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Employee Engagement among Public Service Employees in Putrajaya Federal Territory

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Abstract

During this COVID-19 endemic, even there is large grumbles received from public which regards to poor services given especially from the counter services and frontline officers, the government must ensure the delivery of service cannot be compromised. Hence, government needs to provide public officers with good support from top management, full trust from top management as well as allowing them to work in a group to realize the organization's goal. Thus, few factors should be examined to determine which factors strongly influence to employee engagement. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors influencing the employee engagement among federal government's staff in Putrajaya. This study was conducted on 110 employees working in various units from Ministry of Finance. The survey included measures of Management Support, Management Trust, Work in Group and Employee Engagement. Purposive sampling technique was used for this study. Online survey through Google Forms were distributed using the non-probability sampling technique which is purposive sampling. Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Outer Weight Loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Convergent Validity), Fornell-Larcker Criterion (Discriminant Validity), Standard Beta, T-value, Effect Size (f^2) and R Square were employed.

The analysis was performed using SmartPLS path model. Results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the exogenous variables and employee engagement. As a result, this study addresses concerns about that lack of academic research on employee engagement among federal government's staff and speculation that it might just be yet another management fad.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Management Support, Management Trust, Work in Group, SmartPLS

Introduction

The unexpected and vicious disruption by the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown the public service and public servants into wrath situations, pressing them not to only deal with combatting its spread but trying to manage its accompanying socioeconomic fallout. Every organization in Malaysia is competing to survive in the challenging and volatile economic environment (Ramalu & Rashid, 2017). In order to survive, they need pools of excellent, talented and productive human capital to work in organizations. During this COVID-19 endemic, even there is large grumbles received from public which regards to poor services given especially from the counter services and frontline officers, the government must ensure the delivery of service cannot be compromised (Maduraiveeran & Lasi, 2021). Hence, government needs to provide public officers with good support from top management, full trust from top management as well as allowing them to work in a group to realize the organization's goal. Several initiatives were undertaken to improve the efficiency of public service delivery. National Integrity Plan (NIP) and Integrity Institute of Malaysia were established with the objective to improve governance and work ethics and to prevent misuse of power and curb corruption (Ramalu & Rashid, 2017). To further strengthen the public service delivery, the Malaysian government has introduced the Government Transformation Plan (GTP) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) (Mahazril et al., 2012). These strategies are meant to enhance service delivery to people as well as aim at reducing corruption, mismanagement, power abuse besides enhancing the efficiency of service delivery and improving corporate governance. The focal point in addressing public expectation is the public service employee's job performance and quality of the public service delivery that is fully emphasized by Malaysian government (Zakaria et al., 2018).

Despite all these efforts, the quality of public service delivery to the public still failed to achieve the expected result (Zakaria et al., 2018). In the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic however, public servants are working under life-threatening circumstances. In all COVID-19 pandemic affected countries they are both expected to deliver services despite the pandemic while at the same time suffering its impact, either by being directly infected or having family members who are. Ramalu and Rashid's (2017) claim that there is room for further studies in employee engagement in any government sectors or agencies covering up manufacturing, service, education, mining and others. Iberahim et al (2021) recommend to conduct a study on employee engagement based on four factors namely goal clarity, management support and trust, knowledge sharing and transfer, and teamwork. There are more than 8,000 complaints recorded in 2019 about ineffective and poor service in government services and these complaints are keep increasing among public on 2020 (Malaysian Public Complaints Bureau, 2021). The association between public complaints towards employee engagement is that employee perceived the complaints from public as negative and it turns to burnout (Miranda et al., 2020). The increase in complaints reflect the low level of public sector

services. Thus, few factors should be examined to determine which factors strongly influence to employee engagement. The purpose of this research was to determine the level of employee engagement by examining the factors, management support, management trust and work in group.

Review of Literature

Employee Engagement

One of the first challenges presented in the literature is the variation regarding the definition of employee engagement. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) found as many as fifty different definitions of the term employee engagement. Armstrong (2012); a leading academic in human resources, describes employee engagement as a willingness to go that extra mile. Similarly Cook (2008) defines employee engagement as *“all about the willingness and ability of the employee to give sustained discretionary effort to help their organisation succeed”*. Kahn (1990) defines employee engagement as *“the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”*. Engagement can lead to a host of positive organisational outcomes such as increased profitability, higher levels of productivity and task performance, customer satisfaction and reduced employee turnover (Rich et al., 2010).

