



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB RESOURCES AND EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT**

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(Human Resource Development)
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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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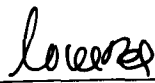
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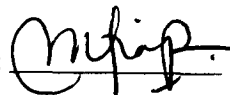
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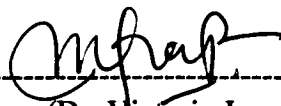
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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB RESOURCES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

ROWENA GLORIANA GEORGE

Employee engagement is crucial for an organization. However, recently there has been a decline in employee engagement level in Malaysia. Job resources are considered important factors to enhance employee engagement. As such, it is important to understand how job resources influence employee engagement especially in the Malaysian context. Thus, the study aimed to determine the relationship between job resources and employee engagement. The independent variables of the study were skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback while the dependent variable was employee engagement. Furthermore, the study was conducted at a selected public hospital located in Papar, Sabah. Survey questionnaire was used to collect the data and by using convenience sampling a total of 78 respondents participated in the study. Hence, the demographic information of respondents was analyzed using a descriptive statistic and reported in frequencies while Spearman Rank Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between job resources and employee engagement. Based on the findings, all the alternative hypotheses were accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback towards employee engagement. Finally, the study contributes a depth understanding of the importance of employee engagement. Nevertheless, the study also proposed as a guideline to foster employee engagement by fully used of job resources especially at the task level.

ABSTRAK

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB RESOURCES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

ROWENA GLORIANA GEORGE

Penglibatan pekerja amatlah penting bagi sesebuah organisasi. Namun, terdapat penurunan pada tahap penglibatan pekerja di Malaysia. Sumber kerja merupakan faktor yang penting untuk meningkatkan penglibatan pekerja. Oleh sebab itu, amatlah penting untuk memahami bagaimana sumber kerja mempengaruhi penglibatan pekerja terutamanya dalam konteks Malaysia. Oleh yang demikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara sumber kerja dan penglibatan pekerja. Pembolehubah tidak bersandar dalam kajian ini adalah kepelbagaian tugas, identiti tugas, kepentingan tugas, autonomi, dan maklum balas manakala pembolehubah bersandar adalah penglibatan pekerja. Tambahan pula, kajian tersebut telah dijalankan di sebuah hospital awam yang terpilih iaitu bertempat di Papar, Sabah. Borang soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mendapatkan data dan melalui "convenience sampling" seramai, 78 orang responden terlibat dalam kajian ini. Ciri-ciri demografi responden dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan dilaporkan dalam nilai frekuensi manakala, ujian kolerasi Spearman digunakan untuk mengkaji perkaitan hubungan antara sumber kerja dan penglibatan pekerja. Berdasarkan dapatan kajian, kesemua hipotesis diterima. Oleh itu, terdapat hubungan signifikan antara kepelbagaian tugas, identiti tugas, kepentingan tugas, autonomi dan maklum balas dengan penglibatan pekerja. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini memberi sumbangan dalam pengetahuan yang lebih mendalam mengenai kepentingan penglibatan pekerja dan dapat dijadikan sebagai panduan untuk meningkatkan penglibatan pekerja dengan menggunakan sumber kerja terutamanya sumber kerja di tahap tugas.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of Study

In recent years, the topic of employee engagement remains a hot topic and attracted a great number of interest among practitioners and consultants (Saks, 2006; Albretch, 2012). According to Albretch (2012), many books, research and conference papers, and presentation mainly focusing on employee engagement are still growing within the academic field. Examples of past research conducted on employee engagement were by Thomas, Xu, and Saks (2018), Bon and Shire (2017), Sonnentag (2017), Albrechth (2012), Saks (2006) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). The research tested and specified the resources that influence employee engagement the most. While, Gruman and Saks (2011) conducted a study and suggested a model on ways to enhance employee engagement to foster high levels of job performance; Saks (2006), conducted research that identifies the engagement's antecedents and consequences.

