Designing and Testing a Model of Antecedents of Work Engagement

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is designing and testing a model of antecedents of work engagement. Four variables introduced as antecedents include work motivation, job satisfaction, psychological empowerment and Moral climate. Participants were 226 employees of an organization who were selected via multistage random sampling and then completed the research instruments. Five questionnaires were chosen to gather data. Structural Equation Modeling analysis supported model fitting with data. As the result of analysis of this study indicates, these variables were found to have statistically significant correlations to job engagement and have the casual relationships too.

Keywords: job engagement, job satisfaction, work motivation, moral climate, psychological empowerment

1. Introduction

Engagement is a multifaceted construct that has been variously defined. Even so, on the whole, personnel engage when they feel appreciated and involved. In such instances, they are likely to hold a positive attitude is a vis the organization and its corporate values (assuming the latter are enacted, not just espoused). This translates into correct focus and enthusiasm about the work as well as mindful proactively and persistence in the conduct of it (Serrat, 2010). Engaged employees feel a sense of attachment towards their organization, investing themselves not only in their role but in the organization as a whole (Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009). Organizational benefits gained from employee engagement have been known to include greater achievement of individual work goals or productivity (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), employee satisfaction and profitability (Coetzee & De Villiers, 2010). The concept of work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002). Vigor and involvement is characterized by high levels of energy and willingness to invest effort in one’s work, while dedication is expressed by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride and inspiration. Absorption, the third defined characteristic of engagement, is described as being completely concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work (Hoigaard, Giske & Sundsli, 2011). By considering the importance of job engagement we want to propose the following hypothesis:

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H: psychological empowerment, work motivation, job satisfaction and moral climate have positive influences on work engagement.

Spreitzer (1995) defined empowerment as a process or psychological state manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Specifically, meaning concerns a sense of feeling that one’s work is personally important. Competence refers to self-efficacy, or belief in one’s ability to successfully perform tasks. Self-determination indicates perceptions of freedom to choose how to initiate and carry out tasks. Impact represents the degree to which one views one’s behaviors as making a difference in work outcomes. Employee engagement and psychological empowerment are important concepts to consider when dealing with changes at work and improving performance. Psychological empowerment increases employees’ sense of personal control and motivates them to engage in work, which in turn results in positive managerial and organizational outcomes (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). Other researchers such as Stander and Rothmann (2010); Greco, Laschinger and Wong (2006); Laschinger, Wilk, Cho & Greco (2009), Cleland, Mitchinson & Townend (2008), and Lockwood (2007), report similar findings. Work motivation is described as the psychological processes that direct, energize, and maintain action toward a job, task, role, or project (Kanfer, 1990). Intrinsic motivation is the extent to which an individual is interested in a task and engages in it for the sake of the task itself (Uttman, 1997). Luthan (1998) defines motivation as, “a process that starts with a physiological deficiency or need that activates a behavior or a drive that is aimed at a goal incentive”.

Locke and Lathan (1990) give a comprehensive definition of job satisfaction as pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experience. Job satisfaction is a result of employee’s perception of how well their job provides those things that are viewed as important. In 2005, Robinson reported that job satisfaction, feeling valued and involved and equality of opportunity are the three strongest drivers of engagement. Gallup (2008) proposed that employee engagement may be the ‘ultimate expression’ of employee satisfaction (Kosec, 2003): the more satisfied they are, the more engaged they are with the company.

Ethical climate, in turn, determines what members believe is right or wrong and shapes their ethical decision making and behavior (Johnson, 2008). Ethical climate characterizes how ethical decisions should be made within an organization according to employee perceptions of the norm. While ethics vary from person to person, they can be influenced by one’s environment. Thought of differently, an ethical climate is a way of labeling the ethics of an organization (Borry, 2011). There is little research about moral (ethical) climate and work engagement, for example: Vazirani (2006), in this research said, one of the antecedents of work engagement is the Standards of Ethical Behavior. A company’s ethical standards also lead to the engagement of an individual.

Until now, there isn’t any research to study the relationship between four variables (psychological empowerment, work motivation, job satisfaction, and moral climate) with work engagement. Only Vazirani (2006) in his research studied some of these variables and founded Standards of Ethical Behavior, Empowerment, Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment, and Job Satisfaction are antecedents of work engagement.

