

Job Autonomy, Work-Life Balance, And Innovative Work Behavior: The Mediating Role Of Work Engagement Among Retail Employees In Pontianak

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Abstract

Innovative work behavior (IWB) among retail employees in Pontianak remains limited, despite its importance for firms competing through innovation. This study examines the effects of job autonomy and work-life balance on IWB, directly and through work engagement as mediator. A quantitative, causal-explanatory design was applied to 115 retail employees in Pontianak, selected through simple random sampling and analyzed using PLS-SEM in WarpPLS 8.0. Job autonomy ($\beta = 0.266$, $p = 0.001$) and work-life balance ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$) both significantly strengthen work engagement, which strongly predicts IWB ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$). Job autonomy also directly influences IWB ($\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$), whereas work-life balance shows no significant direct effect ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.110$). Work engagement significantly mediates both the job autonomy-IWB relationship ($\beta = 0.130$, $p = 0.022$) and the work-life balance-IWB relationship ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$), and the full model explains 68.3% of IWB's variance. Following Zhao, Lynch, and Chen's (2010) typology, work engagement is a complementary (partial) mediator for job autonomy but the sole (indirect-only) pathway for work-life balance – indicating that work-life balance fosters innovation only once it has first built engagement.

Keywords: *job autonomy; work-life balance; work engagement; innovative work behavior; retail employees; PLS-SEM*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's retail industry is undergoing significant change alongside urban growth, the rise of online shopping, and shifting consumer preferences. In Pontianak, retail growth has been underpinned by an economy that expanded 6.10% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, and Bank Indonesia's January 2026 Real Sales Index (IPR) projected further retail-sales growth of 7.9% year-on-year (Bank Indonesia, 2026). Yet this opportunity comes with intensifying price competition and increasingly selective consumers outside of primary necessities, meaning that retail firms can only capture this growth if they are able to respond to competition through innovation (Yanuar & Harti, 2020).

The success of innovation ultimately depends on employees' contribution to discovering and implementing new ideas. De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) define innovative work behavior (IWB) as a deliberate set of actions to recognize problems, formulate useful new ideas, and develop and apply them in products, services, or work methods – meaning IWB concerns not only idea creation but also its implementation. Informal observation across

several retail firms in Pontianak, however, suggests that employees' IWB still needs strengthening, reflected in the scarcity of new ideas for improving service, product layout, and marketing approaches. This limitation is plausibly linked to heavy workloads, long working hours, and the routine nature of retail work, conditions that can erode work-life balance and weaken employee engagement.

Job autonomy and work-life balance are well established as resources that employees draw on at work, but Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) suggests that such resources rarely translate into proactive outcomes on their own; instead, they typically operate through a motivational process in which resources first build work engagement, which then drives positive work behavior such as IWB. Job autonomy functions as a job resource with strong motivational potential, satisfying the basic psychological need for autonomy described in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), while work-life balance functions as a personal resource that, per Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), prevents role conflict and the resource-loss spiral that would otherwise drain the energy employees need to engage fully at work – consistent with evidence that employee well-being and engagement play a central, resource-dependent role in shaping work outcomes across Indonesian institutional settings more broadly, where work-life balance in particular tends to shape engagement only indirectly through such intervening psychological states (Lianto, Chang, *et al.*, 2026). Consequently, job autonomy and work-life balance may plausibly be insufficient to generate IWB unless they first build work engagement, which motivates testing work engagement as a mediating variable within a single explanatory model.

This study offers novelty in integrating job autonomy and work-life balance as joint antecedents of IWB, with work engagement as mediator, within a single structural model, a combination still relatively uncommon since prior research has generally examined these two variables separately with mixed results, more often in the hospitality, advertising, automotive, and public sectors than in Indonesian retail. This study is therefore expected to yield more comprehensive human-resource recommendations for strengthening employee engagement and innovation in the retail sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Grounding Theories

This study is anchored in Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which classifies job characteristics into demands and resources and proposes a motivational process in which resources build work engagement, which subsequently predicts favorable work outcomes. Two complementary theories explain why each resource in this study builds engagement. Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) the role of job autonomy: satisfying the basic psychological need for autonomy heightens intrinsic motivation, which manifests as the vigor, dedication, and absorption that constitute work engagement (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) explains the role of work-life balance: individuals strive to obtain and protect resources such as time, energy, and attention, and when work-life balance is achieved, role conflict is reduced and psychological energy is freed for full engagement at work rather than depleted by a resource-loss spiral. The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) further clarifies why job autonomy matters for innovation specifically: autonomy gives employees the freedom and discretion to complete tasks in their own way, creating the psychological space needed to experiment and develop new ideas.

Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative work behavior (IWB) is a deliberate set of actions through which an employee recognizes problems, formulates useful new ideas, and develops and applies them in products, services, or work methods (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Janssen (2000)

operationalizes IWB through three sequential dimensions: idea generation, the creation of novel and useful ideas in response to problems or opportunities; idea promotion, building support for an idea among relevant colleagues; and idea realization, transforming an idea into a workable application within the employee's role or organization. IWB is thus best understood as an effortful, proactive process that extends beyond ideation to include the social and practical work of implementation.

Job Autonomy

Job autonomy is the discretion employees have in determining how they carry out their responsibilities (Suryowibowo & Syakarofath, 2024), consistent with the Job Characteristics Model's emphasis on freedom over scheduling, methods, and decision-making (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Autonomy is consistently found to be among the strongest predictors of innovative behavior, because employees who feel in control are more inclined to explore new ways of working (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010); Janssen (2000) similarly argues that highly autonomous employees are more driven toward idea generation and idea implementation. Room to make decisions and set one's own working methods also signals organizational trust, which can increase employees' motivation to try new approaches and produce innovative ideas.

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance describes an individual's ability to reconcile career demands with personal needs such as family, rest, social activity, and personal development, and is captured through three components: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance across work and non-work roles (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003). Under Conservation of Resources theory, achieving work-life balance reduces role conflict so that psychological energy remains available for creative thinking and innovation, since a good balance also fosters motivation, satisfaction, and a stronger sense of responsibility toward one's role both at work and outside it (Mardiani & Widiyanto, 2021), such that employees with adequate life balance tend to show better motivation and performance (Ubaidillah *et al.*, 2024). Sustaining this balance may be comparatively harder for retail employees, whose schedules often include shift work and extended hours, making work-life balance a particularly salient resource in this setting.

Work Engagement

Kahn (1990) defines engagement as the condition in which individuals invest themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work role. Engaged employees exhibit higher vigor and absorption, making them more active in seeking opportunities for improvement and new solutions. As a psychological state marked by involvement, commitment, enthusiasm, energy, and focus (Macey & Schneider, 2008), work engagement makes employees more willing to give their best effort and more likely to actively contribute ideas and participate in organizational innovation processes.

Hypothesis Development

Job autonomy satisfies the basic psychological need for autonomy central to Self-Determination Theory, and meta-analytic evidence confirms autonomy as a significant driver of work engagement (Christian *et al.*, 2011); a similar positive relationship has been reported among Indonesian employees (Suryowibowo & Syakarofath, 2024). Work-life balance likewise functions as a personal resource that, once protected from role conflict, frees the psychological capacity needed for full engagement, consistent with reviews and empirical findings linking work-life balance to work engagement across sectors, including retail (Talukder *et al.*, 2018; Wood *et al.*, 2020). Accordingly:

H1: Job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on work engagement among retail employees in Pontianak.

H2: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on work engagement among retail employees in Pontianak.

Beyond their contribution through engagement, job autonomy and work-life balance may also relate directly to IWB. Autonomous employees face fewer procedural constraints on experimenting with new approaches, and job autonomy has been found to be a consistently strong direct predictor of innovative behavior, including among Indonesian startup employees (Suryanto & Purba, 2022) and in the broader IWB literature (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; De Spiegelaere *et al.*, 2014). Under Conservation of Resources theory, an adequate work-life balance similarly frees the cognitive and emotional resources needed to think beyond routine task demands and engage in proactive, innovative behavior (McDowall & Kinman, 2017). Accordingly:

H3: Job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior among retail employees in Pontianak.

