

Spiritual employee engagement and work–life balance as predictors of turnover intentions in the agrochemical sector



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Dates:

Received: 15 Aug. 2025

Accepted: 14 Apr. 2026

Published: 25 May 2026

How to cite this article:

Prajnanta, F., Noermijati, N., Suryadi, N., & Kurniawati, D.T. (2026). Spiritual employee engagement and work-life balance as predictors of turnover intentions in the Agrochemical Sector. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 24(0), a3284.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v24i0.3284>

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Orientation: The study emphasises the increasing employee turnover intention (ETI) among millennial employees, focusing on millennial field staff in the agrochemical industry in Java, Indonesia.

Research purpose: The research purpose is to develop a predictive model of ETI by examining the roles of work–life balance (WLB) and spiritual employee engagement (SEE).

Motivation for the study: There is a need to explore new factors, such as SEE combined with WLB, to better understand how to reduce ETI among millennial field staff, who have high turnover rates. The research also explores a new indicator, spiritual humility (SH), as part of the SEE variable.

Research approach/design and method: Quantitative research using a structural equation modelling approach. Data were collected from 345 millennial field staff members using proportionate stratified random sampling. Analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4.0 software following expert judgement.

Main findings: The study found that improving WLB significantly reduces ETI. Spiritual employee engagement mediates the relationship between WLB and ETI. Spiritual humility is identified as a key indicator of SEE.

Practical/managerial implications: Organisations should implement retention strategies that promote SEE and foster spiritual values. There is a need for flexible WLB policies and well-being support programmes to enhance millennials' retention.

Contribution/value-add: The study highlights the role of spirituality in predicting ETI, with SH emerging as a key indicator in religious-cultural settings in eastern countries. It integrates spirituality into social exchange theory, providing effective retention strategies for millennial employees.

Keywords: employee turnover intention; millennials; spiritual employee engagement; spiritual humility; work–life balance.

Introduction

Employee turnover intention (ETI) refers to an employee's conscious decision to leave their job or organisation within a certain period, irrespective of whether they have begun job searching (Lu et al., 2023; Obeng et al., 2021). It is influenced by various factors such as job satisfaction, knowledge sharing, compensation, leadership style and work–life balance (WLB) (Fattah et al., 2022; Kanchana & Jayathilaka, 2023; Owusu & Gregar, 2021).

There are two types of employee turnover – voluntary, when employees choose to leave, and involuntary, when the company decides to terminate employment (McCarthy et al., 2020; Warden et al., 2021). Employee turnover intention is a crucial aspect of an organisation's bottom line, affecting overall performance, disrupting operations, increasing recruitment costs and affecting team cohesion (Fattah et al., 2022). Understanding these helps organisations manage turnover and boost performance.

The millennial generation is referred to as the 'digital generation' because they were born during a period of rapid advancements in information and communications technology. As a result, people have become more 'tech-dependent', feeling as though they are without something without the technology that enables them to learn new things around the clock (Easton & Steyn, 2022).

Millennials are rapidly taking over the workforce; by 2021, they accounted for roughly 50% of the global workforce (Mabaso & Mathebula, 2025). Millennial employee loyalty is influenced by many predictors; some of them are work engagement, financial benefits, WLB, career and growth opportunities, and organisational culture (Dahalan et al., 2024; Easton & Steyn, 2022; Marozva et al., 2024). One emerging but critical dimension of engagement is spiritual employee engagement (SEE), which refers to the attitude of employees who find spiritual meaning in their work, express personal values, demonstrate high productivity and build a strong relationship of commitment with the organisation. It is hoped that this new variable will help lower the rate of turnover intention among millennial employees.

Research shows millennials often exhibit lower loyalty compared to previous generations, prompting organisations to explore strategies to enhance their commitment (Bantha et al., 2023; Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2021; Sahni, 2021). Employee turnover intention among millennials is a significant topic of research due to this generation's distinct work preferences and behaviours (Aboobaker et al., 2020; Ardi & Anggraini, 2023). Millennials prioritise value flexibility, anticipating companies offering remote work, flexible working hours and task management autonomy to improve their WLB (Aleksić & Rangus, 2020; Zaitouni et al., 2024).

In Indonesia, the millennial generation is the largest in the workforce; nevertheless, their intention to leave is strong, showing their low loyalty to the organisation (Ardi & Anggraini, 2023; IDN Research Institute, 2024). Nevertheless, high turnover not only creates direct financial burdens and operational disruptions but also leads to losses in customer relationships, diminished employee morale, cultural instability, and makes it harder for companies to compete for top talent (Barkhuizen & Gumede, 2021; Els et al., 2021; Maharani & Tamara, 2024). Millennials are known to value flexibility, so they expect companies to provide options such as remote working, flexible schedules and autonomy in task management so that they can achieve a better WLB (Lee et al., 2024).

