



JOB INSECURITY AND INTENTION TO STAY: THE ROLE OF WORK STRESS AND FRIENDSHIP SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study examines the effect of job insecurity on employees' intention to stay through work stress as a mediating variable, and tests the moderating role of friendship support on the relationship between job insecurity and work stress as well as between work stress and intention to stay, among operational employees of a plastic manufacturing company (PT XYZ) in Cirebon Regency.

Methods: This research employs a quantitative approach. Primary data were collected from 177 operational employees determined through purposive sampling and the Yamane formula. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software, covering outer model and inner model evaluation.

Results: The results show that job insecurity has no significant direct effect on intention to stay, but has a significant positive effect on work stress. Work stress has a significant negative effect on intention to stay and fully mediates the effect of job insecurity on intention to stay. Friendship support does not significantly moderate the effect of job insecurity on work stress, but significantly moderates (weakens) the negative effect of work stress on intention to stay. The moderated-mediation effect of friendship support on the overall indirect path is not supported.

Conclusion and suggestion: These findings indicate that work stress is the central psychological mechanism explaining employee retention behavior under conditions of job insecurity, while friendship support functions effectively only as a buffer against work stress that has already emerged, not against the structural threat represented by job insecurity itself. Companies are advised to strengthen contractual transparency and structural certainty, alongside fostering a supportive social climate among coworkers.

INTRODUCTION

Global economic uncertainty in recent years has placed significant pressure on Indonesia's manufacturing sector, as reflected in the widespread phenomenon of layoffs, the non-renewal of employment contracts, and efforts to improve labor efficiency, particularly in labor-intensive industries. Data shows that from January through July 2024, the number of workers laid off in Indonesia reached 42,863, and the manufacturing sector was among the sectors most vulnerable to these impacts (CNBC, 2024). The plastics manufacturing industry is one of the strategic sectors that is highly dependent on the stability of global polymer raw material prices and supply chain efficiency; as a result, uncertain economic conditions are driving companies to make various operational adjustments that have a direct

impact on employees' psychological well-being, one of which is a sense of insecurity regarding job security (Sari & Yanto, 2025).

In the face of a competitive business environment, human resources are a strategic factor for companies in maintaining their organizational competitiveness (Guan & Frenkel, 2018). As a result, companies are required to maintain the quality and sustainability of their workforce, including employees' ability to adapt to changes in the work environment (Manopo et al., 2018). This situation is evident at PT XYZ, a plastics manufacturing company in Cirebon Regency, which still relies on operational employees for its production processes. These employees face high production targets and demands for precision in their work, and some are employed under Fixed-Term Employment Agreements (PKWT), making their job security more vulnerable to uncertainty.

The results of the researcher's initial observations and interviews with operational employees at PT XYZ indicate the presence of work-related stress that triggers perceptions of job insecurity, particularly regarding uncertainty about employment status, contract continuity, and the risk of losing one's job at any time. Job insecurity is understood as the sense of insecurity employees feel regarding the possibility of losing their jobs (Johan et al., 2020). The results of a preliminary survey conducted on April 23, 2026, among 28 operational employees of PT XYZ reinforce this indication, as shown in Table 1. It is important to note that this preliminary survey is utilized solely to identify the initial phenomenon and establish the research problem, rather than to draw definitive conclusions.

Table 1. Results of the Preliminary Job Insecurity Survey (n = 28)

No	Statement	Yes	No
1	I feel that my job is insecure	9	19
2	I'm worried about losing my job	21	7
3	I have doubts about the continuation of my employment contract	20	8

Source: Preliminary Survey Results (2026)

Preliminary survey results indicate that the majority of employees are concerned about losing their jobs and are uncertain about the continuity of their employment contracts. According to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, threats to key resources such as employment cause individuals to experience psychological pressure in the form of work stress (Hobfoll, 1989), which, in turn, has the potential to reduce employees' intention to stay with the organization. On the other hand, social support from coworkers—or "friendship support"—is believed to serve as an additional resource that can help employees cope with such work-related stress (Bekiros et al., 2022).

