

Work Engagement of Springbok's executive team members in a teleworking context

Gap Analysis of the Influence of Job Demands and Job Resources on Executive Team Members' Work Engagement within Springbok in a Teleworking Context, to make recommendations on how to improve work engagement

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Preface

In front of you lies the thesis ‘Improving Work Engagement of Springbok’s executive team members in a teleworking context by using the JD-R perspective’. I wrote this master thesis as part of my master’s degree program ‘Organizational Design & Development’ at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. I have been preparing, conducting, and writing this research from January 2023 to July 2023.

I must confess, I found it quite nerve-wracking to start writing my master's thesis. It is widely regarded as a challenge, and I agree. There are indeed challenges you encounter throughout the process. Now, in retrospect, I am glad to say that I have overcome these challenges and that today, I submit my master's thesis with pride. I am grateful to have so many wonderful people around me, who have assisted me throughout the entire process. Fortunately, I did not lack ‘social support’ during the writing of my thesis.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. M.J.P. van Berkel. I believe that he possesses a lot of knowledge in our field, and I have learned a lot from his expertise. But more importantly, I genuinely mean it when I say that he is an incredibly pleasant, engaged, and helpful supervisor. Secondly, I would like to thank my second examiner Dr. Ir. L.J. Lekkerkerk for providing valuable feedback on my research proposal and for reading and evaluating my final master thesis. Thirdly, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor from Springbok, Mrs. Inge van Dijk, for the trust she placed in me, her feedback, and her support.

Furthermore, I would also like to thank my fellow student Anne-Fleur Wiesmans. We had a lot of contact during the process, and I enjoyed being able to share our experiences.

Finally, I would like to thank the respondents who participated in my research. Without the valuable input from these respondents, I would not have been able to conduct the study.

Hopefully, you will enjoy reading my master thesis.

Ilonca Krabbenborg

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Abstract

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Springbok implemented teleworking as the new norm, allowing employees to work remotely at least two days a week. A survey conducted by Springbok revealed that employees of the executive teams experienced reduced engagement in the teleworking context. This study aimed to diagnose the causes of reduced engagement and provide recommendations for improving work engagement.

In this study, work engagement is defined as a positive state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. In this study, the JD-R model is employed, which suggests that work engagement is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources. The model emphasized the importance of managing job demands and enhancing job resources to promote work engagement. The most important job demands (work-home conflict, work-overload, isolation, and role ambiguity) and job resources (autonomy, social support, and performance feedback) in the teleworking context were based on the literature.

This research question was addressed using deductive qualitative methods, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of decreased work engagement among Springbok's executive team members. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight respondents from two executive teams. The interviews focused on exploring the participants' experiences and perceptions related to job demands, job resources, and work engagement in the teleworking context.

The data was analysed deductively, guided by a pre-existing theoretical framework, and a coding scheme consisting of dimensions and indicators was used. The analysis aimed to analyze the gap between the actual values of the dimensions and indicators with the desired values and examine correlations and interrelationships between job demands, job resources, and work engagement.

The data analysis revealed that, to improve work engagement, Springbok should improve social support and performance feedback and decrease isolation, workload, and work-home conflict. This could be done by dividing cells into smaller groups where members can provide additional support to each other (1), focusing on creating an atmosphere of recognition and appreciation for the efforts of teleworking employees (2), introducing informal communication channels to facilitate informal interactions among colleagues (3), enforcing stricter attendance to the office to reduce isolation (4) and fostering a culture where supervisors actively monitor and encourage employees to speak up about their well-being (5).

The JD-R model was proven useful in this study, as it was easily applicable in practice and offered relevant insights into work engagement. Although this study provided interesting insights, more (inductive) research on work engagement in the teleworking context is needed. It proved valuable to examine work engagement in the teleworking context qualitatively, this is recommended for future researchers. Finally, it was shown that job design and organizational design are an extension of each other and can help each other by conducting research at different levels to provide a more complete picture.

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1. Introduction

Springbok is a leading international brand tech agency with six locations in Belgium and the Netherlands. The headquarters, where 170 people are working, is located in Den Bosch. Springbok consists of 6 business units: advertising & performance, creation & content production, CRM & marketing automation, data, experience platforms, and experience strategy. Each business unit consists of various so-called ‘‘cells’’ that contain expertise in a specific area. Within the company, a distinction is made between support (commercial, strategic, staff, finance, HR, and operations) and executive (CRM, paid, owned, data, and design) teams. Previously, employees were mainly working from the office location, which is considered the ‘‘traditional way of working’’. But this traditional way of working has changed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to Covid-19, the employees were forced to suddenly start teleworking. The employees expressed to their supervisors that they enjoyed working from home several days a week instead of being physically present in the office all the time. This is particularly the case for the executive team members, as they can more easily carry out their work at home than the co-workers in the support teams. The management responded to this, by introducing a new way of working after the abolition of the corona measures: working in a telework context. Teleworking was thus integrated into working practices and changed the status quo.

In response to the new way of working, a few guidelines for working from home were added to the current work policy. A drastic change took place, the new policy mandates employees to work remotely at least two days a week. The homework policy is very limited and is, so to speak, an extension of the regular work policy. Little time has been spent on creating a policy specifically for home working. Thus, after the introduction of teleworking as the new norm, business continued as usual, with a slight change in policy. Managers have expressed concerns that employees may become less engaged when working from home and are afraid that the employees are less connected to their work, colleagues, or the organization when working from home. Springbok prioritizes employee well-being and aims to ensure that teleworking doesn’t negatively impact this. To find out the employee well-being in the new teleworking context, Springbok conducted the ‘Great Place to Work Survey’ to evaluate how teleworking affects employee well-being. Ironically, the study found that there are concerns considering employee well-being; the study revealed that employees feel less energetic, dedicated and, engaged as a result of the teleworking context. Thus, the concerns expressed by the managers turned out to be justified. The results of this study particularly concern the employees of Springbok’s executive teams, as these are the employees required to structurally work at home at least two days a week. Reduced employee-wellbeing forms the background for making this study, which diagnoses the backgrounds and causes of this reduced employee well-being in the teleworking context. The results focus on making recommendations on how to improve employee-wellbeing, this is done by using the JD-R model as a perspective, as this perspective is considered most relevant in this specific case as you can apply this perspective to specific contexts (Schaufeli, 2017).

The concept of *work engagement* is usually used to investigate issues around well-being at the workplace, which is the case at Springbok as described above (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This is taken as a starting point in this study. Work engagement refers to a positive, affective-motivational state of high energy combined with high levels of dedication and a strong focus on work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295). Work engagement has far-reaching implications for employee performance. The energy and focus inherent in work engagement allow employees to bring their full potential to the job, which enhances the quality of their core work responsibilities (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Those who are engaged perform better, work harder, and are more focused. A high degree of employee engagement is desirable for Springbok. Springbok is highly dependent on their HR, as is the case for many organizations (Bent & Freathy, 1997). Altogether these issues signal that work engagement has decreased.

A lack of engagement can be explained by a wide array of causes. Theory on work engagement however mostly agrees that work engagement is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Whereas job demands are the most important predictors of burnout, job resources are the most important predictors of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In terms of the interaction of job demands and resources, sufficient resources are likely to facilitate engagement as job resources enable employees to cope with job demands. To examine the interaction between job demands and resources, the Job-Demands-Resources Model can be used (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The model specifies how job demands and job resources interact and predict important organizational outcomes. Therefore, this model is applied in this research to assess work engagement in a teleworking context.

Teleworking is quite a new phenomenon and became popular after Covid-19. After abolishing the Corona measures, the Dutch continue to work from home twice as much as before the pandemic (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2019). This is also the case for the executive team members working at Springbok. Management is entering unfamiliar territory in the teleworking context and does not know how the teleworking policies can be optimally designed to increase the executive team members' work engagement again. The management acknowledges the problem and is aware that the current work policy is irrelevant to the teleworking context and that the policy needs to be improved.

As the problem is clearly formulated, this research will focus on analyzing the difference between the desired and actual situation, which means this research is based on a diagnostic gap analysis. Using the JD-R model as an optic can contribute to this analysis since the literature has shown that this model is suitable for finding out and specifying work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). To analyze the difference between the desired and actual situation, norm values of job demands, and job resources are specified and are subsequently compared to the actual values of the job demands and job resources. This diagnostic gap analysis is conducted through qualitative data collection based on interviews with executive team members. By using a qualitative method of data collection, more in-depth information can be gathered about work engagement in Springbok's teleworking context.

1.1. Objective

To summarize, the purpose of this study is to make recommendations to Springbok's management to improve the homework policy to improve the work engagement of Springbok's executive team members by analyzing the difference between the current and desired situation regarding the influence of job demands and job resources on work engagement.

Research framework

The research model is shown in Figure 1 and is as follows: (1) Theory in the field of work engagement and teleworking context will be studied, along with a preliminary study, this provides assessment criteria about the desired situation (2), with which the differences between the current and desired relationships between job demands and job resources, and work engagement will be assessed (3). The assessment results are then processed into recommendations regarding conditions that tap into work engagement.

The difference between the current and desired situation will be analyzed using a qualitative approach. This research aims to gather more in-depth information on the substantive aspects of the teleworking context. For this purpose, a qualitative research method is appropriate (Myers, 2020). This in-depth information needs to be retrieved to understand the current relationship between job demands and job resources and work engagement in the teleworking context, of the executive team members of Springbok. Currently, relatively little is known about the job demands and job resources that influence work engagement in the teleworking context. A qualitative research method is appropriate to find out more about work engagement in the teleworking context because it can efficiently be used to gather in-depth insights by understanding concepts, thoughts, and experiences on this topic and may lead to additional insights about the usefulness of this model.

