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The Mediating Role of Social Support on the Relationship between Employee Resilience and Employee Engagement

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Abstract: The present study addresses the mediating role of social support in the relationship between employee resilience and employee engagement. A cross-sectional design was adopted to collect data from a sample of 260 registered nurses working in public hospitals in Lagos, Nigeria. The findings suggest that employee resilience is significantly related to social support and employee engagement. However, the quantitative analysis could not establish a significant mediation role of social support in the relationship between employee resilience and employee engagement. Based on the results, this research provides empirical evidence for the importance of employee resilience to greater employee engagement.

Keywords: employee engagement; employee resilience; social support; Lagos; Nigeria

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1. Introduction

The continuously upsurging globalisation level makes today's organisations more complex and compete to acquire more market share and keep up with business growth. At such uncertain and unstable times, human resource management (HRM) has been pressured to developing effective strategies, tools, and approaches to recruit, retain, and build talented workforces in organisations for progress and survival [1]. As a result, construction of employee engagement has become well-known in human resource management to address this need and increase employee productivity. It is because engaged employees help organisations to remain competitive in ever-increasing globalisation and to achieve set organisational goals [2] In addition, they are productive, committed, innovative, satisfied, and generally contribute to organisation outcomes, which, by implication, positively affect a nation's economy [3]. Consequently, today's organisations need employees who are engaged and who demonstrate self-confidence, high-level energy, and genuine zeal and passion for their work. Thus, it is crucial for managers to support the development of employee engagement in the workplace. Numerous studies have analysed employee engagement and its outcomes. However, much theoretical and empirical research on employee engagement has mostly concentrated on the organisation factor, with less focus on individual factors [4,5]. To carefully understand and solve the problems facing employee engagement globally, an all-encompassing approach that regards both the organisational factors and the individual factors must be considered [1].

Previous research states that individual factors, such as employee resilience, can influence employee engagement. However, despite eminent literature on employee resilience in the management discourse, the field of HRM has not fully recognised that employee

resilience can be instilled and how to optimally utilise it in today's organisations [6,7]. Most current studies treat employee resilience as a trait and a coping mechanism [6,8]. In addition, most previous studies have theorised employee resilience as a resource that can be developed in reaction to hardship [6,9]. In fact, researchers have called for research to focus on employee resilience as a capacity that can ensure positive work outcomes through organisational enablers [10–15]. Indeed, resilience interventions are minimal, and limited research has been conducted on this issue in the health sector.

According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model [16], the level of resources such as social support employees get from an organisation is essential to build resilience. Previous studies proposed that an organisation's ability to develop and sustain employee resilience depends on managing resilience-enabling procedures and practices [17,18]. However, despite the significance of social support, studies have not paid attention to social support as an underlying mechanism through which employee resilience relates to positive work outcomes. Therefore, it would be intriguing to understand social support as a potential mechanism through which employee resilience relates to employee engagement. Thus, this research examines how employee resilience and employee engagement are related among nurses in public hospitals in Nigeria. In addition, to investigate the underlying mechanism of social support on employee resilience–employee engagement, we use the underpinning theory of the JD-R model to explore both the direct relationship and the underlying mechanism of social support.

This study contributes to the existing knowledge surrounding employee engagement. First, it adds to the existing knowledge of employee engagement by examining resilience as a developable capacity that can be promoted and stimulated in the workplace. Most prior studies on employee resilience have theorised employee resilience as a trait, a coping mechanism, and a stable resource developed and exhibited in response to adversity [8,19]. As such, this research proposes that employee resilience can be developed and enhanced by employing potential organisational enablers. The results of this study will provide empirical evidence for the argument proposed by previous studies that employee resilience is a capacity that can be developed among employees through organisational enablers and optimally utilised in today's organisations [19.8]. Second, this research proposes social support as an underlying mechanism under which employee resilience relates to employee engagement. In the context of employee resilience and employee engagement, studies have not paid full attention to using social support as a mediator. It is because prior studies have focused on other mediating variables, such as positive affectivity [20] and high-performance work systems [21]. Therefore, including social support as a mediator adds to the existing knowledge base.

