



Hochschule für
Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin
Berlin School of Economics and Law

Bachelor's Thesis

in the study programme

International Business Management

FAMILY SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR BEHAVIOUR & WORK ENGAGEMENT

A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AMONG IT PERSONNEL AT A
LARGE GERMAN CORPORATION

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27 February 2017

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Word count
15,695

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations utilised in this thesis and long forms of these are listed below.

A	Absorption
COR	Conservation of Resources
CWFM	Creative Work-Family Management
D	Dedication
ES	Emotional Support
FSSB	Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour
FSSB-SF	Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour Short-Form
IS	Instrumental Support
JD-R	Job Demands-Resources
LMX	Leader-Member Exchange
M	Mean
MBI-GS	Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey
OLBI	Oldenburg Burnout Inventory
RM	Role Modelling Behaviours
SD	Standard Deviation
UWES	Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
V	Vigour
WE	Work Engagement

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1. INTRODUCTION

Due to past and ongoing workforce changes, tensions between work and family roles are constantly growing. As employees' perceptions of the compatibility of family and career are shifting towards greater reconcilableness and value is increasingly placed on experiencing fulfilment at the job, work engagement, which can be regarded as a work-related state of well-being (Bakker et al., 2014), is becoming more important. In order to accommodate these desires, many companies make use of a variety of formal policies, which offer concrete benefits to employees with dependents (Butts et al., 2013, p. 2), including, for instance, child care, telecommuting, and flex-time (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 7). However, these may not always be sufficient to counteract work-family conflict and create work engagement. Thus, informal support in the form of family supportive supervisor behaviour (FSSB) is gaining traction. As the link between FSSB and work engagement has been understudied, the aim of this thesis is to find out whether there is a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement, using a sample of IT personnel of a large German corporation.

Over the past decades, progressing globalisation and the associated migration and demographic changes have brought about extensive changes in the workforce (Straub, 2012). As the number of single parents and women in the workforce rises (Hammer et al., 2009) and work hours get longer while work intensity and pace accelerates, work-life flexibility increasingly gains importance (Kossek et al., 2011). In addition, employees have started to place more emphasis on achieving balance between work and life areas (Straub, 2012). Moreover, employees increasingly want to experience a sense of purpose and meaningfulness at work (Geldenhuis et al., 2014) and, hence, work engagement is becoming more relevant.

Work engagement entails employees experiencing fulfilment on the job as they are vigorous while being dedicated to and absorbed into their work (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). In order to foster work engagement, formal family-friendly policies can be implemented that are aimed at supporting the successful management of work and family roles. However, employees do not always make use of existing organisational policies, for instance due to fears of experiencing negative repercussions to their careers. Therefore, formal policies, albeit necessary, cannot act as the sole source of family support within the organisation. Instead, informal support is critical as well. This can either be in the form of

family supportive organisational climate or directly provided by the immediate supervisor (Allen, 2001). On the whole, supervisors are powerful change agents whose behaviour will ultimately have an impact on organisational climate and culture (Straub, 2012). As supervisors are instrumental in providing informal support and often act as guiding figures for acceptable behaviour within the company or department, FSSB increasingly gains value as a tool for reducing conflict between work and family roles (Hammer et al., 2013).

Often, if work and family demands are not counterbalanced, tension is created that leads to work-family conflict, and ultimately to negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction and lower performance at work (Bagger & Li, 2011). Since engaged workers not only identify more with their work role, but also exhibit more commitment to extra-role behaviours, work engagement leads to enhanced employee productivity and positively affects the organisational bottom line. Moreover, employees have increased intentions to stay with the firm, thus saving the company potential recruitment and training costs. Finally, an engaged workforce can also prove to be a source of competitive advantage (Matthews et al., 2014). This shows that it is crucial for organisations to reduce work-family conflict experienced by their employees to a minimum in order to foster work engagement.

Although an abundance of research has been carried out on the topic of work engagement, and some studies exist covering FSSB, to date, only very few studies (e.g. Matthews et al., 2014; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016) have investigated the link between the two. However, it is important to study this relationship since FSSB, as the link between formal and informal support practices, helps to reduce work-family conflict and fosters work engagement (Matthews et al., 2014). In practical terms, this means that FSSB training has the potential of raising supervisors' awareness about their employees' work-family needs and enables supervisors to behave in a more family supportive way, which ultimately helps to create work engagement. Hence, this thesis is relevant as it adds to the scarce body of literature on the topic of FSSB and work engagement.

In Germany, organisational family support is still mostly available in the form of formal policies. However, awareness about the importance of supervisory family support is growing. Already, employees who are encouraged by their supervisors to make use of existing family-friendly policies report that they experience less work-family conflict, less

fear of negative career consequences, and increased job satisfaction (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2016). Work-family research in Germany so far has mostly focused on work-family conflict and the implications of formal family-friendly policies, whilst no studies have examined informal support in the form of FSSB yet. By utilising data that was obtained from a German company, the present study contributes to the existing work-family research as it investigates the impact of FSSB on work engagement in a German sample. Furthermore, this thesis fills a gap in the literature by looking at the implications of gender and parental status on the link between FSSB and work engagement. Identifying potential differences in the preferred treatment of work-family issues allows for a more targeted training of supervisors in FSSB, which takes into account the respective preferences of their employees. In addition, the relationship will be investigated according to the FSSB and work engagement subdimensions, which has not been researched in its entirety before. Thereby, it will be possible to identify for which subdimensions the relationship is strongest, allowing to make suggestions about which of them may need to receive more attention in FSSB training programmes.

In order to examine the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, secondary analysis of quantitative data was utilised. Data was gathered by two researchers in the IT branch of a large German corporation in 2012, as part of a study on work-life balance (n=426). The aim of this thesis is to investigate the impact of gender and parental status on the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, assuming that, based on Matthews et al., 2014, positive perceptions of FSSB lead to increased work engagement. Resulting from societal expectations about gender-based role distribution, women continue to be primarily responsible for childcare and household and, thus, they experience much more interference between their careers and family responsibilities than men (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Consequently, women are more likely to benefit from FSSB and, hence, it was expected that they would exhibit a stronger relationship between FSSB and work engagement than men. In addition, parents are likely to experience high levels of work-family conflict as they have to manage childcare and household duties. As such, they require organisational family support (Thompson et al., 1999). Accordingly, it was hypothesised that FSSB would have more impact for parents, and that the link between FSSB and work engagement would be more pronounced in parents than in employees without children. In order to test these hypotheses, correlation coefficients for FSSB and work engagement were calculated for the respective samples.

One major limitation of this method is that it does not infer causality, but merely determines if a relationship exists between the variables. However, in the scope of this thesis, it is sufficient to identify if a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement exists as the main aim is to determine the implications of gender and parental status on this relationship.

The first section of this thesis entails an examination of the existing literature of relevant concepts. First, the concept of FSSB is defined and its subdimensions are presented. In addition, tools to measure FSSB are introduced. Second, work engagement is defined, along with an introduction of its subdimensions and an overview over the most common measures. Third, the theoretical background on which the two concepts are based follows, commencing with work-family conflict and enrichment. Subsequently, Conservation of Resources and Broaden-and-Build theory are introduced, acting as the underlying concepts for the relationship between FSSB and work engagement. Then, supervisor support and Leader-Member Exchange theory are detailed, highlighting the theoretical basis of FSSB, followed by an explanation of the job demands-resources model as the foundation for work engagement. Finally, the relationship between FSSB and work engagement is investigated, looking at the antecedents and consequences of FSSB and work engagement, respectively, and introducing the hypotheses that serve as the basis for the empirical part of this thesis.

The second section begins with an account of the methodology, elaborating on the data collection and analysis process. Thereafter, the data is analysed, followed by a presentation of the findings of the study at hand. Next, the findings are discussed, relating the results of the analysis to the theory. In the end, limitations of the study as well as practical implications and directions for future research are explained.

2. DEFINITION OF THE MAIN CONCEPTS

In order to be able to understand how FSSB and work engagement are related, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the two concepts first. Hence, this chapter will introduce FSSB, its subdimensions, and measures. In addition, the concept of work engagement will be defined, explaining its subdimensions and giving an account of the most important measures.

2.1 Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour

Formal family support within organisations occurs through the provision of formal family-friendly policies, while informal support is conveyed through the organisational culture and climate. As both formal and informal support practices affect supervisors' interpretation and, consequently, their realisation of organisational policies, supervisors exhibit family supportive behaviours (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 169). FSSB is defined as those behaviours "exhibited by supervisors that are supportive of employees' family roles" (Hammer et al., 2013, p. 286) and results in employees feeling emotionally supported by their supervisors (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 182). Family roles, in the context of this thesis, refer to non-work and personal roles of all employees, not just to those associated with traditional nuclear families. As such, FSSB acts as the critical link between formal policies, organisational support, and employee outcomes such as work-family conflict and stress (Hammer et al., 2007, pp. 165–166).

FSSB is a multidimensional construct that consists of four hierarchically arranged subdimensions, namely emotional support, role modelling behaviours, instrumental support, and creative work-family management (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 841). *Emotional support* includes the employees' perception that they and their feelings are being regarded, while they are also comfortable asking for support when needed. At the same time, supervisors are aware of and open towards employees' family commitments, treating issues respectfully, sympathetically, and empathically (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 841). In concrete terms, this means that supervisors listen to and care about their employees' work-family concerns (Hammer et al., 2011, pp. 136–137).

Role modelling behaviours signify the strategies and behaviours supervisors utilise in order to give employees an idea about how they might cope with or limit work-family interference successfully. According to social learning theory, humans primarily learn by

observing others and, thus, supervisors need to corroborate corporate culture by acting in a family supportive way (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 842). This might be achieved, for instance, by not responding to e-mails after working hours or on weekends, and by occasionally finishing work early in order to tend to family commitments (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 189).

Instrumental support refers to supervisors reacting to the current work and family needs of a particular employee, e.g. by scheduling their work day in a manner that prevents work-family conflict or by interpreting existing policies on an individual level (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 843). This means changes can be made that affect the time, place, and manner of doing work in order to allow employees to tend to their responsibilities at work and at home (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 188).

Finally, *creative work-family management* involves innovative strategies utilised by supervisors proactively to restructure work in such a way that employees can be effective in managing both work and family demands. In order to maximise employee effectiveness, the work design has to consider company as well as employee needs (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 843). It involves becoming active at the organisational level, allocating the time and means to complete work most efficiently. Ultimately, this is aimed at reducing work-family conflict experienced by employees while improving outcomes at the company level (Straub, 2012, p. 16). This dual agenda approach to organisational change aims to redesign work so that work-family demands can be managed in a way that creates a win-win situation for both parties (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 188).

Altogether, a few concrete examples of FSSB include removing negative career repercussions of time devoted to family responsibilities, as well as raising awareness about formal family supportive policies in place and encouraging employees to make use of them. In addition, supervisors may address issues concerning work-life balance in internal meetings. Further, instead of using physical attendance as an indicator for employee performance, supervisors can utilise employee output in order to evaluate their subordinates. Finally, managers engaging in FSSB refrain from including regular overtime or other unworkable expectations as a requirement for promotion (Straub, 2012, p. 16).

