

**THE IMPACT OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE, LEADERSHIP, WORK
ENVIRONMENT, AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION ON EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE RETAIL INDUSTRY AT
SRI AMAN**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication on employee engagement among retail employees in Sri Aman, Malaysia. This study sought to determine the elements that have a major impact on employee engagement in the retail industry, given the growing concerns about low engagement levels and excessive turnover. 66 employees were given a structured questionnaire as part of a quantitative study approach. The results showed that employee engagement is significantly positively correlated with all four variables: work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and communication, with the work environment being the most important element. These findings give retail managers information on what they should concentrate on in order to improve employee engagement, increase productivity, and lower turnover. The application of the Balanced Scorecard Model and the Social Exchange Theory to the retail scenario in Malaysia is another way that the study adds to the body of current material.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Work-Life Balance, Leadership, Work Environment, Communication, Retail Industry, Social Exchange Theory, Balanced Scorecard Model

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study examines the variables that affect employee engagement in the retail sector. In this section the background of the study was explored, problem statement, research objectives, and questions, research hypothesis, conceptual framework, definition of terms, significance of research, and limitations of research were discussed.

1.1 Background of study

Employee engagement is often defined as an intellectual and emotional commitment to an organization (Baumruk, 2004). According to Baumruk, engaged employees are those who feel aligned with the company's goals, listen actively, are motivated to perform, and treat the organization's objectives as their own. Additionally, research by Koop (2021) shows that companies with highly engaged employees achieve a 6% higher net profit margin than those without. This highlights the need for companies to foster employee engagement. Identifying the factors that drive employee engagement within an organization or institution is essential for enhancing it. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) identified various influencing factors, including loyalty, initiative, effectiveness, identity, commitment, ownership, and productivity, which collectively impact employee engagement. Therefore, companies must understand these factors to increase engagement effectively. Moreover, the arrival of a new generation with different expectations and values from the previous generation also drives this need.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 greatly expedited the global transition from traditional offline work environments to online work setups, affecting many aspects of organisational life, including employee engagement (Amano et al., 2021). Businesses and employees had to swiftly adjust to remote work environments as a result of this shift, which promoted new methods of cooperation, communication, and productivity maintenance.

According to Nurita (2022), companies in Indonesia are currently transitioning from a pandemic phase to an endemic strategy to managing COVID-19. For companies that had made significant adjustments to working online, this change signifies the slow transition back to in-person operations and a crucial readjustment time. The return to physical workplaces is expected to have complex implications on employee engagement levels as businesses reconfigure their operations to fit a hybrid or entirely in-person model. As businesses weigh the advantages of flexibility offered by remote work against the requirements of in-person presence, the shift presents a new set of opportunities and problems. It is essential to comprehend the elements that affect employee engagement in this changing "new normal," especially as businesses look to retain talent, promote wellbeing, and maintain productivity in a setting that is constantly adjusting to both lingering and new developments.

Employee work engagement and organizational commitment influence employee retention in the retail industry, particularly in Supermarket (Arcadio & Distor, 2023). According to Nelson (2022), the turnover rate for business associates in retail industry was 29%, but supermarkets faced an even more alarming turnover rate of 58% in 2020. This high attrition has led to employee shortages of up to 20%, causing significant operational challenges such as reduced customer service quality, delayed inventory restocking, and increased pressure on the remaining employees. These issues are further intensified in larger retail operations like hypermarkets, where the complexity of managing a larger workforce amplifies the difficulties. In Malaysia's expanding labor market, these high turnover rates highlight the persistent challenge of retaining employees, which threatens both the operational efficiency and long-term stability of supermarkets in the face of a highly competitive retail environment. The main issue facing the company was that some managers of retail establishments did not develop plans to increase employee engagement, which led to a decline in business profitability (Maynard, 2020).

Employee engagement has become crucial for organizational success, with various studies examining factors like rewards, work environment, supervisor support, organizational culture, balance, compensation, and leadership as key determinants. Recognition and rewards enhance engagement by boosting motivation and fostering positive work environments (Almerri, 2023; Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2019). Recent studies highlight increasing employee disengagement in the private sector, emphasizing the need to investigate organizational and supervisory support impacts (Nguyen & Tran, 2021). Research shows that inclusive cultures with open communication boost employee motivation (Almerri, 2023; Hasan et al., 2021), while work-life balance policies promote engagement (Lee & Shin, 2023). Studies also indicate that work environment, compensation (Pranitasari et al., 2019), and operational leadership (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022) significantly influence engagement levels.

Employee engagement is essential for organizational success, driving profitability, retention, and productivity. Despite extensive research, gaps remain in understanding how specific predictors like work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication affect engagement within the retail industry, particularly in high-turnover environments. In the retail industry, particularly supermarkets, high turnover rates, and employee shortages highlight the need for strategies to enhance engagement and operational stability. Addressing these factors ensures improved employee satisfaction, reduced attrition, and sustained competitiveness.

1.2 Problem Statement

1.2.1 Empirical gap

The previous research seems to have an empirical gap. The earlier literature lacks thorough investigation. In light of their combined effects on employee engagement and organizational performance, some of these understudied factors pertaining to the integration of work-life balance, the workplace, leadership, and effective communication seem significant and deserving of further research. Empirical research on these topics is crucial because it can yield practical advice for raising employee satisfaction and output, which will eventually boost organizational performance. Saks and Gruman (2020) and other studies have looked at several facets of employee engagement, but they haven't thoroughly investigated how these factors are related to one another. According to Kassim et al. (2023), empirical study is crucial for comprehending how job expectations affect employee motivation and involvement. Additionally, prior research on the public understanding of employee engagement and satisfaction has mostly been qualitative. The combined influence of these particular variables has not yet been empirically assessed using reliable quantitative techniques in any study. The integration of the Balanced Scorecard model with Social Exchange Theory has received relatively little empirical investigation. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how these variables interact and how organizations can leverage this understanding to enhance employee engagement. A more detailed examination of the impact of leadership styles, work environment, and communication strategies on engagement could provide valuable insights. Furthermore, investigating the ways in which these elements affect various industries especially in high-turnover industries like retail industry may result in focused performance-enhancing tactics. The significance of

this study is underscored by the possibility of gaining a more profound comprehension of these dynamics. The study will fill up these empirical gaps and provide fresh insights into how to create a more engaged workforce.

1.2.2 Practical Gap

It seems that the previous research has a practical knowledge gap. The earlier literature is deficient in thorough investigation. Several of these untested methods for raising employee engagement seem to be absent from the retail industry's operations. The area of employee engagement is ready for useful, targeted research on tactics like customized engagement programs, rewards, and support networks to keep employees in high-turnover settings. Bakker and Demerouti (2020) emphasise the value of both job and personal resources while talking about doable strategies for raising employee engagement. Meanwhile, identifying various strategies to enhance employee engagement and their practical applications across different industries is essential (Bailey et al., 2017). This is particularly important in Malaysia's retail sector, where employee engagement has a direct influence on customer satisfaction and overall business performance. High levels of disengagement are linked to reduced profitability, higher turnover rates, and operational inefficiencies. Theoretical aspects of employee motivation and engagement have been the subject of numerous previous research. However, the topic of retail management has very few action research studies or practical studies. Given that consumer satisfaction and corporate performance are directly impacted by employee engagement in Malaysia's retail industry, this is a significant and deserving inquiry. Examining these problems is crucial since high disengagement rates lead to decreased profitability, more turnover, and operational inefficiencies.

Additionally, the majority of prior theoretical research has been on engagement predictors at a broad or industry-wide level, with relatively little practical study on successfully implementing these predictors in retail settings.

1.2.3 Theoretical Gap

The researcher discovered an apparent theoretical gap in the previous research on employee engagement. The theory on social exchange and employee engagement is rather dated, and the current studies bear the fruit of this theoretical gap. Kahn (2020) highlights the need for updated theoretical models while revisiting the fundamental notion of employee engagement. Saks (2021) offers new frameworks for comprehending employee engagement and challenges accepted notions. Some of the prior theories seem significant and deserving of acknowledgment as a basis. However, an investigation in terms of the impact of work-life balance, work environment, leadership, and effective communication on employee engagement and theoretical development is warranted. An investigation of these issues is important because they directly influence employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational success. Furthermore, to give projects a firmer theoretical foundation, earlier theoretical models must incorporate recent findings in organizational behavior, human resource management, and linked domains to give projects a solid theoretical foundation. The previous theory tends to focus primarily on simple measures of employee satisfaction. It does not encompass new paradigms in comprehensive employee engagement frameworks such as the balanced scorecard model. A more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of employee engagement may be possible through the integration of modern theories. The evolution of these theories is particularly crucial as organizations face new

challenges in a rapidly changing work environment. By updating theoretical models, researchers can better reflect the complex dynamics between employees and employers today. This shift could lead to more accurate and actionable insights that guide organizational strategies. A more updated theoretical approach will also help bridge the gap between academic research and practical applications in diverse industries.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 The general objective of this study is:

To examine the relationship between selected factors and employee engagement among retail industry employees at Sri Aman.

1.3.2 The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement.
2. To examine the relationship between leadership and employee engagement.
3. To examine the relationship between work environment and employee engagement.
4. To examine the relationship between effective communication and employee engagement.
5. To identify the most dominant factors affecting employee engagement.

1.4 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Does work-life balance have a significant relationship with employee engagement?
2. Does leadership have a significant relationship with employee engagement?
3. Does the work environment have a significant relationship with employee engagement?
4. Does effective communication have a significant relationship with employee engagement?
5. What is the dominant factor affected employee engagement?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to investigate the significant relationships between selected factors and employee engagement within the retail industry. The study's adoption of alternative hypotheses is indicative of the anticipated strong correlations between the variables being examined and employee engagement. By assessing the existence and intensity of these linkages, these alternative hypotheses offer valuable information about how each component influences employee engagement.

