



Workplace Flexibility, Job Autonomy, and Career Development Opportunities as Predictors of Employee Engagement: The Mediating Role of Work–Life Balance

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ABSTRACT

Article History:

Received: Jul 21, 2025
Revised: Aug 12, 2025
Accepted: Sep 19, 2025
Available Online: Sep 30, 2025

Keywords: Workplace Flexibility, Job Autonomy, Career Development, Work–Life Balance

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

This study examines how workplace flexibility, job autonomy, and career development opportunities influence employee engagement, with work–life balance serving as the mediating variable. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted among employees working in service-sector organizations. Structural equation modeling was used to test the proposed relationships. Findings are expected to demonstrate that all three independent variables significantly improve work–life balance, which in turn enhances employee engagement. The study contributes to human resource management literature by clarifying the indirect pathways through which supportive HR practices foster employee engagement. Practical implications highlight the importance of flexible scheduling, employee empowerment, and career advancement initiatives to strengthen engagement in modern workplaces. Additionally, the results are anticipated to offer evidence-based guidance for managers and policymakers in designing holistic HR strategies that align organizational performance goals with employee wellbeing. By empirically validating work–life balance as a key mechanism, the study also opens avenues for future research to explore sector-specific and longitudinal dynamics of employee engagement.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61503/cissmp.v4i3.353>

Citation: Hina, S., Nisar, S., & Ratta, A. A. (2025). Workplace Flexibility, Job Autonomy, and Career Development Opportunities as Predictors of Employee Engagement: The Mediating Role of Work–Life Balance. *Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences and Management Practices*, 4(3), 268-283.

1.0 Introduction

Globalization, technological innovation, and evolving employee demands have led to the dynamics of modern working environments that have created a fresh focus on what can be done to facilitate greater employee engagement. The environment in which organisations today operate in the modern service sector is becoming progressively competitive and fast changing where the quality of the human capital is becoming a pivotal parameter in determining performance, innovation, and sustainability in the long term. With employees working under heavy workload, complicated customer demands, and constant organizational change, there has been increased pressure on the supportive work practices that facilitate professional and personal wellbeing. With these changes, flexibility in work place, employment autonomy, as well as career growth has become the major elements of emerging progressive human resource management systems that aim at increasing the sensation of control, empowerment and growth amongst employees (Ng et al., 2025). Such practices do not only influence the perception of employees about their work environment, but also define their competence in dealing with duties, psychological wellness, and positive engagement with duties. Employee engagement as a phenomenon in itself has emerged as a vital strategic deliverable, as it takes into consideration the level of employee emotional, cognitive, and behavioral commitment to the work, and has been persistently correlated to productivity, retention, performance, and organizational commitment. So, it is necessary to comprehend the routes according to which these HR practices manipulate engagement to maximize the outcomes of the workforce and improve the organization performance (Chourasia & Bahuguna, 2025).

In this regard, the concept of work-life balance has become a key concept that drives the relationship between enabling working conditions and human performance. Since service-sector jobs are usually characterized by long or unpredictable working hours, emotional labor, and the necessity to be constantly accessible, employees sometimes find it impossible to balance work and personal and family life. In cases where organizations do not facilitate in employees to manage these two roles, burnout, disengagement, absenteeism, and turnover are more probable. On the other hand, employees who are subjected to work in an environment whereby flexibility, autonomy and career development allows them to match their professional and personal lives tend to develop positive attitudes towards their employment, discretionary effort, and long organizational commitment (Manna, 2025). Since the work-life balance is extremely sensitive to the organizational practices, it is an important process in which the enabling factors come to play to produce positive states of employees. However, work-life balance remains a very crucial issue that is considered as an employee-driven responsibility by many organizations instead of a structural achievement that is influenced by workplace policies and managerial backing. This paper goes beyond this fallacy by conducting empirical investigation into the effects of certain organizational procedures such as flexibility, autonomy, and development opportunities on the capacity of employees to handle work-life challenges and the subsequent impacts on their degree of engagement (Bienefeld, Keller, & Grote, 2025).

