

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS AMONG CHINESE BANKING PROFESSIONALS

*Shi Shuai*¹, *Siti Aida Samikon*²

Post Graduate Center, Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Malaysia

Abstract

This study has been done with an aim to investigate the significant aspects and defining of employee engagement concepts and related literature. the secondary aim of this study is the analyse the different aspects of employee engagement introduced and progressed in business literature. for this, I have gone through rigorous business literature and designed this paper. It enlists the concepts, definitions, outputs and at the end it elaborates the concept in modern business liter.

Keyword: Engagement, Human Resources Management, Burn Out, Retention, Evolution

1.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Empowered employees seem to be one of the keys to an organization's success (Tarboda, 2001; Bose, I., 2018) Psychological empowerment is empowerment from psychological perspective. It can be viewed as the perception of individuals towards their work and their role in the organization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The term empowerment in this case is motivational in nature. The motivational construct of empowerment is about discretion, autonomy, power, and control. It is also defined as a motivational construct as it increases intrinsic task motivation manifested in a set of four cognitions that reflect an individual's orientation to his or her work role, notably meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Suhaimi, S. A. et. al., (2018). Thus, it is believed that employees who experience psychological empowerment are more motivated and will be more beneficial to organizations.

Previous studies on the consequences of psychological empowerment stressed on specific attitudinal outcomes

such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Jha, 2011) and on more general outcomes such as managerial and organizational effectiveness (Spreitzer et al., 1997). However, for this study, the researcher would only include the examination of job involvement as the outcome of psychological empowerment. Menon (2001) found that job involvement is also a consequence of psychological empowerment. Evidence from the literature review indicates that a study on job involvement among employees in banking sector of the local context still needs to be carried out (Boon, Arumugam, Safa & Bakar; 2007; Xu, & Syarifah, S. A. B. 2019). Most of the past studies on psychological empowerment had included individual factors such as self-esteem and locus of control (Samad, 2007) and situational factors such as job characteristic, organization structure, access to information and resources, political support and leadership style (Avolio et al., 2004; Chan, 2003) as antecedents of psychological empowerment. Previous studies had shown a positive relationship between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment (Pousa, Hardie, & Zhang, 2018; Samad, 2007).

Furthermore, Chan (2003) in his study, included organization structure as one of the antecedents to psychological empowerment. Nevertheless, the findings showed that there was no relationship between organization structure and psychological empowerment and thus, Chan's study did not support the hypothesized direct and positive relationship between the organically structured organizations and psychological empowerment. As for job characteristics, several studies had acknowledged the importance of job design approaches to empowering employees (for instance, Chen & Chen, 2008; Zhan, Li, & Luo, 2019; Jha & Nair, 2008).

2. DEFINITION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Previously, Section 2.1 presented an overview of the evolution of employee engagement research as shown in the Box A of Figure 2.2 and it has been concluded that employee engagement is the combination of academic

literature and practitioner literature. In this section, the existing definitions of employee engagement derived from the academics and the practitioner researchers were reviewed and the definition adopted by this research was constructed, as below in figure 2.3.

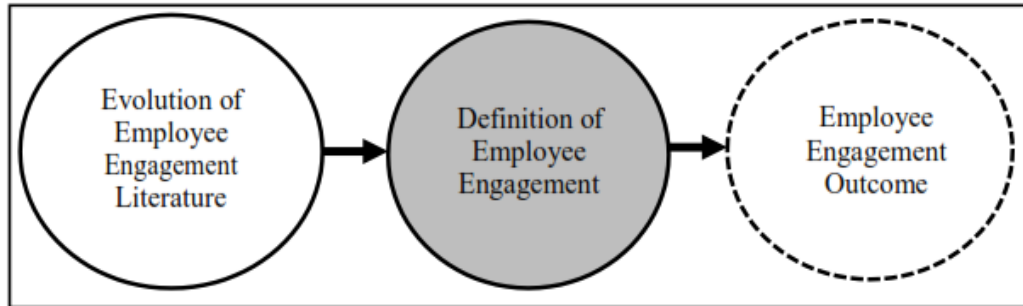


Figure 1: Milestones of Literature Review, Box B
Source: developed for this research

