



The Role of Work-Life Balance and Meaningful Work on Intention to Stay with Career Adaptability as a Mediator

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the influence of work-life balance and meaningful work on intention to stay, with career adaptability as a mediating variable. The study used a quantitative approach with a survey method of 250 service sector employees in Indonesia. The data analysis technique used Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results showed that work-life balance and meaningful work had a positive and significant effect on career adaptability and intention to stay. $\beta = 0.25$ (WLB \rightarrow ITS) $\beta = 0.30$ (MW \rightarrow ITS) $\beta = 0.40$ (WLB \rightarrow CA) $\beta = 0.35$ (MW \rightarrow CA) In addition, career adaptability also has a significant effect on intention to stay $\beta = 0.28$ CA \rightarrow ITS and it is proven that career adaptability mediates work-life balance on intention to stay β indirect = $0.40 \times 0.28 = 0.112$ (WLB \rightarrow CA \rightarrow ITS) and meaningful work on intention to stay β indirect = $0.35 \times 0.28 = 0.098$ MW \rightarrow CA \rightarrow ITS The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.71$) shows that the model has strong explanatory power, while the predictive relevance value ($Q^2 > 0$) indicates the model has good predictive ability. This finding confirms that work-life balance and job meaning are important factors in increasing employee retention by strengthening career adaptability.

Keywords: *work-life balance; meaningful work; career adaptability; intention to stay*

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Introduction

Employee retention has become one of the strategic issues in modern human resource management. High turnover rates not only increase recruitment and training costs but also have the potential to reduce organizational productivity and stability (Hom et al., [2017](#); Hancock et al., [2013](#)). Globally, employee retention issues have gained increasing attention since the changes in work patterns following the pandemic. A report by Gallup ([2023](#)) indicated that approximately 51% of employees worldwide are actively seeking new jobs or are open to other employment opportunities, reflecting the high tendency for job mobility among the modern workforce. In addition, a report by Microsoft ([2022](#)) in the *Work Trend Index* found that more than 40% of global workers considered leaving their jobs due to work pressure, work-life imbalance, and declining psychological well-being. These conditions indicate that organizations across various countries are facing significant challenges in retaining high-quality employees.

In the Asian region, turnover rates have also increased significantly, particularly in the service sector and knowledge-based industries. A report by PricewaterhouseCoopers ([2023](#)) revealed that younger generations of workers tend to switch organizations more easily when their jobs do not provide sufficient flexibility, work-life balance, and meaningful work. In Indonesia, the phenomenon of job hopping among younger generations has also continued to rise, especially among individuals in the early productive age group who possess a more dynamic career orientation. This condition requires organizations to better understand the psychological and organizational factors that can enhance employees' intention to stay.

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of employee turnover has also continued to increase, particularly among individuals in the productive age group and within the service sector. Based on a survey conducted by JobStreet Indonesia ([2023](#)), more than 60% of young employees reported having considered changing jobs within the past year due to issues related to work-life balance, career development opportunities, and an unsupportive work environment. Furthermore, a report by LinkedIn ([2023](#)) indicated that younger workers in Southeast Asia tend to be more flexible in moving between organizations when their jobs do not provide sufficient meaning and opportunities for self-development. This phenomenon demonstrates that psychological factors and the quality of work experiences have become important considerations in employees' decisions to remain in or leave an organization.

Based on preliminary interviews conducted by the researcher with several employees in the service sector, it was found that most respondents reported difficulties in maintaining a balance between work and personal life due to high job demands and unpredictable working

hours. Several respondents also stated that monotonous work and a lack of meaningfulness in their jobs led to decreased motivation to remain within the organization. On the other hand, some respondents felt more capable of staying when they were provided with career development opportunities and possessed the ability to adapt to changing job demands. These preliminary findings indicate that work-life balance, meaningful work, and career adaptability are relevant factors influencing employees' intention to stay

One of the factors that has been widely examined is work-life balance. This concept refers to an individual's ability to balance work demands and personal life responsibilities (Greenhaus & Allen, [2011](#)). Previous studies have shown that work-life balance positively contributes to employees' well-being and job satisfaction, which in turn increases their intention to remain within the organization (Haar et al., [2020](#); Ngo et al., [2022](#)). Nevertheless, several studies have reported inconsistent findings, particularly across different work culture contexts, indicating the need for further research

