



ADRRRI JOURNALS ([www.adrri.org](http://www.adrri.org))

E-ISSN: 2343-6662 VOL. 31, No. 4 (8), October, 2022-December, 2022

## **The Effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance in Ghana's MSMEs Sector during Covid-19: The Moderating Role of Job Demands**

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**Available Online:** 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022

**URL:** <https://journals.adrri.org/index.php/home>

### **Abstract**

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across the globe have been the major victims of 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 investigate the effect of EE on Employee Performance within the COVID-19 pandemic and how this relationship is moderated by job demands. A sample size of 395 respondents who were selected from a variety of MSMEs via a convenience sampling method. The study used a survey questionnaire approach as the main method for collecting primary data. The result of the correlation analysis showed that there was a significant relationship between EE and employee performance. It was revealed that job demands moderated the relationship between EE and employee performance. Finally, the result showed that job demands had an insignificant effect on EE. Thus, it can be concluded that, in the face of COVID-19, Employee engagement is a significant predictor of the EP in the MSMEs sector.

**Keywords:** employee engagement, job demand, MSMEs, employee performance

[Cite article as: Nkansah, D., Gyimah, R., Sarpong, D. A-A., and Annan, J. K. (2022). **The Effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance in Ghana's MSMEs Sector during Covid-19: The Moderating Role of Job Demands.** Africa Development and Resources Research Institute Journal, Ghana: Vol. 31, No. 4 (8), Pp. 42-73, E-ISSN: 2343-6662, 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2022.]

*Received:* (September 10, 2022)

*Accepted:* (December 31, 2022)

## 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, 2020; Kumar, 2021; Atiku & Randa, 2021; Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021; Jung, Jung & Yoon, 2021). Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are the most affected 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, 2020). 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, Nursyamsi & 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 and 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 (Beri & 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; Buliska-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 and 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 and 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 employee performance. Albrecht 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 elements that contribute to enhancing employees' performance because performances have a direct linkage with the goal attainment of the organisation (Biddle & Evenden, 2014). The debate on EE has been going on in Africa as well. For instance, Shirin and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 the public and private sectors can be realized when the employees are provided with the resources needed to perform their work roles. Also, Kaliannan and Adjovu (2015) found that engagement strategies implemented by a Ghanaian telecommunications organisation resulted in success. In 2020, Ohemeng, Obuobisa-Darko and Amoako-Asiedu (2020) assessed the effect of EE on workers task performance in Ghanaian state-owned enterprises. The study found out that EE has a positive and significant influence on the performance of employees. Organizational culture has been found to enhance EE in the Ghanaian public sector (Prepra-Mensah & Kyeremeh, 2018). 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. In addition, it refers to employees' involvement in their

work and commitment to the organization's vision, mission, and goals (Rensburg et al., 2013). These definitions suggest that an engaged employee goes beyond just the performance of his or her work to make sure that the performance leads to positive organizational outcomes. EE employs a three-pronged approach: intellectual engagement, which refers to how deeply an employee considers the work and ways to improve it; affective engagement, which entails a good feeling about one's performance; and social engagement, which entails vigorously seeking out chances to talk about work-related advancements with co-workers (The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2014). 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, 2020). 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; Ouellette, 2021; Narayana & Niranjana, 2021). Ouellette (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 achieving effective engagement in the organization, there must be a clear distinction between organizational goals, 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 organisation to pave the way for EE. Thus, according to Gabr and El-Shaer (2013), factors like recognition and reward, organisational perceived support, procedural justice and job characteristics, are antecedents of EE. The authors added that, organizational commitment, the intention to quit, employee involvement, and job satisfaction account for EE. In addition, they further argue that these elements are antecedents of 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 team, organisational output, and employee (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 organisation (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 and Rahim (2021) concluded that the financial and non-financial outcomes of an organisation are highly dependent on the output of its employees. However, the quality of individual performance in an organisation is determined by the level of EE (Satata, 2021). This implies that it is actually EE that causes performance 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 organisation since it is the primary indicator of quality employee performance. This prompted the researchers to investigate the impact of EE on employee performance in a sample of Ghanaian MSMEs. In line with the study's general objective, which is to examine the impact of employee engagement on employee performance, and how job demands moderate the link between employee engagement and

employee performance in some selected MSMEs in Ghana during Covid-19 pandemic. The study's specific objectives are as follows;

- (1) To examine the impact of employee engagement on employee performance.
- (2) To evaluate the effect of Job demands on employee engagement and
- (3) To examine the extent to which the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance is moderated by job demands.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Employee Engagement*

