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Strategic Human Capital and Academic Performance: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are increasingly relying on the human capital of their faculty to maintain the academic quality of research articles and institutional competitiveness. This study examines the role of strategic human capital which includes individual and psychological capital (PsyCap) in enhancing faculty performance effectiveness, with work engagement serving as a mediating variable. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 120 tenured faculty members at private universities in East Java under the jurisdiction of LLDIKTI Region VII, via a structured questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that individual development has a significant effect on faculty performance (effect size = 0.307; $p < 0.001$) and work engagement (effect size = 0.672; $p < 0.001$). PsyCap also demonstrated a significant influence on performance ($r^2 = 0.243$; $p = 0.001$) and work engagement ($r^2 = 0.198$; $p = 0.007$). Furthermore, work engagement was found to be a significant predictor of faculty performance ($\beta = 0.437$; $p < 0.001$) and acted as a mediator between strategic human capital components and performance outcomes. These findings extend the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework within the context of higher education, emphasizing the strategic value of psychological and developmental resources in fostering work engagement and academic performance.

Keywords: Higher Education; Lecturer Performance; Psychological Capital; Strategic Human Capital

JEL Classification: I23; J24; M53; O15

INTRODUCTION

Lecturer performance represents not only a fundamental pillar in ensuring academic quality but also a strategic organizational asset that determines institutional competitiveness and long-term sustainability in higher education (Grochocki & Cabello, 2023). In contemporary higher education governance, lecturer performance increasingly functions as a measurable driver of institutional outcomes, influencing accreditation results, research productivity, institutional reputation, and stakeholder trust (Dumulescu & Muţiu, 2021). Consequently, universities face strategic decisions regarding how to manage and develop their human capital in order to maintain academic competitiveness and improve institutional performance (Kwiek & Roszka, 2024).

Within this context, lecturers assume a dual strategic position. Apart from discharging conventional academic duties including teaching, research, and community engagement they actively contribute to institutional performance outcomes. Their productivity, innovation, and professional dedication not only affect individual performance indicators but also exert influence upon the broader governance and performance assessment frameworks of higher education institutions (Tømte et al., 2019). Therefore, understanding the factors that enhance lecturer performance is critical for institutional leaders when designing effective human capital strategies.

From a strategic human capital perspective, Psychological Capital (PsyCap) represents an important intangible resource that strengthens both individual capability and organizational performance. Lecturers with strong PsyCap tend to demonstrate proactive behavior, higher adaptability, and stronger resilience in dealing with complex academic responsibilities (Dóci et al., 2023; Tømte et al., 2019). Such psychological resources enable lecturers to engage actively in professional development, initiate academic innovation, and respond effectively to the dynamic demands of the higher education sector. Empirical studies have shown that PsyCap is associated with higher job responsibility, stronger organizational attachment, and improved performance outcomes (Dóci et al., 2023; Tømte et al., 2019).

Psychological capital, which consists of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Dwicahyani & Gorda, 2023), can be viewed as an internal capability that supports sustainable performance. From a strategic performance management perspective, these psychological dimensions enhance lecturers' ability to pursue academic goals, innovate in teaching and research activities, and maintain productivity despite increasing institutional demands. For instance, high self-efficacy encourages lecturers to implement innovative pedagogical approaches, while optimism and resilience help them navigate performance pressures and organizational changes (Abukhalifa et al., 2022). Consequently, PsyCap may function as a strategic resource that contributes to institutional value creation.

In addition to psychological resources, investment in lecturer development represents another critical component of strategic human capital management. Training and development programs are institutional mechanisms designed to strengthen lecturers' competencies, professional skills, and academic productivity. From a governance perspective, such initiatives should not be perceived merely as operational expenditures but rather as strategic investments capable of generating long-term performance returns (Sušanj et al., 2020). Effective development programs improve lecturers' competencies in research, digital learning technologies, and curriculum innovation, thereby supporting institutional competitiveness in an increasingly knowledge-driven environment (Iqbal et al., 2024; Pham, 2021).

Work engagement has been widely recognized as a key motivational mechanism that links individual resources with performance outcomes. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework (Gillet et al., 2024), engagement emerges when employees possess sufficient personal and organizational resources to meet job demands effectively. In the context of higher education, engaged lecturers tend to demonstrate stronger dedication, higher creativity, and greater persistence in achieving academic goals. Empirical studies have found that work engagement positively contributes to teaching effectiveness, research productivity, and broader institutional contributions (Hassan et al., 2024). Notwithstanding the substantial body of literature examining psychological capital, lecturer development, and work engagement, notable gaps persist within the existing research. Empirical evidence concerning the direct and mediating influence of work engagement on lecturer performance continues to yield inconsistent findings. Whereas certain studies demonstrate significant positive effects, other investigations report weak or non-significant relationships (Martínez et al., 2019). The mechanism through which individual resources translate into lecturer performance has not yet been fully clarified.

