

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Influence of Performance and Workload on Employee Retention: A Study of Boarding Schools

Rahmat Wiyoga^{*1}, Nugraha Saefudin²

¹Universitas Widyatama, Bandung, Indonesia^{1,2}

¹Correspondence email: rahmat.wiyoga@widyatama.ac.id^{*1},
nugraha.saefudin@widyatama.ac.id²

Article Information:

Received: May 20, 2026, Accepted: May 28, 2026, Published: May 31, 2026

Abstract

The phenomenon of rising turnover amid high performance achievement represents an anomaly that calls for psychological explanation. This study aims to examine the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between employee performance and workload on employee retention in a boarding school setting. The research population consisted of 228 employees at Sekolah Islam Nurul Fikri Boarding School Serang, with a sample of 146 respondents selected through proportional random sampling. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that employee performance has a positive effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.676$, $t = 11.781$) but no direct effect on retention ($\beta = 0.040$, $t = 0.363$). Workload has no significant effect on employee engagement ($\beta = -0.011$, $t = 0.123$) yet exerts a negative effect on retention ($\beta = -0.255$, $t = 3.994$). Employee engagement fully mediates the influence of performance on retention ($\beta = 0.445$, $t = 7.670$), whereas its mediating role in the workload–retention link is not significant. These findings confirm that retention is not directly influenced by performance; rather, the effect is transmitted through employee engagement. In contrast, workload directly reduces retention without operating through the engagement mechanism. The integration of AMO theory, the JD-R model, and Social Exchange Theory successfully elucidates these dynamics, particularly within the high-demand context of boarding school education. The managerial implications underscore the need for employee engagement enhancement programs and structural workload management.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, Workload, Employee Retention, PLS-SEM, Boarding School

JEL Classification: M12, M54, J24, J63

1. Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of human resource management, employees are no longer viewed as factors of production, but rather as strategic assets that determine competitive advantage ([Kaufman, 2001](#); [Noor Al-Jedaiah & Albdareen, 2020](#)). This view is particularly relevant in boarding schools, where employees are required to perform intensive and continuous roles involving academic, caregiving, and character-building responsibilities. In broader institutional contexts, engagement has also been recognized as an important participatory mechanism for strengthening shared responsibility, collaboration, and sustainable

Published by:

organizational development ([Wijaya et al., 2026](#)). However, the reality at Nurul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Serang reveals an anomaly: employee turnover has consistently risen from 7.36% in 2022 to 10.96% in 2024, while the average Key Performance Indicator (KPI) score increased from 72.14 in 2023 to 90.13 in 2024.

Theoretically, the relationship between performance and retention remains inconsistent. A study by [Riadi et al. \(2025\)](#) found that performance has a positive and significant effect on retention; conversely, [Kiazad et al. \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that high-performance work practices can increase occupational embeddedness, which in turn facilitates quit intentions. Meanwhile, studies on the effect of workload on retention also show mixed results. Most of the research, such as [Galanis et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Handayani & Pujiyanto \(2024\)](#), found that high workload triggers burnout and quit intentions. However, [Prihantoro & Sutianingsih \(2025\)](#) reported that workload can have a positive effect on retention when accompanied by incentives, whereas [Rahmansyah & Indiyati \(2024\)](#) found no significant effect. These differences suggest that the mechanisms linking causal factors and retention are not direct and require psychological mediating variables

To address this research gap, this study posits employee engagement as a mediating variable. Employee engagement is understood as a state of positive mindset, vigor, dedication, and absorption that influences how employees interpret job demands ([Schaufeli et al., 2002](#)). [Bakker & Demerouti \(2017\)](#) in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model explain that high job demands can be offset by personal resources, including engagement, thereby minimizing the negative impact on retention. On the other hand, Social Exchange Theory ([Blau, 1964](#)) emphasizes that employees who feel valued and emotionally invested will reciprocate with loyalty. It is the integration of the AMO model ([Appelbaum et al., 2001](#); [Jiang et al., 2012](#)), the JD-R model, and Social Exchange Theory that is proposed to explain why high performance can drive retention through the reinforcement of engagement, while workload may have a direct route to the decision to leave