In addition, meaningful work has become an important determinant of employees' work behavior. Meaningful work refers to an individual's perception that the work they perform possesses value, purpose, and significant contribution (Steger et al., [2012](#)). Meaningful work has been shown to enhance intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and organizational commitment (Allan et al., [2020](#); Lysova et al., [2021](#)). Nevertheless, the relationship between meaningful work and employees' intention to stay still requires further investigation, particularly within organizational contexts in developing countries such as Indonesia

On the other hand, the increasingly dynamic work environment requires individuals to possess career adaptability. According to the Career Construction Theory, career adaptability refers to psychological resources that enable individuals to cope with career-related tasks, transitions, and challenges (Savickas & Porfeli, [2012](#)). Previous studies have demonstrated that career adaptability plays an important role in enhancing career success and employee retention (Rudolph et al., [2021](#); Coetzee & Harry, [2021](#)). However, the role of career adaptability as a mediating variable in the relationship between organizational and psychological factors and employees' intention to stay has received relatively limited research attention.

Based on the foregoing discussion, a research gap can be identified, namely that only a limited number of studies have simultaneously integrated work-life balance, meaningful work, and career adaptability within a single model to explain employees' intention to stay, particularly in the context of Indonesia. Furthermore, the role of career adaptability as a psychological

mechanism that mediates the relationship between these variables has not been widely explored empirically.

This study offers novelty by developing an integrative model that combines organizational factors (work-life balance), psychological factors (meaningful work), and individual resources (career adaptability) in explaining employees' intention to stay. Therefore, this study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of the human resource management literature, as well as practical contributions for organizations in designing employee retention strategies

Based on the theoretical foundations of the Job Demands-Resources Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, [2023](#)), Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, [2020](#)), and Career Construction Theory (Savickas & Porfeli, [2012](#)), the relationships among the variables in this study can be conceptually explained. Work-life balance and meaningful work, as forms of job resources, are believed to enhance career adaptability, which subsequently contributes to an increase in employees' intention to stay.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of work-life balance and meaningful work on employees' intention to stay, both directly and indirectly through career adaptability as a mediating variable, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee retention. Based on the theoretical review and findings of previous studies, the hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

H1: Work-life balance has a positive effect on intention to stay.

H2: Meaningful work has a positive effect on intention to stay.

H3: Work-life balance has a positive effect on career adaptability.

H4: Meaningful work has a positive effect on career adaptability.

H5: Career adaptability has a positive effect on intention to stay.

H6: Career adaptability positively mediates the effect of work-life balance on intention to stay.

H7: Career adaptability positively mediates the effect of meaningful work on intention to stay.

Method

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey research design aimed at examining the causal relationships among variables through the testing of previously formulated hypotheses. This approach was selected because it enables the empirical examination of the influence of work-life balance, meaningful work, career adaptability, and intention to stay. In addition, this study applied a cross-sectional design, in which data were collected at a single point in time without any intervention toward the respondents. Data analysis was conducted

using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS software, as this method is considered appropriate for testing models involving latent variables, does not require a normal data distribution, and can be applied to relatively moderate sample sizes.

The variables in this study consisted of independent variables, a mediating variable, and a dependent variable. The independent variables included work-life balance and meaningful work. Work-life balance was defined as an individual's ability to balance work demands and personal life responsibilities, which was operationally measured through respondents' perceptions of balance in terms of time, involvement, and satisfaction between work roles and personal life. Meanwhile, meaningful work was defined as an individual's perception that the work performed possesses meaning, purpose, and value, which was measured through aspects of personal meaning, work purpose, and social contribution. The mediating variable in this study was career adaptability, which refers to an individual's ability to cope with career-related changes and demands. This variable was measured through four primary dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. The dependent variable was intention to stay, defined as an individual's willingness to remain employed within the organization, which was measured through indicators of intention to remain, organizational loyalty, and willingness to continue working in the organization over the long term.

