

The Role of Professional Commitment in Mediating the Influence of Job Autonomy on Employee Job Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the effect of job autonomy on professional commitment, the effect of job autonomy on job engagement, the effect of professional commitment on job engagement, and the mediating role of professional commitment in the effect of job autonomy on the job engagement of employees at the Class II Harbormaster and Port Authority Office (KSOP) of Jayapura. The research employed an explanatory design with a quantitative approach grounded in the Job Demands–Resources model. The population, which also served as the sample, comprised all 67 civil servants, selected through a census (saturated sampling) technique. Data were collected through a 1–5 Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS. The results show that job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on professional commitment (path 0.915; p 0.000); job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on job engagement (path 0.769; p 0.000); professional commitment has a positive and significant effect on job engagement (path 0.231; p 0.000); and job autonomy has a positive and significant effect on job engagement through the mediation of professional commitment (path 0.210; p 0.000), categorized as moderate mediation (upsilon v = 0.0447). The model demonstrates relevant predictive value (Q^2 = 0.9943). These findings confirm that increasing job autonomy as a job resource should be directed toward strengthening professional commitment in order to enhance employee job engagement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are a crucial determinant of organizational success, as there exists a close relationship between individual performance and organizational performance. Notoatmodjo (2009) asserts that humans, as components of an organization, are the decisive resource for achieving the

vision and mission of the organization and thus must be effectively managed. The Class II Jayapura Harbor Master's Office and Port Authority (KSOP), as a Technical Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Transportation tasked with overseeing maritime safety and security, has shown employee performance achievements for the

period of January–April 2024 with an average of 46.44% and an average timeliness of reporting of 8.55%—both of which are considered satisfactory. However, these achievements still need improvement as some employees fall below the standard. To perform optimally and maintain this level of performance, employees need to have high job engagement.

Job engagement depicts the psychological involvement of employees in their work, characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and immersion in fulfilling their roles. [1] states that job engagement demands active involvement beyond the organization's minimum requirements, while [2] explain that job engagement represents a positive situation that benefits the organization, such as increased productivity. Thus, job engagement becomes the key linking individual efforts to organizational performance achievement.

One job resource that can enhance job engagement is job autonomy. [3] found that job engagement can be enhanced through increasing job resources like social support, job autonomy, learning opportunities, and feedback. Job autonomy describes the level of independence employees have in making work-related decisions [4]. However, the influence of job autonomy on job engagement has not been consistently supported in empirical findings. [5], [6], and [7] found significant effects, while some other studies did not. This inconsistency suggests that job autonomy does not always directly increase job engagement, necessitating a mediating variable to explain the mechanism of this relationship.

Professional commitment is positioned as a mediating variable due to its close association with employee engagement. [8] state that individuals with high professional commitment are more focused on public interests, while [9] and [10] found a significant impact of commitment on job engagement. Job autonomy, which provides freedom in organizing work, is believed to strengthen professional commitment, subsequently leading to increased job engagement. Based on these phenomena and

research gaps, this study aims to elucidate: (1) the influence of job autonomy on professional commitment; (2) the influence of job autonomy on job engagement; (3) the influence of professional commitment on job engagement; and (4) the influence of job autonomy on job engagement through the mediation of professional commitment at the Class II Jayapura KSOP.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Job Demands–Resources Model

This study is grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which posits that every job characteristic can be categorized as job demands or job resources, each triggering distinct psychological processes [11], [12]. Job resources - physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects that facilitate goal achievement and foster growth - initiate motivational processes leading to job engagement [11]. Job autonomy is a key job resource; providing freedom to organize work has been shown to enhance work engagement across various contexts, including the public sector [13], [14], [15].

The psychological mechanisms underlying the influence of autonomy are elucidated by Self-Determination Theory, which posits that meeting basic needs for autonomy fosters internalized motivation supporting engagement and commitment [16]. Within this framework, job engagement is understood as a positive psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work [11], with job autonomy positioned as a resource that triggers it, either

directly or through reinforcing professional commitment.

2.2 Job Engagement

Job engagement describes employees' psychological involvement characterized by vigor and dedication in role performance. [1] states that job engagement demands active involvement beyond organizational minimum requirements, while [2] emphasize the positive situation's benefits, such as increased productivity. As a motivational outcome in the JD-R model, job engagement serves as a link between job resources and organizational performance [11], [14]. In this study, job engagement is measured through three indicators: intellectual engagement, affective engagement, and social engagement [17].