Before that, it is best to understand what is employee engagement. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engagement characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. While, Kahn (1990) defined engagement associated with cognitive, emotional, and behavior. Nevertheless, Saks (2006) stated that employee engagement is different from organizational commitment because it does not refer to an attitude but an attentive behaviour on how an employee employs themselves in their work role. It is also different from job involvement.

Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the importance of employee engagement. First and foremost, the issues of employee engagement are really important for many organizations (McBrian, 2007), due to its economic benefits (Thomas, Xu & Saks, 2018). Ling, Mat, and Al-

Omari (2013), stated that it emerged as the most discussed topic because it is the most important element for the survival and success of an organization. Saks (2006), also claimed that employee engagement as the predictors of employee outcomes, the success of an organization and the organization financial performance. A highly engaged employee is passionate and deeply connected to his or her work (Robbins & Coulter, 2012), they are more productive, enjoy their work, and more efficient in their work. A higher engagement level brings many advantages which include lower turnover and lower health problems (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), allows proactive behavior (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008), increase satisfaction, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour (Saks, 2006), and increase effectiveness (Luthans & Peterson, 2001) and increase team performance (Torrente, Salanova. Llorens & Schaufeli, 2012).

Therefore, burnout is the opposite of employee engagement (Saks, 2006). Thus, the lack of engagement essentially will cause burnout among the employees and will increase the intention to leave the organization; the disengaged employee will come to work but without energy and passion in completing their work (Robbins & Coulter, 2012). There are many factors that contribute to employee disengagement mainly when job demand is high which include the demands of emotional, mental and physical, and work pressure (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Thus, since employee engagement is very important it is crucial to identify the ways to enhance engagement levels among the employee.

1.1 Statement of Problem

In 2017, the levels of engagement in Malaysia fell to 59%, which is a decline of 2016 thus make Malaysia as the lowest rank among Asian countries such as Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand (Johnson, 2017). However, in 2018 Malaysia's employee engagement level rose to 63% yet Malaysia still ranks among the lowest in the region compared to Indonesia and the Philippines that have higher levels of employee engagement at 76% and 71% (Aon, 2018).

Ismail (2018), stated that in order to solve this issue, leaders must play their roles in providing opportunities by allowing employees experience challenges in their work, to fully use their ability, to perform at their best and feel connected with their work. According to Kahn (1990), a work that is challenging, enable the employee to utilize many skills and provide an opportunity to make an important contribution are associated with psychological meaningfulness. Employees can achieve these psychological states through job resources namely job characteristics.

First of all, it is important to know that job resources were widely studied as the factors, and mediator of employee engagement (Farndale & Murer, 2015; Bakker & Demerouti, 2006; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Therefore, assessing job resources that are available for the employees is crucial because it is one of the strategies to improve employee engagement (Farndale & Murer, 2014). Bakker and Demerouti (2006), stated that the job resources that were available were allocated at the organizational level, interpersonal and social level, work level, and task level. Although there are many job resources, in this study, the job resources will only focus on resources available mainly at the task level.

Although, many previous study suggested that existing relationship between task level resources and employee engagement; however, task level resources were tested together with other job resources such as organizational level, interpersonal level, and work level in a same structural model (Farndale & Murer, 2015; Saks, 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Therefore, it did not cover all the resources under the task level. Thus, this study will cover all the resources available in the task level namely, skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1974).

Ismail (2018), suggested that employees should be provided with challenging work and task. Especially, to foster engagement among millennial. According to Hackman and Oldham (1976), skills variety triggers the states of meaningfulness as well as task identity and significance. In other words, when an employee experiencing a sense of challenge in their work, they will see that their job is important. In addition, when they involve in a task that needs to be completed using a variety of skills and activities, the employee will sense an opportunity for growth and learning. Moreover, a job that provides an opportunity for the employee to complete as a whole, and at the same time can affect other people lives, the employee will perceive that their work is very important thus, encourage them to be fully absorbed in their work and a high chance for engagement to happen. In addition, healthcare employees involved in highly skilled and challenging work, thus this study want to examine if challenging works relate to employee engagement in the healthcare sector. Feedback is important for employees to receive sufficient information on their performance effectiveness. Several studies stated that there is a relationship between feedback and employee engagement (Saks, 2004; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Bon & Shire, 2017), however a study that was conducted by Farndale and Murer (2015) implies that

feedback is not related to employee engagement; it also emphasize the different form of giving feedback is important. Positive and negative feedback might bring different effects on the levels of engagement. Thus, the study will examine if feedback has a relationship with engagement at work

