



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**AN EXPLORATION OF FACILITATORS AND
BARRIERS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG PRIVATE
SECTOR WORKERS**

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**Bachelor of Science (Honours)
(Human Resource Development)
2021**

Grade: A

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Final Year Project Report

Masters

PhD

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**AN EXPLORATION OF FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS OF WORK
ENGAGEMENT AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS**

SYAMILIA NURIN BINTI SHAMSUDDIN

This project is submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my beloved final year project supervisor, Dr Victoria Jonathan for all the guidance, supports and precious advice throughout the study. Her insightful comments and wide knowledge have facilitated me in completing this study.

In addition, my sincere thank goes to Dr Hana as evaluator for my project presentations as her valuable comments have helped me to improve my final year project. Moreover, I would also like to deliver a huge of appreciation to all the informants who are providing useful information for this study to be completed. Their cooperation and willingness in taking part of this study are highly appreciated.

Furthermore, special thanks to my fellow friends and course mates for their encouragement and supports throughout the years of studies in UNIMAS. On top of that, I would like to dedicate this project paper to my beloved parents and family members with a gratitude of thanks. Their unconditional love, caring and supports in terms of emotional as well as financial have been the main sources of motivation for me to complete my study.

Last but not least, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to everyone who is involved in my completion of the final year project either directly or indirectly.

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR WORKERS

SYAMILIA NURIN BINTI SHAMSUDDIN

There are rapid changes in the world of work in many aspects. Employees who are the important asset in an organization contribute to its success and achievement. In light of the concerns, employees need to adapt with the changes involving their task in order to be engaged. This study attempts to explore and identified the facilitators and barriers of work engagement of employees working in private sectors. While the significant attention has been made on the concept of work engagement, there were few gaps in this study particularly in less study in Malaysia and its methodology. The research design used is qualitative case study in qualitative approach. The study was conducted in Kuching, Sarawak. The data were collected from 8 respondents which were employed in private sectors which were coming private institution and private automotive industry The data were collected using a semi-structured interview and audio recorded. Content analysis was used for data analysis procedure. It was found that passion, support received working environment and condition, learning and development initiatives, and rewards and recognition are the major facilitators in employees' work engagement. Meanwhile, the barriers discovered were personal characteristics (laziness, boredom, not feeling positive, and delaying works), work-related factors (new changes at workplace, and working condition), and personal problems. Finally, summarization, implication, and recommendation for this study are also further elaborated to gives insight and awareness as well as providing measures for the barriers at work.

Keywords: work engagement, private sector employees, facilitators, barriers

ABSTRAK

PENEROKAAN FASILITATOR DAN HALANGAN PENGLIBATAN KERJA DALAM KALANGAN PEKERJA SEKTOR SWASTA

SYAMILIA NURIN BINTI SHAMSUDDIN

Terdapat perubahan pesat dalam dunia kerja dalam banyak aspek. Pekerja yang merupakan aset penting dalam sesebuah organisasi menyumbang kepada kejayaan dan pencapaiannya. Memandangkan kebimbangan itu, pekerja perlu menyesuaikan diri dengan perubahan yang melibatkan tugas mereka. Kajian ini cuba untuk meneroka dan mengenal pasti fasilitator dan halangan penglibatan kerja pekerja yang bekerja di sektor swasta. Walaupun perhatian yang ketara telah dibuat terhadap konsep penglibatan kerja, terdapat beberapa jurang dalam kajian ini terutamanya dalam kajian yang kurang di Malaysia dan metodologinya. Reka bentuk penyelidikan yang digunakan adalah kajian kes dalam pendekatan kualitatif. Kajian ini dijalankan di Kuching, Sarawak. Data tersebut dikumpulkan daripada 8 responden yang diambil bekerja di sektor swasta dari institusi swasta dan industry automotif. Data dikumpul menggunakan rakaman temu ramah separa berstruktur dan audio. Analisis kandungan digunakan untuk prosedur analisis data. Didapati bahawa semangat, sokongan menerima persekitaran kerja dan keadaan, inisiatif pembelajaran dan pembangunan, dan ganjaran dan pengiktirafan sebagai fasilitator utama dalam penglibatan kerja pekerja. Sementara itu, halangan yang ditemui adalah ciri-ciri peribadi (malas, bosan, tidak berasa positif, dan melengahkan kerja), faktor berkaitan kerja (perubahan baru di tempat kerja, dan keadaan bekerja), dan masalah peribadi. Akhir sekali, ringkasan, implikasi, dan cadangan untuk kajian ini juga dihuraikan selanjutnya untuk memberi pandangan dan kesedaran serta menyediakan langkah-langkah untuk halangan di tempat kerja.