2.3 Job Autonomy and Hypotheses Development (H1, H2)

Job autonomy reflects the level of freedom employees have in scheduling work and determining their own work procedures [18], [19]. As a job resource, job autonomy is assumed to strengthen professional commitment: employees with high autonomy exhibit greater willingness and motivation to develop their work [19]. [12] demonstrate that resource-based job autonomy contributes to the growth of other resources such as engagement and commitment, while [16] explain that autonomy fulfills psychological needs for autonomy fostering internalized motivation. Based on this:

H1. Job autonomy has a positive and significant impact on professional commitment.

Job autonomy is also a direct predictor of job engagement. Consistent with the JD-R model, autonomy as a job resource triggers motivational processes enhancing engagement [11], [12], [14]. Findings by [20], [7], and [13] in public sector contexts support this relationship. Therefore:

H2. Job autonomy has a positive and significant impact on job engagement.

2.4 Professional Commitment, Mediation, and Hypotheses Development (H3, H4)

Professional commitment entails accepting professional goals and values, exerting effort on behalf of the profession, and desiring to maintain membership in the profession [21]. This variable is measured through three indicators: affective, continuance, and normative professional commitment [21]. [8] state that individuals with high professional commitment focus more on common interests, while [9], [10], and [22] find a significant relationship between commitment and work engagement. Thus:

H3. Professional commitment has a positive and significant impact on job engagement.

Integrating the three pathways in the JD-R framework, job autonomy as a resource is assumed to enhance job engagement not only directly but also through strengthening professional commitment as an intermediary mechanism. Given that some studies find inconsistent direct effects of job autonomy on job engagement, the mediation of professional commitment explains how job

resources are translated into engagement. Therefore:

H4. Job autonomy influences job engagement through

professional commitment as a mediating variable.

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

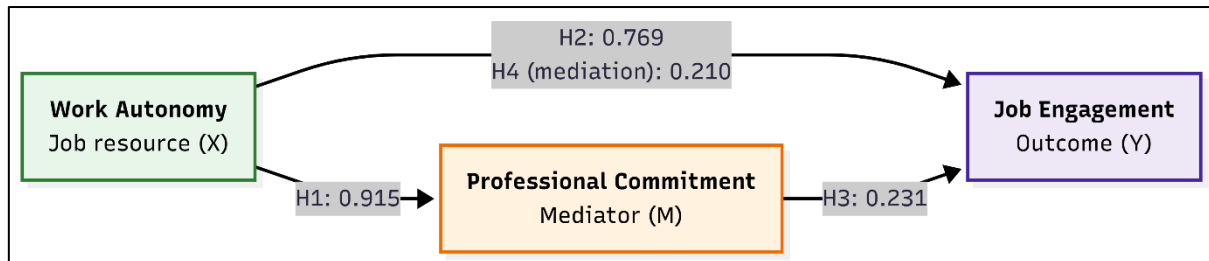


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

3. METHODS

This study employs an explanatory pattern with a quantitative approach, aiming to depict the causal relationship between two or more variables.

3.1 Population and Sample

The population consists of 67 civil servants at the Class II Jayapura Port Authority. Following [23] guidelines, when the research subjects are fewer than 100, it is advisable to include all of them. Thus, a sample of 67 individuals was determined using either census or saturation sampling techniques.

3.2 Types and Sources of Data

The data comprises both quantitative data (respondents' perceptions) and qualitative data (respondents' characteristics). Data sources include primary data (directly from respondents) and secondary data (depicting the research object). Data collection was conducted through questionnaires and literature reviews.

3.3 Variables and Operationalization

The study incorporates three variables measured on a Likert scale of 1–5, each assessed with six items. The operationalization of variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operationalization of Variables

Variable	Number of Indicators	Indicators	Source
Job Autonomy (X)	6	Internal motivation; time flexibility; work procedure formulation; information exchange freedom	Q. Zhou et al. (2019)
Professional Commitment (M)	6	Affective professional commitment; continuous commitment; normative commitment	Kusumastuti (2022)
Job Engagement (Y)	6	Intellectual engagement; affective engagement; social engagement	Pranitasari (2019)

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

Descriptive analysis involves calculating the average answer scores categorized based on frequency distribution [24]: $1.0 < \text{average} \leq 1.7$ (strongly disagree); $1.8 < \text{average} \leq 2.5$ (disagree); $2.6 < \text{average} \leq 3.3$

(neutral); $3.4 < \text{average} \leq 4.1$ (agree); $4.2 < \text{average} \leq 5.0$ (strongly agree).

