Job Demands as Mediators between Work Engagement and Work-family Conflict

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- Emotional demands,
- Work engagement,
- Work-family conflict,
- Work overload,
- Working mothers.

ABSTRACT

This study advanced the understanding of the mechanism via which work engagement is related to work-family conflict by examining the mediating role of job demands (work overload and emotional demands) on the relationship between work engagement and work-family conflict. The study examined the mediating roles of these variables in the relationship between work engagement and work-family conflict remain elusive. Thus, the current study examined the mediating roles of job demands in the relationship between work engagement and work-family conflict in a sample of working mothers in Nigeria banking industry.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, research on work engagement have established that having an engaged workforce can produce numerous positive work outcomes, such as higher organizational performance (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002), organizational citizenship behaviour, job performance, customer/client satisfaction (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005; Bakker & Bal, 2010) intention to stay, and organizational commitment (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008; Gupta & Shaheen, 2017). These positive outcomes have made work engagement one of the most attractive factors in organisations (Bakker & Bal, 2010).

Nevertheless, recent research on the dark side of work engagement has revealed that engaged employees are more likely to suffer severe consequences (Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Halbesleben, 2011). For example, research evidence in the area of work-family interface revealed that employees who score high on work engagement reported high work-family conflict (Balogun & Afolabi, 2019). Following the conservation of resources (COR) theory, these extant studies argued that employees who are highly engaged at work tend to allocate more resources to work, which leaves them with fewer resources to address family demands and thereby increase their work-family conflict.

However, while the direct relationship between work engagement and work-family conflict has been established, very little is known about the underlying process via which work engagement relates with work-family conflict (Halbesleben et al., 2009; Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2016). Understanding the mechanism through which work engagement relates with work-family conflict have important implications for reducing and preventing the negative effect of work engagement on work-family conflict.

Scholars have recently claimed that job demands such as work overload and emotional demands play crucial roles between work engagement and work-family conflict (Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2016; Balogun & Afolabi, 2019). However, to date, the mediating roles of these variables in the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict remain elusive. Thus, the current study examined the mediating roles of work overload and emotional demands in the relationship between work engagement and work-family conflict in a sample of working mothers in Nigeria banking industry.

We test this proposition using the framework of the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). As explained by JD-R theory, job demands is specific domains of the job that tax and can deplete workers personal resources (Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2003; Bakker et al., 2007). The theory predicts that excessive job demands without adequate job resources lead to burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Consistent with this idea, the current study argues that engaged working mothers who devote excess resources in job characterized by work overload and high emotional demands may experience high work-family conflict. This is likely because consistent encounter with such heavy demands especially with inadequate job resources may deplete/consume their

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resources. When resources are depleted, working mothers may have little or no resources left to address family demands, and thus experience high work-family conflict.

The current study expands previous studies in two ways. Firstly, this study expands and builds on the growing body of knowledge on the process by which work engagement is related to work-family conflict (Halbesleben et al., 2009; Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2016) by examining work overload and emotional demands as mediators in the relationship. Secondly, the study goes beyond the conservation of resources (COR) theory by using JD-R theory to explain how work overload and emotional demands mediate the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict, which is lacking in the literature. By this, our study unravels new theoretical ideas for managing the negative consequences of work engagement.

**Work engagement and work-family conflict**

Work engagement has been defined as a positive motivational state of work-related well-being characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, & Fischbach, 2013). This conceptualization suggests that highly engaged employees usually feel engaged, and strongly involved and immersed with their work (Listau, Christensen, & Innstrand, 2017). Engaged employees are highly valued in organisations because they are more creative and productive (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Halbesleben, 2010). Engaged employees tend to devote excess resources to work, because to them, work is more meaningful, inspirational and challenging (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Research has revealed that employees’ engagement at work improves organisational well-being and efficiency (Schaufeli, Taris, & van Rhenen, 2008; Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). This is because engaged employees tend to work harder and go the extra miles for their organisation (Bakker et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, Bakker et al., (2008) submitted that “engaged employees are no supermen – they do feel tired after a long day of hard work” (p. 187). This assertion suggests that engaged employees can become exhausted if they face heavy job demands (Chernyak-Hai et al., 2016). Engaged employees who feel exhausted as a result of the job demands they face may have difficulties balancing work and family demands, and thus experience work-family conflict (Balogun & Afolabi, 2019).

