



# Does Employee Engagement Strategy Matter? An Intervention to Improve Job Embeddedness of Employees in the Private Higher Education Institutions

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## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Private universities face a high turnover rate. The employment issue is compounded by factors such as long working hours, heavy workloads, customer aggression, stress levels, uncomfortable work schedules, and other work-related challenges commonly faced by employees in these institutions. Addressing this employment issue involves the concepts of job embeddedness and employee engagement. This study aims to understand the factors that can enhance job embeddedness and explore the mediating role of employee engagement strategy in the relationship between work-family conflict, work overload, and job embeddedness. The study involved 205 faculty members from private universities as respondents. This study use a quantitative method and Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS) was used for analysis. The findings reveal that work overload and work-family conflict have a significant negative impact on both employee engagement strategy and job embeddedness. Conversely, employee engagement strategy positively influences job embeddedness. Moreover, employee engagement strategy mediates the relationship between work-family conflict, work overload, and job embeddedness.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the dynamic institutional environment, often faced with high levels of uncertainty, are inevitable [1-2]. To remain viable in dynamic and uncertain situations, sustained levels of creativity and innovation are required [3,4]. Therefore, maintaining and managing creative and innovative resources becomes crucial for institutions. Handayani et al. [5] stated that human resources (HR) play a central role as a key production factor in fostering innovation and helping institutions achieve their goals. The presence of employees is a key element in enhancing the business sustainability of institutions through various aspects such as market competition, problem-solving, and building institutional credibility [6-7]. However, empowering employees to positively contribute to institutional performance is not as straightforward. Institutions today face various employment challenges that can threaten their operational sustainability. One of the main problems threatening the presence of human resources as key success factors for institutions is the high employee turnover rate [8]. The impact of high turnover rates can result in significant losses for organizations. This turnover issue is complex as it relates to productivity, motivation, discipline, morale, and low employee loyalty [9]. In 2019, the average turnover rate in Indonesia reached around 7%, still below the normal threshold set at around 10% (Mercer, 2020; Haris et al., 2002).

In 2021, higher education institutions, especially private ones (HEIs), faced a high turnover rate reaching 23.2% [10]. This occurred despite HEIs facing intense competition. The employment issue is more complex with factors such as long working hours, heavy workloads, customer aggression, stress levels, uncomfortable work schedules, and other work-related burdens being common challenges for employees in these institutions [11]. Factors such as workload and dual roles in the context of work and family become elements that can affect the commitment and performance of employees. In this situation, institutions may experience negative impacts, including suboptimal employee performance, low commitment levels, and difficulty in retaining competent and high-performing staff [12]. According to Karatepe [13], the solution to address these employment issues involves the

concepts of job embeddedness and employee engagement. A high level of job embeddedness in institutions can reduce turnover rates, as employees feel strongly connected to the organization and find it difficult to leave (Syaefudin & Prayekti, 2020). Job embeddedness reflects employee behavior bound to the organization due to supportive work environments (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2007; Anggara et al., 2024b; [14] The concept of job embeddedness indicates the social and natural support perceived by employees in the workplace and the identification of values that align with the work environment [15]. Job embeddedness becomes a key factor in maintaining institutional sustainability [16]. According to Hernandez et al (2014), Job embeddedness will be more effective when accompanied by increased employee engagement or involvement. Currently, employee engagement poses a challenge for HR professionals to keep employees engaged in their work. Without employee engagement, an institution cannot survive in the long run [3]. The formation of engagement with the institution can affect employee embeddedness, preventing them from leaving their jobs. Therefore, it is important for institutions to design specific organizational strategies aimed at retaining potential employee connections and attachments. This can be achieved by instilling loyalty to the institution through participation in various organizational and community [17]. However, recent research findings by Buhali & Margaretha [18] stated that employee engagement does not influence employee embeddedness. The difference in previous research findings forms the basis for the formation of a research gap on this topic and becomes even more interesting to delve into.

