

The Influence of Career Development and Work Motivation on Employee Loyalty: Evidence from A Packaging Manufacturer in Surabaya, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of career development and work motivation on employee loyalty at PT XYZ, a laminated tube packaging manufacturer in Surabaya, Indonesia. Grounded in human capital theory, social exchange theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Herzberg's two-factor theory, the research employs an explanatory quantitative approach. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to employees selected using proportionate stratified random sampling and analyzed using multiple linear regression. The findings indicate that both career development and work motivation positively and significantly affect employee loyalty, both individually and collectively. Career development emerges as the stronger determinant, highlighting the importance of clear career advancement opportunities. The study suggests that organizations should integrate structured career development programs with motivational initiatives to strengthen employee loyalty and improve workforce retention.

INTRODUCTION

An organization's capacity to convert strategy into performance ultimately rests on its people. Advanced technology, deep capital reserves, and modern facilities cannot on their own produce durable competitive advantage unless they are mobilized by a workforce that is both capable and committed (Junaidi et al., 2023; Neault et al., 2017; Yadav & Roy, 2025). Within the human resource management (HRM) literature, employee loyalty, that is the willingness of employees to remain with the organization, perform at their best, protect its reputation, and align with its goals, occupies a central position because its presence or absence carries tangible operational consequences (Alim et al., 2023; Khan, 2026; Khan & Siddique, 2024; Majid et al., 2017). High loyalty is typically accompanied by stronger productivity, fewer unplanned absences, and lower turnover, whereas eroding loyalty imposes recruitment and retraining costs, disrupts daily operations, and depresses output quality.

These dynamics have sharpened globally in the post-pandemic labour market. Gallup's recent State of the Global Workplace research places worldwide employee engagement at roughly one-fifth of the workforce, among the lowest levels recorded in more than a decade, with associated productivity losses estimated in the trillions of US dollars annually (Gallup, 2026). Complementary industry surveys rank limited career growth as the leading reason employees voluntarily resign, ahead of compensation and management concerns (Second Talent, 2025), while LinkedIn's 2025 Workplace Learning Report finds that only about one-third of organizations operate structured promotion pathways, mentoring, and internal mobility programmes, and fewer than one in five employees report active managerial help in building a career plan (LinkedIn Learning, 2025). Motivation-related indicators show a parallel deterioration: manager engagement, frequently treated as a proxy for a firm's motivational climate, declined sharply between 2024 and 2025 amid shrinking budgets, restructuring, and accelerating technological change (Gallup, 2026).

The stakes are particularly concrete for Indonesian manufacturers. The sector absorbed roughly 14 percent of national employment in 2024 and continues to pay above agricultural wages, anchoring its position in the country's labour market (Statista, 2025), it remains exposed to churn driven principally by limited growth opportunities (Second Talent, 2025). For a labour-intensive operation, even a modest loyalty deficit can interrupt production continuity and quality control. PT XYZ, which manufactures Aluminium Barrier Laminate (ABL) and Plastic Barrier Laminate (PBL) tube packaging, competes for skilled operators and technical staff within the Surabaya industrial corridor; its output stability therefore depends directly on retaining competent, loyal employees through credible advancement opportunities and a motivating work climate.

Despite extensive scholarly attention to loyalty, three gaps persist. First, career development and work motivation have most often been examined alongside other variables (such as compensation, discipline, organizational culture, work environment, or commitment), rather than paired as primary joint antecedents of loyalty (Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018; Nadeak & Naibaho, 2020; Peggi et al., 2025; Siska Yulia et al., 2026; Yunita et al., 2023). Second, prior