Empirical studies, though limited, have provided support for this argument (George, 2011). Bolino and Turnley (2005) found that job stress, role overload, and work-family interference increased with high level of organisational citizenship behaviour (a behavioural form of engagement—Halbesleben et al., 2009). In the United States, Halbesleben et al. (2009) found that work engagement was positively associated with work-family conflict among fire workers, working adults, and hairstylists. Their study also showed that organisational citizenship behaviour increased the extent to which work engagement influenced work-family conflict. Using the resource investment tenet of the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), Halbesleben et al. (2009) submitted that engaged employee experienced high work-family conflict because they go the extra miles for their organisation and invest more resources to work than family.

Chernyak-Hai and Tziner (2016) advanced the study of Halbesleben et al. (2009) by examining burnout as mediator between work engagement and work-family conflict among service employees in Israel. Their findings showed that highly engaged employees experience burnout, which in turn increases their level of work-family conflict.

However, a study by Listau, Christensen and Innstrand (2017) showed that higher work engagement was associated with low level of work-family conflict among employees in a Norwegian University. They argued that engaged employees in the Norwegian organisation reported low work-family conflict because they tend to enjoy more supportive work-life culture than employees in the United States.

Against this background, Listau et al. (2017) echoed the need for more studies on how work engagement influence work-family conflict in different cultural settings in order to determine the cross-cultural transportability and generalizability of previous findings. Based on this, we examine whether work engagement will positively predict work-family conflict among working mothers in the banking industry in Nigeria. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:  

**H1:** Working mothers who are highly engaged in their work will experience high work-family conflict.

**Job demands as Mediators between work engagement and work-family conflict**

Job demands is defined as the physical, social and cognitive aspect of a job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort on the part of the employee and that are connected to certain physiological and/or psychological cost (Bakker et al., 2007; Rothmann, Mostert, & Strydom, 2006). Job demands include role conflict, time pressure, high work pressure, emotional and physical demands, work overload, and role ambiguity (Bakker et al., 2005; Tremblay & Messervey, 2011). Scholars have argued that job demands are not stressors or negative in any way (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). However, they may become job stressors if they exceed employee coping capability or capable of depleting employees’ resources (Schaufeli et al., 2004; Ongubamila, Balogun, Ongubamila, & Oladele, 2014).

According to JD-R theory (Bakker et al., 2007), high job demands are more likely to lead to negative outcomes if they exceed employees’ capabilities. Empirical studies have supported this assertion. For example, research has shown that high job demands increased burnout and absenteeism (Bakker et al., 2005). Other possible outcomes of high job demands include exhaustion, turnover intention and work-family conflict (Balogun, Adetula, & Owoludunoye, 2013; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001).

Job demands are typical of specific service industry (Schaufeli et al., 2004; Ojedokun & Idemudia, 2014). For example, in the banking industry in Nigeria, work overload and emotional demands are two major prevailing types of job demands that bank employees face (Ugwu, Amazue & Onyedire, 2017). Work overload is the perception that there are too much work-role demands (Karatepe, Sokmen, Yavas, & Babakus, 2010). Work overload occurs when employee job demands exceed their resources and
abilities (Nasurdin & O’Driscoll, 2011). Employees who perceived work overload feels that they have too many work-related demands to handle without enough time or resources to do so (Cardenas, Major, & Bernas, 2004).

Previous studies have shown that work overload can deplete or consume employees’ energy and resources, and thereby makes it cumbersome for them to juggle work and family roles. For example, Karatepe et al. (2010) showed that frontline employees who experienced work overload reported high level of work–family conflict. Nasurdin et al. (2011) also found that work overload increased work–family conflict among academics in New Zealand and Malaysia.

Emotional demands on the other hand, concerns “emotionally charged interactions or situations at work (e.g., customer/colleague misbehaviour)” (Xanthopoulou et al., 2013, p. 74). Emotional demands also include the emotion display rule placed on employees by their organisation (Bakker et al., 2005; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Most service industries expect their employees to strictly follow emotion display rule (Ogungbamila, Balogun, Ogungbamila & Oladele, 2014). For example, Nigerian banks establish display rules that expect their employees to display positive emotions and suppress negative ones (Balogun, Balogun, & Agesin, 2016). However, while discharging their daily duties, employee may come across unfriendly customer/client and situations that may warrant the display of negative emotions, contrary to the expected positive emotional display rules (Balogun et al., 2016). This emotional dissonance (i.e., incongruence between felt and displayed emotions) has been found to be detrimental to employee well-being (Xanthopoulou et al., 2013). Prior research revealed that emotional demands positively influenced work–family conflict among wives than husbands (Idris & Ismail, 2018).