In order to measure FSSB, Hammer et al. (2009) created a 14-item measure which reflects the four-factor structure of the FSSB concept. As previous measures mainly focused on emotional support and an overall lack of measures for supervisory support

behaviours was identified, it was necessary to create a tool for supervisor assessment which would not be contaminated by organisational work-family culture or climate. Utilising this tool allows for reducing ambiguity as supervisors can clearly establish which behaviours are perceived as family supportive. This allows for a more effective implementation of policies as well as the opportunity to train managers in FSSB (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 853). In 2013, a 4-item version of the FSSB measure, the FSSB-SF, was developed and found a significant relationship between FSSB and work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions, replicating the results of the full FSSB measure. In addition, the FSSB-SF measured control over work hours, obligation to work when sick, perceived stress, and family time adequacy. As this tool is much more condensed than the original, it is more likely to be included in future studies and to actually be answered completely. Moreover, it serves as a valuable assessment tool since supervisors oftentimes rate themselves more positively than their subordinates do. This demonstrates a potential starting point for FSSB training, which ultimately impacts employee performance and well-being outcomes (Hammer et al., 2013, p. 294).

2.2 Work Engagement

With the emergence of Positive Psychology, a branch of psychology that concentrates on well-being and strength rather than on human shortcomings and negative outcomes, a shift from burnout to work engagement has occurred (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, p. 11). Work engagement is defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). *Vigour* refers to employees being energetic and mentally resilient when working, while they are also willing to invest effort into their work and stay persistent when they face difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). *Dedication* indicates “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74), while *absorption* signifies that employees fully concentrate on their work and become so engrossed that time passes quickly and it is difficult for them to detach themselves from their task (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 75).

Rather than only a short-term peak, engaged employees experience a lasting, profound affective-cognitive state of mind (Schaufeli et al., 2002, pp. 74–75). They possess high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about and immersed in their work. Work is seen

as fun, and at the end of the day, being tired is a pleasant feeling because employees feel accomplished. Engaged workers also create their own positive feedback and experience a spillover of enthusiasm and energy to areas outside of work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, pp. 209–210). This includes, for instance, life satisfaction and community involvement since engaged employees possess resources that they can apply outside of work. This spillover highlights the permeability of work and non-work domains (Eldor et al., 2016).

Often, the term ‘work engagement’ is used interchangeably with ‘employee engagement’, a concept coined by Gallup in the 1990s. However, employee engagement refers to one’s relationship with the organisation, whereas work engagement more specifically alludes to the relationship with one’s work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, p. 10). Although conceptualisations of work engagement in business are rather vague, definitions by consulting firms commonly consider organisational commitment as well as extra-role behaviour to be part of work engagement. In academia, scholars have been concerned with the topic since the 1990s as well. Some have viewed work engagement as the direct opposite of burnout; a state of mind which is characterised by exhaustion and cynicism towards work as well as reduced professional efficacy. Yet, others think of it as a distinct concept that is negatively related to burnout. As such, vigour and exhaustion are considered opposite poles on a continuum, while dedication and cynicism constitute another continuum. Absorption and reduced efficacy, however, are not opposites, but rather distinct concepts (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, p. 12).

There are several tools to measure work engagement. Initially, the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey (MBI-GS; Maslach et al., 1996) was utilised to assess work engagement as the direct opposite of burnout. Accordingly, engaged employees would be identified by indicating opposite scores on the burnout scale. Whereas burnout would be characterised by high scores on exhaustion and cynicism and low scores on efficacy, the contrary would be true for work engagement. The problem with this tool, however, is that if burnout and work engagement are regarded to lie on the same continuum, it is impossible to study the relationship between the two concepts (Schaufeli et al., 2002, pp. 73–74). Similarly, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti & Bakker, 2008) was originally introduced to measure burnout and can be utilised to assess work engagement. In contrast to the MBI-GS, the OLBI only considers two dimensions; one ranging from exhaustion to vigour and the other ranging from cynicism to dedication. This

two-factor structure was confirmed in several studies (e.g. Demerouti et al., 2001a; Demerouti et al., 2002; Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005).

As these two measures do not allow the researcher to assess burnout and work engagement simultaneously, Schaufeli et al. (2002) developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which is the most widely-used tool for evaluating work engagement nowadays. This multidimensional measure is available as a 17-item as well as a shortened 9-item scale. For practical purposes, a composite score can be used to indicate work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The structure of the UWES was found to be invariant across nations, occupations, and time. Consistent with the notion that work engagement is a persistent state, UWES scores, at least for the shortened version, were proven to be relatively stable for time periods up to three years (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, pp. 16–19).

This chapter introduced FSSB as a type of informal family support provided by supervisors, which incorporates emotional and instrumental support as well as role modelling behaviours and creative work-family management. In addition, work engagement was defined as a form of work-related well-being that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Further, tools for measuring FSSB and work engagement were presented. Thus, by elucidating the two key concepts of this thesis, this chapter served as a foundation for understanding the link between FSSB and work engagement. Next, the underlying theory of this relationship will be introduced.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

After having explained the two concepts that are at the core of this thesis, introducing their subdimensions and their most important measures, it is now essential to examine other key theories that aid the understanding of the link between FSSB and work engagement. This chapter begins with an account of work-family conflict and enrichment, which are two major factors related to individuals' work-family roles and, therefore, act as important mediators between FSSB and job attitudes, such as work engagement (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2012). Thereafter, Conservation of Resources and the Broaden-and-Build theory will be illustrated, which serve as the theoretical basis for explaining how FSSB and work engagement are connected. After having introduced the

most important terminology for understanding the FSSB-work engagement connection, the theoretical background for FSSB in supervisor support and Leader-Member Exchange theory will be expanded upon. Finally, the Job Demands-Resources model will be introduced to further explain work engagement.

3.1 Work-Family Conflict & Enrichment

When looking at the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, work-family conflict and enrichment are important factors to consider as they mediate between the two (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012). Work-family conflict and enrichment are hereby understood to be bidirectional, which means conflict and enrichment occur in the work-to-family direction as well as in the family-to-work direction.

Work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). In other words, resources, such as time and energy, that are needed for the successful fulfilment of one role are drained by the demands of the other role (Lapierre & Allen, 2006, p. 170). This means that the more time and energy is spent on meeting family demands, the less of these resources can be utilised to satisfy work demands, and vice versa.

Work-family conflict is based on three different sources: *Time-based* conflict implies that spending time on activities of one role means that this time cannot be spent on the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77), implying that one role consumes the bulk of time and, thus, impedes overall schedule flexibility (Lapierre & Allen, 2006, p. 170). *Strain-based* conflict means that strain in one role influences individuals’ performance in the other role, i.e. compliance with role demands is impeded. Strain symptoms include, among others, anxiety, tension, and depression (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 80). These symptoms occur as stressors lead to a depletion of physical and mental energy (Lapierre & Allen, 2006, p. 170). Finally, *behaviour-based* conflict refers to the individual’s inability to adjust their behaviour to meet different role expectations. For instance, individuals are expected to be self-reliant and pragmatic at work, while at home, family members value warm and nurturing behaviour. This discrepancy between the different role expectations may lead to work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, pp. 81–82). Moreover, work-family conflict is intensified when work or family roles are important to the person’s

identity and/or when negative repercussions for not complying with role demands can be expected (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).

In their 2005 meta-analysis, Eby and colleagues identified several predictors of work-family conflict. Undesirable working conditions, such as unpredictable work routines, long work hours, and working weekends, but also high intrinsic motivation as well as high organisational commitment constitute work domain factors that promote the emergence of work-family conflict. On the other hand, worries about children and childcare as well as high levels of familial stress, for instance due to disagreements between spouses, act as family domain antecedents of work-family conflict. As a consequence, work-family conflict makes employees more prone to experiencing negative health, work, and family outcomes. These include depression, physical health complaints, higher turnover intentions, and lower life, job, and family satisfaction. Yet, the negative impact of work-family conflict can be mitigated through a supportive organisational culture, supervisor support, and family support (Eby et al., 2005, pp. 144–145).

This shows that FSSB, as a means of supervisory family support, is an important factor that mitigates the emergence of work-family conflict. One way in which FSSB lessens work-family conflict is by increasing the uptake of formal family-friendly policies (Breugh & Frye, 2008, p. 345). Use of family-friendly policies, hours worked per week, childcare responsibilities, and supervisor support were found to predict bidirectional work-family conflict, which ultimately affects job satisfaction (Frye & Breugh, 2004, p. 197). According to another recent meta-analysis, employees who make use of family-friendly benefits experience less work-family conflict and, thus, have more positive job attitudes (Butts et al., 2013, p. 3). As work engagement can be considered as a positive job attitude, FSSB fosters work engagement by increasing the adoption of formal policies and lowering work-family conflict. However, in a recent meta-analysis, Halbesleben (2010) discovered that bidirectional work-family conflict increases as work engagement goes up. This development may be due to individuals being too engrossed in their work. Although the reason for this relationship has not yet been determined, the existence of this connection indicates that FSSB may be able to counteract the emergence of work-family conflict resulting from employees being too immersed in their work, as FSSB helps employees to manage their work and family demands better.

Conversely, individuals can also benefit from spillover between work and family roles. Consistent with the trend towards Positive Psychology, the concept of work-family enrichment gains importance, whereby the focus lies on health rather than illness. It is defined as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73). Resource gains in one role enhance performance and affect in the other, and the availability of resources in one role influences the extent to which this role enriches the other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 82).

Two types of enrichment can be distinguished: *Instrumental* work-family enrichment signifies that resources, i.e. skills and experiences, are transferred from one role to the other and, thus, results in enhanced performance. *Affective* work-family enrichment, on the other hand, implies that resources gained in one role increase positive affect, that is, moods and emotions, for that role. This also facilitates functioning in the other role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 82). As a result of the role accumulation associated with work-family enrichment, individuals experience a greater well-being. Participation in multiple roles can act as a stress buffer for either of the roles, and positive experiences in one role can be transferred to create positive outcomes for the other role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73).

The individual's identity as well as informal support in the form of emotional support at work or at home lead to work-family enrichment, which, in turn, drives organisational commitment and reduces turnover intentions (Wayne et al., 2006, p. 445). In addition, work-family enrichment serves as a predictor for job performance. FSSB was found to promote work-family enrichment as it helps employees manage their work-family roles. As a result, employee perceptions of FSSB predict supervisor ratings of employee performance over time (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2012, p. 28). This implies that positive perceptions of FSSB will lead employees to put more effort into their work and, hence, increase their job performance.

The main difference to work-family conflict, which is driven by role demands, is that work-family enrichment is generated through personal experiences in the respective roles (Siu et al., 2010, p. 478). All in all, both work-family conflict and work-family enrichment lead to individual level, family level, and organisational level outcomes (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 168).