Responding to the phenomenon of high turnover rates in HEIs (Kucoro, 2022), it is relevant to further investigate. Therefore, this study will focus on HEI employees as representatives who have relatively high turnover rates. HEIs must indirectly pay attention to and improve factors such as turnover intention or significant measurements related to employee involvement intending to leave the workplace [19]. Challenges due to the influence of turnover intention will impact commitment, which in turn makes employees remain engaged in their work [12]. HEIs need to implement strategic management

in the field of employee engagement or employee performance involvement, which is important to direct institutional improvements because of the relatively high resignation rates of HEI employees [20]. Employees at HEIs face intense work pressures, including administrative tasks, teaching responsibilities, research, and overtime for support staff, which are considered workloads that do not match working hours, leaving little time for personal needs and family gatherings. Moreover, many HEIs still provide remuneration and benefits considered less competitive compared to PUs. The high resignation rate indicates that increasing employee engagement at HEIs is not an easy task [21].

The above phenomena can become gap phenomena, so special strategies are needed to form a culture of employee engagement as a step to positively maintain institutional performance and strengthen commitment as concrete actions within the institution [22]. Employee engagement has been proven to increase productivity and profitability for institutions (Rachmawati, 2013). Implementing employee engagement strategies tailored to employee needs is crucial to achieving long-term success for institutions from the performance provided by employees (Sugianingrat et al., 2018). It is also important to note that measuring employee engagement as a measure of employee performance has become a growing trend in the business world (Rachmawati, 2013). Previous research [21] shows that employee engagement is an effective strategy for retaining employees, and HEI management plays a key role in implementing this concept. In implementing employee engagement strategies, HEI management should pay attention to the relationship between institutional management and employees (Anggara et al., 2024c), attachment to the institution's vision and mission, and provide support and feedback to employees. The goal is to increase employee work attachment [21].

Two-way conflicts, known as work-family conflict, become significant factors that can negatively impact the formation of work attachment, especially for married employees. They are expected to manage their time wisely between work and family [22]. Research on work-family conflict in HEIs is beneficial for investigating the influence of personal and organizational factors on handling work-family conflicts, providing a deeper understanding of how employees can use

organizational and personal factors to better manage the balance between work and family. Activities in the field of education at HEIs include high work intensity and longer informal working hours. Work overload can lead to physical and mental fatigue in employees. As a result, excessive workloads that must be dealt with within a certain period can have a negative impact on the level of job embeddedness in the institution and contribute to suboptimal performance [23]. Employee alignment with workload becomes a key factor in increasing job embeddedness. When employees' workload is appropriately aligned with their capabilities and responsibilities, it significantly contributes to their job embeddedness. It is important to motivate employees so that they have the desire to optimize their abilities according to the tasks they undertake [24-25]. Excessive workloads can increase performance conflicts both within the scope of work and outside of work, affecting low levels of job engagement. Only about 15% of employees feel attached to the institution where they work [8].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research employed a quantitative descriptive approach within a positivist paradigm. Descriptive research is a model aimed at depicting ongoing or past phenomena, while quantitative research involves collecting statistical data for analysis, considering various factors such as data type, respondents, data acquisition methods, timing of data collection, and subject from which the data is obtained (Yuliawan, 2021). The general population in this study comprises administration staff employees working in private higher education institutions (HEIs), with an unspecified number. The sampling technique utilized was purposive random sampling, a method where sample selection is based on the researcher's judgment of units that are more representative, beneficial, and aligned with the research objectives (Rubin & Babbie, 2010). Respondents were required to work in HEIs, with potential observation sites including the Universitas Sains Al-Quran Wonosobo and Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo.

The researcher determined the minimum sample size using the 10-times method proposed by Hair et al. [26]. Data collection was conducted using an online questionnaire. Work overload was measured using 5 indicators [15], while work-family conflict was assessed through 5 indicators

(Ghayur & Jamar, 2012). Strategic employee engagement was gauged using 5 indicators (Armstrong, 2021), and job embeddedness was measured using 12 indicators [27]. The measurement scale utilized in the study was a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The data analysis technique employed was SEM PLS.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Deskriptive Analysis

The participants involved in the research sample were lecturers from Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). They have diverse backgrounds, including gender, marital status, education level, position, length of service, and income. The provided table can provide further details on the number of respondents in each mentioned category [28-30].

Table 1 provides a clear overview of the characteristics of respondents involved in the study. The majority of respondents are male (51.7%), with the number almost balanced with female respondents (48.3%). Gender representation differences can influence how respondents respond to questions or issues in the study. Differences in perception and experience between men and women can lead to variations in results or data interpretation. The majority of respondents are still unmarried (90.7%), while only a small percentage are married (9.3%). Married respondents may have different responses or priorities in the research context compared to unmarried ones. For example, responses to topics related to family or marriage differ between the two [31].