2. Literature Review

The literature review was structured according to the objectives of the study and hypotheses development is discussed under the following sub-headings: theoretical framework and review of previous studies on the research constructs.

2.1. Job Demands-Resources Model

The JD-R model [16] became distinctly well-known amongst the research community in the employee engagement literature [22,23]. Numerous studies on engagement have used the model as an explanatory structure [24]. As indicated by the model, job characteristics have two distinct classifications: job demands and job resources. According to [25], job demands are those physical, social, psychological, or organisational parts of the job that involves continuous physical or psychological effort in performing tasks. Job demands include high work pressure, physical demands, role ambiguity, and shift work. Job resources, on the contrary, refers to the availability of those physical, social, or psychological resources (i.e., performance feedback, job control, and social support) that decrease job demands' effects and enhance employee growth and development. According to [26], the main evidence of the JD-R model is that both job demands and job resources affect

employee engagement through some procedures. Job resources play a motivational role that reduces the burnout level, thus encouraging an employee's positive approach, mindset, and attitude toward their job and, therefore, enhancing the engagement level [26]. This can be elucidated through the viewpoint of intrinsic or extrinsic motivational roles because they are instruments for accomplishing work goals.

Recently, the concept of personal resources was introduced into the JD-R model [16]. Specifically, personal resources refer to a positive self-assessment that is usually connected with resiliency that empowers individuals to impact their environment [16] successfully and effectively. Employees with this character (i.e., resilience, self-efficacy, optimism, and self-esteem) are predicted to be extra engaged as they impact their workplace [27]. As such, they can work without much of a stretch and adjust to change quickly. Personal resources are essential in helping people cope effectively with stress and stay in balance [28]. In addition, these resources allow individuals to tolerate and avoid excessive stressors and to improve their process of coping with stress [29,30]. Furthermore, personal resources have been discovered to be associated with social support and employee engagement [26], Employee engagement is influenced by the personal or interpersonal resources they receive from their organisation. The JD-R model has been used widely in investigating the influence of demands and job resources on several individual and organisational outcomes, such as employee engagement [24].

2.2. Employee Engagement

Over the past decade, employee engagement has become crucial to researchers and practitioners [31,32]. The practitioner and academic approaches to viewing the construct differ in both purpose and outcome [33]. The practitioners aim for desired outcomes such as employee retention, productivity and commitment. In addition, they focus more on group and macro levels to increase the function of the workgroups. However, the aim of the academics is precise; it has an unambiguous meaning, and the measurement of the construct is well established. The academics focus on the individual and the micro level to better understand the antecedent variables instigating its development and the correlated outcome variable [24,34].

Kahn [35] earlier defined employee engagement, and [36] reintroduced the construct of employee engagement by building on Kahn's findings; their works on the concept of engagement adopt an alternating yet connected approach. This paper applies [37] definition of engagement. [37] used a different method to test the computerisation of engagement found in [36]. They challenged the burnout/engagement perspective and introduced another conceptualisation of engagement. [37] stated that engagement is a mental and positive fulfilment characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Engagement is a more tenacious and affective-cognitive state than a momentary and specific state. Additionally, engagement does not focus on any individual, object, behaviour, or event. According to [37], vigour is characterised by the mental resilience of individuals and the high levels of energy put in while performing work. Such individuals are eager to work harder, even in times of difficulty. Dedication denotes active individual involvement in carrying out duties with enthusiasm, satisfaction, pride, and inspiration, while absorption can be described as the social state of individuals' deep involvement when carrying out a given task. As a result of the deep involvement in executing a given task, time passes quickly, and employees have no intention of being disengaged from their work role.

2.3. Employee Resilience

According to Kuntz et al. [19], the concept of employee resilience was developed to shift the focus of resilience research away from internal indicators of how well people cope with stress towards the context of how well people demonstrate resilience in their daily work lives [19]. Employee resilience been conceptualised as a dispositional variable in charge of psychological mechanisms that empower employees to recover from challenging situations, traumatic events, and adversities [6,38]. In other words, it reflects employees'

ability to react well and experience less harmful consequences when faced with pressure at work. Employee resilience is a protective factor in employees' responses to change and modification in the workplace, which in turn helps to cope and bounce back from adversity or setbacks that are often common in the workplace [39].

