EXPLORING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN JOB CHARACTERISTICS AND JOB SATISFACTION OF BUSINESS EDUCATORS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The study examined the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction among business educators in Southeast Nigerian universities. Guided by one research question and hypothesis, the correlational survey design was adopted to explore these relationships. The study's research question asked about the mediating influence of work engagement on the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction, while the hypothesis posited that work engagement does not significantly mediate this relationship. The study population included 122 business educators across federal and state universities in Southeast Nigeria, comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States. The census sampling technique was utilized due to the manageable population size. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated psychological scales, comprising 41 items across clusters measuring job demands, job resources, work engagement, and job satisfaction. Instrument reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients ranging from .799 to .852, indicating high reliability. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23.0 and Process Macro for SPSS version 34.1, employing Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Bias Corrected bootstrapping techniques. The findings revealed that work engagement did not significantly mediate the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction. Based on the findings, it was recommended that governments develop and implement policies to ensure a favorable balance between job demands and resources in educational institutions. Additionally, increased funding for educational resources and professional development programs was suggested to enhance the job resources available to business educators.

Keyword: work engagement, job satisfaction, job characteristics, job resources, job demand

INTRODUCTION

Business education holds a unique place in the educational system. It prepares individuals not just with knowledge but with the practical skills and acumen needed to navigate the complexities of the modern corporate landscape. By providing a bridge between academia and industry, it equips students with the tools to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth (Tuetue, 2021) At the heart of business education are its educators - the architects of knowledge, the mentors of ambition, and the catalysts of transformation in the field of business education. These business educators play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of future business leaders, entrepreneurs, and innovators. Business educators are professionally trained instructors who are capable of instructing all business-related courses in the faculties of education at universities and colleges of education (Umezulike & Anozie,

2021). Umezulike and Anozie continued that business educators are trained in colleges of education and faculty of education in universities. While business educators play a pivotal role in shaping future business leaders and contributing to economic growth, the journey of business educators is not without its challenges. Business educators face numerous challenges, including an increasing workload, inadequate resources, insufficient budgetary allocations, library resources, and technological infrastructure and constant changes in the education landscape, preparing lectures, grading assignments, conducting research, mentoring students, and staying updated with the evolving business landscape.

Job characteristics are multifaceted aspects that define a specific role or position within an organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job characteristics can be broadly categorized into two main components: job demands and job resources. Job demands, such as workload and work-family conflict, contribute to stress and can lead to outcomes like burnout, anxiety, fatigue, and depression. On the other hand, job resources, which include organizational support, job autonomy, performance feedback, work advancement opportunities, and job security, encompassing the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of a job. These resources play a crucial role in facilitating goal attainment, mitigating job demands, and minimizing associated psychological or physiological costs (Imaga, Amah & Okocha, 2022). Additionally, job resources contribute to personal development, creating a positive work environment that fosters employee well-being and productivity (Metin and Halil, 2021; Ile and Edokpolor, 2022; Hedge and Jennifer, 2017).

Job satisfaction is a state of mind of employee that manifests in their love and commitment to their job. BasuMallick (2020) defined job satisfaction as the contentment one experiences as a direct outcome of playing a particular role at work. Obiekwe, Obibhunun and Omah (2019) opined that a person's overall likes and dislikes about their job are referred to as job satisfaction. It is a rational or emotional reaction to numerous aspects of one's employment. It is also one’s overall attitude and perspective of their employment. According to Medhi (2021), an individual’s selfish drive is not a function of job satisfaction. It is however fueled by love for what one does. An engaged employee does not necessarily need to be a satisfied one. However, for satisfaction to occur, it is crucial that a person at least likes, if not loves the work they do (Medhi, 2021).

Numerous studies have explored the factors that influence job satisfaction, however, research specifically focusing on the moderated-mediation in job characteristics and job

satisfaction relationship with person-environment fit and work engagement among business educators in universities in Southeast Nigeria is scarce. Studies have not examined how job characteristics and person-environment fit influence job satisfaction via the work engagement of business educators. The investigation into the motivating factors behind job satisfaction has been the subject of extensive research (Ile and Edokpolor, 2022, Oyebanji, et al, 2023. Banerjee, Stearns, Moller and Mickelson, 2017; BasuMallick, 2020; Bayona, Caballer and Peiro, 2020). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory has shed light on the significance of both job demands and resources in this context (Crawford and Detar, 2023; Breevaart and Bakker, 2018). Additionally, studies employing concepts like work engagement and person-environment fit have been instrumental in predicting job satisfaction (Aslan, 2019; Kristof-Brown, 2015). Despite the wealth of research applying the JD-R theory in various settings, business educators in South East Nigeria have notably been underrepresented in these studies.

There seems to be limited literature on the combined influence of job characteristics, person-environment fit, and work engagement as predictors of job satisfaction of business educators. Previous studies have predominately examined these variables in isolation, failing to provide a comprehensive understanding of their interplay and potential mediating and moderating effects on job satisfaction which makes this study very paramount.