Over the last ten years, there has been a significant amount of discussion about employee engagement (Pandita & Bedarkar, 2015), and due to that, several research works have been conducted in an effort to operationalize the concept. (Dhir & Shukla, 2019). Khan (1990) pioneered and theorised engagement as the attachment of an organisation member's self to their job requirements; throughout, people employ, role performances 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 and 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 domains of EE: vigour, dedication, and cognitive engagement in the conceptualization of EE. For example, Shuck and Wollard (2010) describe EE as an employee's emotional, behavioural state and cognitive, 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, and emotional energy and physical in the performance of his or her work (Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010). Similarly, Barrick, Thurgood, Smith and Courtright (2015) defined EE as the collective effort where all the members of an organisation cognitively, physically, and emotionally put in their work. According to Shuck, Osam and Nimon (2017), EE is a constructive, vigorous, job-related mental state which is driven by preservation, passion, and focus of mental, emotional, and behavioural vitality. On the other hand, the unitary definitions conceptualize EE as a dedicated willingness, positive state of mind, and the opposite of burnout. For instance, EE is said to a goal-oriented psychological state whereby individual completely concentrate on the activity at hand. EE, is described as the degree to which workers are content with their job, have sense of valued by their employer, and demonstrate a positive attitude and dedication to their company in order to secure future organizational success (Human Capital Institute (2011), 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 and Roodt (2011) EE, describes an employee's motivation and ability to assist their organisation flourish by substantially providing discretionary effort on a long-term basis. In the same way, Myrden and 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 organisation as a whole. It involves an employee's participation and fulfilment 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 intense vigour and psychological elasticity, as well as the readiness to devote energy and be fully focused on individual's job 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 the work and activities carried out (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 organisational setting and vigorously collaborate with co-workers to increase on-the-job performance for the company's benefit (Robinson et al., 2004). As a result, EE can further be defined as an employee's commitment to the job, management, team, and organization, which motivates effort and determination to stay and improves the organization's overall success. Markos and Sridevi (2010), posit that engaged worker are emotionally tied to their organizations and strongly invested in their jobs, demonstrating a strong desire in contributing to the success of the institution by going above and beyond the scope of their delegated job. 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 an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional 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 and 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 (Ouellette, 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 institution simply defined EE as employees' taking part in their work with enthusiasm. 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 Organization, 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 defines EE as the extent to which employees are dedicated to their jobs, the level of effort they put in, and the length of time they remain in the organisation as a result of their dedication.

#### *Employee Performance*

Every organisation requires talented employees who have the ability to complete their work (Kurniawan, 2018), because an organization's success or failure is determined by its employees' performance (Elnaga & Imran, 2013; Mathis, 2016; Obuobisa-Darko & Tsedzah, 2019). Employee performance is defined by Jabeen and Rahim (2021) as both non-financial and financial outcomes relating to the success of an organisation directly. Therefore, successful businesses hold employee performance in high esteem since the performance 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 organisation 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 individual work 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), employee performance can be broadly defined as all of an employee's actions while on the job. It is also defined as every employee's true behaviour expressed as work achievement relevant to their job in the company (Ahmed & Ramzan 2013). Similarly, Biddle and Evenden (2014) define performance as a pattern of behaviour used by a manager or supervisor in interactions with everyone, 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 influence on output of the institution. According to Ahuja (2006), 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. Efficiency is the ability to deliver the best results with the fewest resources feasible, whereas effectiveness is the ability of people to achieve the intended goals or targets (Stoner, 1996). Productivity evaluates how an employee, and organisation, converts inputs into output (in the form of goods and services), and it is quantified as the ratio of output generated to inputs needed to achieve 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 output of each employee in an organisation 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.

#### *Job Demands*

Job demands are work characteristics that cost energy, for instance, workload, complicated tasks, and disagreement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). They are job characteristics such as physical, social, or psychological demands that involve constant physical and/or psychological (mental and affective) exertion or abilities linked to physiological and/or psychological expenses (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker, et al., 2007). Job demand is viewed as causes of stress (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), draining employees' energy and leaving them fatigued and unsure of areas to focus their efforts. When a job requires more time investments, and these efforts turn out to be extra difficult to make owing to excessively demanding work conditions, the likelihood of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) diminishes. Although job expectations are not always harmful (Van den Broeck, et al., 2010), several research anticipates that having extremely challenging work conditions overburdens people's personal capacity and has negative implications (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees often regard job responsibilities as sources of stress since they involve putting in a lot of effort (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Employees' physical and emotional well-being has been found to be challenged by job expectations, which can result in energy exhaustion and adverse health consequences (Bakker, et al, 2003; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Physical, social, and psychological needs have been classified as job demands (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). To begin with, physical job demands include components of the job that have a direct impact on employee tasks, the tools used in a task, and the strength of labour in the course of task completion. The workload experienced during task performance is an example of a physical job requirement. When employees are unable to cope with the speed of work, have limited time, or basically there is a lot of work to be done, this is an example of workload (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Negative emotions, exhaustion, and other sentiments such as wrath and



