



The effect of career growth on work engagement among Sarawak civil servants

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ABSTRACT

Although career growth is widely recognised as an important driver of employee engagement, limited research has examined how its distinct dimensions influence engagement, particularly within the public service sector. This descriptive-correlational study examines the influence of career growth on work engagement among Sarawak civil servants. A total of 63 employees from local authority organisations in Sarawak were selected using a non-probability sampling method. The survey instrument was adapted from the Career Growth Scale and Work Engagement Scale. The scales' reliability was confirmed, with Cronbach's alphas exceeding 0.7 for all variables. The results of a Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant and positive relationship between career growth dimensions and work engagement. Notably, the regression analysis showed that professional ability development has the greatest influence on work engagement, surpassing that of career goal progress. These findings provide valuable insights into the factors influencing work engagement among Sarawak civil servants, offering a pathway to develop a more comprehensive training plan for public-sector employees. By examining work engagement within the administrative and cultural context of Sarawak, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how engagement drivers, particularly career growth opportunities, operate in Malaysian public institutions and adds to the broader literature on employee engagement in government settings.

Keywords: career growth, work engagement, civil servants, public sector

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1 INTRODUCTION

In today's highly competitive business environment, organisations are constantly looking for strategies to outperform their competitors. As highlighted by Ahmed et al. (2018), employees play a crucial role in differentiating organisations from their competitors, making workforce management a key priority. Ensuring that employees are engaged and consistently perform at their best is important for organisational success and market sustainability (Bawazir et al., 2024). Over the past decade and into recent years, work engagement has received considerable attention across sectors, including academia, industry, and consultancy, due to its positive influence on work-related attitudes. In an effort to enrich the body of knowledge in this domain, numerous past studies have examined work engagement in relation to a wide range of workplace variables and across diverse organisational contexts (Mohsin, 2015).

Employee engagement, first recognised as a critical organisational factor in the 1990s, has since been widely acknowledged for its positive impact on job performance. This concept is commonly defined as the extent to which employees demonstrate commitment and active involvement in their organisation and its core values. Engaged employees collaborate effectively, understand business goals, and contribute meaningfully to organisational success (Purushothaman & Kaviya, 2020). This dynamic is supported by Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees reciprocate organisational support with increased dedication, and the Theory of Need Achievement, which highlights their intrinsic motivation to excel and seek recognition. Together, these theories explain why fostering engagement is essential not only for productivity and retention but also for enhancing customer satisfaction and corporate reputation (Mohsin, 2015; Purushothaman & Kaviya, 2020).

Career growth opportunities are one of the key factors influencing employees' work engagement. Organisations that actively support career advancement are more likely to foster higher levels of engagement compared to those that do not (Ahmed et al., 2018). When employees perceive clear pathways for growth, they are more motivated to contribute meaningfully to organisational success. These opportunities empower employees to take ownership of their professional development and enhance their skills, thereby strengthening their commitment to the organisation. Moreover, career growth initiatives enable managers to identify and support employees who are aligned with the organisation's goals and values. By offering opportunities for skill development and knowledge enhancement, organisations can develop a workforce that is both engaged and high performing (Mohsin, 2015).

Despite much research on how different aspects of career growth affect work engagement, a significant gap remains in understanding the extent to which career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth influence work engagement (Mohsin, 2015). Therefore, the present study contributes to the existing literature by examining the relationship between career growth and work engagement, specifically among Sarawak civil servants. This organisational context remains understudied yet possesses distinctive cultural, administrative, and organisational characteristics that demand scholarly investigation. As civil servants represent a critical segment of Malaysia's workforce, sustaining their work engagement

is crucial to maintaining government effectiveness and enhancing overall public-sector performance.

In this study, career growth is examined as the independent variable, measured across four dimensions, namely career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. The dependent variable is work engagement. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the impact of these four career growth dimensions on work engagement among civil servants, and to determine the significance of each factor in shaping employee engagement levels.