Previous research by Fapohunda (2014) highlighted the differences between men and women in facing work-family conflict and its impact on high turnover rates. The findings indicate that women tend to experience more complex issues in this regard, due to social roles that require them to play a larger role in household affairs. This is consistent with other studies showing that women often bring household work burdens into the workplace, potentially affecting their performance at work (Williams and Boushey, 2010). Additionally, higher levels of emotional sensitivity in women have also been identified as a factor influencing their interactions in the work environment (Hurlock, 2002). However, it is important to note that previous research has limitations, especially in terms of an unbalanced sample composition

between men and women. These raises concerns that the findings may be influenced by differences in the proportion of respondents by gender, thus requiring further analysis to ensure the validity of the research results [32].

Most respondents have a Master's degree (92.2%), while only a few have a Doctorate degree (7.8%). Higher levels of education can influence the depth of understanding and perspectives on the research topic. Respondents with Master's or Doctorate degrees may have more complex analyses or deeper perspectives than those with lower education levels. In terms of position, the majority of respondents are educators (63.9%), with a small percentage occupying higher position. Differences in positions may reflect differences in experience, responsibilities, and expertise, which can affect how respondents interpret and respond to questions in the study, as well as their sensitivity to certain issues.

In terms of work experience, the majority of respondents have work experience between 1 and 10 years (61.5%), while a small percentage have less than 1 year or more than 10 years of experience. Different work experiences can result in variations in understanding and knowledge of the research topic. Respondents with longer work experience may have more mature perspectives or deeper understanding compared to those who are just starting their careers. Lastly, in terms of monthly income, the majority of respondents have incomes between IDR 3,600,000 to IDR 5,500,000 per month (43.9%), but there are still a small number of respondents who have incomes below IDR 2,500,000 per month (10.7%). Respondents' income levels can influence their priorities, needs, and perceptions of various aspects of life. This can affect how they interpret and respond to questions in the study, as well as their potential motivation or interest in participation. These various characteristics can impact the research results, given the differences in backgrounds, experiences, and priorities of respondents that can influence their perceptions and responses to the research topic [33].

The descriptive analysis of the research data also provides a comprehensive overview of the main variables under study, such as workload, work-family conflict, employee engagement, and job embeddedness. This will include descriptive statistics such as minimum, maximum, and mean for each variable, providing a deep

understanding of the perceived workload, the extent of work-family conflict experienced, the level of employee engagement in their work, and the extent to which employees feel attached to their jobs.

In the workload variable, higher values approaching 3.80 indicate a higher workload level, while lower values approaching 2.00 indicate a lower workload level. Similarly, for the work-family conflict variable, higher values reflect higher levels of conflict between work and family, whereas lower values indicate lower levels of conflict. Regarding the employee engagement variable, higher values nearing 5.00 indicate higher levels of engagement, while lower values approaching 2.20 indicate lower levels of engagement. For the job embeddedness variable, higher values nearing 5.00 indicate higher levels of attachment to the job, whereas lower values approaching 2.25 indicate lower levels of attachment. Thus, this analysis helps the researcher understand respondents' perceptions and experiences related to each variable in the context of the study.

### 3.2 SEM-PLS Test Output

#### 3.2.1 Outer model analysis

In Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), meticulous validation of the outer model is imperative to ensure its robustness. Convergent validity, a fundamental criterion, evaluates the strength of relationships between indicators and their corresponding latent constructs. This assessment involves scrutinizing loading factors, which indicate the magnitude of these relationships, ideally demonstrating substantial values indicative of strong associations. Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measure is pivotal in determining the extent of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error, with values exceeding 0.50 considered satisfactory for adequate convergent validity. Concurrently, Composite Reliability (C.R) evaluates the internal consistency of indicators within constructs, with values surpassing 0.70 signifying reliability [34].