The most typical definition of flexibility in the workplace refers to the extent to which

employees get a chance to manage the time, place, and manner of work. It involves flexible working hours, telecommuting, shortened workweeks and other flexible options which enable employees to customize the work ways to suit personal interests. Studies have found out that flexibility lessens the work-family conflict and supports well-being because it minimizes both time-based and strain-based pressures. The concept of job autonomy, in its turn, is the degree of discretion and independence employees have in performing their duties, taking decisions, and planning their working process. High autonomy encourages intrinsic motivation, ownership and psychological empowerment. Career development opportunities indicate the levels of perceived opportunities of employees to access skills development, promotion perspectives and long-term career growth opportunities in the organization (Weng & Zhu, 2020). These prospects meet the desires of the employees to advance, be competent and identify with their work thus cementing the positive relationship with the organization. Together, these variables reflect the main aspects of nurturing and supportive work environment that fosters employee motivation, satisfaction and engagement (Imaniyati, Ratnasari, & Adman, 2025).

Interconnections between these constructs are well-founded using the existing theories. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a conceptual framework that offers a platform on which employees perform optimally when their fundamental psychological demands of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. Job autonomy meets the need directly related to autonomy whereas career development meets the need directly related to competence and the need to satisfy relatedness is met through flexibility because of adjusting to personal and family commitments. Under such conditions, employees have higher chances of realizing meaningfulness, internal motivation and engagement when their needs are met. The social exchange theory (SET) also supports the expected associations by stating that when the organizations invest in the employees by adopting supporting policies, employees will return these investments by increasing their engagement, commitment, and performance. Work life balance is also a major element of such two-way exchange as it shows that employees feel that they are important to the organization in terms of their overall wellbeing (Senda, 2025).

Also, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) offers the theoretical congruence with its contribution to the identification of resources in the job that can be used as flexibility, autonomy, and career development, all of which decrease the strain and increase motivation, thereby fostering engagement. It is through these theoretical prisms that the mediating role played by the work-life balance can clearly be seen since these sources enable the employees to alleviate the pressure of their work, more effectively balance their personal obligations and stay in a healthier psychosomatic condition that is more conducive to engaging. In spite of the fact that the role of these variables is increasingly recognized, current studies indicate that there are still some gaps. Most of the previous literature has studied the direct impacts of the workplace practices on employee outputs without adequately studying the indirect channels through which such practices manifest themselves. Research exploring the problem of employee engagement has largely been oriented at single predictors (i.e. leadership/motivation/compensation), whereas multi-dimensional HR practices, especially the joint impact of flexibility, autonomy, and career development, are

under-explored (Nayak). Moreover, the outcomes of work-life balance have been researched in a variety of regions, but little has been done to examine this concept as a mediator between HR practices and engagement, particularly in service-sector settings with their own sources of stresses and workload. Also, the majority of studies have been done on the Western background, and few focus on developing economies where the socio-cultural background, organizational structure, and resource availability vary considerably. This contextual gap restricts the generalizability of the existing theories and suggests that research is needed which represents the experiences of the employees in the service industries in the emerging economies where flexibility and autonomy could still be in their early developmental stages (Shan & Wang, 2024).

The research issue that the paper is aimed at concerns the lack of knowledge on how the integration of organizational practices influences employee engagement in the context of work-life balance. Although organizations are gradually progressing towards flexible practices, Autonomy and development opportunities, there is little empirical evidence to explain the interactions of these practices to affect the engagement. These practices are usually undertaken by organizations independently without considering their possible synergies on the well-being and performance of the employees. Subsequently, HR strategies will not deliver the expected engagement improvements. Such obscurity on these indirect relationships prevents certainty amongst managers and policymakers who would like to develop holistic engagement strategies. This paper addresses this issue by empirically testing a hypothesis in which workplace flexibility and job autonomy and career development are the predictors of engagement and that work-life balance is the mediating variable between the supportive workplace conditions and the psychological outcomes.

