



The Role of Work Motivation in the Relationship between Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction in Retail Workforce

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the effect of work engagement on job satisfaction with work motivation as a mediating variable among retail employees. A quantitative approach with a correlational survey design was employed. Data were collected through self-report questionnaires using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), and Motivational at Work Scale (MAWS). The sample consisted of 81 retail employees selected through purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using regression analysis to test the direct relationships among variables. The results indicate that work engagement has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction. In addition, work motivation also shows a significant negative relationship with job satisfaction. These findings suggest that high levels of engagement and motivation do not necessarily lead to higher job satisfaction, particularly in work environments characterized by high operational demands and limited organizational support. From an educational management perspective, the results highlight the importance of managing human resources not only by encouraging engagement and motivation, but also by improving the quality of work experiences, organizational learning, and employee development systems. This study contributes to the literature on work psychology and educational management by emphasizing the contextual nature of employee well-being and providing practical implications for human resource management and workplace learning in service-oriented organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

The modern retail industry operates within an environment characterized by intense competition, rapidly changing consumer preferences, and increasingly high service standards. These conditions place retail employees under continuous pressure to perform efficiently while maintaining emotional

labor and customer-oriented behavior (Aini et al., 2025; Musthofa & Faizin, 2025). From a societal perspective, the sustainability of retail organizations is closely linked to the psychological well-being of their workforce, as retail employees represent a significant proportion of urban labor markets (Azizi et al., 2025; Zaini & Maulidi, 2025). Research in organizational psychology consistently shows that employee well-being contributes not only to organizational performance but also to broader social outcomes such as job stability, reduced turnover, and healthier working communities (Cima et al., 2023; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2024). One of the most critical indicators of psychological well-being at work is job satisfaction, which reflects employees' overall evaluation of their work experiences (Putra, & Wibowo, 2023). Therefore, understanding the factors that shape job satisfaction among retail workers is essential, not only for organizational effectiveness but also for promoting decent work and social sustainability in contemporary societies.

Despite the strategic role of the retail sector in economic growth, the expansion of modern retail has not always been accompanied by improvements in employees' working conditions and well-being (Hasanah et al., 2024; Windiasari et al., 2025). In many developing countries, including Indonesia, retail employment is often associated with relatively low wages, high workload, limited career prospects, and unstable work schedules. These conditions create structural vulnerabilities that may undermine employees' job satisfaction and long-term commitment (Samsi, 2025; Sholehah & Ichsan, 2025). National labor statistics indicate that workers in the trade sector remain among those with comparatively lower income levels and limited access to structured human resource management systems (BPS, 2024). Such circumstances highlight a broader societal issue in which economic growth does not automatically translate into improved quality of work life. When job satisfaction is neglected, organizations face higher turnover, lower service quality, and reduced productivity, which ultimately affect consumers and the wider economy. Consequently, examining job satisfaction in labor-intensive sectors such as retail is crucial to addressing persistent inequalities in workplace well-being (Febriyanto, 2025; Hadi & Masuwd, 2025).

The challenges of retail employment become particularly visible at the regional and organizational levels. In East Java, the trade sector remains a major contributor to regional economic output; however, workers' welfare indicators have not shown proportional improvement (BPS, 2024). The provincial minimum wage in East Java remains below the national average, reflecting economic pressures that may influence employees' perceptions of fairness and satisfaction at work. In Surabaya, the largest commercial hub in the region, the retail labor market is characterized by high employee mobility and the dominance of small and medium retail enterprises with limited human resource capacity. Employees

often face demanding performance targets, extended working hours, and strong customer service expectations. These conditions foster high levels of work engagement, yet they may simultaneously generate psychological strain. Empirical observations suggest that highly engaged retail employees do not always report high job satisfaction, indicating a complex relationship between engagement, motivation, and well-being that warrants systematic investigation.

Job satisfaction has been widely conceptualized as a positive emotional state resulting from an individual's appraisal of their job experiences (Putra, & Wibowo, 2023). Fleischer & Wanckel, (2024) further emphasized that job satisfaction is multidimensional, encompassing pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, coworkers, job characteristics, and organizational procedures. Numerous studies have demonstrated that higher job satisfaction is associated with beneficial outcomes such as increased productivity, organizational commitment, and reduced turnover intention (Cima et al., 2023; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2024). One psychological factor frequently linked to job satisfaction is work engagement, defined as a positive, fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, 2022). Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, work engagement emerges when job resources adequately support employees in coping with job demands (Cima et al., 2023). However, recent literature suggests that this relationship may not be universally positive across all work contexts.

