6 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

6.1 Discussion on hypothesis testing results

Our first hypothesis H1 stated the positive relationship between work engagement and job crafting. The support of data for this hypothesis reinforce the idea that engaged workers are better able to create their own job resources and consequently make changes to their work characteristics with respect to their abilities, preferences and needs. Previous studies have suggested the link between job crafting and work engagement (Bakker, Tims & Derks, 2012).

We suggest that, the pattern is circular in that job resources lead to work engagement and, in turn, engaged employees will more easily obtain job resources in order to craft their jobs. Once resources are obtained, according to conservation of resource theory (COR) workers are then motivated to protect them. Ultimately, engaged employees remain engaged (Bakker & Bal, 2010). The hypothesis result is in line with the Bakker (2011) proposition, who states that there can be a positive link between work engagement and job crafting.

In the hypothesis H2, we proposed that perceived supervisory support will play the moderator role between work engagement and job crafting linkage. However, our data analysis result did not support this proposition. There may be a couple of explanations to such result. Lyons (2006) study suggests that most job crafting tends to happen without the knowledge of supervisors. It is suggested that these job redesign changes are probably not even noticed by the manager (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In such a case, it may happen that employees don't acknowledge the support from supervisor for this particular crafting activity. This explanation was supported by post
data analysis interviews. Some employees reported sensitive social relations as an annoyance. Some employees stated that in the need of support while mobilizing their resources (job crafting), they seek for help from somebody else rather than immediate supervisor. In such situations, informal groups in the organization come to rescue. Their perceived support was also dependent on how good relationship they shared with their supervisor, and also on how open the organization culture is. Some respondents also suggested that, in an industry like IT where deadlines are stringent and deliverables are fixed, not much support can be expected in case of inclusive redesigning of work characteristics.

In this context, House (1981) suggested that social interactions/support in the workplace may be both positive and negative. Supervisory support may be required for job crafting (hygienic factor) but may not ensure an increase in job crafting. Perhaps supervisory support cannot be expected to promote job crafting for an engaged employee beyond a level that the individual is accustomed to. Eisenberger et al. (2002) found that the perceptions of how the supervisor is valued by subordinates is dependent on supervisor status, tenure, and upward (or outward) mobility. Thus, the position of supervisor in an organization may also affect the amount of support employees feel. It was further suggested that proactive individuals would be less inclined to possess feelings of helplessness (Parker & Sprigg, 1999). Future research should explore this relationship and using other samples to find out if the result of this study is consistent.

In our next hypothesis, we proposed the link between work engagement and employee's innovativeness behavior. Data analysis showed that the hypothesis was
supported. This result emphasizes the notion that engaged employees will think of and apply new and innovative ways to be effective and efficient in their work roles. These new and innovative employee ideas are thought to translate into higher levels of employee effectiveness and efficiency, which helps to produce higher levels of organizational profitability. We found the support for this hypothesis in Gallup’s recent report (2010-2012) which says that the "30 million engaged employees in the U.S. come up with most of the innovative ideas, create most of a company’s new customers, and have the most entrepreneurial energy" (pg. 5).

We also examined the moderator role of the personality trait openness-to-experience between the relationship of work engagement and innovativeness behavior. The data analysis result does not support this hypothesis. Perhaps, the existence of higher number of reverse coded items posed an issue. Future research should be conducted to further explore this relationship.

The next hypothesis proposes the positive link between high level of work engagement and work family conflict. Data analysis results suggest that highly engaged employee will face work interference with family and family interference with work. Employees with higher engagement level tend to spend more work hours than the less engaged employees. Frone et al. (1997) and Parasuraman et al. (1996) further reported that work overload is a significant predictor of the two dimensions of work-family conflict -work interference with family (WFI) and family interference with work (FIW).