Kata kunci: *penglibatan kerja, pekerja sektor swasta, fasilitator, halangan,*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of Study

According to Schaufeli (2013), engagement can be defined as the involvement, dedication, continuous effort, spirit and requires energy. Engagement mainly related to involvement, commitment, persons' passion, enthusiasm, required energy and constant effort. Work engagement can be described as the positive, influence-motivational state of satisfaction and fulfilment that is categorized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, 2012). The purpose of conducting this research is aiming to explore barriers and facilitators of work engagement in the private sectors. This research attempts to identify the factors affecting work engagement among private sectors workers, the challenges towards work engagement, and the reasons for barriers and disengagement occurred in organization.

The nature of works has been changing a lot nowadays which involved many countries globally (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017). The issue arises globally like advancement of technology and others which affecting workers in organization particularly. Not only that, it can also affect interaction and communication (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). This study could provide awareness on the importance of employee relationship with their role and task.

According to Bakker and Albrecht (2018), the current trend of work engagement is that the engagement might fluctuate among person's time and situation. According to Qureshi et al. (2012), workload has been the biggest contributors in turnover and engagement issue. The "2020 Employee Experience Trends" by Qualtrics presented the percentage of employee engagement in Malaysia is 54%. In addition, engagement level in Asian countries is lower than other regions (Schaufeli, 2012). Good employee engagement will give a major impact on work engagement (Shean et al., 2019). The desire of public and private organization to

have employees who are engaged because engagement has been shown to correspond with high levels of task performance, creativity, organizational behaviour and satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2014). The focus area of this study is on a private organization work environment phenomenon, which particularly touch on the job resources involving physical, psychological, social, or organizational in nature, including equipment, participation in decision making, social support from colleagues, and flexible working times (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

1.1 Problem Statement

The organizations' effort in building work engagement of employee by executing HRM strategies such as job design, relying on motivational job resources, job rotation, and enhanced learning and development (Schaufeli, 2012). However, there is a fluctuation on the vigor, dedication and cognitive absorption within short period of time (Sonnentag, Dormann & Demerouti, 2010). Therefore, this study is focusing on the facilitators or motivators in regards to engagement particularly as employees who have access to many job resources are in fact able to face high job demands together with personal resources; employees' cognition or beliefs, control over their environment, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). The environment at work is overwhelmingly demanding in private than any other sector because employees need to go all out for the growth of organization. The engagement of employee with their work should not be taken lightly as private sector is control by market force not political force like public sectors (Khan & Khandaker, 2016)

Other than that, conflict pertaining the disengagement of workers remain a challenge and has become a key subject of research enquiry globally (Barros et al., 2016). This comes along with the fact employees do not feel engaged at the workplaces which make Malaysia as one of the highest number in the Asia Pacific region with 26% (Mercer, 2020). It has several

impacts on the performance of an individual and organization itself. Hence, this research focuses to provide information to find out whether the people working in private sector in certain organization encountered disengagement and the reason behind it. This is because the researcher also aims to explore the barriers to work engagement. This study focuses on private sector because it operates differently than public sector as it is profit-oriented aiming growth and revenue thus it is important to be aware on the issue of employee with their job because it leads to bad or better organizations profit (Baarspul & Wilderom, 2011).

