

Supervisor support, religiosity, work engagement, and affective commitment: evidence from a Middle Eastern emerging market

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing on job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, this study aims to develop a model of how work engagement mediates the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment, with religiosity moderating the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement. This study further tests a moderated-mediation model exploring the relationships between supervisor support, religiosity, work engagement and affective commitment within a unique institutional context where religious values and beliefs significantly influence and shape people management practices.

Design/methodology/approach – Using a survey-based approach, data were collected from 367 employees from the telecommunication sector in the context of Jordan.

Findings – Supervisor support was positively related to work engagement, which positively impacts affective commitment. Work engagement mediated the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment. In addition, religiosity amplified the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement, and the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment.

Originality/value – This study contributes to JD-R theory and pertinent literature by examining the moderating role of religiosity, an important yet neglected personal resource. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is the first to examine the interaction effect between religiosity and supervisor support in predicting work engagement. It is also the first to examine a moderated mediation model exploring the relationships between supervisor support, religiosity, work engagement and affective commitment.

Keywords Affective commitment, Religiosity, Supervisor support, Work engagement, Emerging market

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

Work engagement has recently received much attention and remains of enduring interest and importance for researchers and practitioners because of its positive effects on employees and organisations (Banihani and Syed, 2020; Gupta and Shaheen, 2018). Work engagement is “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002, p. 74). Work engagement is strongly connected with meaningful work, and highly engaged employees are passionate for their work and deeply connected and committed to the tasks they perform (Toth *et al.*, 2021). Given the importance of work engagement, researchers and practitioners are encouraged to look into novel approaches that can improve work engagement (Memon *et al.*, 2020).

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When discussing how to promote work engagement, scholarship has brought supervisor support to the table (Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021; Stefanidis *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, prior work on the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement has been somewhat difficult to comprehend across different sectors and occupations (Hidayah Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019), and yet, the role of personal resources in enhancing work engagement and job-related outcomes is largely neglected (Abualigah *et al.*, 2021; Agarwal and Gupta, 2018). Furthermore, existing literature has overlooked the potential impact of employee religiosity although the latter is an important personal resource for enhancing work engagement and employee commitment (Abualigah and Koburtay, 2022; Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018; Baker and Lee, 2020) particularly in unique institutional contexts like the one under investigation in the current study, where religious values and beliefs significantly influence and shape people management practices (Abualigah *et al.*, 2022; Haak-Saheem and Darwish, 2021).

Religiosity refers to believing in God and behaving according to God's will (McDaniel and Burnett, 1990). Existing evidence suggests that employees are increasingly seeking meaning at work (Garcia-Zamor, 2003) which can be characterised by religiosity (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018; Baker and Lee, 2020). Despite the importance of personal resources in predicting job-related outcomes, little theorising of the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory has been conducted to explore the interaction effect between job and personal resources in facilitating work engagement (Grover *et al.*, 2018). For example, Abualigah and Koburtay (2022) recently found that work engagement mediated the relationship between religiosity and turnover intention. However, they have called for more research to further investigate the role of religiosity in the workplace. To advance this line of inquiry, drawing on JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014), this study seeks to explore the interaction effect of job resources (supervisor support) and personal resources (religiosity) on work engagement. Additionally, this study aims to examine the moderating role of religiosity, from an Islamic lens, and the mediating role of work engagement through a moderated-mediation model.

Against this backdrop, the current study proposes a research model through which work engagement mediates the link between supervisor support and affective commitment, with religiosity moderating the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement. More specifically, anchored in the JD-R theory, this research aims to:

- investigate the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement;
- examine the relationship between work engagement and affective commitment;
- investigate the mediating effect of work engagement on the linkage between supervisor support and affective commitment;
- examine the moderating role of religiosity on the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement; and
- investigate the interplay between supervisor support, religiosity, work engagement and affective commitment through a moderated-mediation model.

The study makes several contributions to existing literature. First, little attention has been directed towards understanding the interaction effect between job and personal resources in facilitating work engagement in the context of JD-R theory (Abualigah and Koburtay, 2022; Grover *et al.*, 2018; Jolly *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, this novel study extends JD-R theory by examining the moderating role of religiosity as a personal resource on the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement. Second, because previous studies on the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement are inconsistent (Hidayah Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019) and have mainly focused on Western contexts, notably, North America and Western Europe (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018; Banihani and Syed, 2020; Pattnaik and Panda, 2020), this study explores the relationship between these constructs in a Middle Eastern emerging market where institutional arrangements are fragile, and religious beliefs

and moralism play a significant role in work engagement and commitment ([Haak-Saheem and Darwish, 2021](#)). Third, to our knowledge, this study is among the first to test a moderated-mediation model by investigating the relationships between supervisor support, religiosity, work engagement and affective commitment. Finally, previous studies that have investigated religiosity have done so typically in the North America and Western Europe and from Christianity lens ([Abualigah and Koburtay, 2022](#); [Banihani and Syed, 2020](#)). Hence, we explore the concept of religiosity from an Islamic perspective, thus extending scholarship and practice in this underexplored non-Western context.

