

# Mediatory Influence of Work Engagement on Employability Skill and Job Innovativeness

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**Abstract** Job Demand Resources model give a vivid theoretical explanation of the factors that can affect work engagement in the workplace, that work engagement mediated the relationship between job resources on job outcomes. The current study therefore examined the mediatory influence of work engagement on perceived employability skill and job innovativeness. In a survey using cross-sectional research which utilised ex-post facto design, data were collected through structured psychological scales from 200 employees of financial institutions in Lagos metropolis using purposive sampling technique. The collected data were processed using simple mediating bootstrapping approach. Work engagement had mediatory influence on the relationship between perceived employability skill and job innovativeness. The implication of the findings is discussed in line with sustainable employment and change from status quo to innovation in job.

**Keywords** Work Engagement, Employability Skill, Job Innovativeness

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## 1. Introduction

Job innovativeness can be conceived as complex behaviour consisting of idea generation, idea promotion and idea realization with the aim of meeting organizational goals in novel ways [1]. Job innovativeness is the degree to which an individual is receptive to new ideas [2]. Job innovativeness requires creativity and willingness to change [3]; an optional extra role behaviour required by the organisation [4]. Job innovativeness requires that the individual is both intelligent and eager to be innovative. For an employee to be innovative one requires intrinsic motivation and a certain level of internal force that pushes one to persevere in the face of challenges inherent in a creative work [5]. Moreover, the internal force keeps the employee going even when the challenges are positively overcome; it is about a positive tension and desire to excel [6].

An example of an internal energy that may be requisite by the employee is work engagement. Work engagement captures an enduring, positive and fulfilling affective-cognitive state of mind, characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption at work [7, 8]. A work related psychological state in which an individual finds himself engrossed and immersed in work. Work engagement could

also be assumed to be a motivational concept [9]. When engaged, employee feels constrained to strive towards a challenging goal, and want to succeed. Work engagement goes beyond reacting to the immediate situation; employee acknowledges one's responsibility to achieving the goal. Engaged employee not only have the ability to be energetic, they excitedly apply the energy to their work. They do not reserve their energy for possible later use for an important task, however they acknowledge that today's work deserves their energy. Work engagement consists of three components which are the physical component that is the energy used to perform a job; the emotional component that is putting one's heart in one's job, and the cognitive component that is being engrossed in a job [10, 11]. Moreover, an employee who is extremely engaged in one's job personally identify with the job, work harder, is more productive than others and is more likely to produce the results the organisation wants [9]. An employee who is not engaged in one's job, may have reduced job performance, less innovativeness and creativity and may likely not make good use of one's skills and abilities.

An employee possesses assets which include the various skills and intellectual abilities which are used in line with the organizational goals. For an individual to be employable one needs a character or quality of being employable termed employability; some skills also need to be acquired. Employers tend to view employability mainly as a characteristic of the individual [12] and as a resource required on the job. Employability skills are the essential assets possessed by an individual which make one suitable for potential employers. The employability skills emerge from personal development skills, people skills and general skills. [13] explain further that an individual requires a set of

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achievements, understandings and personal attributes that increase the probability of one gaining a job; which the potential employers want to pay for. Employability skill varies from those already employed in work and the unemployed who are still hunting for work [12]. The individual situation may likely spur one's perceived employability skill and likewise influence job outcomes such as job innovativeness indirectly through job attitudes [14] work engagement [15].

The Job Demand Resources model (JD-R) by [16] states that there are some job resources that inherently influence employee's engagement in work [17]. The JD-R model emphasizes the relationship between job resources and work engagement [8]. Job resources can be categorized into different levels among which is the level of the task such as skill variety and autonomy [18] and employability skill. [8] claimed that if employees gain necessary job resources they may become more engaged in the work, and also influence job performance and sustainability [19-21]. Moreover, [22] posited that the (JD-R) model reveals that work engagement mediates the relationship between job resources on one hand and positive outcomes on the other. Work engagement has an influence on various job outcomes [19] such as job and financial performance, and job innovativeness. Employees' work engagement could be enhanced and managed through organizational and individual efforts (e.g., providing job resources) such that work engagement can play mediating role on organizational effectiveness [23].

In previous studies, researchers [24] found that employability correlates positively with supervisor rated innovative work behavior. Also, [25] showed that work engagement significantly influences employees' innovative work behaviour. Furthermore, [26] found that work engagement significantly mediates causal relationship between work environment which are organisational support and autonomy on innovative work behaviour. Work engagement also plays a mediating role in the relationship between job resources and job performance within organizations [19, 6, 28]. Moreover, [29] showed that employees' job innovativeness is very essential for continuous development and corporate entrepreneurship in the organisation.

It is not business as usual but business unusual that prompts innovation or the generation, promotion, realisation and acceptance of new ideas. When the status quo is maintained, there will be no room for creation of new ideas that would eventually lead to new achievement. There is a global change from industrial based economy to knowledge based economy. Financial institutions specifically moved from analogue to information technology compliance in rendering their services. The global and institutional change requires and demands improved employability skills of the employee and work engagement to spur job innovativeness. Work engagement catalyses energetic ability of the employee to work. Job innovativeness involves searching for new and improved ways which brings about change in organisation from dynamic employees therefore dovetail

into economic growth and sustainability.