There is an increase growth of research interest in engagement including both organizational and academic circles (Guest, 2014). However, a huge number of studies regarding work engagement are often being studied by foreign countries especially in a western context (Dagher, Chapa & Junaid, 2015). Thus, location gap concerning research study will likely to answer the question about factors and barriers influencing work engagement in the context of Malaysia specifically. This study could provide different contextual perspective to work engagement in Asia country. Since, according to Schaufeli (2012), Asia countries has lower engagement level compared to other regions globally.

Moreover, in the context of sampling size or population, previous study regarding work engagement has suggested future research to widening population and conduct interview (Hong et al., 2014). The gap identified in past research is the methodology. One of the well-known data collections from quantitative context is questionnaire. However, questionnaire limit the idea of respondent since they are only able to answer question based given by the questionnaire maker. Hence, acknowledging this suggestion from past researchers, the study aim to investigate various samples from various organizations in Malaysia private sector. Besides, the method will be carry out in interview method for better insight as suggested (Hong et al., 2014).

1.2 Objectives of Study

General Objectives: To explore the facilitators and barriers of work engagement in Malaysian private sector

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the facilitators of work engagement among employees
- To find out the barriers of work engagement among employees

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the facilitators that drive employees to be engaged in their work?
2. What are the barriers that hinder work engagement of employees?

1.4 Significance of Study

There are several significances of this study.

1.4.1 Significance to Knowledge

This study enhanced the knowledge about work engagement from the private sectors' perspective in Malaysia. This study also contributes in identifying the facilitators that motivates employee as well as the barriers in private sector which as a result giving awareness for every organization in Malaysia to pay full attention on employees' well-being and the impact it has for their task performance. Since engagement at workplace is very important thus leads to an improvement. Therefore, this study is important to encourage employers to provide a better working condition for its people. Finally, this paper may assist future researcher in reviewing literatures needed regarding this topic as it is done in qualitative method which offer more in-depth insight.

1.4.2 Organization

This study might help organization to focus on the process and factor rather than only end result. Consequently, this study aims to explore the private sector in Malaysia in identifying the facilitator and challenges as well as reason of disengagement. The study may assist organization to increase learning opportunity, for instance implementing training and development, providing support and feedback as well as highlighting the importance role of leaders. Besides that, the barriers discuss in this study also can be revise for them to reflect on what is lacking and what is need to be improvise.

1.4.3 Practitioner (HRD)

The concept of engaging employees must be emphasize since it has interrelation with goals and strategy of the organization in profit earning. By identifying the barriers and facilitators, it might help policy maker or HRD practitioner to come up with new strategy to engage employees in private sector organization. As these ideas align with the significant roles of HRD in ensuring employees has the right skills, and suitable working environment while performing their task and jobs at the best conditions. Maintaining employee retention can be enhance in term of employment. Finally, to make an initiative in term of performance review related to engagement based on the outcomes for its growth entirely.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

There are few limitations in conducting this study. This first limitation is the findings in this study which focuses on work engagement in private sector may not applicable in the public sector because both have different orientation and mission. Other than that, there is also limitation in the location since it only conducted in Kuching, Sarawak hence the findings does not cover overall Malaysia.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1 Work engagement

- i. Conceptual: The harnessing of organization members' selves to work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances (Kahn, 1990, p. 694)
- ii. Operational: Involves a persons' commitment in their role performance and work/task whereby interconnecting personal development and the goals of the organization

1.6.2 Disengagement

- i. Conceptual: Disengaging means an individual uncouple themselves from their job roles, following own self-behaviour, less connection in terms of physical as well as absence in cognitively and emotionally (Kahn, 1990)
- ii. Operational: The state whereby a person has lack of interest in their work, a sense of detachment and hardly committed to the performance roles