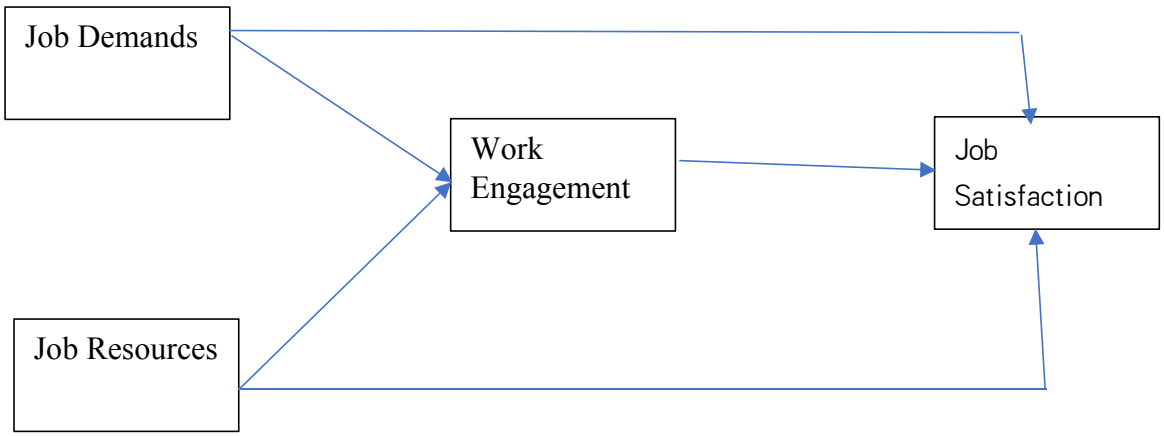
Research Questions

The following research question guided the study

What is the mediating influence of work engagement in the relationship among job characteristics and job satisfaction of business educators in universities in southeast, Nigeria?

Hypothesis Development

The author supports the present study with a schematic model (see Figure 1) to explain and describe the relationship among job characteristics such as job demands and resources (independent variable), work engagement (mediating variable) and job satisfaction (dependent variable). However, the author developed a schematic model upon which the hypothetical propositions of all the study variables as well as the mediation role are based.



The following null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. Work engagement does not significantly mediate the relationship among job characteristics and job satisfaction of business educators in universities in southeast, Nigeria.

Methods

Research Design

Correlational survey design was employed in the study. The design is suitable for the study because it helps to determine the relationship between job characteristics (job demands and Job resources, work engagement and job satisfaction among business educators in different public universities in south east, Nigeria. The degree to which the independent variables (job demands and Job resources), and the mediating variables (work engagement) can predict the dependent variable (job satisfaction) will be expressed as a correlation coefficient (*r).* Additionally, the research design helps to determine the mediating influence of work engagement in the relationship. The study was carried out in South East, Nigeria. South East comprised five states, namely Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo

Sample and Sampling Technique

A census sampling technique was be adopted for this study. The entire population of 122 business educators were studied without sampling because the population is small and manageable.

Instrument for data collection

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire adapted from existing psychological scales which are "Questionnaire on job characteristics, work engagement and job satisfaction among business educators''(QJCPEFWEJC) contains 41 items in the four clusters in line with the variables covered. Items 1 to 21 will measure job characteristics dimensions such as job demands and job resources (organizational support, performance feedback, job autonomy and Work development opportunities and Job Security). and items will 37 to 44 measure work engagement which (emotional, cognitive, physical engagement) and the Job satisfaction have 13 items which covering **(**Nature of the Job, Operating Conditions, Fringe Benefits and Reward, Supervision, Co-workers), three instruments are structured on a 4 point scale ranging from 4- Always, 3= Rarely, 2= Sometimes and 1- Not at all. To establish the reliability of the instrument, 20 copies of the instrument were administered to 20 business educators from Delta State University, Abraka, and University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State who were not part of the sample used for the present study in a pilot test. Thereafter, Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the items of both instruments. The coefficients' alpha values provided the reliability for each cluster which included job characteristics such as job demands (α = .799) and Job resources (α = .845), work engagement (α = .852), Job satisfaction (α = .831). The overall coefficients' alpha value (α = .823), Therefore, the coefficient alpha values obtained were greater than .700, which established adequate reliability and internal consistency measures of the scales (Fornell & arcker, 1981). This indicates that these instruments are profoundly reliable and can be utilized in any setting to measure the same items and variables at any given time.

Method of Data Analysis

The IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 and Process Macro plugging for SPSS for SPSS version 34.1 by Hayes (2018) were used as the statistical packages for data analyses. The statistial tools employed to perform the data analyses was inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (PPMCC)

Results

Table 1:

Person correlation of work engagement as a mediator in the relationship among job characteristics and job satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5
JD	1				
JR	-.227*	1			
JSFAC	.270**	-0.099	1		
WEEE	0.114	.536**	0.067	1	
JC	.601**	.642**	0.131	.530**	1

Table 1 shows the data on the pearson's correlation determining the mediating influence of work engagement on the correlation between job characteristics and job satisfaction among business educators in public universities. the overall correlation between job characteristics and job satisfaction is positively low (r =.131) while work engagement and job satisfaction is positively low (r=. 0.067) since there is evidence of positive correlation between the pairs of variables. Work engagement, there is potential mediator in the correlation between job characteristics and job satisfaction among business educators in universities in south-east, Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 2：*Regression Estimates for mediating influence of work engagement on the relationship between job characteristics, and job satisfaction*

			Job Satisfaction				
						95 percent CI	
Variables	Effects	Pathways	Beta(β)	*SE*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
JC	Total	JC-JS	.222	.159	.165	-.093	.538
	Direct	JC-JS	.225	.189	.234	-.148	.599
	Indirect	JC-WE-JS	-.003	.097	NS	-.163	.224

Note: JC=Job Characteristics, JS= Job Satisfaction, WE= Work engagement.