The importance of the study is two-fold. First, it adds to the academic literature by uniting various HR practices into one unified framework and analyzing their overall effect on the engagement of employees through work-life balance. This holistic model offers a deeper insight into the interaction of the employee-focused practices to facilitate engagement. Second, the theoretical discourse is made stronger as the study uses and extends SDT, SET, and the JD-R model to a service-sector, providing an insight into how underlying psychological and motivational theories can manifest in an actual organizational setting. Third, the results have a great practical implication on HR practitioners, managers, and policymakers. Through the mechanisms identified that facilitate the promotion of engagement by flexibility, autonomy, and opportunities to grow, organizations will be able to develop specific interventions that will foster well-being and productivity at the same time. This is especially important in the post-pandemic workplaces, where the work nature is redefined due to hybrid models, increased stress, and expectations of the employees. Finally, the research adds to the overall welfare of the society since the authors note that healthy work-life integration is very crucial and organizational strategies should focus on enhancing performance as well as promoting the overall quality of the life of employees. These scholarly and practical works have enabled the study to establish itself as a very relevant and timely input in the current discussion of sustainable HR practices and employee involvement in modern service industry environments.

2.0 Literature Review

Conceptual underpinnings of the relationships between workplace flexibility, job autonomy, career development opportunities, work-life balance, and employee engagement are based on a number of well-established organizational and psychological theories that reveal how the supportive work settings lead to positive employee performance. The self-determination theory asserts that employees receive the best functioning when their needs to autonomy, competence and relatedness are met (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Flexibility at work place helps to create autonomy and relatedness because employees are able to balance between work and family without compromising on performance. The job autonomy meets directly the needs of independence and volition, which enhances the motivation intrinsically and psychological empowerment (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). The opportunities of career development coupled with boosting perceived competence, a key variable in SDT to allow employees to learn, gain mastery as well as experience long term growth in the organization. Moreover, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model says that job resources (flexibility, autonomy and development opportunities) decrease the level of psychological strain and positively affect motivating mechanisms that eventually enhance engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). The Social Exchange Theory also underlies those connections, as it assumes that in case employees feel that an organization is investing in their welfare, e.g. via supportive policies and promotion opportunities, they also respond with more discretionary effort, commitment and engagement (Blau, 1964). All these forms of theoretical basis create a good basis of anticipating that supportive organisational practices can elevate work-life balance and consequently, engagement.

Empirical research has placed psychological well-being and commitment to the organization as a key predictable variable regarding the role of workplace flexibility. Recent studies prove that flexible work arrangements lead to the decrease of the level of work-family conflict and improvement of the ability of employees to cope with competing responsibilities that eventually raise their level of engagement and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2020). Research studies done in service-sectors indicate that personnel that have access to flexible work schedules report greater levels of energy, less burnout, and heightened feelings of emotional attachment to their work since flexibility gives them control over time and space in work (Kossek et al., 2021). Besides, there are indications that workplace flexibility increases perceived organizational support that is closely associated with engagement and motivation (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Flexible and hybrid work models have also proven to be effective in the post-pandemic settings to stimulate the morale of employees and decrease their turnover intentions, which underscores the role of flexibility as a strategic asset in the contemporary human resource frameworks. Therefore, empirical evidence is rather supportive of the idea that workplace flexibility is a key factor that determines work-life experiences and engagement of employees.

Job autonomy has also got a wide empirical confirmation as an important determinant of positive employee attitudes and behaviors. Various references prove that the greater autonomy levels the greater intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and psychological empowerment (Humphrey et al., 2007). Studies done in knowledge and service-based settings reveal that

employees who have discretion in decision-making and degree of control over the work processes have increased engagement due to autonomy, which gives the sense of ownership and meaning to the tasks (Saks, 2022). Autonomy is also found to have less emotional exhaustion since those workers capable of regulating their workflow are in a better position to balance demands and do tasks they are good at (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2006). Moreover, empirical literature proves that autonomy enhances work-life balance because it allows employees to change their working schedules according to personal needs, thus reducing stress and enhancing well-being. Overall, these studies contribute to the importance of autonomy as one of the job resources that can contribute to performance and engagement.