Quantitative analysis utilizes SEM-PLS [25] with two evaluations. The outer model is assessed through convergent validity (ideal loading factor > 0.7 , tolerance > 0.5 ; AVE > 0.5), discriminant validity (cross-

loading), and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70; Composite Reliability > 0.7) [26]. The inner model is evaluated through R-square (0.75 strong; 0.50 moderate; 0.25 weak) and predictive relevance Q^2 (0.02 weak; 0.15 moderate; 0.35 strong).

Hypothesis testing is conducted using the full SEM model with SmartPLS. A hypothesis is accepted if the T statistic > T table 1.96 (α 5%) and p-value < 0.05. The

magnitude of influence is assessed by effect size (f-square): 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), 0.35 (large) [27]. Mediation testing uses the effect size epsilon (v) following Ogbeibu et al. (2020): 0.01 (low), 0.075 (medium), 0.175 (high).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

Table 2. Characteristics of Participants

Characteristics	Category	Quantity	%
Education	S1	29	43.28
	SLTA	21	31.34
	S2	10	14.93
	D4	5	7.46
	D3	2	2.99
Gender	Male	55	82.09
	Female	12	17.91
Age (years)	40–49	35	52.24
	50	15	22.39
	30–39	11	16.42
	20–29	6	8.96
Total		67	100

Table 2 illustrates the characteristics of the respondents, indicating that the majority of respondents are graduates with a Bachelor's degree (43.28%), male (82.09%), and aged between 40 and 49 years (52.24%).

4.2 Description of Respondents' Responses

The variable Autonomy at Work has an average score of 4.12 (indicating agreement/good), with the highest score on OK_2 (4.17) and the lowest on OK_4 (4.01).

The Professional Commitment variable has an average score of 4.07 (good), with the highest on KP_3 (4.18) and the lowest on KP_6 (3.92). The Job Engagement variable has an average score of 4.10 (agree/good), with the highest on JE_1 (4.11) and the lowest on JE_4 and JE_6 (4.00). Overall, respondents perceive all three variables to be in the good category.

4.3 Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)

Table 3. Validation and Reliability Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Cronbach's α	CR	Remarks
Work Autonomy	OK_1	0.944	0.911	0.980	0.981	Valid & Reliable
	OK_2	0.927				
	OK_3	0.983				
	OK_4	0.915				
	OK_5	0.972				
	OK_6	0.984				
Professional Commitment	KP_1	0.819	0.652	0.893	0.895	Valid & Reliable
	KP_2	0.793				
	KP_3	0.829				
	KP_4	0.811				

Job Engagement	KP_5	0.824	0.817	0.955	0.958	Valid & Reliable
	KP_6	0.767				
	JE_1	0.932				
	JE_2	0.955				
	JE_3	0.881				
	JE_4	0.879				
	JE_5	0.942				
	JE_6	0.826				

The outer loading values of all indicators are above the threshold, with all Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50, indicating convergent validity. Discriminant validity is also confirmed as cross-loading results show that each item correlates higher with its intended construct compared to others. All Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceed 0.7, indicating the reliability of all variables.

4.4 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

The adjusted R-square value for professional commitment is 0.830 (83%), indicating that professional commitment can be explained by autonomy at work, with the remaining 17% attributed to other variables. The adjusted R-square value for job engagement is 0.967 (96.7%), showing that job engagement is explained by autonomy at work and professional commitment, with 3.3% influenced by other variables. The predictive relevance value $Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0.967) = 0.9943$ (99.43%), indicating the model's high predictive relevance.

