



Career Development, Promotion Opportunities, and Employee Performance After PT Sigma Acquisition

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Abstract

Background: Post-acquisition integration can reshape organizational structures, career pathways, competition for internal positions, and employees' expectations about their future. At PT Sigma, these issues became salient after the acquisitions of PT Gabung Satu and PT Gabung Dua, creating a need to examine how career development and promotion opportunities relate to workforce performance.

Objective: This study investigated the associations of perceived career development and promotion opportunities with employee performance at PT Sigma following the acquisition.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 431 permanent employees representing different job levels and tenure groups. The data were evaluated using descriptive statistics, instrument validity and reliability tests, classical assumption testing, and multiple linear regression.

Results: Career development was positively and significantly associated with employee performance, whereas promotion opportunities showed a significant negative association ($B = -0.083$; $\beta = -0.285$). The two predictors jointly accounted for 32.9% of the variance in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.329$), indicating that development support and perceived advancement opportunities were related to performance in different directions.

Conclusion: The findings show that stronger perceptions of career development were associated with higher employee performance, while perceived promotion opportunities were associated with lower performance in this post-acquisition setting. For PT Sigma, the results highlight the importance of a transparent career architecture and merit-based promotion governance. Because the design was cross-sectional, causal conclusions require longitudinal evidence.

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INTRODUCTION

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are widely employed to accelerate corporate expansion, extend market presence, and obtain strategic resources and capabilities. Even so, many transactions do not generate the value initially anticipated because expected synergies are not realized automatically after closing. Recent scholarship therefore places greater emphasis on the post-acquisition integration stage, when organizations must coordinate structures, systems, and human resources if the transaction is to create lasting value (Bauer et al., 2016, 2024). The people-related dimension is especially important because employee alignment, communication, and workforce outcomes influence whether the combined organization can sustain its performance over time (Wang & Schweizer, 2024). This issue is particularly salient in energy and other capital-

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intensive industries, where operational continuity and productivity are essential and workforce performance during integration directly affects competitiveness.

Performance challenges after an acquisition can emerge from several interconnected organizational changes. Integration may alter reporting lines, job classifications, and internal opportunity structures, creating uncertainty about employees' roles and future career prospects (Kroon & Reif, 2023; Schlindwein & Geppert, 2021). As the workforce expands, the internal talent pool also grows, increasing competition for a limited number of managerial and strategic positions. At the same time, incomplete or inconsistent communication can intensify uncertainty about career progression within the newly integrated organization (Hasmin, 2025). Legacy and acquired employees may also enter the combined organization with different expectations and employment histories. When promotion processes are viewed as unclear, insufficiently merit-based, or inconsistently administered, perceptions of inequity and career stagnation may develop (Kitole & Mwita, 2025). Collectively, structural change, stronger internal competition, communication gaps, and concerns about fairness create conditions that may threaten employee performance during integration.

These conditions have implications for both employees and the organization. Perceived limitations or inequities in development and advancement opportunities can weaken motivation and organizational commitment while increasing frustration and intentions to leave (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Hom et al., 2017). Employee turnover and instability in workforce retention can subsequently interrupt work continuity and reduce labor productivity, generating tangible organizational costs (Alberto De La Cruz Saavedra et al., 2025; De Winne et al., 2019). Likewise, when advancement is seen as inaccessible or unfair, employees may reduce effort, collaboration, and job satisfaction, undermining the performance gains that the acquisition was expected to create (Kabii & Ngetich, 2026). Consequently, unresolved concerns about career development and promotion may translate into lower productivity, weaker operational continuity, and difficulty in capturing the strategic value of the acquisition.

The present study focuses on career development, promotion opportunities, and employee performance. Career development is viewed as an ongoing process through which employees build knowledge, skills, experience, and opportunities that support progress toward career objectives within an organization (Greenhaus et al., 2019, 2025; Noe, 2020). From an employee-perception perspective, the construct reflects how individuals assess the availability and quality of organizational support for their professional growth and future advancement (De Vos & Cambré, 2017; Krammer et al., 2011; Lei et al., 2025). Promotion opportunities refer to employees' judgments about whether advancement is available, accessible, fair, and realistically attainable, rather than merely whether a formal promotion system exists (Dessler, 2020; Pergamit & Veum, 1999; Suganthi et al., 2025). Employee performance is treated as a multidimensional construct encompassing task, contextual, and adaptive behaviors demonstrated when employees fulfill core duties, contribute to the work environment, and respond to change (Koopmans et al., 2011; Suganthi et al., 2025). The proposed relationships draw on Career Development Theory Super (1957) and Expectancy Theory Zahrani (2026), which explain why perceived opportunities for growth and advancement can shape effort and performance.