The novelty of this study lies in simultaneously testing the mediating role of employee engagement regarding two causal factors (performance and workload) within a single structural model, an approach that remains very limited, particularly in the context of boarding schools. Thus, the objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the characteristics of employee performance, workload, employee engagement, and employee retention; (2) to test the effects of employee performance and workload on employee engagement; (3) to test the effect of employee engagement on employee retention, (4) to test the direct effects of employee performance and workload on employee retention, and (5) to test the mediating role of employee engagement in each relationship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Performance and Employee Engagement

Employee performance refers to the level of work achievement measured in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, autonomy, and interpersonal impact ([Bernardin & Russell, 2015](#); [DeNisi & Murphy, 2017](#)). According to the AMO Model ([Appelbaum et al., 2001](#); [Jiang et al., 2012](#)), performance is a function of ability, motivation, and opportunity. When employees successfully achieve their work targets, they experience a sense of mastery that enhances their self-efficacy and professional self-esteem. This condition subsequently triggers employee engagement, particularly in the dimensions of dedication (pride and meaning

in work) and vigor (energy and enthusiasm). Thus, the higher the employee performance, the stronger their commitment to their work. Therefore:

H1: Employee performance has a positive effect on employee engagement.

2.2 Workload and Employee Engagement

Workload represents the physical, mental, and emotional demands that must be met within a specific timeframe ([Spector & Jex, 1998](#)). In the JD-R Model, workload is classified as a job demand that can trigger a health impairment process and reduce engagement ([Bakker & Demerouti, 2017](#)). However, when work demands are still perceived as challenges and supported by job resources such as work meaning and organizational support, their negative impact can be mitigated. In a boarding school environment rich in spiritual values, workload can be interpreted as a form of service, so it may not immediately reduce engagement. Second hypothesis:

H2: Workload has a negative effect on employee engagement.

2.3 Employee Engagement and Retention

Employee retention is an organization's ability to retain valuable employees ([Hausknecht et al., 2009](#)). Engaged employees are physically, cognitively, and emotionally present, thereby developing a strong psychological bond with the organization. Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, engagement is a form of positive employee response to supportive organizational treatment; in return, they demonstrate high commitment and a strong desire to stay. Various studies ([Gašić & Berber, 2023](#); [Mvuyana et al., 2025](#)) demonstrate that employee engagement is a primary predictor of retention. Therefore:

H3: Employee engagement has a positive effect on employee retention.

2.4 The Direct Impact of Performance on Retention

High performance does not always equate to loyalty. High-performing employees have significant bargaining power in the job market and can more easily secure alternative employment ([Kiazad et al., 2024](#)). If they lack an emotional connection to the organization, increased employability may encourage their intention to leave. Equity Theory ([Adams, 1963](#)) explains that when inputs (performance) are not matched by outcomes (rewards and recognition), a perception of injustice arises, which reduces retention. Therefore:

H4: Employee performance has no direct effect on employee retention.

2.5 The Direct Impact of Workload on Retention

Workload that exceeds an individual's adaptive capacity depletes energy and leads to chronic fatigue, which directly influences the decision to stay or leave the organization ([Galanis et al., 2024](#)). Furthermore, a breach of the psychological contract due to excessive workload creates a perception of unfairness, leading employees to leave the organization. Therefore:

H5: Workload has a negative effect on employee retention.

2.6 The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

By integrating the AMO, JD-R, and SET models, it is hypothesized that employee engagement serves as a mechanism that mediates the effect of performance on retention. High performance builds engagement, which in turn strengthens loyalty. Without engagement, performance loses

its driving force on retention. Conversely, engagement may not be able to act as a buffer if the destructive impact of the workload is too strong. Thus:

H6: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between employee performance and retention.

H7: Employee engagement mediates the effect of workload on retention.

3. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative, explanatory design and a cross-sectional survey. The population consisted of all 228 active employees at the Nurul Fikri Islamic Boarding School in Serang. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula at a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum sample of 146 respondents. The sampling technique used was proportional random sampling by employee category (educators, Quran instructors, dormitory staff, and general staff). Of the 146 respondents, the majority were male (62%), aged 25–35 years (37%), had >7 years of service (70%), and were permanent employees (94%).

The variables were measured using a 1–5 Likert-scale questionnaire. Employee performance (X1) was operationalized through 13 indicators based on the performance dimensions identified by Bernardin & Russell (2015), including quality, quantity, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, supervision needs, and interpersonal impact. Workload (X2) used 8 indicators adapted from [Spector & Jex \(1998\)](#) and [Koesomowidjojo \(2017\)](#), covering quantitative, qualitative, and mental/emotional demands. Employee engagement (M) is measured using 9 indicators from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) by [Schaufeli & Bakker \(2004\)](#), consisting of enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment. Employee retention (Y) is measured using 12 indicators adapted from [Mathis & Jackson \(2019\)](#) and [Hausknecht et al. \(2009\)](#), covering organizational factors, career opportunities, rewards, task design, work relationships, and retention intentions.