Recent studies on employee resilience have changed their perception from the dispositional approach to the scholar's ability approach. For example, [40,41] proposed that employee resilience is a productive construct in organisational research when considered as an individual's ability that can be built. Employees might be encouraged to cope with the obstacles they face through interactions between individuals and their work environment. This statement emphasises the significance of considering employee resilience in a work-related context and viewing it as an ability that can be established over time [9].

Studies have shown resilience as a requirement for survival in an unpredictable workplace [11,21]. Resilience among employees is significant for effective functioning in a "turbulent world" [42]. It has become essential for organisations to encourage specific means for stimulating employee resilience and employee engagement [21,43]. According to [39], resilient employees have a more prominent ability to recuperate from workplace challenges and are more receptive to fundamental organisational changes than non-resilient employees. In addition, [44] indicated that individuals with low resilience are more emotionally unstable and less flexible when faced with challenges. Reference [6] conclude that the significance of resilience cannot be underestimated as it is necessary for organisations' sustainability.

2.4. Social Support

According to the Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R), social support is recognised as a job resource that can positively influence employee engagement and help control work demands [31]. Furthermore, social support is described as the assistance rendered by other individuals with a possibility that it may have positive effects on physical well-being and health [45]. Some researchers have described social support as a basic individual's human and social needs for esteem, affection, approval, identity, sense of belonging, and security which are fulfilled through interaction and cooperation with others [46]. However, others have suggested that the benefits of social support arise because it facilitates coping and assists in responding to stress [47]. Additionally, social support triggers proactive behaviour skills and increases the propensity to take advantage of available resources [29]. Furthermore, social support can help leaders to influence subordinates' creativity, adapt to environmental changes, and encourage intrinsic motivation [48]. Furthermore, support from organizations can improve job security and communication among employees and their employers [49].

Employees working in a supportive and resourceful work environment are most likely to be effective in accomplishing the organisation's goal. This is because supportive relationships with others at work make the work environment more pleasant and rewarding [47]. Hence, the higher the support, the more openly employees can build trust and share vital information with their co-workers and the organisation, resulting in a positive organisational outcome. Social support is an essential variable in the effectiveness of an organisation and individual accomplishment; this, in turn, leads to employee engagement [50]. In addition, Coffman and Gonzalez-Molina [51] concluded in their study that social support is an essential antecedent of job satisfaction, job involvement, job stress, and engagement. Social support can also be examined as a mediator between two variables [52]. Hence, this research aimed at finding the mediating role of social support in the context of a specific autotelic personality, positive affectivity personality, proactive personality, and resilience on work outcomes such as employee engagement.

2.5. Research Model and Hypotheses Development

The hypotheses development is discussed under the following sub-headings. This research proposes a relationship between employee resilience and employee engagement. A relationship between employee resilience and social support. Also, social support

mediation between employee resilience and employee engagement. Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework.

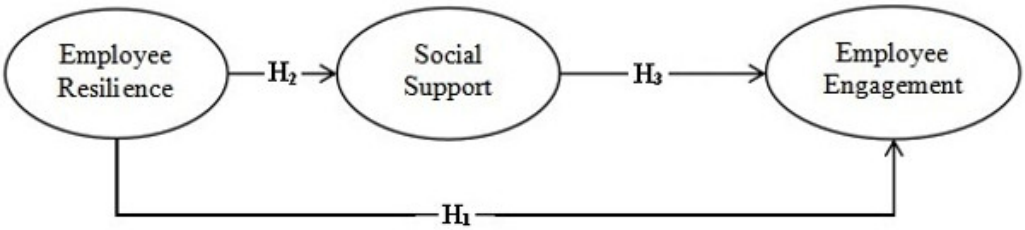


Figure 1. Research Conceptual framework.