Another limitation of existing studies lies in the fragmented examination of key human capital factors. Previous research tends to investigate psychological capital, training, and work engagement as separate constructs rather than integrating them within a strategic human capital framework. From the perspective of human capital theory (Bakker, 2022) and strategic human resource management (Noe et al., 2020), investments in human capital resources and development initiatives should contribute to sustainable competitive advantage and improved organizational performance. Nevertheless, limited empirical research has examined how psychological resources and structured development initiatives jointly influence lecturer performance through engagement mechanisms.

Furthermore, much of the existing literature focuses primarily on individual-level performance outcomes without positioning lecturer performance within a broader strategic governance context. In higher education institutions, lecturer performance directly affects institutional accreditation, research productivity, and organizational reputation. Yet empirical studies rarely conceptualize lecturer performance as a strategic driver of institutional performance within governance systems. Consequently, a theoretical gap remains in explaining how intangible psychological resources and institutional development investments contribute to strategic performance outcomes through work engagement dynamics.

This study seeks to investigate the influence of individual development and PsyCap as components of strategic human capital on lecturer performance enhancement, with work engagement functioning as a mediating variable, among permanent lecturers at private universities in East Java affiliated with LLDIKTI Region VII. This research contributes in two key respects: first, it integrates PsyCap and individual development within a consolidated strategic human capital framework; second, it applies the JD-R model—a theoretical lens not previously explored in conjunction with these elements. Theoretically, the present study extends the JD-R model to the domain of higher education governance. Practically, it provides actionable recommendations for institutional administrators aimed at improving lecturer engagement and performance. This research will offer a significant contribution to the growing body of knowledge pertaining to human resource management in higher education within Indonesia.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) as a Strategic Human Capital Resource

PsyCap constitutes a higher-order construct of positive psychological resources that bolsters individual capability and organizational effectiveness. Defined as a state-like construct amenable to development, PsyCap encompasses four dimensions: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience. In contrast to rigid personality traits, PsyCap demonstrates malleability and may be enhanced through organizational interventions, thereby holding strategic relevance within performance management frameworks.

From the perspective of human capital theory (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2020) and strategic human resource management (Noe et al., 2020), PsyCap constitutes an intangible organizational asset that contributes to sustainable competitive advantage. In higher education institutions, where knowledge creation and academic excellence are central, lecturers' psychological resources become critical internal capabilities that drive teaching quality, research productivity, and institutional reputation.

Empirical evidence suggests that lecturers with high PsyCap demonstrate stronger adaptability, proactive behavior, and persistence in overcoming professional challenges (Granziera & Perera, 2019). Self-efficacy strengthens confidence in implementing innovative teaching strategies; hope supports goal-directed academic achievement; optimism sustains positive expectations toward institutional goals; and resilience enables lecturers to cope with workload pressure and regulatory demands. Collectively, these psychological dimensions function as performance-enabling resources that support both individual outcomes and broader institutional objectives.

Thus, PsyCap should not merely be viewed as a psychological condition, but as a strategic internal capability that enhances lecturer performance and contributes to institutional effectiveness.

Individual Development as Strategic Human Capital Investment

Individual development refers to structured efforts undertaken by institutions to enhance employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and professional attitudes. In higher education, lecturer development includes training, pedagogical enhancement programs, research capacity building, and professional certification initiatives.

Grounded in Human Capital Theory (Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2020), investment in development generates long-term returns in the form of improved productivity and organizational competitiveness. Strategic Human Resource Management further posits that systematic development initiatives align human capital capabilities with institutional goals (Noe et al., 2020). Therefore, development expenditures should not be considered operational costs but strategic investments that generate measurable performance outcomes.

In line with Social Cognitive Theory (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020), training programs influence not only technical competence but also cognitive processes such as self-efficacy, goal orientation, and self-regulation. Development initiatives that enhance lecturers' perceived capability and professional identity strengthen their confidence and adaptive capacity in dynamic academic environments.

Empirical studies confirm that continuous training improves competence, innovation capacity, and job performance (Fernandes et al., 2023; Obeng-tuaah, 2025). In higher education governance, structured development programs enhance lecturers' ability to

meet accreditation standards, research expectations, and curriculum innovation demands. Accordingly, individual development functions as a strategic lever that strengthens internal capabilities and drives sustainable institutional performance.

Work Engagement as a Motivational Mechanism

Work engagement can be conceptualized as a positive and fulfilling work-related condition characterized by energy, commitment, and immersion. This conceptualization aligns with the theoretical foundations of the JD-R model (Bakker, 2022), engagement is defined as a motivational process whereby personal and organisational resources are converted into enhanced performance outcomes.

Engaged lecturers exhibit high energy levels, strong involvement in academic responsibilities, and deep concentration in teaching and research activities. Empirical evidence indicates that work engagement enhances creativity, persistence, and organizational commitment (Corbeanu & Iliescu, 2023; Wan et al., 2022). In academic institutions, engaged lecturers are more likely to produce innovative research, adopt effective teaching methods, and contribute actively to community service.

