Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTED HUMAN RESOURCE
PRACTICES AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELECTED HUMAN RESOURCES
PRACTICES AND WORK ENGAGEMENT.

STEPHANIE JONG PEI PEI

This project is submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Bachelor of Science with Honours
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The project entitled 'The Relationship between Selected Human Resource Practices and Work Engagement' was prepared by Stephanie Jong Pei Pei and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Science with Honours Human Resource Development.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between selected human resource practices and work engagement. A total of 120 sample were gathered from 173 employees from Institut Pengajian Guru Batu Lintang. A quantitative research methodology is used in this research and the data were collected using online questionnaires as the instrument. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were reported, followed by reliability analysis, Spearman's Rank Correlation and hypothesis testing using stepwise multiple regression. The findings showed there was a significant relationship between goal setting, job autonomy, role benefits and rewards and recognition and work engagement. The findings also showed that there were moderate relationship between goal setting, job autonomy, role benefits and rewards and recognition and work engagement in the selected organization. Besides, findings from this study also indicated that role benefits were the most dominant among independent variables for the work engagement in the selected organization. The study contributes to the existing pool of knowledge to the selected organization and industry in Malaysia. It has enhanced both the organization and human resource practitioners' knowledge and understanding of how selected human resource practices of the employees in Sarawak. On the other hand, the result of this study could help the organization to improve the policy and work design to ensure the organizations can improve work engagement among the employees.

Keywords: goal setting, job autonomy, role benefits, rewards and recognition, work engagement

ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti hubungan antara amalan-amalan sumber manusia yang terpilih dan penglibatan kerja. Sebanyak 120 sampel dikumpulkan dari 173 pekerja dari Institut Pengajian Guru Batu Lintang. Metodologi penyelidikan kuantitatif digunakan dalam penyelidikan ini dan data dikumpulkan menggunakan borang soal selidik dalam talian sebagai instrumen. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan inferensi. Statistik deskriptif dilaporkan, diikuti dengan analisis kebolehpercayaan, Spearman's Rank Correlation dan pengujian hipotesis menggunakan regresi berganda bertahap. Hasil kajian menunjukkan terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara penetapan tujuan, autonomi pekerjaan, faedah peranan dan penghargaan serta pengiktirafan dan penglibatan kerja. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan sederhana antara penetapan tujuan, autonomi pekerjaan, faedah peranan dan penghargaan serta pengiktirafan dan penglibatan kerja organisasi yang dipilih. Selain itu, penemuan dari kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa faedah peranan adalah yang paling dominan di antara pemboleh ubah bebas untuk penglibatan kerja di organisasi yang dipilih. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada kumpulan pengetahuan yang ada kepada organisasi dan industri terpilih di Malaysia. Ini telah meningkatkan pengetahuan dan pemahaman pengamal sumber manusia dan organisasi mengenai bagaimana amalan sumber manusia terpilih pekerja di Sarawak. Selain itu, hasil kajian ini dapat membantu organisasi untuk memperbaiki dasar dan reka bentuk kerja untuk memastikan organisasi dapat meningkatkan penglibatan kerja di kalangan pekerja.

Kata kunci: penetapan tujuan, autonomi kerja, faedah peranan, penghargaan dan pengiktirafan, penglibatan kerja

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of the research is to identify the relationship between the selected human resource practices and work engagement. This chapter divided into several parts which are the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, conceptual framework, significance and limitations of the study and lastly definition of terms. This chapter ends with a summary.

1.1 Background of the study

Work engagement is defined as an indication of employees' energy and high involvement in work by focusing on job details under hardships (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Schaufeli, Bakker, and Jaume (2006) defined work engagement as an employees' mindset in their job which relates to vigour, dedication, and absorption. Work engagement is the main topic that frequently debated and research because one of the keys to organization success is high engagement from the employees in the organization.

According to Qualtrics XM (n.d.) statistics in 2017, it showed that 62% of United States of America (USA) employees are engaged meanwhile 56% of employees from Australia, 48% of the United Kingdom and 42% employees from Hong Kong are engaged. According to Harter (2018, August 26), employees with consistent recognition from managers are likely to stay in their organization. In 2018, Aon Hewitt's report on engagement stated that Malaysia's worker engagement level was 63% but ranked lower to that of Indonesia (76%) and the Philippines (71%) in the Asia Pacific (Ismail, 2018, May 16). Aon Hewitt is a human capital and management services provider in the United States. Based on the report, it was suggested

that government and non-profit organizations need to collaborate in researching intervention to increase work engagement in Malaysia. Furthermore, Malaysia's authorities need to collaborate with neighbouring countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines that scored high engagement than Malaysia so that Malaysia can adopt the strategies and interventions from the neighbouring countries to improve the work engagement in Malaysia.

An engaged employee can be motivated to be proactive in his or her work. Most people have misconceptions that burnout is related to work engagement. According to (Schaufeli, Taris & Rhenen, 2008), burnout is negatively correlated with work engagement as well as workaholism (Taris, Schaufeli & Shimazu, 2010) because engaged employees have a lack or none of the addiction work characteristics. An engaged employee possessed vigour, dedication, and absorption in their work.

