



DOES WORK-LIFE BALANCE REDUCE TURNOVER INTENTION? JOB STRESS MEDIATION AMONG PLANTATION EMPLOYEES

Irena Cyntia Dewi Putri¹, Meiske Claudia^{2*}

¹ Master of Management Program, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia

² Master of Management Program, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Indonesia

Email : 2420318320018@mhs.ulm.ac.id¹, mclaudia@ulm.ac.id²

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Abstract :

This study examines the effect of Work-Life Balance (WLB) on Turnover Intention by investigating the mediating role of Job Stress among plantation employees. A quantitative approach with an explanatory survey design was employed. Data were collected from 135 permanent employees using purposive sampling and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS. The findings demonstrate that Work-Life Balance has a negative and significant effect on both Job Stress and Turnover Intention. In contrast, Job Stress exerts a positive and significant effect on Turnover Intention. Furthermore, Job Stress partially mediates the relationship between Work-Life Balance and Turnover Intention, indicating that employees who experience a better balance between their work and personal lives are less likely to experience job stress, which subsequently lowers their intention to leave the organization. These findings underscore the importance of promoting work-life balance as an organizational strategy to alleviate job stress and strengthen employee retention. This study also extends the employee retention literature by providing empirical evidence that Job Stress represents an important mechanism through which Work-Life Balance influences Turnover Intention in the plantation industry.

Keywords : Work-Life Balance, Turnover Intention, Job Stress,

INTRODUCTION

Turnover intention represents a major challenge in human resource management because employees' intentions to leave disrupt organizational continuity, increase recruitment and training costs, and ultimately reduce long-term organizational productivity. This challenge requires organizations not only to pursue high levels of performance but also to foster work environments that encourage employee retention. Among the factors associated with employee retention, work-life balance has received considerable attention. It refers to employees' ability to maintain an appropriate balance between work responsibilities and personal life. A healthy work-life balance contributes to psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and organizational commitment, thereby strengthening employees' willingness to remain with their organizations. Conversely, persistent imbalance between work and personal life may trigger work-life conflict, increase job stress, impair work performance, and ultimately strengthen employees' intentions to leave. These findings indicate that work-life balance is not merely associated with individual well-being but also plays an important role in retaining a productive and committed workforce (Allen et al., 2013; Greenhaus & Allen, 2010; Haar et al., 2014; Jiménez et al., 2017).



The importance of work-life balance becomes even more evident in the context of Indonesia's labor market. Labor statistics for 2024–2025 indicate that 26.80% of Indonesian workers are employed for more than 49 hours per week, exceeding the International Labour Organization (ILO) standard of 40 working hours per week. Such prolonged working hours suggest that many employees continue to experience work demands that may erode the balance between their professional and personal lives. When sustained over time, these demands may accumulate into job stress, which subsequently influences employees' decisions to remain with or leave their organizations. This argument is consistent with previous studies reporting that job stress positively influences turnover intention. However, empirical evidence regarding the direct relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention remains inconclusive, as several studies reported no direct effect, whereas others documented a significant negative relationship between the two constructs (Nita, 2022; Soleha & Wulandaru, 2025; Upadianti & Surya, 2025)

These inconsistent findings indicate that the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention may not be adequately explained through direct effects alone. Previous studies have suggested that work-life balance influences organizational outcomes through various intervening mechanisms. In the context of employee performance, the effect of work-life balance has been explained through employee engagement and job satisfaction, whereas other studies identified job satisfaction as the mediating mechanism linking work-life balance, compensation, and employee performance (Aditya & Deviastri, 2024; Sutanto et al., 2024). In a different context, work-life balance was found to mediate the relationship between job stress and career satisfaction, while job stress mediated the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction (Aulia & Putra, 2024; Çobanoğlu et al., 2023). These findings suggest that the influence of work-life balance on organizational outcomes is more frequently explained through mediating mechanisms than through direct relationships.

Despite these findings, empirical evidence concerning the direct relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention remains inconsistent. Several studies reported that work-life balance does not directly influence turnover intention, whereas others identified a significant negative relationship between the two variables (Nita, 2022; Soleha & Wulandaru, 2025; Upadianti & Surya, 2025). In contrast, job stress has consistently been identified as a positive predictor of turnover intention across different organizational settings, including high-pressure work environments and crisis situations, although the mechanisms underlying this relationship differ across studies (Cuc et al., 2022; Wahyuningrum & Khan, 2023). Other studies further reported that work-life balance, job satisfaction, and job embeddedness simultaneously influence turnover intention but did not examine the mediating role of job stress in explaining these relationships (Khoiryah et al., 2025). Previous studies therefore present several limitations. First, empirical evidence regarding the direct effect of work-life balance on turnover intention remains inconsistent. Second, the mechanisms explaining this relationship vary across studies. Finally,

existing evidence is predominantly derived from public organizations, healthcare institutions, the gig economy, start-up companies, and other specific occupational settings.