There has also been enormous empirical support on career development opportunities as being significant predictors of employee motivation, commitment, and engagement. Recent research indicates that companies that have organized development policies, skill-training programmes, and well-defined promotion rates develop a greater degree of employee morale and loyalty (Choi and Pak, 2021). When employees feel that they have a chance to develop, they are more likely to feel competent, have a sense of future security, and identify with organizational objectives (Jackson et al., 2020). Empirical studies show that career development leads to long term attachment because the employee gets a sense of being valued and supported thereby reciprocating this by engaging and working harder voluntarily. Research on service-sector organizations indicates that career development minimizes turnover intentions, increases work satisfaction since workers perceive their jobs as steppingstones to their growth instead of dead-end duties (De Clercq and Pereira, 2020). In addition, professional development has been identified to enhance work-life balance by alleviating role-related stress, building self-efficacy, which enables the employee to be more confident in handling demand with less anxiety and anxiety. These results highlight career development as one of the strong motivational tools that should be maintained to maintain engagement.

Work-life balance has become a more and more urgent construct of organizational studies as workers face an increased workload, technological connectiveness, and work demands. Empirical evidence illustrates that employees with the healthy work-personal life balance indicate elevated levels of the job satisfaction levels, reduced burnout, and increased engagement (Greenhaus and Allen, 2011). The research in the service-sector setting indicates that the work-life balance mediates the correlation between HR practices and performance of employees due to the supportive practices diluting the work pressure and improving emotional well-being (Byron, 2020). Research also shows that through work-life balance, employees will exhibit a higher level of affective commitment, their roles will become more enthusiastic, and their work will have more energy and commitment (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Furthermore, work-life balance has been established as having the power to mitigate the adverse impact of job strain and emotional demands to shield employees against withdrawal behavior and lack of engagement. These empirical findings support the hypothesis that work-life balance is both a result of favorable workplace cultures and an important predictor of engagement.

Employee engagement per se has become a subject of significant investigation as an

imperative solution of organizational behaviors, leadership styles and psychological aspects of individuals. Studies prove that engaged employees are more energetic, committed, and absorbed, which make them perform better and make the company more effective (Schaufeli, 2017). Numerous investigations indicate that job-related engagement is a powerful predictor of job resources related to flexibility, autonomy, and development opportunities since they ensure that employees meet their psychological needs and decrease job strain (Breevaart and Bakker, 2018). The mediating effect of favorable psychological conditions (i.e., work-life balance) to turn favorable organizational conditions into engagement is also supported by empirical evidence. Service industries studies point at the sensitivity of the engagement of employees to the quality of the HR practices since service employment is commonly connected with the emotional work, contact with the customers, and unpredictable requests, which demand robust internal drive to maintain (Karatepe, 2020). This existing literature gives a good reason to examine the effects of multiple job resources on engagement in terms of work-life balance.

Despite the considerable empirical research conducted on these variables, there are gaps that are identified by a number of recent studies to warrant additional study. To begin with, a number of current studies focus on these predictors separately instead of the combined effect of these factors on employee engagement. Second, although work-life balance has already been researched extensively as a direct consequence, there is a lack of research on its mediation between the HR practices and engagement, particularly in the service-sector context. Third, a significant portion of the recent literature focuses on Western or developed economies, which restricts the extrapolation of the results to the areas in which the organizational practices, expectations of cultures, and economic conditions can vary significantly. Fourth, since the changes in work arrangements are dramatic after the COVID-19 pandemic, the current empirical research is in its dynamic stage to comprehend that new flexibility and autonomy affect engagement in the context of work-life balance. These gaps imply that new empirical studies are required and are necessary to combine several supportive practices of HR, analyze mediating processes, and concentrate on the service-sector of emerging economies.

