

The Effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance in Ghana's MSMEs Sector during COVID-19: The Moderating Role of Job Resources

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Abstract

Small, micro, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across the globe were largely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has plunged the business world into a serious crisis. However, Employee Engagement (EE) has been labeled as an essential nutrient that organizations need in order to survive in these turbulent times. This study was to examine the effect of EE on Employee Performance during the COVID-19 pandemic and how job resources moderate this relationship. The study used a sample size of 395 respondents who were chosen from a variety of MSMEs via a convenience sampling method. The study used a survey questionnaire design as the main method for collecting primary data. The results of the correlation analysis showed a statistical significant correlation between EE and employee performance. It was revealed that job resources moderated the relationship between EE and employee performance. Finally, the result showed that job resources had a significant effect on EE. Thus, it can be concluded that, in the face of COVID-19, EE is a significant predictor of the employees in the MSMEs sector performance.

Keywords

Employee Engagement, Job Resources, Employee Performance, MSMEs, COVID-19, Ghana

1. Introduction

In the past, employees were seen as strategic tools by organizations. However,

since the corporate environment has evolved, employees are now viewed as strategic partners (Singh, 2020). As a result, organizations face the challenge of devising strategies to purposefully position their employees in that direction. This situation has been aggravated by the advent of the global pandemic, COVID-19, plunging businesses around the world into a serious crisis (Mani & Mishra, 2021; Kumar, 2021; Atiku & Randa, 2021; Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Jung, Jung, & Yoon, 2021). Among businesses, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across the globe are the most affected sectors by the pandemic (Shafi, Liu, & Ren, 2020; Eggers, 2020), worsening their problems and leaving behind a gap that leaders and owners need to fill (Atiku & Randa, 2021). Besides, these organizations are finding effective ways to get the best out of their most valuable asset, human resources, since it is the effort of these resources that sustains organizational effectiveness and survival (Obuobisa-Darko & Tsedzah, 2019; Theo, Nuryamsi, & Munizu, 2021). Employee Engagement (EE) is the essential nutrient that modern organizations require in order to thrive (Dixit & Singh, 2020). Metaphorically, EE is being prescribed as the antidote to the recent crisis in the corporate business setting, and just as the world is relying on a vaccine for survival, organizations rely on EE to stay in business. Furthermore, Rao, Narayana, & Niranjana (2021) asserted that EE is a powerful tool that can assist organizations in transforming their employees from strategic tools to strategic partners. Hence, organizations must go beyond employee motivational strategies and incorporate workplace practices that promote EE (Berri & Gulati, 2021). As a result, the concept of EE has become one of the most popular and extensively explored fields in human resource management for practitioners and academics alike (Rameshkumar, 2020; Bulińska-Stangrecka & Iddagoda, 2020; Hameduddin & Lee, 2021), as well as in the popular press (Saks & Gruman, 2020), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chanana, 2020; Kumar, 2021).

Regardless, HR managers are attempting to mitigate the consequences of the global crisis on their employees, a circumstance that is slowly but steadily lowering EE (Kumar, 2021). Dinh (2020) also showed that businesses usually face various types of challenges in their efforts to develop interaction with their employees in order to build a robust labour force. As a result, HR managers and business leaders are compelled to focus more on engaging their valuable assets, as the output and performance of these assets have a direct effect on organizational productivity (Sharma & Sharma, 2014; Taha, 2016; Dhir & Shukla, 2019). Simon & Jeromy (2018) noted that when HR managers improve EE, it leads to improved performance, lowers staff turnover, and enhances employee well-being. According to Balogun & Afolabi (2018), organizations globally have become much more aware of the importance of their human resources serving as a competitive edge over their competitors. Through their performance, employees create a competitive edge for their organizations. Therefore, organizations should find ways to embed engagement strategies into the overall organization's policies to achieve the highest possible levels of performance from their employees. Al-

brecht et al. (2015) concluded that HR managers need to make it a point to insert EE into their HRM policies and practices. Also, organizations are required to concentrate on the factors that contribute to enhancing employees' performance because their performances have a direct linkage with the goal attainment of the organization (Biddle & Evenden, 2014). The debate on EE has been going on in Africa as well. For instance, Shirin & Kleyn (2017) found that engagement among employees of a large South African bank was primarily driven by the corporate reputation perceptions of the employees. Conversely, Vittee (2015) postulated that employee empowerment and employees' participation in decision-making were the core indicators of engagement in South Africa. Moletsane, Tefera, & Migiro (2019) found that the low level of productivity in a South African sugar factory was due to the high number of relatively engaged employees in the factory, and this was attributed to personal feelings of employees, work atmosphere, communication, leadership style, and devotion.

In addition, Otieno, Waiganjo, & Njeru (2015) found that the performance of organizations in the Kenyan horticultural sector mainly depended on EE, and in the same national jurisdiction, creativity and innovation were found to be the main antecedents of EE among librarians (Gichohi, 2014). Also, Mokaya & Kipyegon (2014) revealed that remuneration was the key driver of engagement in a co-operative bank in Kenya. Nevertheless, the study found that factors such as personal development and growth, workplace recreation, and performance management were found to have impact on engagement in the workplace. In Uganda, Sendawula et al. (2018) established that EE influences employee performance in the health sector. Moreover, Ajayi, Odusanya, & Morton (2017) postulated that MSMEs in Nigeria can achieve sustained growth and survival by putting in place the appropriate organizational context for EE. Ghana has also not been left out in the EE debate in Africa, as Amoako-Asiedu & Obuobisa-Darko (2017) found out that employee performance in the public sector was directly related to engagement levels. Thus, the researchers concluded that employees in the public sector will perform at their maximum best if they are engaged. A study conducted by Agyemang & Ofei (2013) found that EE levels were higher among private sector employees than among their colleagues in the public sector. However, the study pointed out that EE in both private and public sectors can be realized when employees are provided with the resources needed to perform their work roles. Also, Kaliannan & Adjovu (2015) found that engagement strategies implemented by a Ghanaian telecommunications organization resulted in success. In 2020, Ohemeng, Obuobisa-Darko, & Amoako-Asiedu (2020) examined the impact of EE on employee task performance in Ghanaian state-owned enterprises. The study found out that EE has a statistically significant positive influence on employees performance. Organizational culture has been found to enhance EE in the Ghanaian public sector (Peptra-Mensah & Kyeremeh, 2018). According to data from the Ghana General Registry, 90% of registered companies are micro, small, and medium enterprises (Mensah, 2004). Agriculture,

tourism, ICT, services, energy, general infrastructure, fishing, manufacturing, and waste management are all examples of SMEs in Ghana. In Ghana, SMEs account for around 85% of manufacturing employment, representing approximately 85% of the private sector and approximately 92% of firms (Steel et al., 1991, as cited in Adjabeng & Osei, 2022). According to Turner (2020), EE is the positive and proactive workplace behaviour that is engineered by enthused and passionate employees as well as rational people management practices and compassionate managers are directed toward the realization of effectively articulated business goals. Additionally, it alludes to staff members' dedication to their jobs as well as the institution's mission, vision, and goals (Rensburg et al., 2013).

Despite the fact that managers are responsible for ensuring EE, the managers themselves must be engaged in their work before they can effectively engage their employees (Clack, 2021). Thus, the desire to nurture effective engagement does not rest solely on the shoulders of employers and management, but both the employee and the employer have active roles to play (Tauetsile, 2016; Roy et al., 2021; Niranjana et al., 2021). Roy et al. (2021) stated that managers may initiate EE systems, but the ultimate decision lies with employees to make use of the systems such that everybody will own them in the organization. However, in order to achieve effective engagement in the workplace, there should be a clear distinction between organizational goals and individual roles, as well as a comprehensive performance management system that provides opportunities for goal realization (Turner, 2020). The foregoing discussions suggest that engagement does not occur by chance, but in an enabling work environment that has been strategically designed. Hence, certain elements or factors should be present in the organization to pave the way for EE.

