



Work engagement as a mediator of transactional leadership and workload on employee turnover intention

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ABSTRACT

Applying replacement value of goods and salary deductions as sanctions is part of the transactional leadership policy and this burdens employees, which makes them choose to leave their jobs. Work engagement is expected to mitigate this. This study investigates the impact of transactional leadership and workload on turnover intention, considering work engagement as a mediator. The population in this study were permanent employees of PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk in West Kalimantan, with a sample size of 205 respondents with purposive sampling. Data collection methods using a questionnaire with a Likert scale. The data analysis model uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and AMOS 24 statistical tools. The results of this study indicate a significant positive influence between transactional leadership and workload on turnover intention. Transactional leadership and workload variables also significantly positively affect work engagement. The mediating role of work engagement strengthens the relationship between transactional leadership and workload on turnover intention. This research is expected to prevent the increasing turnover in the retail business company PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk. The novelty in this research comes from the underexplored topic of high employee turnover in business retail company due to transactional leadership policies. Therefore, this study is anticipated to contribute to enriching academic literature.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Global competition has emerged as a crucial component in formulating corporate strategy and increasingly competitive market growth due to the changing dynamics of the business environment and global organizational development. HR is needed as a fleet to achieve the vision and mission, and its performance needs to be monitored (Daud & Afifah, 2021). Optimal human resource management needs to be done so that everyone can make the best contribution to the success of the company.

Turnover is the final decision to reduce the number of employees at any given time. Turnover is a condition when employees wish to withdraw from their jobs; this is a risk that organizations must be prepared to face (Robbins & Judge, 2018). Communicating plans to leave a task is much easier than leaving. Increased employee turnover rates can lead to financial losses and consume valuable time for

businesses, including what it takes to find new employees and train them and the costs spent on advertising, recruiting, and retraining new workers (Park & Min, 2020).

Turnover intention is an interesting issue at PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk, one of the fastest-growing retail businesses in Indonesia.

Table 1. Employee's entry and exit data

Year	Current total incoming employee	Current total outgoing employee
2020	56.602	21.084
2021	65.915	31.825
2022	91.877	71.375

Source: (Annual Report Alfamart, 2020-2022)

The information listed on table 1 indicates that the subject is experiencing a relatively high employee turnover rate every year from 2020 to 2022. The figure refers to the number of employees who resigned and have not considered employees who left due to retirement or death. It is feared that the turnover rate above will continue to increase, increasing the number of unemployed and impacting the decline in the community's economy.

Leadership is considered a vital predictor of individual work outcomes that reduces subjectivity and focuses on the leadership instrument (Gutu et al., 2022). Employees are annoyed by retail business leaders' strict work rules and leadership style, as conveyed directly through observations and pre-research interviews. The nominal value of lost items must be compensated to employees. Salary reduction is another company policy if the store's revenue does not match what is listed in the system. The employee's employment contract is claimed to contain such penalties. Employees quit their jobs because these conditions made them feel uncomfortable and burdened. A transactional leadership style is when a leader delegates tasks to the organization through rewards and punishments in a transactional model (Changar & Atan, 2021). It describes a process of exchange where employees are rewarded for their job performance, and leaders gain advantages from the outcomes achieved through completed tasks (Rosnani, 2012). Leaders communicate what they expect and must accomplish (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Competent leaders can control their subordinates. These leaders are oriented toward the overall management of the organization, catapult its performance, and ensure the obedience of their subordinates through rewarding and applying sanctions (Patiar & Wang, 2020). Similarly, if followers perceive their transactional leaders to be fair, they will be fairly motivated to pay back by exhibiting positive work-related attitudes and behaviors (Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2020). Transactional leaders are expected to generate greater job satisfaction to improve sustainable organizational performance and ensure their employees' high job satisfaction (Alarabiat & Eyupoglu, 2022).

The company policy promises bonuses if employees can break the sales target. However, if the target is not exceeded, workers are ready to be shadowed by sanctions. Workers recognize such working conditions as a heavy burden. This can be another factor that affects turnover intention, namely workload (Anees et al., 2021). The definition of workload refers to organizations that rarely engage in agile. Still, workers must complete tasks carefully and exert extra effort so that the workload will be very pronounced (Laux & Kranz, 2019). The existence of workload is considered a complexity in the job, even though sitting in the same organization can have different tasks and responsibilities because they have different rank levels (Inegbedion et al., 2020).