1.2 Research Objectives

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate the relationship between job resources and employee engagement.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

- a) To determine the relationship between skills variety and employee engagement.
- b) To determine the relationship between task identity and employee engagement.
- c) To determine the relationship between task significance and employee engagement.
- d) To determine the relationship between autonomy and employee engagement.
- e) To determine the relationship between feedback and employee engagement.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

H1 There is a significant relationship between skills variety and employee engagement.

H2 There is a significant relationship between task identity and employee engagement.

H3 There is a significant relationship between task significance and employee engagement.

H4 There is a significant relationship between autonomy and employee engagement.

H5 There is a significant relationship between feedback and employee engagement.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

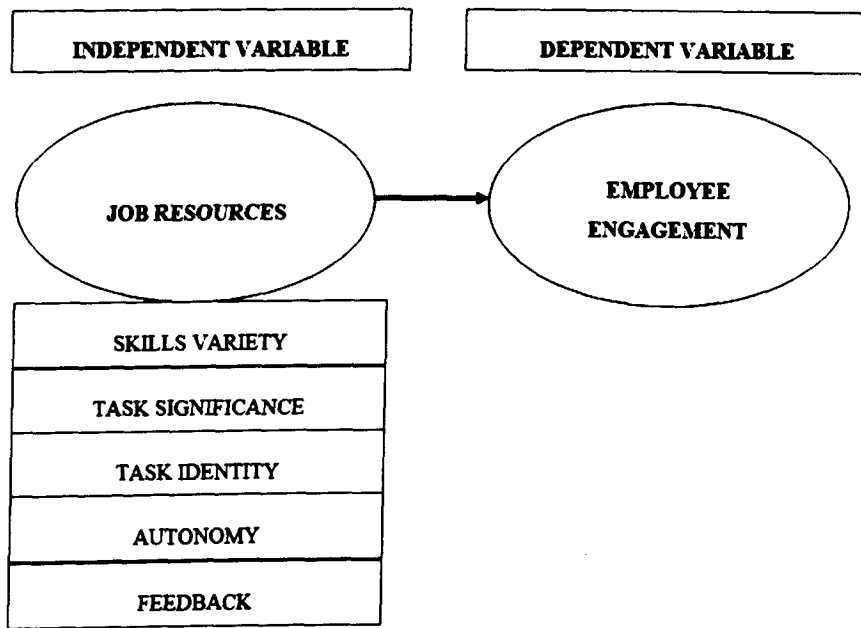


Figure 1. 1 Conceptual framework

Source: Adapted and modified from Bon and Shire (2017); Garza and Slaughter (2011); Salanova and Schaufeli (2008); Bakker and Demerouti (2007).

Based on Figure 1.1, it shows the conceptual framework of the study. The independent variable is job resources which including skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback, whereas the dependent variable is employee engagement. Moreover, the conceptual framework was adapted and modified from Bon and Shire (2017), Garza and Slaughter (2011), Salanova and Schaufeli (2008), and Bakker and Demerouti (2007).

1.5 Significance of Study

1.5.1 Body of Knowledge

The study contributes an understanding and extension to existing past findings on factors that foster employee engagement. It also supports the general idea and brings awareness to the importance of employee engagement.

1.5.2 Policy and Organization

The result of the study contributes to the organization strategy on how to increase and retain a more engaged employee. The manager needs to know how to use the job resources that are available in the organization to improve the employee's motivation to increase employee engagement. In addition, this study also proposed and encourage the management to consider changing the organizational policies and culture that is more profound towards enhancing engagement among employees.