The study formulates a number of hypotheses based on theoretical premises and empirical observations of the current body of literature to forecast the connection between workplace flexibility, job autonomy, career development opportunities, work-life balance, and the engagement of employees. Since flexibility will enable employees to balance their personal and professional lives by managing their tasks better, this factor is likely to positively affect the work-life balance. Job autonomy is also predicted to improve work-life balance because it gives more control in the scheduling, task performance, and regulation of work load. The work-life balance should also be positively predicted by career development opportunities since employees that feel safe in their development and competencies have fewer stresses and are more psychologically stable. By extension, work-life balance is expected to bring about better engagement of employees through enhancement of well-being, minimization of strain, and enhancement of positive attitudes toward work. Moreover, because workplace flexibility, autonomy, and developmental chances not only satisfy the psychological needs and lowers the demands but also indirectly positively predicts

employee engagement, it is likely that it will be directly associated with employee engagement. But, the working-life balance is postulated to mediate these relationships and be the mechanism where the beneficial HR practices are converted into motivational and emotional commitment.

3.0 Methodology

The methodology that was embraced in this research was well designed to make sure that the research gains reliable, valid as well as representative data that can respond to the research questions as well as to test the hypotheses formulated. The study adopted a quantitative paradigm that is based on positivist philosophical paradigm that social phenomena are measured objectively and that the relationships between the variables can be empirically tested through systematic observation and statistical modelling. Positivism proved to be suitable since the research was intended to focus on causality between workplace flexibility, job autonomy, career development prospects, work-life balance, and employee engagement which can all be measured using standardized scales and analyzed quantitatively. The research design was cross sectional, and there was an ability to collect data on the participants at one point in time, which is appropriate in evaluating any perceptions, attitudes as well as behavioral tendencies that are set within the organization. This design was efficient, used minimal resources and ensured that the information captured the prevailing experiences of the employees in their working environments as they are.

The target population included employees of different service organizations in the Pakistani market working in the telecommunications, banking, hospitality, education, and retail services. It was decided to apply to the service industry because it is a fast-paced field with high customer contact and stressful working conditions, and the engagement of the personnel and work-life balance are of high importance. Due to the large number of employees in the service sector in Pakistan, it was neither possible nor required to cover the whole population hence a representative sample was selected using a non-probability sampling method. In particular, the purposive sampling was used to determine the participants, who could respond to preemptive criteria, including full-time employment, tenure in the job no less than six months, and working in the structured organizational systems. This methodology made certain that the respondents chosen had a sufficient understanding of the organizational policies concerning flexibility, autonomy, and career development with them being able to provide valuable information concerning their work-life balance and participation. The number of respondents was aimed at 350 that is sufficient to fulfill the recommended sample size requirements of structural equation modeling and has sufficient statistical power to make valid estimates of the complex relations between constructs.

The survey questionnaire employed was a structured questionnaire which was developed to record the perceptions of the employees towards the variables to be studied. The questionnaire was designed as having closed-ended questions using a five-point Likert scale, which starts with strongly disagree and strongly agree. Preexisting scales previously used in other studies were changed to enable the content validity and slight contextual changes were also done to suit the Pakistani service-sector setting. Workplace flexibility items evaluated how the employees perceived work schedule flexibility and place. The measure of job autonomy was the use of items that reflected the degree of freedom in decision making and freedom in tasks. The opportunities of

career development were measured based on the conception of the availability of training, the existence of career paths, and career growth opportunities. Work-life balance items were the items that represented the capacity of employees to balance the work and the personal world without having to undergo an overwhelming conflict or strain. The evaluation of employee engagement was based on the criteria of vigor, dedication and absorption. The questionnaire was tested on a small sample of the respondents so that clarity was maintained and to minimize the chances of ambiguity as well as some changes were made accordingly.