Low employee engagement is one of the factors for high turnover rates. Employee implicit engagement refers to positive affirmations that can be certified in response to a work program (Chen & Fellenz, 2020). Engaged workers have high energy levels, work enthusiastically, and truly immerse themselves in their activities (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Workers feel happy in this climate, which aligns with their authoritative qualities (Borst et al., 2019). Engagement can be used as a preventive measure for depression in employees (Torp & Bergheim, 2023). Employee turnover rates will be lower when employees are more engaged at work. Employee attachment to their work can also mitigate employees' desire to leave due to workload. The perceived burden can be diverted into a sense of extraordinary devotion if the attachment is fostered in the worker. As a result, experiencing positive

and negative emotions simultaneously should be considered a function in organizational life (Vakola et al., 2021). Leaders should recognize the importance of stimulating employees' engagement with their work (Monje-Amor et al., 2020).

This study evaluated the extent to which transactional leadership affects employee turnover by considering the influence of employee work engagement interventions at PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk. This study also contributes novelty to the construct of the model paradigm. Transactional leadership and workload in the model as variables that are believed to affect turnover intention and see the impact of work engagement as a mediator of retail businesses in Indonesia have not been widely discussed by previous researchers. So, a study is needed to provide insight to companies and related stakeholders to reduce employee turnover for related parties who need it in formulating strategic policies.

The initial section provides an overview of the problem's context. Structural Equation Modeling will be employed for analysis, with a specific focus on uncovering the directions and causal relationships among these factors. Following section will further explore the research methodology, the mechanisms associated with these factors and hypotheses. The third section will unveil the outcomes of data analysis, commencing with an overview of respondent demographics, followed by an assessment of measurement validity and reliability, culminating in the presentation of the structural model, explaining the relationships hypothesized to occur and discussing their outcomes. The final section will offer a conclusion, summarizing the results of hypothesis testing and their broader implications.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The survey distributed in this study was administered to individuals meeting predefined criteria. Utilizing a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), transactional leadership was evaluated with three items adapted from early research (Bass, 1990). Workload assessment involved six items from the NASA-TLX (Hart & Staveland, 1988), while turnover intention was measured with three items based on (Mobley et al., 1978). Work engagement, assessed with three items, drew from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002)

Data were collected from a sample of 205 respondents affiliated with PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk in West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Participants, aged 18 and above, were employed at Alfamart, and questionnaires were distributed across various locations in West Kalimantan.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through AMOS 24 was employed for model analysis. Model fit was evaluated using parameters such as CMIN/DF, TLI, IFI, CFI, RMSEA, RMR, NFI, and GFI. Validity was assessed through standardized loading factors (SLF) with a threshold of ≥ 0.50 , while construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values determined construct reliability. SEM analysis was conducted to examine the structural model and test research hypotheses, with t-count values compared to critical t-table values (usually 1.96 at $\alpha = 0.05$). The Sobel test assessed the indirect effect of the mediating variable.

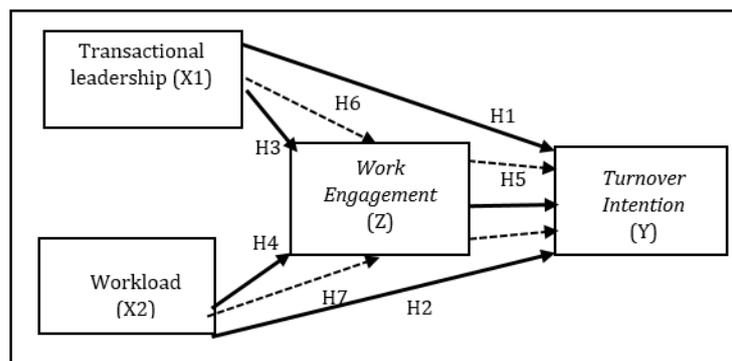


Figure 1. Research Framework.