Differences in occupational characteristics across industries may produce distinct patterns in the relationships among work-life balance, job stress, and turnover intention. The plantation industry remains relatively underexplored despite its distinctive operational characteristics. Employees in this sector commonly encounter demanding operational targets, geographically remote workplaces, and working conditions that frequently blur the boundary between professional and personal life. These characteristics therefore provide an appropriate context for extending empirical evidence on the relationships among work-life balance, job stress, and turnover intention. This study therefore examines the effect of work-life balance on turnover intention through the mediating role of job stress among employees in the plantation industry. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the mechanism through which work-life balance influences turnover intention within the plantation sector.

RESEARCH METHOD

A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed to examine the effect of work-life balance on turnover intention through the mediating role of job stress. The cross-sectional design enabled the proposed relationships among the study variables to be examined using data collected during a single period. Data were collected from permanent employees of PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk using a structured self-administered questionnaire.

The population consisted of 201 permanent employees of PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk as of January 2026. The minimum required sample size was determined using the Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a minimum sample of 134 respondents (Yamane, 1967). A purposive sampling technique was employed because the research required respondents who met specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Accordingly, respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (1) currently employed by PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk, (2) at least 21 years of age, (3) having worked for the company for a minimum of six months, (4) holding permanent employment status, and (5) working within Indonesia.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data, with all constructs measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Work-life balance was assessed using the scales developed by Fisher et al. (2009) and Haar et al. (2014), job stress was measured using the instrument developed by Parker & DeCotiis (1983), whereas turnover intention was assessed using the scale proposed by Mobley et al. (1978). SmartPLS 4 was used to analyze the proposed research model. The analysis started with an assessment of the measurement model, including indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The structural model was then evaluated through collinearity, the coefficient of

determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and the significance of the hypothesized relationships to examine the proposed direct and indirect effects (Hair et al., 2021). (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and the significance of the hypothesized relationships to evaluate both the direct and indirect effects proposed in the research model (Hair et al., 2021).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model

Measurement model evaluation focused on indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Outer loadings were used to assess indicator reliability, whereas Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) were used to evaluate construct reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2021).

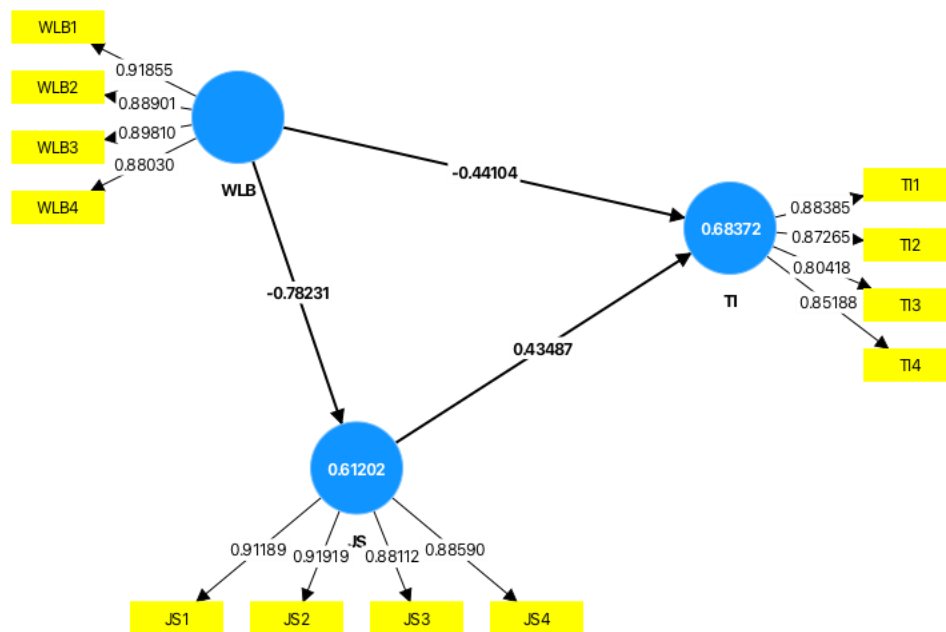


Figure 1 : Measurement Model

Table 1 : Indicator Reliability, Construct Reliability, and Convergent Validity

Construct	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
WLB		0.919	0.943	0.804
WLB1	0.919			
WLB2	0.889			
WLB3	0.898			
WLB4	0.883			
TI		0.876	0.915	0.729
TI1	0.885			
TI2	0.873			
TI3	0.804			

Construct	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
TI4	0.852			
JS		0.921	0.944	0.809
JS1	0.912			
JS2	0.919			
JS3	0.881			
JS4	0.886			