H4: Work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior among retail employees in Pontianak.

Consistent with JD-R theory's motivational process, engaged employees show greater proactive and extra-role behavior, including a greater propensity to contribute innovative ideas (Agarwal, 2014; Aryee *et al.*, 2012), and more broadly to act as active advocates of their organization's identity and reputation once engaged (Lianto, Dwiatmadja, *et al.*, 2026). Accordingly:

H5: Work engagement has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior among retail employees in Pontianak.

Finally, because job and personal resources are theorized to shape proactive outcomes primarily by first energizing employees, work engagement is expected to carry part of the effect of job autonomy and work-life balance on IWB. Mediation through engagement has been documented for job or personal resources more broadly (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020; Bakker & Bal, 2010) and specifically for job autonomy and IWB (Jhody & Fitria, 2022), and for work-life balance and IWB via engagement (Sitompul *et al.*, 2024). Because this mediating role is not universal — Budur *et al.* (2026) found no such mediation in a different institutional context — the type of mediation present in this setting (full, partial, or none) is tested empirically using the Zhao *et al.* (2010) typology rather than assumed in advance:

H6: Work engagement mediates the effect of job autonomy on innovative work behavior.

H7: Work engagement mediates the effect of work-life balance on innovative work behavior.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 summarizes the hypothesized relationships among job autonomy (X1), work-life balance (X2), work engagement (Z), and innovative work behavior (Y). Job autonomy and work-life balance are modeled as parallel exogenous resources with both a direct path to innovative work behavior and an indirect path through work engagement.

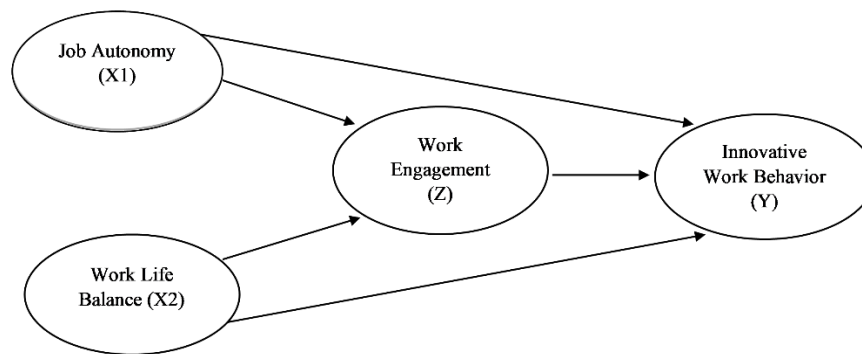


Figure 1. Conceptual research framework

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal research design. Quantitative research uses numerical data to answer research questions, emphasizing objective measurement, standardized data collection, and statistical analysis to test hypotheses or explain phenomena (Waruwu *et al.*, 2025). This study aims to describe the characteristics of the research object based on the data collected, while also testing the hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships among the variables under study.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprises employees working at retail companies in the city of Pontianak. The sampling technique used was probability sampling with a simple random sampling method, in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as a research sample (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). A total of 115 respondents were collected for this study.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed online via Google Forms. Each statement in the questionnaire was measured using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire items were sourced from established literature: job autonomy was measured using indicators developed by Breugh (1985) and Lengermann (1971); work-life balance was assessed using indicators adapted from Greenhaus *et al.* (2003); work engagement was measured using indicators proposed by Chan *et al.* (2020), grounded in Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) vigor-dedication-absorption structure; and innovative work behavior was measured using indicators developed by Janssen (2000). Each item was written as a single, unidimensional statement to avoid double-barreled wording. Before completing the questionnaire, respondents were given an explanation of the study's purpose, and the confidentiality of their data was fully guaranteed. Respondent participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained prior to completing the questionnaire.

Operational Definition and Measurement

All constructs are measured reflectively using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Table 1 summarizes the operational definition, dimensions, and measurement source for each construct.