3.2 Conservation of Resources

In order to better understand how FSSB affects work engagement by mitigating work-family conflict, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory can be utilised. COR is a conceptual model of stress that states that perceived and actual loss of resources creates stress, as resources are regarded as having instrumental and symbolic value (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 513). Stress is defined as “a reaction to the environment in which there is (a) the threat of a net loss of resources, (b) the net loss of resources, or (c) a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516), while resources are “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). This implies that individuals try to minimise the resource net loss when they are experiencing stress, whereas they try to develop a resource surplus to be prepared for potential future loss if they are not currently experiencing stress. Resources can be enriched and conserved for the future by investing existing resources, either taken from one’s own resource reservoir or from the environment. These resources can either be physical objects that also hold some symbolic value, conditions, such as marriage, tenure or seniority, personal characteristics, such as skills and traits, or energies, such as time, money or knowledge (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 517).

Individuals who maintain high levels of resources, act early, and select circumstances that are appropriate for their resources are capable of planning for the future, invest their resources accordingly, and can thus minimise risks and maximise resources; following a proactive coping style. Individuals, however, who lack resources often keep emergency contingencies and have a more reactive coping style (Hobfoll, 2001, pp. 351–353). Since these individuals do not have the necessary resources to counteract loss, they are more vulnerable to further losses, which promotes the emergence of loss spirals (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 519). Similarly, if individuals lack resources at one point in time, they are more likely to experience lack of resources later in life as well (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 350). On the other hand, individuals can also experience gain spirals as they want to obtain or retain things they value (Salanova et al., 2010, p. 120). If the amounts of gains and losses are equal, losses have a greater impact on personal and work-related outcomes. Resource gain becomes more important if the individual anticipates or experiences loss, and negative experiences, i.e. resource loss, influence well-being more strongly than positive experiences, i.e. resource gains (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 345).

Stress at work is created if employees feel like their efforts are not balanced with rewards and if resources are threatened through job insecurity or role ambiguity, or lost due to retirement or being laid off. Hence, resources are invested in order to cope with stress, avoid negative outcomes, or to gain additional resources. A wealth of resources implies that employees are less vulnerable to stress and more prone to further resource gains (i.e. gain spirals), while a lack of resources suggests that employees are more vulnerable to stress and more prone to further resource loss (i.e. loss spirals) (Salanova et al., 2010, p. 120). If resources are distributed unevenly between work and family roles, these roles start to interfere and, hence, work-family conflict ensues. The more resources employees have at their disposal, the less work-family conflict ensues. If one role is suffering more from conflict, less resources are available for the other role (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999, p. 353). This, in turn, leads to job and family dissatisfaction as well as reduced physical health. In order to try and minimise resource loss, employees will search for alternative employers and will aim to switch jobs (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999, p. 365).

FSSB, therefore, assumes a buffering function: Being a resource, it improves the employees' ability to cope with stress and counteracts the development of work-family conflict. As a result, employees experience higher work engagement. Hence, COR is crucial for explaining the FSSB-work engagement relationship as it allows for understanding the mechanisms of resource gains and losses.

3.3 Broaden-and-Build Theory

Another approach to understanding how people cope with stress is the Broaden-and-Build theory of positive emotions. Positive emotions have the ability to broaden individuals' thought-action repertoires, implying that more thoughts and actions come to mind when experiencing positive emotions. Thereby, more resources are created, which are then available in times of stress. Positive emotions can initiate upward spirals because a broadened mind-set leads to resilience, which ultimately fosters well-being (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 218). The five major positive emotions – interest, joy, contentment, love, and pride – all have different implications for the creation of resources. For instance, joy fosters the “urge to play, push the limits, and be creative” while interest evokes the “urge to explore, take in new information and experiences, and expand the self in the

process" (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 220). The resources built through positive emotions are typically durable and longer-lasting than the emotional states they were created by. Hence, they act as reserves that can be used to counteract threats in the future (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 220).

In addition, positive emotions can not only be used to cope with negative emotions, but they can also mitigate the effects of negative emotions. Negative emotions, such as fear and anger, are thought to narrow the thought-action repertoire as, historically, in life-threatening situations it was necessary to take action quickly and decisively in order to ensure survival. As positive emotions broaden the momentary thought-action repertoire, individuals can recover more quickly from negative emotions, which consequently have a lesser impact on their mind and body. It is also possible for the effects of positive emotions to accumulate. Thus, individuals are better able to cope with stress and thereby improve their resilience and well-being, which ultimately creates more positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001). This upward spiral allows people not only to feel good now, but also in the future (Salanova et al., 2010, p. 125). Work engagement fulfils three roles in Broaden-and-Build theory: It serves as an initiator as well as an outcome of positive emotions, and can also be understood as a positive emotion itself (Salanova et al., 2010, pp. 125–126). Since positive emotions lead to the creation of resources, work engagement helps to improve resilience and well-being in the long run, thus perpetuating an upward spiral.

3.4 Supervisor Support

Another means of explaining the impact of FSSB on work engagement through diminishing work-family conflict is supervisor support, a work-related form of social support. Social support enables individuals to feel cared for and appreciated while it also allows them to receive help. As such, it is a crucial job resource. Workplace social support may stem from multiple sources, such as supervisors or colleagues, and can be content-general or content-specific. General supervisor support is a *content-general* type of workplace social support, whereby supervisors care about employees' overall well-being at work. *Content-specific* support, however, includes supervisory family support, which allows employees to manage work and family responsibilities simultaneously (Kossek et al., 2011, pp. 291–292). Thus, a family supportive supervisor is "one who empathises with

the employee's desire to seek balance between work and family responsibilities" (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 7). This support may be given in the form of flexible scheduling, tolerating short personal phone calls, or trading shifts for monitoring new elder-care arrangements (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 7). In addition, supervisor support was found to lead to higher job satisfaction, lower turnover intentions, and higher work-family enrichment. As such, it is a critical job resource (Hammer et al., 2009, p. 839).

If workplace social support is insufficient, the work role is more likely to interfere with the family role and, hence, work-family conflict ensues (Kossek et al., 2011, p. 291). Supervisor support, general as well as work-family specific, was found to reduce work-family conflict and negative health outcomes, such as depression, physical complaints, and blood cholesterol levels. This was due to improved employee perceptions of control over time and place of work (Kossek et al., 2011, pp. 302–303; Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 6). However, supervisory family support was more strongly related to work-family conflict than general forms of support, which suggests that supervisors should be trained in family supportive behaviours in order to reduce employees' work-family conflict (Kossek et al., 2011, p. 290). This indicates that FSSB is a valuable tool for counteracting work-family conflict and fostering work engagement.

This finding was expanded by Odle-Dusseau et al. (2012), who suggest that family-specific supervisor support promotes work-family enrichment and, subsequently, positive employee outcomes. However, they point out that a family supportive organisational culture is critical as well (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012, p. 30). This allows employees to benefit from formal family-friendly policies. While supervisors are the most powerful to encourage employees to utilise formal policies (Grover & Crooker, 1995, p. 285), an unsupportive organisational culture negates the impact of available policies and, thus, prevents their positive impact on work-family conflict and employee well-being (Hammer et al., 2007, p. 173).

3.5 Leader-Member Exchange

When trying to understand how FSSB mitigates work-family conflict, social exchange theory can be utilised. At work, if one party shows goodwill gestures to another, social exchange relationships may develop, which in turn lead to positive outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction (Bagger & Li, 2011, p. 1124). Employees may form social

exchange relationships with supervisors, co-workers, organisations, customers, and suppliers (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 883). The relationship to one's supervisor can be regarded as a form of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) relationship. If this relationship is based on mutual trust and commitment, employees and supervisors will do the other one a favour. However, they will also build expectations of the other party, aiming to achieve a balance in their efforts over time. A high-quality relationship will produce rewards, if expectations are satisfied. Whereas in a low-quality relationship, which is based on formality rather than trust and liking, both parties will only fulfil the formal requirements laid out in their respective contracts (Bagger & Li, 2011, pp. 1126–1127).

If employees perceive the company to be family supportive, they feel indebted to the organisation and, hence, will respond by exhibiting positive job attitudes (Butts et al., 2013, p. 3). When employees meet certain job demands, supervisors reward them with additional resources. However, investments made by supervisors are paired with high expectations about employee performance. Thus, a high-quality LMX relationship increases the availability of resources and, in turn, leads to enhanced work engagement and job performance (Breevaart et al., 2015, p. 754). Furthermore, LMX is significantly linked to job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Bagger & Li, 2011, p. 1128) since the employees' organisational attachment increases when they feel valued (Casper & Buffardi, 2004, p. 394).

Although some uncertainty remains about the processes which guide social exchange, a variety of crucial factors has been established. In an organisational setting, economic and socioemotional resources are critical, including financial resources as well as social and esteem-based resources (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 881). Social exchange is thought to be cyclical, which implies that the exchanged resources can originate from past transactions. Moreover, the relationship is altered as a result of the exchange but the quality of the relationship also impacts future exchanges (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 889). Social exchange relationships are conceptualised to be either a series of interdependent exchanges or interpersonal attachment *resulting from* a series of interdependent exchanges (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 886). Interdependent exchanges are a type of reciprocity that occurs in exchange relationships as a consequence of assuming that outcomes are based on combined efforts, i.e. something has to be given back in return for another's action (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, pp. 876–877).

LMX quality increases if no or only few formal policies are in place, rendering the supervisor the only source of family support (Bagger & Li, 2011, p. 1134). In a high-quality LMX relationship, employees will experience elevated levels of intrinsic motivation, increasing their work engagement. Conversely, supervisors will give their followers more rewards, fostering even more positive attitudes toward work, including optimism and self-efficacy, which also act as predictors of work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2015, p. 756). Moreover, this motivational process, which is initiated by the LMX relationship, leads to the creation of job resources and work engagement, and ultimately impacts job performance (Breevaart et al., 2015, p. 763). Thus, FSSB may be a resource given to employees in exchange for work engagement or may serve to foster work engagement through counteracting work-family conflict.

3.6 Job Demands-Resources Model

In order to understand how work engagement develops, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model can be utilised. According to this model, working conditions can be categorised either as job demands or as job resources. While the former is primarily related to exhaustion, the latter is more strongly linked to engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001b, p. 499). Job demands are “those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312), while job resources are those aspects of the job that are “functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs [and/or] stimulate personal growth, learning, and development” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312). Job demands may turn into stressors if there is insufficient recovery time. Job resources support this recovery process and, additionally, have motivational potential. This implication of job resources is also in line with COR (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, pp. 312–313).