irritation are all examples of workload reactions (Miles, Borman, Spector & Fox, 2002). Depression, work anxiety, and a drop in job satisfaction are some of the other psychological pressures (Spector, 2006). Second, social job expectations take into account the stress that employees face as a result of their interactions with co-workers. Workplace interactions, for example, might cause anxiety if they are highly emotional and characterised by a high degree of interpersonal conflict (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Interpersonal conflict, which relates to conflicting encounters with co-workers, is an example of social job demands (Spector & Jex, 1998). Employee stress levels have been proven to rise when there is a lot of interpersonal conflict in the workplace (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Emotional demand is the extent to which a job demands employees to follow certain rules guiding their emotional displays so as to affect feelings, attitudes, and behaviours of their clients (Heuven, Bakker, Schaufeli & Huisman, 2006).

#### *Job demands and Employee Engagement*

The Job Demands and Resources (JD-R) theory can be used as an integrated theoretical framework for workplace monitoring with the goal of increasing work engagement and preventing burnout (Schaufeli, 2017). According to Crawford, LePine & Rich (2010), the association between occupational demands and EE differed depending on the type of demand. As a result, the researchers identified two types of employment demands: stressors and challenges. Job demands that employees see as obstacles were shown to have a negative association with EE, whereas demands that employees see as challenges were found to have a good link with EE (Crawford, LePine & Rich, 2010). Job hindrances were also found to be negatively correlated with vigour, a crucial component of EE, by Van den Broeck, et al, (2010), whereas job challenges were positively associated with vigour. As well, a study conducted by Radic (2020) showed that job demands influenced engagement among cruise ship employees negatively. Again, Podsakoff, LePine & LePine (2007) confirmed these relationships when the results of their meta-analyses of 183 independent samples revealed that hindrance stressors were negatively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, in contrast, challenge stressors were positively related with the same variables. Li, Taris & Peeters (2020) found out that the presence of high job demands resulted in negative outcomes, however, the negative outcomes were weaker in job demands which are perceived as being high-challenge. Clearly, the empirical review shows that job demands may influence EE negatively or positively. As a result, the study hypothesizes the following:

*H1: Job demands will positively relate to Employee Engagement.*

#### *EE and Employee Performance*

According to the RBV theory, an institutional internal environment is the main source of competitive advantage, as are the resources available to compete with others in the environment (Onditi, 2016). A company's control over valuable, scarce resources and capabilities results in a long-term competitive advantage, and non-substitutable (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; Satata, 2021; Linggiallo, Riadi, Hariyadi &

Adhimursandi, 2021). Swati et al. (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 significant impact on employee performance. Dajani & Zaki (2015) established that EE had a significant impact on the job performance of 245 bank employees from both private and public sector banks 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. Jepkorir (2014) also looked into the perceived relationship between EE and performance at East African Portland Cement Company Limited, using a sample size of 260 people. 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 et al. (2018) investigated the impact of transformational leadership, employee placement, competency, and EE on employee performance in DKI Jakarta construction and construction enterprises. According to the findings of the study, transformational leadership, employee placement, and competence all had a positive and significant effect on EE, either partially or simultaneously. In addition, Pantri et al. (2012) investigated the effect of employee's happiness, moderated by employee engagement, on 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. In addition, Shaheen et al. (2017) used the PLS technique to assess a structural equation model in establishing the relationship between worker relations with supervisors, EE, and job performance with developing country context (Bangladesh).. Employee relations with supervisors, according to the study, have an impact on employee productivity and engagement. EE mediates the relationship between employee relations and employee performance. Employees with jobs that provide high degree of autonomy, task complexity, task identity, and responses are more engaged and, as a direct consequence, receive higher ratings for performance from their supervisors, according to the study. The study drew on data from a survey of 283 employees in a UK consulting and construction firm, as well as independent performance evaluations from supervisors. In Uganda's public sector, Peter (2015) investigated the impact of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards on employee engagement. 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.*

*The moderating role of Job Demands*

Based on the JD-R theory, Crawford et al. (2014) explored the job demand-resources with respect to the stressor evaluation principle to anticipate differences in the demand-to-engagement connection. Because of the intricacy of the demand and how it appears to be judged by employees, it was discovered that the link between job expectations and dedication varies. Job demands have a positive impact on burnout, while decreased burnout has a link with job resources, and job resources have a favourable relationship with enhanced engagement, according to the meta-analysis's findings. The findings further indicated that both job resources and job demands had a statistically strong effect on employee exhaustion, whereas only job resources significantly affected EE. Peng (2015) investigated how job resources (i.e., perceived organisational support, immediate superior support, coworker support, personal freedom, recognition, job reputation, and perceived external reputation), work-life enrichment, job demands, and core self-evaluations influence work engagement. The findings of the hierarchical regression analysis revealed that job demands only had a moderating effect on the work-to-personal life enrichment and work engagement correlations, implying that when job demands are higher among academic staff, the impact of work-to-personal life enrichment and work engagement is increased. The authors employed a moderated hierarchical regression analysis to test a sample of 156 working mothers in the country (Nigeria). Findings from the study indicated that work engagement was favourably linked to employee performance, and job demands and resources substantially moderated the interaction, so that highly engaged working mothers facing high task demands with lower job resources reported low work performance. From the above presentation the study hypothesizes that: From the above presentation the study hypothesizes that:

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

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. highlights the connections between the constructs used in this research.

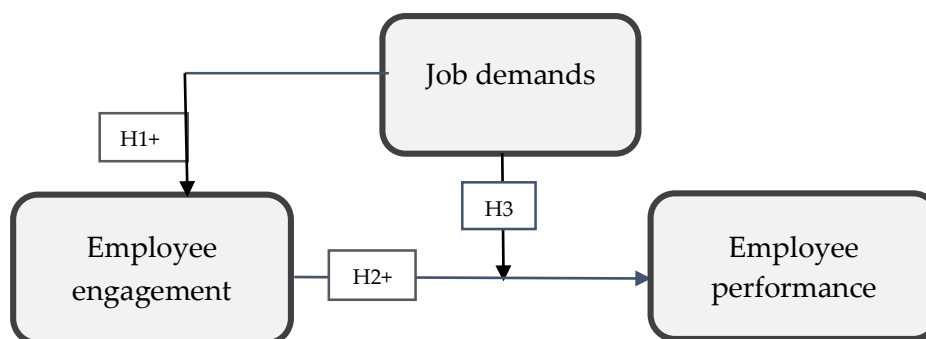


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

## METHODOLOGY

### Design

Research design details the plan for addressing research objectives or hypotheses (McDaniel and 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), comparative design, longitudinal design, case study design and experimental design. Different designs provide numerous options, each having its own strength and weakness, although it is often asserted that no single best research design exists (Cohen et al., 2007; McDaniel & Gates, 2012), under certain circumstances, certain designs seem more applicable. As emphasised by Cohen et al. (2007), "fitness for purpose" is a key governing principle in the choice of design. The study objective, required data, budget allocation for carrying out the study, duration for the study, all play important roles in selecting a specific design (McDaniel & Gates, 2012). A cross-section design was adopted. For explanatory research, a cross-sectional survey design is adequate (Malhotra and Grover, 1998; Rindfleisch et al., 2008). However, it has been argued that cross-sectional survey designs are more ideal for examining "cause-and-effect" questions than experimental and longitudinal approaches. (Bryman, 2012) since the probability that it will encounter common method variance problem is high (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Rindfleisch et al., 2008). The questionnaires were "closed-ended," with respondents choosing from a predefined list of response options. Respondents were asked five-point Likert scale questions, with answers ranging from one to five: 5 means strongly agree, 4 means agree, 3 means uncertain, 2 means disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree. The study used closed-ended questions, as this approach helps to fast-track effort and time needed to enter data while also boosting ability and proficiency in lowering non-response rates (Ruane, 2016).

#### *Population, Sampling/Sampling size and Data Collection*

Population refers to all people or items that are of interest to a researcher (Rahi, 2017; Geoffrey, 2019). It is the total universe of people from which a sample is chosen. It also denotes all elements or items a researcher is interested in (Rahi, 2017; Geoffrey, 2019). According to Alvi (2016) all respondents who match the precise criteria set for a research study are known as the target population. The study's population was made up of employees from a few selected MSMEs in Ghana's second capital, Kumasi. Through personal and social contacts of the researcher, 36 MSMEs were selected and informed to participate in this research, which is by means of snowball sampling techniques. Nonetheless, 32 out of the 36 provided feedback to the researcher, allowing the researcher to continue with the data collection. All respondents were provided with questionnaires to answer based on how they perceive EE and its impact on employee performance, using job resources and job demands as moderators in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 416 questionnaires were completed and returned, out of a total of 550 sent out. However, 21 out of the 416 were excluded because not all the items on these questionnaires were answered. Therefore, only 395 questionnaires were used for the data analysis, representing a response rate of 72%. The study used convenience-sampling technique to select 395 respondents. Convenience sampling is a way of collecting data from a population that is accessible to the researcher and conveniently reachable (Rahi, 2017). Researchers employed the convenience sampling technique for sample selection and questionnaire administration. 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. Data

was collected over a four-month period between January and May of 2022, using a Likert scale (a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

#### *Data Analysis*

Data collected were sorted and questionnaires that had majority of questions unanswered removed and the rest of the questionnaires were entered into excel and exported into SPSS ver. 21.0 software for cleansing. A two-step strategy was used to analyse the data: preliminary analysis and main analysis. The first involves checking nonresponse bias and exploring the data to understand the characteristics of the respondents as well as the underlying structure of and relationships that exist in the substantive data. The results generated from this step was discussed by the supervision committee members. The committee then provided suggestions on more desirable statistical tools and procedures to use and better ways of presenting the results. Following this, the main analysis was conducted in three phases: generation of results for profiling the participants, testing of the reliability and validity of the study measurement items, and testing of the conceptual model/hypotheses. Several statistical tools were used to analyse the data. SmartPLS 3 was used to examine the hypothesised relationships 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.