Although work engagement is often viewed as a desirable condition, empirical findings indicate that high engagement may coexist with work intensification, excessive demands, and insufficient recovery, particularly in high-pressure service environments (Albrecht, 2021; Bakker, 2022). In such contexts, engagement does not always translate into enhanced job satisfaction and may even contribute to psychological strain. Emerging evidence from Indonesia supports this inconsistency, especially within service sectors, where highly engaged employees do not necessarily report optimal levels of job satisfaction (Putra & Wibowo, 2023). These mixed findings suggest the presence of underlying psychological mechanisms that shape the engagement–satisfaction relationship. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a relevant framework by emphasizing the quality of work motivation, ranging from autonomous motivation to controlled motivation and amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; 2017). Prior studies indicate that autonomous motivation is positively associated with job satisfaction, whereas controlled motivation is linked to poorer well-being outcomes (McAnally & Hagger, 2024).

Building on SDT, motivation quality may function as a key mechanism that explains why work engagement leads to different well-being outcomes across contexts. Employees who are highly engaged may experience their work as fulfilling when their engagement is driven by autonomous motivation, but the same level of engagement may become psychologically taxing when it is fueled

by external pressures or internalized obligations. Despite its theoretical relevance, empirical research examining work motivation as a mediating variable between work engagement and job satisfaction remains limited and yields inconsistent results, particularly in non-Western and retail-specific contexts. In Indonesia, studies focusing on the psychological dynamics of retail employees are still scarce, even though this sector presents unique combinations of high service demands and constrained job resources. Therefore, this study contributes novelty by integrating the JD-R model and SDT to examine the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction among retail workers.

Based on the theoretical and empirical gaps identified, this study aims to examine the effect of work engagement on job satisfaction, with work motivation serving as a mediating variable among retail employees at PT. X Surabaya. The central research problem addresses whether work engagement directly enhances job satisfaction or whether its effect depends on the quality of employees' work motivation. It is argued that work engagement will be positively associated with job satisfaction when mediated by autonomous motivation, whereas controlled motivation may weaken or alter this relationship. By testing this argument, the study seeks to contribute to organizational psychology literature by clarifying the psychological mechanisms underlying engagement and well-being in high-demand service contexts. Practically, the findings are expected to inform human resource management strategies in the retail sector, emphasizing the importance of fostering not only engagement but also high-quality motivation to promote sustainable employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODS

The unit of analysis in this study is individual retail employees working at PT. X Surabaya, Indonesia, within the organizational context of the retail sector. The research focuses on employees' work-related experiences in their daily work activities, particularly in relation to work engagement, work motivation, and job satisfaction. PT. X was selected as the research site due to its relevance as a retail organization operating in an urban commercial environment, which represents the characteristics of retail labor dynamics in Surabaya.

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational survey design to examine the relationships among variables and to test the mediating role of work motivation in the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. The primary source of data consisted of respondents who were retail employees at PT. X Surabaya, selected using purposive sampling based on predefined criteria. Data collection was conducted through a structured self-report questionnaire using standardized psychological instruments, including

the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by Fleischer & Wanckel, 2024, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale short version (UWES-9) developed by Dlouhy et al. (2024), and the Motivational at Work Scale (MAWS) developed by Handayani et al. (2026), all measured using a five-point Likert scale.

The data collection process involved a desk review to support the conceptual framework and the direct distribution of questionnaires in the respondents' work environment. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to test the hypothesized relationships among variables. Mediation analysis was conducted to examine both direct and indirect effects of work engagement on job satisfaction through work motivation, with all analyses performed using appropriate statistical software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Reliability and Validity Testing

Table 1. Validity and Reliability

	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work Engagement	9	0.909
Job Satisfaction	32	0.935
Work Motivavation	15	0.914

The reliability test results presented in Table 1 indicate that all measurement instruments demonstrate good internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for work engagement ($\alpha = 0.909$), job satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.935$), and work motivation ($\alpha = 0.914$) exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. These findings confirm that all instruments used in this study are reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Regression Analysis

Table 2. Regression Analysis of Work Engagement on Job Satisfaction

Model		Coefficients		t
		Beta		
1	Constant	156.636	12.794	12.424
	X	-1.636	0.291	-5.617

The regression analysis results show that work engagement has a negative and statistically significant effect on job satisfaction ($B = -0.429$; $\beta = -0.534$; $t = -5.617$; $p < 0.01$). This result indicates that an increase in work engagement is associated with a decrease in job satisfaction.