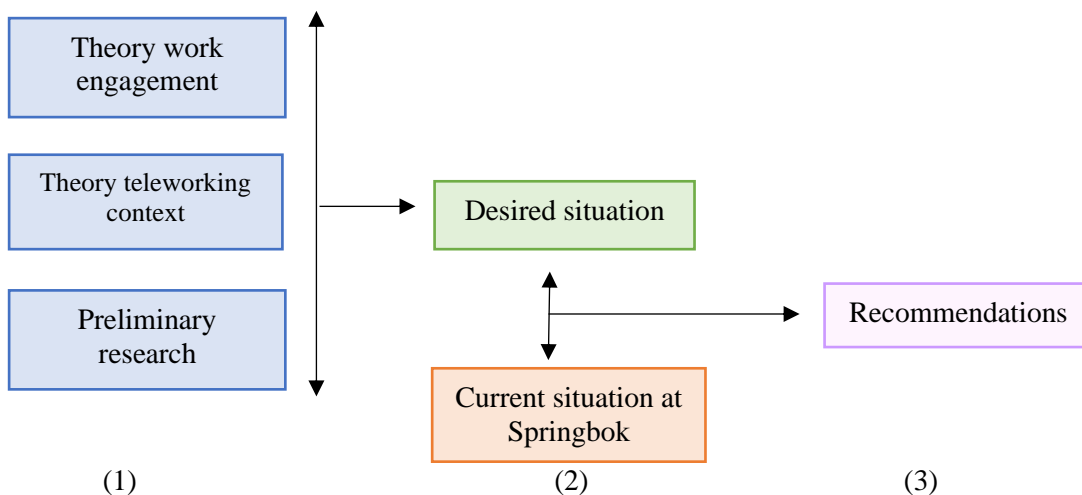


Figure 1: Research framework

1.2. Research question

The central question in this study is:

“What recommendations follow from conducting a gap analysis on the difference between the current and desired situation with regard to the influence of job demands and job resources on work engagement of the executive team members working at Springbok in a teleworking context?”

This will be investigated through a gap analysis comparing the current and desired situation. The research perspective that will be used for this purpose is the JD-R model. Norm values will be set for various factors and compared with actual values.

1.2.1. Sub-questions

To answer this central research question, three sub-questions were drawn up: a theoretical sub-question, an empirical sub-question, and an analytical sub-question. Chapter 2 will answer the theoretical sub-question, Chapter 3 will answer the empirical sub-question and Chapter 4 will answer the empirical sub-question and analytical sub-question.

Theoretical sub-question

The first sub-question is the theoretical question. This theoretical question will answer what the desired relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement looks like in a teleworking context based on the literature, while taking the specific situation at Springbok into account. Based on this desired relationship, norm values can be specified. The theoretical question is as follows:

“Given theory and preliminary research, what is the desired relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement in a teleworking context of the employees in the executive teams of Springbok?”

Empirical sub-question

The second sub-question is the empirical question. The empirical question will answer what the current relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement of the executive team members in the teleworking context at Springbok is. This sub-question is as follows:

“What is the current relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement of Springbok’s executive team members in a teleworking context?”

Analytical sub-question

The third sub-question answers what the similarities and differences are between the current and desired relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement of Springbok's executive team members in the teleworking context. Therefore, this sub-question is as follows:

“What are the similarities and differences between the current and desired relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement of Springbok’s executive team members in a teleworking context?”

1.3. Academic relevance

Although making a theoretical contribution is not the primary aim, this thesis might be of broader interest to scholars in the field of organizational design and development in several respects.

First, this research makes a methodological contribution. Normally, work engagement (in the teleworking context) is investigated through quantitative research methods. This study demonstrates the translation from quantitative to qualitative research, as a qualitative research method is used in this practice-oriented study. This research serves as inspiration for future researchers, to provide insight into how to approach concepts that are more quantitative in nature in a qualitative manner as well. In doing so, it also provides insights into how this can be applied in a practice-based research project.

Second, this study uses the JD-R model as a perspective to examine work engagement from an organizational design project. In this study, Modern-Social Technical Design is not necessarily chosen, but an attempt is made in this research to reason along the same lines. A theory is used that is not initially seen as related to Modern-Social Technical Design, but in reality, could be viewed that way. The JD-R perspective can be seen as an extension of the Quality of Work Concept. Therefore, this research demonstrates that job design and organizational design are closely intertwined. Organizational design researchers can learn from the more specific job design insights reflected in this study.

1.4. Outline

The structure of this study is as follows. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework is presented. This chapter explains the theory that is used to answer the research question. Furthermore, in this chapter, the desired relationships between job demands, job resources, and work engagement are shown. In Chapter 3, the current relationships between job demands, job resources, and work engagement are shown. Then these current values were compared to the desired values in Chapter 4. From this, results were drawn. Chapter 5 presents the conclusion, on which subsequent recommendations are based. Finally, theoretical, methodological, and personal reflections are discussed.

2. Theoretical framework

Springbok has introduced a new way of working: working in a teleworking context. Employees in Springbok's executive teams are high-skilled workers on contract and work from home two to four days a week. This makes them regular home-based workers (Daniel et al., 2001). Work engagement has decreased because of the teleworking context. Job demands and job resources affect work engagement in the teleworking context. This relationship is represented in the preliminary conceptual model shown in Figure 2. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the desired relationship between job demands and job resources and work engagement.

To address this, five sub-questions will be answered below:

- Theoretical sub-question 1: What are the desired values of work engagement?
- Theoretical sub-question 2: What is the desired relationship between job resources and work engagement in the teleworking context of Springbok?
- Theoretical sub-question 3: What is the desired relationship between job demands and work engagement in the teleworking context of Springbok?
- Theoretical sub-question 4: What is the desired interaction between job demands and job resources in the teleworking context of Springbok?
- Theoretical sub-question 5: What does the elaborated conceptual model look like?

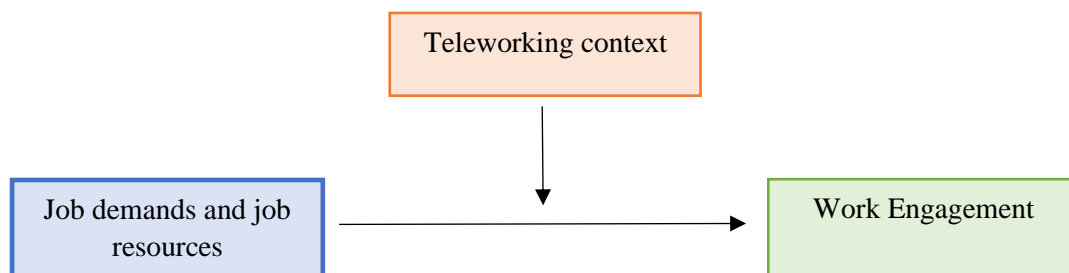


Figure 2: Conceptual Model

2.1. Desired values of work engagement

To find out what the desired relationship between job demands and job resources and work engagement in a teleworking context looks like, it is important to clearly formulate the concept of work engagement.

The concept of work engagement was introduced by Kahn (1990), who conceptualized it as: 'harnessing of organization members selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves psychically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance' (p. 692-724). Nowadays, work engagement refers to a positive, affective-motivational state of high energy combined with high levels of dedication and a strong focus on work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Work Engagement is mostly defined as: 'a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption'' (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74-75).

Vigor refers to high levels of energy and the mental resilience of employees while they are working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002, pp. 74-75). Vigor at work implies a feeling of moderate activation accompanied by a feeling of pleasure (Shirom, 2003). The key indicators for vigor at work are *high level energy, feeling strong, and willing to work*.

Dedication refers to being deeply engaged in one's work, feeling a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). In the literature dedication has been defined as "strong involvement that goes one step further than the usual level of identification" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, pp. 74-75). The key indicators of dedication at work are *being inspired, feeling enthusiasm, and pride about the job*.

Lastly, absorption is characterized by complete concentration and enjoyment when working, whereby time passes quickly, and disengaging from work becomes challenging (Schaufeli et al., 2002, pp. 74-75). The key indicators of absorption at work are *feeling happy, being immersed, and feeling liveliness*.

The concept of work engagement bears some similarities with key concepts in the field of Modern Socio-Technics (MST). MST is a theory that focuses on improving the organizational structure to improve Quality of Organization and Quality of Work (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010). De Sitter, who is regarded as one of the most prominent founding scholars of Modern Socio-Technics, argues that there are two indicators for quality of work: low level of absenteeism and personnel turnover (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010). Jobs should enable organizational members to develop themselves, to feel involved with their work, and allow organization members to deal with work-related stress. According to MST, this is the case when the values of the so-called 'design parameters' are all low. Thus, MST is also concerned with increasing employees' well-being and decreasing stress, which is the core of work engagement.

Whereas MST focuses primarily on the organizational structure and how that provides conditions, the literature on work engagement stresses individual traits, embedded in the employee and amplified through job design. In that sense, job design is an extension of organizational structure. This study focuses on job design and individual traits because this approach provides the most information about work engagement in the teleworking context, which mainly affects individual traits of jobs. Therefore, the JD-R perspective is used in this research, since it identifies individuals', job demands and job resources and how they affect work engagement. Improving work engagement requires a change from the bottom up to figure out how things work within Springbok and not from on top looking at the whole structure.

Work engagement does not have a direct link with organizational design at first glance, but it does provide input for organizational design. By learning from job design principles, organizational design can create a work environment that aligns with employees' needs, promotes autonomy, foster meaningful and challenging work, and embraces adaptability and flexibility (Achterbergh & Vriens,

2010). This research is delineated to job design but can complement organizational design with the insights it provides.

In sum, in this study work engagement is defined following Schaufeli et al. (2002), Bakker & Demerouti (2008) and Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) with the three dimensions vigor, dedication, and absorption. These three dimensions of work engagement are positively correlated with each other. Research has shown that individuals who experience high levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption are more likely to be fully engaged in their work (Bakker et al., 2008). Employees who feel engaged with their work tend to exhibit more positive emotions and envision a more optimistic future within their organization and are willing to invest physical, cognitive, and emotional energy to achieve better performances and well-being in their roles at work (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Therefore, it is highly desirable for Springbok to have engaged employees.

According to earlier evidence absorption is the least central indicator of work engagement (De Bruin & Henn, 2013). In contrast, vigor has the strongest relationship with engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Therefore, its value in practice must be **very high**. Springbok executive team members must feel energetic, strong and must be willing to work. Dedication also has a strong relationship with work engagement, but not as strong as vigor. Therefore, the norm value of dedication is **high**, which means that employees should feel inspired, enthusiastic, and proud of their work. Absorption has a significant influence on work engagement, but employees should not be too absorbed. Employees who identify very strongly with Springbok may also engross themselves strongly in the negative aspects of their work, which impacts work engagement negatively. The teleworking context increases the likelihood of excessive absorption (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Therefore, the value of absorption should be **high but not too high**.

