

The Role of Work Fatigue and Employee Engagement as Mediators in the Relationship Between Work Stress and Workload on Employee Turnover Rates at Waste Paper Raw Material Supplier Companies in Serang Regency

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Job Stress; Workload; Job Fatigue; Employee Engagement; Employee Turnover.	This study aims to examine the role of job fatigue (KK) and employee engagement (K) in mediating the relationship between job stress (SK) and workload (BK) on employee turnover (TK) in waste paper raw material supplier companies in Serang Regency. The research employs a quantitative correlational approach with a sample of 205 employees selected as respondents. Data were analyzed using partial least squares–structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3 software to test both direct and indirect relationships among variables. A total of 12 hypotheses were formulated and examined in this study. The results indicate that job stress has a positive and significant effect on employee turnover ($p = 0.032 \leq 0.05$), while workload also has a positive and significant effect on turnover ($p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$). Job fatigue has a positive and significant effect on turnover ($p = 0.002 \leq 0.05$), whereas employee engagement does not significantly influence turnover ($p = 0.099 \geq 0.05$). Furthermore, job stress positively affects job fatigue ($p = 0.000 \leq 0.05$), and workload also significantly influences job fatigue ($p = 0.008 \leq 0.05$). However, neither job stress nor workload has a significant effect on employee engagement. Indirect effect analysis reveals that job stress and workload positively influence employee turnover through job fatigue ($p = 0.008$ and 0.024 , respectively), indicating a mediating role of job fatigue. Conversely, employee engagement does not serve as a mediator. In conclusion, job stress, workload, and job fatigue increase employee turnover, while employee engagement shows no direct or mediating effect.

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INTRODUCTION

To develop human resources (HR), they must be managed effectively, presenting a challenge for governments and organizations or companies. The goal is for HR to provide maximum contributions while maintaining and enhancing performance, ultimately achieving company objectives (Priyantika, 2018; Mirsaedi & Rigby, 2020; Nazari & Oghyanous, 2021). Companies in the paper waste management and supply sector have experienced high employee turnover rates from 2019 to 2023. Among the four companies in this business sector, turnover rates exceeded 10%. This issue demands special attention, as it is likely to recur in the coming

years, leading to financial losses, reduced productivity, and declines in operational performance (Sheehan et al., 2019; Sravani, 2018; Teng et al., 2018).

Employee turnover consists of two dimensions: voluntary and involuntary. Defined simply, employee turnover refers to the rate at which employees enter or leave a company or workplace (Oginni et al., 2018). To estimate future turnover rates, researchers conducted a pre-survey among actively working employees at the four companies. This aimed to assess voluntary turnover intention levels. The results of the pre-survey are shown in the graph below:

The graph above presents percentage results from a pre-survey of 136 employees at a waste paper supplier company. It reveals that approximately 58.8% of employees intend to resign in the future, while 41.2% choose to stay, indicating a very high level of turnover intention. General factors influencing employee turnover often include low job satisfaction, poor work environments, and high material or non-material needs (Ugwu & Onyishi, 2020; Vermooten et al., 2019; Pattnaik & Panda, 2020). However, deeper analysis points to more specific psychological causes, such as increasing workloads and stress levels, which lead to excessive work fatigue among employees (Wen et al., 2020). Beyond stress, companies must address excessive or escalating workloads driven by new operational policies. According to Ling Liu and Hwei Lo (2018), workload refers to the excessive amount of work assigned or expected from an employee; when too much work must be completed in limited time, it becomes overwhelming, leaving employees feeling overworked.

Researchers examined the role of work fatigue and employee engagement as mediators in the relationship between work stress and workload on employee turnover rates at waste paper raw material supplier companies in Serang Regency by treating these as mediating variables. This approach assesses the extent to which work stress and workload influence employees' decisions to stay or leave (Costello et al., 2019; Amoo & Adam, 2022; Anees et al., 2021). The link between work fatigue (job burnout) and turnover intentions has been confirmed across various countries and companies (Marshall & Stephenson, 2020). Work fatigue fosters negative work attitudes and behaviors, such as reduced effectiveness, low commitment, and heightened intentions to leave, often due to excessive workloads and mental stress (Shantanam & Srinivas, 2019).

In contrast, when employees feel engaged in their work, research by Memon et al. (2020) defines employee engagement as "a positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption," which helps avoid negative thoughts. Higher engagement reduces turnover intentions, positioning it as the most influential psychological factor (Jung Sun et al., 2021). It reflects the degree to which employees invest discretionary effort, such as extra time, mental energy, and physical exertion (Chaabouni, 2021). Thus, companies seeking to retain valuable employees must foster a sense of involvement in their work (Kamau et al., 2020).