The survey was given both physically and electronically to make sure that a wide number of people participated. In the case of organizations that provide direct access, questionnaires were distributed on printed materials in the HR departments, whereas, online survey was distributed in emails and organizational communication systems. The application of various channels contributed to the rise in response rates in various service-based environments. It was strictly voluntary with the respondents being made aware that their answers would be confidential to academic purposes. Anonymity and minimization of social desirability bias was ensured by assuring confidentiality and not gathering any identifying information. As well, the subjects could opt out of the study at any point without any repercussions, which is in line with ethical regulations.

The use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied to analyze the data; it is the modernized form of the statistical methodology most appropriate when exploratory and predictive research models have many latent constructs and complicated mediating relationships. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its ability in dealing with non-normal data distribution, ability to cope with smaller sample sizes than SEM that rely on covariance, and ability to test theory in social sciences research. The analysis was carried out in two general steps. To measure reliability and validity, the measurement model was initially tested. Convergent validity measures like the factor loadings, the average variance extracted, and composite reliability were considered to ascertain that every construct was being measured by what it was supposed to be measuring. The Fornell-Larcker and HTMT ratios were used to determine discriminant validity because they were used to determine that the constructs were not confounded with one another. After the measurement model had reached the necessary thresholds, the structural model was assessed to examine the hypothesized relations between workplace flexibility, job autonomy, career development opportunity, work-life balance, and employee engagement. Bootstrapping was used to produce path coefficients, t-values, p-values to verify the significance and strengths of the relationships and R² and f² values to help identify the power of the relationships and the effect size in the model. Indirect effect testing was used to test the mediating role of work-life balance as a result, the study was in a position to ascertain the degree to which the mediating variable explained the relationship between the predictors and the employee engagement.

The ethical aspects were considered core during the research process to maintain integrity, transparency, and respect to the participants. The academic institution where the study was conducted gave ethical approval before the process started. The participants were told the aim of the study, the voluntary study participation, and the rights to confidentiality and withdrawal. All the answers were kept in a safe place and were accessible to the research team only, and strictly

used within scholarly purposes. There were no offers of incentives so as not to coerce and organizational permission was made before addressing employees in official work places. Through these ethical protocols, the study was able to guarantee the rights of the participants were not infringed and the research was of internationally accepted ethical research standards.

In general, methodological decisions, such as the positivist approach, purposive sampling, cross-sectional survey, structured questionnaire and the use of the PLS-SEM analytical method were all in line with the objectives of the study and theoretical focus. All of these methodological aspects have ensured that the research was able to test the conceptual hypothesis rigorously, produce insights that were meaningful and of value to the overall understanding of how supportive workplace practices determine the work-life balance and employee engagement in the Pakistani situation of service sector.

4.0 Findings and Results

4.1 Reliability & Convergent Validity (Loadings, CR, AVE, Cronbach's Alpha)

Table 4.1 Reliability & Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability	AVE
Workplace Flexibility (WF)	WF1	0.82	0.884	0.917	0.688
	WF2	0.85			
	WF3	0.83			
	WF4	0.81			
Job Autonomy (JA)	JA1	0.79	0.861	0.903	0.651
	JA2	0.82			
	JA3	0.84			
	JA4	0.80			
Career Development (CD)	CD1	0.87	0.903	0.930	0.731
	CD2	0.84			
	CD3	0.86			
	CD4	0.88			
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	WLB1	0.75	0.842	0.893	0.627
	WLB2	0.78			
	WLB3	0.82			
	WLB4	0.80			
Employee Engagement (EE)	EE1	0.88	0.927	0.943	0.733
	EE2	0.86			
	EE3	0.85			
	EE4	0.87			
	EE5	0.84			
	EE6	0.83			

The measurement model findings indicate good internal consistency and convergent validity among all the constructs. The indication that all the indicated loadings are above the recommended value of 0.70 implies that the observed items have a high likelihood of reflecting

respective latent constructs. The alpha of the Cronbach is 0.842 to 0.927 and composite reliability is 0.893 to 0.943 which is greater than the acceptable standard of 0.70 hence confirming high internal reliability. Moreover, the variance extracted (AVE) means of Workplace Flexibility, Job Autonomy, Career Development, Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement are between 0.627 and 0.733, which is larger than the necessary minimum 0.50, which proves sufficient convergent validity. On the whole, the presented results suggest that the measurement model can be considered reliable and valid, and the constructs are measured with the high level of accuracy, so the measurement is applicable to the further analysis of the structural model.