Previous research on job insecurity has largely focused on its effects on turnover intention, burnout, and work stress separately (Ghani et al., 2022; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018). Meanwhile, research on friendship support generally views social support solely as a factor that reduces work-related stress or enhances psychological well-being (Bekiros et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024). Research that integrates job insecurity, work stress, friendship support, and intention to stay into a single model—particularly in the plastics manufacturing sector—remains scarce. The novelty of this study lies in testing the role of friendship support as a moderating variable in the relationship between job insecurity and work stress, while simultaneously testing work stress as a mediating variable between job insecurity and intention to stay within a single structural model.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the effect of job insecurity on intention to stay through work stress, as well as to examine the role of friendship support as a moderating variable among operational employees in the plastic manufacturing industry in Cirebon Regency. The results of this study are expected to provide a theoretical

contribution to the development of Conservation of Resources Theory, as well as a practical contribution to management in designing more targeted employee retention strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

This research is based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory put forward by (Hobfoll, 1989). This theory explains that individuals strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster resources that they value, such as job conditions and psychological energy. The threat of resource loss, such as job uncertainty, if not balanced with adequate replacement resources, will trigger a negative energy depletion process in the form of psychological strain which will lead to defensive individual behaviors. In the context of this research, *job insecurity* is positioned as the primary threat to resources faced by plastic manufacturing employees, *work stress* represents the psychological strain or tension that arises due to this threat, while *intention to stay* is a defensive outcome influenced by the strain process. Furthermore, *friendship support* acts as an additional social resource (*resource replenishment*) intended to buffer the negative impacts. The COR framework provides a conceptual basis that the relationship between the threat of job loss and employee retention is not always direct, but can be mediated by psychological conditions such as work stress and moderated by social resources, as tested in this research model.

Job Insecurity

Job insecurity is the sense of insecurity experienced by employees regarding the possibility of losing their jobs (Johan et al., 2020). This phenomenon arises when individuals worry about losing their jobs or losing important aspects of their work, even though the organization has not explicitly announced any layoffs (Fitri et al., 2025). Job insecurity is not merely a temporary condition but rather a psychological stress that can persist for a certain period and continuously affect work performance (Debus et al., 2020). The indicators of job insecurity in this study, based on Johan et al (2020), include insecurity regarding job retention (job loss insecurity), insecurity regarding job features (job feature insecurity), powerlessness, and persistent job-related worry.

Work Stress

Work-related stress is understood as a state of psychological tension that arises from an imbalance between the demands of the work environment and an individual's capabilities and resources. In a professional context, stress is an adaptive response—involving both physiological and psychological aspects—to organizational stimuli that are perceived as stressful or threatening (Ghani et al., 2022). According to COR Theory, stress occurs when an individual feels threatened with the loss of valuable resources or fails to recover resources after investing significant effort and time (Hobfoll, 1989). Work stress is measured through physiological, psychological, and behavioral dimensions (Ghani et al., 2022).

Friendship Support

Friendship support is a form of social support in the workplace that stems from informal and voluntary interpersonal relationships among coworkers; it includes emotional support, information, and instrumental assistance that help individuals cope with job demands (Lee et al., 2024). Within the framework of COR Theory, *friendship support* is viewed as an external asset that individuals can use to replenish or restore mental resources depleted by work stress Hobfoll (1989), thereby serving as a buffer that reduces the impact of stress caused by work pressure (Bekiros et al., 2022). Indicators of friendship support This involves psychological support, the provision of information, and practical assistance (Lee et al., 2024).

Intention to Stay

Intention to stay refers to an employee's intention to continue working within an organization for a certain period of time Kyndt et al (2009), as demonstrated by the employee's willingness to remain committed and stay with the organization in the long term despite job offers from other places (Kemie et al., 2023). Intention to stay is often viewed as the opposite of turnover intention; thus, a high intention to stay reflects a low tendency for employees to leave the organization. This variable is measured unidimensionally through indicators that reflect employees' desire to continue working, achieve job satisfaction, and envision a future within the company (Kyndt et al., 2009).