2. Method

This was a cross-sectional-descriptive study. Participants of this research were 226 employees of an organization who were selected via multistage random sampling and then completed the research instruments. Five questionnaires were chosen to gather data: Work Motivation (Robinson, 2004),) Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Brayfield and Rothe, 1951), Psychological Empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995), Job Engagement (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2001) and one subscale of Organizational Culture Survey (OCS; Glaser, Zamanou & Hacker; 1987) include Moral Climate. All questionnaires had validity and reliability. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through AMOS-16 and SPSS-17 software packages were used for data analysis. Fit indices include the Chi-Square statistics divided by the degree of freedom (χ² /df); Relative Fit Index (RFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).
3. Result

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the research variables.

| variables             | Mean | SD  | 1  | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
|-----------------------|------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 Moral climate       | 24.76| 7.2 | 1.000 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 2 Job satisfaction    | 18.5 | 4.5 | .505 | 1.000 |     |     |     |     |     |
| 3 Work motivation     | 44.86| 6.1 | .381 | .376 | 1.000 |     |     |     |     |
| 4 Psychological Empowerment | 47.9 | 6.6 | .387 | .499 | .564 | 1.000 |     |     |     |
| 5 Vigour              | 25.16| 3.8 | .509 | .639 | .598 | .659 | 1.000 |     |     |
| 6 Dedication          | 19.91| 4.3 | .514 | .645 | .603 | .665 | .794 | 1.000 |     |
| 7 Absorption          | 23.58| 4.7 | .460 | .577 | .540 | .595 | .711 | .717 | 1.000 |

SEM analysis supported model fitting with data (table 2). Following goodness-of-fit indices were used to assess the model-fitting: A chi-square of 22.72 on 8 degrees of freedom, GFI= 0.98, CFI= 0.99, NFI= 0.98, RFI= 0.96, TLI= 0.98, IFI= 0.96 and RMSEA= 0.09.

| Model   | CMIN | DF | P  | CMIN/DF | GFI | NFI | RFI | IFI | TLI | CFI | RMSEA |
|---------|------|----|----|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Default model | 22.72 | 8  | .04 | 2.84    | .98 | .98 | .94 | .96 | .98 | .99 | .09   |

As expected and see in figure 1, job engagement was significantly and positively predicted by job satisfaction (r= 0.37, P= 0.01), psychological empowerment (r = 0.34, P= 0.01), work motivation (r = 0.29, P= 0.01) and moral climate (r = 0.15, P= 0.05). Square Multiple Correlations (R²) was 0.80 that indicate four variables explain 80% of job engagement’s variance.
4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was designing and testing a model of antecedents of work engagement. As the result of analysis of this study indicated, these variables were found to have statistically significant correlations to job engagement, predicted it and had the casual relationships. There isn’t any empirical research about the relationship between psychological empowerment, work motivation, job satisfaction and moral climate with work engagement. In line with the finding of Vazirani (2006), about some of these variables, this study also found a significant relationship between these constructs. Thus, even though promoting greater engagement can be done at the level of the individual employee (for example, through better manager communication, satisfy their needs, creating challenged and stimulated work environment, enhance value and ethical climate and develop empowering work place), To promote higher levels of employee engagement, companies must make themselves the kinds of organizations with which employees want to engage.

In line with most of the findings regarding the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement (Stander, et al., 2010.; Laschinger, et al., 2009; Cleland et al., 2008; Lockwood 2007; Greco, et al., 2006), this study also found a significant relationship between these constructs.

Employees feel most engaged when they have a good relationship with their manager, when they can be professional and have autonomy to make decisions, when they feel valued and feel confident in their own role and feel proud of the work they do (Cleland et al., 2008). Kahn (1990) found that people are more likely to engage in...
situations that are high on meaningfulness. This proposition is supported by Lockwood (2007) who suggested that organizations who build a culture of meaningfulness are more likely to have engaged employees. Meaningfulness represents the sense of a return on investing the self exerting energies into a task, and occurs when people feel they have valued and making a difference. It is important that the task is challenging, offers some autonomy and ownership, has clearly defined goals, is creative and varied, demands both routine and new skill, and has some influence and ownership over the work. Engaged employees see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs (self-efficacy) (Llorens, Salonova, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2007). Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) found a strong correlation between self-efficacy and engagement. Self-determination goals will enhance employee engagement, while heteronymous goals, even when introduced efficaciously, will not (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Goals that are selected through self-determination are well-internalized and autonomous (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008). Impact implies a sense of progression towards a goal and individuals’ belief that their actions are making a difference in their organizations, which contributes to employee engagement. Engaged employees have a sense of energetic and effective connection with their work activities and see themselves as able to deal completely with the demands of their jobs (Schaufeli, et al., 2002).

Work motivation will be promoted employee engagement. Work motivation is the process of stimulating people to action and to achieve a desired task. One way of stimulating people is to employ effective motivation, which makes workers more engaged to their jobs.

Job satisfaction can influence on work engagement. The finding of this research is consistent with Gallup (2008; cited in Scarborough, 2008) and Koscec (2003). If people feel positive about their job and various aspects of work, such as pay, supervision, or workload, that is, satisfy in their work, enable to be more motivated, committed to helping the company achieve its objectives finally have a desire to be involved and engaged in.

Also, moral climate can influence on work engagement. This finding is consistent with Vazirani (2006). If employees learn how to behave through formal and informal socialization, and exist good relationships between co-workers, especially the relationship between employee and manager with mutual respect and trust between colleagues and managers and demonstrate trust by allowing autonomy is seen as key to enabling employees to engage with the organization (Robertson-Smith & Markwick, 2009).

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