Table 1. Operational definitions and measurement sources

Construct	Operational Definition	Dimensions	Measurement Source
Job Autonomy (X1)	The discretion an employee has in determining how to carry out work responsibilities, including scheduling, methods, and decisions.	Independence in work; job authority; participation in goal-setting; freedom in professional judgment	Breaugh (1985); Lengermann (1971)
Work-Life Balance (X2)	The degree to which an employee experiences comparable time investment, psychological involvement, and satisfaction across work and non-work roles.	Time balance; involvement balance; satisfaction balance	Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw (2003)
Work Engagement (Z)	A positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by energy, enthusiasm, and full concentration in one's work.	Vigor; dedication; absorption	Schaufeli <i>et al.</i> (2002); Chan <i>et al.</i> (2020)
Innovative Work Behavior (Y)	A deliberate set of actions to recognize problems, formulate useful new ideas, and develop and apply them at work.	Idea generation; idea promotion; idea realization	Janssen (2000); De Jong & Den Hartog (2010)

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed in two stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to characterize the respondents and the general response tendencies for each research variable. Second, inferential analysis was carried out using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with WarpPLS 8.0 to test the hypothesized causal relationships among the variables. Convergent validity was assessed through indicator loadings and Average Variance Extracted ($AVE \geq 0.50$); internal consistency reliability was assessed via Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha (both ≥ 0.70); and discriminant validity was assessed by inspecting each indicator's loading against all four constructs (cross-loading) and by comparing the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with other constructs (Fornell-Larcker criterion). Structural-model quality was evaluated using R^2 and Q^2 for the endogenous constructs, and overall model fit was evaluated using WarpPLS's global indices: average path coefficient (APC), average R-squared (ARS), average adjusted R-squared (AARS), average block VIF (AVIF), average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF), Tenenhaus's Goodness of Fit (GoF), Simpson's paradox ratio (SPR), R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR), statistical suppression ratio (SSR), and nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR). Hypotheses were tested from the significance ($p < 0.05$) and sign of each structural path coefficient. Mediation (H6 and H7) was evaluated using the Zhao *et al.* (2010) typology, which classifies each indirect pathway as complementary (partial) mediation, indirect-only (full) mediation, direct-only non-mediation, or no effect, based on the significance and consistency of the indirect and direct effects, rather than the Baron and Kenny (1986) causal-steps approach.

RESULTS

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Table 2 presents the combined measurement-model results: each indicator's standardized loading, standard error, and p-value, followed by the Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for its construct.

Table 2. Measurement model: indicator loadings and construct reliability

Indicator	Loading	SE	p-value
Job Autonomy (X1)			
X1.1.1	0.806	0.076	< 0.001
X1.2.1	0.812	0.076	< 0.001
X1.3.1	0.813	0.076	< 0.001
X1.4.1	0.807	0.076	< 0.001
<i>Cronbach's α = 0.824 Composite Reliability = 0.884 AVE = 0.655</i>			
Work-Life Balance (X2)			
X2.1.1	0.682	0.078	< 0.001
X2.1.2	0.778	0.077	< 0.001
X2.2.1	0.648	0.079	< 0.001
X2.2.2	0.821	0.076	< 0.001
X2.3.1	0.849	0.075	< 0.001
X2.3.2	0.738	0.077	< 0.001
<i>Cronbach's α = 0.847 Composite Reliability = 0.888 AVE = 0.572</i>			
Work Engagement (Z)			
Z1.1.1	0.865	0.075	< 0.001
Z1.1.2	0.742	0.077	< 0.001
Z1.2.1	0.870	0.075	< 0.001
Z1.2.2	0.751	0.077	< 0.001
Z1.3.1	0.791	0.076	< 0.001
Z1.3.2	0.692	0.078	< 0.001
<i>Cronbach's α = 0.876 Composite Reliability = 0.907 AVE = 0.621</i>			
Innovative Work Behavior (Y)			
Y1.1.1	0.760	0.077	< 0.001
Y1.1.2	0.738	0.077	< 0.001
Y1.1.3	0.753	0.077	< 0.001
Y1.2.1	0.743	0.077	< 0.001
Y1.2.2	0.827	0.076	< 0.001
Y1.2.3	0.801	0.076	< 0.001
Y1.3.1	0.858	0.075	< 0.001
Y1.3.2	0.879	0.075	< 0.001
Y1.3.3	0.798	0.076	< 0.001
<i>Cronbach's α = 0.927 Composite Reliability = 0.940 AVE = 0.635</i>			