The analysis of related literature on employee engagement had been carried out based on several criteria: (i) the year of publication; (ii) the refereed journal status, such as journals published in ISI, Scopus, and Impact Factor Journal found on databases such as Proquest Direct, Emerald Management

Twelve articles were published in refereed journals (column 2, row 1, row 3-8 and row 10-14 in foci A of Table 2.1), two articles were from books (column 3, row 2, and row 9 in foci A of Table 2.1). Although these two articles from books were not published in refereed journals, the authors are professors in renowned

universities and well-known academicians in the area of employee engagement research. The remaining seven articles were published as practitioner literature (Table 2.1). These publications, although were not published in refereed journals, their studies however were heavily cited by articles published in various refereed journals (Chat-Uthai, 2013; Jauhari et al., 2013; Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Ahlowalia, Tiwary, & Jha, 2014).

Table 1

Analysis of the Articles on Employee Engagement and Authors' Background

	Articles' Background (FOCI A)		Author' background (OCIB)		
	Year of Publication	Academic Literature	Ph D	Practitioners	Academics
Kahn (1990)	1990	√	√		√
Leiter & Maslach (1998)	1998	√			
Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter -2001	2001	√			

§ Maslach (refer to Leiter & Maslach, 1998)				
§ Schaufeli				
§ Leiter (refer to Leiter & Maslach, 1998)			√	√
Harter et al. (2002)	2002			
§ Harter			√	√
§ Schmidt			√	√
§ Hayes				
Schaufeli et al. (2002)	2002	√		
§ Schaufeli (refer to Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001)				
§ Salanova				
§ Gonzalez-Roma			√	√
§ Bakker			√	√
Jones & Harter (2005)	2005	√		
§ Jones			√	√
§ Harter			√	√
Saks (2006)	2006	√	√	√
Macey & Schneider (2008)	2008	√		
§ Macey		√		√
§ Schneider		√		√
Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young	2009			
§ Macey (refer to Macey & Schneider, 2008)				
§ Schneider (refer to Macey & Schneider, 2008)				
§ Barbera				
§ Young				√

Zigarmi et al. (2009)	2009		√	√	√
§ Zigarmi				√	
§ Nimon				√	
§ Houson				√	
§ Witt				√	
§ Diehl				√	
Albrecht (2010)	2010	√		√	
Bakker & Leiter (2010)	2010				
§ Bakker (refer to Schaufeli et al., 2002)					
§ Leiter (refer to Leiter & Maslach, 1998)					
Shuck & Wollard (2010)	2010				
Robertson & Cooper (2010)	2010				
Towers Perrin (2003)	2003				
Hewitt Associates LLC (2004)	2004	√			
Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday (2004) – IES	2004	√		√	
CLC (2004)	2004				
Flemming & Asplund (2007) –	2007				
Czarnowsky (2008) – ASTD	2008			√	
Towers Watson (2012)	2012		√	√	√

Furthermore, the assessment regarding the authors' background found that 18 out of 27 (67%) were PhD holders (column 6 in foci B of Table 2.1) and two out of 27 (7.4%) were education doctorate (ED.D) holders (column 7 in foci B of Table 2.1). Next, 15 out of 27 (56%) of the authors were practitioners (column 8 in

foci B of Table 2.1), 13 out of 27 (48%) were academicians (column 9 in foci B of Table 2.1). Four out of 27 (15%) of the authors were both academicians and practitioners (column 8-9, row 8, row 10, and row 14 in foci B of Table 2.1).

In summary, based on the assessment on the background of the selected articles and the author's background, it can be concluded that these 21 articles

are relevant for the analysis of the definition of employee engagement on the basis of the credibility of the articles and the authors of those articles themselves.