Organisations should adopt flexible, well-being-focused workplaces to retain millennial employees. This shift, coupled with healthy WLB policies, can reduce turnover rates, improve productivity and reduce stress, absenteeism and illness (Opoku et al., 2022). Due to fierce competition, millennial field staff in the competitive agrochemical industry, which has more than 150 companies, easily change jobs. In this high-pressure environment, the risk of burnout and disengagement increases, underscoring the need for effective WLB and spiritual engagement strategies to improve retention and well-being. Research on WLB in relation to millennial turnover intention in the agrochemical industry remains very limited, which is why this study chose to examine the WLB variable.

Recently, workplace spirituality has gained significant scientific attention from researchers and organisations due to its positive psychological impact on employees' work environment, making it an important issue to address (Tigedi et al., 2024). The incorporation of spiritual principles and practices into the workplace, known as workplace spirituality, is a major factor in raising employee engagement (Srivastava & Gupta, 2022). A study by Margaretha et al. (2021) highlighted a correlation between workplace spirituality and employee engagement, with professional dedication being a crucial factor in enhancing motivation and performance, and in reducing ETI.

Tsvangirai and Chinyamurindi (2019) showed a correlation between employee engagement and workplace surveillance, with employee motivation playing a crucial role in moderating this relationship. Employee engagement needs a robust connection between an individual and their organisation, with meaningful work being the foundation of workplace spirituality and engagement (Saks, 2022).

Spiritual workplaces foster emotional and mental bonds among staff, increasing employee retention and reducing stress and burnout, while also reducing turnover rates among employees who experience high workplace spirituality (Syahir et al., 2025). Milliman et al. (2018) demonstrated that workplace spirituality directly impacts employee engagement and the intention to stay in organisations, highlighting the importance of understanding intrinsic motivation and work meaning for retaining and engaging frontline employees. Fostering emotional and mental bonding among employees leads to expressing personal values, finding spiritual meaning in work, building strong relationships, and demonstrating commitment and productivity (Gupta & Mikkilineni, 2018; Srivastava & Gupta, 2022).

The synthesis of workplace spirituality and employee engagement yields SEE, in which employees derive spiritual meaning from their work. This alignment boosts productivity and commitment while potentially lowering turnover intentions among millennials. The study explores how WLB affects turnover intentions, focusing on the mediating role of SEE. It also examines the direct effects of WLB on SEE and how this engagement moderates the relationship between WLB and turnover intentions, specifically targeting millennial field staff in the agrochemical sector in Java, Indonesia.

Literature review

Social exchange theory

The study is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), a fundamental framework in the social sciences developed by Homans (1958) and later expanded by Blau (1964) and extended by Emerson (1976). When organisations provide favourable treatment, such as support for WLB, employees respond with positive behaviours like higher engagement

and loyalty, which in turn reduces turnover intention (Ahmad et al., 2023; Xuecheng et al., 2022).

Social Exchange Theory in this study provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for explaining the relationships among WLB, SEE and ETI in organisational contexts. Komodromou (2013) demonstrated that applying the SET concept to employees' WLB can help leaders create a friendly environment that encourages employee engagement and reduces the risk of ETI. Social Exchange Theory promotes workplace spirituality, which leads to increased employee engagement (Fachrunnisa et al., 2014; Rashidin et al., 2020).

In addition, SET has also been linked to millennials' job-switching behaviour, suggesting that their career decisions and expectations can be understood through a social exchange lens, particularly in relation to career opportunities for advancement, WLB, and getting quality work for millennials (Park et al., 2021; Rivers, 2018). The concept of SEE emerges when workplace spirituality and employee engagement reinforce each other. These two theories become applied theories that underpin the SET in this study.

Workplace spirituality

Workplace spirituality involves integrating spiritual values and practices in the work environment. Workplace spirituality acknowledges employees' inner lives and is enriched by meaningful work within a community context, focusing on three dimensions – meaningful work, inner life and community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Petchsawang and Duchon's research (2016) on workplace spirituality in the Asian context identified four key factors: compassion, meaningful work, mindfulness and transcendence. They emphasised the importance of compassion, meaningful work and transcendence in fostering a supportive work environment.

Workplace spirituality, distinct from religion, enhances job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity, reduces stress, and fosters strong interpersonal connections aligned with organisational values and a culture of service and integrity (Aboobaker et al., 2020; Ahmed et al., 2022). This dimension prepares the ground for increased employee motivation and meaningful engagement.

Employee engagement

William Kahn introduced the concept of personal engagement in the 1990s, describing it as authentic self-expression at work. Engagement is defined as an employee's ability to use their full self, and is measured by three indicators: physical, cognitive and emotional (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). Employee engagement refers to the commitment employees have towards their work, encompassing cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects, and their enthusiasm, which positively impacts the organisational environment (Sahni, 2021).

Managing employee engagement is crucial for organisational survival, vitality and profitability, as it enhances customer happiness, profit and staff productivity (Rathee & Sharma, 2019). Engagement represents the active, energising connection employees feel towards their tasks and the organisation.