Transactional leadership

Employees are enforced with exchange mechanisms driving their hard work (Ugwu & Okore, 2020). Transactional leadership is related to exchange because leaders have certain expectations, and leaders will fulfill the needs of their followers as far as possible (Park & Pierce, 2020). For this reason, confidence and credibility are needed to successfully implement a leadership system (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2021). Employees are more inspired to do their jobs when they believe in lofty goals aligned with the company's mission. More specifically, by displaying high levels professional skills based on tasks during interactions with customers, leaders will serve as appealing role models by exemplifying high-performance standards that employees should embrace (Zheng et al., 2020).

Workload

The number of tasks anticipated to be completed by individual employees in a specific period is called workload (Inegbedion et al., 2020). Another definition is the various target results that must be achieved within a certain time. The term stressful workload can be divided into two categories: excessive workload, which refers to work responsibilities beyond the worker's coping capacity, and low workload, which refers to work responsibilities below the employee's ability. Workload management ensures worker comfort (Dang et al., 2020).

Work Engagement

The positive emotional situation in achieving organizational goal operations is known as work engagement (Hoch et al., 2018). Employees' sense of ownership will grow due to their involvement with the company. Employee enthusiasm, dedication, and task completion rate are indicators of work engagement (Zhang et al., 2020). It connects employees sincerely and intellectually with their work (Wee & Lai, 2022). The character, work performed, influence, and role of employees are crucial (Li et al., 2019). In carrying out their obligations, each representative wants to achieve the most extreme work results, influencing employee engagement.

Turnover Intention

An employee intends to leave the organization voluntarily. Turnover intention is undoubtedly due to decreased individual performance and increased organizational costs, resulting in employee turnover (Li, 2018). Turnover intention measures an employee's inclination to stay within the organization or the inclination to depart from it (Anees et al., 2021). For this reason, it can be concluded that turnover intention is the subjective possibility of individual employees leaving and moving from their jobs. Employees who follow positive expectations outside their jobs can experience this difficulty. Increasing turnover rates can be anticipated from the number of workers needed to move into an organization or organization.

Transactional Leadership and Turnover Intention

Providing sanctions as part of transactional leadership can incite an employee's inclination to depart. Consistent with the results, transactional leadership has a significant impact on turnover intention (Hamzat et al., 2020; Martins et al., 2023; Masood et al., 2020).

H1: Transactional leadership affects turnover intention

Workload and Turnover Intention

The workload is categorized as one of several major factors in forming a desire to leave a corporate institution. This condition must be prevented. Findings with similar results also resulted in a positive significant relationship between workload and the desire to move (Fei et al., 2023; Holland et al., 2019; Liu & Lo, 2018; Nainggolan & Gunawan, 2021; Verma & Kesari, 2020).

H2: Workload affects turnover intention

Transactional Leadership and Work Engagement

Employee participation in the work environment is vital to a company's success in human resource development. Competent leaders are necessary for a business to succeed hoping to advance further. In line with value-based transactional leaders, focus on task results and the shortcomings and variations in performance results of their subordinates (Patiar & Wang, 2020). In transactional leadership, there are rewards for employees for certain performance results. This can stimulate

employee attachment to their work. The findings align with prior research, suggesting that transactional leadership is significantly correlated with the level of employee work engagement (Edelbroek et al., 2019; Jangsiriwattana, 2019; Li, 2018; Suhendra, 2021).

H3: Transactional leadership affects work engagement

Workload and Work Engagement

An agency not only needs skilled workers but also wants workers who are agile in accepting various tasks. Tasks at work become unnatural if they exceed the capabilities of the worker. Workers feel burdened, especially with the company's complicated policies. Employees perceive their workload as excessive due to the necessity of performing tasks, beyond their job descriptions, compounded by a lack of attention from their superiors. This condition is often the reason for leaving. For this reason, it is necessary to foster strong work bonds within the agency. Engaged employees always look for the best way to complete their tasks while minimizing time and resources (Rožman et al., 2021). With work engagement, tasks do not become a burden for employees. Some findings show a positive relationship between workload and work engagement (Liu & Lo, 2018; Presti et al., 2020).

