

THE EFFECT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITH JOB STRESS AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement with job stress as a mediating variable through a literature study approach. The method used is a literature review of scientific articles, national and international journals, and relevant books published between 2019 and 2025. The selected literature focuses on the relationship between work-life balance, job stress, and employee engagement. The findings indicate that work-life balance has a significant positive effect on employee engagement. Employees who maintain a balance between personal life and work tend to be more enthusiastic, loyal, and dedicated. Conversely, job stress has a negative impact on employee engagement by reducing motivation, energy, and commitment. Furthermore, work-life balance negatively affects job stress, functioning as a protective factor that reduces stress levels. These results confirm that job stress mediates the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement. The study provides practical implications for organizations to design policies that support employees' work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, organizational support, and mental health programs, in order to enhance employee engagement and organizational sustainability.

Keywords: *work-life balance, job stress, employee engagement.*

INTRODUCTION

Developments in the world of work in the era of globalization and digitalization have brought significant changes to employee lifestyles. The dynamics of increasingly fierce business competition require companies to continuously improve performance through human resource optimization. Employees are no longer viewed merely as task performers but also as strategic assets that determine the organization's sustainability and competitiveness. Therefore, companies need to pay attention to various aspects that influence employee engagement to ensure they have motivation, loyalty, and dedication to achieving organizational goals (Pranitasari & Kusumawardani, 2021). One factor that has received considerable attention in human resource management studies is *work-life balance*. This balance is crucial because employees face high work demands as well as personal life obligations, such as family, social life, and self-development. An imbalance between these two aspects can trigger work stress, decrease motivation, and even potentially lead to *turnover intention*. Conversely, employees who are able to manage their work-life balance tend to have better work morale, higher engagement, and optimal performance (Nadira, 2019).

The concept of *employee engagement* has become a central topic in modern organizational research. Engagement is not merely job satisfaction, but rather an employee's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attachment to their work and the organization they work for. Highly engaged employees demonstrate dedication, energy, and commitment to their work, thus positively contributing to the achievement of company goals. However, this engagement doesn't just arise; it's influenced by various factors, including the employee's work-life balance (Paramarta & Darmayanti, 2020). Job stress has emerged as a crucial variable bridging the relationship between *work-life balance* and *employee engagement*. Excessive work pressure, an unbalanced workload, and high organizational demands often lead to stress, negatively impacting employees' psychological and physical well-being. Prolonged job stress can reduce concentration, decrease satisfaction, and weaken motivation, leading to decreased engagement with work. Conversely, if employees are able to manage their work-life balance well, stress levels can be reduced, thus fostering stronger work engagement (Harmen & Sunjaya, 2022).

Research on the relationship between *work-life balance*, job stress, and *employee engagement* is relevant, particularly in the context of modern organizations. Many companies are beginning to recognize that employee well-being involves more than just material aspects, but also emotional and psychological balance. *Work-life balance programs* such as flexible working hours, organizational support for employees' families, and mental health policies have been shown to increase employee engagement while reducing stress levels. Therefore, this study is expected to provide an empirical contribution regarding the mediating role of work stress in explaining the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement. This study is important not only for companies but also for the development of human resource management literature. From an academic perspective, this research enriches the understanding of the psychological mechanisms that bridge the relationship between work-life balance and work engagement. From a practical perspective, the research findings can serve as a basis for management in formulating strategic policies related to employee well-being, stress management, and increasing engagement, which have implications for organizational productivity and sustainability. Therefore, research on *the Effect of Work-Life Balance on Employee Engagement with Job Stress as a Mediating Variable* has high urgency both theoretically and practically.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement

The feeling of engagement is a sense of connectedness, involvement, commitment, loyalty, a sense of belonging to the company, a desire to contribute to the company, and a sense of pride in one's work and the company (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). Meanwhile, Arianti (2020) states that employee engagement is characterized by passion (vigor), dedication to work (dedication), and absorption during work (absorption). These three things are considered a positive outlook on life and thoughts about the unity of work relationships, resulting in employees with high engagement will feel positive and satisfied. Employee engagement is a form of employee direct contribution to their work that can be seen through their passion, dedication, and appreciation (Arianti et al., 2020). When employees are engaged, they will have an awareness of their role so they can give their best to the fullest ability. According to Srimulyani (2020), discussions of employee engagement in the field of human resources in Indonesia are still relatively limited, this can be seen from the limited research that touches on employee engagement. In fact, employee engagement can be used as a reflection of employee behavior and company performance (Srimulyani, 2020).