Spiritual employee engagement

Spiritual employee engagement develops through mutual reinforcement between workplace spirituality and employee engagement, creating a holistic experience in which employees find deep spiritual meaning in their work. This construct synthesises personal fulfilment from meaningful work and enthusiastic commitment through engagement, integrating inner life, community belonging and value alignment. Such engagement nurtures intrinsic motivation and strengthens psychological bonds with the organisation, both of which are critical for retention and commitment. The two theories become applied theories that underpin the social exchange theory in this study.

Previous research shows that workplace spirituality can positively influence employees' perceptions of their organisation and contribute to employee well-being and employee engagement (Bantha et al., 2023; Chongvisal & Supparerkchaisakul, 2017; Rashidin et al., 2020). Saks (2022) links workplace spirituality to employee engagement through three dimensions: transcendence, community and spiritual values. These dimensions influence engagement via four psychological states: meaningfulness at work, meaningfulness in work, safety and availability. The model explains how spirituality enhances meaningfulness and psychological safety, which fosters employee engagement.

Those previous studies indicate a strong link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement, highlighting the importance of meaningful work, emotional and mental connections, personal values, deep relationships, and high levels of commitment, productivity and contribution. Finally, the concept of SEE refers to employees who are not only professionally connected to their organisation but also spiritually connected to their work and environment, fostering meaningful and purposeful working conditions.

Work-life balance and employee turnover intention

Work-life balance refers to an employee's ability to effectively manage work, home, and other responsibilities, ensuring equal interest and contentment with work-family roles, and ensuring efficiency and fulfilment align with life roles at any given moment (Maharani & Tamara, 2024; Opoku et al., 2022). Work-life balance is crucial for organisations as it affects employee turnover and intentions to leave (Al Kabir & Tirno 2018). It has a negative impact on turnover intention and promotes increased employee engagement, which in turn reduces turnover intention (Triningsih & Darma, 2024).

Research on WLB and ETI is crucial, especially for the millennial generation, as it has become a necessity (Aleksić & Rangus, 2020; Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2021). A healthy WLB reduces the likelihood of ETI by enabling them to focus on their work without personal distractions, thereby helping companies retain their workforce (Chigeda et al., 2022). Studies on WLB have shown a negative effect on ETI (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023; Faulia Putri et al., 2024; Lestari & Margaretha, 2021). However, many other research results show the opposite result that WLB has no effect on ETI, meaning that even though there is WLB, the employees studied show a desire to stay out of work (Absharina Herman Wr & Rusdi, 2025; Ranasari Bimanti Esthi & Saur Panjaitan, 2023).

The inconsistency of previous studies regarding the effect of WLB on ETI is a research gap in this study. Based on previous studies and the description above, one of the research hypotheses formulated in this study is:

H1: Work-life balance has a significant negative effect on employee turnover intention.

Work-life balance and spiritual employee engagement

Spiritual employee engagement is a new variable. The relationship between WLB, SEE and ETI is based on proxies from employee engagement research. The research in Vietnam on 'The determinants of employee engagement mediated by WLB and work stress' shows the results that WLB and work stress have a positive effect on employee engagement (Dinh, 2020). Social Exchange Theory posits that employees who perceive a balanced work-life relationship feel valued and supported (Komodromou, 2013), which in turn motivates them to increase their engagement (Dinh, 2020).

Research that specifically discusses the effect of WLB on employee engagement in the millennial generation shows that WLB is one of the important factors that has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (Larasati, 2019). Work-life balance does not always show a positive relationship with employee engagement. The study of WLB on employee engagement among millennial employees in the manufacturing industry in Malaysia showed no significant effect of the relationship between WLB and employee engagement (Dahalan et al., 2024).

The effect of WLB on employee engagement has been supported by multiple research studies, indicating a generally positive impact. Work-life balance enables employees to manage work and personal life effectively, which enhances their emotional and psychological engagement with work. This is consistent with SET, which suggests that employees who perceive balance and support from their organisation feel valued and reciprocate with greater spiritual and emotional engagement. Based on the proxies of previous studies and the description above, one of the research hypotheses formulated in this study is:

H2: Work-life balance has a significant positive effect on spiritual employee engagement.

Spiritual employee engagement and employee turnover intention

Employee engagement is critically important in reducing ETI because it reflects an employee's emotional and psychological connection to their work and organisation (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020; Nehra, 2023). Engaged employees tend to feel valued, motivated and aligned with organisational goals, which leads to higher job satisfaction and loyalty, significantly lowering their desire to leave (Ashraf & Siddiqui, 2020; McCarthy et al., 2020). Because SEE is a new variable, this study investigates its relationship with ETI using a proxy approach based on previous research.