1.1 Effect of Career Goal Progress on Work Engagement

Career goal progress is defined as an employee's current role within their organisation that offers opportunities to achieve their goals (Ekabu et al., 2018). A direct, progressive career goal is considered crucial because it is often tied to an employee's identity. Hence, employers must foster an environment that supports employees' career goal progression to entice and retain their services (Jiaying & Muda, 2023). Employees who feel that their current organisation is helping them achieve their career goals are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work. This finding is consistent with Bai and Liu (2018), who reported that employees become more engaged and committed when their organisations actively support their career goal progress.

When employees are satisfied with their positions in their current organisation, they are more likely to stay and work hard to contribute. Organisations that invest in their employees' growth and help them progress towards their desired career goals motivate and commit employees to contribute their best to the organisation. As a result of feeling valued by the organisation, they engaged more with their work (Bai & Liu, 2018). In relation to the preceding discussion, the current study aims to test the following hypothesis: Ha1 - There is a significant relationship between career goal progress and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.

1.2 Effect of Professional Ability Development on Work Engagement

Professional ability development refers to the extent to which an employee's current role within the organisation provides opportunities to acquire new knowledge and enhance skills relevant to their profession (Ekabu et al., 2018). When organisations invest in training and development initiatives, employees often reciprocate through positive work behaviours, demonstrating increased commitment and performance. Employees who perceive that they are valued and supported by their organisation are more likely to be motivated and dedicated to their roles (Memon et al., 2016).

Empirical evidence from a study on millennial employees in Indonesia further supports this relationship, indicating that professional ability development has a significantly positive impact on work engagement (Komala, 2023). Employees who are given opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills report higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction. In contrast, remuneration growth was found to have the least positive effect on work engagement. Komala's findings suggest that millennial employees prioritise learning and development over financial

incentives, reflecting a strong intrinsic drive for personal and professional growth. In relation to the preceding discussion, the current study aims to test the following hypothesis: Ha2 - There is a significant relationship between professional ability development and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.

1.3 Effect of Promotion Speed on Work Engagement

Promotion in an organisation occurs when an employee is moved to a higher position, often accompanied by a salary increase (Nyaga & Omuya, 2024). Promotions are a significant event, as they are perceived as a sign of recognition for employees who have performed well for the organisation over a sustained period. Promotion speed is defined as the perception that an employee has of their pace and chances of promotion in their current organisation, compared to their colleagues and their past organisation (Ekabu et al., 2018). When employees feel they are rightfully acknowledged for their contributions to the organisation, they will be more engaged in their work and repay the organisation with their contributions.

According to Weer and Greenhaus (2020), employees who are provided with promotion opportunities and avenues for career advancement within their organisation tend to exhibit higher levels of commitment and work engagement. Their research shows that employees who demonstrate strong engagement are often recognised by their employers, leading to increased trust and greater responsibility assignments. This recognition frequently translates into promotional opportunities, reinforcing the employee's sense of belonging and value within the organisation. Bai and Liu (2018) further support this view, noting that when organisations actively offer promotion prospects, employees are more likely to identify with the organisation and, in turn, contribute their best efforts toward its success. Furthermore, Bai and Liu (2018) highlighted that career growth opportunities have a significant and positive effect on work engagement, suggesting that the faster the career growth, the higher the employee's work commitment. In relation to the preceding discussion, the current study aims to test the following hypothesis: Ha3 - There is a significant relationship between promotion speed and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.

1.4 Effect of Remuneration Growth on Work Engagement

Remuneration growth is an employee's perception of the likelihood that their compensation will increase over an appropriate period (Ekabu et al., 2018). Increasing employee compensation is a difficult task for employers. However, it should not be taken lightly, as the amount an employee is paid signifies how important they are to the company and how highly regarded they are by the employer (Jiaying & Muda, 2023). When remuneration is tied to an employee's contribution, their satisfaction increases and their attachment to work strengthens (Werdati et al., 2020).