Nearly all indicators loaded above the conventional 0.70 threshold with $p < 0.001$. Three indicators fell slightly below this threshold – X2.1.1 (0.682) and X2.2.1 (0.648) on work-life balance, and Z1.3.2 (0.692) on work engagement – but were retained because their loadings remained substantively meaningful and statistically significant, and because their parent constructs' AVE still exceeded the 0.50 threshold (work-life balance AVE = 0.572; work engagement AVE = 0.621), indicating that the construct as a whole is still adequately represented. All four constructs also exceeded

the 0.70 threshold for Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability, confirming that the measurement instrument is reliable. Together, these results indicate that the measurement (outer) model meets the requirements to proceed to structural (inner) model testing.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, comparing the square root of each construct's AVE with its correlations with the other constructs; Table 3 presents these correlations, with the square root of each construct's AVE shown in parentheses on the diagonal.

Table 3. Discriminant validity: correlations among latent variables with square roots of AVE on the diagonal

	Job Autonomy	Work-Life Balance	Work Engagement	Innovative Work Behavior
Job Autonomy	(0.809)	0.671	0.600	0.702
Work-Life Balance	0.671	(0.756)	0.673	0.681
Work Engagement	0.600	0.673	(0.788)	0.762
Innovative Work Behavior	0.702	0.681	0.762	(0.797)

For every construct, the square root of its AVE (shown in parentheses on the diagonal) exceeds its correlations with all other constructs. Combined with the cross-loading inspection underlying Table 2 – in which every indicator loaded most strongly on its intended construct – this confirms that discriminant validity is established for all four constructs.

Structural Model and Predictive Relevance

Having established a valid and reliable measurement model, the structural (inner) model was evaluated next. Table 4 reports the R-Square, adjusted R-Square, and Q-Square values for the two endogenous constructs, work engagement and innovative work behavior.

Table 4. R-Square, adjusted R-Square, and Q-Square results

Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Q-Square
Work Engagement (Z)	0.493	0.484	0.496
Innovative Work Behavior (Y)	0.683	0.674	0.683

Job autonomy and work-life balance jointly explain 49.3% of the variance in work engagement (adjusted $R^2 = 48.4\%$), while job autonomy, work-life balance, and work engagement together explain 68.3% of the variance in innovative work behavior (adjusted $R^2 = 67.4\%$) – a moderate-to-substantial level of explanatory power for both endogenous constructs. Both Q^2 values are well above zero (0.496 and 0.683, respectively), indicating that the structural model has good predictive relevance.

Model Fit and Quality Indices

Beyond R^2 and Q^2 , WarpPLS 8.0 reports a set of global fit and quality indices that evaluate the structural model as a whole. Table 5 summarizes each index against its recommended threshold.

Table 5. Model fit and quality indices

Fit Index	Result	Rule of Thumb	Conclusion
Average Path Coefficient (APC)	0.335 ($p < 0.001$)	$p < 0.05$	Accepted

Average R-squared (ARS)	0.588 ($p < 0.001$)	$p < 0.05$	Accepted
Average Adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.579 ($p < 0.001$)	$p < 0.05$	Accepted
Average Block VIF (AVIF)	2.231	≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	Accepted
Average Full Collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	2.621	≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3	Accepted
Tenenhaus Goodness of Fit (GoF)	0.604	small $\geq .1$, medium $\geq .25$, large $\geq .36$	Accepted (large)
Simpson's Paradox Ratio (SPR)	1.000	acceptable $\geq .7$, ideally = 1	Accepted
R-squared Contribution Ratio (RSCR)	1.000	acceptable $\geq .9$, ideally = 1	Accepted
Statistical Suppression Ratio (SSR)	1.000	acceptable $\geq .7$	Accepted
Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	acceptable $\geq .7$	Accepted

All model-fit indices meet their respective thresholds. APC, ARS, and AARS are all statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). AVIF and AFVIF fall within the ideal range, indicating no multicollinearity problem among the constructs. The large Tenenhaus GoF indicates strong explanatory power, and the model is free from Simpson's paradox, statistical suppression, and nonlinear bivariate causality problems, confirming that the structural model is well specified.

Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effects

With the measurement and structural models both confirmed adequate, the five hypothesized direct paths (H1-H5) were tested from the significance and sign of their standardized path coefficients. Table 6 reports the results.

Table 6. Path coefficient (direct effect) test results

Hypothesis	β	p-value	Conclusion
H1: Job Autonomy $\rightarrow$ Work Engagement	0.266	0.001	Accepted
H2: Work-Life Balance $\rightarrow$ Work Engagement	0.490	< 0.001	Accepted
H3: Job Autonomy $\rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.316	< 0.001	Accepted
H4: Work-Life Balance $\rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.112	0.110	Rejected
H5: Work Engagement $\rightarrow$ Innovative Work Behavior	0.490	< 0.001	Accepted

Job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on work engagement ($\beta = 0.266$, $p = 0.001$; H1 accepted), and work-life balance has an even stronger positive and significant effect on work engagement ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$; H2 accepted). Job autonomy also has a positive and significant direct effect on innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$; H3 accepted). Work-life balance, by contrast, shows no significant direct effect on innovative work behavior ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.110$; H4 rejected). Work engagement has a positive and significant effect on innovative work behavior, and the strongest coefficient in the direct-effects set ($\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$; H5 accepted).

Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)

Finally, the mediating role of work engagement in the job autonomy-IWB and work-life balance-IWB relationships (H6 and H7) was tested from the significance of each indirect effect. Table 7 reports these results.

Table 7. Mediation effect (indirect effect) test results

Hypothesis	β	p-value	Conclusion
H6: Job Autonomy → Work Engagement → Innovative Work Behavior	0.130	0.022	Accepted
H7: Work-Life Balance → Work Engagement → Innovative Work Behavior	0.240	< 0.001	Accepted

Work engagement significantly mediates both the job autonomy-IWB relationship ($\beta = 0.130$, $p = 0.022$; H6 accepted) and the work-life balance-IWB relationship ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$; H7 accepted). Applying the Zhao *et al.* (2010) typology to these results alongside the direct-effect results in Table 6 yields two distinct mediation patterns. For job autonomy, both the direct effect (H3, significant, positive) and the indirect effect through work engagement (H6, significant, positive) are significant and point in the same direction, which the typology classifies as complementary (partial) mediation: job autonomy drives innovative work behavior both directly and by first building engagement. For work-life balance, the direct effect (H4) is not significant while the indirect effect through work engagement (H7) is significant, which the typology classifies as indirect-only (full) mediation: work-life balance shapes innovative work behavior solely by first strengthening work engagement, with no residual direct pathway. Figure 2 summarizes the full pattern of direct and indirect paths together with their standardized coefficients.