Thus, according to Gabr & El-Shaer (2013), EE is preceded by factors such as organizational justice, job characteristics, perceived supervisor support, perceived organisational support, and reward and recognition. The authors added that, organizational commitment, the intention to quit, employee involvement, and job satisfaction account for EE. Heerden (2015) also pointed out that a number of issues which decide work engagement include family-work related stress and personal relationships in the work setting. EE is a necessity for businesses because of its favourable impact on employee, team, and organizational outcomes (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018), and it is a way to enhance strategy implementation and decrease performance gaps and waste (Nienaber & Martins, 2020; Katili, Wibowo, & Akbar, 2021) in an organization. It is also a recipe for positive overall performance of an organization (Sutisna, Fauziya, & Pranoto, 2020), and can thus be a game changer in organizational performance (Mburu, Koome, & Gichuhi, 2020) in this current business environment. In light of that, Jabeen & Rahim (2021) concluded that the financial and non-financial outcomes of an organization are highly dependent on the performance of its employees. However, the quality of individual performance in an organization is determined by the level of EE (Satata, 2021). This implies that it is actually EE that causes per-

formance to influence the financial health of an organization, and not performance on its own. Thus, the engagement of employees should be of the utmost concern to every organization since it is the primary indicator of quality employee performance. This motivated the researchers to study the impact of EE on employees performance in selected MSMEs in Ghana.

Scholars have published on EE as well as meta-analyses (Saks & Gruman, 2020), but only a few of these studies have simultaneously incorporated moderating effects job resources (Taha, 2016; Tauetsile, 2016). Additional, few studies have found EE to be positively associated with employee performance (see Govender & Bussin, 2020; Tensay & Singh, 2020; Satata, 2021; Linggiallo, Riadi, Hariyadi, & Adhimursandi, 2021). Even so, a study conducted by Zondo (2020) in a South African automotive assembly organization revealed that EE had an insignificant effect on employees' productivity. The mixed results indicate that more research into the relationship between the two variables is required. To this end, the researchers formulated the research questions as follows;

- 1) What is the impact of Job Resources on Employee's Engagement?
- 2) What is the level of impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance?
- 3) Does the moderating role of job resources influence the relationship between EE and Employee Performance?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement has attracted immense interest over the past ten years (Pandita & Bedarkar, 2015), and due to that, a high volume of research have been carried out in an attempt to operationalize the concept (Dhir & Shukla, 2019). Kahn (1990) pioneered and theorised engagement as the attachment of an organization member's self to their job requirements; throughout role performances, people employ and express themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically. Since then, EE has evolved into a broad concept that is now a vital aspect of human resource management within organizations (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). However, academics and practitioners have not been able to give a clear and generally accepted definition of the construct (Gupta & Sharma, 2016), resulting in variations in its definition (Shrotryia & Dhanda, 2020). That notwithstanding, Sun & Bunchpattanaskda (2019) categorized all the definitions of EE into two kinds after conducting an exhaustive assessment of the current literature on the subject. These are the multi-faceted and unitary definitions. The multi-faceted definitions of the construct take into consideration the three dimensions of EE: dedication, vigour, and cognitive engagement in the conceptualization of EE. For example, Shuck & Wollard (2010) describe EE as an employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state that is aimed directly toward the intended outcome of the organization. It is also referred to as the concurrent active utilization of one's cognitive, emotional and physical energy in the per-

formance of his or her work (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010).

Similarly, Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright (2015) defined EE as the collective effort where all the members of an organization cognitively, physically, and emotionally put in their work. According to Shuck, Osam, & Nimon (2017), EE is a constructive, vigorous, work-related psychological state which is driven by the preservation, passion, and focus of mental, emotional, and behavioural energy. On the other hand, the unitary definitions conceptualize EE as a positive state of mind, a dedicated willingness, and the opposite of burnout. For instance, EE is defined as a goal-oriented psychological state in which a person is completely concentrated on the activity at hand. EE, according to the Human Capital Institute (2011), is described as the degree to which workers are content with their work, feel valued by their employer, and demonstrate a positive attitude and dedication to their company in order to secure future organizational success. Alias et al. (2014) further stated that EE refers to an employee's level of devotion and interest in his or her company. According to Braine & Roodt (2011) EE, describes an employee's motivation and ability to assist their organization flourish by substantially providing discretionary effort on a long-term basis. In the same way, Myrden & Kelloway (2015) stated that EE refers to employees' preparedness to devote themselves and increase their discretionary effort with the aim of helping the employer to succeed by being passionate, enthused, and devoted to their work and the organization as a whole. It involves an employee's participation and fulfillment at work along with his or her passion for work (Harter et al., 2002). However, it is noteworthy to state that some of the definitions are a blend of multifaceted and unitary definitions. For instance, EE, according to Taha (2016), is a pleasant, gratifying work-related emotional state characterized by high levels of vigour and mental resilience, as well as the readiness to devote energy and be fully focused on one's work even in the face of challenges. EE is also defined by Schaufeli et al. (2002) as a pleasing, pleasurable, work-related state of mind marked by energy, devotion, and immersion. Work engagement is the psychological state in which employees are physically energized (vigour), enthused about the composition of their work and the things they do (dedication), and so engrossed in their work tasks that time just seems to fly by (absorption) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These definitions clearly view EE as a positive state of mind (unitary) as well as encompassing vigour, dedication, and cognitive (multifaceted). Employees who are highly engaged are more cognizant of the business setting and actively collaborate with their co-workers to increase on-the-job performance for the company's benefit (Robinson et al., 2004).

Consequently, EE can also be described as an employee's dedication to their position, management, team, and organisation, which encourages effort and perseverance to stay and enhances the success of the company as a whole. According to Markos & Sridevi (2010), engaged employees are emotionally tied to their organizations and strongly invested in their jobs, demonstrating a strong desire to contribute to their employer's success by going above and beyond the scope of

their employment agreement. EE is typically made up of both job and organizational engagement (Saks, 2006). Organizational engagement is defined as “the degree of absorption into one’s role performance in an organization” (Saks, 2006: p. 602), whereas job engagement is a multifaceted motivating concept that reveals the concurrent utilization of one’s emotional cognitive and physical energy in active, full-time work performance (Rich et al., 2010). Despite the fact that these phrases have significantly diverse definitions, they all have the same core: to describe a mental state (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). In the organizational sciences, engagement is becoming more widely acknowledged as a major study issue (Sonnentag, 2011). EE, for example, is positively connected to productivity (Rich et al., 2010), organizational commitment (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009), and organizational citizenship behaviours, whereas it is negatively related to outcomes like turnover intentions and exhaustion (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Rao, Narayana, & Niranjana (2021) define EE as the barometer that measures the relationship of an employee with his or her organization. EE is the willingness of employees to add value to their organizations beyond just the performance of their jobs (Roy et al., 2021). Thus, Turner (2020) argues that EE is a strategic rather than a tactical or operational concept due to its vast business advantages. As a result, corporate organizations have also tried to define the concept of EE. Consequently, Storey et al. (2008) reviewed and highlighted some of the commercial definitions of the concept that have been put forward by some of the most renowned organizations in the world. First, EE as defined by Caterpillar Company refers to employees’ level of commitment, work effort, and willingness to stay in the organization. The Gallup Organization simply defined EE as employees’ involvement with and enthusiasm for work. The company, however, expounded the meaning of the construct by referring to “engaged employees” as employees who are genuinely interested in their jobs and have a positive feeling about their organizations and are more likely to promote innovation and propel the company ahead (Gallup, 2006). Dell Inc. also defines EE as a purposeful effort that businesses must make with the intention of winning their employees’ minds and hearts in a variety of ways that result in unexpected effort. Finally, the Corporate Leadership Council also defines EE as the degree to which employees are dedicated to their jobs, the level of effort they put in, and the length of time they remain in the organization as a result of their dedication.