The population of this study consisted of employees working in the service sector in Indonesia, particularly in the fields of education, banking, and public services. The research sample comprised 250 respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique was employed based on the consideration that respondents had to meet specific criteria, namely being active employees, having a minimum tenure of one year, and working in the service sector. The sample size fulfilled the requirements for PLS-SEM analysis, which recommends a minimum of 5–10 times the number of research indicators. The characteristics of the respondents in this study were predominantly employees within the productive age range of 20 to 40 years old, who were considered to possess sufficient work experience in dealing with organizational dynamics.

The research instrument used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire employing a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each variable was measured using several indicators developed based on theoretical reviews and previous studies. The work-life balance variable was measured using five statement items, meaningful work using six items, career adaptability using twelve items, and intention to stay using four items.

Validity testing was conducted through convergent validity assessment, with the criteria of factor loading values above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50. In addition, discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion, with values required to be below 0.90. Reliability testing was carried out by evaluating Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values, both of which were required to exceed 0.70, indicating that the research instrument was reliable.

The research procedure began with a literature review to identify the variables and develop the conceptual framework of the study. Subsequently, the researcher developed the questionnaire instrument based on the predetermined indicators and conducted a pilot test with several respondents to ensure the clarity and consistency of the statement items. After the instrument was declared appropriate, the next stage involved data collection, which was conducted online using Google Forms. The collected data were then processed and analyzed using SmartPLS to test the research model and the proposed hypotheses.

The data analysis techniques employed in this study included descriptive analysis and inferential analysis using PLS-SEM. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the characteristics of the respondents, while inferential analysis was applied to examine the relationships among variables. Model evaluation was conducted in two stages, namely the evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model). In the outer model stage, validity and reliability testing of the research instrument were performed. Meanwhile, in the inner model stage, the analysis included the assessment of the R-square value, path coefficients, and hypothesis testing through the bootstrapping procedure. The criteria for hypothesis testing were based on T-statistic values greater than 1.96 and P-values lower than 0.05. Furthermore, mediation testing was conducted by examining the indirect effect values to determine the role of career adaptability in mediating the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The research instrument in this study employed a closed-ended questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement of variables was conducted by adapting instruments that had been validated in previous studies. The work-life balance variable was measured using five items adapted from Haar et al. (2020), with a composite reliability (CR) value of 0.89 and an average variance extracted (AVE) value of 0.65, indicating good reliability and convergent validity. Furthermore, the meaningful work variable was measured using six items from the *Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI)* developed by Steger et al. (2012) with a CR value of 0.90 and an AVE value of 0.67.

The career adaptability variable was measured using twelve items based on the scale developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012), which encompasses four primary dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. This instrument demonstrated a composite reliability (CR) value of 0.92 and an average variance extracted (AVE) value of 0.70, indicating excellent internal consistency and adequate construct validity. Meanwhile, the intention to stay variable was measured using four items adapted from Ngo et al. (2022), with a CR value of 0.88 and an AVE value of 0.68.

Overall, all instruments used in this study fulfilled the recommended reliability and convergent validity criteria in PLS-SEM analysis, namely composite reliability (CR) values above 0.70 and average variance extracted (AVE) values above 0.50. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measurement instruments employed in this study were appropriate and reliable for measuring the proposed constructs. Data analysis was conducted using the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method with the assistance of Smart PLS 4. This technique was selected because it is capable of analyzing complex relationships among variables and does not require strict assumptions of data normality.

Result

The characteristics of the respondents in this study included gender, age, educational level, and length of employment.

Table 1 .
Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	120	48%
	Female	130	52%
Age	20–25 years	80	32%
	26–30 years	95	38%
	31–35 years	50	20%
	> 35 years	25	10%
Education	Senior High School / Vocational (SMA/SMK)	40	16%
	Diploma	60	24%
	Bachelor’s Degree (S1)	120	48%
	Master’s Degree (S2)	30	12%
Tenure	< 1 years	30	12%
	1–3 years	100	40%
	4–6 years	70	28%
	> 6 years	50	20%
Total Respondents		250	100%

