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Master in Human Resources Management

**The effect of telework on employee engagement in e-
EFKA. An empirical approach.**

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Abstract

The present Master's Thesis investigates the impact of telework on employee engagement in e- EFKA and the mediating effect of work – family conflict on the relationship between role overload and role ambiguity and employee engagement. The literature review provides an overview of the extant literature on telework, role overload, role ambiguity, work – family conflict and employee engagement. A sample of 360 e - EFKA employees in several local branches across Greece was used and data were collected with the use of online structured questionnaires and subsequently analyzed by Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using “SmartPLS 3.3.5”. Based on the research findings there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between role ambiguity and work – family conflict, role overload and work – family conflict and with work – family conflict having a negative impact on employee engagement. Finally, the research finds that work – family conflict acts as a partial mediator, mediating the relationship between role overload and employee engagement, but not the relationship between role ambiguity and employee engagement.

Key words: telework, employee engagement, e-EFKA, public sector

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruption in economic and social activity and put insurmountable pressure on health care systems. To contain the impact of the pandemic, governments implemented social distancing measures and restrictions on a host of activities and the movement of people in general. Social and professional activity came almost to a halt, with lockdown and social distancing measures placing severe restrictions on social mobility to contain the spread of the virus (Walker et al., 2020).

In an unprecedented turn of events, most workers across the globe found themselves stranded in their homes and were forced to work from there, due to the social distancing measures that came into effect soon after new Covid-19 infections were diagnosed in an increasing number of countries throughout the world. Workers found themselves faced with new technological challenges and for the first time the vast majority of workers had to work from home, resorting to telework to perform their work functions. All of a sudden, workers had to use technology in new ways to perform their work duties, communicate with their coworkers and maintain a sense of normalcy. These changes in the professional lives of millions of workers came abruptly and as a result many workers had to work from home environments that weren't properly adapted or suitable for telework (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Within a few months, telework became a necessity for all, or at least the majority, of most organizations' workers. Organizations had to make the necessary arrangements to allow their workers to continue working from home, relying on teleworking by making use of a number of technological solutions for remote team collaboration like Zoom, whether their workers had previous experience teleworking from home or not (Biron et al., 2021).

The first Covid – 19 infection in Greece was diagnosed on February 20, 2020 (National Public Health Organization, 2020) a few days before the World Health Organization declared the Covid-19 outbreak a pandemic (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). Soon after the first infections and with the number of new infections increasing, the Greek government announced a number of social distancing measures and restrictions on social mobility. Schools, sport venues, private businesses and public services were forced to close their premises (Naftemporiki, 2020) in an attempt to protect public health and prevent a mounting number of new infections.

Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, telework was only limited to a fraction of workers and many of them only worked from home occasionally, while being at the office in non-teleworking days. Teleworking rates in the European Union varied greatly, from 30% or more of workers working from home in countries like Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, to less than 10% of the workforce in countries like the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy and Greece (International Labour Organization, 2020). Hence, teleworking in Greece was rather limited before the Covid-19 pandemic and most Greek employees were not familiar with this working arrangement.

The fact that telework is a rather novel working arrangement for many Greek workers and organizations, motivates its investigation as a matter of rather practical and academic importance in light of recent developments brought about by the Covid – 19 pandemic and the expectations about the permanent impact of Covid – 19 on working arrangements moving forward. Especially in the Greek public sector telework before the pandemic was virtually nonexistent. The pandemic, however, forced even the Greek public administration to introduce teleworking for many workers in the country's public sector.

The present research investigates the impact of telework on employee engagement, regarding work overload, role ambiguity and the mediating effect of work – family conflict on the relationship between role overload and role ambiguity and employee engagement. The impact of work family conflict is examined along a few critical dimensions, including role ambiguity, role overload and work engagement, defined as the vigor and dedication workers demonstrate while performing their work duties. The rest of the Thesis is organized as follows. The second chapter reviews the literature on telework and work – family conflict. The third chapter provides an overview of the research methodology. The fourth chapter presents the research results. Finally, the fifth chapter concludes.

2. Literature review

2.1 Telework

Telework can be defined as a working arrangement that allows employees to perform their work duties outside the conventional workspace, for at least some portion of the working week, using information and communication technologies (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). While advances in technology accelerated the adoption of telework from various

organizations, it is not a new phenomenon and it actually preceded the advent of mobile phones, laptops and other mobile devices. The first reference to telework dates back to 1975 when Jack Niles introduced the term “telecommuting” in an article titled “Telecommunications and organizational decentralization” (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Telework encapsulates the evolution of social perceptions about the nature of work organization and the workplace. It challenges and redefines established notions about the place and the ways work is performed, while forcing supervisors and managers to reassess how work performance is evaluated and workers are supervised. Telework, in many cases, has also led to a redefinition of work relations, paving the way for the emergence of contract workers with reduced benefits and corporate affiliation (Bailey & Kurland, 2002).

Telework comes with benefits but also challenges for workers and organizations. Productivity improvements are perhaps the most compelling argument for the introduction of teleworking in an organization. The flexibility that comes with teleworking allows workers to work when they feel they can maximize their productivity and avoid the potential distractions in their office environment (Golden & Veiga, 2008). On the other hand, the use of Information and Communication Technologies to communicate with colleagues eliminates face-to-face interaction and diminishes social contact and interaction in the context of work (Ammons & Markham, 2004).

Furthermore, teleworkers also often find themselves unaware of their organization’s values, culture and mission (Madsen, 2003). Additionally, their visibility to management and consequently management support may be diminished, as a result of working away from their organization’s premises (Cooper & Kurland, 2002), leading to limited career opportunities and hurting their career prospects (Khalifa & Davison, 2000).

At the same time, teleworking from home can help individuals improve their work – life balance, as it enables them to look after their families, especially if there are people in need, children or seniors, in the household (Ammons & Markham, 2004). However, teleworking from home can also disrupt a worker’s work – life balance, as he may face frequent interruptions in an environment unsuitable for productive work or end up working for longer hours than workers following a specific well-defined work schedule at the office (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Finding the right balance between work and family duties emerges as a critical challenge for teleworkers, that may have a considerable

adverse impact on their job satisfaction and productivity, while working away from the office (Nakrošienė et al., 2019).

While teleworkers may worry about the impact of being away from the office could have on their career prospects, for certain groups of people telework can help them keep their careers on track. Telework, for example, can help working mothers to remain at work and not have to abandon their careers and leave the workforce to look after their children (Nakrošienė et al., 2019). Workers who want or need to spend more time with their families can do so, without having to quit their jobs, thanks to telework (Madsen, 2003).

The Covid – 19 pandemic led to a dramatic surge in the number and proportion of workers in the total workforce that telework and at the same time redefined the context and environment in which telework takes place. Most organizations and employees were unprepared to deal with this new reality (Carillo et al., 2021). In 2019, a year before the Covid – 19 pandemic swept the world, only 5% of the entire workforce in the European Union worked from home on a frequent basis. For the past decade this share has remained constant, the percentage of workers, however, occasionally teleworking from home has risen from 6% in 2009 to 9%, a decade later, in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020).

Lockdowns and social distancing measures forced organizations to introduce teleworking arrangements on short notice, without having the time to prepare and design a detailed and thorough plan for this transition for most of their employees. The necessary infrastructure was often lacking, while the complex family situations of many workers could not be account for, as telework was introduced abruptly and unexpectedly (Carillo et al., 2021).