2.2. Employee Performance

Every organization requires talented employees who have the ability to complete their work (Kurniawan et al., 2018), because an organization’s success or failure is determined by its employees’ performance (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Mathis et al., 2016; Obuobisa-Darko & Tsedzah, 2019). Employee performance is defined by Jabeen & Rahim (2021) as an employee’s non-financial or financial results that are directly related to an organization’s performance and success. Therefore, successful businesses hold employee performance in high esteem since the per-

formance of employees defines the success of organizations. However, many organizations are struggling to manage the performance of their employees, and some are totally putting an end to their usual way of measuring performance as a result of the COVID-19 crisis (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021). Interestingly, this is the time organizations require data on employee performance to make critical decisions to thrive in a crisis. Job performance or individual work performance are other terms for employee performance. Employee performance does not have a clear definition, as there are multiple facets to performance. Some scholars define it in relation to the work outcomes or results of employees. For instance, Dessler (2016) defines employee performance as the result of the actual performance of an employee compared to their expected performance. Mangkunegara (2009) describes employee performance as work results in relation to the quality and quantity attained by employees in performing their jobs. Performance relates to the accuracy, cost-effectiveness, thoroughness, and pace with which tasks are completed in comparison to a set of standards (Jabeen & Rahim, 2021). Employee productivity and output are used to assess employee performance, which impacts or aids the organization's efficiency and effectiveness in attaining its objectives (Amoako-Asiedu & Obuobisa-Darko 2017). Based on the foregoing viewpoints, it is reasonable to assume that employee performance is the consequence of one's quality and quantity of work achieved in an organization while performing his or her job. In contrast, other researchers and scholars view performance in relation to an employee's behaviour other than his or her actual work results. For instance, Campbell (1990) defined one's job performance as the actions or acts that are important to the organization's objectives. Aguinis (2009) defines performance as what employees do rather than what they generate or the outcomes of their work. Performance is the ability to put in effort in conjunction with organizational policies in order to attain specific goals. According to Jex (2002), an employee's performance can be broadly defined as all of their actions while performing their duties. It is also described as everyone's genuine behaviour demonstrated through work results attained by employees that are pertinent to their positions in the organisation (Ahmed & Ramzan, 2013). Similarly, according to Biddle & Evenden (2014), performance is a pattern of behaviour used by a manager or supervisor in relationships with others, particularly subordinates or those of lower status. Employee performance is defined by Afshan et al. (2012) as the achievement of particular responsibilities by an organization's workforces, and it is estimated alongside the organization's set or known principles of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed. There are several indicators that can be used to evaluate organizational performance or employees whose performance has a direct impact on the performance of an organization. Ahuja (2006) posits that output, efficiency, efficacy, quality, and profitability are all markers of organizational success. According to Nassazi (2013), profitability denotes an organization's capability to create consistent profits over time, and it is assessed as the profit-to-sales ratio or return on capital invested. The ability to produce the best results with the fewest resources

possible is defined as efficiency, whereas effectiveness is defined as people's capability to accomplish the intended objectives or targets (Stoner, 1996). Productivity measures how well an individual, organisation, or industry converts inputs into outcome (in the form of products and services), and it is expressed as the ratio of output generated to inputs required to produce that output (Stoner et al., 1995). Finally, quality refers to how well the qualities of a company's products or services meet the demands and desires of its customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2002; Nassazi, 2013). In all, the performance of individual employees in an organization can be improved in the presence of employee engagement (Garg, Dar, & Mishra, 2018). In this study, employee performance means explicit behaviours that are required to perform a task and to go beyond the job description and take initiative at work.

2.3. Job Resources

The social, psychological, physical, and organisational aspects of a job that are either required to achieve a professional goal, lessen the demands of the job, or promote learning and personal development are referred to as job resources. Within an occupation, job resources can be found at various levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources, according to Christian et al. (2011), include task diversity, task relevance, autonomy, a healthy connection with the supervisor, social support from co-workers, feedback, and transformational leadership. Job resources also refer to features of the job that 1) decrease job demands and related physiological and psychological costs, 2) aid in the achievement of work objectives, and 3) promote personal development, learning, and improvement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Furthermore, job resources are frequently viewed as playing a critical motivational function inside an organization and can assist in reducing sources of workplace stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) may decrease while OCB may increase as a result of positive attitudes generated about the organization when the organization encourages personal development, learning, and improvement and/or provides incentive to attain job-related goals. Job resources involve elements of an employee's job that assist them in achieving their work goals while also stimulating their personal development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). They are divided into four categories by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), which correspond to the three types of job demands: physical, social, and organizational, as well as psychological. Resources (for example, copy machines and computers) that directly assist workers in completing job-related tasks are referred to as "physical resources." Social or relational resources are interactions between employees and other members of the organization, for example, the level of social support obtained by supervisors or co-workers. The organization provides organizational resources in general, such as financial awards and recognition. Personal attributes such as optimism and self-control are psychological resources that come from the employees themselves. Despite the fact that a va-

riety of job resources have been found to predict employee engagement, the impact of job resources on engagement varies by employee (Lipson, 2020). This is to say that each employee will react differently to a specific job resource. According to Zhang & Farndale (2021), employee age characteristics have a substantial effect in determining engagement. In particular, the researchers discovered that younger staff were more engaged than older ones. In this study, “job resources” refer to physical, social, organizational, and psychological resources that employees require in order to efficiently perform their tasks

2.4. Job Resources and EE

Quite a lot of studies resorted to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory as a basis to explain EE (Lee, Rocco, & Shuck, 2020) and its relationship with job resources. For instance, Farndale & Murrer (2015) looked at the link between work resources and EE, along with the moderating role of national differences. Regression analyses were used to examine questionnaire responses from 19, 260 employees of a global financial services business in Mexico, the Netherlands, and the United States. The study’s findings revealed that in all three nations, job resources for instance, team climate, financial rewards, and participation in decision-making have a favourable impact on engagement. Work resources have a strong beneficial influence on EE, according to Jauhari & Yulianti (2020), and EE also moderated the association between job resources and turnover intentions. Furthermore, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli (2009) used SEM analyses to look at the longitudinal link between job resources, personal resources, and work engagement in a study of 163 employees. The study’s findings revealed that job resources were favourably associated with work engagement. Additionally, Bakker et al. (2007) discovered that having additional job resources has a considerable positive impact on work engagement. Albrecht & Marty (2020) looked at the impact of self-efficacy and job resources on employee engagement, affective commitment, and intention to leave. Job resources have both direct and indirect effects on involvement, according to the findings. Similarly, Radic et al. (2020) discovered that job resources had a favourable impact on cruise ship employees’ engagement and well-being. In the context of South Sudan, Kenyi & John (2020) investigated the links between job demands, job resources, and EE. According to the findings, EE is positively influenced by job resources. This empirical evidence is sufficient to back up the JD-R theory that job resources lead to motivational processes like work engagement. Thus, the study hypothesises the following:

H1: Job resources will positively relate to Employee Engagement.