It is essential to use JD-R as a theoretical lens particularly in contexts where local norms and conventions, religion and other cultural scripts shape organisational practices; the latter present unique opportunities which could have an impact on the way individuals perceive their work environment and their ability to perform their job effectively. JD-R provides a framework for understanding how job demands, job resources and personal resources interact in unique institutional contexts, and how the latter impact on employees' well-being, motivation and performance. Hence, it would be important to provide some insights to Middle Eastern organisations in terms of how they can best design jobs and work environments that support employees' well-being and performance, and as a result, contribute to a more productive and sustainable organisations in such contexts. To be able to offer a better understanding of potential impact of cultural and religious values on employees' engagement and commitment, we aim to survey individuals as the main unit of analysis to measure the main constructs of the study and provide the appropriate linkages of the proposed theoretical framework.

Jordan and Islam: does context matter?

The country of Jordan, with a population of 10 million people, holds a strategic position in the Middle East and has opened up its markets to both regional and global trade and investment. Although the country lacks significant natural resources, the service sector makes up over 75% of its national income, making it a crucial area of focus. Within this sector, the Jordanian telecommunications industry stands out as particularly innovative, and it has undergone significant privatisation and deregulation. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential role of the telecommunication sector in maintaining the country's economy and supporting other sectors, not only in Jordan, but globally.

Although Jordan significantly lacks in natural resources, its human resources are highly valued. However, research on Human Resource Management (HRM) in Jordan and the wider Middle East region is limited, with most studies focusing on the Arab Gulf states only ([Afioni et al., 2014](#); [Wood et al., 2020](#)). Even this limited research in the region is often anecdotal rather than empirical, although it highlights the impact of culture, religion and personal relationships on HRM, as well as the ability of organisations to address contextual challenges ([Taamneh et al., 2017](#); [Mohammad et al., 2021](#)).

Jordan is considered a Muslim majority country, and a large percentage of the population follows the Sunni version of Islam. In the context of the Middle East in general and in Jordan in particular, Islam is a significant driver and a major factor that influences individual's behaviour at work ([Ali, and Al-Shakhis, 1989](#); [Cornelius et al., 2016](#)). Work is viewed as a virtue in Islam with spiritual aspects that are conceptualised as a worship to God as it helps individuals meet their fundamental human needs, upholds their dignity, fosters self-esteem and inspires people to attain balance in their life ([Ali, 2005](#)). Islam not only values work because of its benefits to societies and people's quality of life, but it also encourages employees to put forth effort and perform better in the workplace ([Ali, 2009](#); [Syed and Ali, 2010](#)).

Indeed, the two main sources of Islamic teachings (Quran and Hadith) emphasise the value of work ([Abualigah et al., 2021](#); [Abualigah and Koburtay, 2022](#); [Abu Bakar et al., 2018](#)) as is seen from the following Quranic verse: "And say: Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers" (9:105). In addition, The Prophet

Muhammad said, “God bless the worker who learns and perfects his profession”. Such guidelines have a significant impact on how human resources are managed in firms, management attitude and behaviour, and employees’ expectations (Budhwar *et al.*, 2019).

In light of the above evidence and given the focus on religiosity, this research context is believed to be an ideal opportunity to contribute to theory and practice of the subject matter under study. The findings should be viewed in light of this unique context as it has the potential to inform theory and deliver some important insights. For instance, scholars often see the Middle East context as an exceptionally unique institutional setting, which is the result of the potential impact of local values and conventions and Islamic values and principles on the practice of HRM and work ethics (Haak-Saheem *et al.*, 2017; Wood *et al.*, 2020). These values and principles are rooted deeply in the Islamic and tribal traditions of most of the Middle Eastern countries, and in this vein the main HRM and management policies and practices are much moulded by the guidelines set out by Islam (Haak-Saheem *et al.*, 2017).

Theoretical background and hypotheses development

Job demands-resources theory

According to JD-R theory, job characteristics are classified as job resources and demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Job resources refer to aspects that facilitate learning and development and employee growth as well as reducing job demands and achieving work goals (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job demands relate to the “physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are therefore associated with physiological and/or psychological costs” (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, p. 296). Xanthopoulou *et al.* (2007) extended JD-R theory to include personal resources, which refer to positive self-evaluations that are connected to resiliency and reflect the ability of an employee to successfully control the work environment (Hobfoll *et al.*, 2003). Both personal and job resources are the drivers that boost work engagement, and therefore, result in better outcomes (Van Wingerden *et al.*, 2016). According to Schaufeli and Taris (2014), personal resources can be integrated in the JD-R theory in the form of predictors to work engagement and moderators. Regarding the latter, personal resources may buffer the negative influence of job demands on burnout and amplify the positive effect of job resources on work engagement (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Recent studies have underscored the need to examine the role of personal resources (Abualigah *et al.*, 2021; Agarwal and Gupta, 2018) and the interplay between personal and job resources in predicting work engagement and job-related outcomes (Abualigah and Koburtay, 2022; Grover *et al.*, 2018; Jolly *et al.*, 2021). In light of this, guided by JD-R theory, in the current study we consider religiosity as a personal resource, supervisor support as a job resource, work engagement as a mediator and affective commitment as a job-related outcome.