There are inherent differences between telework during conventional times and telework during a pandemic. During the Covid – 19 pandemic telework no longer allowed teleworkers the freedom of location and working time that it usually entails. Workers were inevitably confined to their homes and full-time teleworking during working hours became mandatory, while lockdowns and social isolation often exacerbated personal issues and blurred the boundaries between personal and professional spaces. Consequently, there are particular differentiating circumstances when telework is introduced during a pandemic (Carillo et al., 2021).

After natural disasters or public health emergencies, telework can help organizations address the need for business continuity, allowing dispersed teams to reassign duties and

responsibilities within the team during a time of crisis. It enables organizations to ensure business continuity, thus acting as an emergency measure (Mello et al., 2011). During normal times telework is often considered as a benefit conferred by organizations to their staff (Wheatley, 2012), to enhance work – life balance among employees (Donnelly & Proctor – Thompson, 2015) and not as a means to address an emergency and the fallout from a crisis.

In any case, telework during a crisis, as was the case during the Covid – 19 pandemic, becomes mandatory and is no longer optional for most workers (Carillo et al., 2021). Addressing the needs and concerns of both organizations, in terms of avoiding disruptions and ensuring business continuity, and employees, with respect to work – family balance, is critical, particularly when telework is introduced during a crisis (Savage, 2002).

As in most cases crises can not be anticipated well in advance, teleworking during a crisis and in particular during the Covid – 19 pandemic had to be implemented suddenly and without adequate preparation or a detailed plan. Organizations had to quickly plan for the introduction of telework, taking into account the new and unprecedented social environment, acquiring the necessary tools and infrastructure and preparing for a new way of work organization for the first time, at least on such a large scale (Donnelly & Proctor – Thompson, 2015).

Telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic was introduced during a time when organizations and workers were facing a diverse set of challenges, including stress due to health concerns, lockdowns and different degrees of access to Information and Communications technology and infrastructure. One crucial aspect that differentiates a public health crisis from other crises, for example due to natural disasters, is that it does not result in significant disruption to public Information and Communications technology infrastructure that could render the implementation of telework impossible (Carillo et al., 2021). On the other hand, a pandemic, like the recent Covid – 19 pandemic, leads to heightened concerns over the health and well-being of individuals and their families and loved ones, while the economic slump that occurs during the pandemic may also result in increased stress about one’s professional future (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). The stress induced by the public health, social and economic consequences of a pandemic could undermine the effectiveness of telework and the productivity of workers (Carillo et al., 2021).

Hence, while telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic, and emergency situations in general, shares some common features with telework during normal times, the unusual circumstances associated with the Covid – 19 pandemic differentiate it across critical dimensions. The abrupt and unexpected nature of the pandemic and the mandatory telework for most workers that it mandated, alter the work – life balance and the work environment for workers and force them to adapt to a new situation that requires considerable adjustments (Dawis et al., 2000).

The following table provides a summary of the key differences between telework in conventional times and telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic.

Table 1. The key differences between telework in conventional times and telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic

Features	Conventional Telework	Telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic
Workplace	Flexibility with respect to work location. It can be at home or any other location other than the organization’s premises.	Mandatory to work at home, as lockdowns were introduced.
Use of Information and Communications technology	Used as a means to introduce a new way of working.	Necessary to avoid significant disruptions and ensure business continuity.
Working hours	Flexibility with working hours.	Flexibility with working hours, but other teleworkers and family members could be at home due to lockdowns.
Proportion of working time	Full – time or part – time for a few days during the working week.	Full-time throughout the working week.
Implementation	Voluntary, with the necessary time to prepare the work environment and acquire the necessary technology and infrastructure.	Mandatory and unexpected, without the necessary time to adequately prepare with respect to the working environment and technology infrastructure.

Social context	Stable public health, social and economic environment.	Public health concerns, stress and uncertainty about the future.
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Source: Adjusted from Carillo et al., 2021.

The table above highlights that telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic brought about a new set of challenges compared to the existing ones of conventional telework, while at the same time one of the main benefits of telework during normal times, namely flexibility and potentially a better work – life balance, is no longer realized when telework becomes mandatory for everyone during a pandemic and public health crisis.

2.2 Role overload

Role overload can be defined as the subjective feeling of excessive demands imposed by the different roles in individual’s lives compared to the resources at their disposal (Byrne, 1994). Role overload occurs when individuals have to respond simultaneously to the demands imposed on them by the various roles in their lives and perform the duties associated with its role. In order to fulfill all the responsibilities associated with the different roles in an individual’s various domains of social and professional activities, he needs adequate resources. When there’s a relative scarcity of resources compared to the demands of the various roles, role overload emerges (Coverman, 1989).

Another setting where role overload may occur is when the expectations associated with the performance of a role by an individual are greater than his abilities, resources and drive to perform his duties appropriately and with ease, without too much strain (Creary & Gordon, 2016). Role overload is the result of excessive role demands, either in terms of a person’s available time or his physical and emotional resources, to perform all the duties associated with each and every role he assumes. When an employee faces high work demands, that require increased and sustained physical and mental effort, the impact on his physical and mental resources and his well-being can be severe and extensive (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Empirical evidence in the literature indicates that when job demands on an individual are rather high, they may result in increased levels of emotional strain, stress and illness (Schnall et al., 1994).

Excessive role demands may deplete a person’s physical and mental resources and have an adverse impact on his personal assessment of his ability to respond to the demands

imposed by the different roles he fulfills and how taking on these roles and performing the duties associated with them can satisfy his personal needs. It may also have an impact on his sense of whether good things will happen to him. The depletion of a person's physical and mental resources can lead to health issues and other negative consequences, especially when role demands are overwhelming and far exceed an individual's available resources. Excessive work and family demands can lead to insurmountable burdens and physical and emotional strain. As a result, they may give rise to increased work and family distress and decreased work and marital satisfaction (Creary & Gordon, 2016).

Harris and Bladen (1994) develop a questionnaire that measures role ambiguity, role conflict, job satisfaction and job tension as well as role overload. The questions concerning role overload, combining questions that were developed by Beehr et al. (1976) and Seashore et al. (1982), provide a personal assessment of whether an individual considers that has the time and necessary resources to perform his duties and fulfill his obligations associated with the various roles in his life.

Conway et al. (2020) in a study among public sector workers in Ireland and the United Kingdom find that role overload in public sector workers leads to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Employees tasked with client-facing duties experienced the most emotional exhaustion leading to burnout. Public sector workers who believe they are tasked with higher workloads compared to others, report higher role overload and emotional exhaustion.

Alfes et al. (2018) studying the effects of role overload among public sector workers in Switzerland find that role overload has a significant adverse impact on the emotional well-being and burnout experienced by public sector workers. Their research findings suggest that a positive work environment and supportive team climate attenuates the impact of role overload on the emotional well-being and consequently burnout of public sector workers. They also find that leadership style has no impact on role overload and worker burnout.

2.2 Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity is the result of uncertainty over the expectations associated with the responsibilities in an individual's role (Ilgen and Hollenbeck, 1991). Telework can increase role ambiguity due to the communication challenges that arise due to teleworkers not being physically present at the office and having to communicate using electronic

communication devices (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012). Teleworking, due to the distance from the production facilities, could lead to feelings of isolation and disengagement from colleagues (Cooper & Karland, 2002).