From a strategic performance perspective, work engagement serves as the mechanism that activates psychological resources and development investments into observable performance outcomes. Without engagement, internal resources may not fully translate into productivity. Therefore, engagement functions as a critical mediator linking strategic human capital investments to institutional performance.

Lecturer Performance as a Strategic Performance Driver

Performance refers to the achievement of work outcomes aligned with predetermined standards and organizational objectives. It encompasses quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and autonomy in task execution (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

However, in the context of higher education governance, lecturer performance extends beyond individual task completion. It represents a strategic performance driver that influences accreditation results, research output, institutional reputation, stakeholder trust, and long-term sustainability (Hart & Rodgers, 2024; Retnowati et al., 2021). Lecturers who demonstrate exceptional performance make immediate contributions to institutional competitiveness and scholarly excellence. Thus, lecturer performance should be conceptualized not merely as an individual outcome, but as a measurable indicator of institutional effectiveness and strategic success.

Hypotheses Development

Psychological Capital and Lecturer Performance

PsyCap strengthens internal capabilities that enhance adaptive behavior, persistence, and goal attainment. Lecturers with high PsyCap demonstrate stronger resilience under academic pressure, optimism toward institutional targets, and confidence in implementing innovative practices (Syahsudarmi et al., 2024). From a strategic human capital perspective, such internal resources directly enhance productivity and performance outcomes. Therefore:

H1: Psychological capital positively affects lecturer performance.

Individual Development and Lecturer Performance

Structured development initiatives enhance lecturers' competencies, professional identity, and adaptive capacity. Training improves knowledge, pedagogical skills, and research capability, enabling lecturers to meet institutional demands effectively (Csiszárik-Kocsir &

Varga, 2024; Hiswara et al., 2023). As strategic investments, development programs generate performance returns that contribute to organizational competitiveness. Therefore:

H2: Individual development positively affects lecturer performance.

Psychological Capital and Work Engagement

According to the JD-R model, PsyCap serves as an individual resource that promotes work engagement. Individuals possessing elevated PsyCap levels typically exhibit enhanced commitment, energy, and perseverance (Aula et al., 2021). Enhanced self-efficacy and optimism foster greater involvement in professional responsibilities. Therefore:

H3: Psychological capital positively affects work engagement.

Individual Development and Work Engagement

Development initiatives signal organizational support and enhance competence, thereby strengthening motivational attachment to work roles. Training improves confidence and professional responsibility, leading to increased engagement levels (Hosen et al., 2024). Therefore:

H4: Individual development positively affects work engagement.

Work Engagement and Lecturer Performance

Engagement functions as the motivational pathway through which internal resources translate into performance. Engaged lecturers demonstrate higher productivity, creativity, and persistence in achieving academic objectives (Ferdinan & Lindawati, 2021). From a strategic performance perspective, engagement transforms psychological and developmental investments into measurable institutional outcomes. Therefore:

H5: Work engagement positively affects lecturer performance.

Work Engagement as a Mediating Mechanism

Within the JD-R framework, work engagement functions as the motivational pathway through which personal resources and organizational investments translate into performance outcomes (Bakker, 2022; Meyers et al., 2020). PsyCap enhances lecturers' confidence, optimism, and resilience, which in turn foster greater involvement and dedication in academic tasks. Engaged lecturers are more likely to transform these psychological resources into productive teaching, research innovation, and institutional contributions. Similarly, individual development initiatives strengthen lecturers' competence and perceived organizational support, which increases motivational attachment to their professional roles (Mohammed et al., 2025). Development investments, therefore, influence performance not only directly but also indirectly through enhanced engagement. Consequently, work engagement may act as an important mediating mechanism that links strategic human capital resources to lecturer performance.

H6: Work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between psychological capital and lecturer performance.
H7: Work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between individual development and lecturer performance.

