

# **Troubling Job Demands at Work: Examining the Deleterious Impact of Workload and Emotional Demands on Work Engagement**

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## **Abstract**

The present study attempted to study the impact of job demands including workload and emotional demands on employees' work engagement. The study sampled bank employees from the large six banks in Pakistan. A total of 537 questionnaires were distributed out of which, 385 were received back and 277 were only were further found to be appropriate for final analysis. Structural equation modeling through using Smart PLS 2.0 was deployed which found workload marked a significant negative impact on employees' work engagement. Accordingly, the study also concluded significant negative impact of emotional demands upon employees' work engagement. The study has confirmed the deleterious effects of job demands like workload and emotional demands on employees work wellbeing, resulting in negatively affecting their engagement.

Keywords: Work engagement, Job Demands, Workload, Emotional Demands, Smart PLS.

## **Introduction**

Organizational scholars have started focusing on work wellbeing for promising individual and organizational outcomes over the recent decades (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Thereby, studies have highlighted that growing competition is resulting in organizations pushing their workforce to give their best and to best achieve this prospect; work engagement is the ultimate solution. (Crawford, Lepine, & Rich, 2010). This is due to the reason that employees who are work engaged are the ones capable of going extra mile to work with high immersion, dedication and energy. Sadly, The increasingly rivalry in the marketplace today has resulted in making work cultures more intense and stressful (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Pugliesi, 1999). Thus, employees are frequently found expressing poor work behaviors (Wilson, 2011). Thus, beyond studying conventional prospects that can enhance individual behaviors like work engagement, it is also equally important to investigate and highlight what can potentially deplete them. Keeping this in view, the present study attempted to outline how critical work stressors like job demands affect employee engagement. The study has attempted to outline explain how job demands like workload and emotional demands can affect work engagement negatively.

## **Work Engagement**

Work engagement is a positive work based state that brings energy, passion and dedication towards work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Multifold of research has outlined that individuals who are engaged express high immersion at work which is why they attempt to give their best towards assigned tasks (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Since its inception by Kahn (1990), the concept of engagement has attracted considerable amount of scholarly attention whereby, studies have outlined to work engaged people to be more profitable, committed and high in customer satisfaction (Sorenson, 2013). In short, studies have underlined tremendous benefits for organizations with highly engaged people (Ahmed, Majid, & Zin, 2016b).

There are several studies conducted over the past outlining numerous factors that could explain work engagement whereby, a lot of studies have also been outlined for future investigations (Ahmed et al., 2016a). Therein, the literature outlines more empirical explanations available pertaining to what potentially enhance engagement but little research on factors that could possibly damage engagement levels (Crawford, Lepine, & Rich, 2010) and therefore, to what extent, certain work stressors could be either negative or positive; is still unclear. Keeping this in view, job demands have been outlined as some of the most deleterious work prospects, affecting work engagement (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

## **Job Demands**

Job demands denote to work prospects that take an individual to exert more psychological and physical efforts thus resulting in fatigue and strain. Job demands are categorized as some of the more challenging work aspects which could be from the work or from the organization as well (Demerouti et al., 2001). Popular scholars in the area have workload and emotional demands to be the most pressing job demands in this regard (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005).

Job demands stress out employees<sup>1</sup> physical and mental capabilities which results in depleting their capabilities. This hence also results in making people to work with lesser connectivity and

energy (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The Job-Demands and Resources model (JD-R) also caters to them as the most important prospect that affects individual engagement levels (Demerouti et al., 2001). Generally, job demands are catered to result in making employees becoming absent (Bakker et al., 2003); facing health problems (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006); Van Yperen & Janssen, 2002). Seemingly, these studies have outlined that job demands can have a deleterious effect on employees` in terms of their work outcomes and physical conditions. In the next section, we discuss these job demands on individual grounds through critical appraisal of the literature on the topic.