HYPOTHESIS

Job Insecurity and Intention to Stay

When employees feel insecure about their jobs, anxiety arises that leads to a decline in organizational commitment. According to COR Theory, threats to key resources such as one's job prompt individuals to protect themselves, one way being by reducing their commitment to the organization (Ghani et al., 2022; Hobfoll, 1989; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018).

H1: *Job insecurity is hypothesized to have a negative effect on intention to stay.*

Job Insecurity and Work Stress

Job insecurity can be a source of work stress because individuals feel threatened by the possibility of losing their jobs or their career prospects. Threats to one's livelihood trigger a stress response as a psychological reaction to uncertainty (Hobfoll, 1989; Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018).

H2: *Job insecurity is hypothesized to have a positive effect on work stress.*

Work Stress and Intention to Stay

Prolonged work stress can drain employees' energy and emotional stability, thereby reducing their commitment to the organization. High work stress has a negative impact on employees' psychological well-being and professionalism (Ghani et al., 2022).

H3: *Work stress is hypothesized to have a negative effect on intention to stay.*

The Mediating Role of Work Stress

Job insecurity is not thought to directly reduce the intention to stay, but rather first increases work stress, which then leads to a decrease in the *intention to stay*—in line with the COR Theory, which states that threats to resources trigger stress, which in turn influences individual behavior (Hobfoll, 1989; Resmiati & Agustian, 2025).

H4: *Work stress is hypothesized to mediate the effect of job insecurity on the intention to stay.*

The Moderating Role of Friendship Support on the Job Insecurity–Work Stress Relationship

From the perspective of COR Theory, social support functions as an additional resource that can reduce the negative impact of stressors. With *friendship support*, employees have emotional support that can weaken the effect of job insecurity on *work stress* (Bekiros et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024).

H5: *Friendship support is hypothesized to moderate the effect of job insecurity on work stress.*

The Moderating Role of Friendship Support on Work Stress–Intention to Stay

From the perspective of COR Theory, *friendship support* acts as a mechanism for resource replenishment. When work stress depletes employees' psychological energy reserves, the presence of emotional support from coworkers replenishes affective resources, thereby preventing total mental exhaustion. Thus, Support from friends is very helpful in reducing work-related stress, which often makes people consider quitting their jobs (Halbesleben, 2006; Hobfoll, 2001)

H6: *Friendship support is hypothesized to moderate the effect of work stress on intention to stay.*

The Role of Friendship Support in Moderating the Mediating Effect of Job Insecurity on Intention to Stay via Work Stress

Within the integrative framework of COR Theory, the tangible threat of job insecurity triggers a resource loss spiral transmitted through *work stress*, ultimately leading to a decline in intention to stay. The presence of friendship support as a secondary resource reserve is assumed to be able to intervene in this loss spiral; thus, the presence of this support will conditionally weaken the strength of the indirect relationship from the upstream to the downstream components of the research model (Chen et al., 2020; Hobfoll, 2001)

H7: *Friendship support is hypothesized to moderate the indirect effect of job insecurity on intention to stay via work stress.*

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study depicts job uncertainty (X) as the primary predictor (independent variable), with job stress (M) serving as the mediating variable, and treating friendship support (Z) as a moderator of intention to stay (Y), which serves as the dependent variable. The relationships among the variables are illustrated in

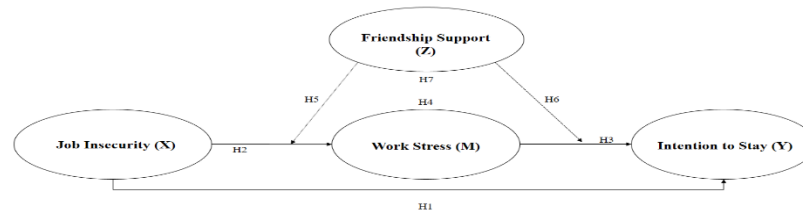


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Source : Data processed by the researcher (2026)

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach using explanatory methods to examine the causal relationships among the variables of *job insecurity*, *work stress*, *friendship support*, and *intention to stay*. Primary data were collected via a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) distributed to operational employees of PT XYZ, a plastic manufacturing company in Cirebon Regency, West Java, in 2026.