2.5. EE and Employee Performance

According to the RBV theory, a firm’s internal environment is the primary source of competitive advantage, as are the resources available to compete with others in the environment (Onditi, 2016). A company’s control over valuable,

uncommon, and incomparable resources and capabilities gives it a long-term competitive advantage (Kaoud, 2018). From this viewpoint, EE may be a rare and valuable asset for organizations seeking to improve employee performance, particularly during this period of COVID-19. Several studies via the RBV have found a link between EE and employee performance, which leads to improved organizational outcomes (Govender & Bussin, 2020; Tensay & Singh, 2020; Sata, 2021; Linggiallo, Riadi, Hariyadi, & Adhimursandi, 2021). Swati & Archana (2019), for example, studied the impact of organizational image on EE and performance. The study used a survey and a quantitative research method to gather information from 701 managers working in diverse Indian sectors. The study's results give employees and employers a platform to better understand and increase EE and performance by establishing a good and consistent corporate image. Anitha (2014) also looked into the fundamental drivers of EE and how they affect performance. The findings demonstrated that all of the selected elements were determinants of EE, with the work setting and team and co-worker relationships having the greatest impact. The study also found that EE had a statistical significant impact on performance. Dajani (2015) established that EE had a statistical significant impact on job performance of employees in both private and public banking sectors in Egypt. However, EE was found to have less impact on organizational commitment. Furthermore, Kasimu et al. (2018) used evidence from Uganda's health sector to determine the impact of training and EE on employee performance. Employee performance was predicted by both training and EE by 44.7 percent in the study, but EE was found to be a more important predictor of employee success than training. Using a sample size of 260 people, Jepkorir (2014) also investigated the perceived link between EE and performance at East African Portland Cement Company Limited. SPSS was used to sort, process, and analyse the data. According to the survey, employees were committed to producing high-quality work that they were proud of, and they worked for lengthy periods of time. Meswantri & Awaludin (2018) looked into the effects of EE, competency, and transformational leadership on worker performance in DKI Jakarta construction and construction enterprises. The study's conclusions indicate that competence, employee placement, and transformational leadership all positively and significantly impacted EE, either partially or simultaneously.

In addition, Pantri & Ahmad (2012) investigated the impact of employee happiness, moderated by EE, on employee job performance and retention. To collect and analyse data from employees, the study used questionnaires and the multiple regression analytical method. According to the study, employee happiness has a considerable favourable impact on employee work performance and retention. Furthermore, Shaheen et al. (2017) used the PLS technique to evaluate a structural equation model in determining the link between employee relations with managers, employee engagement, and job performance in the context of a developing nation and discovered that the responses of 392 employees working

in Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry met the criteria. Employee relations with supervisors, according to the study, have an influence on employee performance and engagement. EE acts as a go-between for employee relations and employee performance. Workers who have jobs that provide high levels of autonomy, task variety, task significance, and feedback are more highly engaged, in accordance with the study, which used data from a survey of 283 workers in a consultancy and construction firm based in the UK and supervisors' independent performance evaluations. Peter (2015) looked into the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards on employee engagement in Uganda's public sector. According to the study, EE was positively influenced by external rewards. Furthermore, the results revealed that intrinsic motivation has a positive significant association with EE, which leads to great employee performance. Inferring from the argument above the study proposes that:

H2: Employee Engagement has a positive correlation with Employee Performance.

2.6. The Moderating Role of Job Resources

A person will usually respond similarly to positive initiating actions by giving more positive reciprocating reactions or giving fewer negative reciprocating responses, according to SET (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Likewise, employees are likely to put up their best performance when they are engaged. However, for employees to be engaged and improve their performance, organizations must provide them with resources. As a result, the impact of job demands and job resources designs on blue-collar workers' stress and safety behaviours was examined by Kantan et al. (2019). According to the study, workload, role conflicts, and job insecurity are a few aspects of work demands that have a positive and significant impact on stress related to one's job. Job insecurity, on the other hand, has a negative and considerable impact on employees' safety behaviours. Adil & Baig (2018) investigated the influence of the job demands-resources (JD-R) model on burnout and well-being. Workload, autonomy, work-life balance, time pressure, and feedback were all factors in the model. The Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) was investigated by Braine & Roodt (2011) as a potential predictor of overall job satisfaction. The study found that compared to work engagement, the JD-R model produced a greater range in devotion. However, it resulted in the widest range of work-based identities, with job resources serving as the best predictor. Similarly, Gabr & El-Shaer (2013) looked at the links between head nurse job demands and resources and their work engagement and discovered that all head nurses. According to the findings, there was a significant association between the job demands and resources components of head nurses' jobs and their work engagement. Al-Homayan et al. (2013) also studied the effects of job demands on nurses' performance in public hospitals, and questionnaires were issued to managers of public hospitals in Saudi Arabia. In a sample of educators, Main (2011) utilized a cross-sectional survey approach

to investigate the relationship between work engagement, job expectations, and job resources. Results showed that job resources moderate the link between work engagement and job expectations. From the above presentation the study hypothesizes that:

H3: Job resources moderates the relationship between Employee Engagement and Employee Performance.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, which illustrates the relationships between the constructs in this study, as shown in **Figure 1**.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design

Research design details the plan for addressing research objectives or hypotheses (McDaniel & Gates, 2012), in terms of how data will be collected and analysed (Bryman, 2012). Research design exists in different shades, and different authors provide different classifications of research design. Common types of designs identified by Bryman (2012) include cross-sectional design (sometimes referred to as survey design), longitudinal design, experimental design, comparative design, and case study design. Numerous options are provided by various designs, each with its own advantages and disadvantages (McDaniel & Gates, 2012). Though it is often asserted that there is no single best research design (McDaniel & Gates, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007), under certain circumstances, some designs may be more appropriate. As emphasised by Cohen et al. (2007), “fitness for purpose” is a key governing principle in the choice of design. Choosing a particular design is heavily influenced by the study’s objectives (and the calibre of information they require), as well as the time and financial costs involved in carrying them out (McDaniel & Gates, 2012). The research used a cross-sectional approach. For explanatory research, a cross-sectional survey design is adequate (Malhotra & Grover, 1998; Rindfleisch et al., 2008). Cross-sectional survey designs, on the other hand, have been argued to be less suitable for studying “cause-

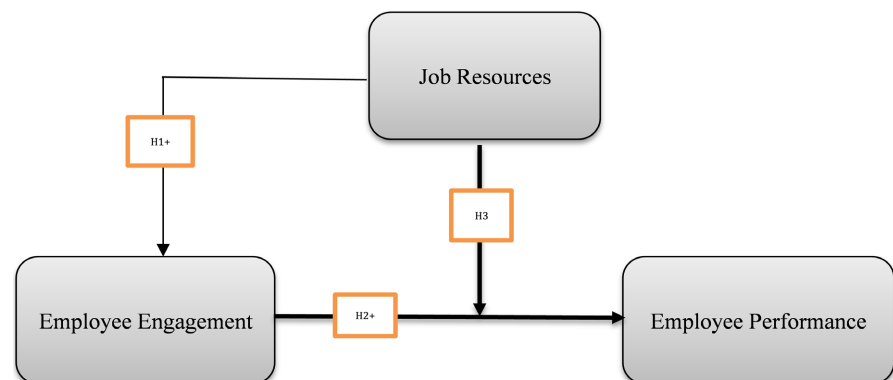


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

and-effect” questions than experimental and longitudinal designs (Bryman, 2012), as there is a high likelihood that they will run into the common method variance problem (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Rindfleisch et al., 2008).

3.2. Research Instrument and Technique

With the exception of the respondents’ demographics, all of the questions were adapted, slightly modified measures designed to achieve the study’s goals. Employee engagement was measured with a 10-item scale adapted from Sak’s Job Engagement and Organization Engagement scales by Saks (2006). Responses ranged from (1) “Strongly disagree” to (5) “Strongly agree”. The alpha reliability of the scale for this scale is 0.82. On the other hand, Employee performance was measured with a 17-item scale adapted from the version 1.0 of the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) by Koopmans et al. (2014). The first 5 items measured the task performance, the next 8 items measured contextual performance, and the final 5 items measured the counterproductive work behaviour of employees. The responses ranged from (0) “Never” to (4) “Always”, with an alpha reliability of 0.72. Job resources were also measured with a 10-item scale adapted from Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) and Chen & Kao (2012). The responses ranged from (1) “Strongly disagree” to (5) “Strongly agree”, with an alpha reliability of 0.71. Closed ended questions were employed because they decrease the time and effort needed to code responses for information passages and examinations while also increasing their capacity and proficiency in reducing non-response rates (Ruane, 2016).