Outer loadings ranged from 0.804 to 0.919. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.876 to 0.921, composite reliability values ranged from 0.915 to 0.944, and AVE values ranged from 0.729 to 0.809, all exceeding the recommended thresholds. These results confirm satisfactory indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity across all constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 2 : HTMT Results

Construct	JS	TI	WLB
JS			
TI	0.863		
WLB	0.849	0.869	

HTMT values ranged from 0.849 to 0.869, with all values remaining below the recommended threshold of 0.90. These results confirm satisfactory discriminant validity among all constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

Structural Model

The structural model was assessed by examining collinearity, the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and the significance of the hypothesized relationships. These analyses were conducted to evaluate the explanatory power and predictive capability of the proposed model (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3 : Explanatory Power and Predictive Relevance

Construct	R^2	Q^2
JS	0.609	0.609
TI	0.679	0.604

The R^2 values indicate that WLB explained 60.9% of the variance in JS, whereas WLB and JS jointly explained 67.9% of the variance in TI. The corresponding Q^2 values were 0.609 for JS and 0.604 for TI, indicating satisfactory predictive relevance for both endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4 : Effect Size

Relationship	f^2
JS -> TI	0.232
WLB -> JS	1.577
WLB -> TI	0.239

The f^2 values ranged from 0.232 to 1.577. The largest effect size was observed for the relationship between WLB and JS ($f^2 = 1.577$), followed by WLB and TI ($f^2 = 0.239$) and JS and TI ($f^2 = 0.232$). These findings indicate that WLB contributed more substantially to the explained variance in JS than the other structural relationships in the proposed model (Hair et al., 2021).

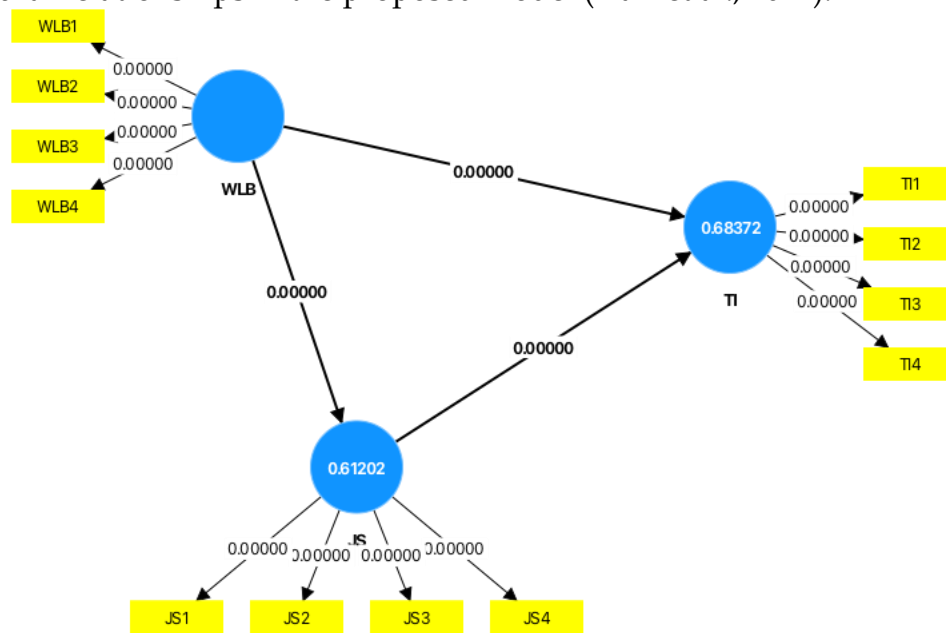


Figure 2 : Hypothesis Result

Relationship	Original sample (O)	Mean	STDEV	T stat	p-values
WLB -> JS	-0.782	-0.783	0.034	22.968	<0.001
WLB -> TI	-0.441	-0.440	0.073	6.072	<0.001
JS -> TI	0.435	0.436	0.069	6.341	<0.001
WLB -> JS -> TI	-0.340	-0.341	0.057	5.938	<0.001

The path coefficient results indicate that WLB had a negative and significant effect on JS, with a path coefficient of -0.782 ($t = 22.968$, $p < 0.001$). A negative and significant relationship was also observed between WLB and TI, with a path coefficient of -0.441 ($t = 6.072$, $p < 0.001$). Meanwhile, JS positively and significantly influenced TI, with a path coefficient of 0.435 ($t = 6.341$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of WLB on TI through JS remained negative and statistically significant, with a path coefficient of -0.340 ($t = 5.938$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating the mediating role of JS.