Two processes act as the basis of JD-R: The *health impairment process* on the one hand, whereby poorly designed jobs and chronic job demands lead to resource exhaustion and, thus, to depletion of energy and health problems. On the other hand, resources have motivational potential, which fulfils an intrinsic as well as an extrinsic motivational role, thereby initiating a *motivational process*. Job resources, hence, not only help to fulfil basic

human needs, but also increase one's willingness to be committed to the work task. As a result, job resources counteract cynicism while fostering high work engagement and excellent performance. In addition, job resources act as a buffer between job demands and strain, with social support being the most well-known buffering variable (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, pp. 313–314). Bakker et al. (2007) determined that this buffering function of job resources serves to increase work engagement and becomes more salient when job demands are high. Resources that were found to be especially important are supervisor support and organisational climate (Bakker et al., 2007, p. 274). Hence, FSSB as a form of content-specific supervisor support mitigates strain and, thus, fosters work engagement.

In addition, personal resources, defined as “positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact upon their environment successfully” (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 213), predict work engagement as well. These encourage positive self-evaluations, and thus lead to high self-regard and goal self-concordance. Due to that, optimistic, self-efficacious, resilient employees are intrinsically motivated and achieve high performance and satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 213).

This chapter has detailed further concepts that are essential for explaining the link between FSSB and work engagement. Work-family conflict and enrichment are important factors to consider in this relationship, as they have an impact on work engagement, hindering or supporting its emergence, while FSSB acts as a mediator whose existence affects work engagement positively. COR and Broaden-and-Build theory are crucial as they explain the importance of FSSB as a resource. Additionally, these theories illustrate the implications of having resources available in times of stress, and how that influences work engagement. Further, supervisor support and LMX theory act as the foundation for comprehending how FSSB originates from the employee-supervisor relationship. Finally, the emergence of work engagement was explained with the help of the JD-R model. Moving on, this theoretical background will be utilised to expound the FSSB-work engagement link.

4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FSSB & WORK ENGAGEMENT

The previous chapter reviewed the theory that provides crucial information for the discussion that follows later on and acts as the basis for understanding the following account of how FSSB and work engagement are connected. Before proceeding to examine this relationship, however, it is important to explore antecedents and consequences of the two concepts separately. Hence, this chapter will start by giving an account of the causes and effects of FSSB, followed by a summary of the antecedents and consequences of work engagement. Next, the relationship between the two concepts will be scrutinised, whereupon the hypotheses for the empirical part of this thesis will be elaborated.

4.1 Antecedents & Consequences of FSSB

Based on the review of the most influential literature on FSSB, Straub (2012) established a multilevel conceptual framework which includes antecedents and consequences of FSSB. Looking at individual-level as well as contextual-level aspects, Straub identified important factors that impact the managers' likelihood to engage in FSSB as well as critical employee-level and team-level outcomes. According to this model, managers feel responsible to exhibit FSSB because of certain individual-level factors, such as work-family interference, life course stage, social identification, and gender roles. This implies that if supervisors identify and empathise with their employees' work-family demands, they are more likely to adopt FSSB practices. Transformational leadership skills and level of management also have an impact on the felt responsibility. Furthermore, certain factors, such as organisational culture, top management openness toward family-friendliness, reward systems, and access to work-family infrastructure, are beyond the managers' influence. Instead, these factors depend on context and impact supervisors' psychological empowerment and, thus, FSSB. Another factor that affects the adoption of FSSB is the quality of the LMX relationship. Outcomes of FSSB on the employee level are well-being, job and career satisfaction, job performance, organisational commitment, turnover intentions, and work engagement. If FSSB is perceived to be equally allocated among the team members, team level outcomes, such as team performance and team

cohesion, are affected positively as well (Straub, 2012, p. 15). The model below illustrates these connections.

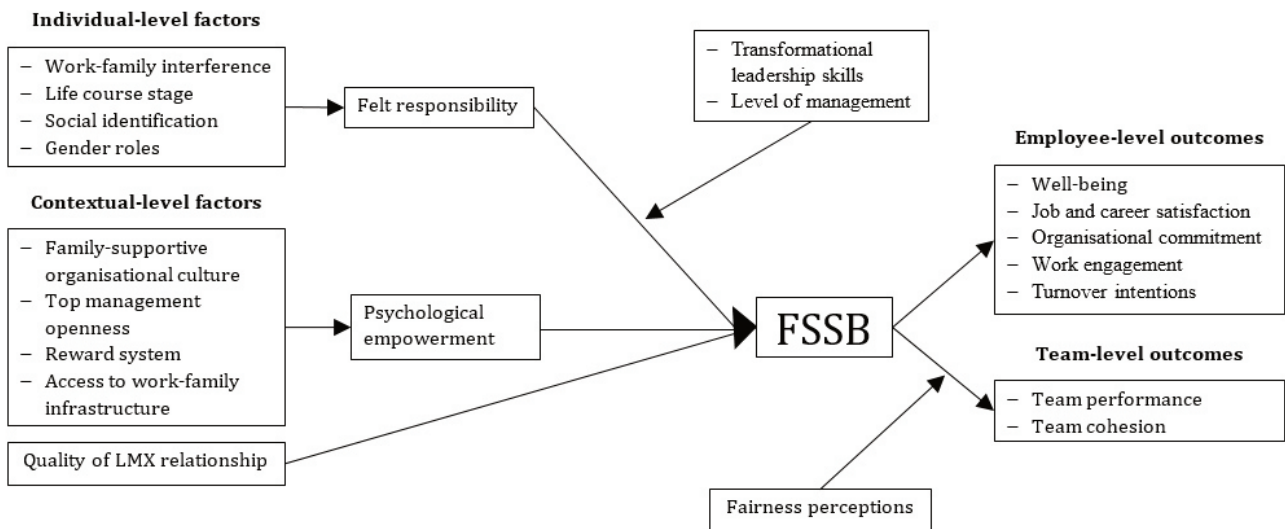


Figure 1. Antecedents and consequences of FSSB (based on Straub, 2012)

Consequently, FSSB is a work-family resource that helps employees manage their work and family roles, and thus impacts work-family conflict and enrichment. In line with COR, work-family resources influence employee outcomes as these resources are implemented in response to employee needs and values (Ode-Duseau et al., 2012, p. 29). Work-family enrichment acts as a mediator between FSSB and employee outcomes, such as job attitudes and supervisor ratings of employee performance. This initiates gain spirals since FSSB, as the resource that was made available in the beginning, facilitates the creation of more resources as well as the utilisation of additional available resources (Ode-Duseau et al., 2012, pp. 36–37).

4.2 Antecedents & Consequences of Work Engagement

Work engagement can be conceptualised as a “psychological state that mediates the impact of job resources and personal resources on organizational outcomes” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, p. 20). Hence, the JD-R model is a suitable tool for explaining predictors and outcomes of work engagement. These outcomes include organisational commitment, extra-role behaviour, personal initiative, as well as job performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010, pp. 20–22). Job resources, such as performance feedback, supervisor support, supervisory coaching, job control, and information, were found to be positively related to work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 211). A motivational process is set off

by the availability of resources, which leads to work engagement and, in turn, to increased job performance. This process is especially salient when job demands are high. Moreover, job and personal resources are related to each other. However, personal resources can be utilised independently to predict work engagement. Thus, optimistic, self-efficacious, resilient employees with high self-esteem are more capable of mobilising resources and, hence, experience higher work engagement (Bakker, 2011, p. 268). Job demands play a mediating role between resources and work engagement. These may include work pressure, emotional, mental, or physical demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 218), as well as bidirectional work-family conflict and work overload (Halbesleben, 2010). Finally, the outcomes of work engagement serve as an input into the resource reservoir, leading to the initiation of gain spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 218). These relations are illustrated in the figure below.

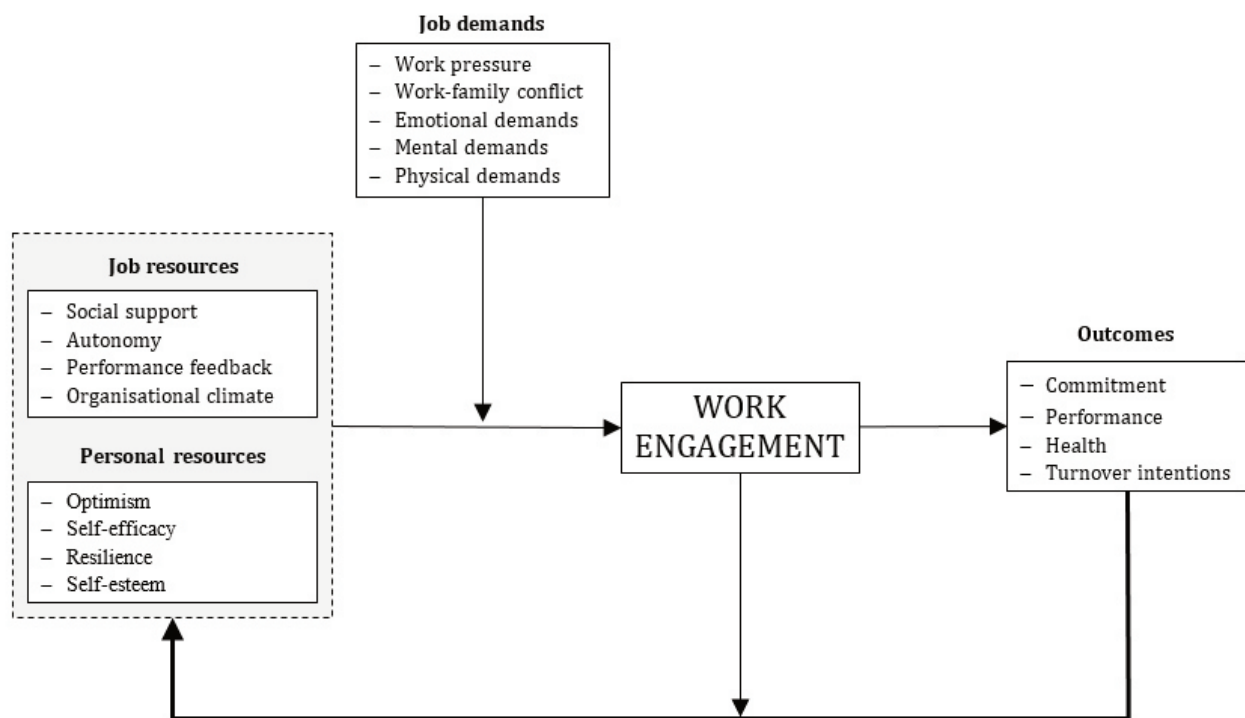


Figure 2. Antecedents and consequences of work engagement (based on Bakker & Demerouti, 2008 and Halbesleben, 2010)

In their meta-analysis, Nahrgang et al. (2011) found support for the health impairment and motivational processes associated with the JD-R model. Job demands impact health negatively and, thus, can lead to burnout, while job resources enhance motivation and, thereby, foster engagement (Nahrgang et al., 2011, p. 71). Likewise, increasing job demands while simultaneously decreasing job resources enhances the employees' chances of suffering from burnout. Whereas an increase in job resources promotes work engagement. In addition, consistent with COR and Broaden-and-Build

theory, resources and engagement influence each other positively, thus initiating gain spirals (Schaufeli et al., 2009).