### **Workload and Work Engagement**

Workload denotes to the amount of work an individual is assigned to. Often employees are bulked with work and tasks with tough deadlines. Such a situation would be denoted as workload (Van Veldhoven & Meijman, 1994). Workload has been termed to cause a lot of negative employee outcomes such as fatigue and absenteeism (Van Woerkom, Bakker, & Nishii (2016).

Research studies have highlighted that workload can seriously stress people and make them to encounter burnout and thus negatively affecting their work engagement. Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2007) in their study outlined that workload affected people in their physiological connection with the work thus resulting in negative affect on work engagement. Similarly, Taipale et al. (2011) in their study also found that workload made employees to feel stress at work due to which, they found majority of the employees feeling lack of energy and mental connectivity thus, decreasing their work engagement.

Likewise, similar results were also forwarded by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) which found that workload negatively affected employees in terms of their work engagement. The study also concluded that employees in the different sector may be experiencing different amount of workload but the multifold of studies on this topic are confirming that workload on a general note is deleterious for employees especially when it comes to their work engagement.

Interestingly, Crawford, Lepine and Rich (2010) examined job demands including workload and found that the case is a little different. The study empirically found that workload may not necessarily lead towards negatively affecting work engagement or disengagement. The authors further outlined that it all depends upon individuals themselves as people who take them as a challenge, result in bringing more energy and connectivity with work whereby, the one assuming them as a hindrance at work source them to negatively affect their work engagement. Accordingly, Mauno, Kinnunen, and Ruokolainen (2007) also conducted the study and found that workload enhanced employees` work engagement. Thus, there are inconsistent results more importantly in the current literature, challenging established paradigms regarding job demands like workload. This henceforth required further empirical attention which the current study aimed to address through the following hypothesis:

***H1: There will be a significant negative relationship between Workload and Work Engagement***

## **Emotional Demands and Work Engagement**

Emotional demands are defined as emotionally charged situations that stimulates the emotive aspect of an individual (Heuven, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Huisman 2006). Emotional demands often lead employees to experience negative about their work and damage their self-esteem and work energy (Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Study by Llorens et al. (2007) examined how emotional demands can affect work engagement and confirmed significant negative impact upon work engagement. Accordingly, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found a significant negative impact of emotional demands on employees` work engagement. The study suggested that emotional situation and fall backs at work from the organization and customers were not very appreciating from the employees which thus resulted in making them feel disengaged at work. Liekwise, Taipale et al. (2010) underlined that emotional demands challenged people to negative affect their work engagement.

On the flipside, there are research studies in the recent domain that suggest that, emotional demands can also work as appositive challenging energy. Bakker and Sanz-Vergel (2013) examined emotional demands and found that employees were taking it as a positive challenge which thus, resulting them in enhancing their work engagement. Accordingly, there is a great deal of influence and relationship between how people are acting in relation to emotional demands towards work engagement. Study by Xanthopoulou, Bakker and Fischbach (2013) recently outlined that emotional demands can have a multifaceted affect. Employees that viewed emotional demands as a hindrance resulted in affecting their work engagement whereby, the ones who perceived it to be a challenge, managed to enhance their work engagement. Henceforth, there lies a series of mixed results that require further empirical attention. Moreover, how they would act in an emerging economy like Pakistan (Khan & Altaf, 2015; Danish et al, 2014) was not also not confirmed empirically in past thus, the present study formulated the following hypothesis:

***H2: There will be a significant negative relationship between emotional demands and work engagement.***

### **Methodology:**

#### **Measures:**

For the purpose of effective conduct of present research, the scales and instruments were carefully selected through critical literature review appraisal. Therein, Work engagement was tested through 9-item UWES engagement scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova 2006). The scale has been tested and validated in Pakistan also (Ahmed, Majid, & Zin, 2016b). Accordingly, workload was tested through 11-item scale by Van Veldhoven and Meijman (1994). The scale is well known and reputedly used across major studies pertaining to workload (Van Yperen and Janssen (2002). Accordingly, 6-item scale by Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2003) pertaining to emotional demands was adapted for the present study.