2.1.1. Desired values work-engagement

To summarize, the construct work engagement with associated dimensions and indicators and specified norm values are shown in Table 1.

Construct	Dimension	Indicators	Desired value
Work Engagement	Vigor	High level energy	Very high
		Feeling strong	
		Willing to work	
	Dedication	Being inspired	High
		Feel of enthusiasm	
		Pride about job	
	Absorption	Feel happy	High but not too high
		Being immersed	
		Feel of liveliness	

Table 1: Desired values Work Engagement

2.1.2. JD-R model

Theory of work engagement mostly agrees with the fact that work engagement is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Whereas job demands are the most important predictors of burnout, job resources are the most important predictors of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The JD-R model can effectively be used as a perspective to analyze these relationships and monitor the workplace, to increase the work engagement of the executive team members of Springbok in a teleworking context.

The JD-R model was introduced to understand burnout. A few years later the model was supplemented with work engagement. Nowadays, the job demands-resources theory is one of the most often used theories to explain work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). It provides a useful, unifying, theoretical platform to examine the causes and consequences of engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). One of the main advantages of using this model as a perspective is that it is very flexible, so it can be customized to the needs of Springbok. The JD-R model predicts outcomes through two processes: demands deplete resources and can thus lead to exhaustion as well as low work engagement (1) and resources have motivational potential and lead to better job performance (2).

According to the JD-R model, every job (function as well as position) includes demands as well as resources, and these job demands, and job resources and their interaction must be balanced to ensure work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Demerouti et al (2001, p. 501) defined job demands as: ‘aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs’. These are the ‘bad things’ at the workplace that are draining energy. Although job demands are not necessarily negative, they can become job stressors when fulfilling those demands require high effort from which the employee fails to recover adequately.

On the other hand, job resources are ‘good things’. Job resources are defined as: ‘aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (1) be functional in achieving work goals; (2) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (3) stimulate personal growth and development’ (Demerouti et al, 2001, p. 501). Job resources possess inherent motivational quality, they are beneficial for employee’s energy and are drivers of work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). By enhancing resources organizations can achieve two objectives at once: preventing burnout and promoting engagement.

An extension of the JD-R model is the inclusion of personal resources in the model. Xanthopoulou and colleagues (2009) define personal resources as positive cognitions and self-evaluations concerning employees’ perception of their ability to control and impact their environment. Several studies found the significance of personal resources and that they can serve as a distinct component of the JD-R model. Work engagement can be boosted by personal resources in addition to job resources (Salanova et al., 2006; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). According to Judge et al. (2004), individuals who display a high level

of personal resources are more inclined to succeed in various job-related aspects such as goal setting, motivation, and performance, in comparison to those who possess fewer personal resources.

Although personal resources can contribute significantly to work engagement, job demands, and job resources offer the most explanatory value when looking at work engagement. Personal resources are more person-specific and are therefore harder to change through the adjustment of a company's structure (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Job demands and job resources, on the other hand, are easier to improve through structural changes. Therefore, it makes sense to focus on job demands and job resources in this study, given the organizational design nature of this research. Finally, the problem within Springbok is not so much on personal resources, this is another reason to focus on job demands and job resources. This does not mean that personal resources cannot be relevant, it just means that within the framework of this study, it is considered not relevant enough given the nature of this research.

Thus, whereas job demands are generally the most important predictors of outcomes such as exhaustion, complaints, psychosomatic health complaints, and repetitive strain injury, job resources are generally the most important predictors of work enjoyment, motivation, and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). **Therefore, to improve work engagement of employees in Springboks' executive teams, job resources must therefore be as high as possible, and job demands as low as possible.**

2.2. Job resources in a teleworking context

This section will identify the most relevant job resources in the teleworking context. The relationship between these resources and work engagement will be examined. After identifying the resources and their relationship with work engagement, the norm values of key dimensions will be specified.

2.2.1. Desired values job resources

Telework changes the physical and psychological distance between individuals and their managers and co-workers (Golden, 2006). Telework also affects job resources and their corresponding effects on work engagement. Mäkikangas et al. (2022) found out that high job resources in a teleworking context are conducive to work engagement, which is in line with Bakker & Demerouti (2017). Several studies proposed that autonomy, social support, and feedback are the job resources that are the most relevant in the teleworking context (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Elst et al., 2017; Perry et al., 2018).

Autonomy

A lack of autonomy leads to high-stress levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job autonomy is a complex phenomenon to conceptualize and operationalize (Breugh, 1985). However, a widely used conceptualization of job autonomy is "the degree to which a job provides freedom, independence, and discretion to employees in scheduling their work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 162). Three autonomy indicators can be identified to operationalize job autonomy (Breugh, 1985). First, *work method autonomy* refers to the degree of freedom and self-direction that individuals have in choosing the procedures and methods they use in

their work. Secondly, *work scheduling autonomy* evaluates the extent to which workers perceive that they have control over planning their work activities. Finally, *work criterion autonomy* pertains to the ability to modify evaluation criteria, engage in self-reflection, and participate in goal setting.

With separation from others, teleworkers are less tied to office routines. These teleworkers can perform their work as they like, as there is less supervision from managers (Dubrin, 1991). The research conducted by Perry and colleagues (2018) indicates that employees that perceive high levels of autonomy tend to experience the least amount of psychological strain when teleworking. According to Warr (1987), job autonomy is proven to be an important job resource, which can positively influence work engagement. Job autonomy is proven to look like an inverted U-shaped pattern, where very high levels of job autonomy could potentially be detrimental to work engagement due to the increased uncertainty, difficulty in decision-making, and elevated responsibility associated with the job. Therefore, autonomy in the teleworking context of Springbok should be *high, but not too high*.

Social support

Elst et al. (2017) found out that social support is a job resource that influences work engagement in a teleworking context. Social support plays a key role in promoting job-related well-being during remote work (Mäkikangas et al., 2022). Social support is a multifaceted concept that can take on various meanings depending on the context. However, it is generally meant to describe the interaction and dynamic between two or more individuals (Pearson, 1986). Several studies indicated that social support primarily refers to the feeling of being appreciated and having access to (in)direct support from others (Pearson, 1986). Social support can be categorized into two categories: a) *social support from colleagues* and b) *social support from supervisors* (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Both social support from colleagues and social support from supervisors contributes to a higher level of work engagement (Halbesleben, 2014).

Furthermore, social support is positively related to the level of vigor at work. Teleworkers who telework several days a week experience less social support, resulting in a decrease in work engagement. This is in line with the study of Sardeshmukh, et al. (2012). Since Springbok employees work at least two days a week from a location other than the office, it is therefore important to include social support as a dimension of the job resources construct. Because social support has a strong effect on work engagement, social support in the teleworking context of Springbok must be *high*.

Performance feedback

Performance feedback is typically defined as the responses and comments that employees receive from their colleagues or supervisors that are helpful and productive (Bakker et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Performance feedback allows employees to reach a higher level of understanding of their job requirements and enhances knowledge and abilities in effectively carrying out tasks (Sommer & Kulkarni, 2012). The teleworking process makes the process of performance feedback less straightforward due to the physical distance between employees and the lack of direct communication.

Because electronic media contain fewer cues and contextual indicators (Belle et al., 2015), they may restrict the free flow of information. If teleworkers rely increasingly on electronic media, this is likely to lead to a decrease in feedback. Studies suggest that organizations should establish appropriate policies and provide guidance and training to employees and supervisors to effectively implement telework arrangements (Belle et al., 2015; Greer & Payne, 2014). Performance feedback allows leaders to communicate *performance expectations* and provides *recognition* of a job well done. Since performance contributes to work engagement, it is important that the value of this dimension is *high*.

Summary desired values job resources

There is a positive relationship existent between job resources and work engagement: a high level of job resources leads to an increased work engagement of the employees working in the executive teams in the teleworking context of Springbok. Therefore, the desired values of the relevant job resources are high. This is shown in table 2.

Construct	Dimension	Indicators	Desired value
Job resources	Autonomy	Work method autonomy	High but not too high
		Work scheduling autonomy	
		Work criterion autonomy	
	Social support	Co-worker support	High
		Supervisor support	
	Performance feedback	Performance expectations	High
Recognition			

Table 2: Desired values job resources

2.3. Job demands in a teleworking context

This section will identify the most relevant job demands in the teleworking context. The relationship between these demands and work engagement will be examined. After identifying these demands and their relationship with work engagement, the norm values of key indicators will be specified.

2.3.1. Desired values job demands

The practice of teleworking leads to alterations in the work requirements that individuals have. The changes take place because of the inherent nature of teleworking, which is characterized by the lack of daily commutes, physical separation from colleagues in the office, and working from a remote location (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Golden et al., 2008). Teleworking's unique work environment creates different demands for employees that, if not effectively managed, might create stress and reduced work engagement (Weinert et al., 2015). Job demands act as moderators between the extent of teleworking and work engagement (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). Therefore, identifying the most important job demands within the teleworking context of Springbok is crucial (Weinert et al., 2015). Several studies have been conducted to identify the most relevant job demands that influence work engagement of teleworkers (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012; Weinert et al., 2015; Golden et al., 2008). Based on these studies,

the most relevant job demands in the teleworking context of Springbok are work-home conflict, work overload, isolation, and role ambiguity.

Work-home conflict

Weinert et al. (2015) identified work-home conflict as one of the main job demands teleworkers experienced. This job demand is particularly important since Springbok employees indicated in the survey that they experience work-home conflict. Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) defined work-home conflict as a type of inter-role conflict in which the role demands stemming from one life domain are incompatible with the role demands stemming from the other domain. Individuals either can be hindered to meet role demands in private life due to work demands (work-to-home conflict), or they can be hindered to meet role demands in the work domain due to private life demands (home-to-work conflict). Work-home conflict can arise in two ways: *time-based conflict* and *strain-based conflict*. Time-based conflict arises when the time spent fulfilling one role prevents meeting the demands of the other role and strain-based conflict arises when stress or strain in one role affects the ability to meet the demands of the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Morgan & King, 2012). This is an important job demand within the executive teams of Springbok, the norm value of this demand should be *low*.