This can increase uncertainty over what is expected from someone and how one should act in certain occasions and in response to particular events. Since electronic communications do not offer as rich interactions as personal communication, teleworkers often experience greater role ambiguity, forcing them to expend more cognitive resources and leading to mental fatigue. As teleworking increases uncertainty over how to accurately interpret interactions and the context of issues, it can enhance role ambiguity for teleworkers (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012).

Rizzo et al. (1970) define role ambiguity in terms of how certain an individual can be about the consequences of his actions and the expectations that emanate from his roles in various social settings and the input and feedback he receives from his environment about the expectations he faces. They develop a scale with 30 items intended to assess the certainty an individual faces about his duties and responsibilities and his interaction with others, along with how clear the expectations are of his duties and responsibilities and whether he can accurately predict the consequences of his actions.

Palumbo (2020) investigates the impact of telework on employees in the public sector using a sample of 9,877 public servants across Europe. His research findings indicate that as teleworking blurs the line between professional and family spaces, it fosters role ambiguity that consequently leads to work – family conflict. By distorting the boundaries between an individual's private and professional lives, teleworking can lead to an intensification of both work and personal activities, leading to overexertion and intensifying feelings of fatigue among teleworkers, thus promoting work – family conflict among public servants.

2.4 Work-family conflict

Reconciling the demands imposed by work and life roles can be demanding and conflicts between the different sets of roles can often arise. Work-family conflict can be one of the most common sources of stress for workers (Andrade & Petiz Lousã, 2021). Work-family conflict occurs when the responsibilities of one domain can interfere with the responsibilities in the other domain and the set of roles it encompasses (Byron, 2005). As the available time in a day for every individual is finite, time pressure can result in work-

family conflict with work duties interfering with family life duties and vice versa. Work-family conflict and the emotional strain that follows leads to a host of negative effects in every domain of activity, including reduced levels of job satisfaction, high turnover rates and an increased number of days of absence in the work domain and discontent with marital and family life in the family domain, while it also can cause mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety (Amstad et al., 2011).

Teleworkers working from home try to set clear boundaries between work and home, by creating a separate work space in their homes to segregate their personal and working lives. They also seek to create routines that clearly delineate the working hours during the day. Teleworkers with children often exhibit a more clearly defined boundary between personal and work life that is bounded by their children's activities. At the same time, many teleworkers seek to adjust their home environment to better suit their work arrangement (Mustafa & Gold, 2013).

Mustafa and Gold (2013) find that telework is not conducive to maintaining a healthy work-home balance, at least for freelancers that are not employees of a particular organization. The close proximity, or even the blending, of work and home environments can lead to anxiety, increase stress and feelings of frustration. Freelancing teleworkers may experience these feelings to an even greater degree than teleworking employees, as they have even less control and face more uncertainty over their work and the boundaries between work and personal life. They conclude that the management of these boundaries is particularly critical if teleworkers are to achieve and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

Teleworking can lead to feelings of social and professional isolation, worse outcomes when it comes to interpersonal relationships with other employees and less involvement with organizational issues, while the lines between personal life and work also become blurred (Rasmussen & Corbett, 2008).

Andrade and Lousã (2021) investigate the impact of enforced telework during the Covid – 19 pandemic. Their research findings indicate that too many work-related tasks can have an adverse impact on the work-home balance of teleworkers and consequently can result in increased work-home conflict. Teleworkers might find it increasingly difficult to maintain balance and control over their work and personal roles, enhancing perceptions of work-home conflict. Low job autonomy, when workers have limited control over

aspects of their work roles, such as the ability to plan their duties, set a timetable for different tasks and determine their goals, is another factor that can contribute to a sense of work-family conflict. Support from colleagues and supervisors has a moderating effect on work-family conflict and could moderate perceptions of work-family conflict among workers.

Enforced teleworking from home imposes significant workspace constraints on several workers as their homes are not suited for work, as they often have to share their household with other family members and their home environment has several distractions. This in turn can have an adverse impact on the emotional well-being of workers, their productivity and their efforts to maintain a healthy work-family balance (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Research by Delanoetje and Verbruggen (2020) finds that telework has no effect on work-family conflict overall, but a negative effect during teleworking days, meaning that workers experienced higher levels of work-family conflict when they had to telework from home than during days working at the office. The authors posit that this finding could be due to the fact that workers probably did not have enough experience teleworking and thus were unable to take advantage of increased work flexibility, or their roles at work and at home became blurred as a result of teleworking, a potential outcome that is often cited as a risk factor of teleworking that may lead to higher levels of work-family conflict.

Social contact and relationships in the workplace determine to an important extent job satisfaction (Sims et al., 1976). Two important notions when it comes to employee satisfaction, thus central to the successful implementation and outcome of telework, are perceived organizational support and perceived social support. The former concept refers to whether employees consider that their organization appreciates their efforts and work and treats their well-being as important (Eisenberg et al., 1997), while the latter concept concerns the extent to which workers believe they have the support of their colleagues and supervisors (Bentley et al., 2016).

Offering specific organizational support to teleworkers is considered an important factor with respect to efficient and effective teleworking practices, as telework differs in a number of important dimensions from work undertaken in an organization's production facilities. The distinct features of telework dictate a different management support for

the implementation of telework arrangements to lead to efficiency and positive work outcomes (Bosua et al., 2013).

Teleworkers in organizations that promoted and placed an emphasis on information sharing among colleagues reported lower work – conflict and increased productivity (Lautsch et al., 2009). When managing teleworkers, supervisors should place an emphasis on effectively managing relationships, instead of focusing on the management of tasks and a task-oriented approach (Dahlstrom, 2013).

Support by the upper management echelons inside an organization, effective communication and building trust relationships among coworkers and between workers and supervisors are important factors for the successful implementation of telework. Trust relationships determine the effectiveness of telework, having a considerable impact on the attitudes of employees towards telework and their performance when working remotely (Baker et al., 2006). Support to teleworkers by supervisors can reduce their stress levels and lead to increased job satisfaction and better outcomes for teleworkers (Babin & Boles, 1996).

Telework can have an adverse impact on workers and lead to feelings of social isolation, isolation at work and distancing from colleagues and increased levels of stress and job strain. Providing social and practical support is important for teleworkers to be able to avoid these adverse outcomes. Organizations that seek to benefit from telework must provide adequate support to their teleworkers working remotely (Bentley et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the greater the extent of telework an employee is involved in, the greater must be the support he receives and this is a fact that organizational policies and practices must take into account. Understanding the issues teleworkers face and how telework affects their work performance and physical and emotional health, as well as the ways they can enhance the management of employees teleworking and being away from the organization's premises, are issues and concerns of increasing importance for modern organizations seeking to benefit from telework to enhance their productivity and worker satisfaction (Bentley et al., 2016).

Netemeyer et al. (1996) develop a 10-item scale employing self-reported measures of work – family and family – work conflict. They consider work – family and family – work conflict as related, but at the same time distinct, types of conflict that arise from the different roles of individuals in work and family contexts and the extent to which the

performance of one's duties in one domain interferes with the performance of the individual's duties and responsibilities in the other domain of an adult's life. The items in the questionnaire provide a self-assessment by workers of whether their duties in the family interfere with their duties at work and whether they find they have the mental and physical resources to perform their duties both at home and work and overcome the strain it imposes on them and their ability to do so.

In a study among faculty members of public universities in the Czech Republic, Záborská et al. (2018) find that work – family conflict significantly increases burnout and appears to be the strongest predictor of burnout among faculty members, while also mediating the relationship between role demands and burnout.