#### **Sampling:**

Bank employees were sampled in the present study based on the evidences outlining tough workload and emotionally challenging situations in the sector (SBP, HR Developments, 2009). a

total of 537 questionnaires were distributed based on the assertions of Krejcie and Morgan (1970)'s sampling table. A total of 385 were received back out of which, 277 turned out to be appropriate for final analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

Structural equation modeling using Smart PLS 2.0 M3 was used for the present study (Ringle et al., 2005). Therein, the measurement model assessment was conducted in order to examine the reliability and validity of the study data. For this, individual item reliability was examined at the first place following which caters to the outer loadings of each of the constructs' items (Hair et al., 2014; Hulland, 1999). According to Hair et a. (2014) items with 0.50 or above loadings should be considered reliable and hence retained. Thus, 2 items from work engagement; 6 items from workload, and 2 from emotional demands were deleted due to lower loadings. Accordingly, for internal consistency reliability, composite reliability coefficients were assessed which as per the suggestions of Bagozzi and Yi (1988) should be above 0.70. The current study has hence achieved significant composite reliability in this regard details of which could be found in table1.0.

Likewise, convergent validity was also examined in the measurement model whereby, Fornell and Larcker (1981) have asserted to examine the average variance extracted (AVE) scores at the first instance. For this, Chin (1998) has suggested that the minimum AVE values should be 0.50 or above. Furthermore, the discriminant validity was examined which requires the assessment of square root of the AVE scores. Therein, the square root values should be higher than all the correlating values to ensure that the constructs are different and unique from each other. The study found significant results in this regard also details of which could be found in Table 2.0.

Table 1.0 Loadings, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

	Loadings	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted	R <sup>2</sup>
<b>Emotional Demands</b>		0.850337	0.588194	
ED2	0.688815			
ED3	0.744646			
ED5	0.779615			
ED6	0.846175			
<b>Workload</b>		0.881812	0.607334	
WL1	0.787602			
WL2	0.71837			
WL3	0.801598			
WL4	0.812675			
WL7	0.746264			
<b>Work Engagement</b>		0.915173	0.915173	0.386947
WE1	0.780469			
WE3	0.825109			
WE4	0.827012			
WE5	0.809027			
WE6	0.774525			
WE8	0.688611			
WE9	0.740848			

Table 2.0 Latent Variable Correlations and Square Root of Average Variance Extracted

	ED	WL	WE
<b>ED</b>	<b>0.76693807</b>		
<b>WE</b>	-0.580991	<b>0.77931637</b>	
<b>WL</b>	0.702004	-0.566141	<b>0.7741163</b>

Upon successful confirmation of the measurement model, the model was examined the structural model of the study. Analysis of the structural model was done through running standard bootstrapping procedure whereby 5000 bootstrapping samples were assessed for the significance of the path coefficients (Henseler et al., 2009; Hair et al., 2014). Figure 1.0 and

Table 3.0 suggests workload resulted to be in significant negative relationship with work engagement ( $\beta = -0.3120$ ;  $t = 4.491$ ) thus supporting hypothesis 1. This suggests that employees perceived workload to be troublesome and hindrance towards their psychological wellbeing thus negatively affecting their work engagement. Accordingly, concerning to hypothesis 2, emotional demands also resulted in significant negative relationship with work engagement. This suggests that employees at bank experienced emotional challenges which affected their engagement at work ( $\beta = -0.3619$ ;  $t = 5.544$ ). Conclusively, both the tested relationships resulted as hypothesized.