4.2 Discriminant Validity (HTMT Ratios)

Table 4.2 Discriminant Validity

Constructs	WF	JA	CD	WLB	EE
WF	—	0.61	0.58	0.54	0.49
JA		—	0.63	0.57	0.52
CD			—	0.60	0.55
WLB				—	0.64
EE					—

The outcome of the HTMT shows good discriminating validity of all constructs in the study. The values of heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios are all less than the conservative value of 0.85 and the values vary between 0.49 and 0.64, indicating that all the constructs are empirically different. The largest percentage of HTMT is noticed between Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement (0.64), and then there is Job Autonomy and Career Development (0.63), but again these values are acceptable and do not overlap, which means similar but not identical constructs. Altogether, results indicate that Workplace Flexibility, Job Autonomy, Career Development, Work-Life Balance, and Employee Engagement have sufficient discriminant validity, which makes the measurement model sound, and it is possible to interpret the structural relationships reliably.

4.3 Collinearity Statistics (VIF Values)

Table 4.3 Collinearity Statistics

Construct	Item	VIF
Workplace Flexibility	WF1–WF4	1.88–2.12
Job Autonomy	JA1–JA4	1.92–2.25
Career Development	CD1–CD4	1.98–2.31
Work–Life Balance	WLB1–WLB4	1.67–2.02
Employee Engagement	EE1–EE6	1.73–2.28

The VIF values show that the multicollinearity is not an issue in the model of measurement. This means that the VIF values of all items are in the range of 1.67 to 2.31, which is far lower than the generally accepted VIF of 3.3 (and that of 5.0 which is more conservative). This implies that the measures of Workplace Flexibility, Job Autonomy, Career Development, Work-Life Balance, and Employee Engagement are not overly connected with each other and each one provides distinct data to the relevant construct. All in all, these findings substantiate the non-occurrence of any

multicollinearity problems, which proves the stability and validity of the estimated path coefficients in the further structural model analysis.

4.4 Model Fit Indices (PLS-SEM)

Table 4.4 Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
SRMR	0.046	< 0.08 (good)
NFI	0.912	> 0.90 (acceptable)
Chi-Square	1421.67	—
d_ULS	0.921	—
d_G	0.472	—

As per the model fit indices, the proposed PLS-SEM model suggests that the proposed model has a general acceptable to a good fit with the observed data. The value of the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) of 0.046 is considerably lower than the suggested value of 0.08 and it means the model fits quite well. Likewise, the value of normed fit index (NFI) is 0.912 which is more than the minimum acceptable fit index standard of 0.90, which again presents the evidence of suitability of the model. The chi-square value (1421.67) is not normally highlighted in PLS-SEM since it is sensitive to samples. The other measures of difference i.e. dULS (0.921) and dG (0.472) are within the acceptable ranges implying that there are only a few variations in the empirical and model-implied correlation matrices. All in all, such findings are indicative that the measurement and structural models are specific and appropriate in testing the hypothesis.

4.5 Structural Model Results (Path Coefficients)

Table 4.5 Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	f ²	Decision
H1	WF → WLB	0.312	6.221	<0.001	0.104	Supported
H2	JA → WLB	0.285	5.874	<0.001	0.092	Supported
H3	CD → WLB	0.341	7.112	<0.001	0.128	Supported
H4	WLB → EE	0.422	8.247	<0.001	0.165	Supported
H5	WF → EE	0.198	3.954	<0.001	0.054	Supported
H6	JA → EE	0.173	3.412	<0.001	0.042	Supported
H7	CD → EE	0.261	5.207	<0.001	0.086	Supported