Several studies show a strong negative relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention; hence, SEE is expected to have a similar effect. Santhanam and Srinivas (2020) examined the effect of engagement on job burnout and turnover intention among blue-collar workers in manufacturing facilities. In addition, this study also explores the role of happiness as a moderator in explaining the effect of engagement on burnout and turnover intention. The results showed the importance of engagement and happiness in reducing burnout and turnover intention. Wang et al. (2020) found that professional identity, employee engagement and job satisfaction have a negative effect on turnover intention. This aligns with SET, in which employees who feel spiritually connected and engaged are less likely to leave their organisation.

Although many research results show that employee engagement has a significant negative effect on ETI, meaning that higher engagement reduces the likelihood of employees intending to leave, in practice, millennials often move to other companies for various reasons. This encourages researchers to include spirituality in empirical studies on SEE as a new variable to reduce ETI. Spiritual employee engagement means employees are not only professionally tied to the organisation but also spiritually connected to their work and environment, leading to greater engagement and loyalty.

Based on SET, SEE reduces ETI because those who find spiritual meaning in their work feel valued and supported by their organisation. This perceived support motivates them to reciprocate with a stronger emotional and spiritual commitment to the organisation, thereby decreasing their intention to leave. Based on the description above, as a new variable, SEE is expected to reduce ETI. One of the research hypotheses formulated in this study, based on the above discussion, is:

H3: Spiritual employee engagement has a significant negative effect on employee turnover intention.

Spiritual employee engagement as a mediator between work–life balance and turnover intention

Research on the role of SEE as a mediating variable in the effect of WLB and ETI is limited, as SEE is a novel variable. Therefore, this study explores the relationships among these three variables using proxies from previous research and examines the effect of WLB on ETI mediated by employee engagement.

Employee engagement has been shown to mediate the effect of flexible work arrangements on turnover intention, indicating that engaged employees who feel supported are less likely to leave (Gašić & Berber, 2023). Spiritual employee engagement is a novel variable that refers to employees' sense of meaning, purpose and connection at work, integrating their spiritual values with their professional roles. This concept goes beyond traditional employee engagement by emphasising a deeper, holistic involvement that nurtures employee well-being and commitment.

However, proxies from existing research on workplace spirituality and employee engagement justify exploring this mediation. This, in turn, can mediate the effect of WLB on ETI by enhancing employees' emotional and spiritual connection to their organisation.

Thus, the hypothesis that spiritual employee engagement mediates the effect of WLB on turnover intention is grounded in the idea that employees who experience spiritual fulfilment at work reciprocate through greater commitment, leading to lower turnover intention. This study proposes that spiritual employee engagement, as a novel construct, mediates the effect of WLB on ETI. Grounded in SET, this hypothesis suggests that employees who perceive a balance between work and life and find spiritual meaning in their work develop a reciprocal commitment to their organisation, thereby reducing their intention to leave:

H4: Spiritual employee engagement mediates the effect of work–life balance on employee turnover intention.

The conceptual model visually represents the hypothesised relationships among the variables studied. The independent variable, WLB, reflects how well employees manage their work and personal life demands. The dependent variable, ETI, indicates employees' conscious desire to leave the organisation. Spiritual employee engagement serves as a mediating variable explaining the mechanism by which WLB influences turnover intention. Specifically, the model hypothesises that better WLB increases spiritual engagement at work, which, in turn, reduces employees' intention to leave. Figure 1 illustrates these relationships clearly within the research model framework.

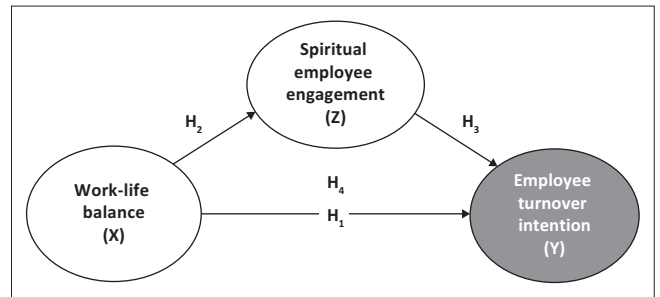


FIGURE 1: Research model.

Research methods

This research is an explanatory study that aims to elucidate relationships among variables and deepen understanding of the phenomena. It is often used to investigate complex relationships and causality among variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The focus of this study is to examine the relationship and interaction between WLB variables and ETI, mediated by SEE in the agrochemical industry; hence, the need for an explanatory approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics.

The newly introduced variable, SEE, was initially validated through expert judgement, with an equal mix of 50% management experts and 50% industry professionals, and then evaluated using the content validity index (CVI). The research was geographically focused on the Java region – specifically West Java, Central Java and East Java – owing to Java's dominant position, representing approximately 55% of the agrochemical industry's business operations.

Population, sample and procedure

The population in this study is millennial field staff in the agrochemical industry in Java, Indonesia. A preliminary survey was conducted in January 2025 to estimate the total population size. The results show that the number of millennial generation field staff across 20 agrochemical companies in Java (representing 90% of businesses) is 1469 permanent employees, with 2% in sales and 98% in field promotion.