Work overload

Work overload is a job demand that refers to the concentration of tasks assigned to an individual at work (Sutarto et al., 2022) and is categorized as one of the most relevant demands for people's work environment (Bakker et al., 2003). According to Grant et al. (2019) and Camacho & Barrios (2022), telecommuting has been consistently linked to an increase in work overload. This is believed to be caused by the intensification of working hours, as well as requests for work and the use of technology outside of regular working hours. Work overload is focused on the quantity of work that must be completed within a specified timeframe rather than the quality of the task themselves (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). Work overload is primarily determined by *time pressure*, *staffing*, and *workload* (Sutarto et al., 2022). Recent studies have shown that the perceived work overload of employees increases because of the greater demands they face when working from home (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021). Work overload is an important demand in the teleworking context for Springbok, especially because the workload within an agency has certain peak times when the workload can be very high. Work overload negatively affects work engagement. Therefore, the value of work overload should be *very low*.

Isolation

A well-known result of the teleworking context is increased isolation, because of reduced face-to-face interaction. Social isolation is one of the main challenges of teleworking (Allen et al., 2015). Isolation at the workplace is conceptualized as a construct that describes employees' perceptions of *isolation from the organization (organizational isolation)* and *isolation from co-workers (social isolation)*. Social isolation means missing social interaction and informal chats, spontaneous discussions, and water-cooler meetings (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). Organizational isolation, on the other hand, is about employees' fear being "out of sight, out of mind" and are afraid that their efforts are not recognized or valued (Cooper

& Kurland, 2002). Golden et al. (2008) found that the feeling of isolation increases with the amount of telework and that it is related to decreased work engagement. Since employees on Springbok's executive teams work from home at least two days a week, isolation is a relevant job demand in context. When isolation increases, work engagement decreases, therefore its value should be *low*.

Role ambiguity

According to McCormack & Cotter (2013), role ambiguity refers to the state of being uncertain about the expectations and requirements associated with performing tasks or duties within one's assigned role. Teleworking will likely lead to increased role ambiguity as communication difficulties increase due to the absence of the office and the use of electronic communication devices. Communication tools such as e-mail and telephone have limited interactivity and often fewer opportunities to convey all signals of interactions compared to face-to-face communication. In addition, role ambiguity indirectly increases workload, which has negative consequences for absorption (Cooper & Kurland, 2002). This leads to increased isolation and a higher risk of an excessive workload, which leads to a decrease in work engagement for the employees in the executive teams of Springbok. Role ambiguity is conceptualized as the *lack of clarity* of role expectations and *the degree of uncertainty* regarding the outcomes of one's role performance (McCormack & Cotter, 2013). When supervisors communicate performance standards and expectations, job ambiguity for employees could be reduced and work engagement could be increased (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Therefore, the value of role ambiguity should be *low*.

Summary desired values job demands

Table 3 summarizes the above-mentioned job demands that affect work engagement negatively. It is therefore important that the values of these job demands are all low.

Construct	Dimension	Indicator	Desired value
Job demands	Work-home conflict	Time-based conflict	Low
		Strain-based conflict	
	Work-overload	Workload	Very low
		Time-pressure	
		Staffing	
	Isolation	Social isolation	Low
		Organizational isolation	
	Role ambiguity	Role clarity	Low
		Role uncertainty	

Table 3: Desired values job demands

2.4. Desired interaction job demands and job resources

Previous research conducted by Korloglu and Ozmen (2002) proved that there is a relationship between job demands, job resources, and work engagement. Bakker and colleagues (2003) found that a balance between job demands, and job resources must be existent. They found that job resources have a positive relationship and have a direct, positive influence on vigor, dedication, and absorption. Job resources can help executive team members to cope with job demands, as job resources have been found to buffer the

adverse effects of high job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Besides mitigating the impact of job demands, job resources are also crucial in creating a healthy and optimal workplace and are connected to the motivational process. This means that job resources are not only relevant to help employees cope with job demands, but they also serve as an independent function (Bakker et al., 2023).

In this study, job demands serve as a moderator, having a suppressing effect on the relationship between job resources, and work engagement. High job demands negatively impact work engagement and is associated with the health impairment process (Bakker et al., 2023). Therefore, the suppressive effect of job demands must be as low as possible.

An example of how the relationship between job demands, job resources and work engagement should be is as follows: social support is considered relevant in the teleworking context of Springbok. The job resource social support can cope with the job demand isolation, because when the executive team members of Springbok are socially supported, they will experience less isolation. This results in higher work engagement (Bentley et al., 2016). Thus, the desired situation is that the suppressive effect of job demands is limited and that the motivating effect of job demands takes precedence.

2.5. Elaborated conceptual model

The elaborated conceptual model, as shown in Figure 3, depicts the desired relationships and the specifications of the desired (norm) values of work engagement, job demands, and job resources in the teleworking context. The literature has shown that the job resources autonomy, social support, and performance feedback have a positive influence on work engagement. The desired situation is therefore that resources are **as high as possible**, hence the '+' on arrow 1 in the model. Furthermore, the literature has shown that the job demands work-home conflict, work-overload, isolation, and role ambiguity have a negative impact on work engagement in the teleworking context. Therefore, the desired situation is that job demands are **as low as possible**, hence the '-' in arrow 2 in the model.

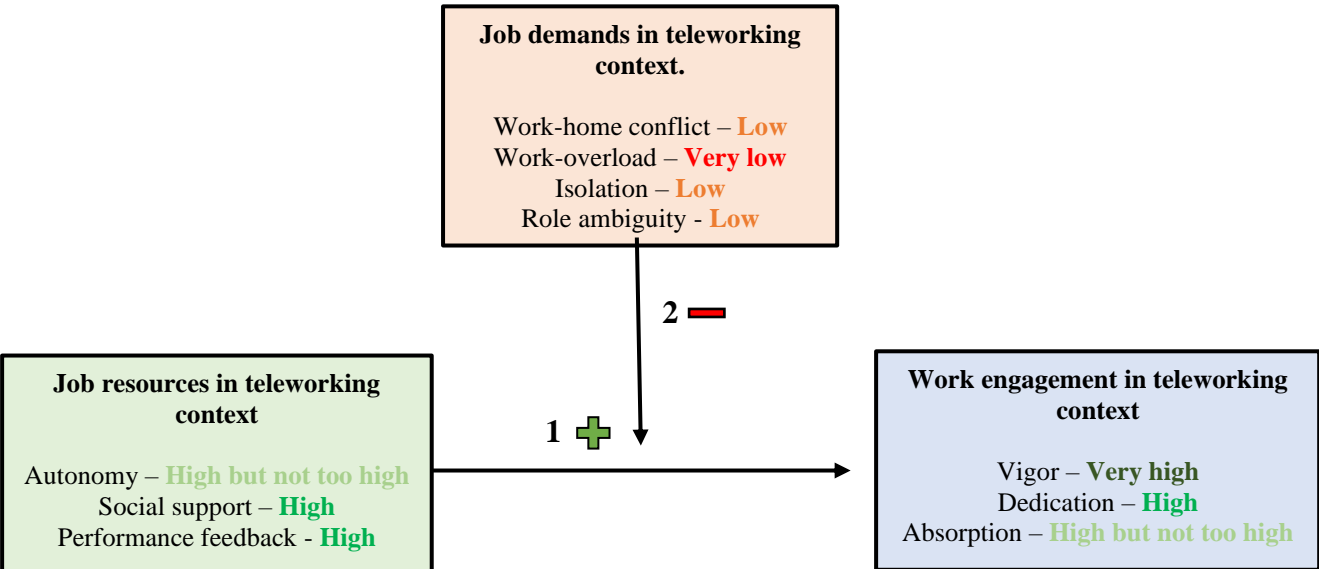


Figure 3: Elaborated conceptual model

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the method by which the research will be carried out and will answer the following empirical question: *‘What is the current relationship between job demands and job resources, and work engagement of Springbok’s executive team members in a teleworking context?’*

3.1. Research design

The research question was answered using deductive, qualitative methods. To provide an in-depth understanding of the decreased work engagement of the executive team members of Springbok, a qualitative approach was used (Myers, 2020). Qualitative research is used to describe a specific situation or phenomenon in more detail, to gather in-depth insights by understanding concepts, thoughts, and experiences on topics that are not well understood (Myers, 2020; Symon & Cassel, 2012). The aim of the study was to draw conclusions based on logical reasoning and the application of existing knowledge to the specific teleworking context of Springbok. Deductive research helped to build reliable and valid knowledge. The research focused on the concepts as depicted in the theoretical framework.

In this study, the interpretivist perspective was used as an inspiration and was considered as an important valuable epistemological stance. This does not mean that the entire study is interpretivist. From this perspective, human experience is central to the construction of knowledge about the social world in which one lives (King & Brooks, 2016). This means that as a researcher, you try to find out and interpret people's meanings, beliefs, and experiences. Information was gathered through conducting 8 semi-structured interviews with executive team members. These semi-structured interviews allowed investigating the experiences and meanings of the respondents concerning the current relationship between job demands, job resources, and work engagement, and how this affects their work engagement.

3.2. Sample

As this study was conducted to make recommendations to the management of Springbok, employees of Springbok were interviewed. When selecting respondents, purposive sampling was used (Symon & Cassel, 2012). This non-probability sampling technique enabled the researcher to exercise her judgment in selecting respondents. The main advantage of purposive sampling is that it enabled the researcher to focus on particular characteristics, which enabled the researcher to answer the research question best. In this research, the respondents were selected based on the following characteristics:

The selected respondents must have experienced a change in their work environment, from working full-time in the office to working partially from home. To gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of employees' experiences, respondents with similar contextual factors were selected. This choice was made because of the relatively small size of this study. Respondents were selected in consultation with the general and HR manager. As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on work engagement of executive team members within Springbok. There are five executive teams ("cells"): CRM (1), paid (2), owned (3), data (4), and design (5). Of these teams, four team members from the two

teams ‘Team Data’ and ‘Team Marketing Automation (MA)’, were interviewed. Thus, a total of eight executive team members were interviewed. Respondents were approached based on the required characteristics mentioned above and were asked if they wanted to participate in this study. The details of the respondents are shown in Table 4.