In terms of remuneration growth, employees are more likely to become engaged in their organisational work when they feel they are fairly compensated for the effort they contribute. By fulfilling the employee's economic needs, the organisation is more likely to secure the employee's commitment and greater engagement with their work (Liu et al., 2017). According to research by Son and Kim (2021), organisational rewards play a significant role in helping employees achieve

high performance at work. When their expected rewards for their efforts are met, they immerse themselves in their work to honour a psychological contract with the organisation. Notably, the present is conducted within a public sector organisation where the remuneration structure is standardised. This makes the perceived fairness of rewards especially crucial for driving employee motivation and work involvement. In relation to the preceding discussion, the current study aims to test the following hypothesis: Ha4 - There is a significant relationship between remuneration growth and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.

1.5 Research Framework

A robust theoretical framework is essential in guiding research and linking it to existing knowledge. The present study draws on two key theories, namely McClelland's theory of needs for achievement and Blau's social exchange theory. The theory of needs for achievement by McClelland (1988) explains how people who are stimulated by achievement are motivated by their hunger for mastery. They wish to achieve success through their hard work rather than stumble into it by pure luck. Some key indicators of a high need for achievement include a strong desire to take responsibility for completing a task and a strong desire for performance feedback. When given opportunities to improve and meet their desire for success under certain conditions, their energy and commitment to their work will be enhanced, resulting in greater engagement. This shows the connection between career goal progress, professional ability development, and work engagement.

On the other hand, Blau's (1964) social exchange theory holds that an individual's actions depend on others' reactions. Consequently, someone will likely work harder when their efforts are fairly rewarded. According to Blau (1964), social exchange is understood as voluntary acts by an organisation towards its employees, with the expectation that such efforts will be reciprocated. It is understood that parties enter and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with other parties, with the expectation that these relationships will lead to fulfilling and satisfying rewards for both parties. In short, when their employers give employees economic or other resources, they feel valued and seek to repay them. Theoretically, this supports the relationship between promotion speed and remuneration growth with work engagement.

According to Bai and Liu (2018), organisations that help employees achieve their desired career goals are more likely to retain an engaged workforce. Organisations that invest in their employees' growth and help them progress towards their desired career goals motivate and commit employees to contribute their best to the organisation. As a result of feeling valued by the organisation, they engaged more with their work (Bai & Liu, 2018; Mansor et al., 2018). These past studies have shown a connection between career goal progress and work engagement.

Based on research on millennial employees in Indonesia, career growth in terms of professional development is significantly and positively related to work engagement. Employees who were given opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills in their current organisation are motivated and satisfied (Komala, 2023). These past studies revealed the connection between professional ability development and work engagement.

On the other hand, Bai and Liu (2018) highlighted that career growth opportunities have a significant and positive effect on work engagement, suggesting that faster career growth is associated with higher employee work commitment. Past studies have supported the relationship between promotion speed and work engagement.

According to research by Son and Kim (2021), organisational rewards play a significant role in helping employees achieve high performance at work. When their expected rewards for their efforts are met, they immerse themselves in their work to honour a psychological contract with the organisation. Thus, the past study supports the relationship between remuneration growth and work engagement.

Therefore, based on the two related theories, the theory of needs for achievement (McClelland, 1988) and Blau's Social Exchange Theory (1964) and related past research, the research framework of the study was constructed. This serves as a foundation for the study's research objectives and hypotheses.

1.6 Problem Statement

Career growth has been widely recognised as a key contributor to both career success and employee engagement. Previous studies have emphasised its role in enhancing not only organisational outcomes but also individual development. Vazirani (2007) highlighted that career development initiatives promote employee engagement and retention and also foster personal growth. Similarly, Zigarmi et al. (2009) stressed that career growth is essential for cultivating employee passion and maximising their contribution to organisational goals. However, their findings revealed that career growth opportunities are among the least provided by organisations, suggesting that many employers may be neglecting this critical factor. This lack of attention may hinder employees' potential to exhibit positive work behaviours, such as increased engagement and commitment. Integrating career growth into organisational strategies is therefore essential, particularly in public service organisations, where employee engagement is closely tied to innovation, service quality, and performance.