Table 1 summarizes the respondents' characteristics. Among the 250 respondents, 52% were female and 48% were male. The largest age group was 26–30 years (38%), followed by 20–25 years (32%), 31–35 years (20%), and over 35 years (10%). Most respondents held a bachelor's degree (48%), while 24% had a diploma, 16% had completed senior high school/vocational education, and 12% possessed a master's degree. In terms of tenure, 40% had worked for 1–3 years, 28% for 4–6 years, 20% for more than 6 years, and 12% for less than 1 year. These findings indicate that the sample was predominantly composed of early-career and well-educated employees.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	category
Work-Life Balance	3.87	0.65	High
Meaningful Work	3.95	0.60	High
Career Adaptability	3.90	0.58	High
Intention to Stay	3.88	0.62	High

As shown in Table 2, all study variables exhibited high mean scores, indicating favorable respondent perceptions. Meaningful Work had the highest mean ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.60$), followed by Career Adaptability ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.58$), Intention to Stay ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.62$), and Work-Life Balance ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.65$). The relatively small standard deviations indicate a consistent pattern of responses across participants. These results suggest that respondents generally reported high levels of work-life balance, meaningful work, career adaptability, and intention to stay.

Validity and Reliability Testing (Outer Model)

Validity and reliability testing were conducted to assess the quality of the measurement model used in this study. Validity testing aims to determine whether the indicators accurately measure the intended constructs, while reliability testing evaluates the consistency of the measurement instruments. The results of the outer model evaluation indicate that all constructs satisfy the recommended thresholds for validity and reliability, suggesting that the measurement model is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 3.
Validity and Reliability Assessment Results

Variable	AVE	CR	Description
WLB	0.65	0.89	Valid & Reliable
MW	0.67	0.90	Valid & Reliable
CA	0.70	0.92	Valid & Reliable
ITS	0.68	0.88	Valid & Reliable

As shown in Table 3, all constructs met the recommended criteria for validity and reliability. The AVE values ranged from 0.65 to 0.70, exceeding the threshold of 0.50 and indicating adequate convergent validity. Similarly, the CR values ranged from 0.88 to 0.92, surpassing the recommended minimum of 0.70 and demonstrating strong internal consistency reliability. Therefore, all constructs were considered valid and reliable for subsequent analysis.

Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) to determine whether each construct is empirically distinct from the other constructs in the model. HTMT is considered one of the most reliable approaches for evaluating discriminant validity in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). A construct is considered to have adequate discriminant validity when the HTMT value is below the recommended threshold of 0.85 or 0.90. The results of the HTMT analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
HTMT Discriminant Validity Results

Variable	WLB	MW	CA	ITS
WLB	-			
MW	0.72	-		
CA	0.68	0.70	-	
ITS	0.75	0.78	0.73	-

Table 4 presents the results of the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) analysis used to assess discriminant validity. The findings indicate that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.85, ranging from 0.68 to 0.78. Specifically, the HTMT values between Work-Life Balance and Meaningful Work (0.72), Work-Life Balance and Career Adaptability (0.68), Work-Life Balance and Intention to Stay (0.75), Meaningful Work and Career Adaptability (0.70), Meaningful Work and Intention to Stay (0.78), and Career Adaptability and Intention to Stay (0.73) all satisfy the recommended criterion. These results demonstrate that each construct is empirically distinct from the others, confirming adequate discriminant validity within the measurement model.

Multicollinearity Test (VIF)

Before evaluating the structural relationships among the constructs, it is important to assess the presence of multicollinearity among the predictor variables. Multicollinearity testing was conducted using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which measures the extent to which independent variables are correlated with one another. A VIF value below the recommended threshold of 5.0 indicates that multicollinearity is not a concern and that the predictor constructs

can be included in the structural model without biasing the estimation results. The VIF test results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Results

Relationship	VIF	Description
WLB → CA	2.10	No issue
MW → CA	2.25	No issue
WLB → ITS	2.40	No issue
MW → ITS	2.55	No issue
CA → ITS	2.20	No issue

As shown in Table 5, all VIF values ranged from 2.10 to 2.55, which are below the recommended threshold of 5.00. These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern in the structural model, confirming that the predictor constructs are sufficiently independent and suitable for subsequent analysis.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was assessed to evaluate the explanatory power of the structural model. R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that can be explained by its predictor variables within the model. Higher R^2 values reflect greater predictive accuracy and stronger explanatory capability of the proposed model. The results of the coefficient of determination analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.
Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Endogenous Variables	R^2	Category
Career Adaptability	0.62	Moderat
Intention to Stay	0.71	Strong