In another study among public servants, involving employees in a state university and a city council in Spain, Blanch and Aluja (2012) find that work – family conflict mediates the relationship between support at work and in the family and burnout. Their findings indicate that burnout has a greater impact on burnout for women than men, as women in Europe still face a considerably higher workload with respect to domestic chores compared to men. At the same time, support provided in the family reduced work – life conflict for men to a greater extent than it did for women.

Investigating the relationship between work – family conflict and turnover intentions and the mediating role of work engagement in public hospital employees in Turkey, Yucel et al. (2021) find that work – family conflict increases worker turnover, with work engagement acting as a partial mediator of the relationship between work – family conflict and turnover intentions. Furthermore, they find that support from supervisors moderates the relationship between work – family conflict and work engagement.

2.3 Employee engagement

Employee engagement can be described as a positive mental state of satisfaction among employees, exhibiting high levels of energy and involvement, vigour, dedication and efficiency in how they perform their duties (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Maslach et al., 2021). Work engagement can be considered as the polar opposite of burnout (Demerouti et al., 2010).

Work engagement is important for modern organizations as it can be an important determinant of enhanced creativity, performance and loyalty by workers leading to

improved customer satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2014). Engaged workers exhibit high energy and enthusiasm about their work duties, are more focused on their work tasks (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018), while they also attain superior performance and financial results (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). They also appear to be more involved with their colleagues, more willing to help them and collaborate with other team members, leading to improved team performance and productivity (Orth & Volmer, 2017). As a result, work engagement may often result in better collaboration and enhanced team performance (Costa et al., 2015).

Work engagement among employees differs based on factors such as the working environment and overall working conditions, their distinct personal features, as well as the behavioral strategies employed by organizations (Bakker et al., 2014). Studies have found that workers are most engaged when they have an abundance of resources (Bakker et al., 2014) and when they have the ability to recover sufficiently from the strain they experienced from previous work sessions (Sonnentag, 2003).

Work resources are those features of an employee's work environment that enable him to achieve his goals and ambitions, reduce work strain and demands and promote his personal development (Demerouti et al., 2001). They include facilities and equipment, a sense of involvement in the decision-making process in the workplace, enjoying support from coworkers and having the ability of flexible work arrangements (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

Resources provide additional motivation to workers, as they enable them to perform their work duties and reach their goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), while having ample resources can help workers cope with increased work demands during periods of high workloads (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Personal resources, such as a positive outlook on one's work and life prospects, resilience and effectiveness are also important determinants of work engagement (Mäkikangas et al., 2013).

An organization's leadership may also have an important impact on work engagement among its workers, as an effective and efficient style of leadership can enhance workers' stock of available work and personal resources (Breevaart et al., 2014).

As telework may lead to a sense of separation from a worker's organization and work environment, teleworkers may exhibit less attachment to their organization and consider themselves as more independent from their organization. Extended teleworking can lead

to even less attachment and a diminished sense of belonging to their organization over time (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999), since their daily routines do not include any physical reminders of their organization and its premises. Therefore, telework can potentially have an adverse impact on employee engagement (Sardeshmukh et al., 2012).

Telework can have a significant impact on job satisfaction, stress levels and job performance of employees. Biron and Van Veldhoven (2016) find that part-time teleworkers, that is employees who spend a few days of the week teleworking while during the rest of the week they work at the office, report lower levels of fatigue and greater concentration on work duties, when working from home compared to days when they work at their organization's production facilities. Overall, part-time teleworkers report more positive emotional reactions to work, experiencing less stress and fatigue and greater motivation when they telework from home than when they have to be physically present at the office. A crucial finding of their research is the moderating impact of worktime control on perceived fatigue and the need for recovery after work when teleworking from home. Moderate levels of worktime control are optimal to minimize perceived fatigue, while high levels of control can lead to negative outcomes, as workers with high levels of worktime control may experience greater levels of fatigue and stress.

Workers with high levels of worktime control when working from home may suffer from increased stress as a result of concerns about their performance and decisions made, while they may also experience cognitive overload. Furthermore, these workers may feel pressed to do more when working from home, both in terms of tasks related to their work but also with respect to tasks that pertain to their non-work roles in life. They also may have to deal with domestic chores and other nonwork duties during normal working hours, thus having to extend their working schedule to non-standard office hours, something that could impact their emotional wellbeing, creating a perception of increased working hours. In this case, worktime control turns from an asset into a liability (Biron & Van Veldhoven, 2016). The authors posit that telework is underutilized by organizations and an increase in the number of telework days, following, for example, a schedule of 3 telework days in one week followed by 3 days of office work the next week, for an average of 2.5 working days per week, could increase the benefits workers and organizations receive from telework.

Delanoëije and Verbruggen (2020) find that organizations introducing a number of teleworking days during the workweek lead to reduced stress levels for workers, both

overall as well as during teleworking days compared to days working from the office. A possible explanation for this finding is the reduced commuting needs of teleworkers. Teleworkers reported higher levels of performance and engagement during teleworking days compared to office days, but their overall performance and engagement levels did not increase after the introduction of telework. Overall, teleworkers reported lower levels of stress in general when allowed to telework, but no effects were observed on job performance and engagement. On teleworking days, however, they reported less stress and higher performance and engagement with their work tasks. Thus, the research findings of Delanoëije and Verbruggen (2020) are consistent with the research findings of Biron and Van Veldhoven (2016) that increasing the number of teleworking days will have a positive effect on the overall job satisfaction, performance and engagement of part-time teleworkers. Other research, however, finds a more positive, albeit small, impact on job performance and engagement on lower numbers of teleworking days, no more than 2.5 days per week on average, as more days of telework could have a negative impact on interpersonal relationships and collaboration among colleagues (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007).

Most studies in the literature on telework investigated the impact of teleworking on a part-time basis, with workers teleworking some days and working at the office during the rest of the workweek. The Covid-19 pandemic mandated teleworking from home for all, or at least most, workers in an organization. With physical meetings no longer possible, workers had to rely on technological solutions to communicate with their colleagues and organize group work. These new communication venues, however, lack the richness of personal contact and impose various limitations on communication. Personal communication styles would have to adjust to the new conditions. Research findings, however, indicate that it is difficult to have a group conversation when multiple people are involved, while it is impossible to advance interpersonal relationships between people in different groups in after-work virtual meetings. These challenges hinder effective communication and may elicit negative feelings in workers. Workers may also find that virtual meetings are too frequent and as a result may end up having a negative effect on productivity and the well-being of workers (Waizenegger et al., 2020).

Supervisors play a critical role in the effective adoption of telework, as organizations rely on them to supervise and direct employees working away from the organization's premises using telework and ensure that the organization's policies are enforced (Lautsch et al., 2009). Thus, the attitudes and perceptions of managers about telework and its

impact are important, since they affect to a great degree the successful implementation of telework in an organization.

Teleworking supervisors face the same challenges teleworkers do, namely as they are physically absent from the organization's premises, they may not be able to provide feedback to the same degree as their non-teleworking colleagues, not be up to date with organizational issues and other information about the situation in the organization and their supervision may be subpar compared to the supervision provided by supervisors that are physically present at the office. Teleworking supervisors also find it more difficult to manage subordinates compared to their non-teleworking colleagues or when themselves are physically present at the office (Park & Cho, 2020).