One of the stressors that IT professionals face is the work–life balance challenge. This stressor is present in all professions; however, the balance can be more
challenging to maintain for IT professionals (Sethi, Barrier & Quick, 2004). IT professionals are expected to be available to provide scheduled and non-scheduled on-call support 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. This becomes all the more prominent when employee himself is absorbed in the work and later finds it difficult to gather personal resources for non work activities. The elevated level of engagement can be maintained for a short period of time, but in long term various mental and physical stress will make it unsustainable.

We found one empirical study supporting our hypothesis result. Halbesleben, Harvey, and Bolino (2009) found first empirical evidence that high levels of work engagement are related to not only positive outcomes but also to more negative outcomes such as work family conflict. This multisource study relying on three distinct samples showed that work engagement was positively associated with a work–family conflict through high levels of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Similar to this study (Halbesleben et al., 2009), our study results also suggest that although there are positive effect of work engagement, but at the same time there are detrimental effects also on personal life.

The next hypothesis of the study proposes the moderator role of gender in work engagement and work family conflict. Gender influences the relationship in such a manner that males experience more work interference with family than family interference with work. Additionally, females experience more family interference with work than work interference with family. Both of the hypothesis were supported by data analysis results. The possible reason may be that because of extensive family responsibilities women are more likely to experience career interruptions and disturbance from family (Lyness & Thompson, 1997). We found three studies
indicating that men experience higher levels of work interference with family than women (Demerouti, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005; Hammer, Saksvik, Nyro, Torvain & Bayazit, 2004; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001). We also found five evidences suggesting that women report higher levels of family interference with work (Boyar, Maertz & Pearson, 2005; Grzywacs et al., 2002; Hill et al., 2003; Keene & Reynolds, 2005; Tatman et al., 2006).

Lastly, the hypothesis, positively relating higher level of work engagement with job leisure conflict got also support from data analysis result. Similar to the argument given to above hypothesis, we suggest that highly engaged employees exert their additional efforts in the work role. Engaged employees spend all their time, energy and dedication at work which prevent them to get involved in non-work activities such as leisure, outdoor exercise and hobbies. Although, in the short term higher engagement level may lead to enhanced satisfaction, but in the long term job leisure conflict and the manifestations of stress on the body may appear. Meijman and Mulder’s Effort-Recovery Model (1998) posits that exerted effort leads to psychological, behavioral, and subjective responses. When one stops exerting effort, recovery occurs. When one neglects to cease their work-task activities, responses accumulate and recovery fails to occur, which may result in negative health outcomes.

6.2 Contribution to theory

This study makes several important contributions to theory of work engagement literature. First, we developed and documented a better understanding work engagement construct. We examined various aspects of the nature of work engagement and discussed antecedents and consequences recognized by previous
studies. Second, the contribution of this study is in positing inter-linkages and interdependencies between variables from different theoretical perspectives. We presented different interplays between related constructs with the help of guiding theories. This way, we not only weaved the proposed model with the underlying theories (Job Demands-Resources model and conservation of resource theory) but also helped in expanding the scope of theory. We further presented the conceptual model that has not yet been provided in extant literature. Third, we established the possibility of both positive and negative outcomes of an originally positive construct. We posited that, in certain cases (such as high level absorption in the work), positive variable can also give birth to dysfunctional outcomes. Fourth, we attempted to contribute to the positive psychology literature (work engagement) which is in dearth in comparison to the negative psychology literature (such as burnout). Diener et al. (1999) as well as Myers (2000) found that research on the work behaviors and attitudes of employees focused more on their negative than their positive (such as work engagement) psychological state of minds. They reported that the ratio of 'negative psychology' studies to 'positive psychology' studies was 17:1 Diener et al. (1999) and 14:1, Myers (2000).

Further, the current study investigates the work family and job leisure conflict in a different context. All previous research on work-non work conflicts were conducted in the scenarios when the employee has to engage in extra-role behavior or work overload because of the supervisory or organizational demands. However, in this study, we investigate work-non work conflict in the situations when employee himself get extra engaged/involved and take on the extra job tasks out of sheer energy, interest, dedication and passion towards work.
All in all, the research of this dissertation advance the literature across a number of growing research areas (e.g., proactive personality, engagement, job crafting). Although, each of the constructs is relatively new within the presented context, they have established themselves within the field as viable and worthwhile constructs with great potential. Therefore, the research results contribute to the existing literature, while informing future research.