3.3. Population, Sampling/Sampling Size and Data Collection

Population refers to all people or items that are of interest to a researcher (Rahi, 2017; Marczyk et al., 2010). It is the total universe of people from which a sample is chosen. It also refers to all people or things of interest to a researcher (Rahi, 2017; Marczyk et al., 2010). According to Alvi (2016), the target population consists of all members who meet the specific criteria established for a research study. The study’s population was made up of employees from a few selected MSMEs in Ghana’s second capital, Kumasi. The study used a survey questionnaire approach as the main method for gathering primary data. Secondary information sources, including journals, unpublished and published works, and other internet source relating to the subject, were also used predominately in the literature review and in supporting the research findings. The study used convenience sampling technique to select 395 respondents. Convenience sampling is a means of collecting data from a group that is close to the researcher and easily accessible (Rahi, 2017). Researchers can use this sampling technique to interview people or gather responses at a minimal cost (Rahi, 2017). In this study, the convenience sampling was employed during the sample selection and questionnaire distribution stages. That is, any employee from the selected MSMEs within the Kumasi metropolis who was readily available at the time of distributing the questionnaires had opportunity to be included in the sample.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data was coded, and analysed using Smart PLS 3.0 statistical software, which was based on the partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique, in accordance with the aims of the study and conceptual model. Following that, the data was presented in tabular, graphical, and narrative formats

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent demographics included age, gender, number of children, marital status, position, qualifications, years spent in current organisation, and type of employment. **Table 1** shows the outcomes of the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1 indicates that of the 395 respondents, 213 were female (representing 53.9% of the total), while 182 were male (representing 46.1%). This has the implication that, MSMEs in the Kumasi metropolis essentially employ more women than men. In terms of the respondents' age range, it was discovered that 127 respondents, or 32.2%, were between the ages of 20 and 29, while 141 respondents, or 35.7%, were between the ages of 30 and 39. The following age group, 40 to 49 years, had 99 respondents, or 25.1%, after that. In the ranges of 50 - 59 and 60 and over, there were 4% and 3%, respectively.

This study reveals that a significant number of the respondents are young, which means that their energy levels are high, which is likely to have an impact on their performance. According to the results, 124 of the 395 respondents did not have a child, 98 of the respondents representing 24.8% had one child, 83 of the respondents representing 21% had two children, 42 of the respondents representing 10.6% had three children, and 48 of the respondents representing 12.2% had four or more children, in that order. This implies that more than half of the respondents have one or no child, which also impacts on their work and family lives. This also has an effect on their engagement levels at work. On the issue of marital status, 179 out of the 395 respondents representing 45.3% were single, 142 of the respondents representing 36% were married, 36 of the respondents representing 9.1% were divorced, and 38 of the respondents representing 9.6% were widowed. This result established that a large number of respondents were not married, which means it is possible to have a positive balance between work and family life, and this is likely to increase engagement levels. Regarding the positions held by respondents, more than twice the average (214) of them, or 54.2%, were workers or non-managers, 129 of the respondents representing 32.6% were supervisors, and 32 of the respondents representing 13.2% held managerial positions.

In relation to respondents academic qualification, Out of 395 respondents, the results show that 146 had certificates, which accounts for 37% of the total, 119 had diplomas, which accounts for 30.1% of the total, 98 had degrees, which accounts for 24.8% of the total, and 32 had master's degrees, which accounts for

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents; Source: field survey, 2022.

Demographic		Frequency (395)	Percentage (100%)
Gender of respondents	Male	182	46.1
	Female	213	53.9
	Total	395	100
Age of respondents	20 - 29	127	32.2
	30 - 39	141	35.7
	40 - 49	99	25.1
	50 - 60	16	4
	60 and above	12	3
	Total	395	100
Number of children	None	124	31.4
	1	98	24.8
	2	83	21
	3	42	10.6
	4 and above	48	12.2
	Total	395	100
Marital status	Single	179	45.3
	Married	142	36
	Divorced	36	9.1
	Widowed	38	9.6
	Total	395	100
Position of respondents	Operative/Non-Manager	214	54.2
	Supervisor	129	32.6
	Manager	52	13.2
	Total	395	100
Qualification	Certificate	146	37
	Diploma	119	30.1
	Degree	98	24.8
	Masters	32	8.1
	Total	395	100
Years spent current in organization	1 year or less	69	17.5
	2 years	92	23.3
	3 years	112	28.3
	4 years and above	122	30.9
	Total	395	100

Continued

Type of employment	Full time	184	46.6
	Part time	88	22.3
	Temporary	59	14.9
	Casual	43	10.8
	Contract	21	5.4
	Total	395	100

8.1% of the total. According to this, the selected MSMEs' respondents generally have low levels of education. Additionally, respondents were questioned about how long they had worked for each organisation. Out of the 395 respondents, 122 respondents or 30.9% have worked for their organisations for at least four years. Respondents who have been responding for three years come next. 112 respondents, or 28.3%, had worked for their organisations for at least two years, 92 respondents, or 23.3%, had done so, and 69 respondents, or 17.5%, had only been there for a year or less. According to the findings, more than 80% of the respondents had been working for their organisations since COVID-19's inception in Ghana, making them well-qualified to share their experiences during this time. Lastly, out of the 395 respondents, 184 represented 46.6% of the full-time workforce, 88 represented 22.3% of the part-time workforce, 59 represented 14.9% of the temporary workforce, 43 represented 10.9% of the causal workforce, and 21 represented 5.4% of the contract workforce. This suggests that the majority of MSMEs in the city employ full-time employees (**Table 2**).

4.2. Measurement Issues

4.2.1 Cronbach Alpha

The reliability of surveys with multiple Likert scale questions is assessed using the Cronbach alpha test. The goals of the questions are to evaluate latent variables. The following is a rule of thumb for interpreting alpha for dichotomous questions or explaining internal consistency: $\alpha \geq 0.9$ as excellent, $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ as good, $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ as acceptable, $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$ as questionable, $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ as poor, and $0.5 > \alpha$ as unacceptable (DeVellis, 2012). The Cronbach alpha estimates for the variables in the study are shown in **Table 3**.

4.2.2. Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

The Fornell and Larcker test was used to investigate discriminant validity. The square root of AVE, according to Fornell & Larcker (1981), should be more than 0.5.

When a construct has discriminant validity, it captures a unique phenomenon that is not mirrored by another construct in the model (Hair et al., 2017). Discriminant validity examines how distinct one construct is from another (Amoa-ko-Asiedu & Obuobisa-Darko, 2017). The results presented in **Table 4** show that the control and latent variables in this study are distinct from each other as each

Table 2. Model fit.

Model 1	CFA	Chi-Square	SRMR	CMIN/DF	CFI	PClose	RMSEA
Suggested Cut-off values	0.747	387.903	<0.0098	<0.973	<0.758	<0.000	<0.113
CFA Measurement model	0.861	398.541	0.0075	14.126	1.000	0.0000	0.532

Source: field survey, 2022.

Table 3. Cronbach alpha.

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Engagement	10	0.815
Employee Performance	17	0.720
Job Resources	10	0.710

Source: Field survey, 2022.

