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ROLE OF PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT AND PERSON-JOB FIT ON WORK ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a matter of concern for leaders and managers in organizations across the globe. Organizations need to identify the factors that help to develop and maintain an engaged workforce. The objective of the present study is to determine the influence of person job fit and perceived supervisor support on employee engagement in the Indian context. Respondents to the survey were 177 employees working in three service sector organisations in Central Kerala, South India. Correlation and regression analyses were used to test the research hypotheses. Results of the study show that there exists significant correlation among person-job fit, perceived supervisor support and employee engagement. Results of multiple regression analysis showed that person-job fit and perceived supervisor support significantly predicted employee engagement in the Indian context. The present study has implications for human resource managers as it provides an understanding into two factors that facilitate employee engagement.

KEYWORDS

perceived supervisor support, person-job fit, employee engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of employee engagement has generated a great deal of attention among many human resource practitioners, business entrepreneurs and academic researchers across the globe. It has emerged as one of the most important topics in the sphere of human resource management (Baldev and Anupama, 2010). The notion of employee engagement has been heavily marketed by human resource consulting firms that offer advice on how it can be created and leveraged (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Employee engagement is a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance (Saks, 2006). Engaged employees play a key role in achieving organizational success and competitive advantage. Researchers have made significant studies in exploring the potential relations between engagement and performance-related outcome variables that suggest enhancing engagement could create a compelling competitive advantage for organizations across the globe (Shuck *et al.*, 2011). As commented by Smith (2009), engagement takes its rightful place at the core of organizational success, regardless of how the economy is doing. It is a fundamental area of concern for leaders and managers across the globe as it is a vital element affecting organizational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness (Welch, 2011). With increasing relevance of employee engagement, researchers are now focusing on what exactly drives engagement and how it can be enhanced. However little research has been undertaken to identify the antecedents of employee engagement and Chaudhary, Rangnekar & Barua (2011) mentioned that antecedents of employee engagement need to attract considerably more attention. The objective of the present study is to determine the influence of perceived supervisor support and person job fit on employee engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Kahn (1990) was one of the first to propound the concept of engagement. Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. Kahn (1990) also noted that personal disengagement is the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances. Building on Kahn's (1990) qualitative study May *et al.*, (2004) quantitatively explored the determinants and mediating effects of three psychological conditions, meaningfulness, safety and availability on employees' engagement in their work. The results showed that three psychological conditions exhibited significant positive relations with engagement. Employee engagement is also considered in the context of organizational behavior. For example, Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. The present study follows the above definition of engagement.

PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Perceived supervisor support is defined as the degree to which employees form impressions that their supervisors care about their well being, value their contributions and are generally supportive (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). Direct supervisors are usually the closest organisational link to the employee and they have the ability to communicate the organizations intentions directly to their subordinates (Levinson, 1965). According to Levinson (1965) as supervisors act as agents of the organization, perceived supervisor support should facilitate positive attitudes towards the organization in general. According to Kahn (1990) management style and processes, like leader behaviours that show more or less support, resilience, consistency, trust and competence, help employees to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self image, status or career (psychological safety). Employees tend to view their supervisors orientation toward them as the indicative of organizational support (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). A study conducted by Eisenberger *et al.* (2002) reported that perceived supervisor support is a predictor of perceived organisational support. This might be because supervisors who seem to be honoured by the organization would be assumed by employees to strongly represent the organizations image (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2002). A basic principle of social exchange theory is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain "rules" of exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Rules of exchange usually involve reciprocity or repayment rules such that the actions of one party lead to a response or actions by the other party. For example, when individuals receive socio emotional resources from their organization, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). When the relationship between the supervisor and the employee is characterized by trust, obligations, socio-emotional resources and a long term orientation, the employees should perceive the exchange relationship as social (Dysvik and Kuvaas, 2012). Thus employees who experience good treatment by their organization are likely to "give back" with more favorable attitudes towards their employer (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Studies signify the positive impact of supervisory support on organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Results also indicate that supervisory support would help reduce employees' tendency to leave the organization (Muhammad & Hamdy, 2005). Literature reveals that perceived supervisor support is an antecedent of employees' positive attitudes and behaviours. On the basis of the above discussion this study proposes a positive relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived supervisor support positively influence employee engagement