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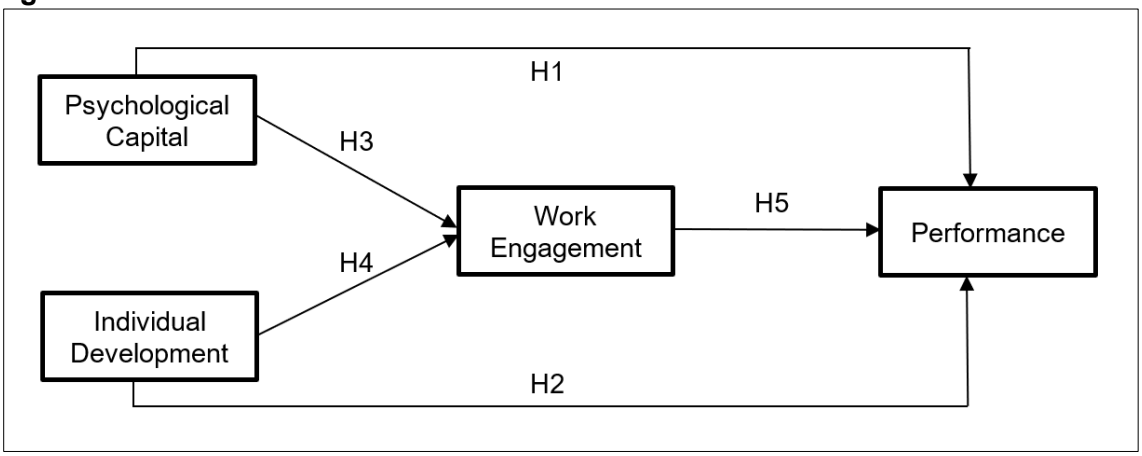
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model underpinning this investigation, depicting the hypothesized relationships among the research constructs. PsyCap (H1) and individual development (H2) are posited to exert direct and positive influences on lecturer performance. Furthermore, PsyCap (H3) and individual development (H4) are anticipated to positively shape work engagement. Work engagement is additionally posited to possess a direct positive effect on lecturer performance (H5). Subsequently, work engagement serves as a mediator in the relationships between PsyCap and lecturer performance (H6), as well as between individual development and lecturer performance (H7). These relationships find their theoretical foundation in the JD-R model, which elucidates the mechanisms through which personal resources (PsyCap) and job resources (individual development) foster engagement and subsequently determine performance outcomes.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships among psychological capital, individual development, work engagement, and lecturer performance. A quantitative methodology grounded in positivist philosophy was utilized to empirically test the proposed hypotheses via statistical analysis. Data were gathered through a structured survey instrument developed based on established theoretical constructs derived from prior literature (Rachman et al., 2024).

Population and Sample

The population of this investigation comprised permanent lecturers from social science study programs at private universities in East Java under the coordination of LLDIKTI Region VII. This setting was selected given that private universities within the region significantly contribute to strengthening regional higher education performance and institutional competitiveness.

Data Collection

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents fulfilling specific criteria, namely lecturers holding permanent academic positions and actively engaged in teaching, research, and community service activities. A total of 120 lecturers participated in the survey (Hair et al., 2021). The sample size proves adequate for (PLS-SEM), a methodological approach particularly well-suited for predictive research designs and capable of accommodating modest sample sizes whilst simultaneously estimating complex interrelationships among latent constructs..

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Measurement of Variables

Table 1 Table 1 presents the measurement of the variables utilised in this study. The operationalisation of each construct is achieved through the utilisation of a series of indicators, which have been adapted from prior studies with the objective of ensuring the measurement's validity and reliability.

Table 1. Measurement of Variable

Variable	Definition	Indicators	
Psychological Capital	A higher-order positive psychological resource reflecting lecturers' internal capacities that enhance adaptive capability and performance.	1	Hope
		2	Self-efficacy
		3	Resilience
		4	Optimism
Individual Development	Structured institutional efforts aimed at enhancing lecturers' competencies and long-term professional capabilities.	1	Teamwork
		2	Feedback Mechanism
		3	Skill Improvement
		4	Attitude Dimension
		5	Adaptability
Work Engagement	The psychological state of the lecturers in question has been found to be conducive to positive and fulfilling work, and has been demonstrated to be a reflection of their motivation and involvement in their roles, which has been defined as their 'attachment', or bond, to said roles.	1	Vigor
		2	Dedication
		3	Absorption
Lecturer Performance	The achievement of work outcomes aligned with institutional objectives, contributing to overall institutional effectiveness.	1	Quality
		2	Quantity
		3	Timeliness
		4	Effectiveness
		5	Autonomy

Data Analysis

The measurement of all items was conducted using a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The data were analysed using PLS-SEM. The selection of this technique was made on the basis of its suitability for use in predictive research models and its capacity to effectively manage complex structural relationships involving multiple constructs with relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al., 2021).

The analytical process unfolded across two distinct phases. In the first phase, the measurement model was examined to evaluate construct reliability and validity. This encompassed assessments of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, convergent validity (AVE) and discriminant validity. In the second phase, the structural model was tested to investigate the hypothesized relationships. This was accomplished through estimation of path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), and effect sizes. Bootstrapping procedures were employed to determine the statistical significance of both direct and indirect (mediating) effects (Hair et al., 2021).

RESULTS

Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the 120 respondents participating in this study.

Table 2. Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic Category	Classification	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	78	65
	Male	42	35
Age	25–35 years	26	22
	36–45 years	50	42
	46–55 years	32	27
	> 55 years	12	10
Education	Master's Degree (S2)	94	78
	Doctoral Degree (S3)	26	22
Academic Rank	Assistant Lecturer	38	32
	Lecturer	58	48
	Associate Professor	24	20
Teaching Experience	≤ 5 years	31	26
	> 5 years	89	74

As presented in Table 2, A predominant proportion of participants were female (65%), with the largest cohort falling within the 36–45 age bracket (42%). Regarding educational attainment, 78% of participants possessed a Master's degree, while 22% held a Doctoral degree. Regarding academic rank, most respondents held the rank of Lecturer (48%), followed by Assistant Lecturer (32%) and Associate Professor (20%). The majority had teaching experience of more than five years (74%), indicating a relatively experienced respondent group. This demographic profile suggests that the sample is representative of permanent lecturers at private universities in East Java under LLDIKTI Region VII.