The study population consisted of PT XYZ's operational employees directly involved in production activities. Based on data from the West Java Provincial Central Statistics Agency regarding Statistics on Large and Medium-Sized Industries, the specific number of operational workers for the 5 companies in the rubber and plastics industry group (KBLI 22) in Cirebon Regency was not explicitly available. Therefore, a proportional estimation approach was methodologically necessary. By calculating the average number of production workers per company across all 447 large and medium-sized industries in the regency (totaling 28,341 workers) and applying this average to the 5 companies in the KBLI 22 sector, the operational employee population was estimated at 317 people. The sample size was determined using the Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error, resulting in a sample size of 177 respondents. The sampling technique employed non-probability sampling using a purposive sampling approach, with the following respondent criteria: (1) operational employees in the plastic manufacturing industry in Cirebon Regency, (2) directly involved in the production process, (3) either permanent or contract employees, (4) with a minimum of one year of service, and (5) willing to complete the questionnaire in full. This sample size exceeded the minimum number recommended by Hair, Jr. et al (2022) for PLS-SEM analysis, which is 145 respondents based on 29 research indicators.

The *job insecurity* variable (X) was measured using 12 indicators adapted from Johan et al (2020); *work stress* (M) was measured using 7 indicators adapted from Ghani et al (2022), *friendship support* (Z) using 4 indicators adapted from Lee et al (2024), and *intention to stay* (Y) using 8 indicators adapted from (Kyndt et al., 2009). All instruments were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of SmartPLS 4.0 software. PLS-SEM was chosen because it is capable of testing complex models that simultaneously include direct, mediating, and moderating relationships, and remains effective for relatively small sample sizes without requiring a normal data distribution (Hair, Jr. et al., 2022). The first step in model evaluation is testing the measurement model, or outer model. This analysis is conducted to ensure that convergent validity is met (as indicated by factor loadings > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50), as well as to ensure the reliability of the instrument through reliability testing (using criteria of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability > 0.70), as well as analysis of the inner model (structural model) through the R-squared value, significance testing of path coefficients using the

bootstrapping procedure, and hypothesis testing with criteria of a t-statistic value > 1.96 and a p-value < 0.05 at a 5% significance level.

Mediation testing was conducted by calculating the indirect effect—defined as the product of the path coefficients from $X \rightarrow M$ and $M \rightarrow Y$ —with full mediation classified as occurring when the indirect effect is significant but the direct effect is not, and partial mediation classified as occurring when both are significant (Hair, Jr. et al., 2022). Moderation testing was conducted using the interaction term between the moderator variable and the independent variable, with the direction of moderation determined by the value of the path coefficient for that interaction term.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The research data were collected from 177 operational employees of PT XYZ. The characteristics of the respondents based on gender, age, highest level of education, and length of service are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Group	Amount	Percentage
Gender	Man	125	70,8%
	Women	52	29,2%
Age	<20 Year	10	5,65%
	20–30 Years	105	59,32%
	31–40 Years	62	35,03%
Last Education	SMP	6	3,33%
	SMA/SMK	90	50,85%
	Diploma	23	12,99%
	Bachelor	58	32,77%
Working Time	1 Year	52	29,38%
	1–3 Years	69	38,98%
	4–6 Years	37	20,90%
	> 6 Years	19	10,74%

Source: Processed Primary Data (2026)

The majority of respondents were male (70.8%), in the early working-age range of 20–30 years (59.32%), had a high school or vocational high school education (50.85%), and had less than three years of work experience (68.36%). This composition reflects the labor force structure of the labor-intensive manufacturing industry, which relies on young workers with a secondary education, while also indicating a high proportion of employees on fixed-term contracts (PKWT)—a factor relevant to the issue of job insecurity under study.