Various factors affect work engagement such as job demands, job autonomy, motivation, leadership, goal setting, role benefits, rewards and recognition and others. Goal setting should be meaningful and has a clear purpose so employees can be motivated to achieve the targeted goals. Job autonomy is significant in employees' decision making. Employers should give autonomy to employees in handling their work so they can learn to work independently and can generate a solution when encountering problems in working. According to Slatten and Mehmetoglu (2011), there are four specific types of role accumulation which are role privileges, overall status security, enrichment of personality and ego gratification and resources for status enhancement. Role benefits can increase the sense of job security and status improvement when they have a positive contribution in multiple roles that carry by an employee (Slatten and Mehmetoglu, 2011). Rewards and recognition are important to increase work engagement among employees in Malaysia. Rewards and recognition can increase the level of motivation, satisfaction, and sense of acknowledgement from employees. Employees

will feel appreciated when they gave rewards and recognition that they should have earned from achieving the organizational goals.

1.2 Problem statement

The problem in this study addresses the limitation of study on the selected human resources practice such as goal setting, role benefits, job autonomy, and rewards and recognition with work engagement. Firstly, there is a lack of past researches in studying the relationship between goal setting and role benefits with work engagement in Malaysia. A study in the United States of America had shown a positive relationship between goal setting and engagement (Medlin & Green, 2009) however most of the foreign past researches study the relationship of goal setting with leadership and work motivation. Several Malaysian past research such as Yong et al. (2013) and Lin and Ping (2016) studied the significant relationship between goal setting as one of the independent variables and employee engagement. Past research on the study of the employees in the sector showed a positive relationship between role benefits and work engagement (Bai & Liu, 2018). However, most past studies have done job resources, job demands, and burnout as the independent variables linked with work engagement than role benefits.

There is contradicting research on whether job autonomy has a positive relationship with work engagement. A study of 107 employees in the fast-food sector of Pakistan showed that some of the employees were unable to work without the manager's command and direction. The study also stated that the employees felt a burden with the autonomy given to them because they did not want to take responsibility for the outcomes of the task (Naqvi et al., 2013). However, according to Krishnan, R. et al. (2015), their study shows there is a significant relationship between job autonomy and work engagement among 800 medical employees from two public hospitals in Malaysia. Furthermore, there is also contradicting

research on rewards and recognition. According to Erciyes, Burke, and Fiksenbaum's (2006) research, a total of 201 employees' perceptions of total rewards have a significant relationship on employees work engagement who worked in Indian technology-based new ventures. However, according to Putra, Cho, and Liu's (2015), their research showed that there is no significant relationship between extrinsic rewards and work engagement when the research conducted on a total of 17 restaurants from Midwestern town in the United States.

Past research in Malaysia suggested researching rewards and recognition and engagement to determine whether there is a relationship between the two variables (Yong et al., 2013). Paille and Raineri (2015) suggested researching recognition or non-monetary rewards with any dependent variable for future studies to explore more on the effect of the non-monetary rewards on employees. Furthermore, there is still a lack of past researches in the relationship between rewards and recognition and work engagement in Malaysia. Most of the past studies researched the relationship between rewards and recognition with another dependent variable such as job satisfaction and motivation.

In terms of industry context, most of the past studies researched the medical industry and targeting nurses. Breevaart, Bakker and Demerouti (2014) show there is a significant relationship between daily goal setting and work engagement among 72 maternity nurses in the Netherlands. A research done by Abood and Thabet (2018) shows shared goal-setting among managers and employees can increase the work engagement to a total of 162 nurses in Mania, Egypt. Furthermore, Vera, Martinez, Lorente, Chambel (2016) and Krishnan et al. (2015) researched nurses' goal setting and work engagement too. There is a lack of variation in the industry in those studies because most of them conducted in the medical and health industry. Therefore, this study will research an educational organization in the public sector at Kuching during Covid 19 outbreak.

1.3 Research objectives

1.3.1 General objective

To identify the relationship between the selected human resource practices and work engagement among employees.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

1. To identify the relationship between job autonomy and work engagement among employees.

2. To identify the relationship between goal setting and work engagement among employees.

3. To identify the relationship between role benefits and work engagement among employees.

4. To identify the relationship between rewards and recognition and work engagement among employees.

5. To identify the dominant factor among human resource practices.

1.4 Research hypotheses

The objectives of this study will examine by testing the research hypothesis identified below:

H1: There is a significant relationship between job autonomy and work engagement.