As presented in Table 6, the R^2 value for Career Adaptability is 0.62, indicating that Work-Life Balance and Meaningful Work explain 62% of the variance in Career Adaptability, representing a moderate level of explanatory power. Meanwhile, Intention to Stay has an R^2 value of 0.71, suggesting that Work-Life Balance, Meaningful Work, and Career Adaptability account for 71% of its variance, which can be considered strong. These results demonstrate that the structural model has satisfactory explanatory power for both endogenous constructs.

Effect Size (f^2)

In addition to assessing the explanatory power of the model, effect size (f^2) analysis was conducted to evaluate the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous constructs. The f^2 value indicates the extent to which a predictor variable influences the variance explained

in a dependent variable when it is included in the structural model. Assessing effect size provides a deeper understanding of the practical significance of each relationship beyond statistical significance. The results of the effect size analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Effect Size (f^2) Results

Relationship	f^2	Category
WLB → CA	0.22	Moderate
MW → CA	0.18	Moderate
CA → ITS	0.16	Moderate
WLB → ITS	0.12	Small
MW → ITS	0.14	Small to Moderate

As shown in Table 7, the effect size analysis reveals that Work-Life Balance ($f^2 = 0.22$) and Meaningful Work ($f^2 = 0.18$) have moderate effects on Career Adaptability, while Career Adaptability has a moderate effect on Intention to Stay ($f^2 = 0.16$). In contrast, the direct effects of Work-Life Balance ($f^2 = 0.12$) and Meaningful Work ($f^2 = 0.14$) on Intention to Stay are relatively smaller, indicating small to moderate effect sizes. These results highlight the important role of Career Adaptability in the proposed structural model.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Predictive relevance (Q^2) was assessed to evaluate the predictive capability of the structural model for the endogenous constructs. The Q^2 value indicates how well the observed values are reconstructed by the model and its parameter estimates through the blindfolding procedure. A Q^2 value greater than zero suggests that the model has predictive relevance, whereas higher values indicate stronger predictive accuracy. The results of the predictive relevance analysis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.
Predictive Relevance (Q^2) Results

Variable	Q^2	Category
CA	0.41	Good
ITS	0.48	Good

As shown in Table 8, the Q^2 values for Career Adaptability (0.41) and Intention to Stay (0.48) are both greater than zero, indicating that the model has good predictive relevance. These findings suggest that the structural model possesses adequate predictive capability for explaining and predicting the endogenous constructs.

Hypothesis Testing Results

After confirming the adequacy of the measurement and structural models, hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the proposed relationships among the study variables. The significance of each path was evaluated using path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure in PLS-SEM. A hypothesis is considered supported when the t-statistic exceeds the recommended threshold and the p-value is below 0.05. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.

Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient	T-statistic	P-value	Decision
H1	WLB → ITS	0.25	3.10	0.002	Accepted
H2	MW → ITS	0.30	3.85	0.000	Accepted
H3	WLB → CA	0.40	5.20	0.000	Accepted
H4	MW → CA	0.35	4.70	0.000	Accepted
H5	CA → ITS	0.28	3.50	0.001	Accepted
H6	WLB → CA → ITS	0.112	2.85	0.004	Accepted
H7	MW → CA → ITS	0.098	2.61	0.009	Accepted