However, while the existing research has extensively examined the antecedents of engagement and its impact on organisational productivity and operations, much of the literature continues to treat constructs such as career growth and employee engagement as unidimensional concepts (Zhu & Song, 2022). This narrow approach limits the understanding of how specific aspects of career growth influence engagement. To address these limitations, the present study investigates the extent to which career growth influences employee engagement and explores the specific relationships between the distinct dimensions of career growth and employee engagement. Specifically, the research examines how career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth influence work engagement, providing meaningful insights into the effects of career growth on employees.

Although much past research has examined how various dimensions of career growth relate to work engagement, a notable gap persists in understanding the extent to which career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth collectively

influence employees' engagement (Mohsin, 2015). Thus, the present study extends the existing literature by examining the relationship between career growth and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants. This organisational setting remains insufficiently explored, warranting empirical attention. Given that civil servants constitute a vital component of Malaysia's workforce, sustaining their work engagement is essential for ensuring effectiveness and enhancing the overall performance of the public sector (Public Service Department, 2018). Furthermore, despite customer satisfaction with services provided by the Public Service Department reaching an all-time high (Public Service Department, 2023), this achievement does not lessen the need for continuous improvement. High customer satisfaction can only be preserved if employees remain motivated, committed, and engaged in their roles. Thus, employers must understand the important factors that motivate employees and sustain their engagement at work.

1.7 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

This study aims to examine the relationship between career growth and work engagement, with a particular focus on identifying the most influential dimension of career growth that impacts work engagement among civil servants in Sarawak. Specifically, four hypotheses have been formulated to guide this investigation:

- i. There is a significant relationship between career goal progress and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between professional ability development and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.
- iii. There is a significant relationship between promotion speed and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.
- iv. There is a significant relationship between remuneration growth and work engagement among Sarawak civil servants.

2 METHODS

2.1 Design

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive-correlational approach to examine the effect of career growth on work engagement. This approach provides an objective, systematic, and scientific method for defining and evaluating cause-and-effect correlations and variable interactions. A cross-sectional survey design using an online questionnaire was employed as the primary data collection method.

2.2 Participants

Data were gathered from employees in local authority organisations in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. A nonprobability sampling method was used to select participants for this study who occupy roles offering significant opportunities for career advancement, compensation, and skill development. A total of 63 employees responded to the survey, thus meeting the minimum sample size ($N = 63$) recommended by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The sample size is rather sufficient, given that the total population consists of approximately 75 individuals.

2.3 Instruments

The survey instrument was adapted from the Organisational Career Growth Scale (Weng et al., 2010) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). It consisted of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A collected data on demographic profiles. Section B consisted of fifteen questions measuring four distinct dimensions of career growth rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Section C contained nine questions assessing work engagement, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Several modifications were made to the original survey to ensure its suitability for the specific context of this study. For example, the scale value of 3 (Neutral) was changed to 3 (Somewhat Agree) for both the Organisational Career Growth Scale and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. These modifications were made based on suggestions of an expert panel to ensure that the instrument met the specific needs of the study, particularly in the context of the research setting, a public service department.

The instrument's validity was assessed through face validity testing with an expert panel, ensuring its relevance and appropriateness. Each item received approval from an expert specialising in Human Resource Development and Organisational Behaviour. Additionally, feedback from respondents was collected through a pilot test. The reliability of the instrument was assessed using SPSS 26.0, yielding Cronbach's alpha values of 0.975 for career goal progress, 0.970 for professional ability development, 0.877 for promotion speed, 0.801 for remuneration growth and 0.915 for work engagement, all of which exceed the 0.7 threshold, indicating reliable measurement (George & Mallery, 2021).