The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Work-life balance and employee engagement

- Ha1: There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement

H2: Leadership and employee engagement

- Ha2: There is a significant relationship between leadership and employee engagement

H3: Work environment and employee engagement

- Ha3: There is a significant relationship between work environment and employee engagement

H4: Effective communication and employee engagement

- Ha4: There is a significant relationship between effective communication and employee engagement

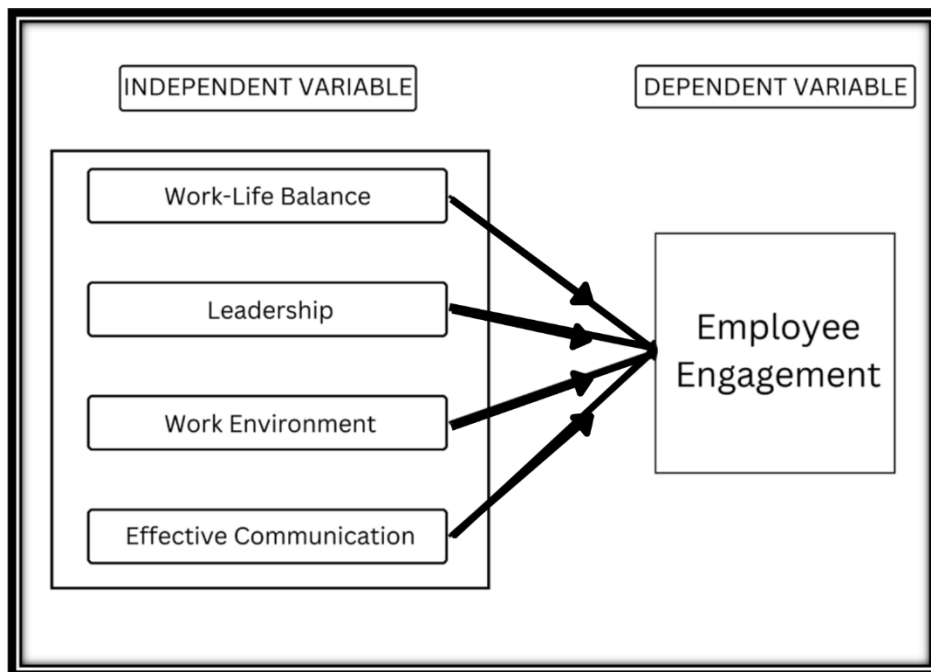
H5: Dominant Factor and Employee Engagement

- Ha5: There is a dominant factor affecting employee engagement.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is developed based on the deductive assumption that there is a problem and that it can be solved by using processes, procedures, a functional approach, models, or theories (Zackoff et al., 2019). This study's research framework is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



(Source: Lee & Shin, 2023; Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022;

Pranitasari et al., 2019; Hasan et al., 2021)

1.7 Definition of term

Term	Conceptual Definition	Operational Defenition
Employee engagement	A common definition of engagement is a dedication to an organisation on both an intellectual and emotional level (Inam et al., 2021).	Employee engagement is the degree to which employees are emotionally connected to their organization, which drives their effort and enthusiasm in their roles.
Work-life Balance	Work-life balance describes achieving a suitable balance between an individual's personal and professional lives (Abdullah et al, 2022).	Work-life balance is measured by the degree to which employees feel they have sufficient time and energy to fulfill both work and personal responsibilities without one negatively impacting the other.
Leadership	The process of leadership involves influencing others to achieve a goal and guiding the organisation in a way that strengthens its cohesion and coherence (Genza, 2021).	Leadership is assessed by the extent to which leaders can inspire and guide their team members to achieve organizational goals and objectives.
Work environment	The work environment refers to the physical surroundings,	The work environment is evaluated based on factors

	psychological factors, and organizational policies that influence job satisfaction and productivity (Basalamah, 2021).	such as workplace safety, comfort, resources, and overall atmosphere that affect employee performance and well-being.
Effective communication	Formal and informal sharing of timely, relevant information in an empathic way is referred to as effective communication (Teng et al., 2020)	Effective communication is measured by the accuracy, timeliness, and clarity of the information exchanged between individuals or groups within an organization.
Social exchange theory	Social exchange theory, which contends that interactions between two parties must entail reciprocal interdependence, is regarded as one of the most well-known ideas in relation to workplace behaviour (Meira & Hancer, 2021).	Social exchange theory is applied by examining the interactions and relationships within an organization to understand how individuals reciprocate actions based on perceived rewards and costs.
Balanced Scorecard Model	The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model highlights key strategic indicators that a company must meet to	The Balanced Scorecard Model is implemented by measuring performance across four key perspectives:

	realize its long-term vision. It focuses on future goals and the continuous improvement of the business (Betto et al., 2022).	financial, customer, internal business processes, and learning and growth.
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Table 1: Definition of Terms

1.8 Significance of the Study

1.8.1 Significance to Organizations

This study is significant because it addresses the critical issue of employee engagement within Malaysia's retail industry. Employee engagement is linked to numerous positive organizational outcomes, including increased productivity, reduced turnover rates, and improved customer satisfaction. Research shows that engaged employees are likelier to align their personal goals with organizational objectives, fostering a stronger commitment to their work (Baumruk, 2004; Liu et al., 2022). This research aims to provide actionable insights for managers and policymakers to foster a more engaged workforce by examining factors such as work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication.

1.8.2 Contribution to the Body of Literature

This study is particularly pertinent given the ongoing changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift from traditional work settings to hybrid models has presented new opportunities and challenges for employee engagement (Amano et al., 2021). Understanding how these factors have evolved during and after the pandemic can aid organizations in adapting their engagement strategies effectively. This research addresses empirical gaps in the study of employee engagement, particularly in high-turnover industries like retail, which have historically reported low engagement levels (Post, 2020).

1.8.3 Significance to Related Industries

The implications of this study extend beyond the retail sector. Organizations in other industries facing similar challenges with employee engagement can apply the findings to design effective engagement strategies. By addressing employees' unique needs in the post-pandemic era, organizations can enhance employee retention, satisfaction, and overall business performance (Nguyen & Tran, 2021). These insights could serve as a valuable framework for improving engagement across various sectors.

1.9 Limitation of study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged despite its merits. First, their exclusive focus on Malaysia's retail industry may limit the findings' applicability to other industries or nations. Different organisational and cultural environments can have a substantial impact on the dynamics of employee engagement (Yusof, 2024). As a result, even though the findings might provide unique perspectives for Malaysian retail industry employees, employees in other sectors or areas might not find them applicable.

Second, surveys are the primary means of gathering quantitative data for this study. Despite their useful statistical insights, quantitative methodologies may not capture employees' complex experiences and perspectives of their engagement levels (Ikemizu et al., 2022). Interviews and focus groups are examples of qualitative techniques that could be used in future research to better understand employee opinions on engagement.

Lastly, as organizations adjust to post-pandemic circumstances, this study is being carried out amid a time of major transition. The results might not represent long-term trends in employee involvement, but rather transitory circumstances (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021). Continuous study will be required to evaluate the long-term effects of workplace changes and norm adaptation on employee engagement. Understanding these restrictions makes it possible to evaluate the findings cautiously and identify areas that require more study.

1.10 Summary of chapter 1

This study examines factors influencing employee engagement in Malaysia's retail industry, focusing on work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication. Employee engagement, defined as an intellectual and emotional commitment to an organization, is essential for driving productivity, profitability, and employee retention.

The significance of comprehending and managing engagement elements is highlighted by high turnover rates and operational inefficiencies, particularly in supermarkets. This study fills in theoretical, practical, and empirical gaps by putting forth a framework that links the identified characteristics with employee engagement. It is based on the Balanced Scorecard Model and Social Exchange Theory.

The purpose of the study is to use quantitative techniques to examine the connections between the selected factors and employee engagement. It is anticipated that the results would help managers create plans to boost organisational performance, increase engagement, and improve retention in Malaysia's cutthroat retail industry. The study's limitations include its sole emphasis on Malaysia and its dependence on quantitative approaches, underscoring the necessity for future research to broaden its coverage and incorporate qualitative findings.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Chapter Two presents the literature review for the study, focusing on previous research and literature related to the dependent variable, employee engagement, and the independent variables: work-life balance, work environment, leadership, and effective communication. The review will draw on various sources, including journal publications, books, articles, and other credible internet-based references, providing a comprehensive overview of the study's key concepts and variables.

2.1 Employee engagement (Dependent Variable)

According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is the capacity of individuals in an organization to relate their identities to their work responsibilities. As a result of engagement, employees use and express themselves physically, psychologically, and emotionally in their work performances. A common definition of engagement is a dedication to an organisation on both an intellectual and emotional level (Inam et al., 2021). For businesses, employee engagement is essential since it goes beyond job satisfaction. An excellent instrument that aids every organization in its efforts to get a competitive edge over its competitors is employee engagement. If properly managed and occupied, people are one element that competitors cannot duplicate and are regarded as the most precious asset. Baumruk (2004) has brought attention to this stance by stating that employee engagement is the primary determinant of a company's viability.

According to Gallup (2002), there are three categories of employees which is engaged employees, disengaged employees, and actively disengaged employees. Engaged employees are builders who consistently strive to provide quality in the way they carry out their duties.

On the other hand, disengaged employees concentrated on the duties that were outlined for them rather than the organization's goals. The employee carries out their advice. Employees who perform poorly and are detrimental to the company are considered actively disengaged.

Previous studies that investigated some of the factors predicting employee engagement included reward and recognition, work environment, supervisor support, organization culture, work life balance, compensation, and leadership. Recognition and rewards enhance employee engagement by valuing their contributions, boosting motivation, morale, and fostering a positive work environment (Almerri, 2023; Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2019). Recent studies on employee engagement, particularly in the private sector, indicate that with employee disengagement on the rise, there is a greater need to investigate the possible impact of organizational and supervisory support on employee engagement in the present labor market (Nguyen & Tran, 2021). Besides that, previous research shows that organizational culture greatly influences employee engagement. When employees feel aligned with an organization's culture, their engagement and satisfaction increase significantly. According to Lee and Shin (2023), a work-life balance policy is one of the many policy measures used to promote employee engagement at work. Research by Pranitasari et al., (2019) has shown the working environment and compensation are two elements that affect employee engagement. Operational leadership is essential to raising followers' level of engagement at work (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022).

While many studies highlight factors that influence employee engagement, there are still significant gaps in understanding how specific predictors such as work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication affect engagement within the retail industry. This study aims to address these predictors, providing insights that can enhance employee engagement strategies, which are essential for operational success and employee retention in high-turnover environments like retail industry.