1.5.3 HR Practitioner

The results of the study may provide guidelines to the HR professional to design learning activities that can improve employee engagement. HR practitioner might design a training program for senior manager and middle manager to help them a better understanding on the importance of employee engagement and ways to foster employee engagement by using job resources especially job resources at the task level.

It also helps the HR practitioner to improve the employees' career plan and development. Changing the performance appraisal approach by giving continuous feedback rather than conducting performance appraisal once or twice in a year. Moreover, this encourages the HR practitioner to actively assess the employees' performance.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Employee Engagement

- a) Conceptual definition: Engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2014)
- b) Operational definition: In the study, vigor, dedication, and absorption will be the measurement of engagement.

1.6.2 Job Resource

- a) Conceptual definition: Job resources at the task level referred to as job characteristics which include skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).
- b) Operational definition: Job resource in this study refers to resources that available mainly at the task level namely, skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback.

1.6.3 Skills Variety

- a) Conceptual definition: Skills variety is the degree to which the job requires a variety of activities and involves many different skills and talent (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). While according to Oliveira (2013), skills variety is the number of various activities required of an employee to accomplish their tasks effectively.
- b) Operational definition: In the study, skills variety refers to the job involves a variety of activities and the employee performing a variety of task and skills.

1.6.4 Task Identity

- a) **Conceptual framework:** Task identity refers to the extent of a job has a beginning and end with a tangible outcome (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).
- b) **Operational definition:** In the study, task identity refers to the employee performing a whole and complete work rather than only performing half or a small part of the task.

1.6.5 Task Significance

- a) **Conceptual framework:** Task significance refers to the importance of the job that can affect other people lives (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Task significance provides perceptions that their job has importance (Oliveira, 2013).
- b) **Operational definition:** In the study, task significance refers to employee involves in a work that significantly affects other's people lives and provides the perceptions that the job is important

1.6.6 Autonomy

- a) **Conceptual definition:** Autonomy refers to the job allows the individual to have freedom, independence in their job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Oliveira (2013) stated that, autonomy is the degree of independence of an employee regarding the processes used, how the work is conducted, and how they schedule their work.
- b) **Operational definition:** In the study, autonomy refers to the job allows the employee to have the freedom and independence to decide the work process, how to conduct the work and how the employee schedules their work.

1.6.7 Feedback

a) **Conceptual definition:** Feedback is the degree to which the job activities give the individual direct and clear information about the effectiveness of their performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

b) **Operational definition:** In the study, feedback refers to employee receive sufficient and clear information of their performance by organization, supervisor, co-workers, and by the work process.

1.7 Summary

In summary, the chapter provides an overview of the study. The subsection discussed including the background of study, problem statement, research objectives, research hypotheses, conceptual framework, the significance of study, limitations of study, and the definition of terms. The following chapter will discuss depth about the issues, theory and past findings that related to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the important element that will be discussed is the dimensions of issues related to the topic, the discussion of related theory or model, and the discussion of past similar findings. This chapter will offer a depth understanding of the undertaken research.

2.1 Issues Related to the Study

2.1.1 Employee Engagement

The brief history of engagement term was introduced by William Kahn in 1990 (Bridger, 2015; Armstrong, 2012). However, in the past research Kahn (1990) used engagement term as personal engagement and disengagement rather than employee engagement, but it specifically referred engagement as a psychological state that experienced by the employee towards their work.

It is crucial to understand the meaning of employee engagement. However, there are too many definitions of employee engagement and according to McLeod and Clarke (2009), there are over 50 definitions of employee engagement. Despite that, it is important to know that no definitions are superior to the other but to highlight the different approaches towards engagement (Balain & Sparrow, 2009).

In the academic perspectives, employee engagement is focusing more on the psychological states (mood, attachment, involvement), performance construct (effort or observable behaviour), and positive effect (Macey & Schneider, 2008). For example, Kahn (1990) defined engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work role” thus employee express