Descriptive Statistics

The subsequent section presents descriptive statistics, offering a comprehensive overview of participants' perceptions regarding the primary variables examined in this investigation. The aforementioned variables include psychological capital, individual development, work engagement, and lecturer performance. Descriptive statistics are a set of numerical quantities which are used to describe a set of data. The most commonly used statistics include the mean, median, minimum, and maximum, as well as the standard deviation. These statistics are used to reflect both the central tendency and variability of the responses given by the lecturers. The results of the descriptive analysis are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
Psychological Capital	3.3	3.0	1	5	1.1
Individual Development	3.8	4.0	1	5	1.1
Work Engagement	3.7	4.0	1	5	1.1
Lecturer Performance	3.6	4.0	1	5	1.1

Table 3 provide an overview of lecturers' perceptions regarding psychological capital, individual development, work engagement, and lecturer performance. The average scores for all constructs exceed the midpoint of the Likert scale, suggesting that participants generally indicate moderate to elevated levels of psychological resources, development opportunities, work engagement, and performance. The median values close to four indicate a general tendency toward agreement among respondents. Meanwhile, the standard deviation values suggest a noticeable variation in lecturers' perceptions, reflecting differences in experiences related to professional development, psychological resources, engagement, and performance.

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Measurement Model Evaluation

This section focuses on the assessment of the measurement model, designed to verify that each underlying construct demonstrates adequate reliability and validity prior to examining the structural relationships. Convergent validity of these constructs was established by evaluating the outer loadings for each indicator. The findings of the outer loading analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Outer Loading

Code	Individual Development	Performance	Psychological Capital	Work Engagement
ID1	0.833			
ID2	0.873			
ID3	0.888			
ID4	0.857			
ID5	0.713			
LP1		0.766		
LP2		0.922		
LP3		0.911		
LP4		0.912		
LP5		0.824		
PC1			0.912	
PC2			0.871	
PC3			0.890	
PC4			0.867	
WE1				0.926
WE2				0.931
WE3				0.899

The results presented in Table 4 It is crucial to ascertain that all indicators demonstrate outer loadings exceeding the prescribed threshold of 0.70. This confirms that each indicator sufficiently captures its respective construct. Thus, the indicators utilized to assess individual development, psychological capital, work engagement, and lecturer performance exhibit acceptable convergent validity.

Furthermore, the reliability and convergent validity of the proposed model were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and (AVE), as presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Individual Development	0.890	0.902	0.920	0.697
Performance	0.918	0.928	0.939	0.755
Psychological Capital	0.908	0.912	0.935	0.783
Work Engagement	0.907	0.909	0.942	0.844

As shown in Table 5, Each construct demonstrated adequate reliability and demonstrated convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceed the prescribed threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Furthermore, AVE values for all constructs exceed 0.50, thus indicating that each construct explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. These findings demonstrate that the measurement model satisfies the required reliability and validity standards.

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Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. This criterion ensures that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. These results are outlined in Table 6.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Variable	Individual Development	Performance	Psychological Capital	Work Engagement
Individual Development	0.835			
Performance	0.850	0.869		
Psychological Capital	0.754	0.783	0.885	
Work Engagement	0.821	0.861	0.705	0.919

As shown in Table 6, three of the four constructs, performance (0.869), PsyCap (0.885), and work engagement (0.919), satisfy the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as their AVE square root values exceed all corresponding inter-construct correlations. Individual Development shows a marginally lower diagonal value (0.835) compared to its correlation with performance (0.850), indicating a slight overlap between the two constructs. However, this result is theoretically justifiable: individual development is conceptually designed to directly enhance performance outcomes, and therefore a degree of shared variance between these two constructs is expected rather than problematic. Furthermore, Hair et al. (2021) acknowledge that minor deviations from the Fornell–Larcker criterion do not necessarily invalidate discriminant validity, particularly when all outer loadings exceed 0.70 and AVE values remain above the 0.50 threshold, both of which are satisfied in this study (outer loadings range from 0.713 to 0.931; AVE for Individual Development = 0.697). Accordingly, the overall measurement model is considered adequate for proceeding to structural model analysis.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

A structural model was subjected to rigorous testing in order to ascertain the causal relationships that exist among the latent constructs, in accordance with the hypotheses that had been previously proposed. The estimation process was executed through the employment of the bootstrapping procedure in PLS-SEM, a methodology that facilitated the determination of the path coefficients and the significance levels of the relationships among variables. The results of the structural model analysis are set out in Table 7.