International Context

Employee engagement is the positive motivation employees feel, characterized by their energy, dedication, and focus at work (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021). Strategies for engaging employees have been frequently used to increase gain a competitive edge and success in business. However, a recent study conducted by Liu et al., (2022) on employee engagement in 141 countries found that only 13% of employees are highly engaged globally. Yusof (2024) asserts that the level of employee engagement varies by country according to several factors related to each multinational corporation. For instance, disengagement was more than 45% in India, whilst engagement was as low as 11% in Japan. Around the world, 85% of employees say they are either actively disengaged from their jobs or not engaged at all (Post,2020). Disengaged team members are a primary cause of employee turnover since they frequently feel underappreciated, undeveloped, and unprepared. According to Post (2020), Logistics executives who acknowledge and encourage their employees will see both immediate and long-term advantages, such as a 24% decrease in turnover, a 41% decrease in absenteeism, and most importantly, a 70% decrease in safety occurrences. A previous study by Abdullahrahman et al., (2024) shows there have three significant factors which are leadership, working environment, and organization support can affect employee engagement and job satisfaction among the employees in United Arab Emirates. According to Ikemizu et al., (2022), Japan came in at number 132 out of 139 countries, and only 6% of its employees demonstrated high levels of engagement, whereas 32% of American employees did so. Similar findings have also been found in other surveys. For instance, Japan's work engagement score is poor when compared to other countries.

Global employee engagement experienced an upward trend from 2011 to 2020 but saw a slight decline in the following years. In both 2022 and 2023, the engagement rate stabilized at 67 percent, slightly below its peak of 69 percent in 2020 (Dyvik, 2024). The retail industry,

in particular, faces significant challenges in maintaining employee engagement. According to Fuller et al. (2022), the retail industry has a 70% greater turnover rate than other sectors, highlighting the urgency for effective strategies to retain talent. According to the Global Report on Frontline Workers, burnout accounted for 58% of retail employees' departures. This emphasizes how crucial it is to manage workplace pressures, enhance leadership techniques, and create a positive work atmosphere in order to reduce burnout.

Malaysia Context

According to Ibrahim et al. (2021), Malaysia's employee engagement rate has been gradually increasing, reaching 63% in 2018. As a result, 37% of employees were disengaged in 2018, and the associated costs came to almost RM 30.661 billion. Despite this positive trend, Mercer (2022) highlights that one in four employed Malaysians still feel disengaged from their jobs. While the average employee engagement score in Malaysia was 54%, slightly above the global average of 53%, it lags behind neighboring countries like Thailand (72%), Hong Kong (63%), and India (79%). This underscores the significant challenges Malaysia faces in maintaining high employee engagement, especially in a competitive global landscape. To address this, it is suggested that employees often seek meaningful activities, such as charity or volunteer work, to enhance their sense of self-worth and self-esteem, thereby potentially boosting overall engagement.

In 2023, the wholesale and retail industry in Malaysia employed over 2.8 million individuals, reflecting a steady increase from approximately 2.75 million in the previous year (Siddharta, 2024). This consistent annual growth underscores the sector's critical role in Malaysia's economy. However, despite this upward trend, challenges persist. The cost of disengaged workers in Malaysia was estimated to exceed RM 26.097 billion in 2020, while the employee engagement rate declined significantly, dropping from 80% in 2022 to 67% in 2023.

(Hossan et al., 2024). These figures highlight the urgent need for organizations to address employee engagement to sustain productivity and economic contribution.

Furthermore, the Retail Group Malaysia (RGM) projected a growth rate of 3.5% for the Malaysian retail industry in 2023, emphasizing its continued expansion and potential (Nizamuddin & Mokhtar, 2023). The retail market's valuation of RM 433.4 billion in 2022, with an anticipated growth of over 8% by 2026, further demonstrates its vital role in driving economic progress (Global Data, 2022). Notably, the retail sector not only contributes significantly to Malaysia's GDP but also supports employment for approximately 700,000 individuals, accounting for 7% of the total labor force. This highlights its dual importance in fostering economic growth and providing livelihoods. Collectively, these insights reaffirm the retail industry's critical position in the economic landscapes of nations like Malaysia.

2.2 Independent Variables

2.2.1 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance, which refers to people's attempts to keep their personal and professional lives in balance, is a crucial idea in modern culture. The word fosters better engagement and lasting connections by reflecting a planned and sophisticated approach to handling work-life difficulties. Consequently, this results in favourable consequences including increased productivity, increased commitment to work, and better general contentment and health. Nonetheless, many employees find it difficult to strike a healthy balance between their personal and professional obligations in a time of digitalization, quick change, and rising job demands. The growing dependence on technology has changed how people view flexibility, what kinds of work-life balance they seek, and how they experience life. As a result, attaining work-life balance has emerged as a primary career goal for several employees (Barhate & Dirani, 2022).

Work-life balance is the capacity of an individual to divide their time and energy between their personal and professional lives in an equitable manner. It guarantees that employees don't feel overburdened by work commitments and have enough time for hobbies, leisure, and personal development. Work-life balance is a key factor that influences employee commitment, overall job satisfaction, and workplace productivity, contributing positively to the success of the organization (Lestari et al., 2021). Work-life balance describes achieving a suitable balance between an individual's personal and professional lives (Abdullah et al, 2022). Maintaining a healthy work-life balance improves enjoyment, productivity, and both physical and mental health. According to Susanto et al. (2023), work-life balance is greatly influenced by a number of factors, including organisational policy, managerial support, workload, and work flexibility.

The definitions and interpretations of work-life balance vary greatly, as evidenced by extensive scholarly discussions and systematic evaluations. Work-life balance is the achievement of temporal equilibrium between the personal and professional spheres (Forces et al., 2022). Other studies, which concentrate on the balancing and integration of personal and professional lives (Hasan et al., 2020), take a more comprehensive approach.

According to Setiyani et al. (2019), compensation had a significant positive impact on employee engagement, indicating that financial rewards can effectively boost employees' emotional and psychological connection to their work. However, work-life balance was not found to have a significant influence, suggesting that in certain organizational or cultural contexts, monetary factors may be more influential than personal life accommodations in driving engagement.

2.2.2 Leadership

Innovation is vital to organizations, and it is fuelled by motivated employees and strong leadership. Leadership significantly impacts how employees approach and participate in creative activities, which is essential for encouraging innovative work behavior (Javed et al., 2019). The relationship between leadership and innovation includes a range of leadership behaviors and styles that create an atmosphere that encourages experimentation and risk-taking. Successful leaders create a culture that promotes experimentation and creativity, offers the required tools and direction, and establishes a common vision (Mansoor et al., 2021; Erhan et al., 2022). Employees are frequently more inclined to come up with fresh concepts, question accepted wisdom, and actively participate in creative projects when their leaders inspire, encourage, and empower their teams. Furthermore, ethical leadership creates a foundation of honesty and trust that allows employees to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and taking part in innovative projects.

According to Genza, (2021), the process of leadership involves influencing others to achieve a goal and guiding the organisation in a way that strengthens its cohesion and coherence. Leaders must be aware of the strengths and shortcomings of their team members in order to accomplish organizational objectives and improve employee performance. Abdelwahed et al. (2022) assert that businesses need to encourage performance enhancements in their local areas. Human resources are essential to a business's success because they are the engine that propels all phases, from planning to assessment, and they also enable the efficient use of other organizational resources. Iqbal et al. (2021) contend that having top-notch human resources improves a business's performance and competitiveness, highlighting the significance of giving employees the freedom to accomplish organizational goals.

Confucius, the ancient Chinese philosopher, proposed that leaders should act honorably and care for those around them (Silva, 2016). Leaders should carefully evaluate the influence of their words and deeds when directing their teams, units, or organizations (Low & Ang, 2012). The crucial role that leadership plays in an organization's success is highlighted by the fact that leaders must work together with their followers to establish and carry out goals. According to Graham (1997), leadership is the capacity to direct a group of people toward a shared goal that would be impossible without the leader's influence. According to Li et al., (2021), the findings reveal that while abusive supervision reduces work engagement, various positive leadership styles are strongly linked to higher levels of employee engagement. Leadership has an impact on a number of areas, including as strategy planning, performance evaluation, motivation, and training and development.

However, according to a study by Ariussanto et al. (2020), Ariussanto et al. (2020) found that leadership style does not directly affect employee performance, as it requires an intermediary variable to influence outcomes. Their study was performance-focused, but the implications are consistent with engagement research, indicating that without other auxiliary

elements like motivation, trust, or communication, leadership might not be enough to improve engagement. In order to increase employee engagement, it is crucial to look at how leadership behaviors intersect with other factors.

2.2.3 Work Environment

The work environment encompasses the physical, psychological, and social dimensions, each of which uniquely contributes to workplace outcomes. According to Wood et al. (2020), the social work environment promotes employee growth and interpersonal interactions, while the psychological work environment affects employees' emotions and behaviors. When it comes to employee satisfaction and engagement, a healthy work environment is essential. According to Armstrong and Taylor (2020), motivation and performance are increased in a supportive work environment that places a high priority on safety, health, stress management, and productive relationships. On the other hand, toxic workplaces that are marked by bad leadership, discriminatory rules, and strained interpersonal connections can reduce output and fuel burnout. Employees who are unhappy with their work environment may take collective action, such as forming a union, underscoring the significance of a supportive work environment in influencing behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2022).

The work environment and employee engagement are tightly related, and both have a big impact on how well an organization is successful. Employee engagement entails their active mental, emotional, and physical commitment to their work (Indah et al., 2022). According to Kosali (2023), higher employee engagement is associated with better performance, fewer workplace accidents, and higher-quality outputs across industries and geographical areas. Employee engagement results in higher retention and lower turnover because engaged employees are proactive, passionate, and in line with company objectives (Yuswardi &

Chrisjunianti, 2022). Furthermore, as noted by Fakhri et al. (2021), these employees frequently exhibit loyalty to their companies and turn down offers from other employers. This emphasizes how important it is for businesses to foster engagement through a great work environment.

The work environment is the total of all encounters between employers and employees, including in-person and virtual. According to Suprihatin and Sunarsi (2021), it includes all aspects of the organizational space that have an impact on how employees carry out their duties, such as physical facilities, resources, protocols, and cooperative practices. (Trisninawati & Elpanso, 2022). The study confirmed that perceptions of job insecurity have a significant impact on employee engagement, emphasizing the need to create a stable work environment. A supportive and secure work atmosphere can enhance employee engagement and reduce turnover intentions, ensuring the retention of top talent (Jung et al., 2021). A well-planned work environment improves comfort, morale, and productivity, whereas a poorly designed work environment can demotivate employees and reduce performance. A supportive work environment makes employees feel encouraged, appreciated, and empowered to reach their full potential.