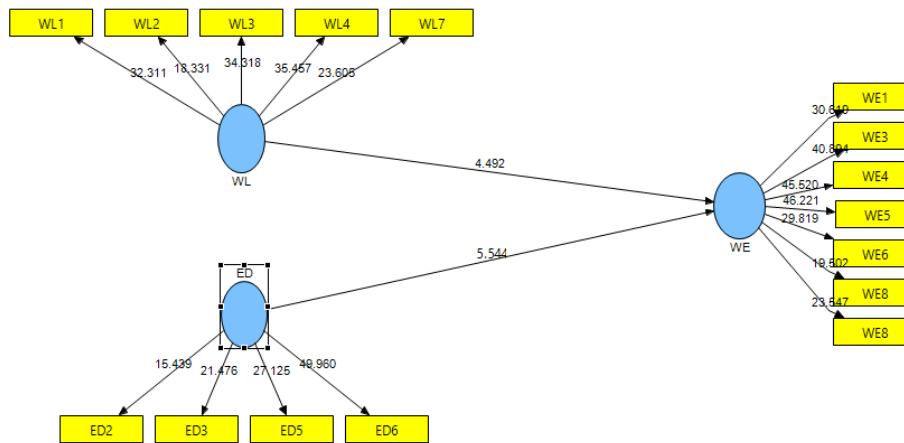


Figure 1.0 Structural Model

Table 3.0 Hypothesis Results

Hypothesis	$\beta$	Std Error	t-Value	Decision
H1 WL-> WE	-0.3120	0.069477	4.491	Supported
H2 ED -> WE	-0.3619	0.065276	5.544	Supported

### Discussion

The present study attempted to address gaps and inconsistent results pertaining to job demands and work engagement. The study outlined that job demands like workload takes people to decrease their connection and passion for the work thus, negatively affecting their work engagement. The findings are parallel to Llorens et al. (2007) and Taipale et al. (2011) outlining that work whereby, employees are bulked with extra assignments and tough deadlines can severely affect their work engagement. In particular, to the present study, the findings have outlined that the bank employees perceived a lot of workload on the job which resulted in negatively affecting their work engagement. This hence asserts that in order to

ensure that the engagement of employees is well intact, it is necessary that they are given manageable work with logically acceptable timelines.

Accordingly, the PLs path modeling results also outlined that emotional demands marked a significant negative affect on employees` work engagement. The findings are parallel to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) and Llorens et al. (2007) confirming that emotional challenges can damage employees` psychological wellbeing thus, resulting in decreasing work engagement. Concerning to the respondents, the findings suggest that bankers experienced emotionally charged situation from the bank and customers which reduced their engagement and connectivity with work. In sum, the findings suggest that job demands like workload and emotional demands are not healthy for employees work wellbeing, especially in an emerging economy like Pakistan.

### **Implications for Research and Practice:**

Based on the findings the paper draws several implications. Pertaining to research, the study guides scholars about the damaging effects of workload and emotional demands on individual work engagement. The findings have termed that economies that are striving to emerge like Pakistan can be found bulking employees with a lot of workload and emotional challenges, causing them to damage their work engagement. Thus, the finding underlines the critical need for scholars to examine job demands and their importance alongside conventional prospects like job resources that are asserted to impact positively.

Pertaining to banks, the present forwards critical implications. Since, the present study has concluded significant negative impact of job demands including workload and emotional demands upon work engagement, HR policy makers and managers need to play their part to ensure that people are given manageable workload. Accordingly, organizations need to also focus on eliminating any emotionally challenging situations to maintain employees` psychological wellbeing.

### **Limitations for Future Research**

The present study has some limitations. At first, the study was conducted through self-administered approach with cross sectional approach hence limiting the causal effect of findings. Future studies therefore may focus on collecting data based on longitudinal approach. Accordingly, the study only catered to banks in Pakistan therefore, future studies may cater to other occupational settings to see how job demands like workload and emotional demands interact with work engagement. Similarly, future studies may also attempt to look into other occupational specific job demands for better understanding of factors that can damage employees` work engagement.

### **Conclusion**

The present study aimed to address the critical nature of job demands in relation with work engagement. Going beyond the conventional research paradigms, the Current study has attempted to fill major empirical gap pertaining to how negative stressors like job demands (workload and emotional demands) can be deleterious for employees towards their



psychological connection with job. Moreover, in specific, the study has managed to underline the significant negative effects of these factors across a major sector in Pakistan which directs management and policy makers to shape job and work structures in a way that people don't feel burdened with work and emotionally challenged. The study has marked towards an important work aspect for practitioners to address for the purpose of more promising results from the employees in the long run.

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