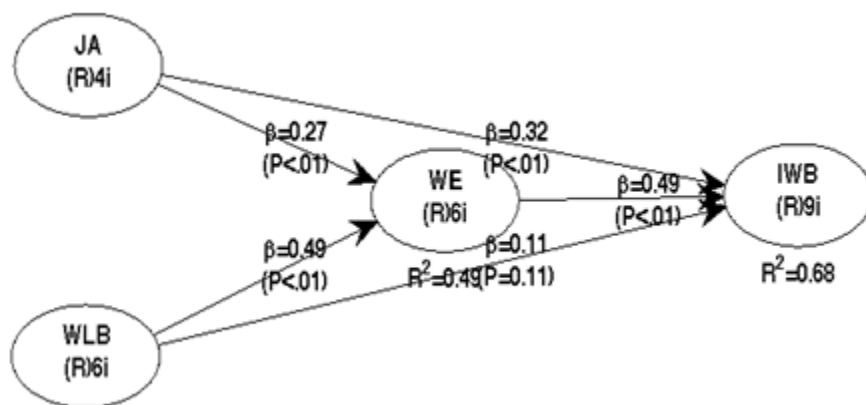


Figure 2. Structural model results with standardized path coefficients

DISCUSSION

Job Autonomy, Work-Life Balance, and Work Engagement

Both job autonomy (H1) and work-life balance (H2) significantly strengthen work engagement, consistent with the study's grounding theories. Autonomy's effect is well explained by Self-Determination Theory: discretion over scheduling, methods, and decisions satisfies a basic psychological need, which manifests as the vigor, dedication, and absorption that constitute engagement (Christian *et al.*, 2011; Suryowibowo & Syakarofath, 2024). Work-life balance shows the stronger of the two coefficients ($\beta = 0.490$ versus $\beta = 0.266$), suggesting that, in this retail sample, protecting employees' personal resources from role conflict is an even more powerful lever for engagement than structural autonomy over tasks — consistent with Conservation of Resources theory's premise that engagement is difficult to sustain once personal energy is depleted by role conflict (Talukder *et al.*, 2018; Wood *et al.*, 2020).

Direct Effects on Innovative Work Behavior

Job autonomy also has a significant direct effect on IWB (H3), reinforcing prior evidence that autonomy is among the most consistent direct predictors of innovative behavior, since employees who control how they work are freer to experiment with new approaches without needing to first feel engaged (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Suryanto & Purba, 2022).

Work-life balance, in contrast, shows no significant direct effect on IWB (H4 rejected; $\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.110$). This can be explained through Conservation of Resources theory: work-life balance functions as a personal resource that protects employees' psychological energy (Hobfoll, 1989), but protecting energy is not the same as channeling it into proactive behavior such as generating and implementing new ideas (Janssen, 2000). Consistent with JD-R theory's motivational logic, a personal resource such as work-life balance typically needs to first be converted into work engagement before it shapes work behavior such as IWB (Bakker & Bal, 2010). This pattern mirrors Jatmiko *et al.* (2025) finding among village facilitators in Kediri that work-life balance did not directly predict IWB, and parallels Fitriani *et al.* (2023) finding that work-life balance only shaped organizational citizenship behavior once mediated by job satisfaction. It also diverges from evidence among women employees in Riau, where work-life balance predicted IWB directly, underscoring that the strength of this relationship is contextual and depends on sector and work-environment characteristics (De Spiegelaere *et al.*, 2014). In the shift-based, routine nature of retail work in Pontianak, work-life balance appears not yet sufficient on its own to drive innovation without first building work engagement.

Work engagement, in turn, has the strongest direct effect on IWB among all paths tested (H5 accepted; $\beta = 0.490$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that engaged retail employees are considerably more likely to exhibit proactive and extra-role behavior, including generating and championing innovative ideas (Agarwal, 2014; Aryee *et al.*, 2012).

The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

The rejection of H4 alongside the acceptance of H7 together indicate that work-life balance shapes innovative behavior indirectly: work engagement functions as the bridge through which work-life balance is converted into innovation. Job autonomy, by contrast, shows both a significant direct effect (H3) and a significant indirect effect through engagement (H6), consistent with a complementary (partial) mediation pattern under the Zhao *et al.* (2010) typology – the same typology previously applied to mediation patterns among West Kalimantan employees, where the operative mediator was similarly found to differ by antecedent rather than following a single uniform pathway (Lianto *et al.*, 2018). Together, these results suggest that job autonomy is a resource that retail employees can translate into innovative behavior relatively directly, whereas work-life balance requires engagement as an intervening state before its benefits for innovation materialize.