However, A research model was presented by Rasoo et al. (2021) to show that a toxic workplace environment has a detrimental direct and indirect impact on employee engagement. According to their findings, this link is mediated by organizational support and employee well-being, suggesting that work environments that are unfriendly or unhealthy might reduce engagement unless they are counteracted by initiatives to improve employee well-being and supportive organizational practices.

2.2.4 Effective communication

Successful change requires effective and continuous communication, which is also essential for fostering change preparedness, lowering opposition to change, and obtaining

individuals' buy-in. Verčič, A. T. (2021) highlights that effective internal communication plays a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement, demonstrating a significant positive relationship between communication satisfaction and higher engagement levels. Effective communication plays a pivotal role in organizations as it ensures that employees clearly understand the tasks assigned to them. Formal and informal sharing of timely, relevant information in an empathic way is referred to as effective communication (Teng et al., 2020). Organisations depend heavily on effective communication since it guarantees that employees comprehend the tasks they are given. Kalogiannidis (2021) emphasises that managers can improve the quality and quantity of their employees' work by communicating task requirements and instructions to them through efficient communication. According to Ahmed et al. (2020), managers who successfully assist staff in completing tasks can greatly improve performance, which in turn raises organizational productivity and profitability. Moreover, clear organizational objectives and the exchange of ideas are ensured by effective communication, which is crucial throughout decision-making processes. Organisations can settle disputes amicably and reach mutually acceptable solutions by politely holding a respectful discourse and candidly addressing opposing views with evidence.

However, employees varied educational backgrounds can cause communication issues. While employees with lower educational backgrounds could need more explanation, employees with higher education levels might find it easier to understand written instructions (Stefania & Spiridnova, 2022). This discrepancy may cause delays in finishing assignments, such as when an employee turns in a report after the deadline, which may impact the work of other team members. Furthermore, knowledge gaps make communication barriers worse since certain employees do not have the information or abilities needed to complete their responsibilities efficiently, which leads to inefficiencies inside the company (Liszniansky, 2021).

Another major issue is language problems, especially in multicultural workplaces like Malaysia where employees mostly speak English or Malay. Employees who are not fluent in these languages may misunderstand or find it difficult to grasp written or spoken instructions, which could result in mistakes and misunderstandings (Habas, 2020). Language ambiguities or translation mistakes can skew the intended meaning, which may lead to disputes or conflicts. To overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and guarantee productive cooperation amongst employees from diverse backgrounds, organizations must place a high priority on developing inclusive and transparent communication procedures.

2.3 Theory and Model of Study

2.3.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory, which contends that interactions between two parties must entail reciprocal interdependence, is regarded as one of the most well-known ideas in relation to workplace behaviour (Meira & Hancer, 2021). In contrast to solely economic trade, Blau (1964) suggests that social exchange theory (SET) is based on the idea that it tends to foster feelings of teamwork among employees regarding their personal responsibilities, trust, and gratitude. Social exchange theory's tenets offer an intellectual basis for elucidating the reasons behind employee' increased or decreased engagement with their jobs. According to SET, employees are likely to show greater degrees of dedication and vigor towards accomplishing organizational goals in return for organizations' time, effort, and resources invested in training and development.

Saks (2006) further emphasises that a strong theoretical foundation for comprehending employee engagement is provided by social exchange theory. According to the notion, a series of exchanges between people in a mutually dependent relationship give rise to obligations. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), a core principle of SET is that relationships grow into mutual commitment, trust, and loyalty over time as long as the parties follow the "rules" of trade. These rules frequently deal with reciprocity, in which the actions of one party cause the other to respond or reciprocate. For example, when employees receive financial and socio-emotional support from their company, they feel obligated to return the favour by engaging in more positive activities. This is in line with Robinson et al. (2004), who define engagement as a reciprocal relationship between an employer and employee.

From the standpoint of social exchange, employees typically respond favourably to the organisation by valuing its investments and support. Morrison (1996) points out that building enduring relationships with employee encourages greater participation in contextual behaviors.

Furthermore, an environment that is encouraging and trustworthy improves employee engagement, allowing employee to make the most of their abilities, resources, and talents in order to provide top-notch services (Leshabari et al., 2008).

2.3.2 Balanced Scorecard Model (BSC)

For studies on the variables influencing employee engagement, the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) approach offers an appropriate model. The Balanced Scorecard Model, which was created by Kaplan and Norton in the early 1990s, is a strategic planning and management tool that businesses use to better communicate internally and externally, align business operations with organizational vision and strategy, and track performance against strategic objectives (Kaplan & Norton, 2005). The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) model highlights key strategic indicators that a company must meet to realize its long-term vision. It focuses on future goals and the continuous improvement of the business (Betto et al., 2022). This model is thorough for evaluating the effects of different factors on employee engagement because it includes both financial and non-financial performance measures. The BSC makes it possible to comprehend how factors like leadership, effective communication, work-life balance, and the workplace environment affect both employee satisfaction and overall organizational performance (Muller, Smith, & Lillah, 2018).

The four independent variables which is work-life balance, leadership, the workplace, and effective communication can be grouped using the Balanced Scorecard into four perspectives, that is learning and growth, internal company operations, customers, and finances. Leadership and effective communication fall under learning and growth and internal company processes, respectively (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). In addition to aiding in the evaluation of employee engagement, this classification helps to match personal objectives with corporate strategy, offering a comprehensive perspective on how enhancing these areas might improve business outcome and employee engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Employee engagement can be studied from multiple angles when the Balanced Scorecard Model is used in research. A balanced approach to examining the impact of the independent variables on engagement levels is encouraged by this thorough framework, which also supports the incorporation of a variety of performance indicators (Gallup, 2013). The Balanced Scorecard Model allows the study to address a broad range of topics and offer a comprehensive understanding of the elements that influence employee engagement at work. For quantitative research, this model is therefore not only appropriate but also reliable, enabling in-depth understanding and practical approach.

2.4 Summary of Chapter 2

The literature review highlights employee engagement as a crucial aspect of organizational success, driven by the emotional, physical, and cognitive connections employees have with their work. Despite its importance, challenges like low engagement rates and employee disengagement persist, emphasizing the need for organizations to adopt effective engagement strategies to retain talent and enhance productivity.

The review examines critical factors influencing engagement, including work-life balance, supportive leadership, positive work environments, and clear communication. Work-life balance fosters well-being, supportive leadership aligns team efforts, a conducive work environment builds loyalty, and clear communication enhances collaboration. These elements collectively improve employee satisfaction and reduce turnover.

Grounded in Social Exchange Theory, the review underscores the reciprocal relationship between employees and organizations. By addressing these factors strategically, businesses, especially in high-turnover sectors like retail, can strengthen engagement, ensuring sustained organizational growth and competitiveness.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The data collection and analysis methods are described in this section, along with the population, sampling strategies, research design, data gathering processes, variable measurement, and data analysis methodology. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the systematic processes undertaken to ensure the study's reliability and validity. The research design establishes the framework for addressing the research objectives, while the sampling techniques ensure a representative sample is selected from the target population. Additionally, the methods for collecting and measuring data are described to ensure clarity and replicability, followed by the data analysis procedures to derive meaningful insights.

3.2 Research Design

This study was guided by a survey research design since it is a suitable method for investigating the elements that affect employee engagement among retail employees in Sri Aman. This design is effective for gathering information from a specific population and quantitatively examining the correlations between variables.

According to Pandey & Pandey (2021), A research design serves as a guide for gathering, measuring, and analyzing data. The survey method was used as it facilitates the collection of standardized data from respondents, making it suitable for comparative analysis.

A quantitative method was taken in this investigation, which is essential for evaluating numerical data and testing hypotheses. Convenience sampling was applied, where respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. This approach allows for the efficient collection of data from individuals who are easily accessible, providing insights into employee engagement within the retail sector while ensuring a timely and practical research process.

3.3 Research instrument

The research instrument for this study is a structured questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data on work-life balance, leadership, work environment, communication, and employee engagement in the retail industry. The questionnaire was designed to align with the study's objectives and was informed by prior research on the relevant variables. It comprised five sections, including demographic information and Likert-scale items addressing the study variables.

The first section collected demographic data, concentrating on the age, gender, race, years of work experience, and educational background of the respondents. In addition to providing contextual information for analyzing the study variables, this section sought to provide a thorough profile of the participants.

The primary study variables which are work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication were covered in the remaining sections. The five Likert-scale items used to test each characteristic ranged from Likert scale ranging from 1. = —strongly disagree, 2. = —disagree, 3. = —neutral, 4. = —agree, and 5. = —strongly agree was employed in this study. This scale ensures a standardized approach to data gathering because it is easy to use and effective at measuring the degree of agreement or disagreement.

Figure 2: Likert Scale Interpretation (adopted from Nyutu et al. 2021)

Point Scale	Mean	Qualitative interpretation	Level of agreement
1	1.00–1.80	Strongly disagree	Very low
2	1.81–2.60	Disagree	Low
3	2.61–3.40	Moderate	Moderate
4	3.41–4.20	Agree	High
5	4.21–5.00	Strongly agree	Very high

3.3.1 Validity and Reliability

In research, validity and reliability are fundamental characteristics of measuring instruments, though they are different concepts. According to Elliott et al. (2020), reliability refers to the capability of a measurement to produce consistent results when applied under similar conditions. Validity refers to the extent to which a test accurately measures what it is intended to measure (Bahariniya et al., 2021). It is derived from the concept of "correctness" and signifies the degree to which the scale achieves its intended purpose. A valid instrument will always be dependable, whereas a reliable instrument might not always be valid. However, validity is not assured by reliability alone. A study will not produce significant results if it is not both valid and reliable. Therefore, this study ensures that the measuring instrument has both validity and reliability, guaranteeing accurate and consistent data collection

An instrument based on accepted ideas and prior research was utilised in this investigation to ensure validity and reliability. Using validated scales from previous research, the questionnaire was created to ensure reliable measurement of important components such work-life balance, leadership, work environment and effective communication. The instrument's validity was further reinforced by recognised measurement instruments and expert feedback.

For reliability, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the instrument is demonstrated by a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70, which indicates that the items within each construct measure the same underlying concept. The survey was conducted within a single company, and although the sample was restricted to this organization, the use of established scales and expert reviews, in conjunction with Cronbach's alpha, ensures that the instrument remains both valid and reliable for this particular context. Convenience sampling was applied to employees working at retail industry Sri Aman, selecting respondents based on their availability and willingness to participate in the

study. This approach allows for the efficient collection of data from employees who are easily accessible, ensuring practical insights into employee engagement within the organization.

