



# “The mediating role of engagement in the relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance”

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# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ENGAGEMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

## Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between employee engagement, equal opportunities, and employee performance in Bahraini retail businesses. Using a cross-sectional survey, data were collected from 231 employees and analyzed via SPSS and Smart-PLS, uncovering significant results. Out of the 249 participants invited to the survey, 231 responded. All the variables of the study showed different effects, with equal opportunity and employee engagement (EO → EE) considered the strongest hypotheses in this study at the significance level of 0.01 ( $\beta = 0.722$ ,  $= 0.724$ ,  $SD = 0.070$ ,  $t = 10.324$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with  $f^2 = 1.087$  above 0.15 and less than 0.35, which was considered a high effect size and strongly supported the hypothesis proposed by the researcher. All hypotheses were supported. The R<sup>2</sup> values of independent variables were above 38% for the variance of employee performance, which is considered an excellent fit to the data as evidenced by the squared multiple correlation R<sup>2</sup> values for the dependent variables. Finally, EO → EE → JP mediating role indirectly affects JP through EO = 24%, which is considered an excellent effect size.

The recent study confirmed a strong positive link between equal opportunities and employee performance, with employee engagement acting as a significant mediator. This suggests that promoting equal opportunities can boost performance, especially when coupled with employee involvement. These findings are important for HRM experts and executives, as they indicate that prioritizing fairness and fostering participation can enhance productivity.

**Keywords** engagement, equal opportunities, employee performance, retail business, Bahrain

**JEL Classification** O15, J50, J54, J53

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of employee engagement has gained significant attention in the field of organizational psychology and management. Scholars and researchers have provided various definitions of employee engagement, highlighting its importance in achieving organizational goals and creating a positive work environment. Kahn (1990) conceptualized employee engagement as the self-expression and self-fulfillment of individuals through their physical, mental, and emotional involvement in their work. Other researchers, such as Kazimoto (2016), emphasize the attendance, performance, and relationship aspects of engagement.

Engaged employees are more likely to exhibit higher job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity, leading to increased retention rates and reduced turnover (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). The rise of positive psychology and the focus on occupational health psychology have further fueled the interest in studying employee en-



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agement. Engaged employees feel energized and connected to their work, which positively impacts their performance (Lee et al., 2020).

The significance of employee engagement extends beyond individual outcomes and has implications for organizational success. Studies have shown that engagement is related to productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, and safety in the (Alshaabani et al., 2021). Organizations that prioritize employee engagement experience higher revenue growth and better overall performance.

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on workplace equality and participation. Many organizations have adopted diversity, inclusion, and engagement policies to attract and retain top talent and enhance performance (Baker & Clegg, 2023). However, the relationship between equal opportunities, engagement, and employee performance remains unclear and requires further investigations. Limited research has explored the mediating role of engagement in the relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance (Al Badi et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2023).

Although employee engagement has received considerable research attention, there are inconsistencies in its definitions, measurements, causes, and outcomes. This literature review highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of employee engagement and its relationship with equal opportunities and employee performance. Further research is necessary to clarify the conceptualization and measurement of engagement, as well as its impact on organizational outcomes.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Increased competition and a greater focus on enhancing employee performance define today's business environment. It is well-known that the success of an organization frequently depends on the performance of its employees, and as a result, businesses all over the globe are seeking to maximize the use of their human resources. Improving worker output, however, is a difficult task that requires a deep familiarity with the many elements that might affect it. Equal opportunity and employee engagement are two such fundamental characteristics that have garnered much academic study.

As per definitions given by scholars, employee engagement is a pleasant, rewarding state of mind associated with work that is marked by vitality, devotion, and attention (Albrecht et al., 2021; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Based on this description, employee engagement consists of three components, namely, vigor (a physical factor), absorption (an intellectual element), and commitment (an emotional element). When employees have strength of mind and tremendous energy while working, this is referred to as vigor. On the other hand, commitment includes work-related motivation, challenge, dignity, importance, participation, and enthusiasm. Finally, absorption happens when employees are

deeply involved in their job and have a high attention level since time passes quickly and they find it difficult to disengage from their job (Borst et al., 2020; Jia et al., 2023). Work engagement has become a highly essential component for both researchers and practitioners in the field of Human Resource Management since studies in the private sector reveal that it is the most powerful predictor of performance outcomes (Borst et al., 2020; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Suhariadi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, employee engagement is vital for an organization's development and growth since it leads to increased productivity.

