty and support sustainable organizational performance in the increasingly competitive hospitality industry.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research focuses solely on employees working in five-star hotels, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other hospitality sectors or service industries. In addition, the cross-sectional design of this study captures employee perceptions at a single point in time and does not account for potential changes over time. Future research is therefore encouraged to expand the scope of investigation by including different categories of hotels or other hospitality organizations and by applying longitudinal approaches to understand better the dynamic relationships among career development, employee engagement, job satisfaction, and employee loyalty.

Overall, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee loyalty in the hospitality sector. By emphasizing the integrated roles of career development, employee engagement, and job satisfaction, the findings highlight that fostering employees' emotional engagement represents a critical strategy for hospitality organizations seeking to build a loyal, committed, and sustainable workforce.

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