3.3.2 Pilot test

A pilot test was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the survey instrument used in this study, which aims to examine the impact of work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and communication on employee engagement in the retail industry. According to Lowe (2019), A pilot study is a preliminary investigation conducted on a smaller scale to evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of the methods intended for use in a larger, more comprehensive research project. The pilot test involved a sample of a minimum 30 employees from the retail industry in Sri Aman, which is considered to be a sufficient number based on recommendations for pilot testing.

The selected employees were chosen using convenience sampling, focusing on individuals who were readily available and willing to participate in the study. This approach allowed for the efficient collection of data while ensuring that the questionnaire was clear, understandable, and relevant to the target respondents.

Feedback from pilot test participants was gathered to find any questions that were unclear or problematic, and changes were made to improve the survey's accuracy and clarity. The pilot test findings will also be used to evaluate the survey instrument's internal consistency, making sure that the items pertaining to each of the variables, which are communication, work-life balance, leadership, and work environment, are trustworthy.

3.4 Research Subject

3.4.1 Research population

The present research study focuses on analyzing the determinants of employee engagement among employees working in the retail industry. The study's population consists of 80 employees employed at the supermarket in Sri Aman, including both operational and support staff. These employees include roles such as cashiers, food preparation workers, baggers, stock clerks, butchers, inventory control specialists, seafood specialists, bakery associates, sales assistants, store maintenance personnel, and other support staff. This approach ensures a comprehensive representation of employees from various functions within the company.

The data for this study was collected on a one-time basis, making it a cross-sectional research design. By focusing on these roles, the study aims to understand the factors influencing employee engagement among workers who directly contribute to the store's daily operations and customer service experience.

This demographic offers a thorough understanding of the variables affecting employee engagement in the retail industry since it comprises a varied range of employees in both operational and support positions.

3.4.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

In research investigations, collecting data from every element of the total population is often impractical due to time, cost, and resource constraints (Karunaratna et al., 2024). To address this, a critical analysis of the sample size determination is required to ensure representative and reliable results. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, which is frequently used to determine a representative sample for a given population size, was used to select the sample size for this investigation. The formula can be written as follows:

$$S = (X^2 NP(1-P)) / (d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P))$$

Where:

- S = required sample size
- X^2 = Chi-square value for a 95% confidence level (3.841)
- N = population size (120 employees)
- P = population proportion assumed to be 0.5 (for maximum variability)
- d^2 = margin of error (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$S = (3.841 \times 80 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5)) / (0.05^2 \times (80-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5))$$

$$S = 76.82 / 1.15775$$

$$S = 66$$

The Krejcie and Morgan calculation indicates that 66 employees out of 80 are needed to create a representative sample for the study. This sample size ensures a sufficient level of precision and reliability in the results, considering the margin of error and the 95% confidence level.

3.4.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

In this study, the sample's demographics include age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of work experience, and educational background. The range or particular ages of the employees are referred to as their age, which aids in the analysis of possible variations in employee engagement among various age groups. Gender is another crucial factor since it can indicate differences in how employees engage with their jobs or view their workplaces. Race and ethnicity are also taken into account in order to investigate whether cultural or ethnic

backgrounds have an impact on workplace dynamics or participation levels. Employees' years of work experience are analyzed to see if engagement and length of service within the organization are related. Finally, educational background is taken into account to assess whether employees' levels of education impact their engagement or perceptions of their roles. These demographic factors provide valuable context for understanding the diversity of the sample and their potential influence on the study's outcomes.

3.5 Research Procedure

The research procedure was carried out systematically to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. The study's goals and assumptions were first precisely established, and then a systematic questionnaire based on previous research was created. A small sample of respondents pre-tested the questionnaire to improve its accuracy and clarity. Convenience sampling was used to distribute the completed survey to employees in the target group who were specifically selected based on relevant characteristics. Employees were instructed on the study's goal and promised confidentiality to promote honest responses. Data were collected over two weeks to ensure a high response rate. Upon completion, the data were checked and encoded for analysis using statistical software.

3.5.1 Data Collection Technique

The data collection for this study employed both primary and secondary data collection techniques to ensure comprehensive and reliable information. According to Taherdoost (2021), primary data is first-hand information that has not been altered by any individual. In other words, researchers employ various methods to gather and obtain primary data tailored to a specific objective. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and experiments are some of the methods that can be used to obtain primary data. For this study, a survey in the form of a structured questionnaire was used to gather primary data from employees at retail industry in Sri Aman. The questionnaire was designed to capture detailed insights on work-life balance, leadership, work environment, communication, and employee engagement.

Secondary data, on the other hand, is information that has already been collected and published by others, often for purposes unrelated to the current study (Karunarathna et al., 2024). Research articles, books, documents, and online resources are examples of secondary data sources. In this study, secondary data was collected from credible sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and online resources. These secondary data sources provided essential background and theoretical support, helping to refine the study's framework and variables, and offering context for the primary data findings. Despite its limitations, secondary data is an invaluable resource when primary data collection is not feasible, as it contributes to the depth and validity of the study's analysis.

3.5.2 Analysis of Data

A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyse the data gathered for this investigation. First, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to code and analyse the data from the completed surveys. The accuracy and validity of research findings are deeply dependent on the thorough analysis of collected data, with SPSS

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) standing as one of the most widely embraced tools in psychological research for this crucial task (Jalolov, 2024).

I. Descriptive analysis:

According to Fadillah and Kusumawati (2021), Descriptive analysis is the process of converting unprocessed data into a form that can be interpreted and understood. The demographic features of the sample, including age, gender, race, work experience, and educational background, were then compiled using descriptive statistics. This data helped put the study's findings in context and provide a thorough picture of the respondents.

II. Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha was computed to ensure the validity of the Likert-scale items included in the survey. The study variables which is work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication, were evaluated using consistently dependable scales.

Cronbach's	Alpha	Internal
Consistency	$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
	$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
	$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
	$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
	$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
	$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha (adopted by Diaz et al., 2023)

III. Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is planned to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables in this study. This analysis will help determine whether the variables are positively or negatively associated, and to what extent. Pearson's correlation will be used to measure the linear relationship between two continuous variables if the data is normally distributed. According to Yang et al. (2021), the Pearson correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to +1, where a value of +1 indicates a perfect positive linear relationship, -1 indicates a perfect negative linear relationship, and values closer to 0 suggest a weaker linear relationship. However, if the data does not meet the assumption of normality, Spearman's correlation will be used instead. Spearman's correlation is a non-parametric test suitable for assessing the direction and strength of monotonic relationships, especially when the data is not normally distributed or when ranked data is involved. Therefore, the decision to apply either Pearson or Spearman correlation depends on the results of the normality test conducted prior to the analysis. Correlation coefficients will be interpreted according to Mukaka (2012), where values between 0.90 and 1.00 (or -0.90 to -1.00) indicate a very high correlation, 0.70 to 0.90 (or -0.70 to -0.90) indicate a high correlation, 0.50 to 0.70 (or -0.50 to -0.70) indicate a strong correlation, 0.30 to 0.50 (or -0.30 to -0.50) suggest a moderate correlation, and 0.00 to 0.30 (or -0.00 to -0.30) represent a weak or insignificant correlation. This classification will be used to interpret the strength of relationships once the appropriate correlation method is selected based on the data distribution.

Correlation Coefficient	Degree of Correlation
.90 to 1.00 (-.90 to -1.00)	Very high positive (negative) correlation
.70 to .90 (-.70 to -.90)	High positive (negative) correlation
.50 to .70 (-.50 to -.90)	Moderate positive (negative) correlation
.30 to .50 (-.30 to -.50)	Low positive (negative) correlation
.00 to .30 (.00 to -.30)	Negligible correlation

Table 3: Degree of Correlation Coefficient, Source from Mukaka (2012)

IV. Multiple Regression Analysis

This analysis was conducted to assess the impact of the independent variables which is work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and communication on the dependent variable, employee engagement. The importance of the entire model was ascertained with the use of the regression analysis, which produced coefficients that showed the relative contributions of each variable. When more than one variable is simultaneously regressed to explain the variance in the dependent variable, multiple regression is employed. The study could determine the extent to which the independent factors accounted for the variance in employee engagement by examining the R² value. Additionally, by examining the F-statistics and its significance level, the multiple regression's outcome can be evaluated.

Ultimately, the findings from the regression and correlation studies were analyzed to derive significant conclusions regarding the connections among the variables under investigation and how they affect employee engagement. Statistically significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) were found to be significant predictors of employee engagement after hypotheses were tested using the correlation and regression coefficients' significance thresholds.

3.6 Data Collection Step

Before proceeding with data collection, permission will be obtained from both the faculty and the company to ensure ethical approval and compliance with organizational policies. Once approval is granted, the Human Resources (HR) department will be contacted to identify suitable respondents who meet the study's criteria. After the respondent selection process, a sample will be generated, and appointments will be arranged to facilitate their participation in the research.

A briefing session will be conducted via a WhatsApp group to ensure that respondents are well-informed about the study. This session will provide an overview of the research objectives, confidentiality measures, and instructions for completing the questionnaire. Following the briefing, the questionnaires will be distributed to the selected respondents, allowing them sufficient time to provide accurate and thoughtful responses. To improve the response rate, timely reminders will be sent to encourage participation and ensure that responses are submitted within the given timeframe.

Upon completion of the survey, an appreciation message will be conveyed to all respondents to acknowledge their time and effort in contributing to the research. This gesture serves as a token of gratitude and reinforces the importance of their participation in providing valuable insights for the study. Their cooperation is instrumental in ensuring the success of the research and enhancing the understanding of the topic under investigation.

3.7 Summary

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to investigate the factors influencing employee engagement in the retail industry. A survey research design, which is appropriate for analyzing the relationships between variables within a particular population, was used in the study. Convenience sampling was used in a quantitative method to select individuals from the target population based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. A structured questionnaire was used as the study tool to gather information on work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication. The survey ensured standardized data collection by measuring respondents' agreement with diverse claims using Likert-scale items.

The research population consisted of 80 employees at supermarket in Sri Aman, including both operational and support staff. A sample size of 66 employees was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, ensuring a representative sample for the study. Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, race, work experience, and education were analyzed to provide context for the study variables. A structured survey was used to gather the data, and respondents were encouraged to be honest by being promised secrecy. To support the research framework, both primary and secondary data were acquired, with the former coming from the survey and the latter from reliable publications.