evidence originates predominantly from public agencies, educational institutions, hospitality, and multinational corporations, leaving Indonesian private manufacturing comparatively unexplored. Third, findings remain inconsistent: some studies report direct motivational effects on loyalty, while others show that motivation operates only indirectly or conditionally (Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018; Sulistianto et al., 2024; Wijayanti, 2024; Winda et al., 2026). Addressing these gaps, the present study asks whether (a) career development, (b) work motivation, and (c) both variables simultaneously exert a significant effect on employee loyalty at PT XYZ. Correspondingly, the study aims to test and quantify each of these effects, thereby enriching the HRM literature on loyalty determinants in emerging-market manufacturing and offering an evidence base for retention policy in comparable firms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty denotes the disposition employees display toward their organization through willingness to stay, compliance with organizational rules, and readiness to contribute their best effort to collective goals. Contemporary treatments extend the construct beyond mere retention intention to encompass discretionary contribution, alignment of personal and organizational objectives, and protection of the employer's reputation (Alim et al., 2023; Nadeak & Naibaho, 2020). Theoretically, social exchange theory and organizational support theory explain loyalty as a reciprocal response: employees who perceive that the organization values their contribution and career aspirations repay that investment with commitment and reduced turnover intention (Reen et al., 2025). Loyalty thereby safeguards organizational sustainability through workforce stability, preservation of tacit knowledge, and continuity of productivity (Khan, 2026; Khan & Siddique, 2024; Retnowati et al., 2025; Urbancová & Vnoučková, 2018). In this study, loyalty is operationalized through compliance with company regulations, responsibility toward assigned work, willingness to cooperate, sense of belonging, and intention to remain.

Career Development and Employee Loyalty

Career development is the deliberate organizational process of enhancing employees' abilities, skills, and experience so that they can progress toward higher positions commensurate with demonstrated competence. It spans structured career planning, competency building, mentoring, coaching, succession planning, job rotation, and continuous learning (Reen et al., 2025). Human capital theory holds that such investments raise employees' value to the firm, while psychological contract theory posits that fulfilling career expectations strengthens trust and attachment. Empirical work across longitudinal, cross-sectional, and meta-analytic designs consistently associates career development with stronger organizational commitment, lower turnover intention, and greater loyalty – particularly where advancement systems are transparent and equitable (Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018; Sulistianto et al., 2024; Urbancová & Vnoučková, 2018). Evidence from the Malaysian hospitality sector similarly confirms a significant positive career development–loyalty linkage Majid et al. (2017), and

Yogaswara et al. (2023) document the same pattern among Indonesian production employees. Conversely, when advancement prospects appear absent or opaque, employees are likely to conclude that the organization offers no future for them and to seek opportunities elsewhere. Here, career development is measured through promotion opportunity, clarity of career pathways, access to training, competency development, and organizational support for self-development. On this basis, the first hypothesis is advanced:

H1: Career development has a positive and significant effect on employee loyalty at PT XYZ.

Work Motivation and Employee Loyalty

Work motivation is the internal and external impetus that propels an individual to devote optimal effort toward a given objective. Maslow's hierarchy frames motivation as progression through physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization needs, while Herzberg's two-factor theory separates motivators (which are achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement) from hygiene factors (such as salary, working conditions, and company policy) (Inoyatova, 2021; Retnowati et al., 2025). Motivated employees exhibit stronger task ownership, resilience under pressure, and organizational commitment, whereas weak motivation is associated with underperformance, dissatisfaction, and turnover intention (Gechbaia et al., 2024; Girdwichai & Sriviboon, 2020; Nadeak & Naibaho, 2020). Empirical studies generally find that motivation elevates loyalty by satisfying both intrinsic drivers (achievement, self-development) and extrinsic ones (recognition, security, organizational support) (Da et al., 2020; Gunawan & Sondakh, 2019; Indrayana, 2019; Liana Putri & Angelica Cindiyasari, 2024; Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018; Peggi et al., 2025). Nonetheless, contrasting evidence suggests motivation may fail to translate into loyalty unless reinforced by complementary practices such as career development (Hadi et al., 2024; Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018; Sulistianto et al., 2024; Yogaswara et al., 2023), implying context dependence. This study measures motivation through work enthusiasm, sense of responsibility, need for achievement, recognition of results, and drive to meet organizational targets, and proposes:

H2: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee loyalty at PT XYZ.