While one would expect that the communication difficulties teleworking supervisors face may lead them to shift their focus from communication to activities that don't require interaction with others, Park and Cho (2020) find that teleworking supervisors spend just as much time on meetings and supervision duties as their non-teleworking colleagues. They do find, however, that teleworking supervisors shy away from tasks that require physical presence at the organization's premises and as a result spend less time on these tasks compared to supervisors who do not engage in teleworking. Feelings of fairness and the perception that teleworking supervisors were assigned the same tasks as non-teleworking supervisors, have a positive effect on evaluations of the impact of telework (Park & Cho, 2020). It is important, therefore, for teleworking supervisors not to feel excluded or ostracized compared to supervisors who do not telework.

More experienced supervisors also tended to evaluate the impact of telework on organizational efficiency more positively. The same result holds for supervisors with more experience supervising teleworkers and supervisors who telework more often. Management support for telework is also another important factor on assessments of the impact of telework, with supervisors who believe that upper management supports telework having more positive perceptions about its impact on their organization (Park & Cho, 2020).

Telework may have an adverse impact even on the performance of the colleagues of teleworkers. The more colleagues telework from home, the greater the impact on the performance of a worker and consequently of his team (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

Cooperation at work is difficult and ineffective when workers are unable to share important information immediately and effectively (Knights & McCabe, 2003).

Workers' performance is influenced by how they utilize each other's experience, abilities and knowledge. As teleworkers are not in close proximity to other workers, it is more challenging to share their knowledge with their colleagues in the organization, as a digital presence cannot replace one's physical presence, when it comes to efficient cooperation among coworkers. Team performance may be diminished when a number of workers telework from home, with teams where workers do not telework more than one day a week often experiencing greater team performance. Consequently, in certain cases telework may have an adverse impact on both individual as well as team performance (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020).

Teleworkers may also feel the need to demonstrate to their colleagues and supervisors that they work just as hard as workers who are physically present at the office (Golden, 2006). At the same time, they may feel that their absence from their organization's production facilities puts them at a disadvantage with respect to promotion opportunities, performance rewards and favorable evaluations of their work from their supervisors (Cooper & Kurland, 2002).

Demerouti et al. (2010) find that the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory is a reliable and valid instrument to measure work engagement and provide an assessment of employee burnout, that can assist organizations in assessing the occupational health, motivation and work satisfaction of their workers. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory uses a questionnaire of 16 scale questions, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, about particular statements meant to capture feelings of work engagement and employee burnout. The questions range from work pressure to perceptions of energy and motivation during and after work, as well as how employees assess how interesting and motivating their work duties are.

Based on the preceding discussion, this research aims to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Role ambiguity influences positively Work-Family Conflict (WFC).

Hypothesis 2. Role overload is positively associated with Work-Family Conflict (WFC).

Hypothesis 3. Work - Family Conflict (WFC) is negatively related to employee engagement.

Hypothesis 4. Work- Family Conflict mediates the relationship between (a) role ambiguity, (b) role overload & (c) employee engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure and sample

The data reported in this paper are drawn from a survey conducted across e- EFKA branches, located in several cities in Greece in December 2021. The questions of the questionnaire are 33 in total and in each one the respondents were asked to answer a 5-point Likert scale, referring to the extent in which they agree with each statement. In addition, there is a demographic data section that studies the social profile of the respondents.

The analysis of the answers will provide useful information about the level of employee engagement, while at the same time it will highlight the main factors created by the questionnaire.

The electronic questionnaire was available online through Google Forms and all participants were informed regarding the anonymity and voluntary nature of their participation and responses.

Overall, a total of 360 questionnaires were answered. The female participants were 76,5% and the male only 23,5%. Moreover 39,6% of the responders were high school graduates, whereas the rest 60,4% held a university degree (41,6%) or even higher (18,8%). The majority of the participants (75,1%) were married and 72,6% worked in various cities in Greece, 18,3% in Athens and 9,1% in Thessaloniki. Regarding the employee status of the participants, only 23,5% were managers while the rest 76,5% were not placed in a managerial position. As for their experience, 28,5% of the responders had less than 10 years working experience, 45,4% 11-20 years of experience and the rest or the responders held more than 21 years of working experience.

3.2 Measures

For all measures, participants provided responses on a five-point Likert scale (“1= I strongly disagree”, “5= I strongly agree”). Moreover, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted for all measures used in this paper (Maximum likelihood extraction method; promax rotation) with a cutoff value of 0.50 to indicate satisfactory loading.

3.2.1 “Work Overload”

Work Overload (Role Overload) was assessed by a six-item scale based on Harris and Bladen (1994). Sample items include “It often seems like I have too much for one person to do”. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.796

3.2.2. “Role Ambiguity”

Role ambiguity was assessed by a six- item scale based on Rizzo et al, (1970). Sample items include “It is clear what the objectives of my job are”. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0,829.

3.2.3 “Work - Family Conflict”

Work - Family Conflict was assessed by a five- item scale based on Netemyer et al. (1996). Sample items include “My job produces strain, that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties”. Cronbach’s Alpha here was 0,921.

3.2.4 “Employee (Work) Engagement”

Work engagement (both Vigor & Dedication) was measured based on Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti et al., 2010) scale. Vigor was assessed by eight- item scale, which included “After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better” (R). Cronbach’s Alpha was 0,726. (R) stands for reversed item. Following the same path, Dedication was assessed by an eight- item scale, which included “I find my work to be a positive challenge”. Cronbach’s Alpha was 0,766. For Employee Engagement Cronbach’s Alpha was 0,728.

3.3 Control Variables

For this paper some individual – level variables were controlled, such as *gender* (“male”, “female”), *employee status* (“manager”, “non managerial position”), *education level* (“high school graduate”, “university graduate”, “higher than university graduate”) and *years of working experience* (“1-10”, “11-20” and “more than 21”) etc. According to the

analysis, however, none of the demographic variables had any effect on our model. This is why the reported results do not include any demographic variables.

3.4 Method of Analysis

To satisfy the needs of this study, “Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied with the software “SmartPLS 3.3.5” (Ringle, Wende, Becker, 2014). PLS-SEM is constantly increasing its popularity in many fields of research, because it enables the user to include hierarchical component models. The software is easy to use and makes it simple to implement and visualize models or introducing hierarchical components, which is crucial for this research (Úbeda – Garcia et al., 2018a, b).

These models are comprised by formative & reflective constructs, an essential part of this study. The proposed and measurement model is depicted in Figure 1 below. To be more specific, the model consists of five (5) factors: Work Overload, Role Ambiguity, Work Family Conflict and Employee Engagement, which consists of vigor and dedication, and was treated as a “reflective-formative” high order component.