The study contributes by examining these constructs together in an empirical setting that has received limited attention. Earlier research has frequently considered career development and promotion separately, emphasized actual promotion events rather than employees' perceptions of opportunity, and concentrated on settings such as hospitality, education, and public administration (Batse, 2025; Firdaus et al., 2024; Hosen et al., 2024). Studies that simultaneously test perceived career development and perceived promotion opportunities as predictors of performance remain limited, particularly in a post-acquisition energy company where legacy and acquired employees compete within the same enlarged talent pool. By analyzing PT Sigma, an integrated Indonesian energy organization, and considering differences in perceptions between legacy and acquired employees, this research connects human-resource issues with post-acquisition integration. Its specific contribution is to examine whether organizational development support and perceived access to advancement show different associations with employee performance within one integrated workforce.

This issue is especially relevant for PT Sigma Blu (PT Sigma). After acquiring PT Gabung Satu and PT Gabung Dua, the organization became substantially larger and more complex, with

approximately USD 7.46 billion in assets and a workforce of more than 6,300 employees. Although this expansion strengthened the company's competitive position, it also shifted managerial attention from completing the transactions to integrating people and sustaining performance. In such a setting, unclear career pathways and promotion practices that employees do not regard as transparent may be associated with lower motivation, weaker performance, and higher turnover risk, all of which are consequential in a capital-intensive industry that depends on operational continuity (Alberto De La Cruz Saavedra et al., 2025; De Winne et al., 2019). Because prior corporate attention has primarily emphasized financial and operational outcomes, the role of employee perceptions in sustaining performance warrants closer examination. Given the cross-sectional design, the empirical relationships in this study are interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

Accordingly, this study investigates how career development and promotion opportunities are related to employee performance at PT Sigma following the acquisition. It specifically examines the association between employees' perceptions of career development and their performance, as well as the association between perceived promotion opportunities and performance. The analysis also considers differences between legacy employees and those originating from the acquired entities to clarify how internal career-related mechanisms may support performance during organizational integration.

The study is expected to offer both theoretical and managerial value. Theoretically, it extends human-resource management and strategic-integration research by evaluating perceived career development and perceived promotion opportunities simultaneously in a post-acquisition environment and by applying Career Development Theory and Expectancy Theory to a context that has received relatively little empirical attention (Komkov et al., 2023; Super, 1957; Vroom, 1964). Practically, the findings are intended to help PT Sigma strengthen its career architecture, align development with competencies, and improve transparent and merit-based promotion governance across legacy and acquired entities (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Haryadi et al., 2025). The results may also be relevant to other organizations managing post-acquisition workforce integration, particularly in energy and other capital-intensive sectors. More broadly, the research highlights career-system perceptions that require managerial attention and underscores the need for longitudinal and multi-source studies to determine how these relationships evolve over time.

METHOD

The research design was structured to translate a post-acquisition workforce problem into evidence that could inform organizational action. Rather than treating the method section solely as a description of statistical procedures, the design links the study setting, variables, participants, measurement approach, and analytical sequence to the practical question of how PT Sigma can understand employee perceptions that may be related to performance during integration. This problem-oriented logic guided each methodological choice and positioned the study as an evidence-based diagnosis rather than a purely descriptive exercise (Creswell, 2014; Weyant, 2022).

A quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional survey design was adopted. This design was selected to estimate the strength and direction of associations between measurable employee perceptions and performance rather than merely describe organizational conditions. Quantitative analysis is appropriate for testing theoretically specified relationships among variables using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014; Weyant, 2022), while the positivist orientation supports systematic examination of a defined population (Sugiyono, 2022). The explanatory sequence moves from measurement assessment to relationship testing to identify perception-related areas that may warrant managerial attention. Because observations were collected at one point in time, the analysis does not establish temporal ordering; regression coefficients are therefore interpreted as conditional associations.