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data, and SPSS software was used to examine the survey data. The reliability of the survey items was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, and descriptive analysis assisted in summarizing demographic data. Multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the effects of work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication on employee engagement, while Pearson's correlation analysis looked at the links between the variables. The main elements impacting

employee engagement in the retail industry were identified by analyzing the data to identify statistically significant predictors of employee engagement.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from the data analysis conducted using SPSS software. It begins with initial data screening and preliminary assessments. Following that, descriptive statistics related to respondent demographics and key constructs are outlined. The chapter concludes with the presentation of results for the hypotheses tested in this study.

4.2 Pilot test analysis

The table below summarizes the number of items and Cronbach's Alpha values for each construct (33 respondents):

Section	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Work-life Balance	8	0.910
Leadership	8	0.948
Work Environment	8	0.881
Effective Communication	8	0.890
Employee Engagement	8	0.922

Table 4: Pilot Test Cronbach's Alpha Result

Pilot Test Results

A pilot test was conducted using data collected from two supermarkets, which included 33 employees, to assess the reliability of the research instrument. The reliability of each section of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, a statistical tool used to evaluate internal consistency. According to Diaz et al. (2023), Cronbach's Alpha values are interpreted

as follows: $\alpha \geq 0.9$ indicates excellent internal consistency, $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ is considered good, and $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ is deemed acceptable.

All four sections of the questionnaire demonstrated high reliability, with alpha values exceeding the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70. The Work-Life Balance section, which consisted of eight items, reported a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.910, reflecting excellent internal consistency. The Leadership section, also comprising eight items, achieved the highest reliability score of 0.948, indicating excellent internal consistency as well. The Work Environment and Effective Communication sections reported alpha values of 0.881 and 0.890, respectively, both of which fall within the good internal consistency range.

These findings confirm that the items in the questionnaire are consistent and reliable, supporting their use in the full-scale study.

4.3 Actual test analysis (66 respondents)

4.3.1 Analysis, Interpretation, and Discussion of Demographic Characteristics

This study collected data from a sample of 66 out of 80 staff members employed at a supermarket in Sri Aman. The first section of the questionnaire focused on gathering demographic information from the respondents. This included details such as age, gender, employment status, years of work experience, and educational background.

Demographic	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20 years old	0	0
	21 to 30 years old	51	77.3
	31 to 40 years old	10	15.2
	41 to 50 years old	5	7.6
	51 to 60 years old	0	0
	61 years old and above	0	0
Gender	Male	31	47
	Female	35	53
Employment Status	Full-time employee	66	100
	Part-time employee	0	0
Years of Work Experience	Less than 1 year	26	39.4
	2-5 years	35	53
	5-10 years	5	7.6
	More than 10 years	0	0
Educational Background	SRP/PMR	5	7.6
	SPM/SPMV	39	59.1
	Certificate	1	1.5

	Diploma	15	22.7
	Degree	3	4.5
	STPM	2	3
	IGCSE 'O' Level	1	1.5

Table 5: Demographic Information for Actual Test

From Table 5 above, it can be observed that out of 66 respondents, 31 were male (47%) and 35 were female (53%). Although there was a slight majority of female participants, the gender distribution was fairly balanced. This indicates that both genders were adequately represented during the data collection process, helping ensure the findings are inclusive and reflective of perspectives from both male and female employees in the retail industry at Sri Aman.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents were between 21 to 30 years old, accounting for 51 individuals or 77.3% of the sample. This was followed by 10 respondents (15.2%) aged between 31 to 40 years, and 5 respondents (7.6%) between 41 to 50 years old. There were no respondents under 20 or over 50 years of age. The distribution indicates that most participants are young adults and early middle-aged individuals, which aligns with common employment trends in the retail sector. This broad age representation ensures the study captures a relevant range of work experiences and generational viewpoints.

In terms of employment status, every single one of the 66 participants (100%) was employed full-time. The dependability of responses about workplace factors and employee engagement is strengthened by this constant employment type since full-time employees are likely to have had more extensive exposure to the organization's work environment, leadership, communication, and work-life balancing policies.

According to the analysis of respondents' years of work experience, employees with two to five years of experience made up the largest group (35 respondents, or 53%). Those with less than a year of experience came next, making up 26 respondents (39.4%). None of the respondents had more than ten years of job experience, and only 5 (7.6%) said they had five to ten years. According to the statistics, the majority of respondents are still in the early stages of their careers, which could have an impact on how engaged they are and how they view organizational elements. However, a balanced knowledge of employee involvement across career stages is facilitated by the inclusion of varied experience levels.

Educational background was another key demographic explored. The majority of respondents held SPM/SPMV qualifications, comprising 39 individuals (59.1%). This was followed by 15 respondents (22.7%) with a Diploma, 5 (7.6%) with SRP/PMR, and 3 (4.5%) with a degree. Additionally, there were a small number of respondents with STPM (3%), Certificate (1.5%), and IGCSE 'O' Level (1.5%) qualifications. These findings indicate that while most employees have secondary education, a fair portion also possess tertiary-level qualifications, allowing for diverse insights into employee engagement based on educational attainment.

In conclusion, the respondents' demographic profile shows a workforce that is primarily young, full-time, fairly experienced, and has a range of educational backgrounds. The study's conclusions are more credible and generalizable in the context of Sri Arabia's retail business thanks to this varied representation.

4.3.2 Reliability Test

66 respondents

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Number of Items
Work-life balance	.896	8
Leadership	.943	8
Work environment	.885	8
Effective communication	.869	8
Employee engagement	.926	8

Table 6: Reliability Test

A reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha to assess the internal consistency of all the variables in this study. The test involved responses from 66 employees from the selected supermarkets. According to Diaz et al. (2023), a Cronbach's Alpha (α) value is interpreted as follows:

- $\alpha \geq 0.90$ = Excellent
- $0.90 > \alpha \geq 0.80$ = Good
- $0.80 > \alpha \geq 0.70$ = Acceptable
- $0.70 > \alpha \geq 0.60$ = Questionable
- $0.60 > \alpha \geq 0.50$ = Poor
- $\alpha < 0.50$ = Unacceptable

As shown in Table 6, all variables recorded Cronbach's Alpha values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal reliability. The Leadership variable had the highest reliability score at 0.943, classified as excellent. This was followed by Employee

Engagement (0.926), also excellent, Work-Life Balance (0.896), Work Environment (0.885), and Effective Communication (0.869), which all fall under the good category. These results indicate that all items used to measure the respective variables are internally consistent and reliable, making them suitable for further statistical analysis.

4.3.3 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptives		
Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Work-life balance (WLB)	3.27	0.835
Leadership (LD)	3.48	0.922
Work environment (WE)	3.67	0.744
Effective communication (EC)	3.61	0.679
Employee engagement (EE)	3.67	0.765

Table 7: Descriptives Analysis

The data gathered from 66 respondents was analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine its distribution and central tendencies. Work-life balance, leadership, the work environment, and effective communication were all found to have a generally beneficial impact on the overall perception of employee engagement. Employee engagement had the highest mean score ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.765$) of all components, indicating that the majority of respondents were moderately to highly involved at work. The work environment also had a mean score of 3.67 ($SD = 0.744$), which indicates that most employees had a positive opinion of their working conditions. Positive perceptions were also demonstrated by leadership ($M = 3.48$), effective communication ($M = 3.61$), and work-life balance ($M = 3.27$); however, work-life balance received a significantly lower score than the other categories. As is typical in social science research, the data distribution had a slight left skew, as indicated by the slightly negative skewness scores for all variables.

4.3.4 Normality Test

Table 8: Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
WLB	.112	66	.038	.965	66	.057
LD	.134	66	.005	.965	66	.058
WE	.122	66	.015	.945	66	.005
EC	.129	66	.008	.945	66	.006
EE	.136	66	.004	.967	66	.073

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the Shapiro-Wilk normality test results, three variables (Work-Life Balance, Leadership, and Employee Engagement) demonstrated normal distribution ($p > 0.05$), while two variables (Workplace Environment and Effective Communication) showed significant departure from normality ($p < 0.05$).

In this study, the normality test was performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test on 66 respondents. The Shapiro-Wilk test is suitable for samples less than 2000 (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965). The null hypothesis (H_0) states that the population is normally distributed, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) states that the data are not from a normally distributed population. At $\alpha = 0.05$, if $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating non-normal distribution. The results showed Work-Life Balance ($W = 0.965$, $p = 0.057$), Leadership ($W = 0.965$, $p = 0.058$), and Employee Engagement ($W = 0.967$, $p = 0.073$) were normally distributed. However,

Workplace Environment ($W = 0.945$, $p = 0.005$) and Effective Communication ($W = 0.945$, $p = 0.006$) showed non-normal distributions.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used for all correlation analyses due to the diverse distribution patterns. A non-parametric statistic that works with both ordinal and continuous data, Spearman's correlation does not presuppose a normal distribution (Sampaio et al., 2024). Regardless of the underlying data distribution, this method ensures stable correlation results by providing robustness against outliers and skewed distributions, maintaining validity when normalcy assumptions are broken, and guaranteeing consistency across all variable associations.

4.3.5 Correlation Analysis

Correlations

			WLB	LD	WE	EC	EE
Spearman's rho	WLB	Correlation	1.000	.316**	.488**	.313*	.502**
		Coefficient					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.010	.000	.011	.000
		N	66	66	66	66	66
LD	LD	Correlation	.316**	1.000	.704**	.780**	.685**
		Coefficient					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	66	66	66	66	66
WE	WE	Correlation	.488**	.704**	1.000	.775**	.806**
		Coefficient					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	66	66	66	66	66
EC	EC	Correlation	.313*	.780**	.775**	1.000	.752**
		Coefficient					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	66	66	66	66	66
EE	EE	Correlation	.502**	.685**	.806**	.752**	1.000
		Coefficient					
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	66	66	66	66	66

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Correlations Test

The results of the Spearman correlation analysis, as summarized in Table 9, indicate that there are significant positive associations between all four independent variables: work-life balance, leadership, work environment, effective communication, and employee engagement. In each case, the p-value was less than 0.001, which is smaller than the accepted significance level $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, all four alternative hypotheses (Ha1 to Ha4) fail to reject, confirming that each factor is significantly related to employee engagement.

Ha1: There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement.