## **RESULTS**

### *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 findings of the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

According to table 1, 213 of the 395 respondents (53.9%) were females, whereas 182 of the respondents (46.1%) were males. This implies that MSMEs in the Kumasi metropolitan area employ more females than males. In terms of age, it was discovered that 141 of the respondents (35.7%) were between the ages of 30 and 39, while 127 of the respondents (32.2%) were between the ages of 20 and 29. This was followed by the age range 40-49 years, which had 99 respondents (25.1%). The brackets of 50-59 and 60 and up had 4% and 3%, respectively. This findings reveals a statistical 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. In terms of respondents' positions, more than half (214) of the respondents (54.2%) were operatives or non-managers, 129 of the respondents (32.6%) were supervisors, and 32 of the respondents (13.2%) held managerial positions. Respondents were also asked to provide their academic credentials. According to the results, out of 395 respondents, 146 (37%), 119 (30.1%), 98 (24.8%), and 32 (8.1%) were certificate holders. This shows that the majority of respondents in the chosen MSMEs have a low level of education. In addition, respondents were asked how long they had been with their respective organisations. In descending order, 122 of the 395 respondents (30.9%) have worked in their organisations for at least four years. This is followed by respondents who have been in the job for three years. There were 112 respondents representing 28.3%, 92 respondents representing 23.3% had worked for a period of two years, and 69 respondents (17.5%) had been with their organisations for one year or less. Based on the findings, more than 80% of respondents had been with their organisations since the inception of COVID-19 in Ghana, and thus were in a good position to express how they felt during this time. Finally, 184 respondents (46.6%) were full-time workers, 88 respondents (22.3%) were part-time workers, 59 respondents (14.9%) were temporary workers, 43 respondents (10.9%) were casual workers, and 21 respondents (5.4%) were contract workers. This implies that the majority of MSMEs in the city employ full-time employees.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<b>Demographic</b>		<b>Frequency(395)</b>	<b>Percentage(100%)</b>
<b>Gender of respondents</b>	Female	213	53.9
	Male	182	46.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age of respondents</b>	20-29	127	32.2
	30-39	141	35.7
	40-49	99	25.1
	50-60	16	4
	60 and above	12	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of children</b>	None	124	31.4
	1	98	24.8
	2	83	21
	3	42	10.6
	4 and above	48	12.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	179	45.3
	Married	142	36
	Divorced	36	9.1
	Widowed	38	9.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Position of respondents</b>	Operative/Non-Manager	214	54.2

	Supervisor	129	32.6
	Manager	52	13.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Level of Educational Qualification</b>	Certificate	146	37
	Diploma	119	30.1
	Degree	98	24.8
	Masters	32	8.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years spent current in organization</b>	1 year or less	69	17.5
	2 years	92	23.3
	3 years	112	28.3
	4 years and above	122	30.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Type of employment</b>	Full time	184	46.6
	Part time	88	22.3
	Temporary	59	14.9
	Casual	43	10.8
	Contract	21	5.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: field survey, 2022

#### Measurement Issues

**Table 2: Model Fit**

Model 1	CFA	Chi-Square	SRMR	CMIN/DF	CFI	PClose	RMSEA
Suggested Cut-off values	0.747	387.903	<.0098	<.973	<.758	<.000	<.113
CFA Measurement model	0.861	398.541	.0075	14.126	1.000	.0000	.532

Source: field survey, 2022

#### Cronbach alpha

The Cronbach alpha test is used to assess the reliability of multiple-question Likert scale surveys. The questions are intended to evaluate latent variables. For analysing alpha for dichotomous questions or describing internal consistency, use the following rule of thumb:  $\alpha \geq 0.9$  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, below.

**Table 3: Cronbach Alpha**

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Engagement	10	0.815
Employee Performance	17	0.720
Job Demands	9	0.835

Source: field survey, 2022

*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 an 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 (Amoako-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 of them recorded a value greater than 0.5.

*Job Demands and EE*

Furthermore, the results show that job demands have an insignificant and negative correlation with EE ( $r = -0.015$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Although there was a negative relationship between job demands and EE, the effect was insignificant as revealed in table 4 below.