H4: Workload affects work engagement

Work Engagement and Turnover Intention

The individual's fit with the job becomes the benchmark for leaving or staying. Turnover intention is when employees leave the association and should be supported. So, there is a need for a different view of each employee morale factor to measure its effect on employee exit intention in this context (Verma & Kesari, 2020). To mitigate employee turnover rates, it is advisable for management to cultivate stronger connections with their employees. The presented findings suggest that work engagement can give an effect on turnover intention (Cao & Chen, 2021; Pereira et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2022)

H5: Work engagement affects turnover intention

Transactional Leadership and Turnover Intention Mediating by Work Engagement

Transactional leaders generally oversee the obligations of their subordinates and reward their efforts and performance (Patiar & Wang, 2020). The implementation of transactional leadership elicits varied responses. Disciplined implementation causes pressure on employees, which may lead to employee turnover. Work engagement is used as a mediating variable to determine the level of intervention for workload and turnover intention (Koesmono, 2017; Shah et al., 2021; Suhendra, 2021; Sultana & Jabeen, 2018).

H6: Transactional leadership affects turnover intention mediated by work engagement.

Workload and Turnover Intention Mediating by Work Engagement

Workload generally results in laziness in individuals and non-productive behavior at work. Workload is a vital factor in productivity and turnover. Workload often triggers workers' desire to leave their jobs and duties. For this reason, work engagement is used as a mediating variable to determine the level of intervention for workload and turnover intention variables. This is supported by the following research: work engagement has a mediating role between workload and turnover intention (Bawono & Lo, 2020; Fabiyani et al., 2021).

H7: Workload affects turnover intention mediated by work engagement

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

Respondent Characteristics

The examination of the respondent's profile in this research relies in Table 2. The demographic attributes provided encompass gender, age, marriage status, educational level, work period, and domicile.

Table 2. Respondent characteristic

Category	Characteristic	F	%
Gender	Male	97	47.3
	Female	108	52.7

Category	Characteristic	F	%
Age	Total	205	100
	18-22 years old	108	52.7
	23-27 years old	82	40
	28-32 years old	11	5.3
	33-37 years old	3	1.5
	>37 years old	1	0.5
Marriage Status	Total	205	100
	Married	82	40
Educational Level	Total	205	100
	Unmarried	123	60
Educational Level	Total	205	100
	High School	167	81.5
	Diploma	16	7.8
	Bachelor	22	10.7
Work Period	Total	205	100
	1-3 years	116	56.6
	4-6 years	83	40.5
	7-10 years	6	2.9
	Total	205	100
Domicile	Total	205	100
	West Kalimantan	205	100

Table 2 shows that respondents are dominated by female employees aged 18 to 22 years, mostly unmarried. The educational level and work period are dominated by high school level and 1-3 years of service. With a total of 205 respondents, Alfamart employees who live in West Kalimantan.

Measurements Model

The suitability, validity, and reliability test results are as follows.

Table 3. Standardized Loading Factor (SLF), Construct Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Values on Overall Model Fit

	Items	SLF	CR	AVE
<i>Transactional leadership</i>	The leadership promised rewards/bonuses if my performance was good	0,697	0,772	0,564
	Warnings and sanctions occur for errors in the work process carried out			
	The leadership corrected and corrected the mistakes I made	0,823		
	At work, I carry out activities such as thinking, calculating, remembering, and searching	0,729		
<i>Workload</i>	I move a lot while working		0,79	0,55
	I feel stressed when the time given is too short	0,794		
	I feel dissatisfied with my performance so far			
	I have to be physically strong when working	0,737		
	I often feel stressed at work	0,706		
	When I work, I feel very excited	0,696		
	I am very enthusiastic about the work I do	0,711		
Time flies so fast when I work	0,801			
<i>Work Engagement</i>	I'm thinking about looking for a new job somewhere else	0,797	0,79	0,525
	I actively track information about other job opportunities besides this company	0,665		
	I am very serious about my intention to quit this job	0,706		
<i>Turnover Intention</i>		0,761	0,77	0,528
		0,684		
		0,734		

As per the findings presented in Table 3, the results indicate that the indicators employed in the developed model meet the prescribed criteria for both validity and reliability. The existing indicators affirm the validity and adequacy of all items in measuring the overall model composition, with standardized loading factor (SLF) values consistently exceeding 0.50. The results of the Construct Reliability (CR) test further affirm the reliability of all instruments, surpassing the threshold of 0.70, indicating their consistent ability to measure the structure within the constructed model.