Respondent	Function	Characteristics
1	Cell lead team Data	2 days teleworking
2	Back-end Developer team Marketing Automation	3 days teleworking
3	Data Engineer team Data	2 days teleworking
4	Data Engineer team Data	2 days teleworking
5	CRM-Marketeer team Marketing automation	2 days teleworking
6	Team lead team Data	2 days teleworking
7	Technical Consultant team Marketing Automation	2 days teleworking
8	Team lead team Marketing Automation	2 days teleworking

Table 4: Respondents

3.3. Data collection

Interviews are a crucial and widely used method for collecting data in qualitative research. This method enables researchers to gather substantial information from individuals in various circumstances (Myers, 2020). This research was based on a deductive way of doing research. Theory was applied to arrive at a focused operationalization of the key concepts of this study. This is done in Chapter 2. The key concepts of work job demands, job resources, and work engagement were made measurable through dimensions and indicators with corresponding desired values. The operationalization is shown in Appendix A. In deductive qualitative research, interviews can be used to gain insight into people's experiences, views, and attitudes on a specific topic or phenomenon under investigation. Interviewing respondents can help to gain a deeper understanding of how the theory applies to the specific context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this research data was obtained by conducting 8 semi-structured interviews with employees working partly from home, in one of the five executive teams.

In contrast with structured interviews, in which there is a predetermined list of questions that are covered in the same order for each person, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to alter the questions and vary them between respondents (Galletta, 2013). By changing the questions covered in the interview, it became possible to explore areas of particular significance to individual participants, and by doing so it was possible to gain a better understanding of the research question.

The interview guide for the semi-structured interviews was based on the dimensions and indicators as depicted in Appendix A. Thereby, more general questions are developed, and structured into general themes. The questions in the interview guide were designed to tap into the dimensions and indicators empirically. These interviews aimed to gather data about the actual values of the dimensions, indicators, and assumed relationships as portrayed by the conceptual model. The interview guide is shown in Appendix C.

3.4. Procedure data collection

As described in section 3.2. eight employees from the executive teams were selected for the semi-structured interviews. These employees were asked if they wanted to participate in the research. The preference was to conduct the interviews face-to-face, at the office of Springbok in Den Bosch. This was most favourable because it allowed the researcher to be observant. Good interviewers are observant, picking up subtle cues such as facial expressions and body language (Myers, 2020). A total of six interviews were conducted in the office and two interviews were conducted online because, unfortunately, these two respondents were unexpectedly prevented from coming to the office.

Before the interviews, an email was sent with a brief introduction about the study. This email is shown in Appendix B. That way they knew what to expect and were already informed about the purpose of the interview. The respondents informed that they appreciated this. Before the start of the interview, the interviewer asked the participant permission to record the interview. The interviews were recorded using audio recordings. Besides that, notes were written after the interview. Audio recording was a valuable tool that helped the researchers to keep records of the interviews, which in turn helped during data analysis. It allowed the researcher to conduct a detailed transcript afterward, this ensured that no relevant information got lost. Before the interviews, once again the purpose of the interview and what the interview would be used for was explained. It was also emphasized that anonymity was guaranteed. Finally, the respondent had a chance to ask questions about ambiguities before the interview started.

After conducting the interviews, the interviews were transcribed directly. 'Verbatim transcription' was chosen as the way to transcribe. This method of transcribing was chosen to maximize readability while retaining all the information. These transcripts are included in Appendix E.

3.5. Data analysis

Deductive analysis, as described by Miles & Huberman (1994), refers to a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that is guided by a pre-existing theoretical framework. It is a more "top-down" approach to data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A coding scheme consisting of dimensions and indicators based on this pre-existing theoretical framework was utilized in the deductive approach for the coding process (Bradley et al., 2007). The researcher systematically applied the coding scheme, which consists of different colours as shown in Appendix D, to the data and assigned relevant codes to different segments of the data. This involved careful reading, interpreting, and coding the data to capture the key concepts of the theoretical framework. The coded interviews are shown in Appendix E. Once the interviews were coded, relevant quotes with their corresponding dimension and indicators were compiled in appendix F. An overview of all current values of the dimensions, and indicators for each respondent is shown in Appendix G.

Ultimately, the actual values of the dimensions, indicators were compared with the desired values and correlations between different respondents were examined. In addition, the interrelationships between job demands, job resources, and work engagement were examined to find out how they influence each other.

3.6. Research quality

Symon and Cassell (2012) put forth universal standards for evaluating the excellence of qualitative research. They argue that the standards applied to quantify research are not suitable for qualitative studies due to their vastly dissimilar methodologies. To address this issue, Lincoln and colleagues (1985) created four criteria for assessing qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These quality criteria are mainly applied in inductive qualitative research but can also be applied to deductive qualitative research.

Credibility refers to finding a good fit between interpretation and reality (Symon and Cassell, 2012). In this study, credibility was based on member checking and progressive subjectivity. Member checking involved verifying the researcher's interpretation of the data with the participant to guarantee that the participant's perspectives have been accurately recorded (Lincoln et al., 1985). The process of progressive subjectivity started by maintaining a record of preliminary constructions during the research. This record allowed for a comparison with the constructions provided by the research participants (Symon & Cassell, 2012). By doing so, the credibility of the research was enhanced as consistency was continuously considered.

Transferability aims to determine the extent to which the findings of the research can be generalized. By presenting a wealth of information about the specific case context, such as through comprehensive description, the reader can determine the applicability of the study's conclusions in their context (Symon & Cassel, 2012). This research has provided relevant insights that are transferable, but because it specifically focused on examining the effects of teleworking at Springbok, the transferability of the findings is not fully applicable.

Dependability was assured by outlining the choices made in the methodology. The research process was carefully documented, methods were reported transparently, and changes or adaptations made during the research were included. By doing so, the research process became transparent and open to examination.

Confirmability refers to clearly identifying the origin of the collected data to ensure that the data, interpretations, and outcomes are not solely based on the researcher's subjective views (Lincoln et al., 1985). In other words, confirmability is about the degree to which the findings of this study are based on the collected data, rather than on the subjective interpretations or biases of the researcher. To maintain the confirmability of this study, a detailed description of the research procedures was provided.

3.7. Research ethics

Myers (2020) argues that ethics is essential for conducting research and must be always ensured. Therefore, multiple ethical considerations were considered. Research ethics is defined as the application of moral principles in planning, conducting, and reporting the results of research studies (McNabb, 2017). It was very important to follow the 'golden rule': "Treat others as you want to be treated and provide benefit to the organization and individuals involved in your work" (Maylor et al., 2017).

The Netherlands Code of Conduct on Scientific Practice is a set of principles that govern the ethical and professional conduct of researchers and scholars in the Netherlands. This code consists of the following principles: honesty, scrupulousness, transparency, independence, and responsibility (Schuurbiens et al., 2009). These principles were used in this research to ensure that this research is conducted with the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

First, honesty in this research involved accurately reporting the process, considering alternative opinions, being transparent about uncertainties and limitations, avoiding baseless claims and fabrications, and presenting unbiased and truthful results.

Secondly, scrupulousness in this research entailed using scientific or scholarly methods and exercising utmost care in designing, conducting, reporting, and disseminating research.

Thirdly, transparency involved documenting and disclosing information about the data, methods, results, and external stakeholders involved in the research process. A clear account of the work was provided, which made it evident to peers and ensured that the research can be verified and replicated.

Fourthly, independence in this research meant avoiding non-scientific or non-scholarly influences in the choice of method, data assessment, and evaluation of others' research or proposals. It required maintaining impartiality and was necessary throughout the research process.

Lastly, responsibility in this research involved considering, within reasonable limits, the interests of research participants. It also required conducting research that was scientifically and/or socially relevant.

3.7.1. Research ethics regarding conducting interviews

While conducting interviews, it was very important to carefully deal with various aspects of research ethics. First of all, informed consent was an important principle. Permission from managers must be obtained to be able to conduct the research. Participation in the research was on a voluntary basis. Furthermore, participants were enabled to freely give their informed consent to participate, and they could terminate their involvement for any reason, at any time.

Before the interviews, participants were informed about what would be done with the research results and possible implications of the findings for the organization and society. All participants were asked for consent on recording the interviews, any refusals were honoured. Participants in the study remained anonymous, meaning that the names of the employees who participated in the interviews were not disclosed. During the research, the participants were always informed about the process. The researcher was clear and open when explaining the research to respondents and other stakeholders. During the interviews, all questions were answered truthfully and completely. The interviews were accurately transcribed without any additions and no text was added that is not articulated by the participants that are interviewed. Finally, respondents were asked if they wanted to see the interview transcript after the interview.

4. Results

This chapter answers the following question: “*What are the similarities and differences between the current and desired relationships between job demands and job resources, and work engagement of Springbok’s executive team members in a teleworking context?*” To answer this question, data gathered in the interviews have been analyzed. The following insights are presented:

1. Gaining insight into the general image of work engagement at Springbok
2. Gaining insight into the influence of job resources on work engagement of the executive team members of Springbok
3. Gaining insight into the role of job demands in work engagement of the executive team members of Springbok
4. Gaining insights into additional side results
5. Gaining insights into the job demands and job resources that influence work engagement most

4.1. The general image of Work Engagement at Springbok

The analysis of the data revealed the overall picture of work engagement at Springbok. The analysis showed that the current value of dedication is equal to the desired value. In contrast, the current values of vigor and absorption are not like the desired values. This is shown in Table 5. What this means for work engagement at Springbok is explained in sections 4.1.1., 4.1.2. and 4.1.3.

4.1.1. Vigor

The analysis showed that the current value of vigor is *moderate*, which deviates from the desired value *very high*. Firstly, all eight respondents reported having more energy in the office instead of at home. Respondent 3 explained this: “*I do notice that I get positive energy from the atmosphere at the office. There is a nice, relaxed work atmosphere that gives me good energy.*” This is especially the case on days when the office is quiet. Thus, respondents have significantly less energy at home.

Secondly, 6 out of 8 respondents reported feeling less powerful when working from home in case something goes wrong. At home, it is more difficult to resolve such situations, which makes them feel less strong when working from home. This results in negative energy while working from home.

Thirdly, respondents indicated they feel more like working when they go to the office than when they work at home. Data has shown that the willpower to work in the office is more prevalent. But what is particularly important, is the balance between working from home and working in the office. The analysis revealed that respondents are most energetic and feel like working when they work at least three days in the office and up to two days from home. One respondent said the following about this: “*I feel like working both at home and in the office, the balance is important. The variety makes it fun. But in the end, I like working in the office the most*” (Interview 4, appendix E).