Employee Resilience and Employee Engagement

This research proposes that employee resilience is related to employee engagement. According to the JD-R model [16], personal resources, such as employee resilience, trigger employees to be extra engaged as they impact their workplace. The JD-R model implies that resilient employees demonstrate confidence in their abilities and see their work environment as resourceful and encouraging, which boosts employee engagement [16]. According to Sweetman and Luthans [52], resilience is a motivational process that enables goal-directed behaviour among employees, which impacts employee engagement. That is, resilience will reduce the negative effect of job demands and help employees to adapt to adversities and change [53]. Furthermore, Luthans et al. [54] proposed that resiliency at the workplace enables employees to see setbacks and adversities as opportunities for learning, growth, and development. As such, employees will become creative and flexible toward the accomplishment of organisational and meaningful goals, which, in turn, predicts engagement at work [53].

Several studies on employee resilience show that a resilient individual can cope with tough challenges and has additional skills to overcome workplace challenges [18,20,55]. As such, they display high readiness to confront demanding situations in the workplace, which ultimately supports work engagement. In addition, resilient individuals have several positive attributes such as being enthusiastic and energetic [56], openness to new experiences and inquisitiveness [57], activeness, and self-assurance that have a high tendency to create meaningful relationships in the workplace [58] which, in turn, promote effective employee engagement [35,59].

Recently, empirical evidence has linked employee resilience to employee engagement. For example, [21], in investigating the role of employee resilience in predicting employee engagement among bankers in China, stated that resilient nurses endure challenges and display self-confidence in their abilities, which, in turn, leads to engagement at work. The study by [11] among IT sector workers in India stated that resilience creates positive attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, which can significantly enhance employee engagement. [12] stated that employees' ability to bounce back from a dire situation is related significantly to engagement. [10] stated that employee resilience may prevent individuals from becoming disengaged by enabling them to manage workplace expectations. In addition, the study by [60] among several industries in China stated that employee resilience empowers individuals to flourish through obstacles and setbacks and be highly engaged at work. Therefore, based on the empirical study and theory of JD-R, this study proposes that employee resilience contributes to employee engagement, leading to the following hypothesis:

H1: *Employee resilience is positively related to employee engagement.*

2.6. Employee Resilience and Social Support

According to the JD-R theory [16], social support is a vital resource that can assist resilient employees in gaining swift recovery from hardship and effectively managing stress. The availability and accessibility of job resources in an organisation motivate an employee's

psychological needs by enhancing progressive growth and development [31]. Furthermore, according to [18], the organisation always inculcates change, and when employees are adjusting to this change, most of the time, it leads to various stresses. Therefore, in times of implementing change, a supportive work environment, information sharing, and words of encouragement will foster resilience in employees. As such, employees will have a greater propensity to gain knowledge from their experiences, hence improving their ability to effectively respond to difficulties [18].

Some studies have shown that social support is significant in building employee resilience in organizations [18,31]. Social support creates room for building trust, information sharing, and friendship, which helps employees' capacity to bounce back from a setback [18,31]. In addition, [60] stated that individuals would be more resilient in the midst of stress through the availability of support from the organisation. A resilient individual will require resources such as social support to adapt to crises [61], cope with hardships, handle especially stressful work, and bounce back from setbacks and adversity [62]. Thus, building social support will help employees to bounce back from a setback [8,63].

Furthermore, studies argued that social support assists employees in developing a higher level of resilience. For example, the authors [64] study on 51 inner-city United States adolescent students proposed that increasing teacher support will improve the students' resilience and academic performance. This is because adolescent students will be resilient toward their academic performance when they obtain the necessary encouragement and feedback from their teacher. Similarly, [65] study on international students argued that for international students to bounce back from challenges and remain mentally and physically healthy they must have strong social support. Furthermore, [66] stated that resilient employees who perceive or receive social support are able to deal with the demands of the organisation more rapidly than those who perceive or receive less support. Therefore, in line with the JD-R model, this study proposed the following hypothesis:

H2: *Employee resilience is positively related to social support*.

2.7. Mediating Effect of Social Support

Research on social support as a mediator between employee resilience and employee engagement is scarce. Following the JD-R model, social support is a motivational pathway that relates employee resilience to predicted engagement at work. According to the JD-R model [16], social support fosters resilience among employees and helps them meet their goals due to its intrinsic and extrinsic motivational potential. In addition, the model implies that employee resilience can be promoted through the availability of social support which, in turn, leads to employee engagement. According to [67], job resources such as social support and personal resources such as resilience have been linked reciprocally to predict employee engagement. The relationship between these resources increases an employee's likelihood of being engaged [67].