Table 7. Structural Path Coefficients

Variable		Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
H1	Psychological Capital → Performance	0.243	0.244	0.070	3.465	0.001
H2	Individual Development → Performance	0.307	0.307	0.082	3.751	0.000
H3	Psychological Capital → Work Engagement	0.198	0.203	0.073	2.711	0.007
H4	Individual Development → Work Engagement	0.672	0.669	0.072	9.274	0.000
H5	Work Engagement → Performance	0.437	0.437	0.085	5.135	0.000

H6	Psychological Capital → Work Engagement→ Performance	0.087	0.088	0.035	2.482	0.013
H7	Individual Development → Work Engagement→ Performance	0.294	0.293	0.070	4.201	0.000

With regard to lecturer performance, PsyCap exerts a significant positive effect (β = 0.243; p = 0.001), thereby supporting Hypothesis 1. Additionally, the results confirm Hypothesis 2, as individual development demonstrably has a positive and significant impact on lecturer performance (β = 0.307; p < 0.001). Concerning work engagement, PsyCap significantly influences work engagement (β = 0.198; p = 0.007), which validates Hypothesis 3. Likewise, individual development exhibits the most pronounced effect on work engagement (β = 0.672; p < 0.001), thus substantiating Hypothesis 4. Moreover, the results reveal that work engagement exerts a substantial positive impact on lecturer performance (β = 0.437; p < 0.001), thereby confirming Hypothesis 5.

In terms of mediation analysis, work engagement significantly mediates the relationship between individual development and lecturer performance (β = 0.294; p < 0.001), as well as the relationship between PsyCap and lecturer performance (β = 0.087; p = 0.013). The results of this study demonstrate that work engagement serves as a pivotal mechanism through which strategic human capital resources influence lecturer performance.

Coefficient of Determination

In this study, we sought to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model. To this end, we employed the coefficient of determination (R^2). The findings are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Performance	0.828	0.824
Work Engagement	0.691	0.686

As indicated by the R^2 value of 0.691, PsyCap and individual development jointly explain 69.1% of the variance in work engagement. Similarly, the R^2 value of 0.828 for lecturer performance demonstrates that psychological capital, individual development, and work engagement collectively account for 82.8% of the variation in lecturer performance. These findings indicate that the structural model demonstrates substantial explanatory power in explaining the association between lecturer engagement and performance in higher education contexts.

DISCUSSION

Psychological Capital and Lecturer Performance

This investigation reveals that psychological capital has a positive and significant impact on lecturer performance (β = 0.243; p = 0.001). Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is supported. These results indicate that academicians possessing greater psychological resources such as optimism, resilience, hope, and self-efficacy, demonstrate elevated levels of academic performance. In the context of higher education, academicians frequently encounter diverse professional responsibilities, including teaching obligations, research requirements, and administrative tasks. PsyCap has been shown to help lecturers sustain confidence, motivation, and perseverance when facing these challenges, thereby improving their professional performance.

These findings are consistent with prior studies in organizational behavior literature, which highlight the role of PsyCap in enhancing employee performance (Sulistiarini, 2024; Thalhah et al., 2022). Previous research suggests that individuals with high PsyCap are more capable of coping with work pressures and maintaining productivity even under demanding conditions. In academic environments, PsyCap allows lecturers to remain motivated in conducting research, engaging in scholarly activities, and delivering effective teaching.

In principle, the outcome can be interpreted through the theoretical framework of positive organisational behaviour, a paradigm that accentuates the significance of optimising positive psychological resources in the enhancement of individual performance and well-being (Syahsudarmi et al., 2024). PsyCap represents an internal resource that enables individuals to maintain positive attitudes and adaptive behaviors in the workplace. As lecturers develop stronger psychological capital, they become more capable of overcoming academic challenges and sustaining their professional productivity.

From a pragmatic perspective, these findings imply that higher education institutions should prioritise not only the development of lecturers' technical competencies, but also the enhancement of their psychological resources. It is submitted that universities can support this by creating supportive work environments, providing mentoring programmes, and encouraging positive organisational cultures that enhance the psychological well-being of lecturers.

Individual Development and Lecturer Performance

This study posits that individual development exerts a positive and significant effect on lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.307$; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the hypothesis that H2 is supported is substantiated. This finding suggests that those employed as academic tutors who invest effort into developing their skills and expertise, through training and professional development, and ongoing learning, tend to demonstrate higher levels of academic performance. Within the domain of higher education institutions, individual development has been shown to facilitate the updating of knowledge, the adoption of innovative teaching methods, and an enhancement of research productivity among lecturers.

These results align with those of earlier research, which highlights the significant impact of professional development on enhancing academic performance and institutional competitiveness. It has been demonstrated by previous research that the provision of continuous learning opportunities and the development of competencies can assist lecturers in enhancing their teaching effectiveness and research output. This, in turn, can contribute to the overall performance of the institution (Csiszárik-Kocsir & Varga, 2024; Lawarang et al., 2023; Urbancová et al., 2021). Therefore, investment in lecturer development can be considered a strategic mechanism to strengthen academic quality and productivity within universities.