2.4 Procedure

The initial step in the data collection process involved preparing a consent letter to obtain approval to conduct the study. Once approval was obtained, an online survey questionnaire created in Google Forms was distributed. Participants were given 4 weeks to complete the questionnaire. The study placed significant emphasis on ethical considerations, confidentiality, and safeguarding participants' rights throughout the research process. Ethical issues were comprehensively addressed, including obtaining the organisation's permission and ensuring that participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

2.5 Data Analysis

The normality of the data on career growth and work engagement was assessed using a QQ plot, which showed that the data points were closely aligned with the theoretical normal quantiles, with only minor or non-significant deviations. This indicated that parametric tests, specifically Pearson's correlation, were appropriate for further analysis (Hernández, 2021). Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise the demographic variables. Inferential analyses, including multiple linear regressions and Pearson's correlation coefficients, were conducted in SPSS version 27.0 to examine relationships among the research variables.

3 RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in three main parts as follows. Data analysis began with descriptive statistics to examine the demographic profiles. Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationships between career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, remuneration growth and work engagement. Further analysis, followed by multiple regression, was conducted to identify the most dominant factors among the career growth dimensions affecting work engagement.

3.1 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

The majority of respondents were female (66.7%), Bumiputera Sarawak (61.9%), aged 31-40 years (41.3%), and holding positions in the Human Resources/Administration section (63.5%). Additionally, most respondents have been working for less than 10 years (55.6%).

3.2 The Relationship of Career Goal Progress, Professional Ability Development, Promotion Speed, and Remuneration Growth with Work Engagement

The Pearson correlation analysis was used to test all four research hypotheses. As presented in Table 1, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant and positive correlation between all four dimensions of carer growth, namely career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth, with work engagement ($p < 0.001$). Among these, the strongest correlation was between professional ability development and work engagement ($r = 0.715$). Similarly, the relationship between career goal progress and work engagement was strongly correlated ($r = 0.649$). As for the relationships between promotion speed, remuneration growth, and work engagement, results showed moderate correlations, with r values of 0.539 and 0.407, respectively. Based on these findings, all four research hypotheses are accepted.

Table 1. Relationships of career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth with work engagement.

Variables	Pearson correlation, r	Significance value, p
Career goal progress and work engagement	0.649	0.000
Professional ability development and work engagement	0.715	0.000
Promotion speed and work engagement	0.539	0.000
Remuneration Growth and Work Engagement	0.407	0.001

3.3 The Effect of Career Goal Progress, Professional Ability Development, Promotion Speed, and Remuneration Growth on Work Engagement

The multiple regression analysis was employed to identify the most dominant dimension of career growth affecting work engagement. The correlation coefficient (R) between career growth dimensions, which consists of career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and remuneration growth, on work engagement was 0.732, indicating a strong positive relationship between all four dimensions of career growth and work engagement. The coefficient of determination (R Square) was 0.536, indicating that approximately 53.6% of the variance in work engagement can be explained by four dimensions of career growth. This suggests that career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth collectively explained a significant portion of the variation in work engagement. The adjusted R-squared of 0.504 decreased slightly from the unadjusted R-squared, indicating that approximately 50.4% of the variance in work engagement remains unexplained after adjusting for the number of predictors. The p-value of < 0.001 further confirms that the regression model is statistically significant, indicating that career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth are significant predictors of work engagement.

Table 2 shows the effect each predictor has on the dependent variable. The results indicated that only professional ability development has a unique and significant effect after controlling for other variables (Beta = 0.559, $p = 0.002$), suggesting it makes the greatest contribution to the variance in the dependent variable. The other three predictors (career goal progress, promotion speed, and remuneration growth) were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) and did not add significant predictive power to the model.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis.