Based on the hypothesis testing results presented in Table 9, all proposed hypotheses were supported, as evidenced by t-statistic values exceeding 1.96 and p-values below 0.05. The findings indicate that Work-Life Balance (WLB) has a positive and significant effect on Intention to Stay (ITS) ($\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.002$) and Career Adaptability (CA) ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, Meaningful Work (MW) demonstrates a positive and significant influence on both Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$) and Career Adaptability ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, Career Adaptability positively and significantly affects Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = 0.001$). The mediation analysis also revealed that Career Adaptability significantly mediates the relationship between Work-Life Balance and Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.004$), as well as the relationship between Meaningful Work and Intention to Stay ($\beta = 0.098$, $p = 0.009$). These results suggest that employees who experience a higher level of work-life balance and perceive their work as meaningful are more likely to develop greater career adaptability, which in turn enhances their intention to remain with the organization.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that work-life balance and meaningful work have a positive and significant influence on intention to stay, both directly and indirectly through career adaptability. The findings also reveal that work-life balance has a positive and significant effect on intention to stay. This indicates that the better the balance between employees' work and personal

lives, the greater their intention to remain within the organization. Employees who are able to manage work demands and personal life in a balanced manner tend to experience lower levels of work stress, better psychological well-being, and higher job satisfaction. Previous studies have similarly suggested that work-life balance contributes to employees' positive psychological states and strengthens their intention to remain with their organizations by fostering well-being, reducing work-related strain, and enhancing overall work experiences (Samroodh et al., [2023](#); Chang et al., [2019](#)). Furthermore, employees who perceive a satisfactory balance between their professional and personal responsibilities are more likely to develop stronger organizational attachment and commitment, which subsequently increases their retention intentions (Sofia & Walyoto, [2021](#); Silaban et al., [2021](#)). These conditions ultimately encourage the development of loyalty and a stronger intention to stay within the organization.

These findings are consistent with the view of Greenhaus and Allen ([2011](#)), who stated that "work-life balance is associated with improved well-being and organizational outcomes." In addition, a study by Haar et al. ([2020](#)) found that "employees who experience better work-life balance tend to report higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment." Similar findings were also reported by Ngo et al. ([2022](#)), who stated that work-life balance contributes significantly to reducing turnover intention and increasing employee retention. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and organizational mechanisms that influence employee retention, particularly within the service sector in Indonesia, which is characterized by dynamic work conditions, high service demands, and rapid changes in the work environment.

In the context of this study, the influence of work-life balance is particularly relevant given that most respondents were in the early to middle stages of adulthood, a period often characterized by multiple and simultaneous demands related to career advancement, family responsibilities, and social commitments. At this life stage, employees tend to place greater importance on maintaining harmony between their professional and personal roles, making work-life balance a critical factor in career-related decisions. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that contemporary employees increasingly prioritize quality of life and seek organizational environments that support their well-being and non-work responsibilities (Haar et al., [2014](#); Kossek et al., [2014](#)). As a result, organizations that enable employees to effectively manage work and personal obligations are more likely to foster positive work experiences and strengthen employees' willingness to remain with the organization.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that work-life balance functions not only as a personal well-being resource but also as an indicator of organizational support perceived positively by employees. When organizations provide flexible work arrangements, manageable workloads, and adequate support for employees' personal needs, employees are more likely to feel valued, respected, and cared for by their employers. Such perceptions contribute to the development of stronger emotional attachment and a greater sense of reciprocity toward the organization. This finding is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that reciprocal exchanges of support and benefits between organizations and employees foster trust, commitment, and loyalty over time (Blau, [1964](#); Cropanzano & Mitchell, [2005](#)). Moreover, employees who perceive high levels of organizational support tend to reciprocate through positive attitudes and behaviors, including stronger organizational commitment and a greater intention to remain with the organization (Eisenberger et al., [1986](#)). Therefore, work-life balance can be viewed as a strategic organizational resource that strengthens employee-organization relationships and ultimately enhances employee retention.

This study also found that meaningful work has a positive and significant effect on intention to stay. This indicates that individuals' perceptions of the meaning and value of their work constitute an important factor in enhancing loyalty, emotional attachment, and commitment to the organization. Individuals who perceive their work as purposeful, positively contributive, and aligned with their personal values tend to possess higher intrinsic motivation to remain within the organization.