Data analysis was performed following the guidelines of [Hair et al. \(2019\)](#). Model evaluation was conducted using the outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability) and the inner model (R^2 , Q^2 , f^2 , and significance tests using 5,000 bootstrap subsamples).

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 descriptive statistics

Overall, employee performance falls into the high category (average score of 4.11), with the interpersonal impact dimension scoring the highest (4.27). The average workload is in the moderate category (3.25), with the qualitative aspect being the most dominant (3.73). Employee engagement is classified as high (3.52), with the dedication dimension standing out the most (4.27). Employee retention is also high (3.78), with the organizational component being the highest (4.05) and the rewards dimension the lowest (3.39). This data confirms that while employees are proud to be part of the organization, the workload and rewards system require serious attention.

4.1.2 outer model evaluation

After eliminating the five workload indicators (X2_1 – X2_5) due to factor loadings below 0.50, all remaining indicators had factor loadings ≥ 0.622 and AVE values above 0.50,

satisfying convergent validity. The Fornell-Larcker test showed that the square root of each construct's AVE was higher than the correlation between constructs, thereby satisfying discriminant validity. The reliability of all constructs was excellent: Cronbach's Alpha ranged from 0.837 to 0.937 and Composite Reliability from 0.897 to 0.945, exceeding the threshold of 0.70.

4.1.3 Inner model evaluation

The R^2 values for employee engagement (0.459, moderate) and employee retention (0.555, moderate-strong) indicate that the model has good predictive power. The Q^2 values of 0.272 and 0.306 (>0) confirm adequate predictive relevance. The effect size (f^2) indicates that employee performance has a significant influence on engagement ($f^2=0.841$), and that engagement also has a significant influence on retention ($f^2=0.527$). The direct effects of performance on retention ($f^2=0.002$) and workload on engagement ($f^2=0.000$) are very small, suggesting that indirect pathways will be decisive.

4.1.4 Hypothesis Testing

The bootstrapping results conclude that:

Table 1 . Direct Effect Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Variables	Between	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Values	Decision
H1	Employee Performance → Employee Engagement		+0.676	11.781	0.000	Accepted
H2	Workload → Employee Engagement		-0.011	0.123	0.902	Rejected
H3	Employee Engagement → Employee Retention		+0.658	7.278	0.000	Accepted
H4	Employee Performance → Employee Retention		+0.040	0.363	0.717	Rejected
H5	Workload → Employee Retention		-0.255	3.994	0.000	Accepted

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

Table 2. Indirect Effect Test Results

Hypothesis	Relationship Variables	Between	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Values	Decision
H6	Employee Performance → Employee Engagement → Employee Retention		0.445	7.670	0.000	Accepted (Full Mediation)
H7	Workload → Employee Engagement → Employee Retention		-0.007	0.122	0.903	Rejected

Source: Processed primary data, 2025

4.2 Discussions

4.2.1 The Effect of employee performance on employee engagement

High performance has been shown to strengthen employee engagement. This aligns with the view that work success provides meaning and pride, which reinforce dedication and vigor ([Schaufeli et al., 2002](#)). In the context of boarding schools, employees who achieve academic and caregiving targets feel that their contributions are valued, thereby increasing their emotional engagement. These results support the study by [Riadi et al. \(2025\)](#) and are consistent with the AMO model's ([Jiang et al., 2012](#)) logic of the mastery experience as a builder of self-efficacy.

4.2.2 The Effect of workload on employee engagement

The absence of a significant effect suggests that workload has not yet eroded employees' emotional commitment. This can be explained by the fact that, in an environment steeped in spiritual values, workload may be interpreted as a calling to service and thus does not directly dampen morale. This aligns with [Wang's \(2024\)](#) finding that the impact of workload on engagement is complex and influenced by organizational support. Within the JD-R framework, job resources, such as social support and high job meaning, at this school can offset demands, preventing energy erosion at the psychological level.