The current value of vigor is problematic since the existing literature has shown that vigor has the strongest relationship with work engagement of the three antecedents’ vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker et al., 2008).

4.1.2. Dedication

The data revealed that the current value of dedication among the executive team members of Springbok is *high*, as it should be according to the desired value. Previous research has shown that the teleworking context might have a negative impact on dedication. However, the analysis revealed that this is not the case at Springbok.

6 out of 8 respondents expressed pride in their work. They speak enthusiastically about their jobs and are feeling a sense of significance. They find the work challenging and are motivated to achieve goals. Data indicated that this is the case because Springbok offers many advancement opportunities and chances to develop yourself, which is conducive to the respondents' dedication. An example of this is given by respondent 7: *"I'm really proud of what I've accomplished so far and really enjoy the work. I really like that I have the opportunity to grow, that challenges me"* (Interview 7, appendix E).

All respondents indicated that they take as much pride in their work when working from home as when working in the office. Working from home does not make them less enthusiastic about the work they perform. They do mention that the office is a more inspiring work environment. However, this does not drastically impact employee dedication when working from home. Analysis revealed that it is important to get the balance right between working in the office and working from home, otherwise, it could affect dedication.

The unchanged dedication in the teleworking context could be explained by the fact that Springbok is an agency. Agencies are generally results-oriented and focus heavily on providing value to customers. Measurable successes are sought which makes employees dedicated.

4.1.3. Absorption

The data analysis indicated that the value of absorption is *high/very high*, this deviates from the desired value *high but not too high*. All respondents reported being able to work with greater concentration when working from home and that they are feeling happy and alive when they can work with full concentration without any distractions. However, this is only the case when they can work independently. Respondent 6 said the following about this: *"At the office, you are a bit more distracted, so it is nice to be able to focus completely at home and immerse yourself in your work. But that only really works when I have to do certain work for which I don't need anyone."*

You would think that it is a positive sign that everyone can concentrate and focus so well at home. But it can also be dangerous to be too absorbed in your work. Consequently, this is the case for most respondents. Data revealed that most respondents become too absorbed in their work when working from home. This is alarming for the workload they experience, increasing the likelihood of overexertion complaints. 4 respondents said they had difficulty letting go of work at home. Being able to work in a concentrated way is very pleasant on the one hand, but it also means that you have less sociability in a day, making you feel less alive. This increases the likelihood of burnout. One respondent gave a good example: *"Because you work at home and have hardly any distractions, you don't have a moment to switch off. My head was just constantly grinding and thinking. So, I couldn't let go of work"*

at home. At the office you have more disruptions, which makes it easier to let go of work.” (Interview 8, appendix E). This is a good example of how the teleworking context increases the likelihood of excessive absorption that has been described by Sandoval-Reyes and colleagues (2021) in the literature.

So, an employee who can get a lot of work done in a short period of time seems very effective, but in the long run, it can be at the expense of the quality of work and result in overwork complaints. Thus, when absorption is too high, it endangers work engagement.

	Current values	Desired values
Work engagement		
Vigor	Moderate	Very high
Dedication	High ✓	High
Absorption	High/very high	High but not too high

Table 5: Current vs. desired values work engagement

4.2. Influence job resources in work engagement

In previous section 4.1, it was shown that the current general image of work engagement at Springbok is not as it should be. Mainly vigor and absorption are not as desired in the current teleworking context as is shown in Table 5. This has a negative impact on work engagement (Bakker et al., 2008). Now that we know that work engagement is not optimal, it is important to find out what influence job resources have on work engagement. According to the literature, job resources are beneficial for employees’ energy and drivers of work engagement, if the values of the job resources are as desired.

Table 6 shows the results of the analysis. The analysis showed that autonomy in the current situation has the desired value and does not have a negative impact on work engagement. Social support and performance feedback, on the other hand, do not have the desired values and have a negative impact on work engagement. This will be explained in sections 4.2.1., 4.2.2. and 4.2.3.

4.2.1. Autonomy

The data revealed that the current value of autonomy among the executive team members of Springbok is *high but not too high*, as it should be according to the desired value. Employees indicate that they make joint team agreements about the division between working in the office and working from home. They think it is important that they have a say in this and that they can work at home whenever they want.

Employees like the fact that working from home allows them to plan their day as they wish. According to the data, this also has a disruptive effect on the work-life balance as explained in section 4.3.1. In addition, it is perceived as pleasant that there is no one watching you. An example of this was mentioned by respondent 5: “At home, you can decide what you do and when you do it. At home there is no one watching you at all, so you do have complete freedom.” (Interview 5, Appendix E).

A difference can be seen between team data and team MA. Team data has more freedom in choosing the procedure they use to perform the work; team MA follows more universally prescribed methods. However, team MA employees indicate that they do not consider this annoying and like a little

guidance. In contrast, team data likes the freedom to plan and work on your own method. Here a difference can be seen between the two different teams.

The employees work for clients, who set certain deadlines and criteria. The work is then distributed among the employees. Employees indicate that they must raise the alarm themselves if their schedule is too full. Two respondents indicated that they sometimes felt that Springbok is less aware of the work they do from home and that they could be a little more attentive to this (Interview 2 & 6, Appendix E). This is an example of why autonomy should be high but not too high. Altogether, employees are given a lot of freedom to control their own work, but not too much. This makes them feel strong, which positively impacts vigor.

4.2.2. Social support

The data indicated that the current value of social support is *low*, which deviates from the desired value *high*. Respondents all indicated that colleagues strongly support each other in the office. The data revealed that support largely disappears when working from home, which is caused by respondents being more isolated at home. One of the respondents mentioned the following: *“I can always go to my supervisor or colleagues with questions or uncertainties. If you have good contact with colleagues, it is easier to ask for help. Working from home makes this more difficult because you don't see each other physically. I find it much easier to give or receive support at the office because you can knock on the door of a colleague and discuss it directly. Explaining things is easier face-to-face than online. At home I am less likely to seek and receive support”* (Interview 7, appendix E). So, respondents feel more supported by colleagues and supervisors when they are in the office, because in the office they ask for help more easily and quickly. So, working from home causes less social support to be sought and given.

Respondents all indicated that colleagues and supervisors are easily approachable. The contact is mostly informal, which is experienced as pleasant. But if there are colleagues who work from home a lot, the threshold to approach these colleagues becomes higher. The analysis showed that colleagues who work from home a lot, become even more isolated from colleagues and the company. Consequently, these employees become even more isolated.

This reduced sense of social support results in less energetic employees that feel less strong when working from home and have a *negative impact on vigor*. This is alarming because social support is seen as a very important resource, as there is a strong interaction between social support and job demand isolation (Bentley et al., 2016). When social support increases, employees will feel less isolated and work engagement will increase. In this way, job resources can help cope with job demands. In addition, the data also showed that social support helps reduce workload. When there is more social support, the workload is perceived as easier to manage.

4.2.3. Performance feedback

The data analysis revealed that the current value of performance feedback is *low/moderate*, which deviates from the desired value *high*. As mentioned above, isolation affects social support. The same is

true for performance feedback. Working from home impacts the extent to which respondents feel valued. Respondents all reported feeling more appreciated when working in the office, as appreciation is mostly expressed face-to-face. Because the respondents are more isolated at home, colleagues and supervisors have less visibility into what you do and are therefore less likely to compliment you.

In addition, performance expectations are normally discussed in the office, which is preferred according to all respondents. One of the respondents said the following about this: *“Working from home can affect feedback. I sometimes ask for additional feedback at the office, you don't really do that at home. So, when you work in the office you receive more feedback than when you work from home. It's nice to have feedback conversations in the office because it's more personal. You can understand each other better when you meet in real life and it also feels more personal”* (Interview 4, appendix E).

Data analysis revealed that performance feedback in a teleworking context is less effective, as it is harder to solve problems immediately. This negatively impacts the workload. Appreciation and clear expectations make employees feel stronger and result in higher energy. The teleworking context results in reduced performance feedback, which results in employees that do not feel like working, have less energy and feel less strong. This is in line with the research of Bentley and colleagues (2016), in which is concluded that there is a significant interaction between performance feedback and work-overload. They concluded that employees that receive more performance feedback, are better able to cope with work-overload. Therefore, the current value of performance feedback (low) has a negative impact on vigor and needs to be improved.

	Current values	Desired values
Job resources		
Autonomy	High but not too high ✓	High but not too high
Social support	Low	High
Performance feedback	Low/moderate	High

Table 6: Current vs. desires values job resources

4.3. The role of job demands in work engagement

Now that it is known in what ways job resources influence work engagement, it is important to find out the role of job demands in work engagement. According to the literature and outlined in the conceptual model, job demands act as moderators and affect the relationship between job resources and work engagement.

Table 7 shows the results of the analysis. The current value of role ambiguity is as desired and has no negative impact on work engagement. Work-home conflict, work-overload, and isolation do not have the desired values and have a negative impact on work engagement. This will be explained in sections 4.3.1., 4.3.2., 4.3.3. and 4.3.4.

4.3.1. Work-home conflict

The data analysis revealed that the current value of work-home conflict is *moderate*, which deviates from the desired value *low*. Most respondents reported occasional work-life imbalance due to working from home. While working from home, they are particularly affected by time-base conflict. 6 out of 8 respondents said they work longer hours and are more likely to work overtime when they work from home. This is mainly because work and private life become intertwined. This is in line with several studies that concluded that the teleworking context leads to work-home conflict (Weinert et al., 2015; Morgan & King, 2012). One respondent said the following about this: *“The threshold does get lower to continue working when the workday is officially over, because my workstation is in the living room. That way, your work-life balance is disrupted. I work longer hours when I work from home”* (Interview 1, appendix E). A few respondents indicated that they occasionally ran out of energy after a day working from home, but this is an exception rather than the rule.

Thus, respondents are more likely to work overtime from home. This is particularly the case because the respondents can work more concentrated and focused at home which makes them more absorbed in their work. Work-home conflicts results in over-absorbed employees, which should be strictly monitored to reduce absorption as it threatens work engagement.