Drawing upon the JD-R theory (Bakker et al., 2007), we propose that work overload and high emotional demands mediate the relationship between work engagement and work–family conflict. In line with JD-R theory, work overload and high emotional job demands can threaten engaged workers’ resources, and consistent exposure to such demands may consume or deplete their resources (Bakker et al., 2005). When these resources are exhausted, employees may have little or no resources left to address family demands, and therefore experience work–family conflict. This assertion is partly supported by the empirical study of Balogun and Afolabi (2019). They found that job demands increased the extent to which work engagement is positively related with work–family conflict. However, Balogun and Afolabi (2019) only considered the composite score of job demands, and therefore called for more studies on how specific types of job demands (e.g., work overload and emotional demands) influence the relation between work engagement and work–family. In line with this suggestion, the present study examined how work overload and emotional demands mediate between work engagement and work–family conflict in working mothers’ sample. Based on the rationale of JD-R theory and previous research, it is expected that:

\[ H2: \] Work overload and emotional demands will mediate the relationship between work engagement and work–family conflict such that engaged working mothers would experience high work overload and emotional demands and thereby report high work–family conflict.

### Method

**Participants**

One hundred and fifty-six (156) working mothers from commercial banks in Lagos State, Nigeria volunteered to take part in the study. Eight banks were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Ages of the sample ranged from 24 to 39 ($M = 34.09, SD = 7.49$). The participants had at least one dependent child with their ages ranging from 2 months to 5 years. Their working experience ranged between 1 and 9 years ($Mean = 3.43, Standard Deviation = 2.29$).

### Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Response by Category of Marital Status, Job Cadre and Academic Qualification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marriage status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>46.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Cadre</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary National Diploma/National Certificate in Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors degree</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters degree</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Measures

**Work–family conflict.** Participants completed a 9-item subscale from the Work–Family Conflict Scale (WFCS) developed by Carlson, Kaam and Williams (2000). The subscale was designed to measure the extent to which employees experience difficulties in balancing work and family demands. The scale is scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. A Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .85 was obtained by Carlson et al. (2000). In the current study, the researchers observed a Cronbach’s alpha of .91 for the subscale.
Work engagement. Participants completed a 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006). The 9-item scale tapped three components of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The components were each measured by three items. However, an overall measure was computed in this study. UWES is rated on a 7-point Likert format ranging from 0 = never to 6 = every day. High score on the scale implies that employee is highly engaged in their work whereas low score indicates otherwise. The internal consistency as reported by Bal and Kooij (2011) was .89. We obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of .92 for UWES.

Work overload. Participants completed an 8-item work overload scale developed by Cousins et al. (2004). Items on the scale are rated on a 5-point Likert-type format ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Sample item include “I am pressured to work long hours”. Cousins et al. (2004) reported an internal consistency of .83. A reliability coefficient of .74 was observed for the scale. High score on the scale suggests high work overload while low score suggest low work overload.

Emotional Demands. Participants completed a 6-item scale developed by Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2003). The scale was designed to measure emotionally charged situations and interactions at work. The response format ranges from 1 = Never to 5 = Always. High score on the scale implies high level of emotional demands while low score indicates low emotional demands. A reliability coefficient has originally been reported for this scale (Xanthopoulos, Bakker & Fischbach, 2013). In the current study, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .79 was obtained for this scale.

Control Variables
Socio-demographic variables such as age, job cadre, work experience, and number of dependent children were included as control variables in this study. These variables have been found to have significant impact on work-family conflict (Innstrøm, Langballe, Espnes, Aasland, & Falkum, 2010; Listau et al., 2017).

Procedure
Permission for the research was obtained from authorities of the banks where the workers that participated in the study work. Participants were made to understand that participation was voluntary. They were given assurance of confidentiality and anonymity of their identities and responses and had the right to discontinue from the study at any point in time if they felt uncomfortable. The participants were also informed that their responses would be used for research purposes only. A purposive sampling technique was used to administer 200 questionnaires to the participants, but 197 questionnaires were retrieved. However, only 156 were duly completed and used for the analysis.