Theoretically, this tendency may be attributed to the principles of Human Capital Theory. This theoretical framework asserts the hypothesis that investments in educational attainment, professional training and the development of skills can enhance an individual's productivity and performance (Fernandes et al., 2023). Individual development represents a form of human capital investment that enhances lecturers' knowledge, expertise, and professional capabilities. As lecturers accumulate more knowledge and skills through development activities, they become more capable of delivering high-quality academic work and adapting to the evolving demands of higher education.

Nevertheless, the efficacy of individual development programmes may be contingent upon the degree to which institutional frameworks provide sufficient organisational support. In the absence of adequate institutional support, comprising training opportunities, mentorship systems and academic collaborative platforms, the impact of developmental initiatives may be constrained (Grochocki & Cabello, 2023). Therefore, higher education institutions need to create supportive environments that encourage lecturers to continuously develop their competencies.

From a practical perspective, these findings highlight the importance of implementing structured lecturer development programs within universities. Institutions should not only focus on recruitment but also prioritize continuous professional development to enhance lecturers' competencies and academic performance. Such initiatives can strengthen universities' capacity to improve teaching quality, research productivity, and overall academic competitiveness.

Psychological Capital and Work Engagement

Based on these findings, psychological capital has a positive and significant impact on work engagement ($\beta = 0.198$; $p = 0.007$). Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported. These results indicate that educators possessing stronger psychological resources tend to experience elevated levels of energy, commitment, and immersion in their work. PsyCap enables the maintenance of positive attitudes and sufficient emotional energy within educational contexts, thereby improving engagement in teaching, research, and scholarly activities.

These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the significant role of individual psychological resources in promoting work engagement. Research demonstrates that individuals with high levels of optimism and resilience are more likely to maintain positive work-related attitudes and experience lower levels of burnout (Granziera & Perera, 2019). In the academic context, such psychological strengths help lecturers remain motivated and committed to their professional roles.

From the perspective of the JD-R model, PsyCap can be categorized as a personal resource that strengthens individuals' capacity to manage job demands. Personal resources enhance individuals' sense of control and competence, which in turn increases their engagement at work (Bakker, 2022). Thus, lecturers who possess strong PsyCap are more likely to experience deeper involvement and commitment in their academic responsibilities.

Practically, this finding implies that universities should pay greater attention to lecturers' psychological well-being. Creating a supportive academic climate, promoting work-life balance, and providing institutional recognition may help strengthen lecturers' PsyCap and, consequently, their work engagement.

Individual Development and Work Engagement

A significant finding of the current study indicates that individual development exerts a positive and significant effect on work engagement ($\beta = 0.672$; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H4 is supported. This finding suggests that lecturers who consistently enhance their professional competencies tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in their work. It has been demonstrated that when academic staff engage in development activities, such as training, workshops and academic collaborations, they are more likely to feel confident and enthusiastic in their academic roles.

This finding is consistent with the conclusions of previous studies that emphasised the significance of professional development in promoting employee engagement.

Development opportunities have been shown to provide individuals with the resources and capabilities required to perform their tasks effectively. This, in turn, has been demonstrated to increase their sense of involvement and commitment towards their work (Hiswara et al., 2023). Within higher education institutions, there is a positive correlation between the perception of robust support and the demonstration of dedication to teaching and research activities. Specifically, lecturers experiencing substantial support for their professional advancement exhibit notably elevated levels of commitment and engagement (Aziti, 2022).

It is possible to offer a theoretical explanation for this finding in terms of the JD-R model. This model asserts the importance of job resources in enhancing employee engagement (Bakker, 2022). Individual development can be considered a form of professional resource that strengthens lecturers' ability to cope with job demands. When lecturers perceive that their institution supports their development, they are more likely to feel motivated and psychologically connected to their work.

From an institutional perspective, this finding highlights the importance of providing continuous professional development opportunities for lecturers. Universities that invest in training, mentoring, and academic development programs are more likely to foster engaged lecturers who contribute actively to institutional goals.

Work Engagement and Lecturer Performance

The present study hypothesises that work engagement exerts a significant positive influence on lecturer performance, with a β coefficient of 0.437 and a p-value of less than 0.001. Consequently, H5 has been identified as the most appropriate option. The present finding serves to confirm the hypothesis that work engagement is a critical motivational mechanism that directly drives lecturer performance. Engaged faculty members, typified by vigour, commitment, and absorption, expend elevated cognitive and emotional exertion in fulfilling their academic obligations, thereby engendering enhanced pedagogical efficacy, augmented research productivity, and augmented service contributions. The result obtained is consistent with the JD-R model (Bakker, 2022), The hypothesis being put forward is that the degree to which employees are engaged in their work has a direct impact on the performance outcomes of the company as a whole. In essence, this suggests that engagement is the motivational pathway through which available resources are linked to these performance outcomes. The extant body of empirical research in the field of higher education corroborates the positive correlation between work engagement and the performance of teaching staff (Ferdinan & Lindawati, 2021; Mendoza et al., 2025), reinforcing the importance of fostering engagement as a strategic priority in academic institutions.