To strengthen the data, a second pre-survey measured employee stress and workload levels. Results showed that 59.3% of employees experienced work stress, primarily from excessive working hours that reduced rest and family time; employees' economic conditions

also contributed (Brunetto et al., 2013; Hidayat & Prasetya, 2024). Meanwhile, 63.3% reported high workloads, mainly due to staffing shortages in divisions and frequent changes to company SOPs/work instructions, which made workloads feel constantly increasing. Work stress and workload are commonly linked to turnover (Burki et al., 2020; Zeb & Butt, 2015). Meanwhile, work fatigue and employee engagement serve as psychological mechanisms mediating these effects. Previous research shows mixed results, creating gaps in variables like work stress, workload, work fatigue, and employee engagement. Based on these phenomena and gaps, this study analyzes relationships between variables and evaluates the mediating roles of work fatigue and employee engagement on employee turnover.

METHOD

The research used a quantitative method with an explanatory research design. The study population included all 418 active employees in four supplier companies, using a simple random sampling technique and a sample size of 205 respondents (Slovin's formula). The study variables consisted of Job Stress (SK), Workload (BK), Job Fatigue (KK), Employee Engagement (K), and Employee Turnover (TK). Operational Definition of Variables The operational definition of each variable and indicator in this study can be explained in Table 2.

Table 1. Indicators in Research Variables

Variables	Item	Reference
Employee Turnover	1. Employee's thoughts of quitting work	Wang et al, (2020) & Heijden et al (2019)
	2. Employee's intention to quit work	
	3. Employee's intention to look for another job	
	4. Inadequate employee skills	
	5. company growth opportunities	
	6. The company failed in competition with other companies	
Work Stress	1. Noise	Winasis et al, (2020)
	2. Physical conditions of the workplace	
	a	
	3. Co-worker support	
	4. Leadership support	
	5. Role conflict	
	6. Role uncertainty	
	7. Involvement in decision making	
	8. Influence on work results	
	9. Financial rewards	
	10. Justice in awards	
	11. Support for families	
	12. Sufficient rest time	
Workload	1. Overtime frequency	Rodriguez- Lopez et al, (2021) & Laksono and Wahyunungtyas (2023)
	2. Level of physical fatigue	
	3. Task complexity	
	4. Number of tasks handled	
	5. Social support	

	6. Frequency of conflict	
	7. Organizational structure	
	8. Working hours policy	
	9. Work procedures and processes	
	10. technological tools and resources	
	11. Difficulty in using technology	
	12. Technology training	
Work Fatigue	1. Feelings of excessive tiredness	Li-Ran et al, (2020)
	2. Lack of energy	
	3. Cynical or negative attitude	
	4. Cold treatment of others	
	5. Decreased interest in work	
	6. Lack of satisfaction with work performance	
	7. Decreased motivation	
	8. Doubting yourself	
Employee Engagement	1. Job satisfaction	Schaufel and Bekker (in Zahra, 2020)
	2. Pride in the company	
	3. Opportunity to learn and grow	
	4. Sense of challenge in work	
	5. Energy and vitality	
	6. Active participation	
	7. Relationships with coworkers	
	8. Support from the team and managers	

Instruments and Measurement Data were obtained from questionnaires administered to respondents to obtain responses to the questions. The researcher used a statement instrument of negative perceptions, measured using a Likert scale with intervals of 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). Analysis using SmartPLS 3, including testing the outer model, inner model, and hypothesis testing for both direct and indirect influences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Validity Test

Convergent validity is related to the principle that the manifest variables of a construct should be highly correlated. Convergent validity testing using PLS software can be seen from the loading factor value for each construct indicator. To assess convergent validity, the loading factor value must be greater than 0.5.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Variables		Outer Loading	Information
Employee Turnover (TK)	T K1	0.729	Valid
	T K2	0.770	Valid
	T K3	0.754	Valid
	T K4	0.797	Valid
	T K5	0.821	Valid
	T K6	0.753	Valid
Work Stress (SK)	SK1	0.791	Valid
	SK2	0.808	Valid
	SK3	0.782	Valid

Variables		Outer Loading	Information
	SK4	0.782	Valid
	SK5	0.741	Valid
	SK6	0.800	Valid
	SK7	0.821	Valid
	SK8	0.787	Valid
	SK9	0.755	Valid
	SK10	0.746	Valid
	SK11	0.763	Valid
	SK12	0.725	Valid
Workload (BK)	BK1	0.801	Valid
	BK2	0.819	Valid
	BK3	0.794	Valid
	BK4	0.760	Valid
	BK5	0.726	Valid
	BK6	0.798	Valid
	BK7	0.807	Valid
	BK8	0.739	Valid
	BK9	0.716	Valid
	BK10	0.726	Valid
	BK11	0.778	Valid
	BK12	0.725	Valid
Work Fatigue (KK)	BK1	0.801	Valid
	KK1	0.842	Valid
	KK2	0.897	Valid
	KK3	0.869	Valid
	KK4	0.885	Valid
	KK5	0.889	Valid
	KK6	0.869	Valid
	KK7	0.871	Valid
Employee Engagement (EI)	KK8	0.845	Valid
	K1	0.864	Valid
	K2	0.828	Valid
	K3	0.876	Valid
	K4	0.862	Valid
	K5	0.893	Valid
	K6	0.845	Valid
	K7	0.848	Valid
	K8	0.867	Valid