Additionally, [68] state that social support is significant in helping to build employee resilience because it creates room for building trust, information sharing, and friendship, which in turn leads to engagement. For example, the employees' ability to bounce back from a setback depends on resources such as information sharing and trust building; this will help employees to be more engaged [18]. In addition, [18] argued that employee resilience is not merely a trait but can be developed through organisational enablers such as supportive supervision and a supportive work environment. Through these organisational enablers, a resilient employee will understand challenging situations and figure out the best approach to manage them, leading to employee engagement [11].

Malik and Garg [11] stated that organisations facilitate their employees to be more resilient by empowering leadership and building a learning-oriented culture, which, in turn, leads to positive work outcomes such as employee engagement. Furthermore, resilient employees will be more likely to learn from experiences and be open to information sharing, leading to a positive outcome such as employee engagement [67]. In line with this, this

study argues that social support will mediate employee resilience, subsequently leading to employee engagement. Thus, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H3: *Social support will mediate the relationship between employee resilience and employee engagement*.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Data Collection and Respondent Characteristics

Nurses at 26 registered public hospitals and 272 public healthcare centres in Lagos, Nigeria participated in the study. A self-administered questionnaire was given to 348 nurses with the senior officer's consent. Out of 348 distributed questionnaires, only 289 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding an 83.05 per cent response rate. During the initial data cleaning, 23 cases were removed from the survey because they had more than 10 per cent missing values out of 88 items across six latent variables. The number of cases left was 266 respondents. Some other cases with less than 10 per cent missing values were retained after replacing them with mean values [69]. After the initial data cleaning, data from the remaining 266 respondents were further explored for thorough engagement. From the results obtained, 5 cases were removed, further bringing the sample size to 261. Cook's distance estimates were used to plot a scatter graph to check for actual or potential outliers. One case was further removed because it exhibited a potential outlier tendency. After data exploration, only 260 cases were used in subsequent data analyses. According to [70], a sample size above 200 can be considered adequate to accomplish the desired level of statistical power with a given model. This is because it is considered that 200 is the minimum size for using SEM [70]. Thus, the sample size in this study exceeds the required sample size suggested by other studies. Figure 2 shows the scatter plot of Cook's distance.

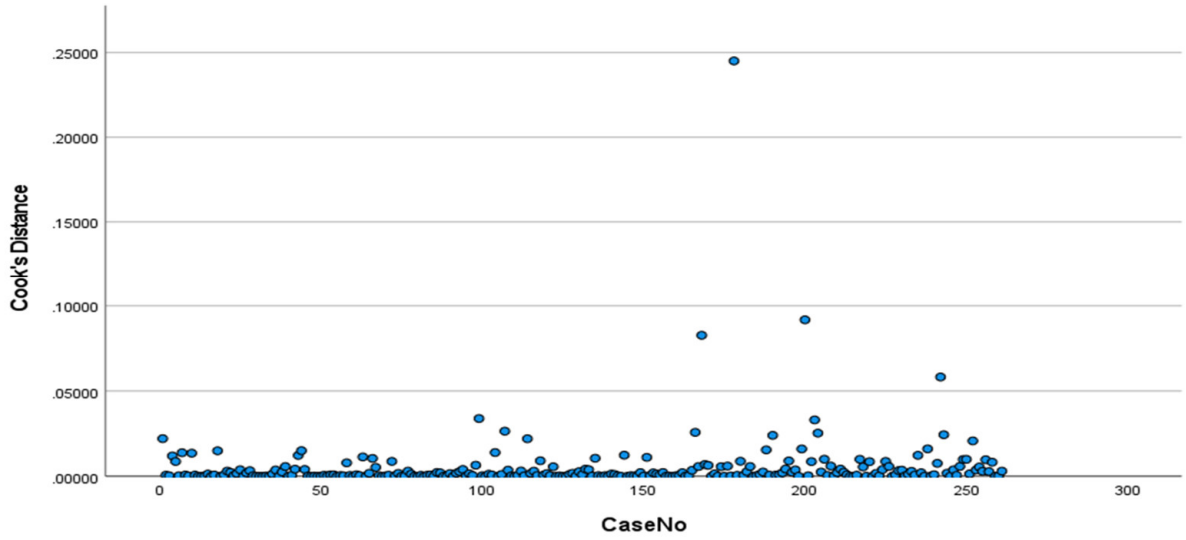


Figure 2. Scatter Plot of Cook's Distance.