The Simultaneous Effect and Research Gap

Loyalty is unlikely to be governed by a single determinant; it emerges from the interplay of organizational provisions and individual psychological states. A credible career architecture supplies confidence about one's future within the firm, while motivation supplies the energy to perform with enthusiasm and commitment; when both operate together, employees perceive organizational investment in their long-term success and reciprocate with attachment (Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018; Sulistianto et al., 2024; Yogaswara et al., 2023). Both report that career development and work motivation jointly and significantly influence loyalty. Yet, as noted, most prior studies embed these variables among broader predictor sets and draw on non-manufacturing samples, so their combined explanatory power within Indonesian private manufacturing remains under-documented. Accordingly:

H3: Career development and work motivation simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on employee loyalty at PT XYZ.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 positions career development (X1) and work motivation (X2) as independent variables and employee loyalty (Y) as the dependent variable, with H1 and H2 denoting partial effects and H3 the simultaneous effect.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework guiding this research.

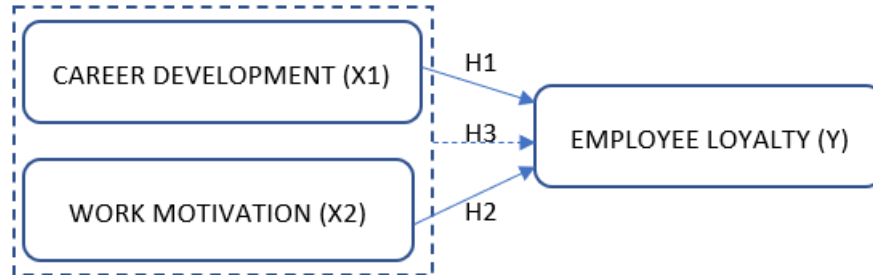


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative explanatory (causal-associative) design intended to test the hypothesized effects of career development (X1) and work motivation (X2) on employee loyalty (Y). Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire administered to employees of PT XYZ, and the resulting data will be analysed statistically using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises all employees of PT XYZ, totalling 228 individuals. Given the size of the population, the sample size is determined using the Slovin formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N \cdot e^2)$$

where n denotes the required sample size, N the population size (228), and e the acceptable margin of error, set at 5 percent in line with common practice in organizational survey research. Applying this formula yields a minimum required sample of approximately 145 respondents ($228 / (1 + 228 \times 0.05^2) \approx 145.2$, rounded to 145). Respondents were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling across the company's operational divisions so that the sample composition mirrors the workforce distribution. All 145 questionnaires were returned and usable.

Data Collection and Measurement

Data were gathered with a closed-ended questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Each construct was measured with five indicators, summarized in Table 1. Prior to full analysis, item validity was assessed through Pearson product-moment correlations between each item and its construct total, and internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha with a 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2020).

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Dimension / Indicator	Source
Career Development (X1)	Promotion opportunity; clarity of career path; access to training; competency development; organizational support for self-development	Reen et al. (2025); Khan (2026)
Work Motivation (X2)	Work enthusiasm; sense of responsibility; need for achievement; recognition of results; enthusiasm for achieving targets	Peggi et al. (2025); Sulistianto et al. (2024)
Employee Loyalty (Y)	Compliance with company regulations; responsibility toward work; willingness to cooperate; sense of belonging; intention to remain with the organization	Peggi et al. (2025); Reen et al. (2025); Khan (2026)

Source: Processed by Authors (2026).

Data Analysis Technique

Hypotheses were tested with multiple linear regression, $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e$, preceded by classical assumption diagnostics: normality (normal P-P plot of standardized residuals), multicollinearity (tolerance and VIF), heteroscedasticity (scatterplot of standardized residuals against predicted values), and autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson). Partial effects were evaluated with t-tests (H1, H2), the simultaneous effect with the F-test (H3), and explanatory power with the coefficient of determination (R^2), all at a 5 percent significance level.

RESEARCH RESULT

Respondents Characteristics

Among the 145 employees who took part in this study, men made up the larger share of the sample, those are 92 respondents, or 63.4 percent, against 53 women, or 37.6 percent. This split is not surprising given how PT XYZ's shop floor is staffed: the laminated-tube production process leans heavily on male operators, so the survey composition simply mirrors who actually runs the machines day to day.