The concept of equal opportunities refers to accepting equality and justice among individuals in all parts of life, particularly among workers. In terms of equal opportunity, all employees must be treated in the same manner, and racial discrimination in the workplace must be avoided (Khan et al., 2023). Equal opportunity refers to a high degree of competitiveness among society's employees, regardless of the availability of constrained resources. Ali et al. (2019) argue that employment equality gives an equal opportunity for all employees to engage in the empowering process and grow based on merit, aptitude, and desire. Moreover, it presupposes that people come from similar backgrounds and can, thus, compete on

an equitable basis. As a result, any behavior or technique that contradicts the concept of equality will result in workplace inequality. In fact, the primary aim of equal opportunity is individual fairness in all aspects of life. In this case, everyone must be provided with an opportunity based only on their experience and qualifications, with no other considerations. Regrettably, due to their influence in government and organizations, only a few people, particularly in Arab communities, have full employment rights, while the majority are deprived opportunities due to nepotism and prejudice (Cheang & Palmer, 2023). Multiple studies have also found that employee motivation is diminished when there is a sense of unfairness in the workplace, even among those who may gain from unjust privileges (Ali et al., 2019; Conti et al., 2022; Mirchandani & Skelton, 2023; Silverman et al., 2023). A similar study also found that employees' enjoyment is reduced when different people receive different incentives for accomplishing the same task (Ollo-López & Nuñez, 2023). In sum, most prior studies have shown that managers or employers may boost workplace productivity by investing in their employees and treating them fairly and equally.

In terms of employee performance, it is a method used by businesses to guarantee that their employees contribute to producing a high-quality service or product. Among the criteria that may be evaluated is the level of performance of workers. Employee performance has several definitions, though in overall it is associated with "creating a shared vision of an organization's purpose and goals, assisting each employee in understanding and recognizing their role, and managing and improving employee performance of both individuals and organizations (Maswani et al., 2021; Udin et al., 2022). Ali et al. (2022) also define it as the level of achievement of business and social objectives and responsibilities. Several researchers have proposed many methods for assessing employee performance. This encompasses the person's quality, quantity, knowledge, or creativity toward tasks that have been completed in accordance with the obligation throughout a set period, in other words, the evaluation systems must include some common criteria on which they depend (Emami et al., 2023). Undoubtedly, the basic value of employee performance in a corporation contributes

to achieving organizational goals and perfecting the firm's goods and services while gaining a competitive advantage. Nevertheless, employee performance could be a source of happiness if duties are completed and performed in a quality and faultless manner. Consequently, employees of a firm will feel a sense of mastery and satisfaction in their accomplishments (Ali et al., 2019).

In the past few years, there has been widespread concern among employees about the growing consequences of workplace injustice and its detrimental consequences on job outcomes. Numerous studies have concluded that unjust treatment of employees in terms of training, performance assessment, selection, and compensation has a detrimental effect (David et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2023a). One of the biggest challenges is that workplace discrimination is unjust to people who are not given the opportunity to succeed based on their merits, wastes resources, and may generate societal problems (Bui et al., 2022; Obaoye et al., 2023). Furthermore, such challenge has serious consequences for the company in all respects, for instance, the increase in hatred among employees and lack of loyalty to the company, in addition to the high turnover rate due to the lack of loyalty, a sense of security, lack of happiness, and the search for an alternative to a healthy work environment free of discrimination (Climek et al., 2022; Napathorn, 2023). In this case and since it did not treat its employees properly or in accordance with their productivity, the firm is indeed the biggest loser in this situation. Additionally, if experienced employees are dismissed and neglected, the corporation also loses its competitive advantage in the market because they account for a sizeable chunk of the firm's capital. Ali et al. (2019) argued that one of the greatest things regarding workplace equality is that it gives workers the security of knowing that they did not tolerate discrimination in terms of equal pay or training, that they will have the same opportunities for promotion, and that their performance will only be evaluated based on measurable merits (Sawaeen & Ali, 2020). Among these benefits is the retention of trained and experienced workers, which can be a competitive advantage for the company, reduced turnover, and maintenance of diversity within the company, which can enhance productivity.