3.2. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

A preliminary analysis shown that 81.5% of the nurses were females, while only a small proportion (n = 48, 18.5%) were males. The nurses' ages ranged from 18 to 44. This implies that for every male nurse, there are more than 4 female nurses. Additionally, most nurses had a bachelor's degree (55.8%). In terms of years of service, a majority of the nurses (n = 208, 80.0%) had less than 20 years of work experience, while only 20 per cent of the nurses (n = 52) had work experience of 20 years or above. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants.

Variable	Frequencies	Percentage	Cumulative %
Number of Respondents (n)	260	100%	
Gender			
Male	48	18.5%	18.5%
Female	212	81.5%	100.0%
Age bracket (years)			
18–24 years	34	13.1%	13.1%
25–34 years	82	31.5%	44.6%
35–44 years	77	29.6%	74.2%
45–54 years	48	18.5%	92.7%
55 years or above	19	7.3%	100.0%
Rank			
Nursing Officer II	69	26.5%	26.5%
Nursing Officer I	34	13.1%	39.6%
Senior Nursing Officer	41	15.8%	55.4%
Matron/Principal Nursing Officer	29	11.2%	66.6%
Senior Matron/Assistant Chief Nursing Officer	26	10.0%	76.6%
Chief Matron II/Chief Nursing Officer	37	14.2%	90.8%
Deputy Nursing Superintendent	24	9.2%	100.0%
Education (Highest education)			
College of Nursing/Midwifery	76	29.2%	29.2%
First Degree (BSc)	145	55.8%	85.0%
Masters' Degree (MSc)	30	11.5%	96.5%
PhD	9	3.5%	100.0%
Years of service			
<5 years	84	32.3%	32.3%
5–9 years	53	20.4%	52.7%
10–14 years	45	17.3%	70.0%
15–19 years	26	10.0%	80.0%
20–24 years	32	12.3%	92.3%
>24 years	20	7.7%	100.0%

3.3. Measures

Employee engagement was assessed using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)-17 items of [71]. Vigour, dedication, and absorption were the three key dimensions of employee engagement that were measured by the items. The respondents submitted their answers on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "Never" and 5 representing "Always." Employee engagement measured by the Cronbach's alpha was 0.71. The Employee Resilience Scale (EmpRes) developed by [18] was used to measure employee resilience. On a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to rate each of the nine things. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was 0.81. Lastly, four items from [72] were used to measure social support. The respondents gave their answers on a 5-point Likert scale. The social support scale's Cronbach's alpha was 0.70.

4. Data Analyses and Results

4.1. Measurement Evaluations: Reliability and Validity

We assessed the model to test the validity and reliability of the constructs. SEM was used to test the hypotheses. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis was applied to assess the convergence and discriminant validity of the scales with SPSS 27. The measurement model obtained estimates for relative chi-square = 1.357; CFI = 0.968; RMSEA = 0.037; PCLOSE = 0.681; and SRMR = 0.034, all of which indicate good model fitness [73]. As in the previous results, the measures showed strong reliability, with scores from 0.71 to 0.81. The KMO = 0.695 with $p < 0.001$ was considered good and significant. The three-factor model explains more than 68.1% of the variance. The reliability analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability analysis.

Construct	Composite Reliability
Employee engagement	0.71
Employee resilience	0.81
Social support	0.70

Furthermore, the discriminant validity among the three constructs was checked, as suggested by [74]. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct was greater than 0.5 indicating the discriminant validity of the constructs. Similarly, the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) estimates are all less than the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) suggesting the distinctiveness of all three constructs. Also, the tolerance = 0.929 and VIF = 1.076, of this research show that the multicollinearity assumption was met. The descriptive statistics and correlations of the study constructs are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, correlations, squared correlations and AVEs of study variables.