Management Support

According to a study conducted by Hewitt (2011), management support is a key driver of employee engagement. Employees who do not feel supported at work are also more likely to leave their jobs. Feeling supported and involved is the key to Robinson, Perryman and Hayday’s (2004) model of engagement. Management support refers to an employees’ beliefs that the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Gupta and Ponnampalani (2015) carried out a study to identify variables affecting employee engagement in financial organizations in India. According to their results, organizational culture including top management support, colleagues support, human resource practices affects employee engagement and all determinants are positively correlated with employee engagement. Ibrahimi et al (2021) found that management support is significantly correlated to employee engagement in LSS project at GTM, one of Malaysia's most significant trading companies in Kuala Lumpur.

H1: There is a significant relationship between management support and employee engagement among staff in Ministry of Finance.

Management Trust

A number of cultural dimensions that likely influence employee engagement have been identified, but management trust has attracted the most research attention. Trust from top management is very important as to ensure the business activity will run smoothly. Managers’ trust and integrity have also been found to be one of the top drivers of employee engagement (Gibbons, 2006). Dharmendra and Naveen (2013) managers’ trust is the clear contribution of employee engagement and to the organization’s performance as they define management trust as the faith and confidence in employees to carry out the task successfully. Other than that, Al-Tit and Hunitie (2015) found positive and significant relationships between management trust and employee engagement. Ibrahimi et al (2021) found that management trust is significantly correlated to employee engagement in LSS project at GTM, Kuala Lumpur.

H2: There is a significant relationship between management trust and employee engagement among staff in Ministry of Finance.

Work in Group

Hart et al (2010) examined both the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in an academic context. They said, working in groups involve two to three or more members of the organization to generate ideas and implement strategic planning for the organization. They found that the dimensions of employee engagement (individual morale, workgroup, affective commitment, continuous commitment and job involvement) have positive and significant relationship towards employee engagement. Kumar and Swetha (2011) proposed four antecedents of employee engagement and all those antecedents has a significant and positive relationship towards employee engagement namely job characteristics, organizational and supervision support, work in group, rewards and recognition.

H3: There is a significant relationship between work in group and employee engagement among staff in Ministry of Finance.

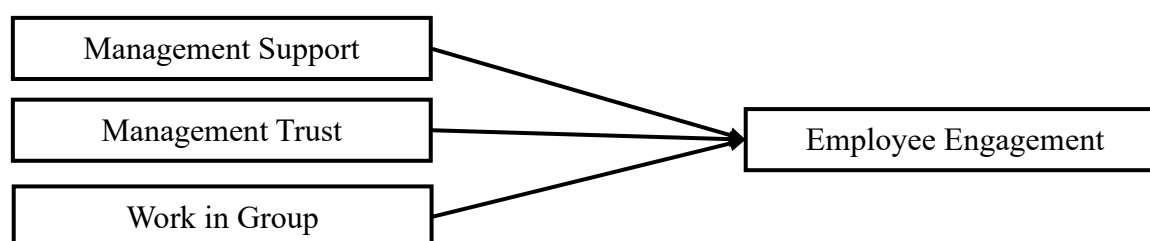


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

This study investigates to what degree management support, management trust, and work in group may be significant factors to employee engagement in Ministry of Finance. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework.

Methodology

The data collected was analyzed using the Smart Partial Least Square (Smart-PLS) and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This study used five-point Likert scale and the questionnaire was adopted and adapted to fit with the environment among federal government's employee. The questionnaire was developed by Saks (2006) and it was used to measure employee engagement that comprises of five items, questionnaire from Chavda (2004) was used to measure all exogenous Management Support (five items), Management Trust (five items) and Work in Group (five items). The sample size of this study was inspired from Krecjie and Morgan (1970) table. A 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was used to measure the variables in this study. The total number of population who works in the Ministry of Finance is 2219 staff. Then, the total number sample size determined through Krecjie and Morgan (1970) table is 377. Other than that, researchers also determined the minimum number of sample size by using G*Power 3.1.9.2 software and the number of sample size determined by this software is 99 respondents. Researcher decided to distribute 400 questionnaires to respondents by using a non-probability sampling which is purposive sampling method.