Table 4. Discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

	Age	Gender	Number of children	Marital status	Employee engagement	Employee performance	Job resources	Job demands
Age	*0.791							
Gender	-0.074	*0.703						
Number of children	0.096	-0.27	*0.692					
Marital status	-0.010	-0.067	0.013	*0.652				
Employee engagement	0.125	0.039	0.014	0.062	*0.852			
Employee performance	0.030	0.037	0.026	0.010	0.617	*0.715		
Job resources	0.051	-0.090	-0.034	0.063	0.537	0.375	*0.719	

*Diagonals are square roots of the AVEs; Source: field survey, 2022.

of them recorded a value greater than 0.5.

4.2.3. Job Resources and EE

The findings indicates that job resources are statistically significantly and positively linked to EE ($r = 0.537$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that EE will increase once employees have the necessary job resources. As a result, financial incentives, tools and materials, social support, training and development, autonomy, and flexibility have the potential to increase EE during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2.4. EE and Employee Performance

Finally, the results of the correlation analysis show that there is a positive relation between EE and employee performance. ($r = 0.617$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that an increase in EE will result in an increase in employee performance.

4.2.5. Employee Performance at Selected MSMEs

Using a Likert scale of 0—never, 1—seldom, 2—sometimes, 3—often, and 4—always to the following statement that measures employee performance. Employee performance includes three dimensions, which include contextual performance, task performance, and counterproductive work behaviour.

With reference to **Table 5**, in relation to task performance, the majority of the respondents always plan their work such that it is done on time (mean = 4.6329, SD = 1.65546). Furthermore, a higher proportion of respondents agreed that they always keep in mind the outcome that they need to achieve in their organizations (mean = 4.5316, SD = 1.26887). Again, the (mean = 4.6076, SD = 1.24037) revealed that the respondents could always separate the main issues from side issues in their organizations. The (mean = 4.5772, SD = 1.24264) show that a significant number of the respondents agreed that they can perform their work well with minimal time and effort. Regarding contextual performance, the (mean = 4.5772, SD = 1.24264) show that the majority of the respondents always take on extra responsibilities in their organizations. The (mean = 4.6127, SD = 1.25619) revealed that a greater number of the respondents always have the initiative for task performance in their organizations. The (mean = 4.6506, SD = 1.22556) show that a significant number of the respondents always take on the challenging tasks when available in their organizations. Also, the (mean = 4.7823, SD = 2.01219) show that the majority of the respondents always work to keep their job knowledge up-to-date in their organizations. Likewise, the (mean = 4.5696, SD = 1.26535) show that the respondents always work at keeping their job skills up-to-date in their organizations. The (mean = 3.5975, SD = 1.31469) revealed that the majority of the respondents often come up with creative solutions to new problems in their organizations. The (mean = 4.5342, SD = 1.23844) revealed that a significant number of the respondents always keep looking for new challenges in their jobs. The (mean = 3.5089, SD = 1.21822) show that most of the respondents often actively participate in a work setting. With regard to counterproductive work behaviour, the (mean = 2.5797, SD = 1.27673) revealed that a significant number of the respondents sometimes complain about unimportant matters at work. The (mean = 1.5468, SD = 1.21802) revealed that the majority of the respondents seldom had problems greater than they were at work. The (mean = 1.5696, SD = 1.22457) revealed that the majority of the respondents seldom focus on the negative aspects of a work situation instead of the positive aspects in their organizations. The (mean = 2.5964, SD = 1.30456) show that a greater number of the respondents sometimes speak with colleagues about the negative aspect of their work in their organizations. The (mean = 2.5949, SD = 1.26771) implies that most of the respondents sometimes speak with colleagues about the negative aspect of their work.

4.2.6. Job Resources at Selected MSMEs

Using a Likert scale of 1 - 5, 1—strongly disagree, 2—disagree, 3—neutral, 4—agree, and 5—strongly agree to the following statements that measure job resources in the organization.

Table 5. Descriptive results of employee performance.

Employee Performance	Mini	Maxi	Mean	Std. Dev.
Task performance				
I plan my job in way that it is done on time.	2.00	5.00	4.6329	1.65546
I keep in mind the results that I have to achieve in my work.	2.00	5.00	4.5316	1.26887
I am able to separate main issues from side issues at work.	1.00	5.00	4.6076	1.24037
I can complete my tasks efficiently and effectively with little time and effort.	2.00	5.00	4.5772	1.24264
Contextual Performance				
I usually take on extra duties.	1.00	5.00	4.5772	1.24264
I have initiative of task performance.	1.00	5.00	4.6127	1.25619
I take challenging work tasks, when available.	1.00	5.00	4.6506	1.22556
I work at keeping my job knowledge up-to-date.	1.00	5.00	4.7823	2.01219
I work at keeping my job skills up-to-date.	1.00	5.00	4.5696	1.26535
I come up with innovative solutions to new hitches	1.00	5.00	3.5975	1.31469
I keep looking for new challenges in my job.	1.00	5.00	4.5342	1.23844
I actively participate in work meetings	1.00	5.00	3.5089	1.21822
Counter productive workbehaviour				
I complain about unimportant matters at work	1.00	5.00	2.5797	1.27673
I make problems greater than they were at work	1.00	5.00	1.5468	1.21802
I tend to concentrate on the negative elements of a job situation rather than the positive aspects	1.00	5.00	1.5696	1.22457
I discuss the negative components of my job with coworkers	1.00	5.00	2.5964	1.30456
I speak with people from outside the organisation about the negative aspects of my work	1.00	5.00	2.5949	1.26771

Source: field survey, 2022.

In **Table 6**, the majority of respondents (mean = 4.6354, SD = 1.25797) agreed that they complete their work on time in their respective organizations. Additionally, the majority of respondents (mean = 4.5367, SD = 1.23836) concurred that they possess the knowledge, abilities, and skills necessary to carry out their jobs in a professional manner. Additionally, the (mean = 4.5494, SD = 1.27429) showed that the majority of respondents concurred they have flexibility in how their jobs are carried out. The (mean = 4.6709, SD = 1.27173) also showed that the majority of respondents concurred that they have control and autonomy over how their jobs are carried out in their organisations. The majority of respondents' responses to the question of whether they have the chance to learn new things through their work were neutral, according to the data (mean = 3.6937, SD = 1.27245). Additionally the results (mean = 4.4746, SD = 1.23997) indicate that most respondents agreed they receive the assistance and support required for their coworkers. Additionally, the (mean = 4.5924, SD = 1.22927) indicate that the majority of respondents concurred that they were provided with the

Table 6. Descriptive results of job resources.

Job Resources	Mini	Maxi	Mean	Std. Dev.
I finish my work on time.	1.00	5.00	4.6354	1.25797
I have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to complete my tasks successfully.	1.00	5.00	4.5367	1.23836
I have the flexibility in the execution of my job.	1.00	5.00	4.5494	1.27429
I have autonomy and freedom over how my job is carried out.	1.00	5.00	4.6709	1.27173
I have the opportunity of learning new things through my work.	1.00	5.00	3.6937	1.27245
I get the help and support needed from my colleagues.	1.00	5.00	4.4746	1.23997
I am given the needed tools to perform my work.	1.00	5.00	4.5924	1.22927
I am paid enough for the work I do.	1.00	5.00	2.7349	1.12717
I am given adequate details on the purpose of my work.	1.00	5.00	4.5722	1.22650
I am allowed to attend training courses.	1.00	5.00	2.5646	1.26162

Source: Fieldwork, 2021.

tools necessary to complete their work. The majority of respondents did not agree that they are paid sufficient compensation for the work they perform for their organisations, according to the data (mean = 2.7349, SD = 1.12717). Likewise, the (mean = 4.5722, SD = 1.22650) show that the majority of the respondents agreed that they have received sufficient information about the purpose of their work in their organizations. Also, the (mean = 2.5646, SD = 1.26162) revealed that a significant number of the respondents disagreed that they should be allowed to attend training courses. The implication is that the majority of the respondents were in agreement with all the above statements, with the exception of the statements on training and salary. A majority of the respondents disagreed with the statements “I am paid enough for the work I do” and “I am allowed to attend training courses.” (Table 7).