Results
Descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlation analyses
Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation (r) analysis were used to describe the participants’ socio-demographic information and test the relationship between the variables respectively. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Inter-correlations of Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>28.72</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job cadre</td>
<td>6.76</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Number of children</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>7.54</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Work experience</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>-.22</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Work engagement</td>
<td>43.23</td>
<td>13.76</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Work overload</td>
<td>38.33</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.41*</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Emotional demands</td>
<td>43.29</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td>-.32*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Work-family conflict</td>
<td>28.45</td>
<td>9.23</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>-.31*</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.37*</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

As shown in Table 2, age was related negatively with work-family conflict (r = .24; p < .05). However, job cadre (r = .13; p < .05) and number of children (r = .19 p < .01) correlated positively to work-family conflict. This implies that the higher the job cadre and number of children of working mothers, the more they experience high work-family conflict.

Work engagement was positively related to work-family conflict (r = .28; p < .01). This suggests that as work engagement increases, work-family conflict also increases. Results also revealed that work overload was positively associated with work-family conflict (r = .37; p < .05). Emotional demands was positively associated with work-family conflict (r = .21; p < .01). It means that working mothers who experience high work overload and emotional demands reported high level of work-family conflict.

Mediation Analysis
To test the study’s hypotheses, a four-level regression model was conducted in line with the mediation procedure highlighted by Baron and Kenny (1986). In the first level, the predictor was regressed on outcome variable. The mediators were regressed on outcome variable in the second level. At the third level, the predictor was regressed on mediators. Lastly, in the fourth level, the predictor was regressed on the outcome variable when the effects of the mediators were included in the model. However, since Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation analysis only indicates that the mediating effect of the mediator is possible or likely, Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) was used to estimate the indirect coefficient. The results are presented in Table 3 and 4 respectively.
Table 3 showed the results of the mediating role of work overload in the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict. Results indicated that work engagement was positively associated with work overload ($\beta = .18; p < .05$). Work overload appeared as a significant predictor of work-family conflict ($\beta = .21; p < .05$). In the third level, work engagement was positively related to work-family conflict when the influence of work overload was controlled for ($\beta = .28; p < .05$). Lastly, when effect of work overload was added to the model linking work engagement to work-family conflict, the prediction power of work engagement changed. The beta ($\beta$) value reduced from .28 to .10 ($\Delta R^2 = .02$). The Sobel test indicated that work overload significantly mediated the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict ($Z = 2.84, p < .05$).

### Table 3: Regression Analysis on Work Overload as Mediators between Work Engagement and Work-family Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>WE→WO</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WO→WFC</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WE→WFC (without WO)</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WE &amp; WO→WFC</td>
<td>10*</td>
<td>8.67</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of the Mediation Analysis**

![Mediation Analysis Diagram](image1)

Table 4: Regression Analysis on Emotional Demands as Mediators between Work Engagement and Work-family Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Path</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>WE→ED</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ED→WFC</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>7.51</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WE→WFC (without ED)</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WE &amp; ED→WFC</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** WE = Work Engagement; WFC = Work-family conflict; ED = Emotional Demands

Results in Table 4 showed that high work engagement was associated with high levels of work-family conflict ($\beta = .13; p < .05$). Emotional demands was positively associated with work-family conflict ($\beta = .37; p < .01$). This suggests that working mothers who experience emotional demands reported high level of work-family conflict. Work engagement was positively related to work-family conflict when the influence of emotional demands was controlled for in the third level ($\beta = .28; p < .05$). However, the inclusion of emotional demands in the model linking work engagement to work-family conflict changed the level at which work engagement relate with work-family conflict. The beta ($\beta$) value reduced from .21 to .11 ($\Delta R^2 = .04$). The Sobel test indicates that the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict was significantly mediated by emotional demands ($z = 3.70, p < .05$).

### Figure 2: Mediation analysis showing the mediating roles of emotional demands (ED) in the relationship between work engagement (WE) and work-family conflict (WFC).
Discussion

The present study contributes knowledge to the underlying process via which work engagement relates to work-family conflict by examining the mediating role of job demands (work overload and emotional demands) in the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict among working mothers in banking industry in Nigeria. In tandem with the first hypothesis, work engagement was found to be positively associated with work-family conflict. This suggests that working mothers who are highly engaged in their work are more likely to experience high work-family conflict. By this finding, the current study replicates and corroborate the findings of previous studies who have established a positive relation between work engagement and work-family conflict (Halbesleben et al., 2009; Chernyak-Hai & Tziner, 2016; Balogun & Afolabi, 2019).