Supervisor support and work engagement

Supervisor support refers to the extent to which workers perceive that their efforts are appreciated, and their line-managers care about them (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Supervisor support is a significant job resource that helps workers solve work-related problems and deal with job requirements, such as handling customer requests (Schalk and Van Rijckevorsel, 2007). According to Rousseau and Aube (2010), supervisor support provides employees positive work experiences, which in turn enhance employee’s comfort at work, thus enhancing work engagement. Support from a supervisor includes, for example, caring about subordinates, appreciating their contributions and developing their skills (Rousseau and Aube, 2010). Supervisor support is considered to be a substantial factor which helps in enhancing employee well-being and may lead to desirable

organisational outcomes (Li *et al.*, 2017; Ng and Sorensen, 2008). Therefore, supervisors, through their support, may influence workers to develop favourable attitudes, which may benefit both workers and the organisations. For instance, supervisor support enhances job satisfaction (Karatepe and Kilic, 2007), organisational citizenship behaviour (Yadav and Rangnekar, 2015) and mental health (Park and Jang, 2015).

In relation to JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), job resources (e.g. supervisor support) begin a motivational path resulting in work engagement and leading to better performance. That is, when employees experience their supervisor's support through, for example, caring about them and helping solve work-related issues, they are more likely to engage at work (Suan and Nasuridin, 2016). Furthermore, when a worker feels supported from his/her supervisor, this will help him/her to meet their basic human needs (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008), and this plays a role in motivating the employee to put forth more effort, being dedicated in their work, and immersed in their task activities, which in turn makes them becoming more engaged (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In other words, employees who receive appreciation and support from their supervisor feel more encouraged, energised and equipped, which results in higher levels of engagement at work (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022). Crawford *et al.*'s (2010) meta-analysis revealed a positive association between supervisor support and work engagement. Suan and Nasuridin (2016) found that supervisor support is positively related to work engagement. Saks (2006), in contrast, found that supervisor support had no statistically significant effect on both job and organisational engagement. Likewise, Menguc *et al.* (2013) noted that supervisor support had no influence on work engagement. Thus, extant evidence regarding the association between supervisor support and work engagement is inconsistent (Hidayah Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019) and needs further theorising. In addition, the construct of work engagement has generally been developed, examined and studied in Western contexts; however, little is known about work engagement in the context of the Middle East (Banihani and Syed, 2017; Blaique *et al.*, 2022). Hence, we contend that exploring work engagement within such institutional contexts is imperative because of its relevance to Islamic codes of life (Farid *et al.*, 2017). Based on the above reasoning and drawing on JD-R theory, we posit:

- H1. There is a positive relationship between supervisor support and work engagement in the context of Jordan.

Work engagement and affective commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991) identified three forms of organisational commitment – “affective, continuance and normative”, with affective commitment is viewed as the most important factor (Mercurio, 2015). This form of commitment is defined as “an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organisation” (Meyer and Allen, 1991, p. 67). Work engagement is increasingly regarded as an important mechanism for achieving desirable outcomes at individual employee and the organisation levels (Banihani and Syed, 2020; Yalabik *et al.*, 2017). Bakker and Demerouti (2008) contend that individuals who are engaged in the workplace achieve higher performance outcomes because they frequently experience better health, positive emotions, leverage their resources better and transfer their engagement to other employees. “These positive experiences and emotions are likely to result in positive work outcomes” (Saks, 2006, p. 607). One of the positive consequences that may result from having engaged workers is being committed to their firms (Pathardikar *et al.*, 2022). This is because workers who are engaged are likely to invest more effort on the job, be enthusiastic and energetic about their work and fully concentrated on it (Joo and Lee, 2017).

According to Scrima *et al.* (2014), employees with high levels of enthusiasm and identification with their work perform better because they are happily engrossed in their work activities. This, in turn, leads to employees becoming more emotionally attached to their organisation (Basit, 2019; Jiang *et al.*, 2020). Lee and Ok (2016) argued that employees who are highly engaged at work have positive experiences because of the resources provided by the organisation.

This is likely to result in employees devoting their effort for the benefits of the organisation (Saks, 2006) such as being more committed to it (Rameshkumar, 2020). Therefore, based on JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), the higher the levels of engagement at work, greater is the employee commitment to their organisation.

Within the context of this study, it is held that positive Islamic ethics can be reflected in employees' commitment, behaviours and actions (Hayaati, 2007), and that work is considered as an obligatory activity and important tool to establish equilibrium in the different aspects of the individual and social life of people (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008). In short, the relationship between work engagement and commitment has important workplace implications (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015). To further examine the predictors of affective commitment (Mercurio, 2015) particularly in the Middle East where affective commitment is less commonly studied (Aladwan *et al.*, 2015), we hypothesise:

- H2. There is a positive relationship between work engagement and affective commitment in the context of Jordan.

Mediating role of work engagement

Several studies have shown that work engagement mediates the association between various antecedents and outcomes (Breevaart *et al.*, 2015; Kundi *et al.*, 2023; Rich *et al.*, 2010; Shantz *et al.*, 2013; Yalabik *et al.*, 2013). For example, Breevaart *et al.* (2015) found that work engagement mediates the relationship between leader–member exchange and job performance. Shantz *et al.* (2013) established that work engagement mediates connections between the antecedents (autonomy, feedback, task variety and task significance), and the outcome – task performance.