The study was undertaken at PT Sigma Blu (PT Sigma), an integrated Indonesian energy company operating in oil and gas, power generation, and mining after its acquisitions of PT Gabung Satu and PT Gabung Dua. This setting was chosen purposively because the post-acquisition period is the stage at which workforce alignment becomes critical to realizing transaction value (Bauer et al., 2016, 2024). Examining employees within one recently enlarged organization also reduces variation attributable to industry and organizational context, thereby

allowing differences in career- and promotion-related perceptions to be considered within the shared integration environment.

Three employee-level constructs were examined: perceived career development (X1), perceived promotion opportunities (X2), and perceived employee performance (Y). Employee origin, legacy or acquired, was used as an additional comparative dimension. The emphasis on perceptions is deliberate because employees' interpretations of development and advancement opportunities may influence their work behavior during organizational change. Employee performance was conceptualized as a multidimensional outcome comprising task, contextual, and adaptive behavior ([Armstrong & Taylor, 2023](#); [Koopmans et al., 2011](#)), thereby capturing both core job execution and the flexibility required in an integrating organization. Each construct was operationalized using observable indicators adapted from established measures. Including employee origin as a descriptive comparison also allowed the study to identify whether legacy and acquired employees experienced the organization's career and promotion systems differently.

The sampling frame consisted of approximately 2,023 permanent PT Sigma employees from legacy and acquired entities, covering organizational levels from staff to senior vice president. Because this population was large and heterogeneous, stratified random sampling was used so that major position levels and employee groups could be represented proportionately ([Bhardwaj, 2019](#); [SAGO, 2024](#)). Using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error produced a minimum requirement of approximately 340 respondents. To improve precision and compensate for potential non-response, 431 valid questionnaires were ultimately obtained from employees across different job levels and tenure categories. The 2,023 employees represent the eligible permanent-employee population used for sampling, whereas the larger company-wide headcount includes personnel outside this frame. Random selection was performed within the defined position strata before the 431 valid responses were finalized.

Data were collected primarily through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument captured respondent characteristics and the three principal constructs in a standardized form suitable for comparison across the workforce ([Sugiyono, 2022](#)). Survey data were supplemented with organizational information, including aggregated engagement-survey results from before and after the acquisitions, cross-level focus-group insights, communication-strategy documents, and talent and promotion guidelines. Such documentary material provides contextual grounding for organizational-change research and allows formal organizational practices to be considered alongside employee perceptions. Career-development items assessed support for competency growth, career planning, feedback, and development opportunities; promotion items measured perceived availability, accessibility, transparency, fairness, and attainability; and performance items covered task, contextual, and adaptive dimensions. Adapted measures were evaluated for item validity and internal-consistency reliability before regression analysis.

The analysis proceeded in a staged sequence. Descriptive statistics were first used to characterize the strength and dispersion of employee perceptions, followed by validity and reliability testing to evaluate measurement quality. Multiple linear regression was then applied to estimate the separate and joint associations of career development and promotion opportunities with employee performance ([Creswell, 2014](#); [Weyant, 2022](#)). Classical assumption tests were conducted before interpreting the regression model. Hypothesis tests and the coefficient of determination were subsequently used to assess the statistical importance of each predictor and the proportion of variation in performance accounted for by the model. This sequence was intended to identify which career-related perceptions were most strongly associated with performance and thereby inform organizational priorities concerning career architecture, promotion governance, and integration communication ([Sugiyono, 2022](#)). Comparisons between legacy and acquired employees were treated as descriptive subgroup analyses rather than as a separate causal model unless explicitly reported otherwise.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The results examine the relationships among career development, promotion opportunities, and employee performance at PT Sigma after the acquisition of PT Gabung Satu and PT Gabung Dua. The integration altered organizational structures, career pathways, internal competition, and employees' expectations concerning their future within the company. In an M&A setting, transaction completion alone does not determine organizational success; effective post-acquisition integration is also required to preserve workforce performance and operational continuity (Bauer et al., 2016, 2024; Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

The analysis is based on 431 valid responses and summarizes respondent characteristics, measurement quality, descriptive patterns, and regression estimates relevant to the study objectives. Participants represented a broad range of roles, including Staff/Officer/Engineer/Individual Contributor, Supervisor/Coordinator/Lead, Superintendent/Manager, Senior Manager/General Manager/VP, and other operational, technical, specialist, and administrative positions. Consequently, the sample captures perceptions across both operational and managerial levels—groups that directly experienced post-acquisition changes in structure, career systems, and competition for advancement (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Koopmans et al., 2011).