**Table 1. Deskriptif responden**

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Men	106	51.7
	Women	99	48.3
	Total	205	100.0
Marital Status	Single	186	90.7
	Married	19	9.3
	Total	205	100.0
Education	Master Degree	189	92.2
	Doctoral Degree	16	7.8
	Total	205	100.0
Position	Lecturer	131	63.9
	Assistant lecturer	36	17.6
	Assistant professor	25	12.2
	Associate professor	13	6.3
	Total	205	100.0
Working Period	< 1 year	69	33.7
	1-10 years	126	61.5
	> 10 years	10	4.9
	Total	205	100.0
Income month per	≤ from IDR 2,500,000,-	22	10.7
	IDR 2,600,000,- IDR 3.500,000,-	40	19.5
	IDR 3.600,000,- IDR 5,500,000,-	90	43.9
	≥ to IDR 5,500,000,-	53	25.9
	Total	205	100.0

**Table 2. Variable descriptive**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Work overload	2.00	3.80	2.9190
Work-Family Conflict	1.40	4.40	2.6000
Employee Engagement	2.20	5.00	3.7580
Job Embeddedness	2.25	5.00	3.8748

Discriminant validity, another critical facet, examines the distinctiveness of indicators across different constructs. The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations test serves as a reliable method for this purpose, comparing correlations within and between constructs to ensure significant differences and thereby confirming discriminant validity. Lastly, the collinearity test addresses concern regarding multicollinearity, which could distort estimations of path coefficients in the structural model. Typically, this test employs the variance inflation factor (VIF), aiming to maintain VIF values below 5 to uphold acceptable levels of collinearity. Together, these validation procedures offer comprehensive insights into the quality of the measurement model, ensuring the reliable measurement of constructs and their distinctiveness from one another in SEM-PLS analyses. The outer model analysis output as following Table 3.

In Table 3, the values indicate that the observed variables meet the criteria for structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. Loading factors are all > 0.5, demonstrating satisfactory relationships between observed and latent variables. Average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed 0.5, indicating strong convergent validity. Composite reliability (C.R) values surpass 0.6, signifying reliable latent constructs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients are > 0.5, ensuring internal consistency. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values are < 5, indicating no significant multicollinearity issues. Overall, these findings support the validity, reliability, and lack of multicollinearity in the SEM analysis [25]. The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) criterion is met with values below 0.9 as following Table 4, indicating acceptable discriminant validity among the observed variables [25].

**3.2.2 Inner model analysis**

In the inner model analysis, R square measures the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by the exogenous

constructs. F square assesses the effect size of the exogenous constructs on the endogenous constructs. Q square estimates the predictive relevance of the model by comparing the predicted values with the actual values. The result is shown as following Table 5.

The R square value of 0.444 indicates that 44.4% of the variance in the endogenous constructs is explained by the exogenous constructs. The F square value of 0.231 suggests a moderate effect size, indicating that the exogenous constructs have a moderate impact on the endogenous constructs. Similarly, the Q square value of 0.242 indicates moderate predictive relevance, as it compares the predicted values with the actual values. Overall, two indicators suggest that the model's fit is moderate, while one indicates a small fit. However, this discrepancy is not critical as the research aims to test the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. Furthermore, these results can serve as a reference for refining the selection of independent variables.

**3.2.3 Hypothesis test output**

Once all the analyses of the outer and inner models are deemed satisfactory, the next step is hypothesis testing or examining the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable. The research model consists of both direct and mediating effects, as illustrated in the following Fig. 1.

The test results are considered significant if the p-value < 0.05. Then, if the effect is significant, the magnitude of the effect can be observed in its coefficient value. Positive or negative values do not indicate magnitude, but rather indicate the direction of the effect, whether positive or negative. Therefore, based on the test results, it is known that all hypotheses can be accepted.

According to Fig. 1, the hypotesis can be summarized as following Table 6.