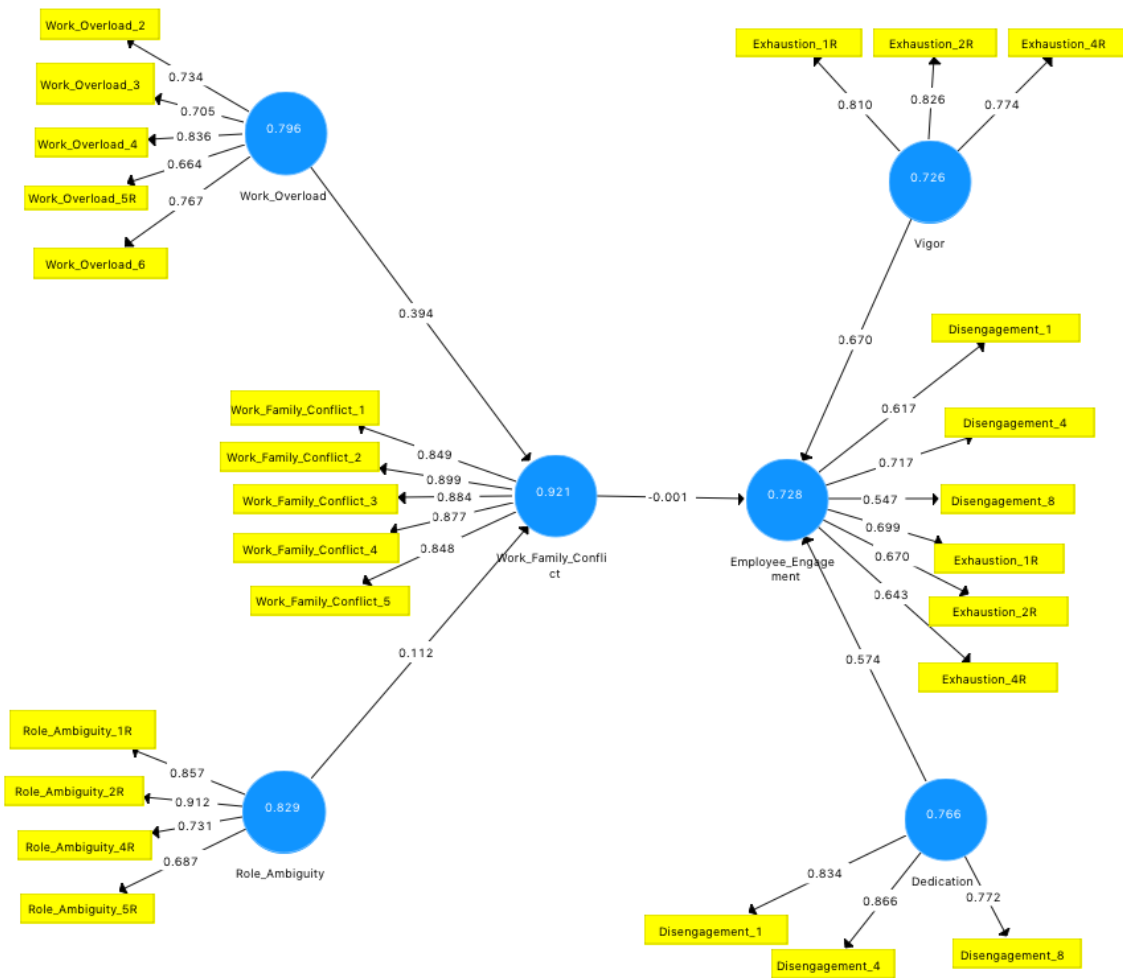


Figure 1. The Proposed Measurement Model

3.5 Assessment of the Measurement Model

According to the above, the conceptual model as seen in figure 1, contains both reflective and formative indicators. Regarding the reflective indicators, validity and reliability was assessed by Hair’s et. al. (2016, p. 95) guidelines, which include “individual indicator reliability”, “compose reliability (CR)” and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As seen in Figure 1 & Table 1, all factor loadings were above 0.5 threshold, while the AVE and CR scored were above the threshold of 0.50 and 0.70 respectively.

Table 2. Construct Reliability & Validity

CONSTRUCT RELIABILITY & VALIDITY	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Dedication	0.766	0.781	0.864	0.681
Employee_Engagement	0.728	0.735	0.814	0.514
Role_Ambiguity	0.829	0.941	0.877	0.643
Vigor	0.726	0.727	0.846	0.646
Work_Family_Conflict	0.921	0.936	0.940	0.760
Work_Overload	0.796	0.800	0.860	0.553

Regarding Discriminant Validity, the study followed two criteria available in SmartPLS (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014): The “Fornell-Lacker”, and the “Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio” (HTMT<0.85). As seen in Table 1.b all of the HTMT values were below 0.85, so discriminant validity was achieved. As regards “Employee Engagement”, which is formative indicator, a different approach is suggested, taking into account the recommendations of Petter, Straub and Rai (2007). Then “formative factors” were tested for “multicollinearity” according to “Variance Inflation Factors” (VIF) (see Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009). All of the VIF loadings were below the upper threshold of 3.33. This means that construct reliability was achieved.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity, HTMT

DISCRIMINAL VALIDITY	HTMT					
	Dedication	Employee_Engagement	Role_Ambiguity	Vigor	Work_Family_Conflict	Work_Overload
Dedication						
Employee_Engagement	0.655					
Role_Ambiguity	0.548	0.487				
Vigor	0.373	0.578	0.213			
Work_Family_Conflict	0.097	0.454	0.157	0.634		
Work_Overload	0.163	0.424	0.164	0.517	0.465	

Table 4. Discriminant Validity, Fornell-Lacker

DISCRIMINAL VALIDITY	Fornell-Lacker					
	Dedication	Employee_Engagement	Role_Ambiguity	Vigor	Work_Family_Conflict	Work_Overload
Dedication	0.764					
Employee_Engagement	0.625					
Role_Ambiguity	-0.431	-0.323	0.802			
Vigor	0.277	0.922	-0.184	0.804		
Work_Family_Conflict	-0.057	-0.457	0.162	-0.530	0.872	
Work_Overload	-0.129	-0.371	0.128	-0.394	0.408	0.744

Taking into account the above measurements, it is safe to say that the model is both reliable and valid. The next step is to test the Hypotheses, through “Two -Step Approach Model, as seen below in Figure 2.