4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Table 4. Direct Effect Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	T-statistic	P-value	95% CI	F-square (Remarks)	Result
H1	Work Autonomy → Professional Commitment	0.915	38.023	0.000	0.863 – 0.956	4.882 (Large)	Supported
H2	Work Autonomy → Job Engagement	0.769	15.048	0.000	0.665 – 0.869	3.111 (Large)	Supported
H3	Professional Commitment → Job Engagement	0.231	4.334	0.000	0.127 – 0.338	0.281 (Large)	Supported

Table 5. Indirect Effect (Mediation) Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	T-statistic	P-value	95% CI	Upsilon v (Category)	Result
H4	Work Autonomy → Professional Commitment → Job Engagement	0.210	4.361	0.000	0.117 – 0.309	0.0447 (Medium)	Supported

All hypotheses are accepted. H1: Autonomy at Work has a significant positive effect on professional commitment (path 0.915; T 38.023 > 1.96; p 0.000) with a large effect size (F-square 4.882). H2: Autonomy at Work significantly influences job engagement

(path 0.769; T 15.048 > 1.96; p 0.000; F-square 3.111). H3: Professional commitment significantly affects job engagement (path 0.231; T 4.334 > 1.96; p 0.000; F-square 0.281). H4: Autonomy at Work significantly influences job engagement through the

mediation of professional commitment (path 0.210; $T\ 4.361 > 1.96$; $p\ 0.000$); the value of $\text{upsilon } v = (0.915)^2 \times (0.231)^2 = 0.0447$ places the mediating role in the moderate category.

5. Discussion

The impact of job autonomy on professional commitment was examined in this study. The testing of hypothesis H1 confirmed that job autonomy has a significant and positive influence on professional commitment. Consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, job autonomy, as a job resource, triggers motivational processes that strengthen commitment [11], [12]. This mechanism is further elucidated by Self-Determination Theory, indicating that autonomy fulfills the basic need for independence, fostering internalized motivation and commitment to the profession [16]. Referring to [19], employees with high autonomy can decide what, how, and when to perform tasks, thereby enhancing their willingness to develop their work. From a managerial perspective, expanding autonomy, particularly in terms of the freedom to express innovative ideas and manage work schedules, should be encouraged to reinforce employees' professional commitment.

The influence of job autonomy on job engagement was also investigated. The results of hypothesis H2 demonstrated a significant and positive effect of job autonomy on job engagement. This finding aligns with [7], [20], and [13], who in the context of the public sector have shown autonomy as a resource that fosters job engagement. Within the JD-R model, autonomy triggers a motivational pathway that leads to job engagement [11], [14]. Therefore, policies aimed at enhancing job autonomy should be directed towards increasing employee job engagement.

Moreover, the impact of professional commitment on job engagement was explored. The results of hypothesis H3 indicated that professional commitment has a significant and positive influence on job engagement, consistent with [10] and [22]. According to [21], professional commitment reflects the acceptance of professional values and the willingness to exert effort on behalf of

the profession. Although significant, the contribution of professional commitment (path 0.231; F-square 0.281) is much smaller compared to the direct contribution of job autonomy (path 0.769; F-square 3.111). This finding suggests that job autonomy is the most dominant driver of job engagement, while professional commitment acts as a complementary enhancer. Consequently, policies aimed at enhancing employee job engagement at the KSOP Kelas II Jayapura should prioritize expanding job autonomy, with professional commitment serving as a reinforcing pathway.

The mediating role of professional commitment was also examined. The path model results indicated that professional commitment mediates the relationship between job autonomy and job engagement in a moderate manner. Considering that the direct influence of job autonomy on job engagement (H2) remains significant when the indirect pathway through professional commitment (H4) is also significant, the mediating role is characterized as partial mediation. This implies that job autonomy enhances job engagement both directly and through the reinforcement of professional commitment. This underscores that professional commitment strengthens - rather than replaces - the direct impact of job autonomy, aligning with the resource accumulation logic in the JD-R model [12]. Therefore, efforts to enhance job engagement through job autonomy should concurrently aim to boost employee professional commitment.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that: (1) job autonomy has a significant positive influence on professional commitment; (2) job autonomy has a significant positive impact on job engagement; (3) professional commitment has a significant positive effect on job engagement; and (4) job autonomy exerts a significant positive influence on job engagement through the partial mediating role of professional commitment.

Theoretically, these findings support the application of the JD-R model in the context of the public sector in Indonesia, with job autonomy being a dominant job resource. From a practical standpoint, it is recommended that organizational policies aiming to enhance job autonomy should be directed towards reinforcing employees' professional commitment, ultimately enhancing job engagement.

However, this study has limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional design restricts

causal inferences. Secondly, the sample was limited to 67 employees from a single institution (KSOP Class II Jayapura), necessitating caution in generalizing the results. Thirdly, the use of self-report data may introduce perceptual biases. Future research is advised to employ longitudinal designs, expand samples across institutions, and include other variables influencing job engagement.

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