1.6.3 Private sector

- i. Conceptual: The profit-oriented company with a mission, vision and strategy to engage in activities involving goods, services and commercialization. It includes small company, big corporation, enterprises, non-formal sectors, etc. (Bella et al., 2013)
- ii. Operational: The part of economy owned by individual or organization who is not under the government control

1.6.4 Facilitators

- i. Conceptual: The motivators of positive opportunities towards work engagement and involvement of employees (Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Bailey, 2008)
- ii. Operational: The factor that provide an outcomes or reasons of an individual to be engage at workplace

1.6.5 Barriers

- i. Conceptual: The challenges which resulting in low level of engagement among employee within their job roles and facing utter complications (Nada & Singh, 2016)
- ii. Operational: The difficulties and challenges faced by employee in engaging themselves with their work/task

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the background of study and problem statement that eventually known as research gap. The objectives consist of general and three specific objectives then followed by the research questions as well as the contribution/significance of study.

Definition of terms helps reader to better understand when reviewing this research paper.

Literature review will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter explains on the issue related to this study and previous similar findings. The first part presents the literature on work engagement. It highlights on the concept of work engagement. Then, next section will elaborate more on past research findings and the issues related to this topic which is the facilitators and the barriers. Then, next part followed by the discussion of theory in this study. This section ends with a chapter summary.

2.1 Work Engagement Concept

Goffman (1961) defined engagement as the randomness involvement in the role and putting a visible attention and efforts. The importance of engaging employee with their work and organization (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Csikszentmihalyi (1982) stated flow concept regarding employee engagement whereas employee experience in a holistic sensation of their work involvement. Kahn (1990) develop the concept of personal engagement in employee engagement (The study of Kahn will further explain in next part of theory below). The role of individual is not assign equally by themselves according to both Goffman and Kahn. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is categorized by vigor, dedication and absorption. May et al. (2004) supported Kahn's model by claiming the psychological condition to have strong relationship with engagement. Meanwhile engagement has relation with commitment (Robinson et al., 2004), job engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), 18-item scale to measure employee engagement (Hewitt Associates, 2004), extended by Saks (2006) with job engagement and organization engagement concept. A study by Truss et al. (2006) established the view of Kahn in employee engagement that operationalised in large survey, employees; connection with co-

workers, managers, and organization which build an engagement and enhance motivation about their job (Gatenby, 2008). Macey and Schneider (2008) defined engagement according to three classification which are psychological state, behavioural engagement and trait engagement. Three behaviours of employee in engagement related to their performance in job, citizenship behaviour and involvement (Newman & Harrison, 2008). Cook (2012) described engagement as the positive thinking and feeling of employee towards the organization, striving organizational goals (customers, colleagues and stakeholders).

2.1.1 Types of work engagement

There are two types of work engagement which are habitual engagement and task engagement (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) describe both habitual engagement refers to the job generally meanwhile task engagement highlights on the task at hand. Job that involves several tasks and due to that employee feel engaged towards particular task rather than the others (Schaufeli, 2012). The characteristics of task also can result in work engagement. Other than that, the prediction of work engagement can come from personal and social resources (Sonnentag, 2017).

2.1.2 The importance of Engagement

According to Bell (2021), employees who are engaged usually put greater effort into their works whereas it will create a better quality of work. Singh (2018) reported that engaged workers has an impact towards organization's performances. Employees who are engage perform better than people who are non-engaged at work (Monica, 2019). Demerouti and Cropanzano (2010) also expressed that job performance has strong connection with employee work engagement. It is supported by Macey and Schneider (2008) which the result of engagement can improve employee performance.

2.2 Facilitators of work engagement

Engaging employees is very crucial in the world of work. It gives an impact to individual, organization and economy as well. When employees feel engage with their works, they tend to enjoy in doing their task which leads to an effectiveness (Bakker & Leiter, 2010).