Age-wise, the workforce skews young. Employees aged 26 to 30 form the single largest bracket at 52 people (35.9 percent), with those aged 20 to 25 closes behind at 46 people (31.7 percent) together these two brackets alone account for well over half the sample. The 31–35 range contributes another 37 respondents (25.5 percent), and employees older than 35 make up the smallest slice, 10 people, which works out to 6.9 percent of the total. Put together, this points to a company where most of the people on the payroll haven't yet turned 30, a detail worth

keeping in mind when interpreting how this group thinks about career runway and advancement.

Tenure tells a slightly different story than age does. A little over a third of respondents, 52 employees (35.9 percent), have been with the company between one and three years, but the majority (81 people, or 55.9 percent) have already stayed past the three-year mark, suggesting a workforce that, once it settles in, tends to remain. Only a small fraction, 12 respondents (8.3 percent), had joined within the past year at the time of the survey. Read alongside the age data, this combination, which is a young but reasonably tenured workforce, hints that many employees started early in their careers at PT XYZ and have stuck around, which lends extra weight to how they perceive the company's career pathways and what keeps them motivated to stay

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Table 2 condenses the SPSS output for the validity and reliability tests. Every item-total correlation (r-count) far exceeds the critical r-table value of 0.163 (df = 143; $\alpha = 0.05$) and is significant at the 1 percent level, confirming that all fifteen items validly measure their intended constructs. Cronbach's alpha values of 0.878 (career development), 0.819 (work motivation), and 0.838 (employee loyalty) all surpass the 0.70 benchmark, demonstrating strong internal consistency. The instrument was therefore fit for hypothesis testing without item deletion.

Table 2. Summary of Validity and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Item	r-count	Sig.	Cronbach's α	Decision
Career Development (X1)	CD1-CD5	0.735-0.861	0.00	0.878	Valid & reliable
Work Motivation (X2)	WM1-WM5	0.726-0.785	0.00	0.819	Valid & reliable
Employee Loyalty (Y)	EL1-EL5	0.770-0.792	0.00	0.838	Valid & reliable

Source: primary data processed with SPSS 27 (2026). n = 145; r-table at df = 163, $\alpha = 0.05$.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 reports the construct means. All three variables score close to 4.0 on the five-point scale, situating them in the "high" category. Career development records the highest mean (3.927), followed by employee loyalty (3.891) and work motivation (3.818). Descriptively, employees perceive advancement opportunities at PT XYZ favourably, hold strong loyalty attitudes, and display slightly lower, though still high, motivation, hinting that the motivational climate offers the most immediate room for improvement. The comparable standard deviations (0.85-0.88) indicate broadly homogeneous perceptions across respondents.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Career Development (X1)	3.927	0.8831	145
Work Motivation (X2)	3.818	0.8714	145
Employee Loyalty (Y)	3.891	0.8528	145

Source: primary data processed with SPSS 27 (2026).

Multiple Regression and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 assembles the essential regression output. The estimated equation is $Y = 0.470 + 0.668X_1 + 0.209X_2$. The positive constant (0.470; $p = 0.003$) indicates a baseline level of loyalty when both predictors are held at zero, while both slope coefficients carry the hypothesized positive sign: each one-unit improvement in perceived career development raises loyalty by 0.668 units, and each one-unit rise in motivation adds a further 0.209 units, *ceteris paribus*.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.470	0.158	—	2.983	0.003	—	—
Career Development (X1)	0.668	0.075	0.692	8.882	0.000	0.257	3.888
Work Motivation (X2)	0.209	0.076	0.214	2.744	0.007	0.257	3.888

Model statistics: $R = 0.882$; $R^2 = 0.779$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.775$; SE of estimate = 0.4041; $F(2, 142) = 249.656$, $p < 0.001$; Durbin-Watson = 1.936. Source: primary data processed with SPSS 27 (2026).

Hypothesis testing proceeds as follows. For H1, the t-count of 8.882 greatly exceeds the t-table value of 1.977 ($df = 142$; $\alpha = 0.05$) with $p < 0.001$, so H1 is accepted: career development exerts a positive and significant partial effect on loyalty. For H2, the t-count of 2.744 also exceeds 1.977 with $p = 0.007 < 0.05$, so H2 is accepted: work motivation exerts a positive and significant partial effect. For H3, the F-count of 249.656 dwarfs the F-table value of approximately 3.06 ($df = 2; 142$) with $p < 0.001$, so H3 is accepted: the two predictors jointly and significantly determine loyalty. Table 5 summarizes these decisions.

Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

H	Hypothesized relationship	Test statistic	Sig.	Decision
H1	Career development→Employee loyalty (+)	t=8.882>1.977	0.000	Accepted
H2	Work motivation→Employee loyalty (+)	t=2.744>1.977	0.007	Accepted
H3	Career development & work motivation→Employee loyalty	F=249.656>3.06	0.000	Accepted

Source: primary data processed with SPSS 27 (2026).

Two features of the model deserve emphasis. First, its explanatory power is substantial: the adjusted R^2 of 0.775 means that career development and work motivation together account for 77.9 percent ($R^2 = 0.779$) of the variance in employee loyalty, leaving only about 22 percent to factors outside the model such as compensation, leadership, work environment, or job satisfaction. Second, the standardized coefficients reveal a clear hierarchy of influence: career development ($\beta = 0.692$) contributes more than three times the standardized effect of work motivation ($\beta = 0.214$), identifying career architecture as the dominant loyalty lever in this organization.

DISCUSSION

Career Development and Employee Loyalty (H1)

The strong, significant effect of career development on loyalty corroborates a broad seam of prior evidence. It aligns with Yogaswara et al. (2023), who found career development significantly raised work loyalty among Indonesian production employees, that is a sample closely comparable to the present one, and with Hadi et al. (2024), Sulistianto et al. (2024), Majid et al. (2017) in Malaysian hospitality, and Urbancová & Vnoučková (2018) in Czech agricultural companies, all of whom document the same directional relationship across markedly different institutional settings. The consistency of this finding across sectors and countries strengthens the claim that the mechanism is theoretical rather than contextual: consistent with human capital and psychological contract reasoning, employees interpret structured promotion pathways, training access, and competency investment as signals of the organization's commitment to their future, and, per social exchange theory (Reen et al., 2025), reciprocate with attachment and intention to stay.

What the present study adds is magnitude. With $\beta=0.692$, career development is not merely significant but dominant, echoing Reen et al. (2025), who identify development programmes as among the most influential loyalty determinants, and resonating with survey evidence that limited career growth now outranks pay as the leading resignation drive Second Talent (2025). In a labour-intensive plant where operators can readily benchmark advancement prospects against neighbouring employers in the Surabaya corridor, the visibility and fairness of internal mobility appear to function as the primary retention currency. The high descriptive mean for career development (3.927) suggests PT XYZ already performs credibly here; the regression implies that protecting and institutionalizing this strength, which is through transparent promotion criteria,

documented career ladders, and routine development conversations, will yield the largest marginal loyalty returns.

Work Motivation and Employee Loyalty (H2)

Work motivation also proved a positive and significant, though clearly secondary, predictor. This supports the mainstream position of Mochklas & Mahardhika (2018), Nadeak & Naibaho (2020), Liana Putri & Angelica Cindiyasari (2024), Peggi et al. (2025), and Retnowati et al. (2025), who consistently link motivational fulfilment, that is both intrinsic (achievement, self-development) and extrinsic (recognition, security, support), to organizational commitment and retention. The result is theoretically coherent with Herzberg: PT XYZ's motivator factors (recognition of results, achievement needs, target-oriented enthusiasm) appear sufficiently present to convert into attachment rather than mere absence of dissatisfaction (Inoyatova, 2021; Retnowati et al., 2025).

At the same time, the comparatively modest standardized effect ($\beta = 0.214$) nuances the literature in an informative way. Sulistianto et al. (2024) reported that motivation alone did not significantly strengthen loyalty unless coupled with career development, and Wijayanti (2024) found motivational effects on loyalty to be partly indirect, operating through commitment and moderating conditions. The present findings sit between these positions: motivation does carry a direct, significant effect, that is contradicting a null direct path, but its influence is dwarfed by career development, consistent with the argument that motivational stimuli gain traction chiefly when employees can connect present effort to a credible future (Khan, 2026). The lowest descriptive mean in the study (3.818) also marks motivation as the construct with the most headroom, implying that recognition programmes, achievement feedback, and target-linked appreciation constitute realistic, low-cost complements to the career agenda.