In theorising JD-R (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), work engagement represents a mediator linking job resources (e.g. supervisor support) and the outcome variables. This means that when employees experience support from their supervisor, for example, by appreciating their efforts and helping them in dealing with job requirements, this will result in workers becoming more engaged at work, and work engagement, accordingly, leads to desirable outcomes to the organisation. This is because providing employees with such a resource will help them invest themselves in their job tasks, which in turn reinforces their engagement levels, and eventually becoming emotionally attached to their firms. In addition, supportive supervisors foster employee engagement at work because they create a positive work environment that promote learning and development and employee growth (Hidayah Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019). Such employees, in turn, display positive work-related outcomes (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2016) such as being committed to their organisation. In other words, work engagement is considered as an important underlying mechanism whereby predictors are linked with outcomes. Earlier studies support JD-R theory and work engagement as a mediator (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007). Agarwal and Gupta (2018) established that work engagement mediates the link between job characteristics and turnover intention. Additionally, Scrima *et al.* (2014) observed that work engagement mediated the relationship between job involvement and affective commitment. Consistent with prior studies and JD-R theory, we hypothesise:

- H3. Work engagement mediates the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment in the context of Jordan.

Moderating role of religiosity

Religiosity is defined as the belief in God and adherence to act and behave according to the God's will (McDaniel and Burnett, 1990). Previous literature highlights the importance of religiosity in consolidating ethical behaviour at work (Conroy and Emerson, 2004; Kashif *et al.*, 2017). However, the moderating role of religiosity as a personal resource in predicting

work engagement has been under-researched. Based on JD-R theory, we argue that religiosity plays a significant role in strengthening the association between supervisor support and work engagement.

Empirical evidence shows that religiosity moderates the association between employee well-being and turnover intention (Wu *et al.*, 2017). Kashif *et al.* (2017) found that religiosity moderates the relationship between perceived behavioural control and behavioural intention. Similarly, Ai *et al.* (2013) observed that individuals who practise their religion experience better social support through participation in religious activities. Similarly, Hashemi *et al.* (2020, p. 482) suggested that “engagement in religious activities, and belief in God provide individuals with a sense of significance, positive emotions, self-esteem, positive relations, sense of meaning, and purpose in life”. Abu Bakar *et al.*'s (2018) qualitative study has extended JD-R theory to incorporate religiosity as a personal resource. Accordingly, work behaviour inspired by religiosity could enhance work engagement because considering work as a form of worship boosts happiness in the workplace thus promoting work engagement (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, when employees view work as a religious obligation to a higher being, this can enhance their levels of work engagement (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018).

According to JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014), personal resources moderate the relationship between job resources and work engagement. In other words, personal resources help to strengthen the connection between job resources and work engagement. That is, religious individuals, through conceptualising work as a worship, are perhaps more appreciative of the support received from supervisors which in turn enhances engagement. Furthermore, employees with a high level of religiosity consider work as a holy task and are therefore more likely to perceive support from their supervisor as an opportunity to put more effort and immerse themselves in their work to please God, thus be more engaged. However, limited studies have been directed towards understanding the interaction effect between job and personal resources in predicting work engagement in the context of JD-R theory (Grover *et al.*, 2018). Religiosity is considered as a relatively new field of research (Abualigah *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, more research is needed to improve our knowledge and theoretical and practical understanding in this under-explored area (Abualigah and Koburtay, 2022). Based on the preceding discussion and drawing on the JD-R theory, in this study we assume that religiosity, as a personal resource, moderates the relationship between supervisor support as a job resource and work engagement:

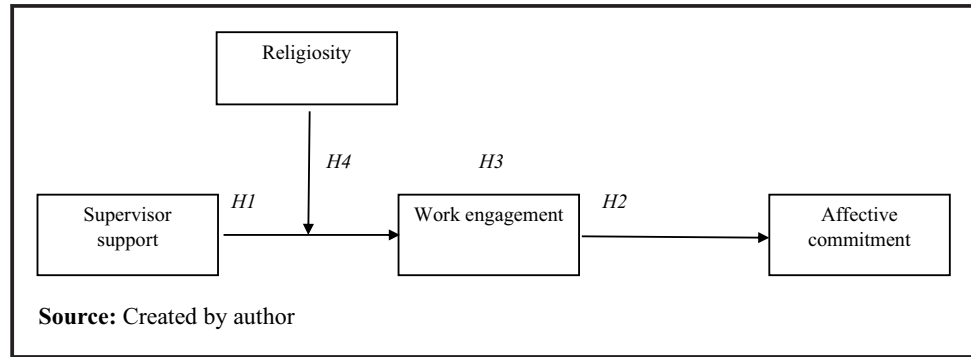
- H4.* Religiosity moderates the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement in the context of Jordan, such that this association is stronger at higher vs lower levels of religiosity.

Consistent with the previous hypotheses and guided by JD-R theory, we also propose a moderated-mediation model, by which religiosity moderates the mediated relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment through work engagement. Employees who adhere to their religious principles see work as a moral obligation and a form of worship aimed at pleasing God (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, religiosity is an important factor that leads to and motivates practising individuals to perform their best because they consider work as a holy task (Wu *et al.*, 2017). High levels of religiosity are more likely to amplify the indirect effect of supervisor support on affective commitment through work engagement. Hence, we hypothesise:

- H5.* Religiosity moderates the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment in the context of Jordan, such that the indirect effect of supervisor support on affective commitment via work engagement is stronger at higher vs lower levels of religiosity.

Our conceptual framework in Figure 1 depicts the hypotheses derived from the literature review.