Source: *SmartPLS 3 Output* (2024)**Discriminant Validity Test**

In the discriminant validity test, it can be seen from the cros loading value, the correlation value of the indicators between variables must be greater than the correlation value of the indicators of different variables and the square root value of AVE (Fornell-Lacker Criterion) must be greater than the correlation value between latent constructs.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variables	BK	KK	K	SK	TK
Workload	0.767				
Work Fatigue	0.555	0.871			
Employee Engagement	0.133	0.128	0.861		
Work Stress	0.623	0.705	0.163	0.776	
Employee Turnover	0.551	0.576	0.192	0.570	0.771

Source: *SmartPLS 3 Output* (2024)

Based on the above, the Fornell-Lacker Creatrium value shows that the square root value of AVE is greater than the value between the latent constructs of each variable, it can be concluded that the discriminant validity test is in accordance with the requirements and the data is declared valid.

R-Square Analysis

R-square is used to assess the influence of independent variables on the dependent latent variable to determine whether there is a substantive influence. The R-square value is small = 0.19, medium = 0.33, large = 0.67. Based on the test results using SmartPLS 3.3.9 software, the following results were obtained:

Table 4. R-Square Values

Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Work Fatigue	0.519	0.515
Employee Engagement	0.028	0.019
Employee Turnover	0.434	0.423

Source: *SmartPLS 3.3.9 Output* (2024)

Based on the above, the R-Square value of employee turnover has an R-Square value of $0.434 > 0.33$ and work fatigue of $0.519 > 0.33$ can be stated to be in the moderate category and employee engagement has a value of $0.028 < 0.19$ which is in the insignificant category.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Based on the path coefficient value (original sample), T-Statistic value, and P Values, hypothesis testing between variables is seen from the direct effects, indirect effects and total effects.

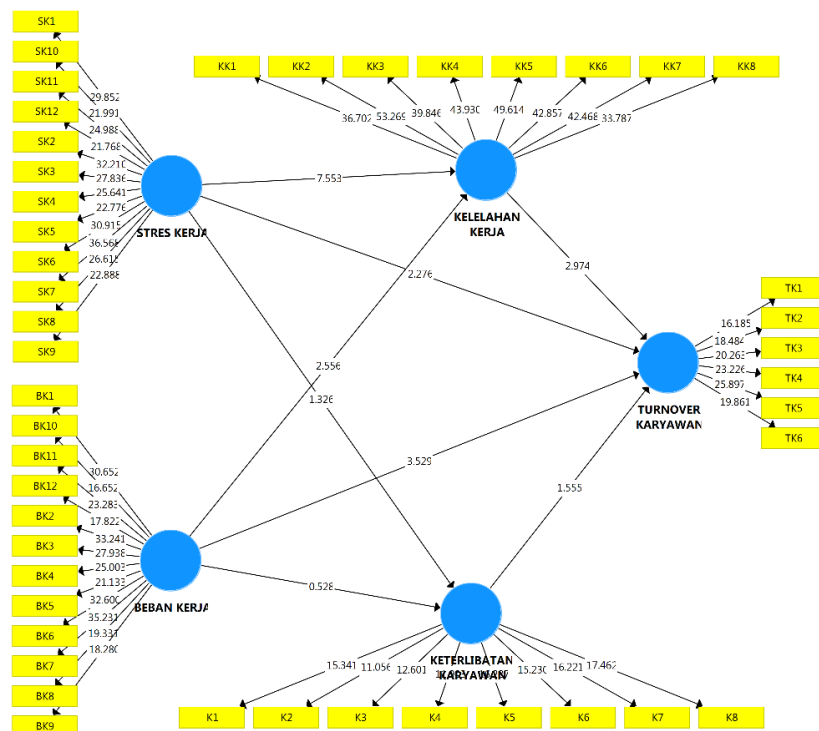


Figure 1. Statistic

Source: SmartPLS 3 Output (2024)

Results of Direct Hypothesis Testing

Direct influence hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the results of hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, and H8. The test results for each hypothesis can be seen in the following table:

Table 6. Path Coefficients

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
SK -> TK	0.191	2,148	0.032
BK -> TK	0.262	3,650	0.000
KK -> Kindergarten	0.284	3,129	0.002
K -> Kindergarten	0.089	1,650	0.099
SK -> KK	0.588	7,864	0.000
BK -> KK	0.188	2,644	0.008
SK -> K	0.132	1,248	0.212
BK -> K	0.051	0.482	0.630

Source: SmartPLS 3.3.9 Output (2024)

The results of the direct influence test of work stress and workload on work fatigue have a positive and significant influence on employee turnover, with a p-value smaller than 0.05, but its influence on employee engagement is not significant with a p-value greater than 0.05. The hypothesis that work stress, workload, and work fatigue directly influence employee turnover

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has a positive and significant influence. However, different results show that employee involvement does not have a significant effect on turnover.