Any organization's success depends on an engaged employee workforce. Employers in business are acting increasingly to reinforce this relationship between people and performance (Ali et al., 2022; Lowe, 2012). While several studies have examined the workers' job satisfaction in the business world, less is known about how the much more basic understanding of engagement applies in these contexts. However, applying the concept as a tool for organizational reform has been challenging, as it has done in other industries since Bahraini private sector businesses lack adequate data on employee engagement. An increasing number of businesses across various sectors have a high level of engagement as a strategic aim. Employees engaged in their work are dedicated to their employer, pleased with their jobs, and eager to put in additional effort to forward the organization's goals. Research demonstrates that work engagement positively impacts other important human resources objectives, including recruiting, employee performance, and absenteeism (Aldoghan, 2021). Hence, the current study aims to examine the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance in the context of Bahraini retail businesses. Based on the proposed model of the study, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

H1: *There is a relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance.*

H2: *There is a relationship between employee engagement and employee performance.*

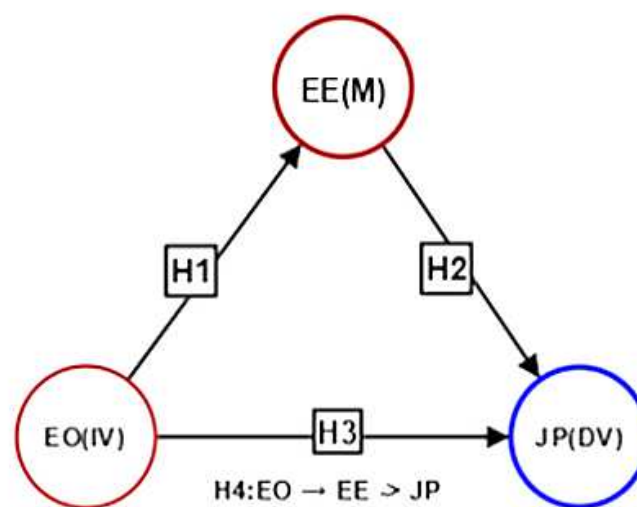
H3: *There is a relationship between employee engagement and equal opportunities.*

H4: *There is mediating effect of engagement on the relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance.*

## 2. METHOD

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) illustrates the variables involved, with employee performance as the dependent variable and equal opportunities as the independent variable (Ali, 2022; Alzoraiki et al., 2023). Additionally, employee engagement is considered as the mediating variable. The study design provides a framework for data collection, analysis, and presentation, ensuring the attainment of research goals and addressing research questions effectively (Al Balushi et al., 2022).

A quantitative approach was employed to gather and analyze data in this study. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire designed to obtain relevant information. Quantitative analytical software was utilized for data analysis (Al-Refaei et al., 2023). The study adopted a descriptive research design to provide



Note: EE= Employee Engagement; EO=Equal opportunities; JP= performance.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

an accurate and reliable depiction of the variables under investigation. Furthermore, a correlational research design was utilized to assess the statistical relationship between the selected variables.

The study participants consisted of employees from Bahraini retail businesses, selected through convenience sampling. The sample size was determined to be 249 employees based on Cochran's calculations, considering a margin of error of 0.05 and a critical value of 1.96 for a population size of 1200 (Ali et al., 2023; Cochran & Ellner, 1992). Invitations were extended to employees working in Bahraini retail businesses to participate in the study.

### 3. RESULTS

Table 1 demonstrates that all variable values are greater than 3.6. This indicates that the respondents understood the significance of the relationship between equal opportunities as an independent variable and the role of engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between equal

opportunities and employee performance in the Bahraini retail business companies.

As shown in Table 1, the most significant effect was on employee engagement (EE). The average score was  $3.990 \pm 0.691$ , which was much higher than the average for the other variables. This is followed by job performance (JP) (Rai & Singh), which scored  $3.985 \pm 0.714$ , with the lowest standard deviation (SD) among the others. Finally, it was revealed that equal opportunity (EO) had the lowest mean and greatest standard deviation (SD) of all the dependable criteria, with a mean of 3.961 and SD deviation of  $-0.757$  (see Figure 2).