Variable	AVE	MSV	Mean	Std. Deviation	EE	S	R
EE	0.563	0.131	3.37	0.85	1		
S	0.553	0.052	3.47	0.73	0.181 **	1	
R	0.510	0.131	3.40	0.61	0.418 **	0.266 **	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

4.2. Structural Model: Hypotheses Testing

In order to assess our hypotheses, the requirement for validity, reliability, and multivariate assumptions was performed using AMOS 27 (IBM: New York, NY, USA). This paved the way for the conduct of data analysis via structural equation modelling. The regression weights of these paths as indicated were estimated and subjected to a test of significance at $\alpha = 0.05$. Table 4 shows the standardized direct and mediating estimates.

Table 4. Standardised direct and mediation effect estimates.

Regression Path	Standardized Estimate	Lower	Upper	*p*
R—>EE	0.348	0.172	0.499	0.01
R—>S	0.228	0.096	0.376	0.007
R—>S—>EE	0.02	−0.025	0.09	0.396

The effect of employee resilience on employee engagement, as hypothesized in H1, was significant ($\beta = 0.035$, $p < 0.01$). This means the hypothesis is supported. In addition, the relationship between employee resilience and social support, as hypothesized by H2, was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.007$). This means that hypothesis H2 is supported.

The mediating role of social support on the effect of employee resilience on employee engagement, as hypothesized in H3, was statistically not significant ($\beta = 0.02$, $p > 0.396$). This means that hypothesis H3 is not supported. Employee resilience cannot be strengthened or dampened as a result of the mediating effect of social support towards employee engagement. Thus, we found support for H1 and H2, but not H3.

5. Discussion

The findings of this research showed that employee resilience is significantly related to employee engagement. As such, the result aligns with the JD-R model [16], which specifies that resilient employees demonstrate confidence in their abilities and see their work environment as resourceful and encouraging, thus, ultimately boosting employee engagement. Additionally, this study aligns with previous studies (e.g., [10–12]) which revealed that employee resilience displays high readiness to confront demanding situations

in the workplace, ultimately supporting employee engagement. Furthermore, according to [12], employees' ability to bounce back from a dire situation is related significantly to engagement. In addition, [10] stated that employee resilience might prevent nurses from being disengaged by allowing them to better manage the demands of their jobs. Therefore, this research implies that resilience creates positive attitudes and behaviours in the workplace, which can significantly enhance employee engagement. Thus, this study result can be interpreted as suggesting that nurses in the public hospital in Lagos are likely to be more engaged because they tend to show creativity and flexibility toward accomplishing organisational and meaningful goals, which, in turn, predicts engagement at work.

This study indicated that employee resilience is significantly related to social support. This finding is consistent with the JD-R theory [16], which revealed that resilient employees would gain swift recovery from hardship and effectively manage job demands through social support. Additionally, this study is consistent with previous studies which revealed that employees' abilities to recover from stressful events could be enhanced by a supportive work environment, information sharing, and words of encouragement [66,75]. According to [31], employees will gain swift recovery from hardship and effectively manage crises through the availability of social support from the organisation. As such, employees will have a greater propensity to gain knowledge from their experiences, enhancing their capability to respond successfully to challenges [66,75]. Furthermore, this corresponds with the findings of [60], who concluded that individuals would be more resilient in the midst of stress through the availability of support from the organisation. Thus, a resilient individual will require resources such as social support to adapt to crises [61]. The result of his study implies that resilient nurses in the hospital in question would require social support to adapt to crises, cope with hardships and especially stressful work, and bounce back from setbacks and adversity. Thus, building social support will help employees to bounce back from a setback.

Regarding the mediating role, social support did not mediate the relationship between employee resilience and employee engagement. This finding is inconsistent with the JD-R theory [16] which revealed that resilient employees would gain swift recovery from hardship and effectively manage job demand through the availability of social support, which in turn will lead to engagement. The result of this study implies that resilient nurses in the hospital in question might not see or perceive social support as a desire to become more or less engaged. The inconsistency can be explained by the fact that resilience may act as a mediating variable between an independent variable and employee engagement [16,76].