Distribution of Research Respondents

Table 1 summarizes respondents according to position level and organizational tenure. These characteristics are relevant because perceptions of development and promotion may vary across occupational levels and career stages, particularly during organizational integration following an acquisition (Junni & Teerikangas, 2019; Alberto De La Cruz Saavedra et al., 2025; De Winne et al., 2019).

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by Position and Tenure

Category Respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Staff / Officer / Engineer / Individual Contributor	158	36,7%
Supervisor / Coordinator / Lead	126	29,2%
Superintendent / Manager	100	23,2%
Senior Manager / General Manager / VP	19	4,4%
Other operational, technical, specialist, and administrative roles	28	6,5%
Total	431	100%
>10 years of service	357	82,8%
1–3 years of service	20	4,6%
4–6 years of service	23	5,3%
7–10 years of service	31	7,2%
Total	431	100%

As shown in Table 1, Staff/Officers/Engineers/Individual Contributors formed the largest group, with 158 respondents (36.7%). Supervisors/Coordinators/Leads accounted for 126 respondents (29.2%), followed by Superintendents/Managers with 100 respondents (23.2%). The tenure profile was heavily concentrated among experienced employees: 357 respondents (82.8%) had worked for more than 10 years. This distribution indicates that much of the sample had substantial organizational experience, which may shape relatively established perceptions of post-acquisition change, career development, promotion opportunities, and performance (Greenhaus et al., 2019, 2025; Noe, 2020). The dominance of long-tenured respondents should therefore be considered when assessing generalizability, as the findings may represent established employees more strongly than newer entrants.

Overview of Research Variables

The model contains three core constructs: Career Development (X1), Promotion Opportunities (X2), and Employee Performance (Y). Career development represents employees' perceptions of organizational support for building competencies, planning careers, receiving

developmental feedback, and accessing professional growth opportunities. Promotion opportunities capture perceived availability, transparency, fairness, accessibility, and attainability of advancement. Employee performance reflects respondents' assessments of their ability to accomplish assigned work, achieve targets, maintain quality, assist colleagues, and adapt to organizational change (Koopmans et al., 2011; Vroom, 1964; Xie & Yang, 2021; Zhao & Khan, 2024).

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables*

Variable	Number of Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Career Development (X1)	12	4,04	0,60	High
Promotion Opportunities (X2)	12	3,51	0,84	Medium-High
Employee Performance (Y)	6	4,43	0,49	Very High

Descriptive statistics indicate that Employee Performance had the highest mean ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.49$), placing it in the very high category. Career Development also received a favorable evaluation ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.60$), corresponding to a high level of perceived development support. Promotion Opportunities recorded a lower mean ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.84$), suggesting a medium-to-high evaluation together with greater variation in employee perceptions than observed for the other constructs (Ahmed et al., 2017; Hosen et al., 2024).

The contrast between strong self-rated performance and less favorable perceptions of promotion is notable. Employees generally considered themselves capable of maintaining high performance, yet they did not express equally strong confidence in advancement opportunities. During post-acquisition integration, this pattern may arise when a larger talent pool increases internal competition while changing structures make career progression less predictable. Promotion can therefore be experienced not only as a pathway for advancement but also as a source of pressure and unmet expectations when the governing process is not perceived as sufficiently transparent (Alberto De La Cruz Saavedra et al., 2025; De Winne et al., 2019; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991).

Findings on Career Development Variables

At the item level, the strongest career-development responses concerned employees' understanding of their professional capabilities in their current roles and their awareness of personal strengths and competencies that still require development. These responses suggest relatively strong self-knowledge among PT Sigma employees regarding their skills, potential, and development needs. Such awareness is valuable during post-acquisition integration because employees who understand their capabilities may be better positioned to adjust to changing roles, performance standards, and organizational expectations (Greenhaus et al., 2019, 2025; Super, 1957).

By contrast, lower-scoring career-development items concerned the clarity of career objectives, the direction of future careers within the company, and concrete plans for achieving career goals. Thus, employees may recognize their own capabilities while remaining less certain about how those capabilities translate into an organizational career path. This gap highlights the importance of career systems that connect individual aspirations with organizational requirements through clear pathways, feedback, mentoring, training, and other development support (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Noe, 2020).