This finding supports and expand the scope of the “resource investment” tenet of the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) by suggesting that highly engaged working mothers experienced high work-family conflict because they apportioned more resources to work. According to scarcity approach (Maesey & Schneider, 2008), human resources limited. Therefore, engaged working mothers who invest greater amount of their limited resources to meet heavy job demands will experience work-family conflict because excessive investment of limited resources into work reduces resources available to handle family obligations (Halbesleben et al., 2009).

The results of this study also supported the second hypothesis. Findings showed that work overload and emotional demands significantly mediated the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict respectively. This finding partly supports the JD-R theory (Bakker et al., 2005), by suggesting that highly engaged working mothers who experienced high work overload and high emotional demands are more likely to experience negative outcomes such as high work-family conflict.

Consistent with the JD-R theory, it implies that working mothers who are highly engaged at work experience high level of work-family conflict because work overload and high emotional demands consistently threaten and deplete the resources needed to manage family or household responsibilities (Balogun & Afolabi, 2019).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study makes important contributions to theory and practice. Theoretically, the study contributes to the understanding of the mechanism through which work engagement is associated with work-family conflict by invoking the JD-R theory. Previous studies have examined the mediating roles of organisational citizenship behaviour and burnout in the relation between work-family conflict and work engagement using the framework of COR theory (see Halbesleben et al., 2009; Chernyak-Hai et al., 2016).

The present study is amongst the first to incorporate JD-R theory to explain how job demands (work overload and emotional demands) intensify the effect of work engagement on work-family conflict. Our study therefore expands theoretical knowledge on how the negative consequences of work engagement on work-family conflict can be reduced or prevented. The study expands the scope of the JD-R theory by showing that work overload and emotional demands are two crucial job demands intensifying the effect of work engagement on work-family among working mothers.

Although past research argued that job demands (e.g., work overload and emotional demands) play critical roles in the negative effect of work engagement on work-family conflict, empirical investigations of these important variables is scare. We found that the relationship between work engagement and work-family conflict was mediated by work overload and emotional demands. From the practical perspective, these findings implicate the need for organisations to focus on optimizing the workload and emotional demands placed on working mothers in the banking industry. In case it is difficult to optimize job demands, adequate job resources can be provided as suggested by JD-R theory.

Limitations and Suggestions for future research

Despite the theoretical and practical implications, this study is not without some limitations. Firstly, causal inferences between the study variables cannot be established in this study. To better understand the causal relationships between job demands, work engagement and work-family conflict, future studies should adopt longitudinal design. Secondly, the sample size is too small for generalization; hence future should use a larger sample size. Thirdly, the present study only focused on job demands aspect of the JD-R theory. The mediating roles of job resources (e.g., work shift, autonomy and social support) were neglected in this study. Future studies on the mediating roles of job resources between work engagement and work-family conflict may provide additional information on the direction of related intervention programmes. For instance, in a situation where job demands cannot be reduced or moderated, job resources can be increased to reduce the effect of job demands on the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict.

Fourthly, in our study we paid less attention to the moderating effects of personal resources in the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict. Earlier research (e.g., Halbesleben et al., 2009) has suggested that personal factors can mitigate the effect of work engagement on work-family conflict. Thus, it would be beneficial if future studies can examine how personal resources (e.g., resilience and hardiness) buffer the effect of work engagement on work-family conflict. This would further broaden our knowledge on how the negative effect of work engagement on work-family conflict can be managed. Finally, replications of this study in different service industries (e.g., hospital, police hospitality and teaching sectors) would help ensure the cross-validation of our findings.

Conclusion

This study contributes knowledge on the underlying mechanism through which work engagement correlate with work-family conflict by examining the mediating roles of two important job demands (work overload and emotional demands) in the relation between work engagement and work-family conflict. The present study revealed that work overload and emotional demands are two major job demands intensifying the effect of work engagement on work-family conflict among working mothers in the banking industry. Thus, it may be beneficial if organisations can optimize these job demands.
References