The sampling procedure took place between March and May 2025. The sampling technique used was proportionate stratified random sampling. To determine the sample size, the formula of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used, with a 5% margin of error. The required sample size is 302 respondents. In this study, the questionnaires were distributed via Google Forms (Mountain View, California, United States). The items in the questionnaire consist of closed-ended questions designed to make it easier for respondents to provide answers more quickly from the given alternatives.

The distribution of the questionnaire was carried out in two stages to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of the

data collected. The first stage involved the preliminary process on a limited sample of 30 respondents as part of the pilot study. The second stage entailed the full-scale distribution of the questionnaire to 375 respondents in the actual research. The collected data used interval measurement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, enabling precise quantification of respondents' answers.

This study utilised Smart PLS 4.0 (Monheim am Rhein, Germany) for analysis. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed for mediation and regression analyses to examine relationships among variables. Partial least squares structural equation modelling is particularly suitable for mediation analysis as it simultaneously estimates direct and indirect effects in complex models, accommodates formative constructs, handles non-normal data and smaller sample sizes, and effectively accounts for measurement error while providing robust statistical power.

There were 345 valid responses to the study, with 92.2% of respondents being men and 7.8% women. Of the respondents, 42.3% had 3–5 years of tenure, and the modal age range was 28–32 years. Additionally, 89.6% of respondents were married, and 77.7% held bachelor's degrees. East Java accounted for the largest share of respondents (44.9%), followed by Central Java (29.6%) and West Java (25.5%). The demographic characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Constructs measurements

Work–life balance in this study is measured using a synthesis of several indicators from Tasdelen-Karckay and Bakalim (2017) and Stankevičienė et al. (2021). The selected indicators of WLB in this study's operational definition are satisfaction with family and professional life, balancing

multiple life roles and time management. In this study, ETI is measured using indicators from Chavadi et al. (2022) and Skelton et al. (2020) namely, thinking of quitting; intending to search for alternatives; and intending to quit the organisation.

In this study, SEE is measured using several indicators namely, *meaningful work* from Bantha et al. (2023) and Ahmed et al. (2022); *spiritual values* from Saks (2011) and Zhang et al. (2023); *spiritual humility* – a new indicator as one of the novelty included in the test; *vigour* from Thompson and King (2023); (Sahni, 2021); *dedication* from Sahni (2021); and *absorption* from Thompson and King (2023); (Sahni, 2021).

This study assesses the reliability of the constructs by calculating Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with all constructs exceeding the accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating consistent internal measurement. Construct validity, including convergent and discriminant validity, was evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE) and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The AVE values for all constructs surpassed the 0.50 threshold, and the square root of AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with other constructs, confirming both convergent and discriminant validity.

Regarding the novel variable, SEE and a new indicator of spiritual humility, expert judgement was conducted to ensure they accurately measured the intended construct; the content validity index (CVI) was calculated, followed by a pilot study. All indicators that make up the SEE variable, with its 11 items, have outer loading values above 0.6, indicating they are valid and able to measure the SEE variable. An interesting finding is that the new spiritual humility indicator is the strongest indicator in the new spiritual employee engagement variable, with an average outer loading value of 0.842. The high outer loading indicates that this spiritual humility indicator is very relevant and reliable in measuring the spiritual employee engagement variable. These steps provided empirical justification for introducing this new variable and indicator alongside established measures.

Ethical considerations

All respondents were proficient in spoken and written Indonesian, reporting no difficulties with questionnaire clarity or comprehension. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to study involvement, explicitly stating their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The study protocol received formal approval from the Ethics Committee of the Research and Community Service Agency (BPPM) of the Faculty of Economics and Business, 'Universitas Brawijaya' (approval no. 01887/UN10.F0201/B/PG/2025). Participant confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through response coding, secure data storage on password-protected servers and restricted

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents.

Characteristic	Description	Frequency (n)	%
Gender	Male	318	92.2
	Female	27	7.8
Age (years)	28–32	146	42.3
	33–37	89	25.8
	38–42	110	31.9
Experience (years)	3–5	147	42.6
	5–10	96	27.8
	> 10	102	29.6
Marital status	Not married	36	10.4
	Married	309	89.6
Education	High school	44	12.8
	3rd Diploma	17	4.9
	Bachelor's degree	268	77.7
	Master's degree	15	4.3
	PhD	1	0.3
Region	West Java	88	25.5
	Central Java	102	29.6
	East Java	155	44.9
Total		345	100

PhD, Doctor of Philosophy.

access limited to research personnel only. The study posed minimal risk, involving self-reported survey data and no sensitive personal identifiers.

Potential benefits included an enhanced understanding of employee engagement factors to support organisational improvement. All procedures adhered strictly to established ethical standards protecting participants' rights, dignity and welfare.