Next, for an assessment of the definition of employee engagement, the working definition of employee engagement from those 21 selected articles were extracted. Each definition was analysed in accordance with the three components of employee engagement, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. These three components were chosen according to the notion

that employee engagement is a multidimensional construct (Saks, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Newman & Harrison, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

The 21 articles were chronologically listed following the year of publication, category of literature, and components of employee engagement. The synthesis of employee engagement definition is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

Synthesis on the Definitions of Employee Engagement by Academics and Practitioners

Authors	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral	Source	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
Kahn (1990)	√	√	√	Harter et al. (2002)		√	√
Leiter & Maslach (1998)	√	√		Towers Perrin (2003)			√
Maslach et al. (2001)			√	Hewitt Associates LLC (2004)			√
Schaufeli et al. (2002)	√	√	√	CLC (2004)			√
Jones & Harter (2005)	x	√	√	Robinson et al. (2004) – IES	√	√	√
Saks (2006)	√	√	√	Flemming & Asplund (2007)	√	√	√
Macey & Schneider (2008)	√	√	√	Czarnowsky (2008)	√	√	
Macey et al. (2009)		√	√	Towers Watson (2012)			√
Zigarmi et al. (2009)	√	√					
Albrecht (2010)	√	√					
Bakker & Leiter (2010)	√	√	√				
Shuck & Wollard (2010)	√	√	√				
Robertson & Cooper (2010)	√	√	√				

The first component to be considered in the definition of employee engagement is cognitive. Well-engaged

employees have a cognitive process that is thoroughly absorbed to give focus and full attention on their tasks at hand (Rothbard, 2001; Rich, 2006). Out of the 21 articles in this research, 10 articles are academic

literature (column 2 in foci A of Table 2.2) and three articles are practitioner literature (column 2 in foci B of Table 2.2) that mention about cognitive component. Thus, cognitive component is included in the definition of employee engagement in this research.

The second component to be considered in the definition of employee engagement is emotional. Emotional engagement refers to the experience of feeling or affective connection to an organization, or something, or someone within it (Kahn, 1990). When employees are emotionally engaged with their work, they invest personal resources such as pride, trust, and knowledge toward task completion (Shuck & Reio, 2013). Out of the 21 articles, 12 articles are academic literature (column 3 in foci A of Table 2.2) and four articles are practitioner literature (column 3 in foci B of Table 2.2) that mention about emotional component. Thus, emotional component is also included in the definition of employee engagement in this research.

In conclusion, there are three components of employee engagement, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. However, the authors in the selected articles either incorporated the cognitive component with the emotional component, and/or behavioral component, or any combinations of those three components. Thus, it can be concluded that for the purpose of this research, the definition of employee engagement must incorporate at least two or more components. Hence, the term employee engagement is defined as an individual's cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes.

3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT OUTCOME AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL IN BUSINESS

In the Section 2.4, it was concluded that the employee engagement outcome is divided into the individual level and the organizational level. This research is to augment the body of research for employee engagement area by exploring the employee engagement outcome at the organizational level. It is based on three premises: (i) the organizational level outcome is the final employee engagement outcome; (ii) the organizational level outcome is the barometers of a business economics'

Table 3

viability; and (iii) the practical utility of studying the organizational level outcome. It is often viewed as a more important indicator for success than the performance of individuals (Pugh & Dietz, 2008).

In summary, all of the articles were published in refereed journals, were conducted in a general business setting, and they examined the relationship between employee engagement and employee engagement outcome at the organizational level. In short, the selected articles are relevant and valid to be further examined to identify factors of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level. Based on the assessment of the selected articles, the limitations in conducting those studies were discovered and related with two areas: (i) the majority of the articles employed quantitative method instead of qualitative method; and (ii) the selected studies only examined employee engagement outcome at the organizational level in a general business setting.

The first factor of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level is employee retention (column 1 of Table 2.3). Employee retention is viewed not as the opposite of turnover, but it is applied to determine what is wanted rather than what is not wanted (Waldman & Arora, 2004). This view is supported by Browell (2003) and Frank, Finnegan, and Taylor (2004) of which all of them had agreed that employee retention involves keeping desirable employees. Organization does not want to lose good employees in order to meet its business objectives. For this reason, this factor is considered in the present research for further investigation.