The Simultaneous Effect (H3) and Explanatory Power

The joint significance of both predictors ($F = 249.656$; $p < 0.001$) replicates Yogaswara et al. (2023) and Hadi et al. (2024), who likewise found simultaneous effects of career development and motivation on loyalty. More striking is the model's explanatory power: 77.9 percent of loyalty variance is captured by just two predictors – substantially higher than is typical in loyalty studies that spread explanatory weight across four or five variables (e.g. Hadi et al., 2024; Mochklas & Mahardhika, 2018, who included work environment). This concentration supports the study's central premise that, in a private manufacturing setting, career development and motivation form a parsimonious core of loyalty formation, with the two levers reinforcing one another: advancement pathways lend meaning to motivated effort, while motivation supplies the energy to pursue those pathways (Peggi et al., 2025). The residual 22 percent plausibly reflects compensation, leadership quality, work environment, and job satisfaction identified elsewhere in the literature, which future models may incorporate.

Practically, the results counsel an integrated rather than sequential retention strategy. Management should (a) codify and publicize career ladders with objective promotion criteria; (b) tie training and competency certification to those ladders; (c) equip supervisors to hold periodic career conversations, addressing the managerial gap highlighted by LinkedIn Learning (2025); and (d) embed recognition and achievement feedback within that same architecture so that motivational signals and career signals are mutually confirming. Given the sector's exposure to growth-related churn (Second Talent, 2025; Statista, 2025), such integration offers PT XYZ and also comparable Indonesian manufacturers, a defensible buffer for production continuity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence gathered from this Indonesian packaging manufacturer answers the question it set out to ask: career development and work motivation do shape how loyal employees feel toward the firm. Career development carries a positive, statistically firm influence on loyalty ($\beta = 0.692$; $p < 0.001$), work motivation contributes its own positive and significant push ($\beta = 0.214$; $p = 0.007$), and combined, the pair accounts for 77.9 percent of the variation in loyalty scores ($F = 249.656$; $p < 0.001$). What stands out most is the imbalance between the two, it means that career development is not merely a contributor but the clear frontrunner. Read against social exchange thinking and human capital reasoning, the results push loyalty scholarship into a setting it has rarely visited (such as Indonesia's private manufacturing sector), and they settle a disagreement running through earlier work: motivation is not a false predictor, as some studies implied, but neither does it carry the weight career architecture does. It plays a supporting role, not the lead.

Given this asymmetry, firms wrestling with retention should place their heavier bets on advancement systems that employees can actually see and trust, which are clear promotion criteria, credible pathways upward, and evidence that competence gets rewarded rather than overlooked. Motivational efforts, recognition programs, achievement incentives, day-to-day encouragement from supervisors, still matter, but they land better as reinforcement bolted onto a functioning career system than as a stand-alone fix for a loyalty problem. An organization that invests heavily in morale-boosting gestures while leaving promotion pathways vague is, in effect, treating the symptom and skipping the cause.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The conclusions reached here come with guardrails worth naming. A single company studied at a single moment cannot support sweeping generalizations, and causal claims stay tentative without repeated observation over time. Self-reported answers on a questionnaire open the door to common-method bias, and a model built from just two predictors leaves out plausible rivals, which are pay, leadership style, and physical working conditions, that could reshape the picture once added. The VIF of 3.888, though within tolerable range, hints that career development and motivation sit closer together conceptually than the model assumes, which is itself worth unpacking rather than dismissing.

Future work would do well to test this framework across several manufacturing firms rather than one, track respondents over multiple points in time or pull data from more than a single source, and probe whether variables like organizational commitment or job satisfaction sit between these predictors and loyalty as mediators, or whether generational cohort or length of tenure changes the strength of these relationships as moderators. Structural equation modelling looks especially promising here, since it could trace the indirect routes that Wijayanti (2024) and Sulistianto et al. (2024) already gesture toward but that a straightforward regression cannot fully expose.

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