Work Life Balance

Work-life balance is generally associated with various aspects of a person's life (Barus, 2022). Work-life balance can be interpreted as evidence of the absence of conflict between work life and home life, thus creating a balance of satisfaction and happiness (Suhartini, 2021). Sirgy & Lee (2018) explain the same thing, namely that work-life balance is a form of high engagement of a person in work and non-work life, as evidenced by the few problems related to work and non-work life. Raja & Ganesan Kanagaraj, (2020) support this, that work-life balance is the creation of balance and employee involvement regarding time, and roles between work and non-work life. Iswardhani et al. (2019) stated that if employees have a high work-non-work balance that can make them satisfied, this will trigger the emergence of a high work ethic and make a positive contribution, because if work takes up more time than family, it will later give rise to work-family conflict (Wijayati et al., 2020).

Work Stress

Job stress is a condition that affects a person's mindset and creates emotional tension, resulting in excessive stress and hindering the completion of a job. Shafira & Nasution (2022) define job stress as a transaction between sources of work stress and personal capacity, and will have a positive or negative impact. If positive, it means the source of stress is a motivator for someone, while if negative, it is an indicator of suppression. Bhastary (2020) defines job stress as a condition of pressure originating from within or within a person. According to Trirahayu & Hendratni (2023), job stress is defined as a condition of tension that will affect a person's thought patterns, emotions, and physical condition. Based on several definitions of job stress above, researchers conclude that job stress is a condition where a person feels threatened, uncomfortable, unable to reach their abilities, burdened, and feels emotional and mental tension, which will result in hampered individual performance. According to Amin et al. (2020), someone experiencing work stress will exhibit symptoms that include three general categories, namely:

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1. Physiological Symptoms. Physiological symptoms are the earliest observable signs, especially in medical and health science research. Stress tends to result in changes in the body's metabolism, increased heart and breathing rates, increased blood pressure, headaches, and, more seriously, heart attacks.
2. Psychological Symptoms. Psychologically, stress can lead to dissatisfaction. This is the simplest and most obvious psychological effect. However, other psychological conditions can arise, such as tension, anxiety, irritability, boredom, and procrastination. Evidence shows that when people are placed in jobs with numerous and conflicting demands or where there is unclear duties, authority, and responsibilities, both stress and dissatisfaction increase.
3. Behavioral Symptoms. Behavioral symptoms of stress include changes in productivity, absenteeism, absenteeism, and employee turnover, as well as changes in eating habits, smoking and alcohol consumption, rapid speech, restlessness, and sleep disturbances.

METHOD

This research uses a literature review method with a descriptive qualitative approach. This method was chosen because the purpose of the research is to analyze, review, and synthesize various previous research results related to the relationship between work-life balance, job stress, and employee engagement. Literature review allows researchers to understand conceptual developments, identify research gaps, and identify patterns of relationships between variables that are the focus of the research. Data sources were obtained through searching scientific articles, national and international journals, reference books, and relevant academic documents. The literature criteria used include: (1) research published within the last five years (2019–2024) to ensure the freshness of the information, (2) articles discussing the topics of work-life balance, job stress, or employee engagement either partially or in an integrated manner, and (3) publications with academic credibility, such as indexed journals or books from reputable publishers.

The data collection process was conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, and SpringerLink, as well as Sinta-accredited national journals. Keywords used in the literature search included: work-life balance, employee engagement, job stress, mediation effect, and human resource management. The obtained articles were then selected based on their relevance to the research topic and the suitability of the methodology used in each study. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis techniques. Each literature was reviewed to identify key concepts, research findings, and relationships between the variables studied. The results of the analysis were then categorized into major themes, namely the influence of work-life balance on employee engagement, the role of job stress in influencing employee engagement, and the mediating mechanisms of job stress in the relationship between the two main variables. Through this literature review approach, the study seeks to present a comprehensive synthesis that illustrates how work-life balance contributes to employee engagement by considering the role of job stress as a mediating variable. Furthermore, this method also allows researchers to identify the practical and theoretical contributions of previous research results, thereby providing recommendations for the development of future human resource policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Author and Year	Title	Research result
Melly Irmawati and Ahmad Rudini (2024)	The Influence of Work Stress and Work Discipline on Employee Engagement of Contract Workers at the Regional Secretariat of East Kotawaringin Regency	Based on the Partial t-Test, it shows that the Work Stress variable has a significant effect on employee engagement of contract workers at the Regional Secretariat of East Kotawaringin Regency.
Hilma Harmen, Wahyu Sunjaya (2022)	Work Stress and Employee Ability: Their Impact on Employee Engagement	It was found that job stress negatively impacts employee engagement, while employee ability positively impacts employee engagement. Simultaneously, job stress and employee ability influence employee engagement.
Felicia Piscesta, Stefhani Febriana L, Yohanes Andri Putranto B (2022)	The Influence of Work-Life Balance on Job Stress in Accounting Educators in Palembang City	Work-Life Balance has a negative effect on Work Stress.