This divergence between job autonomy and work-life balance also helps reconcile mixed findings in the broader literature. Budur *et al.* (2026), for instance, found that work engagement did not mediate the job autonomy-IWB relationship among Kurdish public-sector employees, where public service motivation better explained the pathway instead; Siregar *et al.* (2021) similarly found organizational commitment, rather than engagement, to be the operative mediator between job autonomy and IWB among Indonesian automotive marketing employees. A closely parallel pattern for work-life balance specifically appears among Indonesian university lecturers, where work-life balance shaped engagement solely through an indirect, well-being-mediated pathway (indirect-only mediation), while a task-oriented antecedent (innovative work behavior itself, in that model) operated mainly through a direct pathway with no significant indirect route (Lianto, Chang, *et al.*, 2026) – a division of labor between direct and indirect pathways that mirrors, in reverse, the present study's finding that job autonomy operates directly while work-life balance operates only indirectly. The present findings indicate that, at least in Pontianak's retail sector, work engagement is an operative mechanism for both antecedents, even though it plays a more central (fully mediating) role for work-life balance than for job autonomy – reinforcing the view that the identity of the operative mediator, and the balance between direct and indirect pathways, is itself context- and construct-dependent (De Spiegelaere *et al.*, 2014).

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to JD-R theory by demonstrating that job and personal resources need not operate through a uniform mechanism: within a single model, job autonomy showed both a direct and an engagement-mediated path to innovative behavior, while work-life balance operated only through engagement. This distinction refines the JD-R motivational process by showing that the mediating centrality of work engagement can differ across resource types even within the same sample and outcome. The study also extends the innovative-work-behavior literature to Indonesian retail employees in West Kalimantan, a population and sector combination that has received little prior empirical attention relative to hospitality, manufacturing, and public-sector settings.

Managerial Implications

For retail managers in Pontianak and comparable regional markets, the findings suggest two complementary levers for innovation. Because job autonomy predicts innovative behavior both directly and through engagement, expanding employees' discretion over scheduling, work methods, and day-to-day decisions is likely to yield innovation gains relatively quickly. Because work-life balance predicts innovative behavior only through engagement, managers should not expect work-life balance initiatives (such as manageable shift schedules or adequate rest periods) to translate into innovation unless they are paired with deliberate efforts to build engagement itself – for example, through recognition practices, participative goal-setting, and visible support for employees' ideas – so that the energy freed up by better work-life balance is actually channeled into engagement and, from there, into innovative behavior.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, the cross-sectional design captures relationships at a single point in time and cannot establish the temporal ordering implied by the hypothesized model; longitudinal or experimental designs would allow stronger causal inference. Second, all constructs were measured through employee self-report within a single questionnaire, which, although full-collinearity VIFs in this study fell within the ideal range, still leaves some residual risk of common method variance that future studies could address with multi-source data (e.g., supervisor-rated IWB). Third, the sample was drawn from retail employees in a single city (Pontianak), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or sectors; future studies could test the model across multiple cities or industries to examine its boundary conditions. Finally, because the mediating role of work engagement was found to differ between job autonomy and work-life balance, and because prior studies point to alternative mediators such as organizational commitment (Siregar *et al.*, 2021), job satisfaction (Fitriani *et al.*, 2023), and public service motivation (Budur *et al.*, 2026), future research could test these mediators alongside work engagement in a single comparative model to clarify which mechanism dominates in which context.

CONCLUSION

Based on the PLS-SEM analysis, job autonomy and work-life balance both positively and significantly affect work engagement and, collectively with work engagement, explain a substantial share of the variance in innovative work behavior (IWB) among retail employees in Pontianak. Job autonomy directly strengthens both work engagement and IWB, whereas work-life balance significantly strengthens work engagement but does not directly affect IWB. Work engagement, in turn, has a positive and significant effect on IWB, indicating that more engaged employees display more optimal innovative behavior. Beyond these direct effects, work engagement also significantly mediates the effects of both job autonomy and work-life balance on IWB – functioning as a complementary (partial) mediator for job autonomy and as the sole (indirect-only) pathway for work-life balance. These findings suggest that fostering innovation in the retail sector requires providing employees with greater job

discretion, actively managing work-life balance, and deliberately strengthening work engagement, since these three levers reinforce one another rather than operating in isolation. Retail companies are therefore encouraged to integrate all three dimensions into their human-resource management practices in order to enhance employee innovation and organizational competitiveness.

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