Work Engagement as a Mediating Mechanism

The findings of this study demonstrate that work engagement plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between PsyCap and lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.087$; $p = 0.013$), as well as between individual development and lecturer performance ($\beta = 0.294$; $p < 0.001$). Consequently, both H6 and H7 are supported. A pivotal discovery of this study is the mediating function of work engagement in the association between individual development, psychological capital, and lecturer performance. The findings of the study demonstrate that both individual development and PsyCap exert a significant influence on lecturer performance, with work engagement serving as a mediating factor. This finding indicates that professional competencies and psychological resources enhance performance, primarily by increasing lecturers' level of engagement with their work (Bakker, 2022; Meyers et al., 2020).

These findings corroborate extant literature positing the notion of work engagement as a pivotal psychological mechanism that connects personal and organisational resources to performance outcomes. The hypothesis that lecturers who feel energetic, dedicated and fully involved in their work will invest greater effort in teaching, research and academic service activities is one that merits investigation. If this hypothesis is proven to be correct, it will be possible to conclude that the result will be higher levels of performance.

From a theoretical perspective, this result strongly supports the JD-R model, which proposes that job resources and personal resources enhance work engagement, which subsequently leads to improved performance. In this study, individual development represents an important professional resource, while PsyCap functions as a personal resource (Granziera & Perera, 2019; Wagner & Hollenbeck, 2020). Both resources contribute to lecturer performance through the motivational process represented by work engagement.

These findings highlight the importance of creating an academic environment that not only enhances lecturers' competencies and psychological strengths but also promotes engagement in their professional roles. Universities that successfully foster lecturer engagement are more likely to achieve higher levels of teaching quality, research productivity, and overall academic performance.

CONCLUSION

This investigation explored the potential of psychological capital and individual development as strategic human capital components to enhance lecturer performance. This was achieved by examining work engagement as a potential mediating mechanism among permanent lecturers employed at private universities located in East Java, Indonesia. All seven hypotheses were supported. PsyCap and individual development each positively and significantly influenced both lecturer performance and work engagement. The present study demonstrated that work engagement had a significant positive effect on lecturer performance. Furthermore, the results indicated that work engagement mediated the relationships between PsyCap and performance, as well as between individual development and performance. These findings confirm that psychological resources and professional development investments enhance lecturer performance primarily by strengthening work engagement.

Theoretically, this study extends the JD-R model into the higher education governance context by integrating PsyCap and individual development within a unified strategic human capital framework. By demonstrating the mediating role of work engagement, the study clarifies the mechanism through which professional and psychological resources translate into lecturer performance. Practically, universities should prioritize structured development programs alongside initiatives that strengthen lecturers' psychological resources and foster work engagement, as these elements collectively drive teaching quality, research productivity, and institutional competitiveness.

LIMITATION

It is imperative to acknowledge the methodological limitations of this study when interpreting the findings. Initially, the sample was restricted to 120 permanent lecturers from social science study programmes at private universities in East Java under LLDIKTI Region VII. Despite the fact that the sample size is deemed sufficient for the execution of PLS-SEM analysis, it might not entirely mirror the heterogenity of lecturers in Indonesia in terms of various disciplines, geographical locations and institutional types. It is

recommended that future studies employ larger and more diverse samples in order to enhance the generalisability of the results.

Secondly, the present study employed a cross-sectional survey design, which captures data at a single point in time and thus limits causal inferences. The utilisation of longitudinal research designs in this context would offer a substantial enhancement to the evidence supporting the hypothesised causal relationships delineated in the theoretical model. This is particularly relevant in elucidating the temporal dynamics of PsyCap and individual development, and the manner in which they influence engagement and performance over extended periods.

Third, data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and common method bias (CMB). While PLS-SEM is robust in handling measurement error, the potential for CMB arising from the use of a single data source cannot be entirely ruled out. Future research could adopt multi-source data collection methods, such as incorporating supervisor evaluations of lecturer performance, to mitigate this concern.

Finally, the scope of this study was confined to private universities under LLDIKTI Region VII in East Java, Indonesia. The findings may therefore have limited transferability to public universities, institutions in other regions of Indonesia, or universities in different national contexts. Future research is encouraged to replicate and extend this study across diverse institutional settings, educational systems, and cultural contexts to enrich the theoretical and empirical understanding of strategic human capital, work engagement, and lecturer performance.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The researchers affirm that no apparent conflicts of interest exist pertaining to this investigation. This study was undertaken independently, with no discernible conflicts of interest arising from commercial, financial, or personal affiliations. The final manuscript underwent review by all participating authors, who endorsed the version for submission. Involvement in this study was purely voluntary, and all participants were obligated to provide informed consent prior to data collection.

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