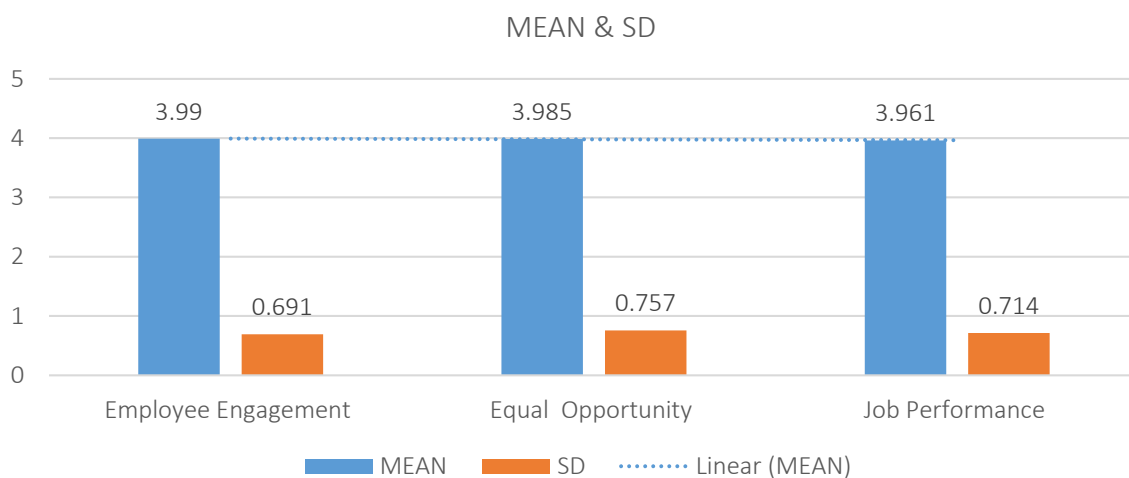
In terms of reliability measurement, its measurement offers internal consistency in the variable's measurement. Furthermore, a test's reliability must be greater than 0.60 so that it is accepted. To conduct Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability tests for this study, the researcher used SPSS 28.

The findings revealed that the composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.916 to 0.815, while the (Cronbach's alpha) values were between 0.899 and

**Table 1.** Mean  $\pm$  SD and rank for the variables

Constructs	Number of items	Code	Mean $\pm$ SD	Rank
Employee Engagement	5	EE	3.9900.691 $\pm$	1
Equal Opportunity	11	EO	3.9610.757 $\pm$	3
Job Performance	6	JP	3.9850.714 $\pm$	2
Average	22		3.9790.721 $\pm$	

Note: Rating scales: 5-point Likert scale (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Natural, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree. Scores range from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating better competence. \*SD: Standard Deviation.



**Figure 2.** A simple bar graph representing the study variable's  $\mu$  and SD

**Table 2.** Reliability and composite reliability

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EE	0.825	0.876	0.586
EO	0.899	0.916	0.502
JP	0.727	0.815	0.503