Indirect Hypothesis Testing Results

Direct influence hypothesis testing was conducted to determine the results of hypotheses H9, H10, H11, and H12. The results of each hypothesis can be seen in the following table:

Table 7. Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values
SK -> KK -> TK	0.167	2,673	0.008
BK -> KK -> TK	0.053	2,268	0.024
SK -> K -> TK	0.012	0.954	0.341
BK -> K -> TK	0.005	0.389	0.698

Source: *SmartPLS 3.3.9 Output* (2024)

The results of the hypothesis testing indirectly show the mediating role between work fatigue and employee engagement, the results show that work fatigue has a positive and significant influence in mediating the relationship between the influence of work stress and workload on employee turnover, while conversely employee engagement does not have a significant influence in mediating the relationship between work stress and workload on turnover.

The research results show that employee engagement has no significant effect on employee turnover at a waste paper supplier company. This phenomenon indicates that the level of engagement established in the work environment is not yet capable of functioning as a psychological factor that suppresses turnover intentions. Statistically, the positive but insignificant coefficient reflects that employee engagement does not have sufficient predictive power to restrain employees' decisions to leave the company.

These findings are inconsistent with previous research that showed a significant negative relationship between employee engagement and turnover. For example, Memon et al. (2020) reported that engagement acts as a protective factor that reduces turnover intentions, while Lee et al. (2019) emphasized that engagement is an important psychological mediator in retaining a competent workforce. Another study by Pattnaik and Panda (2020) also confirmed that high engagement can significantly reduce turnover intentions. However, unlike those five studies, these results are consistent with the findings of Albrecht and Marty (2018) that engagement does not always significantly influence turnover, especially in organizational contexts with structural instability and low-quality work environments.

The empirical context of the supplier companies studied supports this interpretation. A work environment characterized by high workloads, minimal job status certainty, frequently changing SOPs, and inconsistent working hours creates psychosocial conditions that do not facilitate the formation of quality engagement. The failure of employee engagement as a mediating variable in the pathways of job stress → turnover and workload → turnover further strengthens the argument that engagement is weak, immature, and unstable. Statistical testing shows that all mediation pathways through engagement have p-values above 0.05, indicating

that engagement has no intervening capacity to suppress the influence of stress or workload on employee turnover.

In contrast to employee engagement, burnout plays a much more dominant role in explaining turnover in waste raw material supplier companies. Burnout has been shown to have a significant positive effect on turnover and mediates the influence of job stress and workload on turnover. These results suggest that the most important psychological mechanism in the turnover process is the health-impairment pathway, which is the decline in employee energy levels due to prolonged work pressure.

This finding is in line with the research results from Fibriyani (2020), which confirms that excessive workload causes physiological and psychological tension which then develops into burnout. In addition, Subarkah (2020) explains that work demands that are not balanced with employees' psychological capacities increase the risk of emotional exhaustion, which is a core dimension of burnout. O'Connor (2018) emphasizes that burnout occurs when there is an imbalance between job demands and individual resources.

This is in line with the real conditions in supplier companies, where high physical work intensity and minimal organizational support create high levels of fatigue. Cho et al. (2018) also added that job burnout develops when an employee's energy is drained by a workload that exceeds their recovery capacity. Statistical results showed that the paths of job stress → burnout → turnover ($p = 0.008$) and workload → burnout → turnover ($p = 0.024$) were significant. These findings indicate that burnout is a strong mediator, bridging the influence of job stress and workload on employees' decisions to leave the company.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that employee turnover at waste paper supplier companies is driven by psychological factors from work pressure, notably job stress, workload, and fatigue, which heighten employees' intentions to leave amid high task demands and unstable operations. While employee engagement showed no significant impact, fatigue crucially mediates the link between stress, workload, and turnover, as emotional exhaustion prompts rational exits. Organizations should prioritize workload control, work redistribution, stable operational standards, supportive environments, stress management, and fatigue monitoring, alongside evaluating job design and enhancing engagement programs for retention. Future research could incorporate variables like job satisfaction, compensation, and leadership, while extending to other sectors for greater generalizability.

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