Findings on Promotion Opportunity Variables

Perceptions of promotion opportunities were generally in the medium-to-high range, but responses varied more widely than for the other variables. Employees continued to recognize that advancement opportunities existed; however, ratings were less favorable for transparency of the promotion process, clarity of criteria, equitable access, and the perceived attainability of promotion. The key issue is therefore not simply whether promotion is available, but whether employees believe advancement is governed by a process that is understandable, fair, and realistically accessible (Komkov et al., 2023; Pergamit & Veum, 1999; Vroom, 1964).

Promotion perceptions may become particularly sensitive during post-acquisition

restructuring because the workforce incorporates employees from different organizational origins. Legacy employees may experience stronger competition for a limited number of positions, whereas employees from acquired entities may still be learning how advancement decisions are made in the integrated company. When promotion criteria and procedures are not communicated clearly, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and perceptions of unfairness may increase. This interpretation is consistent with Expectancy Theory, which proposes that motivation depends partly on employees' belief that effort and performance will lead to valued outcomes such as promotion (Komkov et al., 2023; Vroom, 1964). These explanations remain interpretive because the questionnaire did not directly measure networking, favoritism, or interpersonal competition.

Findings on Employee Performance Variables

Employee Performance received the highest mean among the three variables. Strong item scores were reported for completing assigned tasks, meeting targets, maintaining quality, helping colleagues, taking initiative, and contributing to a productive work environment. These results indicate that employees continued to evaluate their performance positively despite ongoing organizational changes. Such perceived performance is particularly important during integration because organizational continuity depends on employees' ability to remain productive, preserve work quality, and adapt to revised structures and systems (Koopmans et al., 2011, 2013; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023)..

Respondents also perceived themselves as contributing beyond core task execution by cooperating with colleagues, supporting teams, and taking initiative outside narrowly defined responsibilities. Within the Individual Work Performance framework, these behaviors correspond to contextual and adaptive performance in addition to task performance. All three dimensions are relevant in a post-acquisition environment, where employees must simultaneously deliver routine outputs, support the broader work setting, and adjust to changing structures, processes, and expectations (Campbell et al., 1990; Koopmans et al., 2011; Lei et al., 2025).

Instrument Validity and Reliability Test Results

Validity and reliability testing indicated adequate measurement quality for all three constructs. Each item for Career Development, Promotion Opportunities, and Employee Performance showed a positive and statistically significant item-total correlation. Cronbach's alpha values were 0.920 for Career Development, 0.963 for Promotion Opportunities, and 0.914 for Employee Performance. Because all coefficients exceeded the 0.70 reference threshold, the scales demonstrated strong internal consistency and were considered suitable for subsequent analysis (Sugiyono, 2022).

Table 3

Summary of Instrument Validity and Reliability

Variable	Number of Valid Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Remarks
Career Development (X1)	12	0,920	Reliable
Promotion Opportunities (X2)	12	0,963	Reliable
Employee Performance (Y)	6	0,914	Reliable

These reliability coefficients show that the items within each scale functioned consistently in measuring their respective constructs. Combined with the item-validity results, this provides an acceptable measurement basis for examining the associations among career development, promotion opportunities, and employee performance in the PT Sigma post-acquisition setting (Creswell, 2014; Koopmans et al., 2013; Weyant, 2022).

Classical Assumption Test Results

Before estimating the multiple regression model, the analysis evaluated normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. In the Normal Q-Q Plot, residual observations were positioned approximately along the diagonal reference line, indicating an acceptably normal residual pattern. For Career Development and Promotion Opportunities, tolerance values exceeded 0.10 and VIF values remained below 10, providing no indication of serious

multicollinearity between the predictors (Sugiyono, 2022; Weyant, 2022).

The Spearman-based heteroscedasticity assessment produced significance values above 0.05 for the variables examined. Accordingly, no statistically significant association was observed between the predictors and residuals, supporting the assumption of homoscedasticity. Taken together, the diagnostic results indicated that the regression model was appropriate for evaluating the associations of career development and promotion opportunities with employee performance (Sugiyono, 2022; Weyant, 2022).

Multiple Linear Regression Results

Multiple linear regression showed a positive and statistically significant association between Career Development and Employee Performance. The unstandardized coefficient for Career Development was 0.292 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that more favorable perceptions of career development were associated with higher perceived performance. This result supports the first hypothesis and suggests that clarity of career pathways, organizational development support, and opportunities to build competencies are relevant to sustaining employee performance at PT Sigma after the acquisition (Greenhaus et al., 2019, 2025; Hosen et al., 2024).