For Ha1, Table 9 shows a p-value ($p < 0.001$), which is below the significance threshold ($\alpha = 0.05$), with a Spearman's rho value ($r = 0.502$), indicating a moderate positive correlation. This shows a moderate positive relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (Ha1) fails to be rejected. These results confirm a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement.

In support of this hypothesis, the primary goal of the study was to ascertain whether employee engagement and work-life balance are significantly correlated. Hypothesis 1 was confirmed by the results, which showed a moderately positive connection. This is in line with earlier research, such as that of Barhate & Dirani (2022) and Lestari et al. (2021), which highlight that workers are more likely to be engaged when they can successfully balance their personal and professional commitments.

Abdullah et al. (2022) assert that preserving work-life balance is essential for avoiding burnout, fostering emotional health, and raising general productivity. Employees in the retail sector, where erratic schedules and consumer demands are common, are more likely to be committed and satisfied with their jobs if they believe that their personal lives are not interrupted by work obligations.

According to the results, workers in Sri Aman's retail industry place a high value on their free time, and this balance has a direct effect on their readiness to devote both mental and emotional energy to their work. Therefore, in order to increase employee engagement, companies should offer wellness programs, promote time off, and introduce flexible scheduling.

Ha2: There is a significant relationship between leadership and employee engagement.

Regarding Ha2, Table 9 indicates a p-value ($p < 0.001$) and a Spearman's rho value ($r = 0.685$). This reflects a strong positive association between leadership and employee engagement. As the p-value is below the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the alternative hypothesis (Ha2) is fail to reject, indicating that there is a significant positive relationship between leadership and employee engagement.

In support of this hypothesis, the second research question examined whether leadership has a significant relationship with employee engagement. The results demonstrated a strong and positive relationship, thereby supporting Hypothesis 2. This outcome is consistent with research by Javed et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2021), which showed that leadership philosophies, particularly those that emphasize ethical behaviour and empowerment, have a significant impact on how employees view their position and mission within a company.

Engagement requires clarity, direction, motivation, and emotional support, all of which are provided by effective leadership. Team members are more likely to trust and be enthusiastic when their leaders are personable, equitable, and communicative. This is in line with Genza

(2021) and Mansoor et al. (2021), who contend that effective leadership techniques strengthen workers' faith in the organization's objectives and core values in addition to enhancing performance.

Retail employees frequently handle difficult and dynamic customer-facing tasks. A leader can greatly increase motivation and morale by praising their work, offering constructive criticism, and fostering creativity. In order to improve employee engagement at all levels, retail companies in Sri Aman should fund leadership development initiatives that promote empathy, communication abilities, and accountability.

Ha3: There is a significant relationship between work environment and employee engagement.

For Ha3, the results show a p-value ($p < 0.001$) and a Spearman's rho value ($r = 0.806$), indicating a very strong positive relationship between work environment and employee engagement. Since the p-value is smaller than the α -value of 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (Ha3) is fail to be rejected. Therefore, there is a significant positive relationship between work environment and employee engagement.

In support of this hypothesis, the third objective explored the relationship between the work environment and employee engagement. The results revealed that the work environment had the strongest positive impact among all four independent variables, thereby confirming Hypothesis 3. This result is consistent with other studies by Armstrong & Taylor (2020) and Indah et al. (2022), which found that sustaining high levels of employee engagement requires a work environment that is safe, inclusive, and resourceful.

In addition to the physical surroundings, a helpful work environment also includes the social and psychological elements of the workplace. According to Suprihatin & Sunarsi (2021), workers are more inclined to go above and beyond the call of duty when they feel valued, safe,

and have the resources necessary to carry out their responsibilities. This high degree of voluntary effort is an important indicator of engagement.

In retail settings, work environments often include interactions with customers, long hours, and repetitive tasks. Employees feel appreciated and inspired when these factors are combined with a physical workspace that is tidy, well-stocked, and well-maintained, as well as a supportive work environment. This improves productivity, loyalty, and retention. As a result, retail managers ought to routinely evaluate and enhance working conditions through employee participation programs, safety procedures, and feedback systems.

Ha4: There is a significant relationship between effective communication and employee engagement.

Lastly, for Ha4, Table 9 shows a p-value ($p < 0.001$) and a Spearman's rho value ($r = 0.752$). This signifies a strong positive association between effective communication and employee engagement. As the p-value is below the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$), the alternative hypothesis (Ha4) is fail to be rejected, confirming that there is a significant positive relationship between effective communication and employee engagement.

In support of this hypothesis, the fourth research question investigated whether effective communication significantly affects employee engagement. This result supports the findings of Verčič (2021) and Teng et al. (2020), who discovered that open and sympathetic communication inside companies increases engagement and builds trust.

Clear and consistent communication is crucial in the retail industry, since misunderstandings can lead to mistakes, delays, and unhappy customers. Employee confidence and engagement rise when they are aware of expectations, feel heard, and receive timely feedback. According to Kalogiannidis (2021), managers who successfully convey objectives, directives, and gratitude foster an environment of candor and cooperation.

This study also affirms that communication difficulties arising from variations in language proficiency, educational background, or cultural differences can negatively impact employee engagement if not effectively managed (Stefania & Spiridnova, 2022). As a result, it is important for retail organizations to implement inclusive communication practices, provide language assistance when necessary, and foster a workplace culture where all employees feel heard and respected.

The result of the survey is presented in the table below (Hypothesis Test). The degree of correlation is based on the source, Mukaka (2012).

Research Hypotheses	Correlation Analysis Result (Spearman's rho (rs)/p-value(p))	Degree of Correlation	Result
Ha1: There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and employee engagement	rs = 0.502, p = 0.000 (p < 0.05)	Moderate positive correlation	Ha1 fails to reject
Ha2: There is a significant relationship between leadership and employee engagement	rs = 0.685, p = 0.000 (p < 0.05)	Moderate positive correlation	Ha2 fails to reject
Ha3: There is a significant relationship between work environment and employee engagement	rs = 0.806, p = 0.000 (p < 0.05)	High positive correlation	Ha3 fails to reject
Ha4: There is a significant relationship between effective communication and employee engagement	rs = 0.752, p = 0.000 (p < 0.05)	High positive correlation	Ha4 fails to reject

Table 10: Hypothesis Test

4.3.7 Multiple Regression Analysis

Ha5: Dominant Factor and Employee Engagement

Table 11: Model Summary

		Std. Error			Change Statistics				
Mode	R	Adjusted	of the	R Square	F	Sig. F			
1	R	Square	R Square	Estimate	Change	Change	df1	df2	Change
1	.854 ^a	.729	.711	.411	.729	40.984	4	61	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work-life balance, Leadership, Work environment, Effective communication

Table 12: ANOVA^a

		Sum of				
Model		Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.709	4	6.927	40.984	.000 ^b
	Residual	10.311	61	.169		
	Total	38.020	65			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work-life balance, Leadership, Work environment, Effective communication

Table 13: Coefficients^a

		Standardize						
		Unstandardized		d		Collinearity		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		Statistics		
		Std.				Toleranc		
Model		B	Error	Beta	t	Sig.	e	VIF
1	(Constant)	.079	.306		.258	.797		
	Work-life balance	.168	.071	.184	2.380	.020	.745	1.342
	Leadership	.191	.086	.230	2.223	.030	.414	2.413
	Work environment	.360	.117	.350	3.084	.003	.345	2.898
	Effective communication	.293	.125	.260	2.344	.022	.362	2.762

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Table 11 shows that the independent factors (work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication) account for 72.9% of the variance in employee engagement, which is regarded as a high percentage. The R-squared value of 0.729 supports this finding. ANOVA analysis of the data revealed a significant connection at the 0.000 significance level ($p < 0.05$).

Based on table 13, there is a strong association between employee engagement and all four variables. Out of all of them, the work environment had the greatest impact on employee engagement, as it substantially predicted it with $\beta = 0.350$ ($p < 0.05$). Work-life

balance ($\beta = 0.184$, $p < 0.05$), leadership ($\beta = 0.230$, $p < 0.05$), and effective communication ($\beta = 0.260$, $p < 0.05$) come next.

The work environment has the largest beta coefficient when comparing the four components under study, indicating that it has the greatest impact on employee engagement. It may be inferred that these factors account for 72.9% of the variance in employee engagement, with other factors not covered in this study possibly influencing 27.1%. This shows that while work-life balance, leadership, the workplace, and good communication are essential indicators of employee engagement, other aspects could also be crucial.

4.4 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the investigation. The studies that were conducted included multiple regression, Spearman's correlation, descriptive statistics, normality test, and demographic characteristics. SPSS software was used to analyze and tabulate all of the results. The results, conclusions, and suggestions are reported in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the findings related to the factors influencing employee engagement, specifically focusing on work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication among employees in the retail industry at Sri Aman. The discussions are aligned with the research questions and hypotheses outlined in Chapter One. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the theoretical and practical implications of the study, discusses its limitations, and provides recommendations for future research.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study carry several practical and theoretical implications. Practically, retail managers and HR practitioners should prioritize creating positive work environments, enhancing leadership practices, and establishing clear communication channels. These strategies can foster a more engaged and productive workforce, reducing turnover and improving overall organizational performance in the retail sector.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature by applying Social Exchange Theory (SET) to examine employee engagement in the Malaysian retail context. The positive correlations found in this study support SET's assumption that reciprocal relationships between employees and their organizations, such as receiving support through work-life balance or fair communication, encourage greater engagement. Additionally, integrating the Balanced Scorecard Model (BSC) helped classify organizational elements into strategic categories, offering a holistic approach to evaluating employee engagement drivers.

By focusing on retail employees in a rural area, where disengagement and high turnover are prevalent, this study also closes a significant vacuum in the literature on involvement. It

emphasizes how important it is to adapt employee engagement models to certain sectors and geographical areas in order to improve the precision and applicability of applied theories.

Moreover, the statistical findings show that the work environment has the highest influence on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.350$), followed by communication ($\beta = 0.260$), leadership ($\beta = 0.230$), and work-life balance ($\beta = 0.184$), which provides clear strategic focus areas for managers.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Several limitations were encountered during this research. Firstly, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to observe changes in engagement levels over time. A longitudinal study would allow future researchers to track the effects of interventions or changes in organizational practices on employee engagement more comprehensively.

Second, the study only used structured questionnaires and quantitative approaches. Although this method offered standardized data for statistical analysis, it might have missed more profound insights into the real-world experiences of the employees. Qualitative techniques like focus groups and interviews could be used in future studies to delve deeper into employee perspectives. Qualitative techniques like focus groups and interviews could be used in future studies to explore the reasons behind engagement levels more deeply.