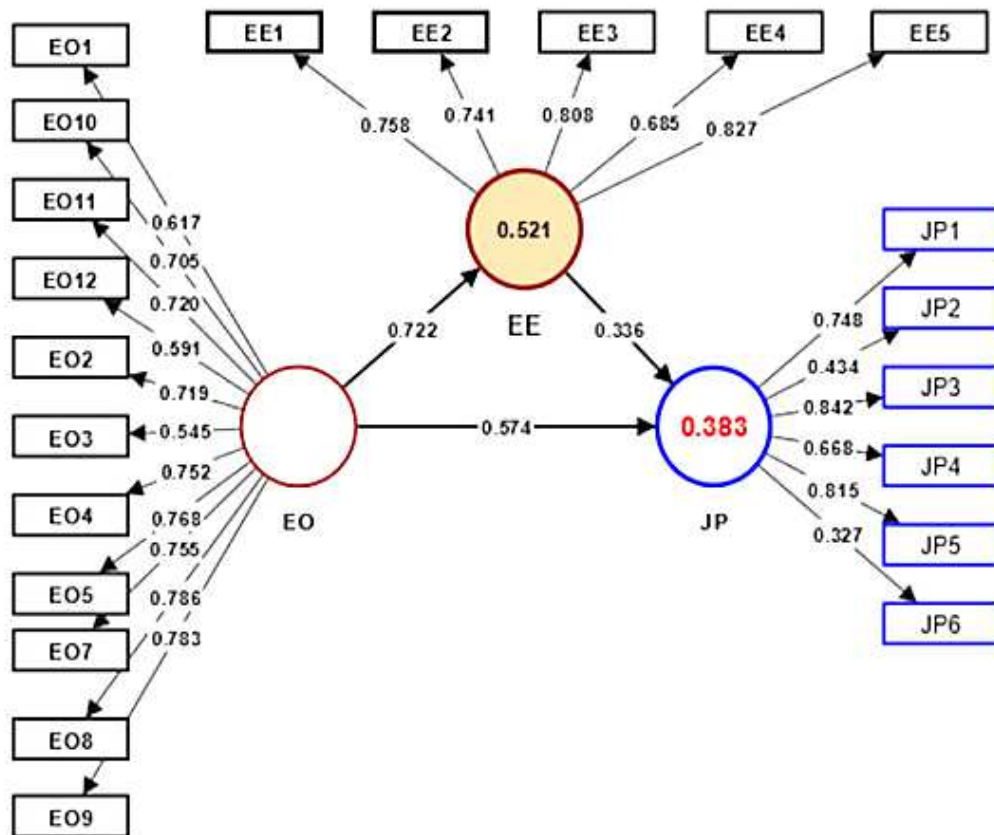
0.727. Due to the square root AVE ranges (0.586 and 0.503), which were higher than the correlation value (0.50) between two latent constructs, the discriminant validity was achieved. It also showed that there were no redundant parts in the model. Therefore, the results for Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and composite reliability were all noteworthy and satisfied the required acceptance requirements. The three constructs that were used were listed in Table 2. All composite reliability estimates were higher than 0.9, while Cronbach's alphas were all greater than 0.7. A great level of consistency is shown here. This result has, therefore, a high internal consistency and fits the data.

Cronbach's alpha: average measure of internal consistency and item reliability and preferred

when EFA is used for factor extraction. <0.7 accepted. \* CR: measure scale reliability overall and preferred with CFA.\* AVE: measures the level of variance captured by a construct 0.5 accepted. AVE: Average Variance Extracted. CR: Composite Reliability.

Regarding the assessment of measurement model, Figure 3 show the assessment of measurement model of the study.

Hair et al. (2017) defined convergent validity as the extent to which a set of factors converge in measuring a particular concept. Several criteria must be fulfilled to establish and validate convergent validity. These criteria required the usage of factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and av-



Note: EE= Employee Engagement; EO=Equal opportunities; JP= performance.

**Figure 3.** Assessment of measurement model of the study

**Table 3.** Convergent validity analysis

Construct	Number of items	CODES	FACTOR LOADING	CR	AVE
Employee Engagement	5	EE	.764	0.876	0.586
Equal Opportunity	11	EO	.704	0.916	0.502
Job Performance	6	JP	.639	0.815	0.503

Note: \* FACTOR LOADING: variance explained by the variable on that particular factor <0.7 or higher to be accepted (Hair et al., 2010). \* CR: measures scale reliability in general and is preferred with CFA. \* AVE: measures the level of variance captured by a construct 0.5 accepted. AVE: Average Variance Extracted. CR: Composite Reliability (Ateeq et al., 2022).

erage variance extracted (AVE), which was recommended by item loadings. It was revealed that all items were over 0.50, indicating acceptable levels (Cheah et al., 2018) as revealed in Table 3. Besides, Table 3 CR score ranges between 0.916 and 0.815, exceeding the suggested value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). These results demonstrate the measurement models' convergent validity. The values of AVE were analyzed to confirm the convergent validity of the outer model. Furthermore, the AVE represents the average variance across a set of items in relation to the variance due to measurement errors. AVE determines the difference between the variation gathered by the indicators and the variance brought on by measurement errors to quantify variance more precisely. In Table 3, the AVE values for the current study are presented. The convergent validity of the model is, in fact, sufficient because all constructs had AVE values that were higher than the threshold of 0.5, ranging from 0.586 to 0.503.