4.3.2. Work-overload

The data indicated that the current value of work-overload is *moderate*, which deviates from the desired value *very low*. All respondents indicated that working for an agency has quiet and busy times. During the year there are peak times, in which the workload can be high. Respondents indicated that they are more productive at home than in the office because they can work more focused from home. You would expect this to be positive for the workload, but it also causes exhaustion and irritation when problems cannot be solved immediately. Respondent 6 says the following about this: *“You can get work done faster at home, which can be beneficial. When you get stuck, it is more difficult to ask for help at home, which in turn increases the workload. You also have fewer distractions at home; at the office, you get new energy from colleagues and are more motivated to get back to work”* (Interview 6, Appendix E). This means that the work- overload in the teleworking context also leads to less vigor.

Thus, although working from home brings more peace of mind, the workload at home is perceived as more intense when there are ambiguities. As already mentioned in section 4.2.3, the data also revealed that it is more challenging to receive performance feedback while working from home, which makes it harder to cope with work overload when problems cannot be resolved independently. This is in line with research conducted by Belle and colleagues (2015). In addition, respondents feel that natural breaks in the office are important for variety. These natural breaks disappear the moment work is done at home, which negatively impacts work-overload and results in excessive absorption.

Furthermore, work performed at home is less visible to colleagues and supervisors. As a result, it is less likely to be noticed that you are structurally under time pressure and that the workload is too high. This also impacts work-overload negatively.

Thus, on the one hand, working from home makes work more manageable, but on the other hand, it also takes energy when problems cannot be solved immediately, resulting in increased workload and time pressure. This has a negative impact on vigor. In addition, it results in excessive absorption. Work-overload acts as a moderator here, as a high workload impacts the relationship between job resources social support and performance feedback and, work engagement.

4.3.3. Isolation

The data analysis revealed that the current value of isolation is *high*, this deviates from the desired value *low*. The most obvious result is that all executive team members feel isolated from colleagues and the company while working from home. Respondents indicated that isolation from colleagues and the company causes them to experience less job satisfaction at home. In general, team data employees experience this isolation more strongly than team MA employees.

Working from home causes respondents to lose connection with their colleagues and Springbok. Therefore, the main reason respondents like coming to the office is to avoid complete isolation. In the office, respondents receive positive energy from other colleagues. Maintaining contact online is considered neither efficient nor value-adding and costs a lot of energy. Online contact is mostly formal and hardly informal, which reinforces the feeling of social isolation. Online, they only speak to direct colleagues, whereas the respondents also enjoy speaking to people outside the team. This only happens in the office. Therefore, online contact cannot prevent the feeling of isolation. Respondents mentioned that they prefer to work at home up to two days a week, to avoid too much isolation. Because online contact takes a lot of energy, *it has a negative impact on vigor*.

Several respondents mentioned that going to the office themselves is important, but also that their teammates are physically present. One of the respondents mentioned the following: *“I do feel less connected to my colleagues and Springbok when I work from home a lot. It is bad when one person within the team deviates. You have to be careful that that doesn't become the new norm. Everyone must have the same attitude and it is really important to make sure that everyone is there regularly”* (Interview 8, appendix E).

Furthermore, data revealed that isolation also affects the extent to which respondents feel supported by colleagues and supervisors and the extent to which they receive performance feedback.

Thus, increased isolation results in decreased support and decreased performance feedback. This results in decreased vigor, which results in decreased work engagement. Isolation acts as a moderator, when isolation is high, it affects the relationship between the job resources social support and performance feedback, and work engagement negatively.

4.3.4. Role ambiguity

The current value of role ambiguity is *low*, as it should be according to the desired value. Overall, all respondents indicated that they have a clear idea of what is expected of them and know what steps to take to resolve ambiguities. Respondents from both teams indicate that their duties and responsibilities are clear, this is mainly due to the well-organized induction process that each new employee is required to go through. One of the respondents said the following: *“I think it is very clear what I have to do, and I also know what my role is within Springbok both in the office and at home”* (Interview 7, appendix E). This is not in line with the literature, which suggests that the teleworking context creates more role ambiguity, which negatively impacts absorption and vigor (Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

Thus, the data revealed there is little uncertainty about tasks and performance within Springbok. Therefore, role ambiguity does not impact work engagement negatively and there are no improvements necessary. This can be explained by the high dedication of the employees. In case of ambiguities, the respondents themselves show initiative to resolve these ambiguities.

However, several respondents did indicate that they prefer to discuss ambiguities in the office rather than online. One respondent said the following about this: *“If you have to explain something online, it often happens that it is just not fully discussed in detail. If you explain it face to face, it usually comes across better”* (Interview 8, Appendix E). However, respondents do not consider it problematic and role ambiguity is considered low.

	Current values	Desired values
Job demands		
Work-home conflict	Moderate	Low
Work-overload	Moderate	Very low
Isolation	High	Low
Role ambiguity	Low ✓	Low

Table 7: Current vs. desired values job demands

4.4. Side results

4.4.1. Working conditions office

In addition to the main results described in sections 4.1. and 4.2. and 4.3., aspects that are bound to the office context and not the teleworking context were also explored. From this, it became clear that the working conditions at the office are not optimal. Data indicated that the office is too small, which forces employees to work from home more often than they would like. Furthermore, the office is poorly insulated and noisy. The respondents reported experiencing concentration problems as a result. This has a negative impact on vigor: employees feel less strong and energetic. In addition, it has a negative aspect on absorption, considering they feel less concentrated.

Respondents indicated that they face a dilemma: work more concentrated at home (absorption +) and be more isolated (vigor -) or work in the office (absorption -) and not be isolated (vigor +). Respondents get energy from working in the office but are forced to work more from home. This increases isolation, resulting in even less social support and performance feedback, creating more work-

home conflicts and higher workloads. Thus, this side result interacts with the main issue and should therefore be considered.

4.4.2. Team differences

Another aspect that emerged during the interviews is that there are clear differences between the respondents from team data and team MA. The first difference is that the respondents from team MA have less need for social contact than the respondents from team data. Respondents from team MA consider a good relationship with colleagues as important, but less important than respondents from team data. All respondents reported feeling isolated when working from home, but respondents from team data experienced this isolation more intensely.

In addition, respondents from team MA generally have a greater need for an environment in which they can fully concentrate. Therefore, they have more difficulty with the noisy office building. This is also evidenced by the fact that respondents from team MA work from home more often than respondents from team data.

Third, respondents indicated that they enjoy sitting together as a team in the office. Currently, there are no set spots for the different teams in the new office building. Team data has no problem with not sitting with their team, but team MA, on the other hand, has more difficulty with this. Respondents indicated that this further weakens the team feeling, especially now that most employees are not in the office that much. While this is a notable side result, it does not interact with the main problem and will not be considered further in this study.

4.5. Influence analysis

The data analysis revealed that the teleworking context does indeed have an impact on work engagement of the executive team members. The main results were that there is a relatively large gap between the current and desired values of the following job resources and job demands: social support, performance feedback, isolation, work overload, and work-home conflict.

The data analysis revealed that the job resources social support and performance feedback have a *direct* influence on work engagement. Autonomy, on the other hand, has little influence on work engagement. This means that social support and performance feedback have a relatively large influence on work engagement.

The data analysis revealed that isolation, work-overload, and work-home conflict (*indirectly*) influence work engagement. These job demands have an indirect influence since they act as moderators. This means that these job demands ‘disrupt’ the relationship between job resources and work engagement. The job demands work-home conflict, work-overload, and isolation influence the relationship between job resources and work engagement, resulting in reduced work engagement in the teleworking context. Role ambiguity, on the other hand, has little influence on work engagement. This means that isolation, work-overload, and work-home conflict have a relatively large influence on work engagement.

The larger the gap between the current and desired values of job resources and job demands, the greater the (negative) impact is on work engagement. This is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Influence of job resources and job demands on Work Engagement

5. Conclusions and discussion

5.1. Conclusions

The goal of this study was to make a diagnosis of the influence of job demands and job resources on work engagement of the executive team members of Springbok in the new teleworking context, to make recommendations about how work engagement in the teleworking context can be improved. To figure this out, a qualitative diagnostic interview study was carried out, leading to data that was analyzed based on the idea of a gap-analysis. This gap analysis was based on the pre-existing literature on work engagement. The review of the literature showed that the JD-R model is a very robust model to gain insights into work engagement. Furthermore, this model contains insights into how to apply it in the teleworking context.

Based on this literature, a theoretical model was developed that identified the desired values of work engagement, job resources, and job demands. Data collection, based on in-depth interviews, provided insight into the current values of work engagement, job resources and job demands, and their interplay. The data analysis then provided insight into the differences between the current and desired values. All in all, data analyses showed that there are several substantial gaps between the current and desired values of work engagement, job resources, and job demands.

The data revealed that the following five resources and demands greatly influence work engagement: social support, performance feedback, isolation, work-overload, and work-home conflict. The data showed that there is a substantial gap between the current and desired values of these aspects. The teleworking context results in employees that are receiving less social support and performance feedback, which makes them feel isolated and less valued. Social support and performance feedback are negatively influencing work engagement directly. Furthermore, the teleworking context results in isolated employees, who have more difficulties managing the workload from home and are experiencing disruptions in their work-life balance. Work-home conflict, work-overload, and isolation are negatively influencing work engagement indirectly and have a reinforcing effect on the relationship between job resources and work engagement.

All in all, the teleworking context results in employees experiencing less vigor and becoming too absorbed in their work. These are important signals that work engagement is not optimal. It is crucial that social support and performance feedback will be increased, and work-home conflict, work-overload, and performance feedback will be decreased to improve work engagement.

5.2. Recommendations

Five recommendations are being made based on the above. Given the results of the influence analysis (section 4.5.), the job demands and job resources social support, performance feedback, isolation, work-overload, and work-home conflict have the most influence on work engagement. On the other hand, autonomy and role ambiguity have little influence on work engagement. Therefore, increasing social support and performance feedback, and decreasing isolation, work-overload and work-home conflict are most important.

5.2.1. Increase social support

It is recommended that Springbok take several measures to strengthen social support. To facilitate social support, Springbok should focus on creating an atmosphere in which colleagues keep an eye on each other and where you clearly feel that you are not working alone. Social support should become more entrenched within Springbok and its culture.