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		
	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.274	.326		3.909	.000
Career goal progress	.059	.145	.072	.405	.687
Professional ability development	.478	.145	.559	3.300	.002
Promotion speed	.142	.111	.195	1.273	.208
Remuneration growth	-.029	.104	-.038	-.282	.779

a. Dependent variable: work engagement

4 DISCUSSION

As illustrated in the previous section, the results of the study demonstrated statistically significant and positive correlations between each of the four dimensions of career growth, namely, career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth, with work engagement. These findings suggest that the improvements in any of these career growth dimensions are likely associated with higher levels of employee engagement in the workplace. These results show that enhancements in any of the identified career growth dimensions are positively associated with increased levels of employee engagement, thereby reinforcing the theoretical linkage between career development and workplace motivation.

Specifically, the study found a significant relationship between career goal progress and work engagement. This aligns with a study by Bai and Liu (2018), which found that organisations are more likely to retain an engaged workforce when they help their employees achieve their desired career goals. There is a higher likelihood that employees will stay and contribute to their current organisation when they are satisfied with their positions. These studies' findings are further supported by the Theory of Need for Achievement, which indicates that organisations that provide employees with opportunities to achieve their career goals will enhance their employees' motivation to try and succeed in their line of work. This would result in a more energetic, committed, and dedicated workforce, which ultimately benefits the organisation in the long run.

Furthermore, the significant relationship observed between professional ability development and work engagement is consistent with Komala (2023)'s findings, which emphasise the importance of organisational support in facilitating opportunities for employees to acquire new knowledge and skills. Such developmental initiatives contribute to a more motivated, engaged, and satisfied workforce. Moreover, the study highlights that employees are intrinsically driven to pursue personal and professional growth through learning and skill enhancement, rather than being solely motivated by financial incentives. This notion is further substantiated by Komala's research, which reveals that among the various dimensions of career growth, remuneration growth exerts the least positive influence on employees' work engagement. The interplay between professional development and engagement is further explained by Social Exchange Theory, which posits that employees' behaviour is shaped by their expectations of reciprocal benefits from the organisation in response to their contributions. According to Memon et al. (2016), when an organisation invests in its employees by providing them with opportunities to develop their professional knowledge, skills, and abilities, it creates a sense of obligation among employees. The investment clearly demonstrates to employees how valuable and important they are to the organisation. In return for the opportunities presented, employees tend to exhibit greater commitment and engagement in their professional work (Memon et al., 2016).

In addition, the significant relationship between promotion speed and work engagement is supported by Weer and Greenhaus (2020), who state that employees who perceive their chance of promotion and career growth as high within their current organisation tend to be more committed and engaged in their work. The perception of opportunities for faster promotion can drive employees to become highly engaged in their work. Furthermore, employers often notice employees' high engagement in their work. This leads to employees being entrusted with more

tasks and responsibilities, which they may gain through promotion within the organisation (Weer & Greenhaus, 2020). The relationship is supported by the Theory of Need for Achievement, which aligns with the idea that promotions are not simply about status and money, but also an indicator of personal accomplishment and mastery of skills within their current organisation (Bai & Liu, 2018). When organisations present employees with opportunities for faster promotion, they frame these promotions as measurable achievements and recognition of success (Bai & Liu, 2018). Seizing these opportunities would drive employees to be more engaged and committed to their tasks.

In addition, the results indicate a significant relationship between remuneration growth and work engagement. Employees are more likely to become absorbed in their tasks when they perceive that they are fairly compensated for the effort they contribute to the organisation. Employees are more likely to be committed to the organisation and exhibit higher engagement towards their work when their economic needs are fulfilled (Liu et al., 2017). Furthermore, Son and Kim (2021) highlight that employees engage with their tasks to honour the psychological contract with the organisation when they are fairly rewarded for their effort. The relationship is strongly supported by the Social Exchange Theory, which assumes that the relationship between employees and the organisation develops over time through mutual expectations, reciprocal commitments, and an obligation to exchange resources. When employees are economically rewarded by their employers, they come to believe they are valuable and feel appreciated. According to Kimutai and Sakataka (2015), this feeling of appreciation leads employees to be more engaged in their work to repay their employer.