Results

Hair and Alamer (2022) showed that convergent validity requires that indicator outer loadings exceed 0.60, and the AVE for each construct surpasses the 0.50 threshold. In this study, the model's validity is confirmed as all variables achieve AVE values greater than 0.50 (Table 2), demonstrating adequate convergent validity. In this study, all items used have been shown to measure each latent variable, as they have outer loadings greater than 0.70 (Table 3). This indicates that all indicators reliably measure their respective constructs, and none need to be removed.

This study uses the Fornell–Larcker criterion to test discriminant validity on three research variables. The results of the discriminant validity test are presented in Table 2.

All relationships satisfy Fornell–Larcker (diagonals > off-diagonals). The ETI–SEE correlation ($r = 0.005$) indicates a near-zero correlation, suggesting that SEE is a distinct theoretical domain from turnover intention. While general engagement typically correlates negatively with turnover, spiritual engagement emphasises transcendental meaning/purpose, which may not directly oppose turnover cognitions in this agrochemical field workforce context, where practical factors dominate. The WLB–SEE (0.685) correlation, though substantial, remains below SEE's AVE root (0.809), confirming discriminant validity. Work–life balance is negatively associated with turnover intention, which aligns with theoretical expectations and prior literature, in which higher WLB reduces turnover

TABLE 2: Value of average variance extracted.

Variable	AVE	Remark
Employee turnover intention	0.701	Valid
Spiritual employee engagement	0.654	Valid
Work–life balance	0.738	Valid

Note: AVE values ≥ 0.50 indicate acceptable convergent validity.
AVE, average variance extracted.

TABLE 3: Results of the discriminant validity test with the Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Construct	ETI	SEE	WLB
Employee turnover intention	0.837	-	-
Spiritual employee engagement	0.005	0.809	-
Work–life balance	-0.140	0.685	0.859

Note: AVE root values $\leq$ bold diagonal values indicate acceptable discriminant validity.
ETI, employee turnover intention; SEE, spiritual employee engagement; WLB, work–life balance.

intention through enhanced well-being and job satisfaction. The modest magnitude (-0.140) reflects the presence of the mediator (spiritual employee engagement), consistent with partial mediation effects observed in similar PLS-SEM studies.

The research model demonstrates discriminant validity according to the Fornell–Larcker criterion, as the square root of AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs. The diagonal values in Table 3 represent these square roots (ETI: 0.837, SEE: 0.809, WLB: 0.859), all of which surpass the off-diagonal inter-construct correlations, confirming the constructs' distinctiveness. The convergent and discriminant validity tests on the indicators and research variables also confirm their validity.

The reliability test uses Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values to assess construct reliability. A construct is considered reliable if it has a Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability value greater than 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4 demonstrates that all indicators and latent variables meet the reliability test.

This study employs structural model testing to assess relationships among latent variable constructs, using R^2 for predictive relevance. Table 5 shows the R^2 and adjusted R^2 values, which represent the proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by their predictors.

The study shows a strong relationship between WLB and SEE. Work–life balance is positively associated with SEE, explaining 48.9% of its variance. However, the model accounts for only 4.5% of the variance in ETI, indicating that SEE and WLB weakly predict turnover intention. This low R^2 suggests that factors outside the model significantly influence employees' intentions to leave. This represents the indirect effect of WLB on ETI via SEE.

The study tested hypotheses connecting latent variables in a sample using bootstrapping techniques. With a p -value < 0.05 and a t -statistic of 1.65, the results were examined using SmartPLS 4.0. The effect was calculated using the route coefficient value. Hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping in SmartPLS 4.0 ($p < 0.05$; $t > 1.65$). Path coefficients indicate

TABLE 4: Result of reliability test.

Indicator and variable	Composite reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Remark
Work–life balance	0.934	0.911	Reliable
Spiritual employee engagement	0.954	0.947	Reliable
Employee turnover intention	0.875	0.786	Reliable

Note: Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values ≥ 0.70 indicate acceptable reliability test.

TABLE 5: Values of R^2 and adjusted R^2 .

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Spiritual employee engagement	0.489	0.486
Employee turnover intention	0.045	0.031

Note: All values ≥ 0.02 indicate significance in PLS-SEM.
PLS-SEM, Partial least squares structural equation modelling.

effect magnitudes: moderate for WLB $\rightarrow$ SEE ($\beta = 0.462$), moderate for WLB $\rightarrow$ ETI ($\beta = -0.311$), weak-moderate for SEE $\rightarrow$ ETI ($\beta = -0.238$) and modest indirect mediation ($\beta = 0.110$). Results are shown in Table 6.

The relationship between WLB and ETI shows a negative path coefficient (-0.311), indicating that higher WLB is negatively associated with ETI. The analysis indicates a reliable effect, supported by a t -statistic of 3.006 and a p -value of 0.001. These results demonstrate a statistically significant relationship. This means good WLB plays a meaningful role in reducing employees' desire or intention to leave their jobs. Hence, **H1 is accepted**.