Synthesis on the Factors of Employee Engagement Outcome at the Organizational Level

Source	Employee Retention	Profitability	Absenteeism	Customer Satisfaction	Productivity	Customer Loyalty	Organizational Performance	Manager Self-Efficacy	Advocacy of an Organization	Business Growth
Luthans & Peterson (2002)	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	√	x	x
Harter et al. (2002)	√	√	x	√	√	X	x	x	x	x
Salanova et al. (2005)	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	x	x
Bhatnagar (2007)	√	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Heger (2007)	√	√	x	x	√	X	x	x	x	x
Xanthopoulou et al. (2009)	x	√	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Schaufeli et al. (2009)	x	x	√	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Ram et al. (2011)	x	x	x	√	x	X	x	x	x	x
Wang (2011)	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	√	x
Heriyati & Ramadhan (2012)	√	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Suharti & Suliyanto (2012)	√	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Balakrishnan et al. (2013)	√	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Chat-Uthai (2013)	√	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Jauhari et al. (2013)	x	√	x	√	x	X	x	x	x	x
Kataria et al. (2013)	x	x	x	x	x	X	√	x	x	x
Merrill et al. (2013)	x	x	√	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Soane et al. (2013)	x	x	√	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Alias et al. (2014)	√	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x
Gorgievski et al. (2014)	x	x	x	x	x	X	x	x	x	√

The second factor of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level is profitability (column 2 of Table 2.4). Profitability refers to the ability to generate, sustain, and increase profits (White, Sondhi, & Fried,

2003) obtained by the enterprise from transformation and/or change activities, as well as surplus appearing in the final phase of the economic circuits (Pălălaioa, 2011).

Hence, this factor is considered in this research for further investigation.

The third factor of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level is absenteeism (column 3 of Table 2.4). Absenteeism is defined as the failure of an employee to report to work at a given location and the time when it is expected to do so (Martichio & Jimeno, 2003; Robbins, 2003; Patton & Johns, 2007). The relationship between employee engagement and absenteeism is negative, which means the higher the level of employee engagement, the lower the incident of absenteeism by employee. Therefore, this factor is considered in this research for further investigation.

The fourth factor of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level is customer satisfaction (column 4 of Table 2.4). Customer satisfaction is defined as a post-choice evaluative judgment response by the consumer to the purchase and the use of a product resulting from the comparison of the product results against some standards prior to purchase (Oliver, 1980; Churchill & Suprenant, 1982; Tse & Peter, 1988; Westbrook & Oliver, 1991; Halstead, Hartman & Schmidt, 1994). Hence, this factor is taken into account in the present research for further investigation.

The next factor of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level is productivity (column 5 of Table 3). Productivity is referred to as sales, work quality, and activities accomplished on schedule (Culnan & Blair, 1983). Productivity is also defined as a ratio depicting the volume of work completed in a given amount of time (Ricardo & Wade, 2001), as well as in reference to output (Singh & Mohanty, 2012). Based on these definitions, productivity includes both effectiveness and efficiency of the employees in performing the given tasks. Therefore, this factor is counted in this research for further investigation.

Finally, the tenth factor of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level is business growth (column 10 of Table 2.4). Business growth can be defined in terms of revenue generation and expansion of volume of business (Gupta, Guha, & Krishnaswami, 2013), growth of sales (Coad & Rao, 2008; Huynh & Petrunia, 2010), as well as extensive asset growth (Bigsten & Gebreyesus, 2007; Choi, 2010). For this

reason, this factor is selected in this research for further investigation. In regard to frequency, out of the 10 factors of employee engagement outcome at the organizational level that have been examined, the highest frequency is employee retention in which eight out of 19 articles studied this factor (column 1, row 20 of Table 2.4). The highest frequency of this factor can be explained by a strong link between employee retention and the increase in sales, market value, and profitability (Huselid, 1995). Employee retention is thus necessary for the success of an organization (Kamil, Abdul Hamid, Hashim, and Omar, 2013).