5.1. Theoretical Implications

One of the theoretical implications of this study is that employee resilience is a personal quality and capacity that can be harnessed for employee engagement in the workplace. Prior studies on resilience have theorised employee resilience as a trait, coping mechanism, and stable resource developed and exhibited in response to adversity [8,19]. This finding is consistent with the notion that employees with a higher level of resilience are more engaged in the hospital. Furthermore, another notable contribution of this study is to add to the existing knowledge of employee resilience by examining the significant relationship between employee resilience and social support. This study implies that employees will be resilient and adapt to changes that continuously occur in the organisation through social support.

Although social support did not mediate the effect of employee resilience on employee engagement in this study, this study is among the few to answer how employee resilience can relate to positive work outcomes through a mediating variable. Prior works on employee resilience have mainly focused on the direct effect of employee resilience on work outcomes (e.g., [10–12]).

5.2. Practical Implications

Practically, this research proffers essential deep insight for personnel managers, supervisors, and counsellors for building concepts and patterns to improve employee engagement. The evolving labour market requires employees to adjust successfully to changing structures and policies to operate efficiently in stressful work situations, putting more pressure on them. According to [77], employees in the health sector carry out their tasks in a demanding environment where assigned duties are mentally challenging, leading to increased job stress and turnover rates. With competitive and alarmingly stressful work environments, public hospitals are confronted with a line of action to retain a labour force which is not just motivated to stretch beyond the official duties but also effectively conforms to changing environmental needs. Therefore, it might benefit public hospitals to foster employee resilience in the present-day economic climate because resilience might function as a pathway for building and promoting engaged employees, where workers seek opportunities to put their resources to confront new challenges and proffer new techniques to take charge of demanding situations at work.

Furthermore, this study will assist management in uncovering the most efficient method to build and encourage support among employees. The role of support in hospitals must be emphasised owing to the increase in group-based work structures for task execution. Therefore, hospitals must create a culture that can positively encourage good employee relationships. Due to the sustainable development goals of the United Nations, health practitioners must increase the ability of nurses to engage in environmentally sustainable initiatives by implementing helpful interventions. Health practitioners that set organizational goals and effectively provide a healthy work environment were shown to encourage nurses to participate more actively in environmental sustainability development. Additionally, health practitioners' discussions could help nurses to improve and share their knowledge of environmental sustainability initiatives and design a range of environmentally sustainable initiatives in their work role. More generally, nurses may be positively predisposed to be resilient and engaged if they receive helpful, precise, and timely information to do their job more sustainably. That is, both social and environmental sustainability can motivate employee resilience towards employee engagement.

5.3. Limitation of the Study

This study is not without limitations. First, due to the multifaceted and complex nature of employee engagement, a deeper understanding of the roles of employee resilience, social support, and employee engagement can be achieved using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Therefore, further studies are recommended to use a mixed methodology—such as qualitative and quantitative—on the same subject matter, which could provide more in-depth insights into the relationship between personality traits, resilience, and employee engagement. Second, this study concentrated only on nurses working in public hospitals. As argued by scholars, capturing multiple respondents would be better than having a single respondent. Therefore, results from this study may not be generalizable to other healthcare facilities and organizations. It is highly recommended to consider multiple respondents and private hospitals in future study, as more value will be added to the understanding of employee engagement.

5.4. Conclusions

Overall, this research contributes to existing knowledge of employee engagement by examining the mediating role of social support on the relationship between employee resilience and employee engagement among nurses in public hospitals in Nigeria. In this study, three hypotheses were developed, and out of these hypotheses, only two hypotheses were supported. The result shows that employee resilience was significantly related to employee engagement and social support. However, social support did not significantly mediate the direct effect of employee resilience on employee engagement. The result of this study shows that employee resilience is an important personal resource

that positively relates to how nurses engage at work and perceive social support provided by the hospital. Therefore, to increase employee engagement, the hospital administration should build resilience among employees to realise the hospital's goals and externally enforced sustainability initiatives and contribute to future sustainable environment.

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Informed Consent Statement: It is to be informed that the paper entitled "The Mediating Role of Social Support on the Relationship between Employee Resilience and Employee Engagement" identified the findings based on the survey questionnaire. The Ethics Committee of Graduate School of Business, National University of Malaysia (UKM), approved the protocol and the study's conduct in accordance with the Declaration.

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