*EE and Employee Performance*

Finally, the results of the correlation analysis show that there is a positive relation between EE and employee performance. ( $r = .617$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests that an increase in EE will result in an increase in employee performance, as shown in table 4 below.

**Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)**

	Age	Gender	Number of children	Marital status	Employee engagement	Employee performance	Job demands	
Age	<b>*0.791</b>							
Gender	-0.074	<b>*0.703</b>						
Number of children	0.096	-0.27	<b>*0.692</b>					
Marital status	-0.010	-0.067	0.013	<b>*0.652</b>				
Employee engagement	0.125	0.039	0.014	0.062	<b>*0.852</b>			
Employee performance	0.030	0.037	0.026	0.010	0.617	<b>*0.715</b>		
Job demands	0.001	0.059	0.014	-0.086	-0.015	-0.025	0.220	<b>*0.828</b>

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

*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 task performance, the majority of the respondents always plan their work such that it is done on time (mean = 4.63, SD = 1.65). Furthermore, a higher proportion of respondents agreed that they always keep in mind the outcome that they need to achieve in their organizations (mean = 4.53, SD = 1.26). Again, the (mean = 4.60, SD = 1.24) indicated that the respondents could always separate the main issues from side issues in their organizations. The (mean = 4.57, SD = 1.24) show that a statistical significant amount of the respondents agreed that they can perform their work well with minimal time and effort. Regarding contextual performance, the (mean = 4.57, SD = 1.24) show that the majority of the respondents always take on extra responsibilities in their organizations. The (mean = 4.61, SD = 1.24) revealed that a greater number of the respondents always have the initiative for task performance in their organizations. The (mean = 4.65, SD = 1.22) show that a significant amount of the respondents always take on the challenging tasks when available in their organizations. Also, the (mean = 4.78, SD = 2.01) show that the majority of the respondents always work to keep their job knowledge up-to-date in their organizations. Likewise, the (mean = 4.56, SD = 1.26) show that the respondents always work at keeping their job skills up-to-date in their organizations. The (mean = 3.59, SD = 1.31) revealed that the majority of the respondents often come up with creative solutions to new problems in their organizations. The (mean = 4.53, SD = 1.23) revealed that a significant number of the respondents always keep looking for new challenges in their jobs. The (mean = 3.50, SD = 1.21) show that most of the respondents often actively participate in a work setting. With regard to counterproductive work behaviour, the (mean = 2.57, SD = 1.26) revealed that a significant number of the respondents sometimes complain about unimportant matters at work. The (mean = 1.54, SD = 1.23) revealed that the majority of the respondents seldom had problems greater than they were at work. The (mean = 1.56, SD = 1.22) 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 = 2.59, SD = 1.30) show that a greater number of the respondents sometimes speak with colleagues about the negative aspect of their work in their organizations. The (mean = 2.59, SD = 1.26) implies that most of the respondents sometimes speak with colleagues about the negative aspect of their work. Also, the (mean = 2.59, SD = 1.26) revealed that a vast majority of the respondents sometimes speak with people from outside their organizations about negative aspects of their work.

**Table 5: Descriptive results of Employee Performance**

<b>Employee Performance</b>	<b>Mini</b>	<b>Maxi</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>Task performance</b>				
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 distinct main issues from side issues at job.	1.00	5.00	4.6076	1.24037
I am able to perform my task with marginal effort and time.	2.00	5.00	4.5772	1.24264
<b>Contextual Performance</b>				
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 task, when available.	1.00	5.00	4.6506	1.22556
I make an effort to keep my job knowledge current.	1.00	5.00	4.7823	2.01219
I work hard to keep my job skills current and relevant.	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
In my job, I am always looking for new challenges.	1.00	5.00	4.5342	1.23844
I actively contribute in workplace meetings.	1.00	5.00	3.5089	1.21822
<b>Counter productive work behaviour</b>				
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 discuss the drawbacks of my work with those outside the organisation	1.00	5.00	2.5949	1.26771

Source: field survey, 2022

#### *Job Demands at selected MSMEs*

In line with table 6, in line with respondents response to job demand, majority of respondents were unsure whether their job required much of them emotionally (mean = 3.48, SD = 1.49). Majority of the respondents were uncertain if they were confronted with things that affected them personally in their organizations, as recorded (mean = 3.76, SD = 1.50). In the organizations, a significant number of respondents were unsure whether they felt personally threatened at work (mean = 3.48, SD = 1.49). In addition, the majority of the respondents agreed that they have contact with difficult clients in their organizations, as recorded (mean = 4.52, SD = 1.20). Again, the



majority agreed that they could convince or persuade people in their organizations the (mean 4.46, SD = 1.24). Also, a greater number of the respondents were uncertain whether there was often a disagreement in their team about who should do what (mean = 3.62, SD = 1.63). The (mean = 3.02, SD = 1.03) showed that the majority of the respondents were uncertain that there was conflict within their team. As well, the (mean = 4.58, SD = 1.55) show that the majority agreed that they are asked to do an excessive amount of work. Finally, the (mean = 4.56, SD = 1.24) showed that most of the respondents agreed that they are given enough time to get their job done in their organizations.