Outer Model Evaluation

The convergent validity test showed that all indicators had outer loadings above 0.70, except for indicators WS1 (0.694) and FS2 (0.619), which were retained because they did not cause the AVE and composite reliability values for the related constructs to fail to meet the minimum standards (Hair, Jr. et al., 2022). Referring to Table 3, the evaluation of discriminant validity using cross-loading values indicates that all indicators have clustered appropriately, with the loading values for the underlying construct proving to be greater than those for the other constructs; therefore, the model is deemed free from discriminant validity constraints.

Table 3. Outer Loading and Cross Loading Values

Indicators	Job Insecurity	Work Stress	Friendship Support	Intention to Stay
JI2	0,846	0,440	0,015	0,020
JI3	0,878	0,472	-0,040	-0,045
JI4	0,864	0,442	0,005	-0,090
JI5	0,840	0,360	-0,113	-0,175
JI6	0,835	0,434	-0,069	-0,145
JI7	0,823	0,338	-0,086	-0,099
JI8	0,836	0,465	-0,072	0,003
JI9	0,797	0,345	-0,136	-0,210
JI10	0,817	0,439	-0,082	-0,140
WS1	0,340	0,694	-0,081	-0,081
WS2	0,427	0,839	-0,123	-0,247
WS3	0,364	0,781	-0,130	-0,156
WS4	0,405	0,835	-0,182	-0,158
WS5	0,435	0,774	-0,200	-0,268
WS7	0,390	0,762	-0,207	-0,212
WS8	0,352	0,764	-0,174	-0,318
FS2	0,045	-0,154	0,619	0,362
FS3	-0,059	-0,139	0,712	0,422
FS5	-0,099	-0,178	0,790	0,477
FS6	-0,084	-0,116	0,736	0,389
ITS1	-0,099	-0,159	0,468	0,720
ITS2	-0,138	-0,188	0,556	0,727
ITS3	-0,155	-0,142	0,386	0,703
ITS4	-0,169	-0,273	0,483	0,772
ITS5	-0,001	-0,251	0,362	0,776
ITS6	0,005	-0,227	0,397	0,759
ITS7	-0,048	-0,160	0,376	0,732
ITS8	-0,011	-0,207	0,300	0,708

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026)

The results of the reliability and convergent validity tests, based on AVE, Cronbach's Alpha, and composite reliability, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. AVE, Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability Values

Variable	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Job Insecurity (X)	0,702	0,947	0,949
Work Stress (M)	0,608	0,892	0,899
Friendship Support (Z)	0,514	0,682	0,693
Intention to Stay (Y)	0,544	0,881	0,887

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026)

All constructs had an AVE value above 0.50, thus meeting the criteria for convergent validity. The Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for the variables *Job Insecurity*, *Work Stress*, and *Intention to Stay* were above 0.70. The Friendship Support variable recorded values of 0.682 and 0.693, which, although slightly below 0.70, are still considered acceptable for exploratory research within the 0.60–0.70 range Hair, Jr. et al (2022); thus, all constructs are deemed reliable.

Inner Model Evaluation and Hypothesis Testing

The R-squared value is used to assess the strength of the structural model in explaining the dependent variable, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. R-Square Value

Variable	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Work Stress (M)	0,282	0,270
Intention to Stay (Y)	0,396	0,382

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026)

The R-squared value for the Work Stress variable, at 0.282, indicates that job insecurity and its interaction with friendship support account for 28.2% of the variation in work stress, which falls into the weak-to-moderate category. Based on the results of the coefficient of determination R-squared test, the “Intention to Stay” variable yielded a value of 0.396. This indicates that 39.6% of the variance or variation in employees’ intention to stay can be explained simultaneously by the variables of job uncertainty, job stress, and social support within this research model. Meanwhile, the remaining percentage 60.4% is explained by other factors or variables outside the scope of this study’s model (Hair, Jr. et al., 2022) .