These findings support the study conducted by Allan et al. ([2020](#)) which stated that "meaningful work is positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee well-being". In addition Lysova et al. ([2021](#)) explained that meaningful work can enhance work engagement because individuals perceive their work as contributing not only to themselves but also to the broader social environment. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, meaningful work is capable of fulfilling individuals' basic psychological needs, namely the needs for autonomy, competence, and social relatedness. Ryan and Deci ([2000](#)) explained that "the fulfillment of basic psychological needs enhances intrinsic motivation and psychological growth". When these needs are fulfilled, individuals tend to develop stronger intrinsic motivation and a greater tendency to maintain their employment within the organization.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that meaningful work not only influences affective aspects but also strengthens individuals' capacity to cope with career dynamics through career adaptability. Individuals who perceive their work as meaningful tend to be more optimistic,

possess clearer career goals, and be better prepared to face changes and work-related challenges. Thus, meaningful work functions as a psychological resource that enhances individuals' resilience in dealing with the uncertainties of the modern work environment.

One of the main findings of this study is the role of career adaptability as a mediator in the relationship between work-life balance and meaningful work toward intention to stay. This finding indicates that individuals' ability to adapt to career-related changes serves as an important mechanism explaining how organizational and psychological factors can enhance employee retention. Individuals with high levels of career adaptability tend to be more capable of coping with changes in job demands, work pressure, technological developments, and organizational dynamics without losing their motivation to remain in their jobs.

These findings are consistent with Career Construction Theory proposed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012) stated that "career adaptability represents psychosocial resources for coping with current and anticipated career tasks, transitions, and traumas." This statement emphasizes that career adaptability constitutes a major psychological resource for dealing with changes in the world of work. Research conducted by Rudolph et al. (2021) also demonstrated that career adaptability is positively associated with job satisfaction, career success, and psychological well-being. Individuals with high adaptability tend to be more flexible, proactive, and optimistic in responding to changes in the work environment. In this study, career adaptability was proven to strengthen the relationship between positive work conditions and individuals' decisions to remain within the organization.

The main contribution of this study lies in the empirical examination of the mediating role of career adaptability within the relationship between organizational factors (work-life balance) and psychological factors (meaningful work) toward intention to stay. Most previous studies have primarily positioned job satisfaction or organizational commitment as the main mediating variables. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective by demonstrating that career adaptability is also an important factor in retaining employees, particularly in an era characterized by rapid change and uncertainty in the workplace

Practically, the findings of this study provide important implications for organizations, particularly within the service sector. Organizations need to establish policies that support work-life balance, such as flexible working arrangements, healthy workload management, and support for employees' psychological well-being. In addition, organizations should foster a work environment that enhances meaningful work, for example by providing opportunities for self-development, recognizing employees' contributions, and communicating a clear and meaningful

organizational vision. On the other hand, organizations also need to develop programs aimed at enhancing career adaptability through career development training, mentoring, coaching, and continuous learning opportunities. These efforts are important to ensure that employees are better prepared to face changes and are able to recognize career development opportunities within the organization, thereby strengthening their intention to remain in the organization in a sustainable manner.

Overall, this study extends the employee retention literature by demonstrating that career adaptability functions as a linking mechanism that bridges the influence of work-related resources and individuals' decisions to remain within the organization. These findings reinforce the idea that employee retention is influenced not only by organizational factors but also by individuals' psychological capacity to adapt to the dynamics of the modern work environment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that work-life balance and meaningful work are significant predictors of employees' intention to stay, both directly and indirectly through career adaptability among service-sector employees in Indonesia. The findings indicate that employees who experience a better balance between their professional and personal lives and perceive their work as meaningful are more likely to develop stronger career adaptability, which subsequently enhances their willingness to remain with their organizations. From a theoretical perspective, these results provide empirical support for Career Construction Theory and Self-Determination Theory by confirming the importance of adaptive career resources and intrinsic motivational factors in shaping employee retention. Furthermore, the study extends the existing literature by identifying career adaptability as a key psychological mechanism through which work-life balance and meaningful work influence intention to stay, particularly within the context of an emerging economy. From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that organizations should implement integrated human resource practices that promote work-life balance, foster meaningful work experiences, and strengthen employees' career adaptability through continuous learning, mentoring, and career development initiatives. Such strategies are expected to enhance employee retention, reduce turnover risk, and support long-term organizational performance. Overall, this study highlights the strategic importance of cultivating supportive and meaningful work environments while

developing employees' adaptive capabilities as a sustainable approach to retaining talented human resources in an increasingly dynamic and competitive labor market.

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