**Table 6: Descriptive results of Job Demands**

Job demands	Mini	Maxi	Mean	Std. Dev.
My job demands a lot from me emotionally.	1.00	5.00	3.4884	1.49097
In my job, I am exposed to situations that have a personal impact on me.	1.00	5.00	3.7674	1.50447
I feel personally threatened in my workplace.	1.00	5.00	3.4884	1.49097
I have contacts with difficult clients in my work.	1.00	5.00	4.5266	1.20117
I work to be able to convince or persuade people.	1.00	5.00	4.4684	1.24055
There is often a disagreement in my team about who should do what.	1.00	5.00	3.6233	1.63559
There are conflicts within my team	1.00	5.00	3.0279	1.03633
I am being asked to do an unusually large amount of work.	1.00	5.00	4.5848	1.55598
I have enough time to complete the task.	1.00	5.00	4.5671	1.24730

Source: field survey, 2022.

#### *Effect of Job Demands on EE*

Furthermore, Path B studied the relationship between job demands and EE, the results ( $\beta = -0.466$ ,  $p = 0.136$ ) showed that there was an insignificant link between job demands and EE. This suggests that job demands did not significantly predict EE in the selected MSMEs during the pandemic as shown in table 7 below.

#### *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. As shown in table 7 below.

**Table 7: Direct Paths results**

Path	Beta coefficient	Standard error	t-statistics	p-value
Job Demands _ -> EE	-0.446	0.911	-8.494	<b>0.136</b>
EE_ -> Employee Performance	1.550	0.138	10.785	<b>0.000</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

#### *The moderating role of Job Demands on the relationship between EE and Employee Performance*

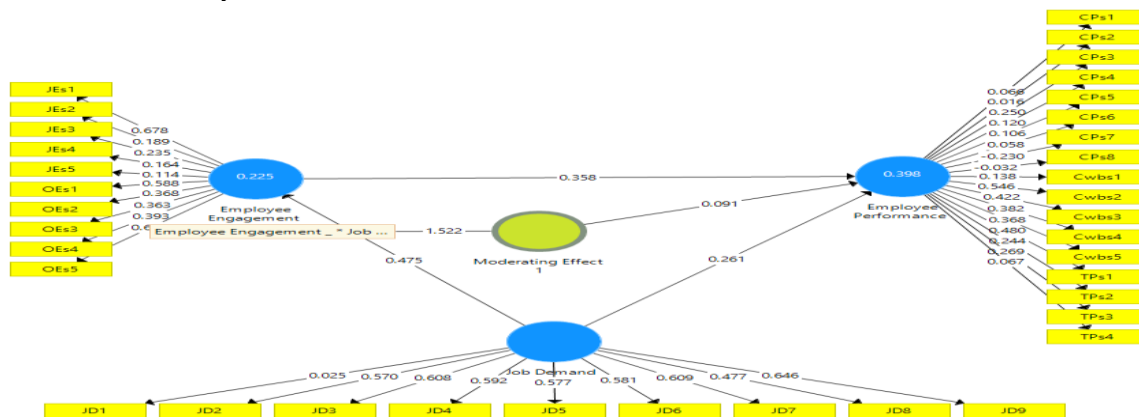
The fifth and final hypothesis investigated the moderating role of job demands on EE and performance in the selected MSMEs.

The results ( $\beta = 0.358, p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) confirmed that there was a significant and positive correlation between EE and employee performance. Furthermore, the results ( $\beta = 0.475, p\text{-value} = 0.136$ ) indicated that there was insignificant relationship between EE and job demands. This means that job demands do not significantly predict EE in the selected MSMEs. Also, ( $\beta = 0.261, p\text{-value} = 0.016$ ) pointed out that there was a significant correlation between job demands and employee performance in the selected MSMEs during the pandemic. With the moderation role, the results ( $\beta = 0.091, p\text{-value} = 0.026$ ) showed that job demands significantly moderated the link between EE and employee performance in the selected MSMEs as indicated in table 8.