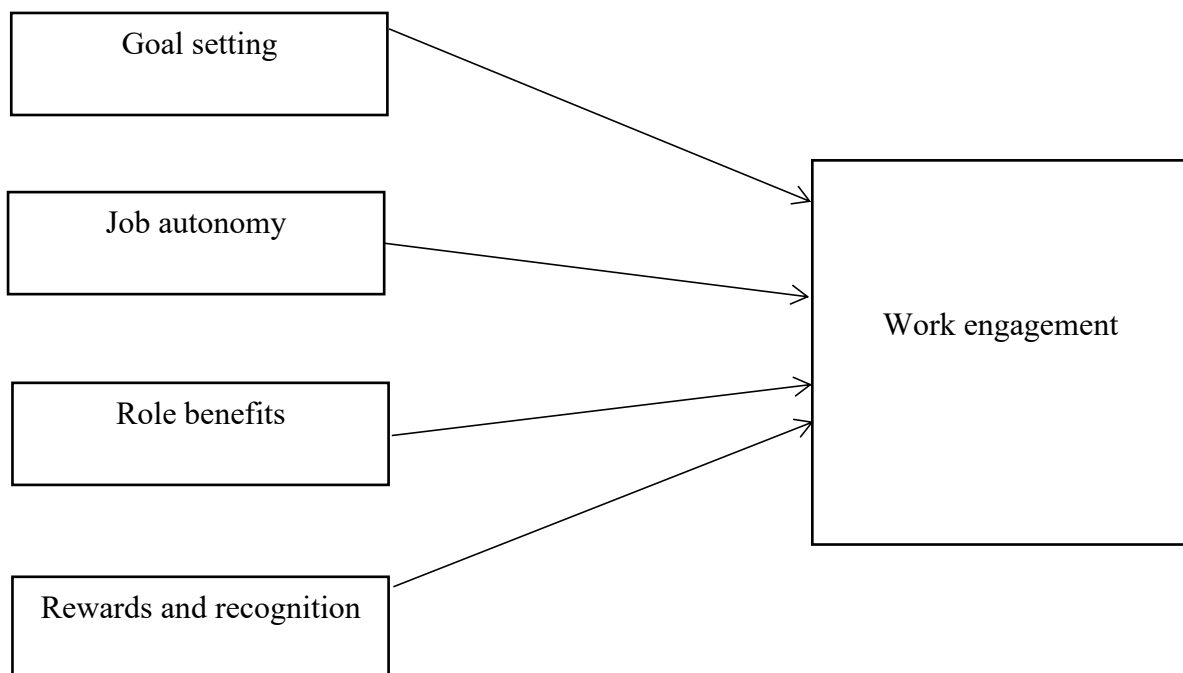H2: There is a significant relationship between goal setting and work engagement.

H3: There is a significant relationship between role benefits and work engagement.

H4: There is a significant relationship between rewards and recognition and work

engagement.

H5: There is a dominant factor among the selected human resource practices.

1.5 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the selected human resource practices and work engagement. This conceptual framework is adapted from Yong et al. (2013) and Paille and Raineri (2015). There are four independent variables from the selected human resource practices which are goal setting, job autonomy, role benefits, and rewards and recognition. The dependent variable that will be tested in this study is work engagement.

Sources : Yong et al. (2013); Paille & Raineri (2015)

Figure 1. A conceptual framework for the relationship between the selected human resource

practices and work engagement

1.6 Significance of research

The significance of this research in the body of knowledge is enhancing the knowledge of the selected human resources practices with work engagement in Malaysia because of the limitation of research in goal setting, job autonomy, role benefits, and rewards and recognition in Malaysia.

Next, this research is important in organization context because this research is conducted to show the benefit for the selected studied organization in Malaysia in providing and implementing the four selected human resource practices as stated in their work to increase their engagement level at work.

Lastly, this study contributes to the human resource development (HRD) practitioners because they can design specific tasks to every employee that can develop their role benefits and let them have autonomy in conducting the tasks and designing a set specific and meaningful goal setting for every individual, group and organization to increase their work engagement. Furthermore, HRD practitioners can design the tasks within return for rewards and recognition for every employee based on their performance.

1.7 Limitation of research.

There is a limitation on the number of variables which some other variables can link with work engagement. This study only using four type of human resource practices as independent variables and one dependent variable which is work engagement. The independent variables should be expanded to study the relationship with work engagement. Next, the sample of the study only focused on one organization in Kuching. The focused sample of respondents might be limited in the generalization of the public organization in other states in Malaysia. Thirdly, this research is only based on one type of industry which

consists of only one public organization in Kuching, Sarawak. This study has limited generalization since this study focusing on respondents in one public organization.

1.8 Definition of terms

1.8.1 Goal setting

1.8.1.1 Conceptual definition

Goal setting is defined as a process that explaining the achievement of the goal in specific periods and has four principles which are goal clarity, goal challenge, goal commitment, feedback and task complexity (Locke & Latham, 2002).

1.8.1.2 Operational definition

Goal setting is defined as a meaningful and personal improvement when an employee has targeted goals in achieving them to boost their motivation in work.

1.8.2 Job autonomy

1.8.2.1 Conceptual definition

Job autonomy is defined as employees can freely control the way they want to carry out their tasks whenever and wherever they wanted to which divided into three main aspects of autonomy which are scheduling autonomy, planning autonomy and method autonomy (Korunka & Kubicek, 2017).

1.8.2.2 Operational definition

Job autonomy is defined as the freedom of an employee in controlling their work scheduling, decision making and work methods possessed in his or her job.