Promotion Opportunities were also significantly associated with Employee Performance, although the estimated direction was negative ($B = -0.083$, $p < 0.001$). The finding should not be taken to mean that promotion itself reduces performance. Rather, in a transitional post-acquisition setting, perceived advancement opportunities may coexist with uncertainty about promotion criteria, accessibility, and decision processes. This contextual interpretation is consistent with the possibility that promotion becomes a source of pressure or competition when governance is not perceived as fully transparent and fair. Because these mechanisms were not measured directly, longitudinal or qualitative research is required before drawing conclusions about why this negative association emerged.

Table 4

Summary of Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.	Verdict
Constants	15,953	-	20,219	<0,001	-
Career Development (X1)	0,292	0,719	13,713	<0,001	Significant positive
Promotion Opportunities (X2)	-0,083	-0,285	-5,430	<0,001	Significant negative

When considered jointly, Career Development and Promotion Opportunities were significantly associated with Employee Performance. The overall model produced $F = 105.114$ ($p < 0.001$), while $R^2 = 0.329$ indicates that the two predictors accounted for 32.9% of the observed variance in employee performance. The remaining 67.1% is attributable to factors not included in the model, which may include leadership, compensation, communication, organizational culture, perceived fairness, and the work environment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Blau, 1964; Vroom, 1964).

Discussion

The Urgency of Research in the Post-Acquisition Context of PT Sigma

The relevance of this study extends beyond the financial and asset-related dimensions of acquisition because integration also alters organizational structures, work arrangements, career pathways, and employees' expectations about their future with the company. At PT Sigma, the acquisitions of PT Gabung Satu and PT Gabung Dua produced a larger, more heterogeneous, and more complex organization. The combined workforce must therefore adjust to new role structures, revised work systems, stronger competition for advancement, and changing expectations regarding development and promotion. This aligns with the argument of Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) and Chaturvedi and Weigelt (2024) that acquisition success depends substantially on the quality of post-acquisition integration rather than on completion of the transaction alone.

Employee performance is a particularly important indicator of whether such integration is functioning effectively. PT Sigma must integrate not only assets, systems, and operating processes but also employees from legacy and acquired organizations, each of whom needs clarity

about responsibilities, development possibilities, and fair opportunities for growth. Poorly managed perceptions of careers and promotion can contribute to uncertainty, insecurity, reduced motivation, and potential talent loss. Junni and Teerikangas (2019), Pooja (2025) and Fayankinnu and Akinde (2020) similarly emphasize that perceived injustice and uncertainty after organizational combinations may affect employee effort, collaboration, and the stability of performance.

Background information also indicates that PT Sigma experienced substantial business transformation between 2022 and 2025. As reported in Table I.1 of the underlying study, the company continued to devote significant resources to employee development through numerous training programs and extensive annual training hours. This level of investment makes it important to determine whether formal development activity is accompanied by employees' confidence in career progression and promotion processes.

Root Cause: Gap between Development, Promotion, and Employee Perception

The descriptive pattern reveals a clear gap among the three constructs. Employee Performance recorded the highest mean (4.43), followed by Career Development (4.04), whereas Promotion Opportunities received the lowest mean (3.51). Employees therefore tended to view their own performance favorably while expressing comparatively weaker confidence in the promotion system. From the perspective of Expectancy Theory, this discrepancy matters because motivation depends partly on whether employees believe that effort and strong performance will lead to outcomes they value (Komkov et al., 2023; Vroom, 1964). When the connection between performance and advancement is unclear, promotion may provide less motivational value than expected.

One possible source of this gap is the increased complexity of career pathways following the acquisition. By combining employees from legacy and acquired entities, PT Sigma enlarged its internal talent pool while leaving the number of strategic positions comparatively constrained. Legacy employees may therefore perceive that they face stronger competition, whereas employees joining from acquired entities may still be unfamiliar with the career rules of the integrated organization. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that perceptions of fairness and development opportunities are closely linked to employee outcomes in post-M&A settings (Alberto De La Cruz Saavedra et al., 2025; De Winne et al., 2019).

A second issue concerns perceived transparency in promotion governance. Promotion Opportunities displayed greater response dispersion than the other variables, indicating that employees did not share a uniform view of the system. Some respondents may perceive realistic advancement prospects, while others remain uncertain about criteria, evaluation procedures, equitable access, or the likelihood of being promoted. The negative regression coefficient for Promotion Opportunities should therefore be read in context: it does not demonstrate that promotion is harmful, but it may reflect a situation in which advancement is accompanied by competition and expectation gaps when the process is not consistently viewed as transparent and fair.