Data in table 2 shows the regression and bootstrap on the mediating role of work engagement on the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction of business educators. The

table revels that the indirect effect of job characteristics via employee engagement is not statistically significant. The total effect of job characteristics on job satisfaction is found not be statistically significant (β= .159, p= .165 > 0.05, LLCI =-.093, ULCI= .538). Similarly, the table shows the direct effect of job characteristics on job satisfaction (β= .225, p=.234 > 0.05, LLCI =-.148, ULCI= .599) is not statistically significant. Since the specific indirect effect of job characteristics on job satisfaction (β= -.003, p> 0.05, LLCI =-.163, ULCI= .224) via work engagement is not statistically significant, work engagement is not found to be a mediator in the relationship. By and large, work engagement do not significantly mediate the relationship between job characteristics on job satisfaction among business educators in universities in south-east, Nigeria.

Discussion

Mediating influence of Work Engagement in Job Characteristics and Job Satisfaction of Business Educators

The results in question six indicated that work engagement is not a potential mediator in the correlation between job characteristics and job satisfaction among business educators in universities in south-east, Nigeria. The result of the corresponding hypothesis revealed that work engagement did not significantly mediate the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction among business educators in universities in south-east, Nigeria. This is line with the findings of AIka and Sunil (2020) revealed that work engagement did not significantly mediate the linkages between job characteristics (Job Demands and Resources) and organizational engagement or job satisfaction among employees working in public sector banks (PSBs) in India. Similarly, Abdelmohsen et al (2021) examined the role of work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between different dimensions of job characteristics and job satisfaction in private sector organizations in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Their study also found that the mediating role of work engagement was not significant, indicating a direct path between job characteristics and job satisfaction.

In another study, Hasna and Hafasnuddin (2021) found that work engagement did not significantly mediate the relationship between workplace fun and job satisfaction among millennial workers in Banda Aceh City, Indonesia. Conversely, Saks (2017) revealed contrary findings, showing that work engagement served as a mediating factor in the relationship between job characteristics, perceived organizational support, supervisor support,

rewards, recognition, procedural justice, and distributive justice. The outcomes of this study included job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and intention to quit. Additionally, Arulsenthikumar and Punitha (2023) found work engagement to partially mediate the relationship between job involvement and organizational commitment, while it did not mediate the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that job demands and job resources play a significant role in influencing job satisfaction among business educators in southeast Nigeria. Organizations should strive to create a work environment that provides a balance between challenging work and supportive resources to foster job satisfaction and engagement among their employees. Based on the findings, it is concluded that higher job demands and resources, such as support, professional development opportunities, and a positive work environment, can lead to higher job satisfaction among business educators. The lack of significant mediation by work engagement suggests that job characteristics directly influence job satisfaction without being affected by the level of engagement. The impact of job characteristics on job satisfaction remains stable and unaffected by the fit of educators into their work environment.

Implication of the Study

The finding that work engagement did not significantly mediate the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction among business educators implies that while work engagement may be a positive outcome of favorable job characteristics, it does not directly influence the relationship between these characteristics and job satisfaction**.** This suggests that other factors, such as individual differences, organizational culture, or external influences, may play a more significant role in mediating this relationship. Social Exchange Theory provides a framework for understanding this relationship. This theory suggests that people engage in social interactions based on the perceived costs and benefits. In the context of work, employees evaluate the demands of their job against the resources and rewards they receive. If the perceived benefits outweigh the costs, employees are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Job Demands-Resources Theory also provides relevant insights. This theory proposes that job demands (e.g., workload, time pressure) and job resources (e.g., support, autonomy) interact to influence employee well-being and job satisfaction. While work

engagement may be a positive outcome of favorable job characteristics, it may not directly mediate the relationship between these characteristics and job satisfaction.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation are made

1. University administrators should increase support structures, provide adequate teaching materials, and ensure access to professional development opportunities to boost job resources for educators and regularly assess and balance job demands to prevent burnout and enhance job satisfaction. Implement strategies to manage workload and provide necessary support.
2. University administrators should foster an engaging work environment by promoting recognition programs, encouraging collaborative work, and providing opportunities for career advancement.

Suggestions for further Studies

Based on the findings, it is suggested the further studies on the following topics should be carried out

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of job demands, job resources, P-J fit, P-O fit, and work engagement on job satisfaction and other outcomes.
2. Explore how these relationships vary across different cultural contexts and organizational settings.

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