6.3 Contribution to practice

From a managerial viewpoint, this study underscores few recommendations for management to enhance the effectiveness of action within the workplace. This study in addition to many others have established that there is positive relationship between work engagement and job performance (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Studies based on JD-R model have consistently shown that employees are able to achieve their best job performance in challenging, resourceful work environments, since such environments facilitate their work engagement (Bakker et al., 2011). Therefore, a first implication is that in order to encourage work engagement, organizations should offer their employees sufficient job challenges, and job resources. An organizational climate should be provided that offers social support and efficient feedback system. Research indeed suggests that management can influence employees’ job demands and resources (Nielsen, Randall, Yarker & Brenner, 2008), and may indirectly influence work engagement and performance.

Since work engagement includes proactive behavior in order to craft the job, an organization should target to build an ecosystem which attracts and select employees
that exhibit high levels of proactive behavior. An organization may align itself to Attraction-Selection-Attrition Theory (Schneider, 1987) to develop a culture that supports and promotes an action-orientation within the workplace.

Various interventions should be introduced that stimulate employees to craft their optimal level of job characteristics. Daily or weekly workplace interventions targeted to specific job demands or job resources can be used as a concrete and effective way to facilitate job crafting. Such activity can function as a cost-less form of informal on-the-job training and individual job redesign. Another way to foster job crafting and innovativeness behavior is to empower employees. Leaders and supervisor play a significant role is this. They should build an “active learning” and open environment that will foster job crafting tendency and bring innovativeness.

The present study shows that work engagement level can be too strong to strike a work-family balance. In parallel to the results of current study Berg et al. (2003) showed that there are high-commitment work environments that aren’t beneficial for work-family balance and health. The issue of work family conflict among highly engaged and committed employees has become all the more important in fast changing, cost-sensitive and high pace working situations, where these aspects are normally de-prioritized but needed the most. Organizations tend to give more work to highly engaged and efficient employees. Such action helps in achieving organizational success in the short term, but may backfire in the long term. Organizations should reflect on the short term and long term benefits of higher level of work engagement. Daily or weekly workplace interventions targeted to avoid work-life conflict at the higher level of engagement should be practiced.
Although, organizations have no influence on the stable personality traits of their employees, however, to a great extent, they can influence which behavioral patterns are rewarded by the organization. Organizations should appreciate employees who try to strike a balance between their work and family, despite their high engagement with the work. Highest management level of the organization should highlight the importance of workplace health promotion and work-life-balance. It is important for the management to encourage employees to leave work beyond a certain point and fulfil other aspects of life in order to recharge and come back with same energy, enthusiasm and dedication level. Since work-life conflict has implications for employee attitudes, behaviors, wellbeing as well as organizational effectiveness (Eby et al., 2005), organizations should introduce interventions such as greater autonomy, flexible policies for work timings, prompt social support (supervisor support), family-friendly organizational culture, outdoor activities.

6.4 Limitations

Some of the limitations in this study come from the inherent conflict that exists between undertaking a study that is generalizable versus a study that is very specific (for example, employing IT professionals). Other limitations of the study are, first, the use of cross-sectional data does not allow us to make cause-and-effect inferences. Reversed causality is possible for the relationships between example job crafting and work engagement and innovativeness and work engagement. It is conceivable that job crafting is a consequence of being engaged with the job. However, there is a possibility that more work engagement could lead to displayed proactive behavior (Sonnenstag, 2003). However, the objective of the present study is not to establish the
causal relationships of work engagement with the other constructs, but to relate the construct to other constructs in the nomological network.

Most of the scales used in this study are adapted from the existing literature. Although the adapted scales exhibited good psychometric properties in the present study.