4.2.7. Effect of Job Resources on EE

Path A studied the link between job resources and EE in the selected MSMEs. The results ($\beta = 1.548$, $p = 0.001$) showed that job resources significantly predicted EE in the selected MSMEs. Thus, once employees are provided with the needed resources, engagement levels will increase.

4.2.8. Effect of EE on Employee Performance

Path C ($\beta = 1.550$, $p = 0.000$) showing that there was a positive and significant relationship between EE and employee performance in the selected MSMEs. This means that when EE levels go high, performance of employees will also increase, and vice-versa.

4.2.9. The Moderating Role of Job Resources on the Relationship between EE and Employee Performance

The fifth and final hypothesis investigated the moderating role of job demands on EE and performance in the selected MSMEs.

Table 7. Model fit.

Model 1	CFA	Chi-Square	SRMR	CMIN/DF	CFI	PClose	RMSEA
Suggested Cut-off values	0.761	352.515	<0.0012	<3.415	<0.745	<0.000	<0.113
CFA Measurement model	0.843	365.438	0.00764	15.127	1.098	0.0054	0.431

Source: field survey, 2022.

Table 8. Moderation effect results for Job resources.

Path	Beta coefficient	Standard error	t-statistics	p-value
EE -> Employee performance	0.300	0.028	11.584	0.000
Job resources _ -> EE	0.432	0.041	9.494	0.001
Job resources _ -> Employee Perf.	0.368	0.024	7.061	0.000
Moderating Effect 1	0.122	0.039	9.371	0.003

Source: field survey, 2022.

Based on the findings in **Table 8**, the results ($\beta = 0.300$, p -value = 0.000) indicated that EE and employee performance have a positive and significant relationship in the selected MSMEs. Similarly, EE contributes to employee performance in the selected MSMEs. The following step investigated the link between job resources and employee engagement; the resultant ($\beta = 0.432$, p -value = 0.001) demonstrated that job resources significantly predicted EE in the selected MSMEs. In step two, job resources were included in the equation, and the results show that job resources can predict EE significantly in the selected MSMEs. In step three, the relationship between job resources and employee performance was also investigated. The results ($\beta = 0.368$, p -value = 0.000) revealed that there is a positive and significant link between job resources and employee performance in the selected MSMEs. Therefore, providing employees with the resources they require will influence them to improve their performance in the organization. Finally, the moderating effect is investigated. The results ($\beta = 0.122$, p -value = 0.003) showed that job resources moderated the correlation between EE and employee performance in the MSMEs sector during the pandemic. **Figure 2** shows the moderating role of job resource in the link between EE and employee performance.

5. Discussion

Employees are essentially an organization's true representatives and brand ambassadors; as a result, their dedication to the company and their performance within it add value to the organization. However, the private and work lives of employees have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn has led to employee anxiety, frustration, and burnout (Aditama & Riyanto, 2020). Schaufeli (2017) found out that employees who are going through these psychological stresses are also associated with occupational injuries and accidents,

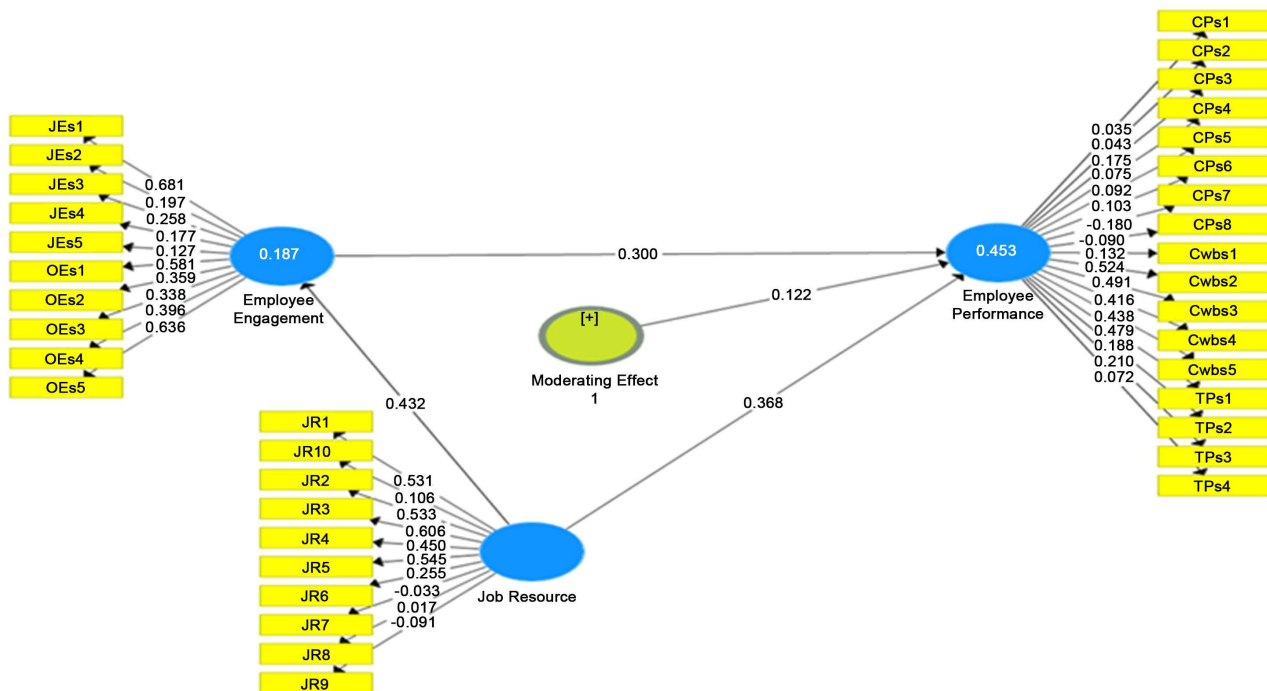


Figure 2. Moderating role of job resource.

poor work performance, and reduced productivity, which also affect the overall organizational performance. With regard to the JD-R theory, job (and personal) resources reduce burnout and psychological stress and also boost EE (Schaufeli, 2017). Thus, the current study was carried out to investigate the impact of EE on employee performance, with job demands as a moderator, using MSMEs in Ghana as evidence. According to the regression analysis model, job demands were found to have insignificant effects on employee engagement. The study proposed three hypotheses, and data was collected and analysed using the questionnaire and PLS-SEM techniques, respectively, to test the hypotheses. The empirical findings did not significantly support all of the proposed research hypotheses. The results are thoroughly discussed below, taking into account each study goal.