**Table 3. Outer model analysis output**

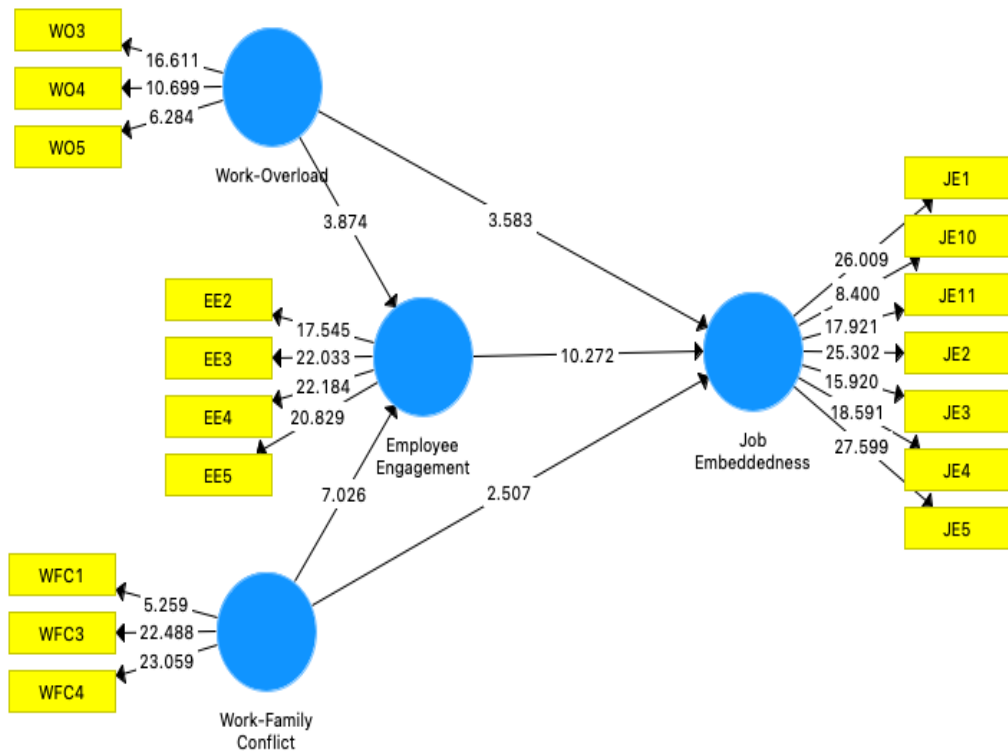
Variable	Item		Loading Factor	AVE	C.R	Cronbach Alpha	VIF
Work Overload	WO1	I have a target in achieving my job.	< 0.5	0.608	0.861	0.784	Eliminate
	WO2	I arrange strategies in achieving my job.	< 0.5				Eliminate
	WO3	I review the job carefully.	0.810				1.240
	WO4	I work according to the operational hours.	0.744				1.196
	WO5	I bring my work home.	0.605				1.085
Work-family conflict	WFC1	I am happy with my current job.	0.545	0.541	0.891	0.855	1.071
	WFC2	I dare to discuss with superiors related to my job.	< 0.5				Eliminate
	WFC3	I provide solutions in completing my work.	0.832				1.426
	WFC4	I work in a structured manner.	0.835				1.441
	WFC5	I have stable emotions at home due to work matters.	< 0.5				Eliminate
Employee Engagement	EE1	I feel comfortable working with my leader in the institution.	< 0.5	0.562	0.788	0.596	Eliminate
	EE2	The leader is always open in resolving conflicts in the work environment.	0.722				1.337
	EE3	The leader listens to every member's opinion.	0.820				1.777
	EE4	I seize every opportunity available to grow and develop.	0.795				1.622
	EE5	The institution facilitates opportunities for promotion.	0.778				1.637
Job embeddedness	JE1	I am comfortable working in this institution.	0.796	0.525	0.766	0.542	2.297
	JE2	The institution has values and principles that align with mine.	0.793				2.335
	JE3	Colleagues in the office are always there to help when I encounter difficulties in my work.	0.729				1.859
	JE4	Every employee in the institution is supportive of each other.	0.757				2.070
	JE5	I am supported by the institution to stay motivated in completing tasks.	0.808				2.184
	JE6	The institution appreciates my work when done beyond the required hours.	< 0.5				Eliminate
	JE7	I feel comfortable interacting with colleagues from the same ethnicity/hometown.	< 0.5				Eliminate
	JE8	I easily establish relationships with colleagues even from different divisions.	< 0.5				Eliminate
	JE9	I and my colleagues have a group chat together.	< 0.5				Eliminate
	JE10	I and my colleagues enjoy meeting outside the institution.	0.536				1.241
	JE11	The institution explains my job in detail.	0.694				1.572
	JE12	The institution is objective in evaluating each of my tasks.	< 0.5				Eliminate

**Table 4. HTMT output**

	<b>Employee Engagement</b>	<b>Job Embeddedness</b>	<b>Work-Family Conflict</b>
Employee Engagement			
Job Embeddedness	0.887		
Work-Family Conflict	0.733	0.743	
Work-Overload	0.583	0.706	0.647