A third consideration is the quality of communication surrounding organizational change. Figure I.6 in the source study indicates lower ratings for workplace communication, including communication about change. Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) and Edwards et al. (2025) show that realistic, structured, and consistent communication can reduce uncertainty during organizational integration. For PT Sigma, weaker perceptions of change communication may reduce employees' confidence that career and promotion decisions are being managed openly. Consequently, even when development programs are available, employees may not clearly understand how those programs connect to promotion, internal mobility, or recognition of performance.

Discussion of Career Development Results on Employee Performance

Career Development demonstrated a positive and statistically significant association with Employee Performance ($B = 0.292$; $\beta = 0.719$; $t = 13.713$; $p < 0.001$). Employees who evaluated career-development support more favorably also tended to report stronger performance. In the PT Sigma context, this result suggests that direction, developmental support, and clarity regarding future career possibilities are particularly relevant after organizational integration. Training, mentoring, feedback, and visible competency pathways may help employees understand how they

can continue to grow and contribute within the enlarged organization.

The result can also be interpreted through Social Exchange Theory Blau (2017) and Stranzl (2024), which views the employee-organization relationship as a reciprocal exchange. When employees perceive that the organization invests in their development, they may respond with stronger commitment, effort, and performance. During post-acquisition change, development support may additionally signal that the organization remains attentive to employees' long-term prospects despite uncertainty regarding positions, responsibilities, and growth opportunities.

Career Development Theory provides a complementary explanation. Super (1957) and McIlveen et al. (2025) conceptualizes careers as long-term developmental processes rather than as a series of immediate job outcomes. Employees therefore evaluate not only whether they can perform current responsibilities but also whether the organization enables them to develop in ways that match their abilities, interests, and aspirations. Greenhaus et al. (2019) and Noe (2020) and Weisenburger (2026) similarly emphasize the alignment of individual development with organizational requirements. A competency-based and clearly communicated career structure may thus help PT Sigma employees connect learning and upskilling with future roles and contributions.

The finding is broadly consistent with earlier work. Hosen et al. (2024) reported a positive relationship between career development and job performance, while Ibojo & Akinade (2023) argued that human-resource development practices such as training, mentoring, and career development can strengthen employee outcomes. The contribution of the present study lies in demonstrating a similar association within a large, capital-intensive energy organization undergoing post-acquisition integration, a context that differs substantially from the hospitality setting examined by Hosen et al. (2024).

Discussion of Promotion Opportunities for Employee Performance

A particularly notable result is the significant negative association between Promotion Opportunities and Employee Performance. The estimated coefficient was -0.083 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the promotion variable was related to performance in the opposite direction from the initial expectation. Promotion is commonly theorized as a motivational mechanism because advancement may bring greater responsibility, status, compensation, and recognition. Accordingly, Dessler (2020) and Armstrong and Taylor (2023) identify promotion as an important human-resource tool for recognizing contribution and retaining talent.

In PT Sigma's post-acquisition environment, however, perceived promotion opportunities may also carry uncertainty and competitive pressure. Strategic positions remain limited while the number of employees competing for them has increased as previously separate entities were integrated. Under such conditions, promotion becomes a sensitive organizational issue. If employees do not clearly understand how advancement decisions are made, they may question whether outcomes are determined solely by merit and may instead suspect the influence of informal factors such as networks, organizational origin, or proximity to decision makers. Such perceptions could weaken the motivational meaning of promotion even when opportunities formally exist.

This pattern differs from Ahmed et al. (2017), who identified a positive relationship between promotion opportunities and performance in the Bangladeshi garment industry, Batse (2025) likewise reported that promotion can support performance when it operates through transparent, merit-based procedures. The difference observed at PT Sigma is therefore contextually important. In a post-acquisition organization, the presence of advancement opportunities may not by itself improve performance; employees' perceptions of clarity, fairness, openness, and attainability appear to matter in determining how promotion is experienced.

The findings therefore add nuance to the promotion-performance literature by showing that the direction of the relationship may depend on organizational conditions. In a relatively stable setting, promotion may be readily interpreted as recognition or reward. During post-acquisition integration, by contrast, advancement can also symbolize intensified internal competition and uncertainty. The implication is not that promotion should be reduced, but that promotion governance should be made transparent, competency-based, and consistently communicated so that opportunities are not experienced as opaque or inequitable.