4.2.3 The Impact of employee engagement on retention

Employee engagement is the strongest determinant of retention. Employees who are physically, cognitively, and emotionally engaged develop a sense of ownership and responsibility and thus are more likely to stay. These results confirm Social Exchange Theory ([Blau, 1964](#)) and the findings of [Gašić & Berber \(2023\)](#) and [Mvuyana et al. \(2025\)](#) that engagement is a central variable in reducing turnover intentions.

4.2.4 The direct effect of performance on retention

Performance does not significantly predict retention directly. This finding explains the anomaly of rising turnover when KPIs are high. High-performing employees have high employability and easily receive offers from outside the company; without emotional ties, they are more willing to leave. This supports the studies by [Kiazad et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Pohlan & Steffes \(2025\)](#) and reinforces the argument that a performance appraisal system is insufficient if not accompanied by efforts to strengthen engagement. Only through engagement can performance be transformed into loyalty.

4.2.5 The direct effect of workload on retention

Workload directly reduces retention, indicating that physical and mental exhaustion resulting from excessive work demands drives the decision to leave. This is consistent with the health impairment pathway in the JD-R Model and the research by [Galanis et al. \(2024\)](#). In the context of boarding schools, long working hours and the dual responsibilities of being both an educator and a caregiver constitute a structural burden that, if not managed, will accelerate turnover, even if employees remain engaged.

4.2.6 The mediating role of employee engagement

Full mediation of the impact on performance demonstrates that employee engagement is a key mechanism. Without engagement, performance has no effect on retention; organizations must ensure that performance achievements are internalized as a source of pride and commitment. Conversely, the mediating role of workload has not been proven. This

means that engagement is not a buffer that can mitigate the negative impact of workload; an excessively heavy workload directly erodes retention and cannot be salvaged by mere love for the job. This is an important finding for HRM practices: workload is a structural issue that requires task design solutions, not just motivational programs.

4.3 Managerial Implications

1. Strengthening employee engagement as a key retention strategy. HR must design recognition programs, provide regular performance feedback, and establish clear career paths to translate performance into emotional commitment.
2. Proportional workload management. Evaluating task distribution, implementing shift-work systems, and adding staff to critical units, such as dormitories, should be prioritized to prevent excessive workload from undermining retention.
3. Special attention to high performers. High-performing employees must be managed with development incentives and fair rewards to prevent them from being easily poached by competitors.
4. Integration of HRM systems. Policies regarding performance, workload, and engagement development must be integrated—not fragmented—to create a balance between demands and resources.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, this study concludes the following:

1. Employee performance, employee engagement, and employee retention are in the high category, while workload is in the moderate category. However, the rewards dimension of retention remains a weak point that requires attention.
2. Employee performance has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. The higher the performance, the stronger the employees' commitment to the organization.
3. Workload does not have a significant effect on employee engagement. This indicates that employees are still able to maintain their commitment despite facing high work demands, as long as the workload is perceived as part of their professional responsibilities.
4. Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee retention. Employee engagement is a key factor in retaining employees.
5. Employee performance does not have a direct significant effect on employee retention. High-performing employees are not necessarily loyal without emotional engagement.
6. Workload has a negative and significant effect on employee retention. A high and sustained workload directly reduces employees' desire to stay.
7. Employee engagement fully mediates the effect of employee performance on employee retention. This means that performance will only affect retention if it first fosters employee engagement.
8. Employee engagement does not mediate the effect of workload on employee retention. Workload directly influences employees' decisions to stay or leave, without going through the psychological mechanism of engagement.

Thus, efforts to retain employees in a boarding school setting must combine the management of structural workload with the development of sustainable employee engagement. The limitations of this study include its cross-sectional design and its focus on a single organization; therefore, caution is warranted when generalizing the findings. Future research is encouraged

to test this model longitudinally and to include contextual variables such as spiritual leadership, organizational culture, and job satisfaction to enrich our understanding of the determinants of employee retention.