Thirdly, the study only included retail employees from Sri Aman. This geographical restriction can limit how broadly the results can be applied to other areas or sectors of the economy. Future research should consider broadening the sample to include workers from various industries or urban areas to better understand the wider applicability of the findings. Future research should consider expanding the sample to include retail employees from urban supermarkets or different industries to provide comparative insights. Last but not least, a larger

and more varied sample could strengthen the conclusions reached, even though the response rate was sufficient.

5.4 Recommendation for Study

Based on the research findings, several targeted and strategic recommendations are proposed to help retail organizations enhance employee engagement. First and foremost, the work environment should be addressed as a top priority, as it emerged as the most dominant factor influencing engagement. Organizations should invest in creating a clean, comfortable, and safe physical workplace while also fostering a positive social environment through teamwork, mutual respect, and employee appreciation. Simple yet impactful changes such as ergonomic furniture, adequate lighting, break areas, and inclusive staff spaces can greatly enhance daily employee experiences.

Second, the organization's communication procedures need to be examined and methodically improved. Clear, timely, and two-way communication is essential within the company. Managers should receive training on how to use consistent message platforms, such as staff briefings, notice boards, and messaging tools, as well as how to listen intently and offer constructive criticism. Employees feel heard and included in organizational decisions when there is open communication, which also helps to prevent misunderstandings and foster trust.

Third, leadership development should be made a core component of organizational strategy. Employee engagement and motivation are directly impacted by retail executives. Therefore, it is advised that businesses put in place leadership development programs that emphasize coaching, emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, and conflict resolution. It is important to urge managers to set a good example, acknowledge staff members' achievements, and foster team growth.

Fourth, work-life balance was a significant predictor of involvement, even though it had the least statistical impact of the four criteria. In order to allow employees to rest and rejuvenate, companies should offer flexible scheduling alternatives, moderate workloads, and time-off rules. Initiatives for wellness, like stress management classes, mental health resources, or collaborations with nearby medical professionals, could also help with work-life balance.

Finally, it is highly advised that companies use the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) method to match strategic company objectives with employee engagement initiatives. Businesses can create quantifiable goals, track their progress, and assess the results of engagement programs by utilizing the four dimensions of BSC which is learning and growth, internal processes, customer, and financial views. This methodical approach guarantees that engagement is viewed as a vital component of long-term business performance rather than as a discrete HR issue.

5.5 Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication on employee engagement among retail employees in Sri Aman. Employee engagement was shown to be primarily influenced by the work environment, with all four hypotheses receiving support. The results imply that raising employee engagement levels can be achieved through improving the work environment, elevating the caliber of leadership, encouraging work-life balance, and cultivating effective communication.

In light of these results, retail managers and decision-makers are encouraged to implement strategies that address these key factors to create a more engaged, motivated, and stable workforce. By doing so, organizations can improve employee satisfaction, reduce turnover rates, and ultimately enhance business performance and sustainability.

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Appendix A: Letter to Organisations

Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia
Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIMAS/NC-16.03/04-13/01 Jld.43 (36)



30 April 2025

Puan Chan Chin Onn
Manager
Doremart
Jalan Resak,
95000 Sri Aman
Sarawak

Puan,

Permohonan Menjalankan Kajian/Soal Selidik Bagi Projek Tahun Akhir

Dengan segala hormatnya perkara di atas dirujuk,

Dengan ini disahkan bahawa pelajar **Joan Chua Zi Ying (84144)** adalah pelajar **Program Pembangunan Sumber Manusia**, Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Beliau sedang menjalankan kajian untuk menyiapkan Projek Tahun Akhir bagi memenuhi syarat bergraduat program tersebut.

Maklumat lanjut tentang pelajar dan kajian adalah seperti berikut:

Tajuk Kajian	: <i>"The Impact of Work-Life Balance, Leadership, Work Environment, And Effective Communication On Employee Engagement: A Study Among Employees In The Retail Industry At Sri Aman"</i>
Penyelia	: Encik Heng Chin Siong
No.Telefon Penyelia	: 082-584508
E-mel Penyelia	: csheng@unimas.my
No.Telefon Pelajar	: 011-10809897
E-mel Pelajar	: 84144@siswa.unimas.my

Sehubungan itu, sukacita kiranya pihak puan dapat memberikan kerjasama kepada pelajar berkenaan untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang diperlukan. Segala maklumat yang diperolehi akan hanya digunakan untuk tujuan akademik semata-mata dan dijamin akan kerahsiaannya.

Di atas kerjasama yang diberikan oleh pihak puan, kami dahului dengan ucapan setinggi-tinggi terima kasih.

Sekian,

Yang benar,


Julia Anak Clifton Akoi@Empadeng
Penyelaras
Program Pembangunan Sumber Manusia

94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, MALAYSIA
Tel + 60 82 581 578

Community Driven University For a Sustainable World

UNIMAS/NC-16.03/04-13/01 Jld.43 (35)

30 April 2025

Puan Mitchelle Kuang
Human Resource Cum Admin
Everwin Centre Sdn. Bhd,
Kampung Stc,
95000 Sri Aman
Sarawak

Puan,

Permohonan Menjalankan Kajian/Soal Selidik Bagi Projek Tahun Akhir

Dengan segala hormatnya perkara di atas dirujuk,

Dengan ini disahkan bahawa pelajar **Joan Chua Zi Ying (84144)** adalah pelajar **Program Pembangunan Sumber Manusia**, Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pembangunan Manusia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). Beliau sedang menjalankan kajian untuk menyiapkan Projek Tahun Akhir bagi memenuhi syarat bergraduasi program tersebut.

Maklumat lanjut tentang pelajar dan kajian adalah seperti berikut:

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Di atas kerjasama yang diberikan oleh pihak puan, kami dahului dengan ucapan setinggi-tinggi terima kasih.

Sekian,

Yang benar,


Julia Anak Clifton Akoi@Empadeng
Penyelaras
Program Pembangunan Sumber Manusia

Appendix B: Questionnaire



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

Research Title

The Impact of Work-Life Balance, Leadership, Work Environment, and Effective Communication on Employee Engagement: A Study Among Employees in the Retail Industry at Sri Aman

Dear Respondents,

I am Joan Chua Zi Ying, a final-year student pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Human Resource Development with Honours at the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development (FCSHD), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). As partial of my degree completion requirement. I am conducting a final year project, The title of my final year project is "The Impact of Work-Life Balance, Leadership, Work Environment, and Effective Communication on Employee Engagement: A Study Among Employees in the Retail Organization at Sri Aman, Sarawak."

This questionnaire is divided into three sections. Section A gathers demographic information of the respondents, while Section B examines four independent variables factors which are work-life balance, leadership, work environment, and effective communication. Lastly, Section C focuses on employee engagement as the dependent variable. Kindly read carefully and respond honestly at each statement according to your experiences.

All responses is strictly confidential and will be used solely for academic purposes. If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please feel free to contact me. Your time and cooperation are greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Yours faithfully:

Joan Chua Zi Ying (84144)

Email address: jchuaziying@gmail.com

Phone number: 011-10809897

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHY

The demographic section of this survey is designed to collect information about your background demographic characteristics. This data is vital for understanding the diversity among participants and for analysing how different groups may respond to or experience various aspects of the study. Please fill in by noting them with a tick (✓) for your answer in the space provided.

1. What is your age group?

- ☐ Below 20 years old
- ☐ 21 to 30 years old
- ☐ 31 to 40 years old
- ☐ 41 to 50 years old
- ☐ 51 to 60 years old
- ☐ 61 years old and above

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What is your current employment status?

- ☐ Full-time employee
- ☐ Part-time employee

4. How many years of work experience do you have in the retail industry?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

5. Level of education

- ☐ SRP/PMR
- ☐ SPM/SPMV
- ☐ Certificate
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Degree
- ☐ Other (Please Specify) : _____

Section B: Factor Affecting Employee Engagement

This section examines Four (4) key workplace factors: Work-Life Balance, Leadership, Work Environment, and Effective Communication. These factors play a crucial role in shaping employee experiences and overall employee engagement.

Please indicate your answer by marking a check (✓) in the space provided, based on the given measurement scale.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

B1. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

NO	STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I struggle to balance my personal life because of work.					
2.	My personal life suffers because of my job.					
3.	I miss important personal activities because of work.					
4.	I come home too tired to enjoy personal time.					
5.	My job makes it hard to have the personal life I want.					
6.	My workload feels too heavy sometimes.					
7.	I often have to work extra hours.					
8.	I wish I could work at a slower pace.					

B2. LEADERSHIP

NO	STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	My leader treats me as an individual with unique needs and abilities.					
2.	My leader talks about the importance of trust among team members.					
3.	My leader acts according to the principles they believe in.					
4.	My leader speaks with confidence about their values.					
5.	My leader is willing to make personal sacrifices for the organization's benefit.					
6.	My leader helps me when I need support to complete my work.					
7.	My leader appreciates me when I meet expectations.					
8.	My leader motivates me to work harder and succeed.					

B3. WORK ENVIRONMENT

NO	STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	My workplace design makes me want to stay and work.					
2.	I have good relationships with my coworkers.					
3.	My relationship with my supervisor is positive.					
4.	Everyone in the workplace is treated equally.					
5.	The work environment helps me finish tasks easily.					
6.	Employees are recognized as important individuals.					
7.	Safety rules are strictly followed in my workplace.					
8.	I have some control over how I work in my job.					

B4. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

NO	STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Communication at my workplace is clear.					
2.	My superior shares important information effectively.					
3.	I am well-informed about the company's activities.					
4.	I feel comfortable sharing my ideas and opinions at work.					
5.	Management encourages employees to share suggestions.					
6.	I often hear company news through formal and informal channels.					
7.	I am always grateful to provide specific details.					
8.	My manager pays attention to my opinions.					

SECTION C: DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Section C focuses on employee engagement. Your responses will help provide valuable insights into these relationships. Please answer each question honestly based on your experiences.

NO	STATEMENT	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I feel very committed to my job.					
2.	Sometimes I get so focused on my work that I forget about time.					
3.	I find my job very interesting and engaging.					
4.	Being part of this organization makes me feel excited.					
5.	I enjoy the activities happening in this organization.					
6.	I feel happy when I get involved in what is going on in this organization.					
7.	I find my work here motivating.					
8.	Being in this organization makes me feel alive.					

Thank you for your cooperation