Path Analysis

Table 3. Path Analysis

Model	Predictor	B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t
1	Constant	85.122	12.620	—	6.744
	Work Engagement (X)	-0.429	0.200	0.221	2.147
	Work Motivation (Y)	-0.315	0.065	-0.496	-4.832

The path analysis results indicate that work engagement has a negative and significant effect on job satisfaction, with a regression coefficient of $B = -0.429$, standardized beta coefficient $\beta = -0.534$, $t = -5.617$, and $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that higher levels of work engagement among retail employees are associated with lower levels of job satisfaction.

Furthermore, work motivation also shows a negative and significant effect on job satisfaction. The regression coefficient for work motivation is $B = -0.315$, with a standardized beta coefficient $\beta = -0.496$, $t = -4.832$, and $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.01$). This result indicates that higher levels of work motivation are associated with lower job satisfaction within the studied retail work context.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationships between work engagement, work motivation, and job satisfaction among retail employees. The results reveal that work engagement has a negative and significant effect on job satisfaction. This finding contrasts with many previous studies that reported a positive relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction (Bakker, 2022; Memon et al., 2020), but it aligns with research emphasizing the contextual nature of engagement and its psychological consequences (Albrecht, 2021).

Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, work engagement is generally viewed as a positive outcome resulting from a balance between job demands and available job resources. However, when high job demands are not adequately supported by sufficient resources, work engagement may develop under conditions of work intensification. In the retail context, employees often face sales targets, long working hours, intensive customer interactions, and limited job autonomy. Under such circumstances, high work engagement may reflect compulsive or forced involvement rather than healthy and sustainable engagement, which may explain why increased engagement is accompanied by decreased job satisfaction in this study.

The findings also demonstrate that work motivation has a negative and significant effect on job satisfaction. This result suggests that high levels of motivation do not necessarily lead to more satisfying work experiences. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the quality of motivation is more critical than the intensity of motivation itself (McAnally & Hagger, 2024).

Controlled forms of motivation, such as external regulation and introjected regulation, are often driven by external pressure, performance demands, or fear of negative consequences. In high-pressure retail environments, employee motivation is likely dominated by external regulation rather than autonomous motivation, which may negatively affect job satisfaction.

These results are consistent with the findings of McAnally & Hagger, (2024), who reported that controlled motivation and amotivation are associated with lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions. Similarly, Putra and Wibowo (2023) found that only intrinsic motivation consistently shows a positive relationship with job satisfaction in the Indonesian service sector. Thus, the present study reinforces the argument that work motivation should be understood as a multidimensional construct rather than merely as the level of motivation.

Overall, the findings confirm that the relationships between work engagement, work motivation, and job satisfaction are highly contextual. In work environments characterized by high demands and limited resources, high engagement and motivation do not necessarily function as protective factors for employee well-being. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological dynamics of retail employees in Indonesia and highlights the importance of work experience quality and motivation type.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that retail organizations should be cautious in promoting work engagement and motivation without adequately managing job demands. Human resource management strategies should focus not only on increasing engagement and motivation but also on fostering supportive work environments that enhance autonomy, psychological recovery, and a balanced relationship between job demands and job resources.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that high levels of work engagement and work motivation do not necessarily function as sources of psychological well-being, as reflected in job satisfaction. In high-demand retail work contexts, work engagement may develop alongside intensified workloads and operational pressures, leading to a negative relationship with job satisfaction. Similarly, work motivation appears to be dominated by controlled forms of regulation, which weakens its potential to enhance positive work experiences. The key lesson from this study is that the quality of engagement and motivation is more critical than their intensity. From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the literature by empirically demonstrating the contextual nature of the relationships among work engagement, work motivation, and job

satisfaction. By integrating the Job Demands–Resources model and Self-Determination Theory, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of employee well-being in service-oriented and high-pressure work environments.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of a cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation, and reliance on self-report measures may introduce common method bias. In addition, the sample size was relatively small and focused on a single organizational context, which may restrict generalizability. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal or mixed-method designs to capture dynamic changes in engagement, motivation, and well-being over time. Further studies should also differentiate types of work motivation more explicitly and examine the moderating role of job resources, leadership style, and organizational support to deepen understanding of how engagement and motivation can be transformed into sustainable job satisfaction.

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