**Table 8: Moderation effect results for Job demands**

Path	Beta coefficient	Standard error	t-statistics	p-value
EE -> Employee performance	0.358	0.028	11.084	0.000
Job demands _ -> EE	0.475	0.258	0.894	0.136
Job demands _ -> Employee Perf.	0.261	0.124	5.461	0.016
<b>Moderating Effect 1</b>	<b>0.091</b>	<b>0.139</b>	<b>3.681</b>	<b>0.026</b>

Source: field survey, 2022



**Table 9: Summary of Hypothesis Test Results**

Hypothesis	Relationship	p-values	Decision
H1	Job Demands -> EE	0.136	Not Supported
H2	EE -> Employee Performance	0.000	Supported
H3	Job Demands* EE -> Employee Performance	0.026	Supported

Source: field survey, 2022

## DISCUSSIONS

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 & Setyo Riyanto, 2020). Schaufeli (2017) found out that employees who are going through these psychological stresses are also associated with occupational injuries and accidents, poor work performance, and reduced productivity, which also affect the overall organizational

performance. With regard to the JD-R theory, personal and job resources reduce burnout and psychological stress and also boost EE (Schaufeli, 2017).

Thus, this study was to examine the influence 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. Data collected was analysed using PLS-SEM techniques, to assess the hypotheses stated. The empirical findings did not statistically significantly support all of the proposed study hypotheses. The results are extensively discussed below, based on each of the study objectives

#### *The Effect of Job Demands on EE*

Results from the hypothesis testing shows that job demands have negative statistical impact on EE in the MSMEs studied in Ghana. Both correlation and regression analysis revealed that the relationship between job demands and EE is insignificant. This indicates that the first hypothesis (H1) is not supported. Thus, EE is unaffected by job demands in the MSMEs sector in the midst of the pandemic in the context of this study's. This study's finding is in agreement with research findings by Radic (2020). The results showed that job demands insignificantly influenced engagement among cruise ship employees. In the same way, by Li et al. (2017) in examining the effects of hindrance and challenge demands on driving anger using the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. Their results also showed insignificant negative link between challenge demands and EE, and demands hindrance. The non-significant effect of job demands on EE may be that even though a significant number of the respondents agreed that they came into contact with difficult customers, and were also asked to perform excessive workload in the midst of COVID-19, however, such demands did not affect the engagement levels of the employees possibly due to the fact that the employees were given enough time to execute their tasks. Also, the excessive workloads perhaps were not chronic. Furthermore, the impact of the pandemic may not be as devastating on the lives of employees in Ghana as it is in other countries. Thus, psychological stress such as fear, frustration, stress and anxiety, and burnout which have been identified to be common among employees during the pandemic (Sahni, 2020) may perhaps not be the case among employees in Ghana. According to the event system theory, not all employees may consider an event as disruptive and critical (Morgeson, Mitchell & Liu, 2015). In the same way, employees in the Ghanaian MSMEs sector may have not considered COVID-19 infection rates to be a significant event. This might have accounted for the insignificant effects of job demands such as emotional demands, workload, time pressure, and interpersonal conflict on EE in the Ghanaian MSMEs sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *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 organisation 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, such as, Tanwar (2017) who 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. Furthermore this study finding is also 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. In the context of this study, the findings indicates that 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 and 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.

#### *Job Demands moderate the relationship between Employee Engagement and Employee Performance*

Finally, the third research objective examined the moderating role of job demands on the linkage between EE and employee performance in the selected MSMEs. Based on the findings, it was discovered that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between job demand, employee engagement and performance of employee. Hypothesis three (H3) is therefore supported. This result is supported by the findings of a study conducted by According to Lu et al. (2016), who looked into the moderating effect of job security on the relationship between job demands and job performance, three studies with cross-sectional and time-lagged designs were found. The study's findings indicate that higher job security led to job demands that significantly improved employee performance, while lower job security led to job demands that slightly decreased performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study's objectives were to investigate the impact of engagement among employees on their 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 & Setyo 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.

### RECOMMENDATION

In light of the research findings, researchers make the following recommendations for policy and practical application by MSMEs in Sub-Saharan Africa and more specifically Ghana. Based on the findings the study researchers recommend owners and managers of MSMEs to focus more on improving EE levels in order to improve employee performance. Management of MSMEs are in a good position to favourably affect EE levels in their businesses and enhance productivity by designing and implementing EE policies. Hence, it is recommended that management of MSMEs place emphasis on the design and implementation of EE policies in their respective organizations by including workforces in the design and execution of these policies. Additionally based on the demographics findings, which shows that majority of the respondents (37%) were certificate holders and (30%) being diploma holders and the descriptive statistics results also indicating that majority of the respondents were not allowed to attend training courses. Based on this, researchers recommend that management of MSMEs organize period training for employees to increase performance, since the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about new ways of conducting business by means of ICT.

#### *For Future Research and Limitations of Study*

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 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. Additionally, a respondent's capacity to express their opinions is typically constrained when using closed-ended questions. 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 cited by Rahi, 2017), future research should use a bigger sample size to increase the reliability of the results. 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.

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