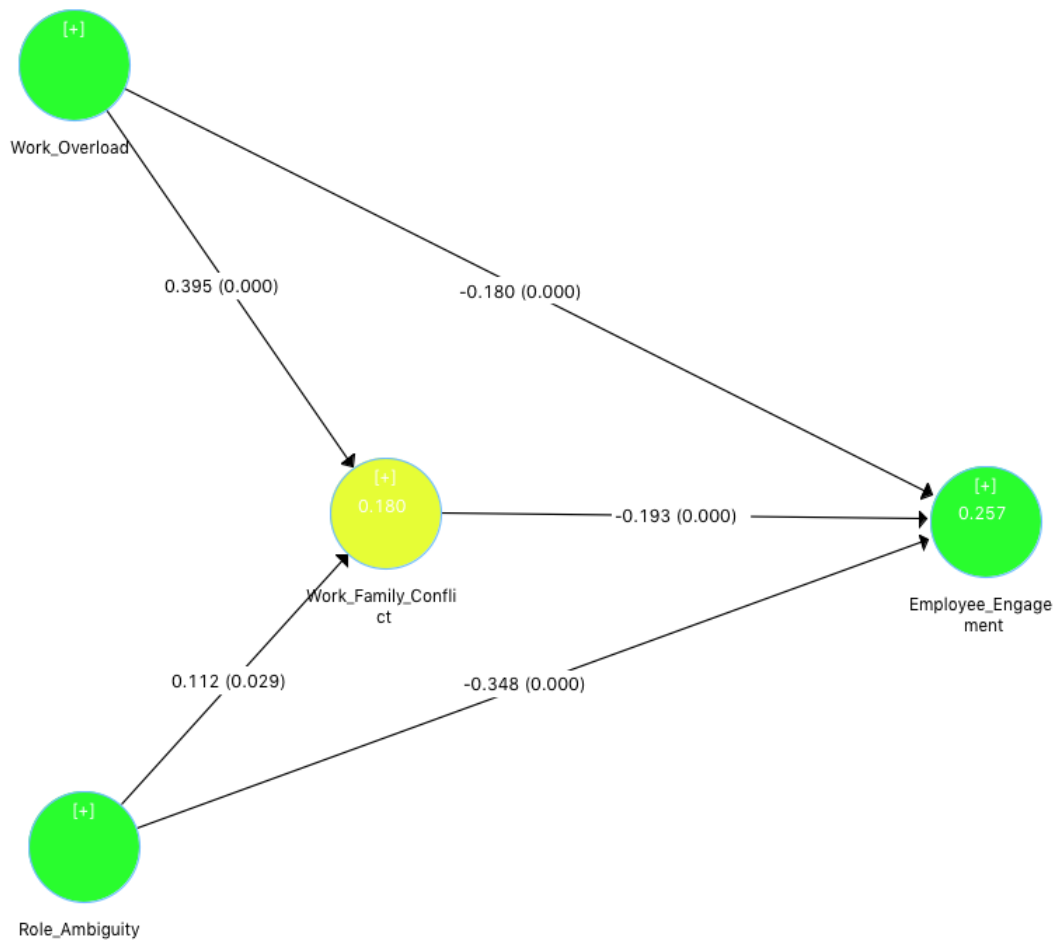


Figure 2. The “Two-Step Approach” Model

3.6 Assessment of Two-Step Approach Model & Results

In the analysis process of the model (Figure 2) and the Two Step Approach (TSA) (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Starstedt, 2016, pp. 230-233) the bootstrapping procedure was applied (2.000 randomly drawn samples). Tables 4 and Figure 2 show the path coefficient along with their significance levels.

Analytically table 2 shows that Work Overload influences positively Work Family Conflict ($\beta = 0.395$, $p < 0.001$), proving that Hypothesis 1 is supported. Likewise, Role Ambiguity ($b = 0.112$, $p = 0.029$) influences positively the Work family conflict, while

Work family conflict influences negatively the Employee engagement ($b=-0.193$, $p<0.001$). Based on the above, the hypothesis H2 & H3 are totally supported.

Table 4. Path Coefficients & P-Values

Path Coefficients	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STD)	T Statistics (O /STD)	P Values
Role_Ambiguity -> Employee_Engagement	-0.348	-0.348	0.046	7.584	0.000
Role_Ambiguity -> Work_Family_Conflict	0.112	0.111	0.051	2.183	0.029
Work_Family_Conflict -> Employee_Engagement	-0.193	-0.192	0.053	3.613	0.000
Work_Overload -> Employee_Engagement	-0.180	-0.179	0.049	3.647	0.000
Work_Overload -> Work_Family_Conflict	0.395	0.394	0.053	7.395	0.000

Before examining the indirect effect, the relationship (1) between Work Overload and Employee Engagement and (2) Role Ambiguity and Employee Engagement was tested. As seen in Table 4 above, Work Overload has a significant negative impact on Employee Engagement. Moreover, Role Ambiguity influences strongly and in a negative way Employee Engagement. Next, the indirect effects were examined, indicating if Work family conflict is a mediator between the relationship among Work overload an Employee engagement and among Role ambiguity and Employee engagement. As shown in Table 5 below, Work Family Conflict mediates the relation between Work overload and Employee engagement ($ab=-0.076$, $p<0.001$) but this is not true in the second relation ($p=0.065$). Based on this, the Hypothesis 4 is partially supported.

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effect

Specific Indirect Effect	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STD)	T Statistics (O /STD)	P Values
Work_Overload -> Work_Family_Conflict -> Employee_Engagement	-0.076	-0.075	0.023	3.323	0.001
Role_Ambiguity -> Work_Family_Conflict -> Employee_Engagement	-0.022	-0.021	0.012	1.847	0.065

To sum up the above measurements, table 4 concludes the Hypotheses tested and the results according to the final, “Two- Step Approach” Model.

Table 5. Summary of Path Coefficients and Significance levels

Direct Hypothesis and corresponding paths	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	Hypothesis Support
Work Overload → Work Family Conflict	0.395	7.395	H1 supported
Role Ambiguity → Work Family Conflict	0.112	2.183	H2 supported
Work Family Conflict → Employee Engagement	-0.193	3.613	H3 supported
Mediation Hypothesis and corresponding path			
Work Overload → Work Family Conflict → Employee Engagement	-0.076	3.323	H4 partially supported
Role Ambiguity → Work Family Conflict → Employee Engagement	-0.022	1.847	

4. Discussion and conclusions

The present study investigated the impact of work - family conflict on employee engagement in the context of teleworking, as well as the mediating effect of work – family conflict on the relationship between role overload and role ambiguity and employee engagement.

Teleworking poses new challenges on workers seeking to balance the various tasks and responsibilities of the different roles in their work and life domains. Estimating the effects on employee engagement of such critical concepts as work overload, role ambiguity, and work – family conflict for teleworkers is critical for estimating the impact of telework on an organization’s productivity and performance.

The Covid – 19 pandemic had a profound impact on the organization of work, as the number of workers teleworking from home and not being physically present at work skyrocketed, due to the constraints imposed by governments around the globe and in Greece to tackle the effects of the pandemic and minimize its impact on public health outcomes. Particularly for many public organizations, it was the first time they had to implement teleworking arrangements for the vast majority of their employees, thus finding themselves in a new and unprecedented organizational situation and dealing with new working arrangements. Hence, investigating the impact of teleworking on work – life conflict, role overload and employee engagement has become of increasing practical and academic interest and received renewed attention. These developments motivated the study of teleworking in the present study, especially in the context of public organizations in the country that had to implement teleworking on short notice without

much previous experience and resources. The present research was conducted among employees in the National Social Security Fund (EFKA), one of the biggest public organizations in Greece, serving most workers in the country.

The first research hypothesis posits that role ambiguity has a positive effect on work – family conflict. Role ambiguity is the lack of clear and accurate information about one’s duties and responsibilities in a particular role. An individual should be in a position to anticipate with a certain degree of accuracy the outcome that his actions will produce and be able to receive input from his environment about the expectations of his role (Rizzo et al., 1970). When the expected end result of one’s behavior is uncertain and unpredictable, then role ambiguity ensues (Pearce, 1981). Role ambiguity could lead to increased tension and stress, adversely affect job satisfaction and even result in lower self-esteem. Thus, one would expect role ambiguity to act as an additional stressor on the emotional well-being of workers and increase work – family conflict. This study finds that there is a positive significant association between role ambiguity and work – family conflict. Thus, our first research hypothesis is confirmed.