Work engagement does not only result in improved job performance, that is, fulfilling in- and extra-role behaviours, but indirectly it also leads to positive outcomes such as customer loyalty and financial returns. Furthermore, engagement is higher on days with more available job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 214). Similar results were found by Xanthopoulou et al. (2009), whose study among employees working in fast food restaurants, a workplace that traditionally offers less formal support, revealed that the level of available job resources had a direct relationship with work engagement and predicted daily financial returns.

One reason why engaged employees generate higher financial returns is that they are more likely to experience positive emotions. This increases their productivity as they are more sensitive to opportunities and engage in more positive interactions with others, while exhibiting higher confidence and optimism. This is in line with Broaden-and-Build theory, as positive emotions are thought to broaden employees' momentary thought. Secondly, engagement is positively related to health, which means that employees experience less psychosomatic and physical complaints. Although no physiological evidence for a link between engagement and health (e.g. cortisol level) has been found, engaged employees report better health and workability. Thirdly, engaged employees are able to create their own resources and, consistent with Broaden-and-Build theory, this also enables them to feel good in the future. As work engagement creates additional resources, employees become more self-efficacious, which makes them more engaged later on. Finally, as organisational performance usually depends on team outcomes, engagement also has a positive impact on that. Since engaged employees positively impact their co-workers, team performance improves as well (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, pp. 215–217).

4.3 The Relationship between FSSB & Work Engagement

Although the reduction of work-family conflict is of great importance in order to increase work engagement, the relationship between FSSB, as a means to reduce work-family conflict, and work engagement has received relatively little attention thus far. Consistent with COR and Broaden-and-Build theory, FSSB can be regarded as a valuable

job resource. On the one hand, the availability of supervisor support in the form of FSSB not only allows effective management of work and family roles, but also has the potential to initiate gain spirals, as available resources encourage the accumulation of further resources. On the other hand, FSSB fosters a climate that brings about new ways of thinking and enables employees to obtain new skills and resources, thereby creating a sense of work engagement (Matthews et al., 2014, p. 169).

As illustrated by the figure below, individual-level and contextual level factors as well as the quality of the LMX relationship affect the emergence of FSSB. This, in turn, impacts employee outcomes such as commitment, performance, health and well-being, as well as turnover intentions. Most importantly, a consequence of supervisors exhibiting FSSB is the emergence of work engagement. Therefore, as it is a crucial job resource, FSSB acts as an important antecedent of work engagement. Additional job resources as well as personal resources foster work engagement, mediated by job demands, of which work-family conflict is the most important. FSSB also helps mitigate work-family conflict and other job demands. Finally, the consequences of work engagement coincide with the outcomes caused by FSSB.

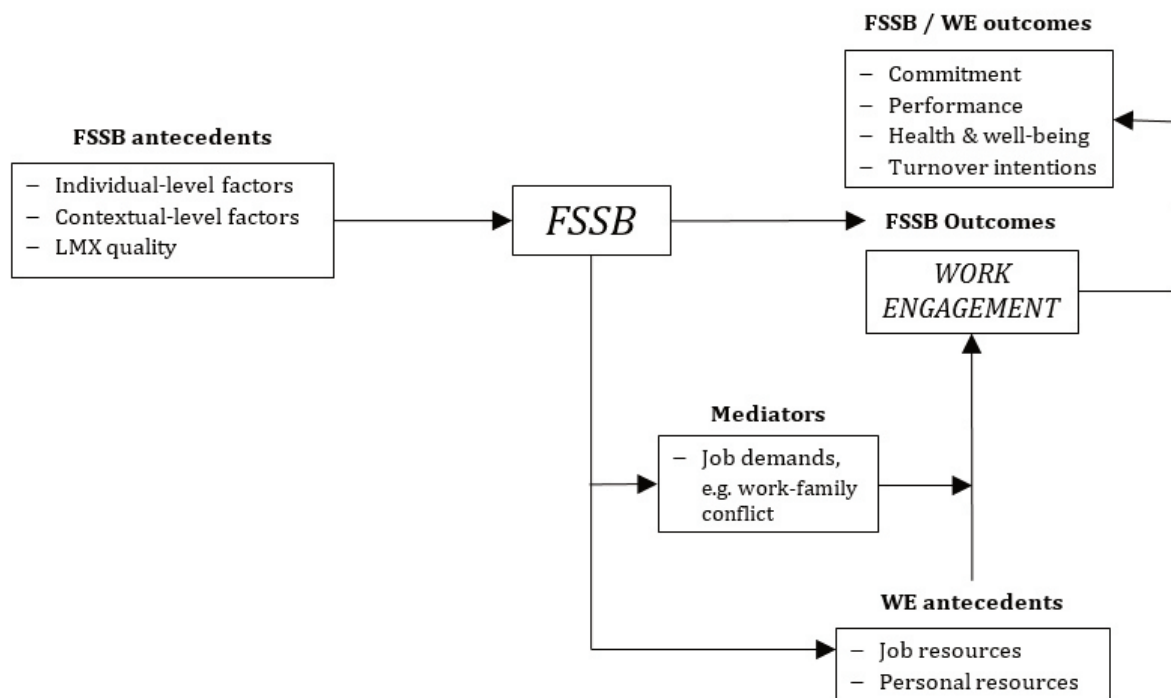


Figure 3. FSSB-Work engagement model (based on Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, Halbesleben, 2010 and Straub, 2012)

After having introduced a model that illustrates the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, the hypotheses that serve as the basis for the empirical part of this thesis will now be proposed. Consistent with the findings of previous studies (e.g. Matthews et al., 2014; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016) it can be expected that when employee perceptions of FSSB are positive, they will be more engaged at work. Hence, I hypothesise:

- (1) Perceptions of FSSB will be significantly and positively related to work engagement, such that if the employees' perceptions of FSSB are positive, their work engagement will be high.

According to Matthews et al. (2014), contextual variables, such as demographics and parental status, are crucial to the relationship between FSSB and work engagement as they act as constraints or facilitators of different behaviours or experiences. Seeing that societal expectations still regard men as the primary breadwinner while women continue to be mainly responsible for childcare and household, gender is therefore an important factor to consider. Although men in dual career households increasingly desire equal distribution of and participation in family responsibilities, division of labour at home is still largely based on gender (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Thompson et al., 1999). As a result, women experience much more interference between their careers and family responsibilities than men (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). This is also underlined by the findings of a recent meta-analysis that identified that the amount of studies detailing higher work-family conflict in women surpasses the amount of studies that found no gender difference or higher work-family conflict in men (Eby et al., 2005). In addition, women attribute more importance to their family role and report higher parenting values. Nevertheless, they exhibit high work values, but find themselves unable to realise those as they have to tend to family obligations. This can lead to increased work-family conflict (Cinamon & Rich, 2002). Therefore, women ascribe higher importance to the availability of formal family-friendly policies and are also more likely to utilise these policies (Thompson et al., 1999). Although policy use was found to be related to higher organisational commitment, women did not experience a considerable reduction of work-family conflict as they have more family demands than men. Accordingly, family-friendly policies may not be sufficiently helpful for women in lowering work-family conflict (Butts et al., 2013). As women require more family support than men, it can be anticipated that the relationship between FSSB and work engagement will be more pronounced in female participants of the study. Consequently, I hypothesise:

- (2) Gender predicts the relationship of FSSB and work engagement, such that female employees will report higher work engagement if their perceptions of FSSB are positive when compared to their male colleagues.

As parents require flexibility and time in order to manage childcare and household duties, they experience elevated levels of work-family conflict. Thus, they are in dire need of organisational family support (Thompson et al., 1999). While the mere availability of formal policies was found to have little impact on parents' job attitudes, instrumental support in the form of policy use is more valuable in managing their work-family demands (Butts et al., 2013). This shows that it is critical to offer tangible support to parents. Therefore, it can be argued that employees with greater family responsibilities, such as parents, will benefit from FSSB more than employees without dependents. Hence, the relationship between FSSB and work engagement will be stronger for parents than for non-parents, leading to the following hypothesis:

- (3) Parental status predicts the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, such that parents will report higher work engagement than non-parents if their perceptions of FSSB are positive.

After having identified individual-level as well as contextual-level factors along with the quality of the LMX relationship as an impetus for supervisors to exhibit FSSB, consequences were determined that include employee-level as well as team-level outcomes. FSSB acts as an input for work engagement, together with further job and personal resources. Job demands, of which work-family conflict is the most notable one, mediate the emergence of work engagement. Eventually, work engagement produces several outcomes that coincide with the employee outcomes caused by FSSB. Based on an explanation of the FSSB-work engagement relationship, three hypotheses were presented that will be examined in the subsequent empirical section.

5. METHODOLOGY

The empirical part of this thesis aims to test the hypotheses presented in the previous chapter. After having explained the theoretical foundations of the FSSB-work engagement relationship in the first part of this thesis, the present chapter serves as an introduction of the methodological approach. Beginning with a description of the data collection, a justification for the choice of the method is presented. Then, participants and procedure are explained, followed by an account of the measures used for this analysis. Finally, the data analysis process is illustrated.

5.1 Data Collection

Raw data was obtained from a survey conducted by Prof. Dr. Barbara Beham of the Berlin School of Economics and Law and Prof. Caroline Straub of the Grenoble Ecole de Management in 2012. The present data was collected as part of a larger study of work-life balance in the IT branch of a large German corporation. Of the original 26 questions, two were selected according to the research problem of this thesis, measuring FSSB and work engagement.

Despite the argument that secondary data is not specifically collected for the purpose at hand, re-analysing archival data has long been a popular research method in the social sciences (e.g. Shultz et al., 2005). In fact, secondary data analysis is frequently used in studies relating to the work environment (Brewer, 2007), and is therefore appropriate to utilise in the context of this study. In addition to being subjected to time and financial constraints, it is often difficult for novice researchers to achieve external validity. Hence, the analysis of available quantitative data is advisable. Although the use of secondary data may require the researcher to adapt the research problem to the available data, this research method does not necessarily have to be inadequate (Brewer, 2007). Indeed, this is of minor concern within the scope of this study as the measures used in the survey directly and explicitly relate to the research problem at hand.

The present survey was chosen because it employs the most widely-used measures for FSSB and work engagement, respectively. This ensures the reliability and replicability of the results of this study. As the results of the original study have not been published thus far, over-reliance on preconceived opinions in the interpretation of the data is ruled out, eliminating the possibility of publication bias (Brewer, 2007). Moreover, utilising a

sub-set of the existing data helps to avoid redundancy, should the study ever be published as a whole. Nevertheless, the validity of the research findings is not impacted by excluding a majority of the original questions as these are irrelevant to the present research problem. Further, each of the questions constitutes a single measure which is independent of the others.

Although traditionally, the percentage of men working in IT is higher, which may compromise the generalisability of the results for Hypothesis 2, the company under scrutiny is one of the major employers in Germany. Hence, the overall results will be generalisable to a great extent. Additionally, using a sample of IT workers is more appropriate for investigating the relationship between FSSB and work engagement as professionals are more likely to experience family support by their supervisors compared to less skilled workers (Behson, 2005). This implies that it is more likely to encounter a significant relationship between FSSB and work engagement in this sample compared to samples of less skilled workers.