The first measure could be to adjust the existing structure of the cells. In the first six months of your career at Springbok, you are paired with a buddy whom you can turn to if you need help. This buddy supports you during the first months, so you can start working independently afterward. However, social support is important not only during the start of your career but throughout your entire career, especially in the teleworking context. Therefore, smaller groups within the existing cells should be created, where members of these groups can provide additional support to each other. It is recommended that the cell will be divided into groups of about 4 people.

It is important to mention that no strict rules must be formed about this, these groups can decide for themselves how to set this up. This concept should by no means feel like an obligation and the nature of this concept is completely informal. The idea is that during a work-at-home day, they can take moments to chat with each other. During this moment, they can catch up, express concerns, ask for help, and so on. The groups should be small on purpose, as it is easier to maintain good contact with each other that way. This is proven by a study conducted by Sardeshmukh and colleagues (2012), in which they revealed that more rich communication may increase perceptions of social support. Thus, by changing the structure of cells, social support will become more embedded in the culture. This is also confirmed by a study conducted by Halbesleben and colleagues (2014).

5.2.2. Increase performance feedback

It is recommended that Springbok take several measures to strengthen performance feedback. Springbok should focus on increasing recognition and appreciation. They should focus on recognizing the efforts that executive team members make from home. Therefore, the second measure that could be taken is to pay more attention to recognition in the work procedure. Springbok should offer the necessary training to teach supervisors how to better recognize and value their employees.

For example, Springbok can create an original, virtual thank you and send them to a teleworker when he or she has made a good contribution, finished an intensive task, or just simply to brighten someone's day. This will increase the appreciation felt by employees of the executive teams. This is confirmed by a study conducted by Mirowska & Bakici (2023).

5.2.3. Decrease isolation

It is recommended that Springbok take several measures to reduce isolation. To reduce isolation, Springbok should build work and social relationships, in which they must take an active role in developing communication opportunities. Therefore, the third measure is that Springbok should introduce a more informal channel, such as 'Slack', where employees can interact with each other

informally and unscheduled. The data analysis revealed that online communication on work-related aspects is mainly formal, while informal contact with colleagues is highly valued. This will contribute to a reduced sense of isolation, as confirmed by a study conducted by Golden and colleagues (2008).

Furthermore, the data analysis has revealed that it is important to be present in the office for at least 3 days to avoid isolation. Currently, some employees mainly work from home. The fourth measure is that this should be more strictly supervised by supervisors, as it is perceived as hindering by the employees who do spend 3 days in the office. This perpetuates the feeling of isolation (Deschênes, 2023).

5.2.3. Decrease workload and work-home conflict

It is recommended that Springbok take several measures to reduce workload and work-home conflict. The recommendations of workload and work-home conflict are an extension of each other; therefore, they are addressed simultaneously. The data analysis revealed that employees have more difficulty managing the interfaces of work and family domains during teleworking and that there is a risk of negative workload in the teleworking context. The fifth measure should focus on reducing this by improving the so-called 'psychological work climate', where employees feel supported by management and comfortable speaking out about their well-being.

Since there is a high risk of a negative workload and employees have more difficulty letting go of work in the teleworking context, it is important to create more awareness and make these issues more discussable. Creating a climate where employees feel comfortable speaking out is crucial, as busy periods and deadlines can be perceived as stressful but not always reported (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). It is important that the managers of Springbok are going to regularly communicate about psychological health issues and that they need to focus more on structural monitoring the employees when they are working from home. The focus here should be on monitoring the workload and so-called "psychological detachment" of executive team members. Management should encourage employees to switch off both behaviourally and mentally from work-related matters. This can enable employees to effectively manage and perform in multiple aspects of their lives.

A study by Žiedelis and colleagues (2022) revealed that psychological detachment is an important resource, which can help to successfully manage the interface of work and family domains during teleworking. They found out that individuals who can leave their work behind experienced greater protection against boundary-blurring and work-family conflict.

So, by creating a culture where people pay more attention to each other and are more willing to speak up, there will be less risk of high workload and fewer work-home conflicts.

These recommendations fall within the realm of structural recommendations; they focus on structural changes within the organization. They imply changes in organizational structure, culture, processes and communication channels. This suits the organizational design nature of this research.

5.3. Discussion

5.3.1. Theoretical reflection

Choice JD-R model

In this study, the JD-R model was chosen, which has been widely used to study work engagement. All in all, the JD-R model was very useful in this study. In the literature, JD-R has been frequently applied to investigate work engagement in a variety of circumstances (Bakker et al., 2003). This literature shows that the JD-R model is appropriate to conduct such studies. This was also found in this study. The model was easily applicable in practice and gained the desired insights.

There are alternative approaches to finding out work engagement in a teleworking context. One of these other possible approaches may be the use of the Socio-Technical-Systems Design of De Sitter. This is a theory that focuses more on the macro level of organizations, to increase quality of work (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010). This would have implied a much larger study, with a much greater focus, which was not chosen to delineate the study. The focus of this study is on work engagement of individual employees. Therefore, it is important to focus on the conditions that directly affect work engagement at the individual level. The JD-R model is an appropriate model to address individual conditions and is therefore appropriate in this study.

However, the things that have emerged using the JD-R model do not contradict Social-Technical-System Design. The use of the Social-Technical-System Design theory probably would not have led to substantially different results, but in this case, it was possible to draw a much more detailed picture of things at the more individual level.

Future research

Most of the job demands and job resources, that were derived from existing literature, do indeed influence work engagement in the teleworking context. Although previous research suggests that autonomy, role ambiguity, and dedication are affected by the teleworking context as well, the results of this study do not show this to be the case. The data analysis showed that dedication is little influenced by the teleworking context.

Currently, only little research has been done on the influence of the teleworking context on work engagement, therefore it is still uncertain which aspects are most important to include in your specific context. This explains why not all job resources and job demands in this study affect work engagement: there is simply little known yet. The findings of this study are therefore relevant to future researchers, as it provides more insight into which job resources and job demands are particularly important in the teleworking context. It will be interesting for future researchers to investigate this in more detail to gain more knowledge about which job demands and job resources are most important in the teleworking context. This could be done inductively.

In addition, future organizational design researchers can learn from the insights of this research based on job design. It has been shown that job design and organizational design are an extension of

each other and can help each other to conduct research at different levels to provide a more complete picture.

5.3.2. Methodological reflection

Qualitative research

It proved valuable to examine the job resources and job demands that influence work engagement in the teleworking context qualitatively. Although work engagement is normally researched quantitatively, a qualitative way of doing research also proves to be appropriate. As the teleworking context is quite a new phenomenon, there is little literature existent on how the teleworking context affects work engagement. The interview guide developed proved to be quite useful in practice. Therefore, future researchers can use this tool effectively.

The qualitative way of doing research resulted in rich data collection by conducting in-depth interviews. This led to relevant insights about respondents' experiences and opinions on the current relationships between job demands, job resources, and work engagement. This study demonstrates that qualitative research helps to find out the interactions between the concepts, which would have been more difficult to find out when using quantitative research. In total, eight interviews were conducted, and saturation occurred after seven interviews. This number of interviews proved to be exhaustive enough and reliable. As a result, no credibility and generalizability issues arose. Future researchers could include multiple levels in the study and should create adapted interview guides for that purpose.

According to Rich and colleagues (2010), work engagement is a dynamic concept that could benefit from a longitudinal study design to capture changes in engagement levels over time. Qualitative research offers the opportunity to measure things in a dynamically accurate and holistic manner. Thus, qualitatively researching work engagement has several advantages over quantitative research methods. Therefore, future researchers should carefully choose the method of research to measure work engagement, especially in the new teleworking context in which little is known yet. All in all, a qualitative research method is recommended when little is known in the context you are studying.

Deductive research

In this study, a deliberate choice was made to apply a deductive research approach. Existing insights about how job demands, and job resources influence work engagement were used to get a measurable picture of the situation at Springbok. However, one could argue that more inductive ways of doing research should be used. This could be very interesting because inductive research can help increase knowledge of which job demands and job resources are most relevant in the teleworking context.

As mentioned in section 5.3.1., the teleworking context in this study had no impact on autonomy, role ambiguity and dedication while this was expected according to the literature. Therefore, since little is currently known about work engagement in the teleworking context, inductive research can help gain new, interesting knowledge.

5.3.3. Personal reflection

Writing a thesis is a challenging and intensive process that requires a lot of time and dedication. During the process of writing this master's thesis, I ran into several things and learned valuable lessons that I can take into my future career.

While writing my bachelor thesis two years ago, I found out the importance of detailed planning in advance. So, I did this during the first week of the research period. Creating a detailed schedule helped me to work in a structured and efficient way. It allowed me to manage my time effectively and to set priorities. I think that working in a structured and efficient manner is an important skill that I will definitely take into my future career. In retrospect, the deadlines I had set for myself did not always turn out to be realistic. Since I conducted practice-based research, I was dependent on external parties. Because of this, things can take longer than you would like. I learned from this that there must be room for leeway in your planning, so that if one thing doesn't go according to plan, your entire schedule doesn't immediately crash.

In addition, writing this master thesis developed my research skills. In the first few weeks of my research, I struggled with determining the appropriate research method for the issue I wanted to investigate. I am convinced that I ended up using the most appropriate research method, deductive qualitative research, to best answer my research question. The help of my supervisor certainly contributed to this. There are many different research methods, and figuring out which one is most appropriate requires critical thinking. Therefore, this process has increased my ability to think critically.

It was an intensive, iterative process, accompanied by moments of frustration. This required resilience. Although I know about myself that I can be impatient, I am proud of myself for taking the time to approach each part of this thesis as carefully as possible. I believe this has contributed to the quality of my research.

Throughout my research, I have focused on how work engagement can be improved. I have realized the importance of making a social contribution, in this case increasing the well-being of working people. I want my work to be meaningful and I get energy from helping people. I also found out through this research that I enjoy giving advice based on my knowledge. Therefore, I am going to look for a job in consultancy, where I can put my knowledge into practice while making a social contribution.

I don't say it easily, but all in all, I am happy to say that I am proud of myself. I am convinced that I have conducted valuable research for Springbok and that they have something to gain from the recommendations I have made. I have grown both as a researcher and as a person. Without the help and support of my supervisor, I would not have been able to conduct such a great study, for which I sincerely thank you. I am curious to see what the future holds for me.

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