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Index

Category	Characteristic	Results	Description
CMIN/DF	≤ 3,00	1,307	Good fit
RMSEA	≤ 0,08	0,039	Good fit
RMR	< 0,05	0,036	Good fit
NFI	≥ 0,90	0,910	Good fit
IFI	≥ 0,90	0,977	Good fit
TLI	≥ 0,90	0,972	Good fit
CFI	≥ 0,90	0,977	Good fit

The model conformance test in Table 4 shows that the model criteria are deemed acceptable. Five measures show a good fit. If there are 3-4 measures with a good level of agreement or above the cut-off value, the research model configuration can be declared adequate and accepted.

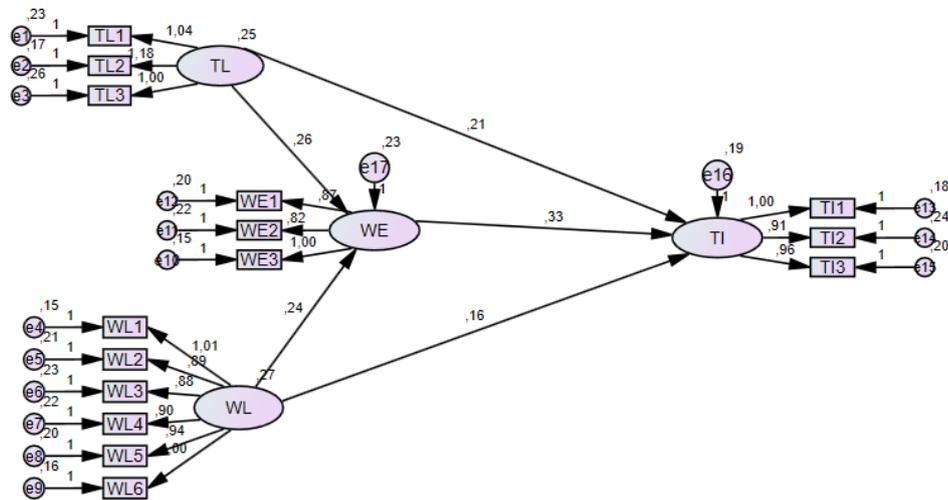


Figure 2. Complete Model Testing

Hypotheses Test

The outcomes of examining the impact of the interrelationship among variables within the research framework constructed in accordance with this study can be articulated as follows.

Table 5. Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Path	Estimate	SE	CR	P
H ₁	Turnover Intention<-- Transactional Leadership	0,261	0,091	2,885	0,04
H ₂	Turnover Intention <-- Workload	0,239	0,081	2,937	0,03
H ₃	Work Engagement<-- Transactional Leadership	0,209	0,089	2,350	0,019
H ₄	Work Engagement <-- Workload	0,164	0,080	2,057	0,04
H ₅	Turnover Intention <-- Work Engagement	0,332	0,095	3,497	0,00

As per the findings in Table 5, the results of data processing support the previously posited research hypotheses. Firstly, transactional leadership demonstrates a statistically significant positive impact on turnover intention (p-value=0.04). Secondly, workload exhibits a statistically significant positive influence on turnover intention (p-value=0.03). Thirdly, a significant positive relationship is observed between transactional leadership and work engagement (p-value=0.019). Fourthly, workload demonstrates a statistically significant positive relationship with work engagement (p-value=0.040). Lastly, the fifth hypothesis, exploring the positive and significant relationship between work engagement and turnover intention, is supported by a p-value of 0.000. These outcomes attain significance as indicated by the obtained p-values, all of which are below 0.05 (α = 0.05).

Table 6. Mediation significance

Hypotheses	Path	Sobel Test Statistic	Two-tailed probability
H ₆	Transactional leadership → Work Engagement → Turnover Intention	2,21	0,0266
H ₇	Workload → Work Engagement → Turnover Intention	2,25	0,0241

Table 6 presents Sobel test statistics for the initial and subsequent results as 2.21 and 2.25, respectively, exceeding the critical t-table value of 1.96. The corresponding p-values of 0.0266 and 0.0241 are both below 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$), leading to the conclusion that work engagement plays an indirect role. These findings suggest that transactional leadership and workload indirectly influence turnover intention through work engagement.