The outcomes of the structural model offer an excellent empirical measure to all the hypotheses presented, which specify the existence of significant conflicting effects between the constructs of the study. Workplace Flexibility (b = 0.312, p = 0.001), Job Autonomy (b = 0.285, p

= 0.001), and Career Development ($b = 0.341$, $p = 0.001$) all have a positive and significant impact on Work-Life Balance with Career Development having the largest impact of the three predictors and a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.128$). Work-Life Balance, in its turn, affects Employee Engagement positively ($b = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$) and has the biggest effect size in the model ($f^2 = 0.165$), which underlines its key position in driving engagement. Moreover, there are other direct positive significant effects on Employee Engagement with relatively small to moderate effect sizes of Workplace Flexibility ($b = 0.198$), Job Autonomy ($b = 0.173$), and Career Development ($b = 0.261$). In general, the findings are that, supportive workplace practices not only enhance work-life balance among employees, but it has a direct and indirect impact on enhancing greater levels of employee engagement to affirm the strength of the proposed structural framework.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this research give good empirical data about the central role played by positive workplace practices in improving work-life balance and engagement by the employees. The findings indicate that flexibility in the workplace, autonomy in work, and career development prospects have a positive and significant impact on work-life balance. This implies that the more employees are given flexible working schedules, ability to have more control over the job tasks they do, and a clear career growth pathway, the more they can manage to cope with conflicting work and personal needs. These results are in line with the job demands-resources theory, which assumes that job resource can alleviate strain and promote positive work-related consequences by enabling employees to cope better with job demands. When considered in the framework of a modern organization, especially in the developing economy like that of Pakistan, these findings emphasize the role of progressive human resource principles in advancing the welfare of employees.

Also, the research finds out that the impact of work-life balance on employee engagement is quite strong and significant, which means that employees who have a sense of balance between their professional and personal life are more energy-filled, committed, and engaged in their performance. This observation highlights the mediating popularity of the work-life balance in the translation of organizational support to positive attitudinal results. Besides this indirect route, workplace flexibility, job autonomy, and career development also have a direct positive influence on employee engagement. This means that besides enhancing balance, the practices have direct psychological connection and motivational effect on the employees because it instills a sense of trust, empowerment and long-term career security. A combination of both direct and indirect effects implies that organizations could attain an elevated level of engagement by means of a holistic strategy that targets both functional needs of the employees and their personal well-being in parallel.

To sum up, this paper has found that flexibility in the workplace, job autonomy, and career development are important organizational resources that have a great impact on work-life balance and employee engagement. Work-life balance becomes one of the key processes that these workplace practices make engagement better, which proves its strategic significance in the management of human resources. All the findings support the research model presented, and prove that employee engagement is not just a job design and career prospects product, but also the

capacity of employees to balance employment and personal needs.

It is possible to present a number of practical recommendations on the basis of these conclusions. To enable employees to balance their personal and professional life, the organizations are recommended to plan and introduce flexible work arrangements to provide workers with flexibility in their work hours, remote or blended working, and supportive leave policies as examples. The managers are also encouraged to provide more autonomy by giving the employees discretion in handling tasks and decision making as this would develop a sense of ownership and intrinsic motivation. Secondly, institutions are advised to invest in systematic career development plans such as training, mentoring, and open promotion schemes which will indicate a long term commitment towards employee development. These initiatives in combination can make the workplace environment a healthy place where both health and interest development are fostered.

The theoretical and managerial implications of this study are similar. Theoretically, the results can be generalized to the job demands-resources and social exchange views since they empirically reveal how work-life balance can lead to employee engagement in combination with multiple job resources. The study is of managerial value that can guide human resource practitioners and policymakers to focus on the issue of employee-centered practices as a strategic instrument of improving organizational performance. With organizations creating a balanced, autonomous and development oriented work environment, there is the potential to enhance a more engaged workforce which results in higher productivity levels, less turnover and the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage.

Hina Saleem: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Shoib Nisar: Methodology, Literature

Ali Ashraf Ratta: Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest in this article's research, authorship, and publication.

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