5.2 Participants & Procedure

Invitations for the survey were sent out via e-mail, offering no further incentive to encourage participation. Completion of the survey was voluntary, and the survey was administered online. Upon completion, the results of the study were analysed and presented as part of a workshop with the company, which also received a final report. Of the 793 employees who received the invitation, 424 completed the survey, accounting for a response rate of 53.5%. The average age was 39.86 (SD = 10.36) years, with approximately one third (32.8%) of the participants being women. Roughly half of the sample were parents (49.1%).

5.3 Measures

In order to be able to find evidence for the hypotheses presented earlier, several measures were employed. These measures are defined below.

Gender. In order to assess gender, dummy variables were used, with male participants coded as 0 and female as 1.

Parental status. Dummy variables were assigned to signify parental status, with 0 denoting employees without children and 1 indicating the existence of children.

FSSB. FSSB was measured with a scale based on Hammer et al. (2009), omitting two items of the original measure. This tool follows the multidimensional structure of the FSSB concept, such that it includes three items for each of the dimensions (emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling behaviours, and creative work-family management). Answers were rated on a 5-point Likert-type agreement scale. A sample item is “My supervisor is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and nonwork life”. Cronbach’s α of this scale equals .90, which surpasses levels deemed acceptable in research and implies very strong reliability. The validity of the FSSB measure was also confirmed in past research (e.g. Hammer et al., 2009).

Work engagement. Work engagement was measured using a shortened version of the UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Several items of the original scale were cut in order to reduce length and to improve response rates. Although similar and redundant items of the UWES were excluded, the basic structure of work engagement, encompassing vigour, dedication, and absorption, was retained. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert-type frequency scale. A sample item of this measure is “When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work”. Cronbach’s α for this scale exceeds .80, indicating strong reliability. The validity of this measure has been confirmed in several studies across a variety of nations (e.g. Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Seppälä et al., 2009).

As the tools for FSSB and work engagement were included in a much longer survey, it was desirable to decrease the amount of questions per tool that respondents had to answer. According to Hammer et al. (2013), employees are less likely to respond to long questionnaires due to the large number of surveys they are asked to complete. In turn, reducing the length of the questionnaire was assumed to increase completion rates and, hence, redundant items were cut. The complete set of questions utilised in this study is presented in Appendix A.

5.4 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS Statistics 24 software. In order to test Hypotheses 2 and 3, the data was manipulated so as to only show female participants and parents, respectively, while for the test of Hypothesis 1, the data was not altered.

Reliability analysis. In order to assess the internal consistencies of the scales used, Cronbach's α was calculated for the respective subgroups under investigation, with $\alpha > .70$ denoting good reliability.

Correlational analysis. Pearson's r was utilised to examine zero-order correlations among the variables, with p-values below .05 indicating statistical significance.

This chapter served to establish the methodological foundation for the empirical part of this thesis. After a justification of the choice of secondary data analysis as the method of exploring the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, the participants and procedure were presented. The adapted FSSB measure as well as the shortened UWES from the original survey were introduced as the tools employed to test the suggested hypotheses. An account of the data analysis process was given, with a presentation of the results of the analysis following in the next chapter.

6. RESULTS

After having introduced the methodological approach as well as background information of the study, the findings of the analysis will now be detailed. First, the outcomes concerning the first hypothesis will be presented, indicating the statistical implications of the data. Repeating this structure, the results for Hypothesis 2 will then be illustrated. Thereafter, findings for Hypothesis 3 will be presented along with an indication of the statistics.

6.1 Hypothesis 1

In a first step, internal consistencies were calculated for the four FSSB sub-scales, the total FSSB measure as well as for the three work engagement sub-scales and the overall work engagement measure. As can be seen from Table 1, Cronbach's α exceeded

.80 for most of the variables, indicating good reliability. Only vigour ($\alpha = .67$) and absorption ($\alpha = .56$) went below the .70 mark, which is commonly deemed to imply acceptable reliability, posing potential problems concerning the reliability of the findings.

In order to test whether there is a positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement, where positive perceptions of FSSB would correlate with high work engagement, Pearson's r was calculated. Correlations, along with means and standard deviations for the respective variables, are illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between FSSB and work engagement subdimensions for all participants ($n = 424$)

Variable	M	SD	ES	RM	IS	CWFM	FSSB	V	D	A	WE
ES	3.74	1.09	(.93)								
RM	2.97	1.06	.62**	(.91)							
IS	3.54	0.97	.74**	.60**	(.83)						
CWFM	3.33	1.08	.76**	.63**	.79**	(.87)					
FSSB	3.40	0.92	.89**	.82**	.89**	.90**	(.90)				
V	3.55	0.66	.33**	.32**	.38**	.38**	.40**	(.67)			
D	3.45	0.84	.36**	.31**	.38**	.37**	.41**	.70**	(.83)		
A	3.34	0.70	.28**	.20**	.23**	.26**	.28**	.55**	.61**	(.56)	
WE	3.45	0.63	.37**	.32**	.38**	.39**	.42**	.86**	.91**	.83**	(.83)

Note. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) appear in brackets. M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations, ES = Emotional Support, RM = Role Modelling Behaviours, IS = Instrumental Support, CWFM = Creative Work-Family Management, FSSB = Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour, V = Vigour, D = Dedication, A = Absorption, WE = Work Engagement

** $p < .01$

Altogether, a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement was found (r s ranged from .20 to .42, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 1, which proposed the existence of such a relationship. Vigour and dedication showed the strongest correlation to the FSSB subdimensions (r s ranged from .31 to .38, $p < .01$), with role modelling behaviours being least strongly correlated with vigour and dedication ($r = .32$ and $.31$, $p < .01$, respectively). Absorption had the lowest correlation with any of the FSSB subdimensions (r s ranged from .20 to .28, $p < .01$). This indicates that, while there is a relationship between the FSSB and work engagement subdimensions, this link is weaker regarding absorption than it is for vigour and dedication.

In general, compound measures showed a slightly higher correlation. When looking at the relationship of the FSSB subdimensions with the overall work engagement score, it became apparent that creative work-family management was most strongly linked to work engagement ($r = .39$, $p < .01$), while role modelling behaviours least strongly correlated with work engagement ($r = .32$, $p < .01$). Conversely, the association of the work engagement subdimensions with the overall FSSB score was also strong (r s ranged from

.28 to .41, $p < .01$) with absorption displaying the least distinct correlation ($r = .28$, $p < .01$). The correlation between the compound scores for FSSB and work engagement was the most pronounced ($r = .42$, $p < .01$), which indicates that the positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement is most distinctly visible when looking at the composite scores.

6.2 Hypothesis 2

In order to find out whether gender predicts the FSSB-work engagement relationship, such that women would be more engaged at work than their male colleagues when they perceive their supervisors to exhibit FSSB, the data was manipulated so as to only show female participants of the study ($n = 139$). Subsequently, internal consistencies for the variables in this sample were calculated, revealing good reliability for the FSSB scores ($\alpha \geq .85$). For the scores of the work engagement subdimensions, only dedication proved to be reliable ($\alpha = .83$). However, the compound work engagement score exhibited acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .74$). Cronbach's α , along with means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between FSSB and work engagement subdimensions for female participants ($n = 139$)

Variable	M	SD	ES	RM	IS	CWFM	FSSB	V	D	A	WE
ES	3.76	1.11	(.93)								
RM	3.02	1.14	.67**	(.93)							
IS	3.63	0.99	.71**	.58**	(.85)						
CWFM	3.32	1.12	.75**	.62**	.78**	(.89)					
FSSB	3.43	0.95	.90**	.83**	.87**	.90**	(.90)				
V	3.71	0.56	.30**	.33**	.34**	.30**	.36**	(.52)			
D	3.55	0.75	.21*	.27**	.26**	.27**	.29**	.62**	(.83)		
A	3.40	0.63	.16	.03	.03	.10	.09	.44**	.44**	(.42)	
WE	3.55	0.53	.27**	.26**	.26**	.27**	.30**	.82**	.87**	.76**	(.74)

Note. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) appear in brackets. M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations, ES = Emotional Support, RM = Role Modelling Behaviours, IS = Instrumental Support, CWFM = Creative Work-Family Management, FSSB = Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour, V = Vigour, D = Dedication, A = Absorption, WE = Work Engagement

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Calculation of Pearson's r for this sample revealed that not for all of the variables, a significant positive relationship existed. While the correlation between the compound FSSB and work engagement scores was significant and positive ($r = .30$, $p < .01$), none of the FSSB subdimensions significantly correlated with the absorption score, and neither did the overall FSSB score (r s ranged from .03 to .16, $p > .05$). Yet, the reliability of this

subset of correlations is questionable, as Cronbach's α was .42, which is very far from the .70 that is commonly regarded to be an acceptable indicator of reliability. Moreover, the significance of the dedication-emotional support correlation lagged behind that of the other measures ($r = .21, p < .05$). However, the scores for all other FSSB and work engagement dimensions showed significant positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level (r s ranged from .26 to .34), with vigour and instrumental support being linked most strongly ($r = .34, p < .01$). Although a majority of the variables showed a significant and positive correlation, the lack of significant relationships between absorption and the FSSB dimensions indicates that the positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement is not as strong for women as originally anticipated.

Interestingly, when manipulating the data so as to only include the male participants of the study ($n = 285$), a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement emerged for all variables, exceeding the correlation coefficients of the female sample (r s ranged from .27 to .47, $p < .01$). However, means for all variables were consistently higher in the female sample. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the male sample are illustrated in Appendix B. Even absorption and the FSSB subdimensions, which exhibited no significance in the female sample, correlated significantly in the male sample (r s ranged from .27 to .36, $p < .01$). Further, all correlations were more pronounced in the male sample, apart from the vigour-role modelling behaviours relationship ($r = .33$ for women vs. $r = .28$ for men, $p < .01$). This finding suggests that the positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement is more pronounced for men than it is for women; thus disconfirming Hypothesis 2.