Discussion of Employee Performance as the Foundation for Successful Integration

Descriptive results place Employee Performance in the very high category. Despite organizational change associated with the acquisition, respondents generally believed that they could complete their work, achieve targets, maintain quality, assist colleagues, and contribute to team objectives. The Individual Work Performance framework distinguishes task, contextual, and adaptive performance (Koopmans et al., 2011, 2014; Lei et al., 2025). These dimensions are especially relevant after an acquisition because employees must continue delivering core responsibilities while supporting coworkers and adapting to revised structures and processes.

High perceived performance provides PT Sigma with an important foundation for integration, but it should not be interpreted as evidence that career-system issues are unimportant. Sustaining strong performance may become difficult if employees continue to deliver results while perceiving little connection among performance, development, and advancement. Over time, such a disconnect could contribute to fatigue, declining motivation, or turnover. Emphasize that the departure of experienced employees can disrupt continuity and weaken organizational performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023; Hom et al., 2017).

The model's R^2 of 0.329 shows that Career Development and Promotion Opportunities jointly accounted for 32.9% of variation in Employee Performance. This proportion indicates a meaningful role for career-related perceptions, while also confirming that most variation—67.1%—lies outside the model. Leadership, compensation, organizational culture, communication, fairness, job security, workload, and the work environment are among the additional factors that may contribute. Career development and promotion should therefore be treated as important components of a wider performance-management system rather than as stand-alone solutions.

The findings point to the need for an integrated career-development and promotion system at PT Sigma. A first priority is to strengthen career architecture through clear job families, career levels, competency frameworks, and distinct technical and managerial pathways. Such a structure can help employees understand both vertical and horizontal mobility and recognize that career growth may involve deeper expertise, broader responsibilities, or greater contribution in addition to formal promotion.

A second priority is to connect development activities more directly to competency requirements. Training should be evaluated not only by the number of programs delivered or training hours completed, but also by its relationship to competency gaps, business priorities, and readiness for future roles. Individual Development Plans linked to performance reviews, managerial feedback, and employee career aspirations could make this connection more explicit. This recommendation is consistent with the regression result showing Career Development as the strongest positive predictor in the model.

Third, promotion governance should be strengthened through explicit criteria, predictable promotion cycles, objective assessment panels, cross-unit calibration, and feedback for employees who are not selected. These mechanisms can reduce perceptions that advancement decisions are opaque. In parallel, communication during integration can be improved through town halls, career clinics, career-related FAQs, manager briefings, and recurring employee surveys. Finally, performance-linked talent analytics could be used to monitor how development participation, promotion outcomes, employee perceptions, performance, internal mobility, and retention evolve over time.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the associations of career development and promotion opportunities with employee performance at PT Sigma after the acquisitions of PT Gabung Satu and PT Gabung Dua. Evidence from 431 permanent employees showed that Career Development had the strongest positive association with Employee Performance. Employees who perceived clearer career direction, stronger competency-development support, and better access to developmental resources also tended to report higher performance. Promotion Opportunities were statistically significant but negatively associated with performance, suggesting that advancement may not function as a straightforward motivational mechanism when employees remain uncertain about the transparency, fairness, or merit basis of the process. Together, the two predictors explained

32.9% of the variance in Employee Performance. These findings reinforce the view that post-acquisition integration is shaped not only by financial and operational arrangements but also by how employees perceive their future careers and the governance of advancement. The study is limited by its focus on a single company, its cross-sectional design, and its reliance on self-reported performance rather than objective performance records. Future research should therefore examine additional organizations, adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and consider variables such as leadership, organizational communication, organizational justice, employee engagement, and psychological safety. Overall, the results indicate a positive association between career development and performance, a negative association between promotion opportunities and performance, and an R^2 of 0.329; these relationships should be interpreted as associative rather than causal.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Bambang Setiabudi contributed to the conceptualization of the research, development of the research framework, formulation of the methodology, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, manuscript preparation, and revision of the final manuscript. Achmad Fajar Hendarman contributed to research supervision, validation of the research design, critical review of the manuscript, refinement of the theoretical framework, and providing academic guidance throughout the research process. Both authors contributed to reviewing and approving the final version of the manuscript for publication.

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