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Sweetenia Syelvy, Andhika Mochamad Siddiq (2024)	The Influence of Work Life Balance on Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction as Intervening Variables at CV Multi Agro Sarana	The results of the study indicate that levels of work-life balance, job satisfaction, and employee engagement are quite good. The conclusion is that work-life balance has a positive and significant impact on employee satisfaction, work-life balance also has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement, and work-life balance influences employee engagement through job satisfaction.
Dhuha Safria (2022)	The Influence of Work Life Balance, Transformational Leadership, and Organizational Culture on Employee Engagement in Shaping Performance in Generation Y Employees	The results of the study show that 1) there is a significant relationship between work life balance and organizational culture on employee engagement.
Dadar Supriatna, Latifah, Haris Karyadi, Widyastuti, Olivia Tahalele (2025)	The Influence of Work-Life Balance, Workload, and Job Stress on Employee Engagement	Research results have found that work-life balance, workload, and work stress influence employee engagement.
Alfiya Jannata, Mirwan Surya Perdhana (2022)	Analysis of the Influence of Work-Life Balance on Employee Engagement with Job Satisfaction as an Intervening Variable (Study at PT Barata Indonesia)	The research results show that work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. This means that the level of balance between work and personal life can influence employee engagement. Companies that strive for a good work-life balance will see employees feel more engaged in both their work and the company.

The Influence of Work-Life Balance on Employee Engagement

Work-life balance is a crucial factor in shaping employee engagement. A literature review shows that work-life balance is consistently positively related to employee engagement levels across various organizational contexts. Employees who perceive a balance in dividing their time, energy, and attention between work and personal life tend to have higher work motivation, stronger loyalty, and dedication to achieving organizational goals. Research by Sweetenia Syelvy & Andhika Mochamad Siddiq (2024) confirms that work-life balance not only directly impacts employee engagement but also impacts job satisfaction. These findings suggest that employees satisfied with the company's work-life balance policy are more emotionally engaged with their work. This aligns with the findings of Alfiya Jannata & Mirwan Surya Perdhana (2022), who demonstrated that work-life balance significantly impacts employee engagement at PT Barata Indonesia. Employees who perceive a balanced work-life balance are more enthusiastic and committed to the company.

Furthermore, research by Dhuha Safria (2022) also shows a significant relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement, especially among Generation Y. This generation is known to have a high orientation towards flexibility and work-life balance, so companies that fail to address these aspects could potentially lose employee engagement. The results of research by Dadar Supriatna et al. (2025) reinforce previous findings by showing that work-life balance, along with workload and job stress, influences employee engagement. Therefore, the better the work-life balance an employee has, the lower their stress levels and the higher their engagement with the organization. These findings provide empirical evidence that work-life balance serves as an important mechanism in fostering work engagement. This can be explained through the Job Demands-Resources Model framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which states that work-life balance acts as a resource that reduces excessive work demands and suppresses work stress. When employees have sufficient energy to manage work and personal life in a balanced manner, they are able to contribute optimally with greater energy, dedication, and focus. In practical terms, companies that neglect work-life balance risk declining employee engagement. An imbalance between work and personal life demands can trigger excessive work stress, decrease motivation, and increase intentions to leave. Conversely, organizations that implement work-life balance policies through flexible working hours, remote working facilities, family support, and mental health programs are better able to maintain long-term employee engagement.

Thus, it can be concluded that work-life balance is a crucial determinant of employee engagement. Employees who perceive a balanced life are more enthusiastic, productive, and loyal to the organization. The literature review consistently confirms that companies need to position work-life balance as a key strategy in human resource management, not only to increase engagement but also to maintain organizational sustainability and competitiveness.

The Influence of Work-Life Balance on Job Stress

Work-life balance is a crucial factor in maintaining employee mental health and minimizing the potential for job stress. The literature reviewed shows that the better the balance between work and personal life demands, the lower the level of work stress experienced by employees. Conversely, an imbalance in managing the dual roles of work and personal life is often a major trigger for stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced work morale. Research by Felicia Piscesta, Stefhani Febriana, and Yohanes Andri Putranto (2022) demonstrated that work-life balance negatively impacts job stress among accounting educators in Palembang. This means that when employees have the opportunity to balance work and personal life, they tend to be better able to manage work pressures, thereby reducing stress levels. This aligns with the Work-Family Conflict theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), which explains that role conflict between work and family can be a source of stress, thus ensuring work-life balance plays a crucial role in reducing psychological stress.