Another limitation of our study is that the majority of the participants possessed high level technological skills. This may limit the generalizability of our findings. For example, it is evident that individuals with higher education and skills are more likely to engage in job crafting (Ghitulescu, 2006; Lyons, 2008; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) because they generally hold strategic and critical positions at their work places. However, these findings are contradicted by recent studies (Berg et al., 2010). Future research should examine the effect of work engagement on high and low education levels (such as manufacturing and retail). The present study relies on self report measures which may be prone to various biases such as social desirability. However, the biases were minimized by assuring that the identity of the respondent will be remained anonymous and only aggregate data will be used for the data analysis process.

6.5 Future research

While there is some literature on work engagement, there remain many important, yet unanswered questions about the triggers, moderators, and outcomes of work engagement. What are the particular managerial behaviors or group dynamics or management practices which enable work engagement? Can work engagement be contagious, setting off a chain as others in the same network also display higher levels of work engagement? What are the personality traits that enable work engagement.
The impact of organizational culture on work engagement can be further studied. Work engagement is an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a single time event, but not many studies have studied how it changes or evolves over a period of time. Future longitudinal studies could explore different work engagement trajectories—looking for patterns in an employee’s attempt to engage highly with work and when it is most beneficial or costly. Field experiments and quasi-experiments will play a role in determining whether efforts to redesign the work environment produce their intended effects in organizational contexts. The effects of quantum of work experience on work engagement can also be studied. More theory and research is needed linking specific forms of engagement to particular individual and organizational outcomes, both positive and negative. Investigation can also be done on under what conditions certain forms of work engagement costly or likely to produce negative side effects for individuals and organizations. Impact of work engagement on social life, leisure, personal growth, family, health can be studied in more detail.

More longitudinal studies are needed to better understand potential negative aspects of work engagement. In the short term, work engagement looks like a win-win situation, but what happens when a person is highly engaged in work over a long period of time? How does the graph look over a period of time. What is the best age/circumstance when work engagement is at its most beneficiary. How to prevent a burnout? Work engagement has been largely received as a positive construct in literature, very few studies have focused on bad effects. The negative effects of work engagement need to be studied in different industries, as the nature of work may have a bearing on different kinds of conflicts arising out of work engagement. What are the circumstances or constructs that moderate the negative outcomes of work engagement?
engagement. Similarly, what are the other factors which moderate the relationship between work engagement and job crafting; and work engagement and innovativeness. What kind of roles and organizations are amenable to job crafting and innovativeness. How important is perceived supervisory support in an organizational context and employees personal growth. How the advent of the internet and mobile technologies have impacted work leisure conflict and work family conflict. What are the effects of social media participation on various constructs like WFC, JLC, innovativeness, openness to experience and work engagement.

6.6 Conclusion

The current research aims to explain the relation between work engagement and its outcomes. The research question of the current project is: What are the positive and negative impacts of engagement on employees? Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and conservation of resource theory (COR) the study investigates to what extent job characteristics (perceived job demands and resources) through work engagement (measured by various indicators of vigor, dedication and absorption) influence proactive and experimental behavior and conflicts (e.g. Job crafting, creativity, work family and leisure conflict).

This research provides the theoretical support for the hypothesized relationships between work engagement and outcome variables (job crafting, innovativeness, work family conflict and job leisure conflict) while also offering support from the empirical investigation. We also discussed how some constructs (perceived supervisory support, openness-to-experience) can affect the interplay between posited
relationships. The instrumental role of gender was also suggested while establishing hypothesis related work family conflict.

Through this dissertation work, we highlighted that the research on work engagement may broaden our view of the meaning and effects of engagement. Employees with high levels of energy and identification with their work have many resources available and seem to perform better. Our overview suggests that a focus on work engagement may not only benefit the individual, but also help organizations through increased performance and productivity. We hope that the research work that we have presented above will be a useful resource for researchers and stimulate future research on work engagement.