Figure 1 Theoretical model



Method

Procedure and sample

Following a quantitative method, data were gathered from employees working in the telecommunications sector in central, northern and southern Jordan. Three main telecommunications companies were invited and two agreed to take part in the study. Convenience sampling was used to select participants from these two companies. Access was gained via direct contact by phone and in person to the respective HR departments. After that, a member of the research team distributed the questionnaires to the participants. Using back-translation (Brislin, 1970), the English language questionnaire was translated into Arabic by a member of the research team who is fluent in both English and Arabic languages. It was then back translated into English by three bilingual experts to check for accuracy. We refined questionnaire items following a pilot study. Saunders *et al.* (2009) suggest that if the study population is 5,000, the number of respondents required is 357 at 95% level of confidence, 5% margin of error. From 700 distributed questionnaires, there was a 52% response rate with 367 fully completed responses. Given that the population of the current study is 4,394 (Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, 2023), the sample size is considered adequate. There were 211 participants comprising 58% aged 25–34 and 21.4% aged 35–44 years old. The male to female ratio was 68.9% and 31.1%, and 67.4% respondents held bachelor's degrees and 18.9% held master's degrees. In the sample, 59.1% stated they were single and 40.9% were married, and 42.5% had been employed for 6–10 years and 27.8% had been employed for 5 years or less.

Measures

Established scales were used to measure the constructs. Indicators were assessed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”.

Supervisor support. Supervisor support was assessed based on the four-item scale established by Rhoades *et al.* (2001). An example item is “My supervisor cares about my opinions”. Previous studies (Chami-Malaeb, 2022) used this scale in the Middle East and found high reliability (0.86).

Religiosity. We measured religiosity with the five-item scale developed by Kashif *et al.* (2017). Example items are “I have a great sense of Allah’s presence” and “It is important for me to spend more time on religious activities”. Prior research has shown high reliability of this measure in the Middle East (Abualigah *et al.*, 2021; $\alpha = 0.89$).

Work engagement. Work engagement was assessed using the nine-item shortened version of the “Utrecht Work Engagement Scale” developed by Schaufeli *et al.* (2006). This scale

comprises three dimensions: vigour, dedication and absorption. An example item is “At my job I feel strong and vigorous”. Studies conducted in the Middle East showed high internal consistency for this scale (Aboramadan, 2022; $\alpha = 0.94$).

Affective commitment. We measured affective commitment using the eight-item scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Example item is “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation”. In the context of the Middle East, Chami-Malaeb and Garavan (2013) found high reliability of this measurement scale ($\alpha = 0.95$).

Control variables. Consistent with previous studies (Hidayah Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019), we controlled for gender, age, education, marital status and job tenure to avoid alternative explanations.

Data analysis

We used a partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique with the SmartPLS version 3.3.3. PLS-SEM technique allows to concurrently examine multiple constructs and recommended for testing mediation relationships (Hair *et al.*, 2019). In addition, PLS-SEM is most suitable to explore theoretical extensions of established theories (Hair *et al.*, 2019). Hence, we considered PLS-SEM the most appropriate data analysis method in this study.

Consistent with previous studies (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair *et al.*, 2019), we adopted a two-step approach which includes assessing the measurement model then the structural model. The measurement model demonstrates the linkage between the latent variables and their indicators or items. The structural model reflects examining the relationships between the study’s variables, i.e. hypothesis testing. Also, we used PROCESS macro version 3.5 (Hayes, 2018) to check the nature of the interaction in addition to assessing the conditional indirect effect.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Means, standard deviations, correlations and discriminant validity are shown in Table 1.

Measurement model

In the measurement model, we assessed the factor loadings of the scales, reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. As shown in Table 2, the loadings of the items for all the constructs were above the cut-off point of 0.60 (Chin *et al.*, 1997). The reliability of the constructs was examined using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR). The results in Table 2 reveal that both Cronbach’s alpha and CR were above the threshold value of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Nunnally, 1978), thus indicating acceptable reliability. Subsequently, we checked the average variance extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Thabet *et al.*, 2023). Because all AVE values were greater than the threshold value of 0.50, then convergent validity was achieved (see Table 2).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics, correlations and discriminant validity							
S no.	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Supervisor support	4.00	0.41	0.736			
2	Religiosity	4.20	0.55	0.23**	0.831		
3	Work engagement	4.11	0.39	0.25**	0.30**	0.744	
4	Affective commitment	3.85	0.50	0.34**	0.29**	0.31**	0.753
Notes: N = 367; Italic diagonal values indicate the square root of AVE; **p < 0.01							
Source: Created by author							

Table 2 Factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE values					
Variables	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Supervisor support	SS1	0.803	0.722	0.825	0.543
	SS2	0.696			
	SS3	0.782			
	SS4	0.656			
Religiosity	REL1	0.851	0.889	0.918	0.691
	REL2	0.784			
	REL3	0.842			
	REL4	0.866			
	REL5	0.812			
Work engagement	WE1	0.768	0.899	0.918	0.554
	WE2	0.784			
	WE3	0.749			
	WE4	0.753			
	WE5	0.743			
	WE6	0.739			
	WE7	0.760			
	WE8	0.727			
	WE9	0.675			
Affective commitment	AC1	0.771	0.890	0.912	0.568
	AC2	0.803			
	AC3	0.743			
	AC4	0.610			
	AC5	0.779			
	AC6	0.814			
	AC7	0.812			
	AC8	0.671			