The second research hypothesis posits that role overload is positively associated with work – family conflict. Role overload is the perception that an individual is overwhelmed with role demands compared to the resources at his disposal (Byrne, 1994). Role overload is associated with an increased load of responsibilities, challenges and demands at an individual’s work and family domains and, as a result, can lead to increased role – family conflict and have an adverse impact on the engagement and performance of employees (Lepine et al., 2005). Furthermore, role overload can lead a worker to question his ability to address the responsibilities and ability to complete his work, given the time constraints he faces and his available energy reserves (Montani & Dagenais-Desmarais, 2018). Consequently, a high workload leads to increased uncertainty and hence an elevated risk for workers that they might lose valuable personal resources, such as energy and time (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). An individual’s efforts to preserve his available resources can lead to a negative effect of role overload on work engagement. Conservation of resources theory posits that every person seeks to preserve resources that are valuable to him (Montani & Dagenais-Desmarais, 2018). When the outcome of one’s efforts and expenditure of resources is uncertain, individuals perceive the loss of resources as a possible outcome that could have adverse consequences on their well-being. The possibility of resource losses can have a demotivating effect and lead to a reduction in work engagement in an effort to preserve these crucial resources. When an individual’s

resources are eventually depleted, as a result of role overload, burnout and diminished work engagement occurs (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). Individuals attempt to preserve their resources by disengaging from situations and tasks that will result in the depletion of their available resources (Hablesben & Bowler, 2007). The present research finds that there is a positive and significant relationship between role overload and work – family conflict. Thus, the first research hypothesis about the relationship between role overload and work – family conflict is confirmed. A perception of role overload by workers leads to increased work – family conflict.

Finally, the third research hypothesis posits that there is a negative relationship between work – family conflict and employee engagement, while our fourth research hypothesis suggests that work - family conflict mediates the relationship between role overload, role ambiguity and employee engagement. Previous research on work – family conflict found mixed results about the impact of teleworking on work – family conflict. One strand in the literature finds that teleworking reduces work – family conflict by allowing workers to more efficiently respond to work demands while also taking into account their family demands (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). Working from home and the increased flexibility it entails, allows teleworkers to better adjust their work demands and structure to the needs of their families (Golden et al., 2006). On the other hand, other research finds that the greater availability of an individual to other family members when teleworking (Bailey & Kurland, 1999) modifies the expectations of family members and alters the person’s work – life balance, resulting in greater involvement with family obligations at the expense of work duties (Aryee et al., 2005). The research findings confirm the hypothesis that work – family conflict is negatively related to employee engagement, possibly due to the increased stress, the demotivating impact and the depletion of resources that work – family conflict results in. Thus, the third research hypothesis is confirmed. Furthermore, with respect to the fourth research hypothesis, this research finds that work – family conflict mediates the relationship between work overload and employee engagement, while it doesn’t mediate the relationship between role ambiguity and employee engagement. Therefore, work – family conflict acts as a partial mediator.

5. Practical and theoretical implications

The present research contributes to the literature on the antecedents of telework and its’ impact on employee engagement. Its findings are in line with previous research that

incongruencies between the different roles in an individual's work and family domains can lead to a situation of work – family conflict (Byron, 2005).

The research findings highlight that employees in e-EFKA face the same challenges in the context of teleworking from home as workers in organizations in the private for-profit sector of the economy. Increased work - family conflict has an adverse impact on employee engagement and consequently on productivity, burnout and worker turnover. Conservation of resources theory can help explain how work – family conflict, role overload and role ambiguity can lead to diminished work engagement (Montani & Dagenais-Desmarais, 2018).

Addressing work – family conflict, work overload and role ambiguity is critical for all managers of e-EFKA seeking to improve employee engagement and consequently enhance organizational performance and productivity while also avoiding worker burnout, especially when employees have to telework. E- EFKA needs to take steps that clarify work demands and duties, as well as remove any tasks and work activities that lead to job demands that take a toll on workers' resources emotional and cognitive resources, thus leading to worker burnout and diminish worker engagement (Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Role overload and ambiguity act as hindrances to worker engagement (Lepine et al., 2005) and should be minimized to the extent possible (Montani & Dagenais-Desmarais, 2018).

It is critical that actions should be taken, to introduce activities and an organizational culture that enables workers to undertake meaningful tasks, allows them to fulfill their potential and foster a positive work environment that provides role clarity (Dagenais – Desmarais et al., 2014). This can enhance worker engagement and lead to enhanced performance and productivity (Montani & Dagenais-Desmarais, 2018).

With regards to EFKA in particular, our research findings point towards the need for a reshuffling of the human resources department. The organization needs to utilize employees with relevant degrees and working experience, while also training employees on new approaches in human resources management. The human resources department needs to be organized on the basis of a clear plan, in close cooperation with the upper management of EFKA and educational institutions.

Introducing a high – performance work systems can help EFKA improve worker engagement and avoid burnout and high worker turnover. Previous research has found

that the introduction of a high – performance work system can contribute to enhanced worker engagement, as these systems can help organizations address role ambiguity and role conflict among workers and improve their emotional well – being, thus avoiding the negative consequences that role ambiguity and role conflict can result in (Kloutsiniotis et al., 2021).

Improving communication between employees, supervisors and management is also critical, particularly taking into account the organization's size and the fact that its branches are scattered across Greece. This makes communication particularly difficult at times and cumbersome. There is a clear need for a practice of frequent communication between supervisors and subordinates, where supervisors take stock of and discuss the problems of the organization's staff. What causes role overload and role ambiguity? Is it poor organization? A lack of communication? Understaffing? The systematic communication and discussion of issues will reveal the real causes of various problems within the organization and thus help the organization to come up with the right solutions.

Any problems that are identified must be communicated to EFKA's management, that will in response design policies that will promote skills matching, placing the right person in the right position, according to his qualifications and working experience as well as his needs and desires. Clearly, it is not easy to implement effectively right away a work practice of this sort, however, with the right organization and consistency, in the long-term significant progress can be accomplished.

An additional measure could involve the creation of a performance evaluation and rewards system, a high-performance working systems practice, that would be communicated clearly to every employee. Everyone must be aware of their duties and responsibilities. Those employees with the highest performance evaluation would be rewarded and those with the lowest performance evaluation retrained. This would reduce role ambiguity and role overload, as current practices lead to a lack of role clarity, with employees performing the work and duties of others. An improved organizational design would bring about better task delegation and less workload.

These initiatives would boost employee morale and sense of justice and lead to increased job satisfaction and work engagement. Along with the other measures and initiatives discussed above, that would lead to a reduction of work – life conflict, time management and life balance seminars and educational material could also help EFKA employees deal

with work – life conflict and improve work – life balance, avoiding burnout and boosting work engagement.

6. Limitations

Despite its contribution, the present research is not without limitations. The sample was rather small compared to e- EFKA’s total number of employees and a larger sample could have been useful. Data collection took place utilizing a questionnaire at a limited time frame, thus dynamic causal inferences are not possible. However, testing a theory – driven model using structural equation modelling still allows for useful inferences to be drawn (Boxall et al., 2016).

Another limitation is that this paper examined the attitude of all employees towards telework and all other factors. It would be interesting to test the same model, with different employee groups, based on their age or their family status (single, married, married with children etc).

An additional limitation is that a number of relevant factors that have an impact on employee engagement, namely high-performance working systems and work pressure (Kloustiniotis et al., 2021), were not included in the research.

Furthermore, the research was conducted during unprecedented times, amidst the Covid – 19 pandemic and at a time when most employees had to resort to teleworking as a result of government measures to tackle the pandemic. The same research, 2 years ago, before the Covid-19 pandemic may have had different outcome. Same goes for future research: In a couple of years, the same research may lead to different conclusions.

Finally, future research should expand the scope of this research to include a larger number of public organizations in Greece, with different organizational structures, missions and goals, in order to provide a better understanding of the impact of teleworking and role overload, role ambiguity and work – family conflict on employee engagement, among public servants working at a wide range of public organizations facing different circumstances. Other public organizations followed a different telework scheme, including rotation, or a mixed program, combining limited presence to the office with extended remote work.

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