6.3 Hypothesis 3

For the purpose of investigating whether parental status predicts the relationship between FSSB and work engagement, so that parents would experience more work engagement than non-parents when their perceptions of FSSB are positive, the data was manipulated so as to only include participants with children ($n = 208$). Then, internal consistencies were calculated, revealing good reliability for all variables ($\alpha \geq .70$) except absorption ($\alpha = .58$). Table 3 provides Cronbach's α as well as means, standard deviations, and correlations for this sample.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between FSSB and work engagement subdimensions for participants with children ($n = 208$)

Variable	M	SD	ES	RM	IS	CWFM	FSSB	V	D	A	WE
ES	3.73	1.12	(.92)								
RM	2.95	1.06	.64**	(.90)							
IS	3.50	1.02	.76**	.64**	(.84)						
CWFM	3.27	1.12	.71**	.66**	.81**	(.88)					
FSSB	3.36	0.95	.89**	.83**	.91**	.90**	(.90)				
V	3.57	0.69	.32**	.28**	.39**	.35**	.38**	(.70)			
D	3.47	0.86	.38**	.29**	.41**	.35**	.41**	.69**	(.84)		
A	3.39	0.71	.24**	.20**	.22**	.20**	.25**	.55**	.62**	(.58)	
WE	3.48	0.65	.37**	.30**	.40**	.35**	.40**	.86**	.91**	.83**	(.83)

Note. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) appear in brackets. M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations, ES = Emotional Support, RM = Role Modelling Behaviours, IS = Instrumental Support, CWFM = Creative Work-Family Management, FSSB = Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour, V = Vigour, D = Dedication, A = Absorption, WE = Work Engagement

** $p < .01$

All in all, calculation of Pearson's r revealed a significant and positive correlation between the FSSB and work engagement subdimensions as well as the compound scores (r s ranged from .20 to .41, $p < .01$). Vigour and dedication were most strongly related to FSSB (r s ranged from .29 to .41, $p < .01$), while absorption showed the lowest correlation with any of the FSSB dimensions (r s ranged from .20 to .25, $p < .01$). However, Cronbach's α for absorption was below .70, pointing to a potential problem with the reliability of this particular subset of correlations. Overall, the results indicate a positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement, in which vigour and dedication are more strongly connected to the FSSB dimensions than absorption is.

Surprisingly, when comparing the data of this sample to that of the non-parents sample ($n = 216$), it became apparent that the FSSB-work engagement relationship was almost equally strong for participants without children (r s ranged from .19 to .45, $p < .01$). Descriptive statistics for this sample are presented in Appendix C. Indeed, several values were higher for non-parents, while others were higher for parents. The correlations between the work engagement dimensions and the FSSB compound score were more pronounced for participants without children (r s ranged from .31 to .45, $p < .01$) than for parents (r s ranged from .25 to .40, $p < .01$). Similarly, FSSB dimensions correlated with the composite score for work engagement more strongly in the sample of non-parents, with the only exception being instrumental support ($r = .40$ for parents vs. $r = .37$ for non-parents, $p < .01$). This result is somewhat unexpected, as it implies that the positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement is, in fact, not stronger for parents than

it is for participants without children, but rather slightly more pronounced for non-parents. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 cannot be supported.

In summary, these results show that a positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement existed, supporting Hypothesis 1. However, contrary to expectations, no support was found for Hypotheses 2 and 3. Instead, the FSSB-work engagement relationship was identified to be stronger for men than for women. Further, participants without children exhibited a slightly more pronounced FSSB-work engagement relationship than parents. The next chapter will discuss these results, attempting to provide an explanation for their occurrence.

7. DISCUSSION

After having presented the results of the data analysis, it is now vital to discuss possible explanations for these findings. Hence, this chapter begins with a discussion of the results of the current study, interpreting them and linking them to previous findings of other scholars. In addition, an account of how the results relate to the theory that was introduced in the first part of this thesis is given. Next, practical implications are discussed, whereupon limitations and recommendations for future research will be presented. Finally, the conclusion will provide a summary of the key points of this thesis, referring back to the arguments presented in the introduction.

7.1 Discussion of the Results

As the relationship between FSSB and work engagement has not been sufficiently explored, the present study set out to confirm that there exists a positive correlation between the two concepts. In addition, a unique contribution to the scarce literature on the FSSB-work engagement relationship is made by this thesis as the different implications of gender and parental status were examined according to the FSSB and work engagement subdimensions. Although the results did not coincide with initial expectations, they are still informative as they provide insight into the implications of the different needs of various subgroups. While Hypothesis 1 could be supported, no evidence was found in support of Hypotheses 2 and 3. Instead, contrary to prior expectations, the

FSSB-work engagement relationship was identified to be stronger for men than for women, and slightly more pronounced for participants without children than for parents.

Calculation of Pearson's r for the entire sample ($n=424$) revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement, repeating the findings of previous studies (Matthews et al., 2014; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). While Matthews et al.'s (2014) study investigated the relationship between the compound FSSB measure and the work engagement subdimensions, the present study identified the correlations between all subdimensions as well as the compound measures. Nevertheless, the structure of Matthews et al. (2014) findings was replicated, with absorption exhibiting the lowest correlation with the overall FSSB score. Conversely, Odle-Dusseau et al.'s (2016) research examined the correlations between the compound work engagement score and the FSSB subdimensions, identifying a weak positive relationship that was significant at the $p < .05$ level. Although the basic structure of the results was not repeated entirely by the present study, the correlations were more pronounced, being significant at the $p < .01$ level. This suggests that the results of the present study are more convincing. While this study agrees with Odle-Dusseau et al.'s (2016) findings insofar that the compound FSSB score is most strongly related to work engagement, and that creative work-family management is the most crucial FSSB subdimension with respect to work engagement, the present study identified role modelling behaviour to be least distinctly linked to work engagement instead of emotional support. This has significant implications for supervisors exhibiting FSSB, as this finding implies that it is more important for them to be emotionally supportive rather than to be a role model.

Despite the theory pointing to women being more in need of family support, no evidence was found in support of Hypothesis 2. Although women experience more work-family conflict (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Eby et al., 2005), which led to the expectation that they would benefit more from FSSB and, consequently, become more engaged at work, the data did not reinforce this assumption. In fact, female participants of the study exhibited a lower correlation between FSSB and work engagement than male participants did. One potential explanation may be that women are more likely to utilise formal policies than men, as argued by Thompson et al. (1999). This implies that women feel more comfortable making use of formal family-friendly policies and place less value on informal support. Men, however, were found to react more strongly to informal support than women (Hammer et al., 2005). Since FSSB is considered

to be a type of informal support provided by the organisation (Hammer et al., 2009), this is also in line with the findings of the present study, as men consistently exhibited higher correlations between FSSB and work engagement than women.

Moreover, as more men work in IT, women may feel the need to assert themselves in their field of work. In the present study, women exhibited higher mean scores for work engagement and FSSB than men. On the one hand, FSSB as a work-family resource may enable women to adopt further responsibilities at home, which may lead to increased work-family conflict and may, thus, explain the less pronounced FSSB-work engagement relationship identified in this study. A similar argument was proposed by Hammer et al. (2005) with regard to the usage of formal policies. On the other hand, supervisors providing FSSB as a job resource to women may be regarded as inputting into the LMX relationship, which is consistent with Straub's (2012) notion that LMX quality serves as an antecedent of FSSB. While women may feel indebted to their supervisors and, thus, exhibit more positive job attitudes, such as work engagement (Butts et al., 2013; Breevaart et al., 2015), supervisors raise their expectations about their female employees. It is a possibility that, combined with the previously mentioned argument that women experience more work-family conflict than men, women fail to meet their supervisors' expectations and, hence, despite showing higher mean values of work engagement than men, the correlation between FSSB and work engagement is less strong.

However, the reliability of the vigour and absorption subdimensions in the female sample is debatable as Cronbach's α for these falls below the .70 mark that commonly denotes the reliability threshold. This may be a possible explanation for the lack of significant relations between absorption and any of the FSSB dimensions. The absorption-FSSB correlations showed, in fact, the lowest effect size in all samples examined as part of this thesis. In their 2014 study, Matthews et al. found the same structure. Hence, it can be assumed that the relationship between FSSB and the absorption dimension of work engagement is the least strong, indicating that absorption is the least important factor to consider in the FSSB-work engagement relationship. Another possible explanation for failing to show significant positive correlations for the absorption-FSSB relationship in the female sample may be related to the fact that women commonly experience more work-family conflict than men do (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Eby et al., 2005), which may not allow them to become as absorbed into their work.

In addition, the discrepancy between the results for male and female participants of the study may be due to the small size of the female sample. As women constituted only about a third of the respondents, the sample consisted only of 139 individuals. Besides being the smallest sample of the study, the female sample also exhibited the lowest effect size of all samples under scrutiny. Similarly, sample sizes for Odle-Dusseau et al.'s (2016) study ranged from 121 to 241 and in that study, correlations between FSSB and work engagement were equally low as for the female sample of the present study. This implies that effect size depends on the size of the sample. In fact, previous research established that sample size has to approach 250 in order for the results to stabilise, as below that, strong fluctuations occur (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013). Therefore, accurate conclusions about the effect size can only be drawn for samples with $n > 250$. This implies the possibility that the female sample in this study was too small in order to allow definite inferences about the relationship between FSSB and work engagement.

Furthermore, it was hypothesised that the FSSB-work engagement link would be more pronounced for parents as they experience more work-family conflict than participants without children. Thus, being given informal support in the form of FSSB was expected to be reflected in work engagement more for parents than for non-parents. Despite parents' increased need for organisational family support (Thompson et al., 1999), no evidence was found that corroborates Hypothesis 3. Still, a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement was identified in the sample of parents. Supporting Butts et al.'s (2013) finding that parents benefit more from instrumental support, the present study determined higher correlations between the instrumental support dimension of FSSB with the work engagement dimensions for parents in comparison to non-parents.

Nevertheless, and consistent with Matthews et al.'s (2014) findings, respondents without children benefitted equally from FSSB, which is indicated by similar effect sizes in the FSSB-work engagement relationship among parents and non-parents. Indeed, participants without children showed slightly higher correlations between most FSSB and work engagement subdimensions. This may be due to the fact that supervisors exhibiting FSSB may be perceived as more family-friendly because they exceed non-parents current needs for family support, as was previously suggested by other scholars (Matthews et al., 2014; Butts et al., 2013). In line with these findings, 80% of German employees without

children reported to value family-supportiveness (Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend, 2016), which highlights the symbolic value of FSSB.

This symbolic value may also stem from justice perceptions of non-parents, who observe those in need of family support benefitting from FSSB and, therefore, assume these behaviours would also be granted to them when facing similar circumstances. A similar argument was presented by Grover & Crooker (1995), who suggested that supervisors appear fair to those not in immediate need of family support when offering family support to those who need it. This is also in line with fairness perceptions identified by Straub (2012) as mediators between FSSB and team-level outcomes.

It is important to note, that while the evidence suggests a rejection of Hypotheses 2 and 3, this should not be misinterpreted to imply that FSSB is not vital for women or parents. In fact, the existence of a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement for women and parents indicates that, while the correlation was more pronounced for men and non-parents, FSSB is an important job resource to be provided to all employees in order to foster work engagement. Hence, supervisors of these subgroups should still engage in FSSB, especially since they oversee a diverse pool of employees, as was argued by Matthews et al. (2014). Further, supervisors should be trained in FSSB, as will be discussed shortly.

Despite the findings not supporting a stronger positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement for women and parents, respectively, the current study contributes to the small, but growing body of literature on this topic by providing evidence for the existence of a significant positive correlation between FSSB and work engagement. Consistent with COR, this implies that when supervisors exhibit FSSB, they add to their employees' resource reservoir, enabling them to be more stress-resistant. Having the resources necessary to combat work-family conflict and other job demands facilitates the emergence of work engagement, as indicated in the JD-R model. This allows gain spirals to initiate, whereby resources generate additional resources.