Benchmarking JD-R model, researchers [18] in their study on job resources used two variables skill variety and autonomy to represent level of task; the present study used employability skill. Furthermore, previous studies utilised job performance and sustainability [19, 20], organisational effectiveness [23] as variables to represent job outcome while the present study used job innovativeness. Moreover, other studies apply work engagement as a mediator between job resources and job outcomes [30, 31, 27]. The present study also retained work engagement as a mediator as purported by JD-R model.

This study therefore examined employability skill on job involvement with the mediating effect of work engagement. Based on the ongoing, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: Employability skills will have significant positive influence on job innovativeness

Hypothesis 2: Employability skills will have significant influence on work engagement.

Hypothesis 3: Work engagement will positively predict job innovativeness.

Hypothesis 4: There will be mediatory influence of work engagement between employability skills and job innovativeness.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

This study is a cross-sectional survey that utilised ex-post facto design. This permitted the collection of data from numerous participants at the same point in time. The participants were 200 employees of financial institutions who are also members of professional associations. The use of computer is mandatory in financial institutions. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting participants for the research study. Demographic variables measured include age, sex, educational qualification, organisational type, and professional association membership.

### 2.2. Instruments

Perceived employability skill was measured by a scale adapted from [32]. This eleven (11) item scale seeks information on general level of employability skills of participants. The scale is a multidimensional construct with two major components namely internal employability skills and external employability skills. The response format utilised 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 as 'strongly disagree' to 5 as 'strongly agree'. The items in this scale include 'I have good prospects in this organisation because my employer values my personal contribution' 'Anyone with my level of skills and knowledge and similar job and organisational experience will be highly sought after by employers'. [32] reported for perceived employability skill scale internal consistency using Cronbach alpha of (.83).

Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES) developed by [7] was adapted to measure participant's level of work

engagement. The scale consists seventeen (18) item which measures the three dimensions of work engagement. In this study, the scale is designed in Likert 4-point scale ranging from 1 as ‘Never’ to 4 as ‘Always’. Items sample in this scale include “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose” and “Time flies when I am working”. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the three subscales of work engagement scale ranges from .80 to .90 [33].

Job innovativeness was measured by twenty (21) items scale adopted from [3]. The items in this scale seek information on participant’s general level of innovative skills. The scale is a multidimensional construct with four major components namely: creativity, willingness, opinion and ambiguity. However, further factor analysis have streamlined the components into just creativity and willingness. The scale is a self-report technique that enables researchers to predict innovativeness [34]. The response format of the instrument is 1-5 point Likert scales. Participants rate each item using 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 as ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5 as ‘Strongly agree’. The items in this scale include “I consider myself to be creative and original in my thinking and behaviour” ‘I am an inventive kind of person”. According to [3] job innovativeness internal consistency using Cronbach alpha was (.89).

**2.3. Procedure**

The administration of a questionnaire that contains all the scales took place at participants’ office in Lagos. A copy of the questionnaire was given to each participant; the

assurance of anonymity was stated in the questionnaire by the researcher. The participants were assured of confidentiality. Two hundred and fifteen questionnaires were administered and the participants were guided on how to respond to the items. Only 200 (93%) correctly completed copies of questionnaire were analysed.

**3. Results**

The analysis of the socio demography of the participants in this study shows that their age ranges from 28 years to 62 years with 77(38.5%) male and 123(61.5%) female. Some 66(33.0%) out of the total participants possess Bachelors degree, 129(64.5%) possess Master degree and 5(2.5%) possess Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree. All the participants are members of professional associations. It was observed that 114(57%) of the total participants work in private financial organizations while 86(43%) work in public financial organizations.

**3.1. Descriptive Statistics of Major Variables**

In order to analyse the data, descriptive statistics of the major variables as well as their correlation were conducted using SPSS version 23. It is observed in Table 1 in the zero-order correlation analysis that there is significant positive relationship between age and all other factors. Sex was negatively related to job innovativeness. Employability skill and work engagement are each positively related to job innovativeness.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	36.27	12.04	1				
2. Sex	-	-	.143*	1			
3. Employability Skill	2.20	.54	.274**	-.11	1		
4. Work Engagement	3.32	.58	.346**	.02	.505**	1	
5. Job Innovativeness	1.58	.47	.322**	-.198**	.723**	.641**	1

Gender (M=1, F=0), \*\*= significant at 0.05% (two-tailed).