A construct's discriminant validity is concerned with how statistically it actually differs from other constructs (Hair et al., 2017). In other words, it shows that various structures are not used by the same items. Thus, constructs measure different concepts even when they are connected. This suggests that if the measures' discriminant validity is validated, the variance shared by each construct and its measures should be greater than the variance shared by individual constructs (Schimmack, 2021). The method developed by Hilkenmeier et al.

(2020) was employed in this study to validate the discriminant validity. In this study, the measures' discriminant validity was verified according to the result in Table 4.

Regarding the prediction relevance of the model,  $R^2$  of the endogenous variable, as is well known in the multivariate data analysis sector, provides the variance of certain criteria given by predictors (Ateeq et al., 2022). To gauge the model's capacity for prediction, the  $R^2$  value for the endogenous variables was used. To further confirm the predictive validity of the model, the sample reuse approach was used, and PLS modeling proved a good fit for this tactic.

Employee performance was the dependent variable in this study, and it received an  $R^2$  of 0.383, showing that the model offered an incredibly tight match to the data (see Table 5 and Figure 4). Therefore, a significant amount of the variance in employee job performance in Bahraini retail enterprises is explained by the single latent variable of independents (IV). Based on dependent variables, the assessment of work performance by retail commercial companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain differed by more than 38% over this time.

Concerning the effect size  $f^2$ , in this study, effect size is predominantly employed to evaluate the significance and relationship among variables. The optimum effect size, according to Cohen (1988), is less than 0.02 (0.02 = little, 0.15 = medi-

**Table 4.** Discriminant validity analysis

	EE	EO	JP
EE	0.765		
EO	0.706	0.708	
JP	0.575	0.574	<b>0.668</b>

Note: The square root of the average variance extracted is represented by diagonal, while the other elements reflect the correlation estimate.



**Table 5.** Coefficient of determination result  $R^2$

Exogenous construct	Endogenous construct	$R^2$	Hair et al. (2017)	Cohen (1988b)	Chin (1998)
EE, EO,	JP	0.383	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial

Note: EE = Employee Engagement, EO = Equal Opportunity, JP = Job Performance. Higher value is preferred: 0.67 substantial, 0.33 average, 0.19 weak (Sarstedt et al., 2021).

**Table 6.** f-square

	EE	EO	JP
EE			0.088
EO	1.087		0.085

Note:  $f^2 = (R^2 \text{ included} - R^2 \text{ excluded}) / (1 - R^2 \text{ included})$ . \*  $f^2$  0.02 weak, 0.15 moderate, 0.35 strong effects (Cohen, 2013).

**Table 7.** Mean, STDEV, t-values, p-values, decision

NO	Hypothesis	$\beta$	$\mu$	SD (STDEV)	T. Value ( O/STDEV )	P values	Decision
H1	EE $\rightarrow$ JP	0.336	0.325	0.140	2.399	0.008	Supported
H2	EO $\rightarrow$ EE	0.722	0.724	0.070	10.324	0.000	Supported
H3	EO $\rightarrow$ JP	0.331	0.351	0.133	2.499	0.006	Supported

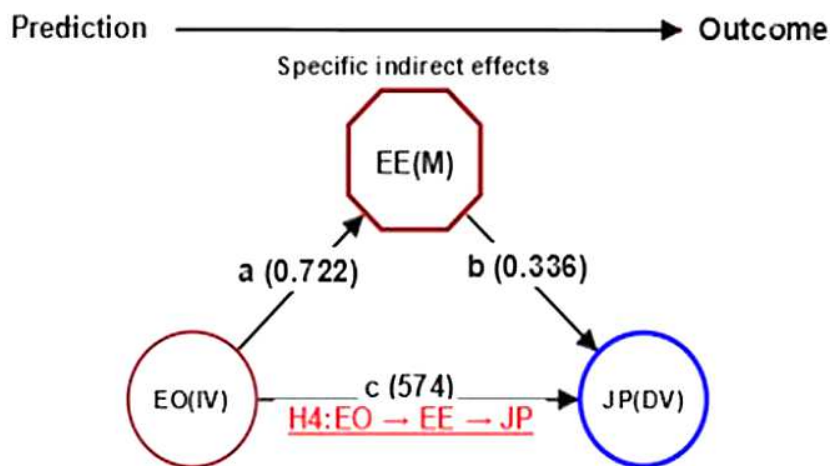
Note: EE = Employee Engagement, EO = Equal Opportunity, JP = Job Performance. Beta ( $\beta$ ); Values from -1 to +1. Assess significance and confidence intervals. p-values; Significance value is based on the degrees of freedom  $p < 0.05$  (Cheah et al., 2020).