Notes: SS: supervisor support; REL: religiosity; WE: work engagement; AC: affective commitment; AVE, average variance extracted

Source: Created by author

Discriminant validity was assessed to demonstrate the extent to which a concept is different from other concepts in the structural model (Hair *et al.*, 2019). In this study, we used two methods to assess discriminant validity: first, Fornell–Larcker criterion to assess whether the square root of AVE for a construct is higher than the correlations between that construct and other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), and second, the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, which refers to “the mean value of the item correlations across constructs relative to the (geometric) mean of the average correlations for the items measuring the same construct” (Hair *et al.*, 2019, p. 9). In relation to Fornell–Larcker criterion, the findings show that the square roots of the AVE values are greater than the correlation values with other constructs. Therefore, discriminant validity was established (see Table 1). We used the HTMT ratio to further confirm discriminant validity. In this context, the HTMT values must be less than 0.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). Table 3 shows that all HTMT values are less than 0.85, hence confirming the discriminant validity of the constructs. Overall, the findings of Fornell–Larcker criterion, as well as the HTMT values, demonstrate that the discriminant validity was confirmed (Hair *et al.*, 2019; Henseler *et al.*, 2015).

Common method variance

This is a cross-sectional study as we collected our data from a single source where common method variance (CMV) may have inflated or deflated estimates of the proposed relationships. Hence, we used a variety of procedural techniques and empirical assessments to deal with potential CMV. For instance, Podsakoff and Organ (1986)

Table 3 HTMT ratio

No.	Variable	1	2	3	4
1	SS				
2	REL	0.277			
3	WE	0.319	0.336		
4	AC	0.426	0.329	0.353	

Notes: SS: supervisor support; REL: religiosity; WE: work engagement; AC: affective commitment

Source: Created by author

suggested that “scale reordering” is essential to reduce the potential impacts of CMV. Hence, we designed our survey in a way where we first placed items in relation to the predictors, followed by items in relation to the outcome variables. In addition, we also ensured anonymity of respondents, precise scale items, simple wording, reliable and validated measures and we offered explanations at the top of each page of the questionnaire to create a psychological separation (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, as recommended by Podsakoff and Organ (1986), we also used Harman’s one-factor test to evaluate the potential impact of CMV on the proposed relationships. The emergence of a single or one general factor would indicate that CMV is a concern (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). However, this was not the case as the test revealed multiple distinct factors rather than one general factor. There was also no single factor which could explain a significant majority of the variance. Overall, the results of Harman’s one-factor test in addition to the steps taken above suggest that CMV is unlikely to muddle the interpretations of our results (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986).

Structural model

Before assessing the research hypotheses, we first conducted a collinearity test through the variance inflation factor (VIF) to ensure that multicollinearity did not affect our results. We found that 1.058 was the largest value, which is less than the recommended value of 3 (Hair *et al.*, 2019), indicating that multicollinearity is not a serious issue. Our findings revealed that the explained variance (R^2) was 0.16 for work engagement and 0.14 for affective commitment, exceeding the threshold of 0.10 (Falk and Miller, 1992). According to the effect size (f^2), the findings in Table 4 showed that the effect sizes ranged between 0.03 and 0.13, which were greater than the recommended value of 0.02 for a weak effect (Cohen, 1988). Furthermore, the predictive accuracy of the structural model was assessed using Stone–Geisser’s predictive relevance (Q^2) value. Hair *et al.* (2019) propose that Q^2 value more than zero demonstrates predictive relevance. The findings showed that Q^2 values for work engagement and affective commitment were 0.08 and 0.07, respectively, indicating a good predictive relevance. We then conducted bootstrap analysis with 5,000 resamples to assess the significance of the path coefficient.

The findings in Table 4 illustrated that supervisor support is positively related to work engagement ($\beta = 0.208$, $t = 4.279$, $p < 0.001$), hence providing support for *H1*. The results also revealed that work engagement is positively related to affective commitment ($\beta = 0.343$, $t = 7.800$, $p < 0.001$), therefore *H2* was supported. Although not hypothesised, we found a positive and significant relationship between religiosity and work engagement ($\beta = 0.262$, $t = 4.557$, $p < 0.001$).

The results of bootstrapping indicated that work engagement mediated the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment ($\beta = 0.071$, $t = 3.260$, $p < 0.01$, CI: 0.037, 0.123), thus *H3* was supported (see Table 4). Regarding *H4*, the results in Table 4 showed that the interaction effect between religiosity and supervisor support in predicting work engagement is significant ($\beta = 0.161$, $t = 2.808$, $p < 0.01$). This study used PROCESS macro version 3.5, Model 1 (Hayes, 2018) to check the nature of the interaction effect. As

Table 4 Results for the hypothesised relationships

	Path coefficient	t-value	p-value	f ²
<i>Direct and interaction effects</i>				
SS → WE	0.208	4.279	0.000	0.04
WE → AC	0.343	7.800	0.000	0.13
SS X REL → WE	0.161	2.808	0.005	0.03
	<i>B</i>	<i>t-value</i>	95% CI	UL
<i>Mediation effect</i>				
SS→WE→AC	0.071	3.260	0.037	0.123
			95% CI	UL
Moderator (religiosity)	Conditional indirect effect	SE	LL	UL
<i>Conditional indirect effects</i>				
Low	0.03	0.03	−0.03	0.09
High	0.101	0.03	0.04	0.18