This research comprised of a quantitative cross-sectional survey undertaken with a sample of 130 employees purposely selected from various units in Ministry of Finance. Then, from 130 questionnaires distributed, 110 valid responses were returned for statistical analysis. Although, it does not meet with the acceptable number of sample in Krecjie and Morgan (1970) table, however, it met with the acceptable number of sample determined by G*Power 3.1.9.2 software. The reason why researchers used purposive sampling was to overcome certain issues on sampling frame that arises with the original intention to sample across using the probability sampling technique which the organization itself did not provide the whole list name of staff. Accessing the employees was a limitation of research which warranted into resorting to the decision to use purposive sampling.

Data of this study was analyzed using the following steps. Following the recommended two stage analytical procedures by (Hair et al., 2014). First, Hair et al (2014) suggested that after the research model was formed, researcher must test the outer model which is also known as measurement model. The objective of in evaluating the measurement model is to ascertain the measurement items' validity and reliability. Second, the examination of the structural model (hypothesized relationship) also recommended by (Hair et al., 2014). Hair et al (2014) also recommends testing the significance of the path coefficients and the loadings a bootstrapping method by using (500 samples).

Analysis of Data

Demographic Analysis

According to Table 1.0, there are 48 number of Certificate holders followed by Bachelor holders, Secondary Level holders, Diploma holders, Master holders and Ph.D holder which are 31, 19, 10, 2 and 0 number of respondents respectively. Other than that, Lower Level Management are the highest number of respondents involved in this study which are 67 number of respondents followed by Middle Level Management and Top Level Management. Most of respondents are having RM 0 – RM 2000 Income Level. Then, males make up most number of respondents participated in this this study which is 71 number of respondents.

Table 1

Demographic Analysis

Items	Items	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Highest Education Level	Ph.D	0	0
	Master	2	1.8
	Bachelor	31	28.2
	Diploma	10	9.1
	Certificate	48	43.6
Work Position	Secondary Level	19	17.3
	Top Level Management	9	8.2
	Middle Level Management	34	30.9
Income Level	Lower Level Management	67	60.9
	RM 0 – RM 2000	62	56.4
	RM 2001 – RM 4000	36	32.7
Gender	RM 4001 - above	12	10.9
	Male	71	64.5
	Female	39	35.5

Loadings, Reliability, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, Path Analysis

According to the Table 2. all constructs in this study had the values of standardized loadings larger than 0.50 indicating that they met acceptable standard of loadings (Hair et al., 2014). Other than that, the composite reliability of all constructs is above 0.80, indicating that the measurement scale used in this study had high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). Likewise, the Cronbach's alpha values also show that all constructs had high internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014). In addition, the values of average variance extracted (AVE) are larger than 0.50 indicating that all constructs met acceptable standard of AVE (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 also shows the results of Fornell-Larcker Criterion analysis. All constructs had the values of larger than 0.5 and every bold value are above than each of the constructs and this indicates that they met the acceptable standard Fornell-Larcker Criterion value (Barclay, Higgins & Thompson, 1995; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). Table 2 also shows that the inclusion of Management Support, Management Trust and Work in Group had contributed 67 percent in the variance of Employee Engagement. In terms of explanatory power of this model, it provides a substantial support for the overall model (Hair et al., 2014). Besides that, Management Support was significantly correlated with Employee Engagement ($\beta=0.353$; $t=5.666$), therefore H1 was supported. This is concluded as the output has met the acceptable standards of t-statistics analysis (Hair et al., 2014).