5.1. The Effect of Job Resources on EE

The first objective of this study was to examine the effect of job resources on EE. The study's results supported the positive and significant link between job resources and EE in the selected MSMEs as hypothesized. This result is empirically supported. For instance, in the context of Sri Lanka, Thisera & Wijesundara (2020), examined how changes in job resources and personal resources predict employee engagement. The findings showed that job resources and personal resources positively affect the employees' engagement. Similarly with the study of Kenyi & John (2020), on the relationships between job demands, job resources, and EE. Their findings also revealed that job resources have a positive influence on EE. Again, Jauhari & Yulianti (2020) study also found that job resources have a significant positive influence on EE & that EE also mediates the association

between job resources and turnover intentions. In a study of 163 employees, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli (2009) used SEM analyses to study the longitudinal relationship between job resources, personal resources, and EE. The study's findings revealed that job resources were positively related to work engagement. Furthermore, Bakker et al. (2007) discovered that increased job resources have a significant positive impact on work engagement. Albrecht & Marty (2020) investigated the impact of self-efficacy and job resources on EE, affective commitment, and intention to leave. According to the findings, job resources had both direct and indirect effects on engagement. Chavarria et al. (2016) investigated EE and exhaustion and how it was influenced by the correlation between job resources, personal resources, and job demands, with a focus on juvenile probation and parole officers. The findings revealed that both job resources and job demands had a statistically significant effect on employee exhaustion, but only job resources had a statistically significant effect on EE. Job resources clearly have a positive relationship with engagement, as empirical evidence from several studies in different professions and countries confirms (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

According to Farndale & Murrer (2015), job resources like team climate, financial rewards, and participation in decisions impact EE in MSMEs. Again, results from a study conducted by Albrecht & Marty (2020) found a strong and significant association between job resources and EE. Christian et al. (2011) stated that job resources such as feedback, social support from supervisors, healthy relationships, and transformational leadership predictors increase EE. In this study, though majority of the respondents reported that training and financial rewards were inadequate during this period of COVID-19, however, this did not greatly affect their engagement levels. This may be that employees are much aware of the global economic distress and its attendant job losses as a result of the pandemic, and thus, they are willing and ready to work, giving the available job resources so as to help their enterprises thrive, and also secure their jobs. This is not to say that during this period of pandemic, certain job resources (e.g. financial incentives) are less important in enhancing EE; but, since most of the organizations in the sector are experiencing financial difficulties, focusing on other job resources such as providing employees with flexibility and autonomy, tools and materials, and social support are key to boost EE. Indeed, job resources have an inherent motivating quality; they energize employees and make them feel engaged (Schaufeli 2017). Similarly, this research postulates that during the Covid-19 pandemic, job resources drive EE.

5.2. The Effect of EE on Employee Performance

The results of the current study indicate that EE is a significant predictor of employee performance in the MSMEs sector during the Covid-19 as presented in the regression model. Also, correlation analysis results indicate that EE is positively related to employee performance. The second hypothesis (H2) is therefore

supported. This means that a positive change in job and organization engagement would result in a positive change in task, contextual, and counterproductive performance of employees, and vice versa. The result is consistent with previous studies. For instance, [Tanwar \(2017\)](#) conducted a study to evaluate the effect of EE on employee and performance. The study found a positive and significant effect of EE on employee performance. In addition, [Ismail, Iqbal, & Nasr \(2019\)](#) explored the link between EE and job performance in Lebanon. According to the findings, EE has a significant positive effect on job performance, which is consistent with the findings of this study. [Anitha \(2014\)](#) also looked at the major factors of EE and how they affect performance. The findings indicated that all of the listed characteristics were determinants of EE, with the working environment and team and co-worker relationships having the greatest influence. Similarly, [Novitasari, Asbari, & Purwanto \(2020\)](#) found out that EE contributes significantly to improve employee performance. This result is in line with a study done by [Kasimu et al. \(2018\)](#), which revealed that through training and development, employees are engaged leading to employee performance. Also, [Jepkorir \(2014\)](#), studied the link between EE and performance in an organization. It was concluded that EE influences the quality work in the organization. Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, EE has a significant effect on employee performance in Ghana's MSMEs sector. EE was primarily explained by organizational and job factors. Aside from organizational and job factors, respondents' demographics: age, gender, marital status, and number of children were strongly related to EE. The findings are in agreement with those of a study conducted by [Khodakarami & Dirani \(2020\)](#), who discovered that age and gender have an impact on the level of EE. According to the study, women were more engaged than men. Furthermore, younger employees were more engaged than older employees. Likewise, in this study, EE may have been influenced by these demographics, because data on the demographic characteristics of respondents showed that majority of the employees in the selected MSMEs were female, and also these MSMEs had youthful population. In summary, the findings of the study indicate that EE is a driver of positive employee performance in Ghana's MSMEs sector.

5.3. Job Resources Moderate the Relationship between Employee Engagement and Employee Performance

Additionally, the regression analysis results show that job resources significantly moderate the link between EE and employee performance in the selected MSMEs during COVID-19. This means that the fourth hypothesis (H4) is supported. The result is in line with a study conducted by [Van Wingerden, Derks, & Bakker \(2017\)](#) which examined the influence of organizational interventions on work engagement and performance. The study adopted the job demands-resources model, and postulated that a personal resources intervention would have a positive effect on EE and performance. The personal resources initiative had a fa-

vourable measurable impact on work engagement and job performance, according to the findings. Work and personal resources, such as motivation for public service, are associated with EE in a positive way. [Schaufeli \(2017\)](#) found out that job resources (the “good things”) have an intrinsic motivating quality; they boost employees’ morale and make them feel engaged, which leads to better outcomes, such as improved employee performance. Therefore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the five job resources (financial rewards, training and development, social support, tools and materials, and flexibility and autonomy) proposed in the study are key drivers of employee engagement which in turn improve employee performance. The implication is that, the performances of employees of the selected MSMEs in Ghana during the pandemic are enhanced via job and organizational engagement, which are also directly caused by these job resources (**Table 9**).

6. Conclusion

The aims of the study were: to examine the effect of employee engagement on employee performance; to investigate the moderating role of job demands on the link between EE and employee performance in selected MSMEs in Ghana. EE, as previously said, is the most important aspect in improving employee performance. However, [Aditama & Riyanto \(2020\)](#) found out that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on employees’ private and professional lives, resulting in employee anxiety, frustration, and burnout. In the same way, [Kansal \(2021\)](#) discovered that job insecurity, work-life imbalance, psychological stress, and collaboration and communication issues are some of the related workplace challenges of the pandemic. The study also stated that if these factors are not addressed, they can have a negative impact on employee performance, affecting an organization’s ability to survive. According to [Dixit & Singh \(2020\)](#), EE is the necessary nutrient for modern organizations to thrive. As a result, increasing EE among employees during a pandemic is critical for organizations to ensure the sustainability of their businesses ([Shortland, 2021](#)). Thus, a study on EE and the impact it has on employee performance in the MSMEs sector is important in this period.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study, like any other research, has limitations. The limitations are discussed, along with future research directions. First, the study was carried out in a few selected MSMEs in Kumasi, Ghana’s second capital. It is possible that the results will

Table 9. Summary of hypothesis test results.

Hypothesis	Relationship	p-values	Decision
H1	Job Resources -> EE	0.001	Supported
H2	EE -> Employee Performance	0.000	Supported
H3	Job Resources* EE -> Employee Performance	0.003	Supported

Source: Field survey, 2022.

differ in other parts of the country. Future studies should include major cities throughout the country in order to produce more generalized results. Furthermore, because this study is the first of its kind to examine the moderating role job demands on the correlation between EE and employee performance during COVID-19, it is recommended that the study is conducted in different countries or cultures, particularly in the developing world. This study also used a cross-sectional approach and a questionnaire with closed-ended questions. As a result, it is likely that variations in employee behaviour over time are not observed. Also, when using closed-ended questions, a respondent's ability to express his or her opinion is usually limited. Consequently, future research should employ a longitudinal and mixed methods design to fully comprehend the subject. Furthermore, while the study used a sample size of 395, which is adequate for structural equation modelling (Comrey & Lee, 2013 cited by Rahi, 2017), it is recommended that future studies use a larger sample size to improve the accuracy of the findings. Again, the study employed a convenience sampling technique, which means that only respondents who were within spitting distance and could easily be reached were included in the sample. It is possible that the sample chosen for this study was in the same line of work in the MSMEs sector. Thus, future studies should use the stratified random sampling technique to give proportionate representation to each business line within the MSMEs sector in order to achieve more generalized results. Finally, because this study is limited to MSMEs, future research should look into other sectors of the Ghanaian economy.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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