Similar findings were demonstrated by Dadar Supriatna et al. (2025), who examined the influence of work-life balance, workload, and job stress on employee engagement. The study found that work-life balance significantly contributed to lower employee stress levels. Therefore, it can be concluded that work-life balance acts as a protective factor, reducing mental stress caused by excessive workload. Theoretically, the negative relationship between work-life balance and job stress can be explained through the Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Within this framework, work-life balance is viewed as a personal resource that helps employees cope with job demands. When balance is maintained, employees have sufficient energy to cope with the workload, thus reducing the potential for stress. Conversely, when balance is disrupted, employees are susceptible to emotional and psychological exhaustion, which can trigger job stress. From a practical perspective, companies that fail to address employee work-life balance tend to experience higher levels of work-life stress among their workforce. This can lead to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and even turnover intentions. Therefore, organizations need to design policies that support work-life balance, for example, through flexible working hours, adequate leave, mental health programs, and support for employees' family life. Thus, it can be confirmed that work-life balance negatively impacts job stress. The higher the level of work-life balance employees perceive, the lower their job stress levels. These findings reinforce the argument that companies that maintain a work-life balance among their employees will create a healthier, more productive, and more sustainable work environment.

The Influence of Job Stress on Employee Engagement

Job stress is a psychological condition that arises from an imbalance between job demands and an individual's ability to cope. This condition is often characterized by emotional exhaustion, decreased motivation, and decreased concentration. In an organizational context, job stress is one of the most influential factors affecting employee engagement. The literature reviewed indicates that job stress tends to negatively impact employee engagement, across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Research by Melly Irmawati and Ahmad Rudini (2024) on contract workers at the Regional Secretariat of East Kotawaringin Regency showed that work stress significantly impacts employee engagement. Partial t-test results indicate that higher levels of work stress lead to lower levels of employee engagement. This finding aligns with research by Hilma Harmen and Wahyu Sunjaya (2022), which found a negative relationship between work stress and employee engagement. Work stress has been shown to weaken employee morale, decrease engagement, and reduce intrinsic motivation, although other factors, such as employee ability, can positively impact engagement. Theoretically, this negative relationship can be explained through the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). High job demands not matched by adequate resources will trigger job stress, which in turn reduces employee energy, dedication, and engagement in their work. Unmanaged stress can develop into chronic fatigue (burnout), leading to disengagement, high absenteeism, and even a desire to leave the organization. Literature findings also reinforce the concept that job stress not only directly impacts employee engagement but also influences broader work behavior. Employees experiencing stress tend to exhibit decreased productivity, inconsistent work quality, and less positive interactions with coworkers. These conditions contribute to weakened team cohesion and decreased overall organizational performance. From a practical perspective, the implication is clear: organizations need to seriously address the factors that cause workplace stress. Unrealistic workloads, lack of support from superiors, role conflict, and unclear tasks are all factors that often

trigger stress. If companies can mitigate these stress-causing factors through appropriate management policies, employee engagement levels can be maintained or even increased. Thus, it can be confirmed that work stress negatively impacts employee engagement. The higher the stress experienced by employees, the lower their engagement with their work and the organization. Conversely, efforts to reduce work stress through workload management, providing organizational support, and improving employee psychological well-being can create a conducive working environment for the growth of strong engagement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that *work-life balance* has a significant positive influence on *employee engagement*. Employees who are able to balance the demands of work and personal life tend to show higher engagement, in the form of energy, dedication, and commitment to the organization. Conversely, work-life imbalance often triggers role conflict that leads to decreased work engagement. Job stress has been shown to negatively affect *employee engagement*. High levels of stress reduce employee motivation, concentration, and loyalty to their work. Stress that is not managed well can even lead to disengagement, absenteeism, and even intentions to leave the organization. On the other hand, *work-life balance* negatively affects job stress. Employees who experience work-life balance are better able to manage work pressure, resulting in reduced stress levels. This indicates that work-life balance functions as a protective factor that can reduce the negative impact of excessive work demands. Thus, job stress acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between *work-life balance* and *employee engagement*. Work-life balance not only directly influences work engagement but also indirectly by reducing work stress levels. These findings underscore the importance of organizational policies focused on creating work-life balance to improve engagement, productivity, and organizational sustainability.

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