In sum, this result demonstrates that Management Support is an important determinant of Employee Engagement. This finding was aligned with Gupta et al (2015) which also found management support significantly correlated with employee engagement. Other than that, the value of f^2 for Management Support was 0.283, signifying that the effect size of Management Support was moderate in the hypothesized model (Hair et al., 2014). Then, Management Trust was significantly correlated with Employee Engagement ($\beta=0.356$; $t=3.347$), therefore H2 was supported. This has met the acceptable standards of t-statistics analysis (Hair et al., 2014). In sum, this result demonstrates that Management Trust is an important determinant of Employee Engagement. This finding also was aligned with (Al-Tit and Hunitie, 2015). Both of them found positive and significant relationship between management trust and employee engagement. Other than that, the value of f^2 for Management Trust was 0.150, signifying that the effect size of Management Trust was moderate in the hypothesized model (Hair et al., 2014). Finally, Work in Group was significantly correlated with Employee Engagement ($\beta=0.264$; $t=2.739$), therefore H3 was supported. This has met the acceptable standards of t-statistics analysis (Hair et al., 2014). This finding also was aligned with (Kumar and Swetha, 2011). Both of them found that work in group significantly correlated with employee engagement. In sum, this result demonstrates that Work in Group is an important determinant of Employee Engagement. Other than that, the value of f^2 for Work in Group was 0.088, signifying that the effect size of Work in Group was weak in the hypothesized model (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 2

Loadings, Reliability, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, Path Analysis

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Extracted	Variance	
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.835	0.847	0.89	0.623		
	EE2	0.801					
	EE3	0.587					
	EE4	0.860					
	EE5	0.832					
Management Support	MS1	0.764	0.814	0.855	0.545		
	MS2	0.764					
	MS3	0.825					
	MS4	0.752					
	MS5	0.557					
Management Trust	MT1	0.874	0.890	0.919	0.694		
	MT2	0.832					
	MT3	0.834					
	MT4	0.785					
	MT5	0.838					
Work in Group	WIG1	0.759	0.814	0.869	0.572		
	WIG2	0.687					
	WIG3	0.849					
	WIG4	0.744					
	WIG5	0.732					
Constructs		1	2	3	4		
1. Employee Engagement		0.789					
2. Management Support		0.646	0.738				
3. Management Trust		0.733	0.498	0.833			
4. Work in Group		0.690	0.438	0.761	0.786		
Hypothesis	Constructs		Std. Beta	t-value	Decision	f²	R²
H1	Management Support → Employee Engagement		0.353	5.666**	Supported	0.283	0.67 2
H2	Management Trust → Employee Engagement		0.356	3.347**	Supported	0.150	
H3	Work in Group → Employee Engagement		0.264	2.739**	Supported	0.088	

Discussions

The global landscape is becoming more chaotic and uncertain leading to slow economic growth due to the COVID-19, highly engaged workforce is the key in driving the public service. At the same time, the government realizes the importance of moving ahead with the agenda of transforming this country towards achieving an advanced nation status through many

stimulus packages namely PRIHATIN, PRIHATIN SME+, PEMULIH and etc. Public service employees in Malaysia are responsible towards implementing many transformation initiatives that have been introduced since 2009. All the above mentioned transformation programmes such as GTP, NIP and ETP to list a few will only be realized by having highly engaged public service workforce. Hence, having engaged employees is significant to achieve excellent performance. Based on literatures, it can be concurred that engaged workers perform far better than disengaged workers. According to Zakaria et al (2021), organizations urgently need engaged employees in order to perform beyond the current level of doing task to thrive in this competitive world. Anitha (2014) mentioned that having engaged employees are the key towards the successful outcome of their operations. Agrawal (2015) stated that engaged employees care for the organization, they are loyal and willing to put extra efforts for organization growth and development. Based on the analysis, having engaged government staff is essential for the government ministries to record the desired result.

Conclusions

Malaysia is aiming on the public servants to perform their duties effectively as they are the backbone of this nation to achieve its developed nation status as outlined in Shared Prosperity 2030. Several initiatives were undertaken to improve the efficiency of public service delivery even this country is facing the pandemic COVID-19. Among the first initiatives was the establishment of Malaysian Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) in 1971 is to ensure an effective and equitable public administration and service delivery to the public (Malaysia Public Complaints Bureau, 2021). Thus, every organization should provide public workers with good support from top management, full trust from top management as well allow them to work in a team as to realize the organization's goal. With that, the employees themselves will be highly motivated in their jobs and this will lead to high performance in their work. Indirectly, this will help the organizations in competing and surviving in a challenging economic environment as well helps to eradicate the public complaints. Based on the result and discussion of this study, researchers had found the factors that influence and contribute to employee engagement among staff in Ministry of Finance. There were significant relationships between management support, management trust, work in group and employee engagement among staff in Ministry of Finance and the level of employee engagement among staff in Ministry of Finance is substantial.

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