The relationship between WLB and SEE reveals a positive path coefficient (0.462), showing a strong association whereby better WLB aligns with higher SEE. The very high t -statistic (5.676) and extremely low p -value (0.000) confirm this is a strong, statistically significant effect. This means that when employees feel they have a good balance between work and personal life, they are more likely to experience spiritual fulfilment and greater engagement at the workplace. Hence, **H2 is accepted**. The WLB showed a robust, positive and significant relationship with SEE.

The relationship between SEE and ETI shows a negative path coefficient (-0.238), indicating that higher SEE is associated with lower ETI. The t -statistic and p -value indicate the relationship is statistically significant. In practical terms, employees who feel spiritually engaged at work are less likely to consider leaving their jobs. Hence, **H3 is accepted**.

The relationship explaining the construct from WLB through SEE to ETI indicates partial mediation. The indirect effect, with a path coefficient of 0.110, suggests that improved WLB enhances spiritual engagement, which in turn modestly reduces turnover intention. This mediation implies that part of the effect of WLB on lowering turnover intention operates through increasing SEE. The positive coefficient (0.110), combined with a significant t -statistic and p -value, demonstrates that SEE partially mediates the relationship. This means that, in part, WLB reduces turnover intention by first increasing SEE, which in turn lowers the desire to leave the organisation. Hence, **H4 is accepted**. This relationship and its statistical significance are illustrated in Figure 2, which presents the detailed results of hypothesis testing.

TABLE 6: Results of hypothesis test.

Construct	Path coefficient	t -statistic	p	Conclusion
WLB $\rightarrow$ ETI	-0.311	3.006	0.001	Significant (moderate)
WLB $\rightarrow$ SEE	0.462	5.676	0.000	Significant (moderate)
SEE $\rightarrow$ ETI	-0.238	2.483	0.007	Significant (weak-moderate)
WLB $\rightarrow$ SEE $\rightarrow$ ETI	0.110	2.223	0.013	Partial mediation

Note: All hypothesised paths are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

ETI, employee turnover intention; SEE, spiritual employee engagement; WLB, work-life balance.

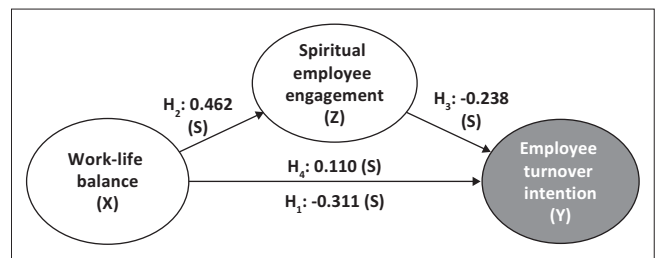


FIGURE 2: Hypothesis testing results.

Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence of the significant influence of WLB and SEE on ETI in the agrochemical industry in Java. The findings reveal that WLB exerts a strong, negative and significant direct effect on turnover intention, underscoring its role as a crucial retention strategy. The findings of this study align with previous research demonstrating that supportive WLB policies significantly reduce employees' intentions to leave an organisation (Ahmad Saufi et al., 2023).

When employees perceive harmony between their professional and personal lives, it enhances their overall well-being while also fostering a deeper sense of meaning, belonging and intrinsic motivation in the workplace (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2018). Moreover, SEE emerges as a critical buffer against turnover intention. Employees who experience a strong connection to their work's deeper values and purpose are less likely to contemplate leaving their roles (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2016). This underscores the importance of nurturing a workplace environment that supports spiritual engagement as part of retention strategies.

Specifically, research on the effect of WLB on employee engagement among the millennial generation shows that WLB is one of the important factors that has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (Larasati, 2019). These findings corroborate proxy studies showing the impactful role of employee engagement in mitigating turnover intention (Santhanam & Srinivas, 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

Crucially, the partial mediation effect identified in this model highlights SEE as one mechanism through which WLB reduces turnover intention. This indicates that organisations can optimise retention not only by supporting work-life harmony but also by cultivating workplace spirituality, as these factors jointly contribute to employees' long-term commitment (Srivastava & Gupta, 2022). In summary, these results support the prioritisation of policies and practices to enhance both WLB and SEE. Integrating such initiatives stands to improve not just employee retention, but also holistic well-being and sustainable organisational performance.

Nonetheless, the relatively low explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.045$) indicates that other factors, potentially

including leadership style, job satisfaction, compensation and organisational culture, must also be investigated to fully understand turnover mechanisms (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Wang et al., 2020). From an external perspective, during the research period, the global agrochemical industry was turbulent or undergoing a correction. Production costs were rising in Europe and the Americas, driven by the global recession, the Russia–Ukraine War and the Israel–Palestine War. Global agrochemical companies have suffered severe losses until 2024. This included destocking strategies and widespread layoffs, with multinational agrochemical firms in Indonesia also beginning to reduce their workforce and, in some cases, close operations entirely in the region.