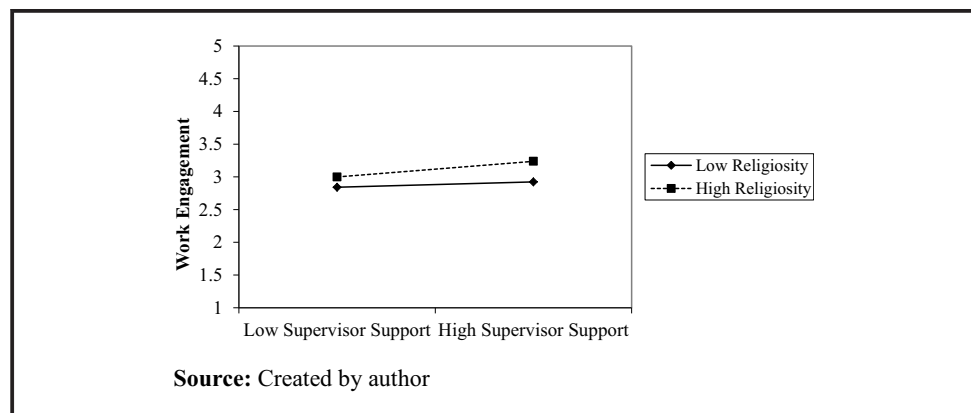
Notes: SS: supervisor support; WE: work engagement; AC: affective commitment; REL: religiosity; CI: confidence interval; LL: lower level; UL: upper level. Bootstrapping based on 5,000 samples
Source: Created by author

recommended by [Aiken and West \(1991\)](#), all predictor variables were mean-centred. The results revealed that the positive association between supervisor support and work engagement was stronger under the conditions of high levels of religiosity ($\beta = 0.287$, $t = 4.536$, $p < 0.001$, CI: 0.162, 0.411). For lower levels of religiosity, no significant association was found ($\beta = 0.09$, $t = 1.501$, $p = 0.13$, CI: −0.030, 0.226), thus providing support for *H4*. [Figure 2](#) depicts this interaction effect.

In relation to *H5*, the findings revealed that the indirect effect of supervisor support on affective commitment through work engagement was significant and positive when religiosity was high (estimate = 0.101, SE = 0.03, CI: 0.04, 0.18). However, there was no significant effect when religiosity was low (estimate = 0.03, SE = 0.03, CI: −0.03, 0.09), hence lending support to *H5* (see [Table 4](#)).

Discussion and implications for theory and practice

We found a positive association between supervisor support and work engagement (*H1*). This association suggests that workers become vigorous, absorbed, dedicated and therefore, engaged in their work ([Bakker and Demerouti, 2017](#)) when they perceive that their efforts are appreciated, and their supervisors care about them ([Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002](#)). Our findings corroborate previous studies that demonstrate supervisor

Figure 2 Interaction of religiosity and supervisor support on work engagement

support enhances work engagement (Crawford *et al.*, 2010; Suan and Nasuridin, 2016). Regarding *H2*, we found a positive and significant association between work engagement and affective commitment, which is in line with past studies (Karatepe *et al.*, 2014) and JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), which explains that work engagement enhances affective commitment. This is because employees who display high levels of engagement have dedication and enthusiasm in their work and are happily engrossed in their tasks (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008), which leads to positive outcomes such as becoming emotionally attached to their organisation.

Our findings also demonstrate that work engagement mediates the association between supervisor support and affective commitment (*H3*), which echo previous studies (Rich *et al.*, 2010; Scrima *et al.*, 2014). In other words, when an employee experiences supervisor support, he or she is more likely to be engaged at work, and become more emotionally attached to his or her organisation. Support from a supervisor sends a strong message to employees that their supervisor cares about their well-being. Employees in such a working environment are more likely to develop positive work experiences (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022; Christian *et al.*, 2011), thus being more vigorous, dedicated and immersed in their work and committed to their organisation (Scrima *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, our study reveals that religiosity moderates the association between supervisor support and work engagement (*H4*). This is consistent with JD-R theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014) which conceptualises how personal resources moderate the relationship between job resources and work engagement. We found that the positive association between supervisor support and work engagement was stronger when religiosity is high whilst no significant association was found when religiosity is low. Religious employees see work as a moral obligation and a form of worship shaped by the aim to fulfil to God's will (Abu Bakar *et al.*, 2018; Baker and Lee, 2020). Religiosity is an important factor that inspires individuals to perform better at work which is viewed as a holy task (Wu *et al.*, 2017). Not only does religiosity mitigate stress at work (Weiß and Süß, 2019), but it also helps to amplify the influence of job resources (e.g. supervisor support) on work engagement. This is because religiosity provides employees with mental balance and psychological support at work (Wu *et al.*, 2017), which enhance their spiritual growth (Kashif *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, we found that religiosity moderates the indirect effect of supervisor support on affective commitment through work engagement (*H5*). Specifically, when religiosity is high, employees tend to invest themselves at work to please God and this behaviour strengthens the indirect effect of supervisor support on affective commitment through work engagement.