**Table 2.** Simple Mediation Model of Innovative Behaviours

Predictors	Consequent Factors											
	Mediator Model			Dependent Variable Model								
	B	t	P	Total effect			Direct effect			I.E (95% Boot C.I)		
Variables	B	t	P	B	t	p	B	t	p	B	LL	LU
Constant	-.624	-3.482	0.001	-.331	-2.378	.018	-.109	-.852	.395	-	-	-
Employability	.467	7.142	0.001	.675	13.272	.000	.509	9.996	.000	-	-	-
Engagement	-	-	-	-	-	-	.356	7.193	.000	.166	.094	.262
Age	.016	3.457	0.001	.012	3.236	.001	.006	1.800	.073	-	-	-
Sex	.066	.576	.565	-.271	-3.062	.003	-.295	-3.728	.001			
	<i>F(3,196)=28.32, R=.550, R<sup>2</sup>=.302</i>			<i>F(3,196)=83.168, R=.748, R<sup>2</sup>=.56</i>			<i>F(4,195)=91.462, R=.808, R<sup>2</sup>=.652</i>					

I.E = Indirect effect, C.I = Confidence Interval, Boot = Bootstrapping.

After presentation of zero order correlation of the major variables, mediation analysis was conducted.

### 3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The study employed SPSS process macro developed by [35] to test the hypotheses generated in this study. Process macro is considered to be useful especially when estimating indirect effect of data without normal distribution [36]. Hierarchical regression Bootstrap estimates were investigated to ensure the mediating effect of work engagement. Process Macro use bootstrapping approach to estimate model coefficient with confidence interval. Using Process Macro for SPSS provided by [37], 5,000 bootstrap estimates to generate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for the observed indirect effects, the analysis result is presented in Table 2.

The analysis result in Table 2 supports hypothesis 1 that employability skills has significant positive effect on job innovativeness ( $B = .675$ ,  $t=13.272$ ,  $p<.05$ ) while controlling for participants age and gender. The second hypothesis which states that employability skills will have significant effect on work engagement was also accepted based on the analysis result ( $B = .467$ ,  $t=7.142$ ,  $p<.05$ ). It was found that employability skills have positive impact on work engagement regardless of employee gender and age. The third hypothesis result also shows that work engagement positively predicts job innovativeness ( $B = .356$ ,  $t=7.193$ ,  $p<.05$ ) after controlling for both age and gender. Finally, the mediating effect (Indirect) of work engagement on the relationship between employability skills and job innovativeness was also accepted ( $B= .166$ , C.I (.094, .262). However, the mediating effect is partial as the inclusion of mediator does not affect employability skill from having significant impact on job innovativeness.

## 4. Discussion

The findings of hypothesis one that employability skills has significant positive effect on job innovativeness supports [24]. This shows that employee who has required skills to execute their duties tends to have better innovative related behaviours on one's job. However, it is not enough to have employability skills to move one within the labour market to realise sustainable employment but is important to put it to relevant use in the organization for change. The organizations crave the employee's willingness to go the extra mile. Moreover, job innovativeness in the creation of something new or different by employees can bring about change for better products and services and competitive advantage for the organisation among financial institutions. The findings of hypothesis two that employability skill have significant effect on work engagement corroborates JD-R model. The employee provides resources from the skills and abilities one possesses. The employee skills are used as expertise for engagement in the work. Work engagement

helps the employee to fully key to one's job so as to deliver excellent outcome in the best interest of the organisation. To apply physical energy, high mental resilience means getting involved or engrossed in one's work without disconnecting oneself from the work.

The findings of hypothesis three that work engagement positively predict employee job innovativeness is in line with [25, 38] report that there is significant relationship between work engagement and job innovativeness. Employee work engagement is one of the key antecedents of creativity and innovation [39]. Employee needs to be engaged in work to get the new and latest technology to facilitate work; search for other ways which the organization can change some vital aspects of the organization in order to enhance development in the organization.

The findings in hypothesis four showing the mediating influence of work engagement between employability skill and job innovativeness supported [19, 27, 28, 26]. Employee's work engagement plays mediating role between job resources and job outcome. Job innovativeness is important in an organisation's ability to compete well in the national cum world market. Individual with employability skill who can willingly try new things to change, create and innovate are important assets for the organisation in the realisation of organisation goals and job outcomes for economic growth, sustainable development, and intrapreneurship that bring about competitive advantage. With competitive advantage an organisation outperforms other organisations because its employees are able to create more value through innovation from the resources, skills and abilities at their disposal.

### 4.1. Implication

The implication for this study is that the individual requires employability skill which is necessary for ones sustainable employment. Although employability skill predicts job innovation, however work engagement mediates the relationship between employability skill and job innovation. That is the engaged worker is creative, innovative and willing to make changes. Moreover, job innovativeness is a positive outcome for organisational change and also improves organisational growth. Work engagement harnesses job involvement of the employee.

### 4.2. Recommendation

To be relevant, employability skill should be dynamic. Therefore employee should be continuously trained to be relevant in the labour market. Management should base employees' placement on the job on their skills; so that employees will be engaged for innovation, economic growth and sustainability. Human Resource Management should promote policy that improves employee skill. Management should endorse organisational policies that encourage job innovation for changes are brought about by new things and new ideas. Management can further convert opportunities brought about by changes into marketable ideas.

### 4.3. Limitation of Study

The present study is a cross sectional survey, future studies may use longitudinal survey to be able to measure changes in the employees' job innovativeness over a long period of time. This will enable the researcher to evaluate how improved employability skills over the period of time influence job innovativeness.

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