Practical implications

This study highlights several practical implications for organisations in the agrochemical industry. Given the significant negative effect of WLB on ETI, organisations need to implement initiatives that support employees in balancing their work and personal lives. Such initiatives may include offering flexible work schedules, remote work options, adequate leave policies and assistance with family responsibilities. These measures not only reduce employees' intentions to leave but also enhance their overall well-being and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the strong positive relationship between WLB and SEE underscores the importance of fostering a workplace culture that nurtures spiritual well-being. Organisations can benefit from programmes that promote mindfulness, purpose-driven work, meaningful recognition and opportunities for employees to connect with values beyond their formal job roles. Spiritual engagement serves as an important protective factor against turnover intention and helps build stronger employee commitment. Because SEE partially mediates the effect of WLB on turnover intention, adopting a holistic approach that integrates both WLB and spirituality-based practices is advisable. Training leaders to recognise and support employees' spiritual needs alongside practical work-life considerations can cultivate a deeply engaged workforce that is less likely to leave. However, given that the model explains only a small proportion of turnover intention, organisations should also focus on other important areas, such as leadership development, transparent communication, career advancement opportunities and competitive compensation, to complement retention strategies. Finally, continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms are recommended to regularly gauge employees' perceptions of WLB and spiritual engagement. Using tools such as surveys and focus groups will enable organisations to tailor their programmes more effectively to meet evolving employee needs, ensuring sustained relevance and positive impact.

Limitations and recommendations

Research limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the model explains only a small

proportion of the variance in employee turnover intention ($R^2 = 0.045$), suggesting that important factors influencing turnover intention may not have been included. Variables such as compensation, organisational culture, job satisfaction and broader labour market conditions may play significant roles and warrant inclusion in future research. Secondly, the data were collected exclusively from the agrochemical industry within the Java region, covering West, Central and East Java. This focus on a specific sector and geographic area may limit the generalisability of the findings to other industries or regions with different organisational cultures and workforce characteristics. Thirdly, the cross-sectional design of this study, which captured data at a single point in time, restricts the ability to infer causality or observe how relationships among variables may evolve over time. Fourthly, the use of self-administered questionnaires introduces potential response biases, including social desirability bias and common method variance, which could affect the accuracy of the findings. Finally, although the SEE construct was validated with acceptable reliability and validity measures, it remains a relatively new variable. To strengthen its applicability, further validation across diverse samples and contexts is recommended.

Recommendations for future research

The study suggests several directions for future research on ETI. It suggests incorporating additional predictors, such as leadership style, compensation, perceived organisational support, job satisfaction and external employment opportunities, to improve the explanatory power and accuracy of research models. Expanding the sample scope and conducting similar studies across different geographical regions, industries and cultural contexts will improve the generalisability of the results. Longitudinal or panel study designs can provide clearer evidence regarding causal relationships and the effect of WLB and spiritual engagement on turnover intentions. Mixed methods, such as interviews or focus groups, can offer a richer understanding of employee perspectives and the complex dynamics between WLB, spiritual engagement and turnover intentions. Strengthening the validation of the SEE scale through broader expert panels and studies in various organisational settings will further advance understanding of ETI and refine organisational strategies for employee engagement and retention.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that WLB plays an important role in reducing ETI in the agrochemical industry, both directly and indirectly through the mediation of SEE. The findings demonstrate that WLB significantly enhances SEE, which in turn lowers ETI. Spiritual employee engagement partially mediates the relationship between WLB and turnover intention, highlighting the importance of addressing both practical work–life considerations and employees' deeper sense of meaning and fulfilment at work. While the model shows moderate explanatory power for spiritual engagement, it accounts for only a small portion of

the variance in turnover intention, indicating that additional factors influence employees' intentions to leave. Therefore, organisations should adopt a comprehensive approach that combines supportive WLB policies, spirituality-based initiatives and other retention strategies such as leadership development and career opportunities. Overall, the study underscores the value of integrating WLB and spiritual engagement initiatives to foster a committed and satisfied workforce, ultimately contributing to sustainable organisational success.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the expert judgement panel from the agrochemical industry, including the late Mr. Herry Kristanto, as well as Mr. Suhendi and Mr. Kasirin, for their valuable insights and contributions to this study. While their contribution was important, it did not meet the criteria for authorship.

Competing interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

CRedit authorship contribution

Final Prajnanta: Conceptualisation, Project administration, Resources, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Noermijati Noermijati: Conceptualisation, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. Nanang Suryadi: Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. Desi T. Kurniawati: Investigation, Resources, Supervision, Visualisation, Writing – review & editing. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

Funding information

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are not openly available due to reasons of sensitivity and are available from the corresponding author, Final Prajnanta, upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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