um, and 0.35 = big). Table 6 shows that the impact of EE is significant, whereas EO has medium and substantial effect on employee performance, EP. The method is shown in Table 6, and Figure 5 was used to calculate the effect of its dimension on employee job performance in Bahraini retail business companies.

For hypothesis testing, Table 7 shows the assessment of the inner model and hypothesis testing procedures.

The bootstrapping method coupled with Smart PLS4 has been used in this study to guarantee that the path coefficients are statistically significant. Bootstrapping was mainly used to provide t-values associated with each path coefficient. However, as a natural consequence, the p-values for the hypotheses were also generated as shown in Table 7. Consequently, it can be concluded that employee engagement and employee performance (EE  $\rightarrow$  JP) have positively impacted job performance as a dependent variable and were supported at the significance level of 0.01 ( $\beta = 0.336, \mu = 0.325, SD = 0.140, t = 2.399, p = 0.000$ ). Additionally, the result showed that the hypothesis is accepted due to the t-value, which was greater than 1.96, while the lower SD is estimated at (0.0140)  $P > 0.008$ . Moreover, in retail businesses within Bahrain, the provision of equal

opportunities among employees is an independent variable, while the performance of these employees (EP) acts as the dependent variable. The positive results from the study confirmed these findings. Based on this evidence, the decision was made to accept the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. Consequently, the study's second hypothesis linking equal opportunity to employee engagement (EO  $\rightarrow$  EE) was also affirmed. Based on compelling data, which demonstrated a positive influence on employee engagement (the dependent variable), it was concluded at a significance level of 0.01 that ( $\beta = 0.722, \mu = 0.724, SD = 0.070, t = 10.324, p = 0.000$ ). Considering the second hypothesis, it emerged as one of the most compelling, given its evident T-value and beta ( $\beta$ ). Furthermore, its dominance among all hypotheses can be attributed to its minimal dispersion value (SD) and the highest arithmetic mean ( $\mu$ ) amongst the variables. This assessment was corroborated by the consensus of the respondents. Through these results, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, and the null hypothesis was rejected. Equal opportunity and performance (EO  $\rightarrow$  JP) have positively impacted job performance as a dependent variable and were supported at the significance level of 0.01 ( $\beta = 0.331, \mu = 0.351, SD = 0.133, t = 2.499, p = 0.000$ ). Considering the findings of this study, the third and final hypotheses turned out to be correct as well.



Note: Indirect effect of  $EO \rightarrow EE \rightarrow JP = 0.242(0.722 \times 0.336)$ ; EE= Employee Engagement; EO=Equal opportunities; JP= performance.

Figure 4. Indirect effect

Table 8. Indirect effect

Specific indirect effects	
$EO \rightarrow EE \rightarrow JP$	0.242

Table 9. Mean, STDEV, t-values, p-values, decision for Indirect effect

No.	Hypothesis	$\beta$	$\mu$	SD	T. Value	P values	Decision
H4	$EO \rightarrow EE \rightarrow JP$	0.242	0.235	0.104	2.332	0.010	Supported

Note: Beta ( $\beta$ ), values from -1 to +1. Assess significance and confidence intervals, (SD) standard deviation, p-values, significance at  $p < 0.05$  (Cheah et al., 2020).

To test the significance level of the indirect effect, Figure 4 demonstrates that the indirect impact of EO on  $EE \rightarrow JP$  is equal to 0.431 ( $0.722 \times 0.336$ ) ( $a \times b$ ), but the effect of the director is 0.574. Therefore, the following conclusion might be obtained: The construct of EE in employees acts as a mediator in the interaction between EO and JP in retail businesses in Bahrain. Since the direct influence is substantial and less than 80% of the moment, this statistically means that the indirect hypothesis is considered to be a kind of partial mediation. The values related to the indirect effect are shown in Tables 8 and 9.