**Table 5. Inner model analysis output**

	<b>R Square Adjusted</b>	<b>F Square</b>	<b>Q Square</b>
Job embeddedness	0.593		0.310
Employee Engagement	0.295	0.565	0.174
Work-Family Conflict		0.042	
Work-Overload		0.087	
Average	0.444	0.231	0.242



**Fig. 1. Research model in SEM-PLS**

The workload significantly influences employee engagement strategies in high education institutions (HEIs). A beta coefficient of -0.211 indicates that every increase in workload results in a decrease of 0.211 in employee engagement strategy. The high t-statistic (3.874) and low p-value (< 0.001) demonstrate the statistical significance of this effect. Similarly, work-family conflict significantly impacts employee engagement strategies in HEIs. With a beta coefficient of -0.431, each increase in work-

family conflict leads to a decrease of 0.431 in employee engagement strategy. The high t-statistic (7.026) and low p-value (< 0.001) underscore the statistical significance of this effect. Moreover, workload significantly influences job embeddedness in HEIs. A beta coefficient of -0.209 suggests that each increase in workload corresponds to a decrease of 0.209 in job embeddedness. The high t-statistic (3.583) and low p-value (< 0.001) confirm the statistical significance of this impact.



**Table 6. Hypothesis test**

	<b>Beta coefficient</b>	<b>T Statistics</b>	<b>P Values</b>	
Workload has a significant negative effect on employee engagement strategy in private tertiary institutions (PTS).	-0.211	3.874	0.000	H1 Accepted
Work-family conflict has a significant negative effect on employee engagement strategy in PTS.	-0.431	7.026	0.000	H2 Accepted
Workload has a significant negative effect on job embeddedness in PTS.	-0.209	3.583	0.000	H3 Accepted
Work-family conflict has a significant negative effect on job embeddedness in PTS.	-0.156	2.507	0.012	H4 Accepted
Employee engagement strategy has a significant positive effect on job embeddedness in PTS.	0.570	10.272	0.000	H5 Accepted
Employee engagement strategy mediates the relationship between workload and job embeddedness in PTS.	-0.120	3.550	0.000	H6 Accepted
Employee engagement strategy mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and job embeddedness in PTS.	-0.246	5.965	0.000	H7 Accepted

Work-family conflict significantly affects job embeddedness in HEIs. With a beta coefficient of -0.156, each increase in work-family conflict results in a decrease of 0.156 in job embeddedness. Although significant, the t-statistic and p-value are not as strong as other variables. Conversely, employee engagement strategies have a significantly positive influence on job embeddedness in HEIs. A beta coefficient of 0.570 suggests that each increase in employee engagement strategy leads to an increase of 0.570 in job embeddedness. The very high t-statistic (10.272) and low p-value (< 0.001) highlight the substantial statistical significance of this effect. Furthermore, employee engagement strategies mediate the relationship between workload and job embeddedness in HEIs. With a beta coefficient of -0.120, employee engagement strategies reinforce the negative impact of workload on job embeddedness. The high t-statistic (3.550) and low p-value indicate the statistical significance of this mediation. Similarly, employee engagement strategies also mediate the relationship between work-family conflict and job embeddedness in HEIs. A beta coefficient of -0.246 suggests that employee engagement strategies reinforce the negative impact of work-family conflict on job embeddedness. The high t-statistic (5.965) and low p-value demonstrate the statistical significance of this mediation.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings underscore the significant influence of workload and work-family conflict on employee engagement strategies and job embeddedness within high education institutions (HEIs). Both workload and work-family conflict exhibited negative effects on employee engagement strategies and job embeddedness, indicating the detrimental impact of these stressors on the overall organizational commitment and attachment of employees in HEIs. Conversely, employee engagement strategies emerged as a crucial factor positively associated with job embeddedness, highlighting its role in fostering employee commitment and attachment to their positions within HEIs. Additionally, the mediation analysis revealed that employee engagement strategies play a pivotal role in reinforcing the impact of workload and work-family conflict on job embeddedness, emphasizing the importance of cultivating robust engagement strategies to mitigate the negative effects of stressors and enhance organizational commitment and attachment among employees

in HEIs. These insights provide valuable implications for HR practitioners and management in HEIs to develop targeted interventions and strategies aimed at reducing workload, managing work-family conflict, and enhancing employee engagement to promote job embeddedness and organizational effectiveness.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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