This is also in line with Broaden-and-Build theory, where work engagement is considered to be an initiator, an outcome as well as a positive emotion (Salanova et al., 2010), enabling the creation of resources due to broadening individuals' thought-action repertoires. Through a high-quality LMX relationship, work engagement may serve to generate supervisor support in the form of FSSB, as supervisors and employees enter a

series of interdependent exchanges. Ultimately, this produces not only an upward spiral of positive emotions, but also a gain spiral of resources. Overall, the results of the current study suggest that FSSB and work engagement are positively related, even if this relationship is less pronounced for certain subgroups.

7.2 Practical Implications

An important implication for practice that emerges from the results of this study is that organisations should place more value on FSSB training. In fact, previous studies have found a connection between FSSB training and job attitudes, enhancing job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Hammer et al., 2011) as well as job performance, organisational commitment, and work engagement (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). As supported by the findings of Matthews et al. (2014), employees are more likely to experience work engagement when supervisors exhibit FSSB. Eventually, this affects the organisational bottom line positively (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

The present study found the FSSB-work engagement relationship to be most pronounced for the composite scores, with the scores of the subdimensions showing weaker correlations. This implies that it is not necessary to provide supervisors with extensive training in either emotional or instrumental support, to thoroughly train them to be role models or how to manage work-family issues creatively. Instead, it seems expedient to train them in all of these behaviours in equal measure, so that they learn how to exhibit FSSB to their employees.

Despite Odle-Dusseau et al.'s (2016) call for FSSB training that is tailored to the needs of the organisation as well as to those of the employees, the findings of the present study suggest that an undifferentiated approach to FSSB training, which does not take differences between gender and parental status into account, is sufficient. As no support was found for women or parents benefitting more from FSSB and thus reporting higher work engagement, it is unlikely that FSSB training targeted to the needs of any subgroup would result in a substantial increase in that subgroup's work engagement. On the contrary, it can be expected that any form of FSSB training would create favourable outcomes with regard to work engagement, as training supervisors in FSSB increases their likelihood of engaging in these behaviours (Hammer et al., 2011). Although the results of the present study suggest that it makes little sense to adapt FSSB training to the

general needs of particular subgroups, it certainly is crucial to keep individual differences in mind. Therefore, it is recommended to train the supervisors' sensibility to evaluate each case on an individual level and to act accordingly.

7.3 Limitations & Future Research

Arguably, this thesis is not without limitations. First and foremost, the correlational research design using cross-sectional data allows no inferences about causality. Although previous studies have identified FSSB as an antecedent of work engagement, it was outside of the scope of this study to replicate this causal structure. Despite finding support for a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement across all samples, no evidence was found that this link is stronger for women or for parents. However, with a small sample size like in the present study, these results may not be as statistically sound. Therefore, it is advisable to replicate this study in a larger context, employing regression analysis and a longitudinal research design.

In addition, traditionally the percentage of men working in IT is larger. This is also the case in this study. Thus, the low number of female respondents may have skewed the results and, consequently, it is recommended to repeat this study in a different context that facilitates a more balanced gender distribution among participants. Moreover, as the sample consisted of highly skilled workers, the generalisability of the results is also arguable, as no inferences can be made about the FSSB-work engagement relationship of less skilled workers. Further, the sample was limited to employees of a single organisation and, although the company is a major employer in Germany, generalisability of the results may present an issue. Hence, a replication of the study in different organisations would be advisable in order to obtain results that are more representative of the whole population. Ideally, this study should be repeated across a set of different industries to ensure good generalisability of the results.

Finally, the majority of factors that affect the FSSB-work engagement relationship (as presented in Figure 3) was not considered in the present calculation. Although work-family conflict acts as an important mediator between FSSB and work engagement (Ode-Dusseau et al., 2012), its effect was excluded from the calculations. The role of other job demands as well as job and personal resources in this relationship was also neglected. The quality of the LMX relationship and the availability of formal family-friendly policies

were not considered as well. Since previous studies identified these factors to play an essential role in the FSSB-work engagement relationship, it is advisable for future research to investigate their effects.

Nevertheless, the current study still offers valuable insights into the relationship between FSSB and work engagement as a significant positive correlation was identified, repeating the findings of previous studies (Matthews et al., 2014; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). Despite the limitations, this study acts as a first foray into the investigation of differences stemming from gender and parental status, and how these predict the FSSB-work engagement relationship. In view of the lack of evidence to support Hypotheses 2 and 3, the present study provides a starting point for future research, which can investigate the implications of gender and parental status further.

7.4 Conclusion

In sum, the present study provides evidence for the existence of a significant, positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement among the IT personnel of a large German corporation. Although this relationship was, contrary to prior expectations, stronger for men than for women and nearly equally strong for parents and non-parents, this thesis makes an important contribution to the small body of literature on the FSSB-work engagement relationship. Addressing a gap in the existing research, this study investigated the implications of gender and parental status. The main conclusion is that gender and parental status are not as crucial in the relationship between FSSB and work engagement as originally anticipated. Instead, it seems reasonable to assume that other factors, which were not taken into account in this study, may be of greater importance for the FSSB-work engagement link.

Nevertheless, this study is significant as it offers vital implications for FSSB training programmes in organisations as well as for future research. In practical terms, it can be suggested that differential treatment according to the preferences of women and parents, respectively, is not necessary. In fact, it is more important to provide general FSSB training to supervisors and train their sensibility to the individuals' work-family needs. Further research should include mediating variables in future replications of this study, allowing researchers to obtain a more realistic idea of how FSSB can be utilised in order

to foster work engagement. Moreover, it is recommended to repeat this study in different industries, using a larger and more balanced sample.

Certainly, following the trend of the past, the workforce will continue to shift towards even greater integration of the work and family domains, attempting to achieve a balance between the two. This study has shown that a significant positive relationship between FSSB and work engagement exists and, thus, FSSB may serve as a tool that helps employees to achieve work-family balance. Hence, work-family researchers need to further enhance their understanding of the implications of FSSB for employees' engagement at work. By giving an overview of the theory that acts as the foundation for FSSB, work engagement, and the relationship between the two concepts, the present study allows for a basic understanding of the FSSB-work engagement relationship and can be used as a building block for more in-depth research on the topic.

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9. APPENDIX

APPENDIX A. Survey questions

Items used for measuring FSSB (based on Hammer et al., 2007; shortened), rated from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree

1. ES1: My supervisor is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and nonwork life.
2. ES2: My supervisor takes time to learn about my personal needs.
3. ES3: My supervisor makes me feel comfortable talking to him/her about my conflicts between work and nonwork.
4. RM1: My supervisor is a good role model for work and nonwork balance.
5. RM2: My supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and nonwork balance.
6. RM3: My supervisor demonstrates how a person can jointly be successful on and off the job.
7. IS1: I can depend on my supervisor to help me with scheduling conflicts if I need it.
8. IS2: I can rely on my supervisor to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated nonwork demands.
9. IS3: My supervisor works effectively with workers to creatively solve conflicts between work and nonwork.
10. CWFM1: My supervisor thinks about how the work in my department can be organized to jointly benefit associates and the company.
11. CWFM2: My supervisor asks for suggestions to make it easier for employees to balance work and nonwork demands.
12. CWFM3: My supervisor is able to manage the department as a whole team to enable everyone's needs to be met.

Items used for measuring work engagement (based on Schaufeli et al., 2002; shortened), rated from 1 – never to 5 – very often

1. V1: When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
2. V2: At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.
3. V3: At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
4. D1: I am enthusiastic about my job.

5. D2: I am proud on the work that I do.
6. D3: I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
7. A1: Time flies when I am working.
8. A2: It is difficult to detach myself from my work.
9. A3: I am immersed in my work.

APPENDIX B. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between FSSB and work engagement subdimensions for male participants (n = 285)

Variable	M	SD	ES	RM	IS	CWFM	FSSB	V	D	A	WE
ES	3.73	1.09	(.93)								
RM	2.95	1.02	.60**	(.89)							
IS	3.50	0.95	.76**	.61**	(.83)						
CWFM	3.34	1.05	.71**	.64**	.81**	(.86)					
FSSB	3.38	0.90	.88**	.81**	.90**	.90**	(.90)				
V	3.48	0.69	.35**	.28**	.40**	.43**	.43**	(.70)			
D	3.40	0.88	.42**	.32**	.43**	.43**	.46**	.73**	(.82)		
A	3.31	0.73	.33**	.27**	.31**	.34**	.36**	.59**	.67**	(.61)	
WE	3.40	0.68	.42**	.35**	.43**	.45**	.47**	.87**	.92**	.85**	(.85)

Note. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) appear in brackets. M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations, ES = Emotional Support, RM = Role Modelling Behaviours, IS = Instrumental Support, CWFM = Creative Work-Family Management, FSSB = Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour, V = Vigour, D = Dedication, A = Absorption, WE = Work Engagement

** p < .01

APPENDIX C. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between FSSB and work engagement subdimensions for participants without children (n = 216)

Variable	M	SD	ES	RM	IS	CWFM	FSSB	V	D	A	WE
ES	3.76	1.08	(.93)								
RM	3.00	1.07	.61**	(.91)							
IS	3.58	0.92	.72**	.55**	(.82)						
CWFM	3.40	1.03	.74**	.61**	.78**	(.86)					
FSSB	3.43	0.89	.89**	.81**	.87**	.90**	(.89)				
V	3.53	0.63	.35**	.36**	.37**	.41**	.44**	(.63)			
D	3.43	0.82	.34**	.33**	.35**	.40**	.41**	.71**	(.81)		
A	3.30	0.69	.31**	.19**	.24**	.34**	.31**	.55**	.61**	(.54)	
WE	3.42	0.62	.38**	.34**	.37**	.44**	.45**	.86**	.91**	.83**	(.83)

Note. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) appear in brackets. M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations, ES = Emotional Support, RM = Role Modelling Behaviours, IS = Instrumental Support, CWFM = Creative Work-Family Management, FSSB = Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviour, V = Vigour, D = Dedication, A = Absorption, WE = Work Engagement

** p < .01

10. AFFIDAVIT

I declare that I wrote this thesis independently and on my own. I clearly marked any language or ideas borrowed from other sources as not my own and documented their sources. The thesis does not contain any work that I have handed in or have had graded as a Prüfungsleistung earlier on.

I am aware that any failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as if they were my own—even if I summarize, paraphrase, condense, cut, rearrange, or otherwise alter them. I am aware of the consequences and sanctions plagiarism entails. Among others, consequences may include nullification of the thesis, exclusion from the BA program without a degree, and legal consequences for lying under oath. These consequences also apply retrospectively, i.e. if plagiarism is discovered after the thesis has been accepted and graded.

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Date: February 27, 2017

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