2.2.1 Job Resources

Bakker and Leiter (2010) presented that job resources has positive relationship on work engagement whereby the facilitators includes social support from co-workers and supervisors, various skills, feedback on performance, autonomy and learning opportunity. Social support has significance relationship with work engagement which refers to individual who gain support from others (superiors and co-workers) physically and mentally to relieve tensions (Li & Sida, 2014). Low neuroticism and receiving support and feedback from supervisors can lift up employees' morale, motivation and determination (Chandani, Mehta, Mall & Khokhar, 2016). In a study of private sector, the factors of engaging workers involve communication, decisions' authority, supportive superiors and also tangible rewards motivators (Shee-Mun et al., 2012). Another factor to promote is through trusting management, supervisor and colleagues (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). Gozukara and Simsek (2015) claimed that transformational leadership has positive influence on work engagement whereby the result of the study focuses on job autonomy and organization identification in regards to work engagement in the context of leadership. Moss (2008) found that leadership offered a great security to their followers in public and private sector by giving support in term emotional and recognize their effort (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015).

2.2.2. Psychological and Physiological

Chaudhary (2014) reported two predictors influencing work engagement which are psychological human resource development climate and self-efficacy. On the other hand, the facilitators of work engagement highlights on the theory of Kahn (1990) which are psychological safety and availability as well as meaningfulness. Meaningfulness here refers to the job and task that is worthy and valuable and reflects on the cognitive, physical and mentally (Kahn, 1990). The effect of physiological referring to healthy lifestyle and exercises boost up work engagement as it can reduce stress, help with mental health, burnout, sick leave and able to prevent absenteeism (Knight, Patterson & Dawson, 2016).

2.2.3 Characteristics

Some researchers found that the motivator of work engagement has to do with pro-active personality. Individual with pro-active personality, core self-evaluation and leader member exchange has strong relationship with task performance and also has become one of the drives that influence the work engagement (Monica, 2019). According to Li and Sida (2014), proactive personality is the moderator of work engagement that touched on the influence of social support and the conflict of work family. In the study of Sonnentag (2017), focus factors are the features of the task which involves task availability, characteristics and specificity. Brkich, Jeffs and Carless (2002) stated that employee who has high level of compatibility with their own characteristics and job requirement obtain a satisfaction in their job.

2.2.4 Rewards and Recognition

The rewards can be in term of intangible and tangible that can be the motivators of work engagement (Shee-Mun et al., 2012). Rewards and recognition has greater impact on

employee work engagement and employees tend to have better performance when their hard work is recognized. The result shows reward and recognition is positively associated with job engagement and organization engagement (Saks, 2006). One of the top drivers of employee engagement in Malaysia is recognition for their good work with a statistics of 62% (Qualtrix, 2020). Scott (2010) reported that providing rewards program enable engagement among employees as it can reduce turnover rate.

2.2.5 Human Resource Development (HRD)

There are several components relating to HRD such as training and development, career development, and organizational development which resulting in performance improvement (Swanson, 1995). According to Khan et al. (2011), the outcome of training is it can enhance employees' capabilities, performance, and assist employees to acquire the knowledge in their work for better outcomes. The benefits of training and development will enhance job satisfaction of the employees in regards to their commitment and empowerment (Mohammed Al-Mzary et al, 2015). Pool (2000) stated that organizational learning can promote motivation of employees. Employees who are committed and motivated are the great of an organization as their level of job involvement is high (Madi, 2017).

2.3 Barriers and challenges

Nowadays, employee and work engagement are quite challenging task to maintain at workplace (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Personal disengagement happens when an individual detach themselves with work roles (Kahn, 1990). There are few researches which claimed that the barriers of work engagement relates to burnout which is known for being the positive antipode of work engagement with dimensions such as exhaustion, cynicism and decoupling from work as well as lack efficacy (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Hakanen