THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENGAGEMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL OUTCOMES AMONG DAMMAM UNIVERSITY LECTURERS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the work engagement among university lecturers in the University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia. The study objectives were to identify the relationship between work engagement and the outcome variables. The study sample comprised of 217 university lecturers from various faculties in the University of Dammam. The hypotheses were tested with the help of statistical tests including descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Based on the results, no significant relationship was found between the independent variable and the dependent variables. In light of the results, discussions were conducted and recommendations were provided for future studies.

Field of Research: Work Engagement, university lecturers, and individual outcomes.

1. Introduction

Past studies have generally ignored the impacts of stress preferring instead to concentrate on its nature. Strain refers to the response to stress that is displayed by the individual and may even manifest as psychological strains like depression or anxiety, or physical and biological strains like in the form of diseases. Strain is deemed to be the outcome of strain or the negative outcome of stressful events (Fletcher, 1988; Hobfoll, 1988; and Jones and Kinman, 2001).

According to Schaufeli et al.’s (2002) model of work engagement has distinct defining characteristics relating to various positive outcomes for organizations, like turnover intention (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004), high job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Saks, 2006), higher discretionary effort (Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke 2004) and superior business performance (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Despite the lack of research conducted concerning individual outcomes of engagement, extant studies reveal that work engagement is related to work aspects such as feedback, social support, supervisory coaching, sleep disturbance, depression, and distress (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Schaufeli et al. 2009; Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Schaufeli et al. 2008). Additionally, job demand resource model postulates that mediating factors affect work well-being. According to the model, work engagement mediates the job resources-positive outcomes relationship (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Current research has evidenced that work engagement mediates between job characteristics and individual and organizational outcomes (Hopkins and Gardner 2012; Karatepe 2012). A group of occupational studies have also highlighted the role of work engagement on both organizational and individual outcomes (Hopkins and Gardner 2012; Karatepe 2012). Hence, work engagement has been defined in the current research as a state of mind that is positive, fulfilling, and work-related and is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. However, only a few empirical evidences have examined the role of work engagement, and individual outcomes in the context of academics. However, the primary purpose of this study is therefore to determine the relationship between work engagement and its outcomes among university lecturers working at the University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia.
1.2 Study Questions

This study aims to answer a number of questions in an attempt to determine the relationship between work engagement and individual outcomes among university lecturers. Specifically, the study questions are listed as follows:

1. Is work-engagement related to professional efficacy?
2. Is work-engagement related to organizational commitment?
3. Is work-engagement related to intention to leave?

2. Literature Review

In addition, the main outcome of interest to the job demand-resource model is work engagement, which is a relatively new concept (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). There is still not consensus as to the definition of work engagement, but there are some common elements that can be gathered in literature; for example, (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004) described work engagement as a state of mind that is positive, fulfilling and work-related and is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Similarly, Jones and Harter (2005) described work engagement as the involvement of the individual satisfaction and enthusiasm for work. This definition is consistent with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualization of cognitive and emotional engagement. In addition, Schaufeli et al.’s (2002) work engagement model suggest that it possesses a distinct defining characteristic relating to various positive outcomes for organizations like turnover intention (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004), high job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization (Saks 2006), higher discretionary effort (Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke 2004), and superior business performance (Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes 2002). Despite the lack of research dedicated to individual outcomes of engagement, extant studies reveal that work engagement are related to work aspects like feedback, social support, supervisory coaching, sleep disturbance, depression, and distress (Hallberg and Schaufeli 2006; Schaufeli and Baker 2004; Schaufeli, Bakker and Van-Rhenen 2009; Schaufeli, Taris, and Van-Rhenen 2008).

3. Study Methods

3.1 Study Design

This study employed the survey design which involves a significant number of individuals describing the characteristics of the population through unbiased sampling selection. The study sample comprised of lecturers working in institutions of higher learning in University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Following the acquisition of an informed consent pertaining to the survey, 217 participants were chosen through stratified sampling method. The sample was divided into 168 male respondents and 49 female respondents.

3.2 Study Measurement

This study uses study measurements including, organization commitment refers to a feeling of belonging and a sense of attachment to the organization and was measured using seven items (Allen & Meyer’s 1996).The Intention to leave measurement used three items and asked lecturers whether they thought about leaving their job, planned to look for a new job, or would actively search for a new job outside the university (O’Driscoll and Beehr’s (1994). Reliability and validity were examined to address research question one. Reliability was tested by measuring the internal consistency through Cronbach Alpha of the entire instrument and within subscales, with the criterion being 0.60.
or higher considered as adequate reliability while 0.80 higher considered as preferable reliability (Nunnally 1978). The results of the reliability and validity of the measurements are: work engagement, 0.87; intention to leave 0.88; professional efficacy 0.93; and organization commitment 0.90. Therefore, it is evident from the results above, that the measures used in the study proved to be reliable and valid.

4. Results of the Study

This study attempts to empirically examine whether or not work-engagement directly related to individual outcomes (intention to leave, professional efficacy, and organizational commitment). The results of data analysis for hypothesis of the relationship between work engagement and intention to leave was positive but not significant (.321 ≥ 0.05); the relationship between work engagement and professional efficacy was positive but and not significant (.371> 0.05); work engagement and organization commitment was positive but and not significant (.116 >0.05). Hence, the results showed that the association between work-engagement and the dependent variables were not supported.

Figure 1: Results of the Study
5. Study Discussions and Implications

This study empirically examines whether or not work engagement directly related to individual outcomes (intention to leave, professional efficacy, and organizational commitment). The results showed that work engagement was not related to intention to leave, professional efficacy, and organization commitment. However, it was not surprising that work engagement is not correlated with the dependent variables intention to leave, professional efficacy, and organization commitment, it is reasoned that most of lecturers worry about losing their jobs, so they might not answer the questions honestly. In addition, the period of data gathering was collected in the third month of the first semester, and because some of the respondents were in their first year working at the university, they might not be well established in their college activities. Another issue regarding engagement that is not directly related to professional efficacy is the negative framing of questions concerning professional efficacy. Therefore, this might affect the result of the relationship between engagement and professional efficacy. Moreover, affective commitment is defined as the individual’s emotional state towards the organization he is working in. Affectively committed employees are more motivated as they are more involved in the activities of the organization. But their constant exposure to strain may deprive them of contributing to organizational activities. Hence, strain negatively affects employees’ organizational commitment. This study attempted to contribute to the work-engagement outcome variables in the context of universities. Lecturers having high level of engagement manifest higher commitment, are more motivated, have high self-efficacy and are less inclined to leave the university.

5.1 Study Limitations and Recommendations

The first limitation of this study lies with its sample which may not be a representation of the bigger population. This indicates non-confirmation of generalization across geographical and demographical areas. Future researcher may adopt the same design and framework, and include all Saudi public and private universities. The second limitation is the quantitative data obtained through self-report measures allowing participants’ manipulation of data. Future studies may utilize other methods to examine the perceptions of lecturers of their work environment.

References