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure with a t-statistic criterion of > 1.96 and a p-value criterion of < 0.05 . The results of the tests for the seven research hypotheses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Hypotesis Testing Result

Hypothesis	Track	Coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Information
H1	JI $\rightarrow$ ITS	0,032	0,503	0,615	Not Supported
H2	JI $\rightarrow$ WS	0,478	7,510	0,000	Supported
H3	WS $\rightarrow$ ITS	-0,159	2,050	0,040	Supported
H4	JI $\rightarrow$ WS $\rightarrow$ ITS	-0,076	2,064	0,039	Supported
H5	FS $\times$ JI $\rightarrow$ WS	0,061	0,904	0,366	Not Supported
H6	FS $\times$ WS $\rightarrow$ ITS	-0,200	3,302	0,001	Supported
H7	FS $\times$ JI $\rightarrow$ WS $\rightarrow$ ITS	-0,010	0,734	0,463	Not Supported

Source: Data processed using SmartPLS 4.0 (2026)

The test results show that of the three direct effect paths tested, two were found to be significant. The effect of *job insecurity* on *work stress* (H2) was found to be positive and highly significant ($t = 7.510$; $p = 0.000$), while the effect of *work stress* on *intention to stay* (H3) was found to be negative and significant ($t = 2.050$; $p = 0.040$). Conversely, the direct effect of *job insecurity* on *intention to stay* (H1) was not significant ($p = 0.615$), so H1 is not supported by the data.

In the test of indirect effects (H4), work stress was found to significantly mediate the effect of *job insecurity* on *intention to stay* ($t = 2.064$; $p = 0.039$). Since the indirect effect was significant while the direct effect (H1) was not, *work stress* acts as a full mediator in the relationship between *job insecurity* and *intention to stay*.

In the moderation effect test, *friendship support* was not found to moderate the effect of *job insecurity* on *work stress* (H5: $p = 0.366$), but was found to significantly moderate the effect of *work stress* on *intention to stay* (H6: $t = 3.302$; $p = 0.001$) with a negative coefficient, indicating that friendship support weakens the negative impact of *work stress* on *intention to stay*. Meanwhile, the test of the simultaneously moderated mediation effect (H7) was not significant ($p = 0.463$), so *friendship support* was not found to moderate the overall indirect path from *job insecurity* to *intention to stay* via *work stress*.

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Job Insecurity on the Intention to Stay

Job insecurity was not found to have a direct effect on the intention to stay among operational employees at PT XYZ. This finding indicates that concerns about employment contract status do not necessarily trigger employees' desire to leave the organization. This situation is likely influenced by the limited availability of alternative formal manufacturing jobs in Cirebon Regency that can provide income security, leading employees to tend to retain their jobs even when they feel insecure. These results are consistent with findings that the relationship between *job insecurity* and *intention to stay* is often not direct but rather operates through other psychological mechanisms such as work-related stress (Jiang & Lavaysse, 2018).

The Effect of Job Insecurity on Work Stress

Job insecurity has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on work-related stress, meaning that the higher the level of *job insecurity* perceived by employees, the higher their level of work stress. This finding supports the COR Theory, which states that threats to primary resources such as employment trigger a stress response as a psychological reaction to uncertainty (Hobfoll, 1989), and in line with the findings of previous research from Ghani et al (2022); Jiang & Lavaysse (2018), who confirm that job insecurity is a major determinant of work stress across various industrial sectors.