References

- Al-Jedaiah, M. N., & Albdareen, R. S. (2020). The effect of strategic human resources management practices on organizational performance. *Management Science Letters*, 10(5), 1135–1144. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.11.023>
- Adams, J. S. (1963). Towards an understanding of inequity. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5), 422–436. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040968>
- Appelbaum, E., Harrell-Cook, G., Bailey, T., Berg, P., & Kalleberg, A. L. (2001). Manufacturing Advantage: Why High-Performance Work Systems Pay off. *The Academy of Management Review*, 26(3), 459. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259189>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job demands–resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- Bernardin, H. J., & Russell, J. E. A. (2015). *Human resource management: An experiential approach*. McGraw-Hill.
- Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Wiley.
- DeNisi, A. S., & Murphy, K. R. (2017). Performance appraisal and performance management: 100 years of progress? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 421–433. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000085>
- Galanis, P., Moisoglou, I., Papathanasiou, I. V., Malliarou, M., Katsiroumpa, A., Vraha, I., Siskou, O., Konstantakopoulou, O., & Kaitelidou, D. (2024). Association between Organizational Support and Turnover Intention in Nurses: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Healthcare*, 12(3), 291. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12030291>
- Gašić, D., & Berber, N. (2023). The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship between Flexible Work Arrangements and Turnover Intentions among Highly Educated Employees in the Republic of Serbia. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(2), 131. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13020131>
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Handayani, N., & Pujiyanto, W. E. (2024). Uncovering the Impact of Workload and Burnout on Turnover Intention: The Critical Role of Resilience to Work. *Jurnal Orientasi Bisnis Dan Entrepreneurship (JOBS)*, 5(1), 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.33476/jobs.v5i1.4516>
- Hausknecht, J. P., Rodda, J., & Howard, M. J. (2009). Targeted employee retention: Performance-based and job-related differences in reported reasons for staying. *Human Resource Management*, 48(2), 269–288. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20279>

- Jiang, K., Lepak, D. P., Hu, J., & Baer, J. C. (2012). How Does Human Resource Management Influence Organizational Outcomes? A Meta-analytic Investigation of Mediating Mechanisms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(6), 1264–1294. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0088>
- Kaufman, B. E. (2001). Human resources and industrial relations: Commonalities and differences. *Human Resource Management Review*, 11(4), 339–374. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822\(01\)00045-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(01)00045-6)
- Kiazad, K., Hom, P., Schwarz, G., Newman, A., & Holtom, B. (2024). High-performance work practices and job embeddedness: A comprehensive test. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 155, 104066. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2024.104066>
- Koesomowidjojo, S. R. M. (2017). Analisis beban kerja. Raih Asa Sukses.
- Mathis, R. L., & Jackson, J. H. (2019). Human resource management (15th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Mvuyana, S., Nzimakwe, T. I., & Utete, R. (2025). Exploring the relationship between employee engagement and counterproductive work behaviour. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1434350>
- Pohlan, L., & Steffes, S. (2025). Performance evaluations and employee turnover intentions: Empirical evidence from linked employer–employee data. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 64(3), 395–433. <https://doi.org/10.1111/irel.12379>
- Prihantoro, A., & Sutianingsih. (2025). Workload, incentives, and job satisfaction: Their influence on employee retention. *Annals of Human Resource Management Research*, 5(2), 269–283. <https://doi.org/10.35912/ahrmr.v5i2.2930>
- Rahmansyah, E., & Indiyati, D. (2024). The Influence of Workload and Work Environment on the Turnover Intention of Employees in PT. XYZ. *International Journal of Science, Technology & Management*, 5(5), 1099–1109. <https://doi.org/10.46729/ijstm.v5i5.1165>
- Riadi, F., Riani, D., & Sunarsi, D. (2025). Analysis of The Influence of Job Satisfaction, Transformational Leadership, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) on Employee Performance and Its Impact on Employee Retention in Manufacturing Companies in Indonesia. *Jurnal Riset Bisnis Dan Manajemen*, 18(2), 227–239. <https://doi.org/10.23969/jrbm.v18i2.21891>
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Utrecht University.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The Measurement of Engagement and Burnout: A Two Sample Confirmatory Factor Analytic Approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3(1), 71–92. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015630930326>
- Spector, P. E., & Jex, S. M. (1998). Development of four self-report measures of job stressors and strain: Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale, Organizational Constraints Scale, Quantitative Workload Inventory, and Physical Symptoms Inventory. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 3(4), 356–367. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.3.4.356>

- Wang, Y. (2024). Exploring the impact of workload, organizational support, and work engagement on teachers' psychological wellbeing: a structural equation modeling approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1345740>
- Wijaya, F., Suryana, Miftahuddin, A., Jamiat, N., & Yusup, I. (2026). Participatory digital branding in youth-driven geotourism: Community engagement and sustainable geosite development. *Geojournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 65(2), 925–933. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.65227-1732>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