Luthans and Peterson (2002) contended that employee engagement occurs when employees work with a powerful psychological sense to accomplish the goals of their work. Luthans and Peterson's (2002) definition is consistent with that of Robinson, Derryman & Hayday (2004). Emotional engagement refers to the management interest in the employee; there are strong emotional ties and the employee's opinion counts. Cognitive engagement refers to employees knowing what is expected of them, understanding their purpose or mission within the organization and are being given opportunities to excel and grow within the organization.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Several studies (e.g. Al-Qatawneh, 2014; Ansari & Valiyan, 2015; Harney & Jordan, 2008; Holagh, Noubar & Bahador, 2014; Lambert, Qureshi, Klahm, Smith & Frank, 2018; Suman & Srivastava; 2012) relate organizational structure to Employee engagement (EC). Al-Qatawneh (2014) examined the impact of organizational structure on Employee engagement of employees in public and private firms in Amman in Jordan. Regression results revealed that organizational structure dimensions, namely formalization and standardization had a significant positive effect on Employee engagement in both sectors except centralization.

Ansari and Valiyan (2015) studied the relationship between organizational structure and organizational commitment using employees of a water and wastewater company in Golestan Province in Iran as the

sample. Their regression results indicated a significant positive relationship between formalization and complexity with organizational commitment, but not centralization. Harney and Jordan (2008) sought to find out whether line managers could stimulate improvements in firm performance by eliciting appropriate employee outcomes. Interview responses from staff of a call centre in the UK disclosed that flat structures did not motivate Employee engagement because a company with flat structures (complexity) provided no clear routes in terms of career progression.

Holagh et al. (2014) analysed the effect of organizational structure on organizational creativity and commitment using staff of Tabriz municipality in Iran as units of analysis. Their regression results showed a significant positive relationship between organizational structure and commitment. Lambert et al. (2006) examined the various forms of centralization and formalization in to understand their impact on Employee engagement of staff at a Midwestern high security state prison in the USA.

Shafae et al. (2012) evaluated the impact of organizational structure and Employee engagement of employees of the statistical society of Parsabad Islamic Azad University. Their structural equation model analysis revealed that organizational structure in terms of formalization and centralization had a positive and significant effect on organizational commitment. Suman and Srivastava (2012) studying antecedents of Employee engagement across different hierarchical levels of the public sector in India used staff of a steel plant as the study sample. Their regression results showed that organizational structure had significant positive relationship on organizational commitment. However, from the above studies some gaps emerge.

5. PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement has been considered the key to increase employee motivation and from individual's perspective, it has been thought of as key to personal growth and satisfaction, which will lead to goal-directed behavior (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Lawler & Hall, 1970). The earlier definition of job involvement proposed by Lodahl and Kejner (1965) relates it with the importance

of work in the workers' total self- image and how performance affects self-esteem. Meyerson and Kline (2008) further proposed that psychological empowerment relates to how competent employees feel when working in empowered environment.

The educational research by Short and Rinehart (1992) has shown a relationship between organizational variables and empowerment. By increasing the level of teacher satisfaction, morale, communication, and principal leadership behaviors have linked to teacher empowerment. Even though several demographic variables have been studied to a relationship with empowerment, there were conflicting results as to whether those variables are significant. Thus, when they feel empowered, it will lead to their commitment towards institutions. According to Chen and Chen (2008), the relationship between works re-designs and organization commitment is mediated with psychological empowerment. Laschinger and Havens (1996) and Laschinger et al. (1999) in their study had found that work stress has negatively affect related to psychological empowerment. Individual who have highly stress will reduced meaning to their work and self-determination and eventually will decrease commitment towards organization.

The construct of psychological empowerment may be an important one in organizational research because previous study had suggested employees who feel empowered by their supervisors demonstrate more commitment towards organization. The social exchange context supports the explanation of the relationships that exist between antecedents and attitudinal or behavioral outcomes that normally associated in the theory of social exchange. In this study, the attitudinal outcome such as Employee engagement is the likely consequence of psychological empowerment. Thus, it is hypothesized that it has a positive relationship with job involvement.

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