The Effect of Work Stress on the Intention to Stay

Empirically, work-related stress has been shown to have a significant negative impact on employees' intention to remain at their jobs. This finding implies that when the intensity of stress caused by operational workload spikes to near the threshold of maximum exhaustion, employees tend to withdraw their commitment to the organization. These results are consistent with the COR Theory's perspective that individuals strive to preserve their psychological resources; thus, prolonged work stress leads to defensive behavior in the form of a decrease in intention to stay (Ghani et al., 2022).

The Role of Mediation in Work-Related Stress

Work stress was found to fully mediate the effect of *job insecurity* on the *intention to stay*. It can be interpreted that job insecurity does not have a significant direct effect on a decline in employees' intention to stay; rather, it must first accumulate as work stress before leading to a decrease in commitment. This finding reinforces the view that *work stress* serves as the primary transmission mechanism linking structural threats (*job insecurity*) to actual employee behavior Resmiati & Agustian (2025), and is consistent with the stressor-strain-outcome model widely used in the organizational behavior literature.

The Role of Moderation in Friendship Support

The research findings reveal a pattern of selective moderation. Friendship support was not found to moderate the effect of *job insecurity* on *work stress*, indicating that social support from coworkers lacks the instrumental capacity to mitigate structural threats such as contract status uncertainty, since coworkers generally occupy the same hierarchical position and lack the authority to change company policy. This condition can be explained through the resource-matching principle an extension of COR Theory (Hobfoll, 2001) which asserts that to counteract the loss of a resource, individuals require a substitute resource that is relevant and comparable in nature. Structural stressors such as job insecurity require instrumental-bureaucratic resources (e.g., contractual clarity and managerial transparency), making social-emotional support such as friendship support less relevant for mitigating these stressors.

Conversely, *friendship support* was found to significantly moderate (weaken) the negative effect of *work stress* on *intention to stay*. These findings suggest that when employees experience high levels of work stress, the presence of social support from coworkers can prevent a decline in their intention to stay. This is consistent with the function of *friendship support* as a resource replenishment mechanism that helps individuals restore their psychological capacity depleted by daily work pressures Hobfoll (1989), and aligns with the findings of Lee et al (2024) that social support from coworkers acts as an effective buffer against the consequences of workplace stress.

In the analysis of the simultaneously moderated mediation model, *friendship support* was not found to moderate the overall indirect path from *job insecurity* to *intention to stay* via *work stress*. This result is a logical consequence of the insignificant moderating role of friendship support in the initial stage (*job insecurity–work stress*); thus, this variable loses its leverage to influence the overall model pathway, even though it effectively mitigates the impact of work stress in the final stage.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study analyzes the effect of job insecurity on intention to stay through work stress, with friendship support as a moderating variable, among operational employees in the plastic manufacturing industry in Cirebon Regency. The results show that job insecurity does not have a direct effect on intention to stay but has a significant positive effect on work stress. Work stress was found to have a significant negative effect on the intention to stay and acted as a full mediator in the relationship between job insecurity and the intention to stay. Friendship support was not found to moderate the effect of job insecurity on work stress, but it was found to significantly moderate (weaken) the negative effect of work stress on the intention to stay, although it was not found to simultaneously moderate the entire mediation model.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the validity of the Conservation of Resources Theory by demonstrating the resource-matching principle—according to which social-emotional support is effective only in mitigating stressors of a similar nature—and validate the role of work-related stress as a full mediator in the chain of influence from job insecurity to employees' intention to stay. In practical terms, company management is advised not only to rely on a harmonious and family-like work climate as a retention strategy but also to implement concrete institutional improvements, such as increasing the transparency of the evaluation system and contract renewals, ensuring that operational workloads align with occupational safety and health standards, and fostering a supportive social climate among employees to maintain psychological stability and work commitment.

Future research is recommended to examine more formal and structural moderating variables, such as Perceived Organizational Support or Leader-Member Exchange, to assess their effectiveness in mitigating the impact of job insecurity on work stress. In addition, future research could expand its scope to include other regions and sectors of the manufacturing industry to test the consistency of the findings regarding retention patterns among contract employees under conditions of job insecurity.

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