Theoretical implications

Our study offers several important contributions to existing literature. Firstly, whilst previous studies have focused on the role of religiosity in attenuating workplace stress (Weiß and Süß, 2019) and promoting ethical behaviour (Kashif *et al.*, 2017), our study complements previous literature and extends JD-R theory by examining the moderating role of religiosity as a personal resource. Specifically, the findings show that religiosity amplified the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement, and the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between supervisor support and affective commitment. Secondly, little attention has been given to understanding the interaction effect between job and personal resources in predicting work engagement in the context of JD-R theory (Grover *et al.*, 2018). This is the first study that examines the interaction effect between supervisor support and religiosity in enhancing work engagement, and to our knowledge, it is the first to examine the interplay between supervisor support, religiosity, work engagement and affective commitment using a moderated-mediation model. In simpler terms, the findings suggest that being religious can make supervisor support more impactful on an employee's work engagement and commitment. This effect is stronger for highly religious individuals and weaker for those who are less religious. Moreover, highly

religious employees may receive more support from their supervisors, which can lead to increased work engagement and commitment. This relationship between religiosity and supervisor support may be influenced by expectations built on cultural value systems. Thirdly, as the relationship between supervisor support and work engagement has been somewhat difficult to comprehend across different sectors and occupations (Hidayah Ibrahim *et al.*, 2019), we provide evidence for the positive impact of supervisor support on work engagement within the telecommunications sector given its significant role in facilitating communications and knowledge exchange in our modern world; as stated earlier, COVID-19 crisis has reminded us how important this sector to keep the economy and other sectors viable. Finally, our study contributes to extant literature and JD-R theory by examining religiosity from non-Western and Islamic perspectives in contrast to extant research that has predominantly focused on the Western, mainly Christian, world (Tracey, 2012). This is important as unique institutional contexts like the one under investigation in the current study, where religious values and beliefs significantly influence and shape people management practices (Haak-Saheem and Darwish, 2021) could potentially explain organisational phenomena and inform Western-derived theoretical perspectives to further contribute and extend their propositions (Whetten, 2009). Hence, these results serve as a reminder of the significance of investigating and discussing the relationship between theoretical concepts and the specific circumstances in which they are applied, including the differentiation between theories developed within a specific context and those that explain the context itself. By engaging in these discussions, we can enhance our comprehension of theoretical models such as the one used in this study (Whetten, 2009).

Practical implications

Our study offers valuable insights for policymakers and HR managers, specifically in contexts where management policies and practices are shaped by Islamic values and principles. Organisations are encouraged to support religiosity in the workplace through greater embeddedness of religiosity into the institutional policies and values. Providing training focusing on the importance of work in an Islamic context potentially boosts employees' work engagement. However, it is worthwhile to note that implementing such training programmes could endanger diversity and plurality within some organisations. Hence a careful and well-balanced approach is indeed essential depending on the context and particularities of the workplace and individuals. Managers may also choose to encourage and reward attitudes and behaviours that are of great value to religious employees. For instance, from an Islamic perspective, HR managers may support religiously practicing employees with time to participate in religious rituals, such as Muslims going for Umrah and Haj and celebrate Ramadan and Eid at work. In addition, our findings provide further implications to organisations in Jordan and the wider Middle East region in relation to the alignment between work and Islamic values (e.g. honesty, integrity, equality, mutual respect, social responsibility, among others), where the latter seems to establish a *sense of purpose and meaning* for employees, which in turn, can have a positive impact on their overall commitment, motivation and work engagement. This is quite a unique link that should be better understood by organisations in the region. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, but this can also provide an important lesson for multinational enterprises (MNEs) in the Middle East region that mainly rely on country of domicile for their main operations. Alternatively, providing *religious flexibility* (e.g. the ability of individuals or organisations to accommodate and respect local religious beliefs and practices) by MNEs could be the key to their success when entering regions/countries where most people actively practice religion.

Limitations and future research

Firstly, our research is cross-sectional allowing us to identify associations rather than temporal sequence or causality. Therefore, future research may consider longitudinal

design to ascertain issues of causality. Secondly, the use of self-reported data raises concerns about CMV (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Although our procedural techniques and empirical assessments indicate that CMV is not a concern, we recommend future researchers to gather data from multiple respondents to minimise CMV. Thirdly, this study is confined to one sector in Jordan. Future research may extend the current study to other industries in Jordan and other comparable contexts. Fourth, this research was focused on a Middle Eastern emerging setting where the religion of Islam is rather dominant and influential. Therefore, future research is needed focusing on other religious backgrounds for comparative analysis concerning the potential impact of religiosity at work. Finally, future research may also incorporate other personal resources in the model such as employee resilience and various outcomes in different sectors and contexts. For instance, future work may examine a moderated-mediation model linking supervisor support, employee resilience, work engagement and innovative work behaviour. This, in turn, would further consolidate the existing theory development by exploring how and when supervisor support leads to innovative work behaviour.

Conclusion

Guided by JD-R theory, the findings of our study show that supervisor support predicts work engagement, which leads to higher affective commitment. Our findings reveal that work engagement mediates the association between supervisor support and affective commitment. Our study also illustrates that religiosity moderates the supervisor support–work engagement relationship, and the positive link between supervisor support and work engagement was stronger when religiosity is high, however, no significant relationship was found when religiosity is low. We found that religiosity moderates the indirect effect of supervisor support on affective commitment through work engagement. Our study, therefore, highlights the importance of religiosity as a key personal resource. This resource has been overlooked in extant scholarship although religiosity can strengthen relationships between job resources, work engagement and affective commitment.

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