Although the Pearson correlation indicated a highly significant and positive relationship among the study's variables, certain predictors (three dimensions of career growth) lost significance in the regression analysis. These findings suggest that the unique characteristics of the Malaysian public sector context, such as cultural norms, hierarchical organisational structures, and collective work values, influence how employees perceive and prioritise different aspects of career growth. Such contextual factors could explain why certain predictors, which are often significant in other settings, did not show statistical significance in this study.

In terms of implications for the literature, this research identifies the type of career growth opportunities that would most positively affect work engagement. Especially in the context of civil servants, identifying career growth opportunities that enhance their work engagement would enrich the existing literature on this area. From a practical standpoint, public organisations can assess the impact of four dimensions of career growth on their employees and improve the delivery of each dimension to increase employees' work engagement exponentially. Additionally, understanding the career growth opportunities that most enhance employee work engagement can significantly help industry players improve their organisation's performance and productivity. However, future researchers can delve deeper into the current career growth dimensions and examine the depth of each. Since remuneration growth has the least positive effect on work engagement, researchers can conduct a study to investigate the underlying reasons for this finding. Researchers can examine why employees are so engaged in their work as a result of professional ability development opportunities. Additionally, it would be beneficial for human resources practitioners to provide a clear pathway for employees to reach their career goals, whether through promotions or remuneration growth. Related organisations should continuously implement and

invest in career development plans and programmes to maintain and continually improve employees' work engagement.

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. The dimensions for measuring career growth are limited to career goal progress, remuneration growth, promotion speed, and professional ability development. It does not account for other potentially influential career growth dimensions, such as job enrichment, increased responsibilities, or lateral transfers. Additionally, the research is limited by its own variables, because even if career growth affects work engagement, the researcher could not measure how strongly it does so relative to other factors, such as work support or work motivation. Future research should address these limitations by incorporating these additional factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of work engagement. For instance, investigating the influence of organisational culture, leadership styles, and support systems on work engagement would be valuable. Studies could also examine changes in value and observe how career growth influences work engagement over time. Furthermore, examining work engagement across different geographical or organisational contexts would help determine whether the findings of this study are applicable in other settings.

Collectively, this study highlights a significant and positive relationship among all four key dimensions of career growth and work engagement among employees in a public-sector organisation in Sarawak. These findings align with the predicted relationships and influences among the variables outlined in the research hypotheses, as predicted by past studies. The results contribute to theoretical understanding by shedding light on the complex connections among these variables, supported by McClelland's Theory of Needs for Achievement and Blau's Social Exchange Theory. Given the limited empirical research in this area, the study emphasises the influence of career growth on work engagement among Sarawak civil servants. Bakker et al. (2008) argue that prioritising employee engagement not only benefits individual employees but can also serve as a strategic source of competitive advantage for organisations. In this context, Human Resource Development practitioners must understand the dynamics of work engagement and offer practical guidance to foster it effectively. To support this effort, research must establish theoretically grounded frameworks that define how engagement can be measured, cultivated, and linked to key organisational outcomes (Zigarmi et al., 2009).

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The first author was primarily responsible for data collection and analysis. The second author assisted in developing the research framework to guide the final-year project and led the drafting and refinement of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the interpretation of the results, the

discussion of theoretical and practical implications, and ensuring the overall accuracy and coherence of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

Approval to conduct the research was obtained in advance from the respective public organisations, namely the Samarahan Resident Office and the Kota Samarahan Municipal Council, to ensure a proper and smooth administration of the questionnaire to their employees. The approval process was facilitated through email correspondence where an official letter from the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development outlining the purpose and scope of the study was provided. As the study involved low or minimal risk to participants, a formal application for Human Research Ethics Clearance to the Human Research Ethics (Non-Medical) Committee, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, was not required under the institutional guidelines.

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