Discussion

Transactional leadership has direct implications for a company's turnover intention. This research is strengthened by previous findings which state that transactional leadership affects turnover intention (Hamzat et al., 2020; Martins et al., 2023; Masood et al., 2020). The real impact of the high employee turnover rate is believed to be due to the principle of punitive fines as part of the transactional leadership system policy. This topic is still underexplored, especially in the retail business sector. Acknowledging the frequent occurrence of this issue emphasizes the relevance of the study, with an expectation that its findings will significantly contribute to the enrichment of academic literature. Likewise, workload is also stated to be directly correlated to turnover. This statement is reinforced by research (Anees et al., 2021; Fei et al., 2023; Holland et al., 2019; Liu & Lo, 2018; Nainggolan & Gunawan, 2021; Verma & Kesari, 2020). This supports that Alfamart employees have the potential to leave because the workload feels heavy.

This research suggests that transactional leadership can also spur high work engagement. Previous research states the same thing (Edelbroek et al., 2019; Jangsiriwattana, 2019; Li, 2018; Suhendra, 2021). This indicates that transactional leadership in Alfamart's retail business can increase employee attachment to their work, which bonuses can trigger if they can achieve sales targets and other rewards. Workload that occurs even though it often causes workers to be stressed and exhausted but makes them feel familiar and bound by their duties and responsibilities. A positive correlation also occurs between workload and work engagement (Liu & Lo, 2018; Presti et al., 2020). So, the resulting work engagement is high but also significantly impacts employee turnover intention. A high level of engagement does not necessarily mean that it has been proven to reduce the intention to move from work (Pereira et al., 2022). A positive correlation also occurs between work engagement to turnover intention (Cao & Chen, 2021; Pereira et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2022). This makes the researcher conclude that even though they have high attachments, PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk employees do not rule out opportunities and possibilities in finding new places and jobs that are considered better than before.

This research proves the indirect correlation between transactional leadership and turnover intention through work engagement (Koesmono, 2017; Shah et al., 2021; Suhendra, 2021; Sultana & Jabeen, 2018). This research proves the significant and positive indirect correlation between workload and turnover intention through work engagement (Bawono & Lo, 2020; Fabiyani et al., 2021). This indicates that work engagement is a mediator that strengthens the correlation between transactional leadership and workload on employee turnover intention.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that transactional leadership and workload affect turnover intention. This research identified a correlation between transactional leadership and workload relation to work engagement. Work engagement that occurs causes turnover intention. Then, the researcher found that implementing transactional leadership by PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk can increase turnover intention through work engagement. This is supported by the high workload level of employee turnover intention through work engagement. Thus, empirically, this study found the presence of work

engagement as a mediating factor enhances the impact of transactional leadership and workload on turnover intention. The novelty in this research comes from the underexplored topic of high employee turnover in business retail company due to transactional leadership policies. Therefore, this study is anticipated to contribute to enriching academic literature. This research is expected to prevent the increasing turnover in the retail business company PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk (Minimarket Alfamart). As a large retail business in Indonesia, it has great challenges from various sides. This includes the challenge of being able to retain workers to prevent turnover. This situation spurs the management to be more careful to avoid increasing employee turnover intention. Steps that can be taken are to evaluate policies considered as triggers for turnover and improve human resource management. Synergy in creating programs to build Alfamart's retail business is an important step taken for the future. This can work well by continuing to support the creation of a more capable policy environment and system. The current retail business competition requires attention and rapid response to maintain a sustainable existence. The limitations of this research are in the variables, objects, and respondents studied. Many other variables still need to be developed to prevent the increase in turnover rates. The objects studied are also different in other retail businesses. This research only presents the situation when the research was conducted. It is expected that future research will use a larger sample, use sophisticated modeling, and explore, strengthen, and develop this research as well as research on transactional leadership, workload, work engagement, and turnover intention with in-depth qualitative research.

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