PERSON JOB FIT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

P-J fit is defined as the match between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job or the needs/desires of a person and what is provided by a job (Edwards, 1991). P-J fit is relevant to an individual's compatibility with a specific job (Lauver and Kristof- Brown, 2001). According to Munchinsky and Monahan's (1987) conceptualization, the person-job fit refers to complimentary fit which represent the degree of compatibility or congruence between individual's KSAs and job's demands. Shelton et al(2001) stated that people being mismatched in their jobs causes anxiety-induced illnesses, higher incidents of job-related accidents, increases in employee absences, and lower productivity. A mismatch between an employee's skills and the job requires the employee to divert valuable time and attention away from matters of task completion and focus instead on flexing and adjusting to job demands incongruent with their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Saks and Ashforth (1997) determined that employees who experience higher degrees of mismatched P-J fit evidence less organizational commitment and organizational identification. Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) said when employees have extended experiences of perceived job mismatches, their perceptions of how they fit positively into the life of the organization is adversely affected. According to them, such negative experiences adversely impact employees' perception of their task performance (how they perceive themselves to execute the responsibilities formally considered to be their jobs) and negatively impact how they execute contextual performance (behaviours contributing to organizational effectiveness beyond formal job requirements). High person-job fit is associated with positive outcomes. Kristof (1996) suggested that P-J fit should be more strongly associated with attitudes specific to the job (e.g., job satisfaction). Based on the above logic we posit that level of engagement of employees with high person job fit is more compared with employees with low person- job fit.

Hypothesis 2: Person- job fit positively influence employee engagement

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

The study was conducted among 177 employees working in three service sector organisations (one in the healthcare sector, one in the insurance sector and one in the telecom sector) in Central Kerala, South India. Questionnaires were administered to participants and confidentiality was assured.

MEASURES

The study used three main instruments derived from the academic literature to measure each variable. The employees who participated in the survey responded using a 5 point Likert scale with anchor points (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Perceived supervisor support was measured by the scale adapted by Rhoades et al. (2001) from the survey of perceived organisational support (SPOS). This instrument contained four items. Person -Job fit was measured using the five items scale developed by Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001). Employee engagement is measured using the shortened version of UWES (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale) developed by Schaufeli et al.,(2006).

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, reliability estimates, and correlations for all measures are reported in Table 1. Analyses of the study were carried out using SPSS 21.0.

TABLE 1: MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS OF STUDY VARIABLES

Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
1.Person Job Fit	3.82	.687	(.842)
2.Perceived supervisor support	3.72	.693	(.756)
3. Employee engagement	3.73	.667	(.881)

TABLE 2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSS, PERSON -JOB FIT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

		PSS	PERSON-JOB FIT	ENGAGEMENT
PSS	Pearson Correlation	1	.351**	.415**
PERSONJOBFIT	Pearson Correlation	.351**	1	.731**
ENGAGEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.415**	.731**	1

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 shows that there exists positive significant correlation between the study variables. Also it is noted that the correlation values are less than 0.8, which rules out the possibility of multi-collinearity (Field, 2009).

To test the hypotheses, H1 and H2 multiple regression analyses were conducted in which employee engagement was regressed simultaneously on person-job fit and perceived supervisor support.

TABLE 3: INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT AND PERSON-JOB FIT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.	R	Adjusted R ²
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	.610	.225		.007		
PSS	.174	.052	.180	.001	.750	0.558
PERSONJOBFIT	.648	.052	.668	.000		

Dependent variable: Employee engagement

As presented in Table 3, the regression results indicate that the person-job fit and perceived supervisor support explained a significant amount of variance in employee engagement, **R²=.558, p<.01**. Person-Job fit ($\beta=.668, p<.01$) and perceived supervisor support ($\beta=.180, p<.01$) were significant predictors of employee engagement. Both the study hypotheses, H1 and H2 were supported in the present study.

CONCLUSION

The concept of employee engagement is acquiring increasing significance among academic circles and practitioners in India. Literature on employee engagement has blossomed progressively over the past two decades. The objective of the present study was to find out the influence of person job fit and perceived supervisor support on employee engagement. The results showed that person job fit and perceived supervisor support predicted employee engagement. Managers may direct selection and socialization efforts toward increasing person job fit of employees. Results of this study also suggest that employee engagement can be enhanced through modulation in perceived supervisor support and person-job fit of employees. As employee engagement is the backbone of an organization it would be fruitful to explore drivers of employee engagement and the linkages between drivers and employee engagement.

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