Discussion

Work-life balance was found to have a negative and significant effect on job stress. Employees who are able to maintain a healthy balance between work responsibilities and personal life tend to experience lower levels of job stress because they can manage their work demands without sacrificing their personal well-being. Maintaining this balance allows employees to allocate their time, energy, and attention more effectively across both domains, preventing work-related pressure from accumulating into prolonged stress. As work demands increasingly intrude upon personal life, employees become more vulnerable to psychological strain, making job stress more likely to occur. A similar relationship was reported by Çobanoğlu et al. (2023), who found that work-life balance reduced the adverse effects of job stress on career satisfaction. Aulia & Putra (2024) also identified job stress as the mechanism linking work-life balance and job satisfaction, illustrating the close relationship between work-life balance and employees' stress levels. The present finding is particularly relevant in the plantation industry, where demanding operational targets, relatively long working hours, and limited separation between work and personal life may intensify work-related pressure. Strengthening work-life balance may therefore help organizations alleviate job stress while fostering a healthier and more productive work environment.

Work-life balance was also found to have a negative and significant effect on turnover intention. Employees who are able to maintain a balanced work and personal life are less likely to consider leaving their organizations because they can fulfil both professional and personal responsibilities without experiencing excessive conflict. A healthy balance between these two domains contributes to greater comfort at work and reduces dissatisfaction that may encourage employees to seek employment elsewhere. As work demands increasingly interfere with personal life, employees are more likely to reconsider their long-term commitment to the organization. Upadianti & Surya (2025) likewise reported a significant negative relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention. Nita (2022) and Soleha & Wulandaru (2025) found that work-life balance did not directly influence turnover intention. The differences across these studies may reflect variations in organizational characteristics, working environments, and job demands within each research setting. The relationship identified in the present study becomes particularly important in the plantation industry, where demanding operational targets, relatively long working hours, and limited separation between work and personal life may increase employees' intention to leave. Promoting work-life balance may therefore serve as an effective organizational strategy for improving employee retention.

Job stress was found to have a positive and significant effect on turnover intention. Employees experiencing higher levels of job stress are more likely to develop intentions to leave because prolonged work-related pressure gradually diminishes their physical and psychological well-being while reducing their overall comfort at work. As stress continues to accumulate, remaining in the organization may no longer be perceived as a desirable option, encouraging

employees to consider alternative employment offering more favourable working conditions. Wahyuningrum & Khan (2023) likewise reported that job stress positively influenced turnover intention. Similar evidence was presented by Cuc et al. (2022), who found that increased work-related stress during periods of crisis contributed to higher turnover intention. Khoiryah et al. (2025) also reported that work-life balance, job satisfaction, and job embeddedness influenced turnover intention. The present finding highlights the importance of managing job stress in the plantation industry, where demanding operational targets, heavy workloads, and challenging working conditions may intensify employees' psychological pressure. Reducing job stress may therefore help organizations lower turnover intention while supporting long-term employee retention.

Job stress was found to significantly mediate the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention. Employees who experience a better balance between work and personal life are less likely to experience job stress, which subsequently reduces their intention to leave the organization. This pattern indicates that the influence of work-life balance extends beyond its direct relationship with turnover intention by operating through employees' psychological responses to their work environment. Employees who are able to balance work and personal responsibilities are better equipped to cope with occupational demands, reducing work-related stress that might otherwise encourage them to leave. Sutanto et al. (2024) reported that the influence of work-life balance on employee performance operated through employee engagement and job satisfaction. Aditya & Deviastri (2024) likewise found that job satisfaction explained the relationship between work-life balance, compensation, and employee performance. Çobanoğlu et al. (2023) reported that work-life balance mediated the relationship between job stress and career satisfaction, whereas Aulia & Putra (2024) identified job stress as the mediating mechanism linking work-life balance and job satisfaction. The mediating role observed in the present study is particularly relevant in the plantation industry, where demanding operational targets, relatively long working hours, and limited separation between work and personal life may intensify employees' job stress. Strengthening work-life balance may therefore help organizations reduce job stress while simultaneously lowering employees' turnover intention.

CONCLUSION

Work-life balance, job stress, and turnover intention among employees of PT Jhonlin Agro Raya Tbk were found to be closely interconnected. Better work-life balance reduced both job stress and turnover intention, while job stress increased employees' intention to leave the organization and mediated the relationship between work-life balance and turnover intention. These findings enrich the literature on employee retention by providing empirical evidence that job stress represents an important mechanism through which work-life balance influences turnover intention within the plantation industry. The findings also highlight the importance of organizational policies that support employees in

balancing work responsibilities and personal life through appropriate workload management, reasonable working hours, and a supportive work environment. Such initiatives may help reduce job stress, strengthen employee retention, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the workforce. Future research may incorporate additional organizational and individual factors to provide a broader understanding of turnover intention across different industrial contexts.

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