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to evaluate employee engagement’s role in mediating the relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance in

Bahraini retail businesses. Based on the findings of the study, employees place a greater emphasis on equal opportunities, the prevalence of which is boosted by the engagement variable. The results of this study demonstrate that engagement influences various attitudes and behaviors, including equal opportunities and employee performance. According to the study findings, the significance of the role that engagement plays in equal opportunity and employee success cannot be overstated. This conclusion is consistent with research data that indicate that employee performance may be predicted using engagement and equal opportunities (Nikolova et al., 2019). Increased employee engagement (EE) significantly boosts staff performance and equal opportunity. Equal opportunities were shown to have an effect, not just on employee performance, but also overall business success. Because of this, the results of this study represent a significant addition to the existing

body of knowledge because it offers useful results that show the relationship among employee performance, employee engagement, and equal opportunities in Bahrain retail companies.

Previous research, along with the current study, support the hypothesis that employee engagement serves as a significant mediator between various organizational factors and employee performance (Abdulaziz et al., 2022; Aboramadan et al., 2022; Peng & Chen, 2022). These findings highlight the importance of prioritizing employee engagement to enhance overall employee performance and the overall success of an organization. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing literature by specifically examining the mediating role of engagement in the relationship between equal opportunities and employee performance in Bahraini retail businesses. The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the interplay among these variables.

Furthermore, there was a statistically significant positive relationship between EE and EP at the level of 0.01 ( $\beta = 0.336$ ,  $\mu = 0.325$ ,  $SD = 0.140$ ,  $t = 2.399$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), which supports the findings of the hypothesis (H1) based on the conducted statistical analysis. These findings align with a large body of previously conducted studies (Riyanto et al., 2021; Rohman et al., 2021). Furthermore, employees with a high EE may make a difference for their coworkers in terms of gaining resource benefits in the form of personal satisfaction and fulfillment if they positively impact employee engagement (Kim et al., 2018). As a result, the ability and desire to engage in the activities of colleagues are both increased by an EE. In particular, one way to

make sense of these findings is to consider the fact that employees in Bahraini retail businesses place a greater emphasis on the aforementioned variable. This indicates that employees view EE as one of the most important aspects of their work, which is reflected in the positive performance, and this has been demonstrated statistically through the obtained findings in this study. On the other hand, the relationship between equal opportunity and employee engagement (EO - EE) was supported at the significance level of 0.01 ( $\beta = 0.722$ ,  $\mu = 0.724$ ,  $SD = 0.070$ ,  $t = 10.324$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding shows that there is a relationship between these two variables. This hypothesis was given a lot of consideration by the employees of retail enterprises in Bahrain, and it was statistically demonstrated to be correct. In addition, the equal opportunity on employee engagement variable received the lowest standard deviation, the greatest mean, the highest value, and the greatest effect of 85% among the study variables, all of which indicated the extent to which equal opportunity has an impact on the lives of workers and their engagement and performance. These findings, together with those of a study carried out by Adnjani and Prianti (2023), which indicated a relationship between equal opportunity and employee engagement within an organization, and the strength of this connection is substantial.

In conclusion, there are several facets to the relationship between employee performance and the mediating function of engagement. On the other hand, studies show that companies with a focus on employee engagement and fair treatment of workers tend to have happier workers and higher productivity.

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## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant relationship between equal opportunities, employee engagement, and employee performance within the retail industry in Bahrain. There is a substantial body of empirical research that strongly supports the concept that increased employee engagement has a direct positive impact on employee performance. A substantial relationship was additionally observed between the implementation of equal opportunity procedures and the subsequent rise in employee engagement. In essence, when workers perceive fair treatment, their level of dedication and excitement towards their job increases, leading to an overall improvement in performance. This study highlights the importance of strategic value for retail enterprises in Bahrain to prioritize equal opportunities and allocate resources towards improving employee engagement. By doing so, these firms may boost productivity and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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