

A Proposed Framework of Job Resources influencing Work Engagement towards Academics of Public Universities in Beijing and Shanghai in China

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Abstract

Over the past, work engagement underwent a rigorous verification process in different occupational background. It is significant to study the factors influencing the employee's work engagement promoting employee's work enthusiasm and thus promoting the development of organization. Despite this, several issues remain unresolved. In addition, there is insufficient understanding of how job resources affect work engagement in the context of public university in Beijing and Shanghai, China. Therefore, this conceptual paper aims to solve it and build a framework to give a guidance for the future quantitative research. Based on the application of the JD-R model, this paper proposes a research framework of the relationship between job resources and work engagement. Suggestions for practice and future research are also presented.

Keywords: JD-R Model, Academics, Job Resources, Work Engagement, Public Universities, China

Introduction

Public universities play a significant role in talent cultivation and societal development. Academics, as an integral part of the educational human resources, have a crucial impact on the construction of organizations and education. In the process of implementing educational reforms, academics' dedication and proactive engagement are significant elements that influence educational reform. The level of academics' dedication not only affects their well-being but also influences education effectiveness, and even impacts the development of a country and its people (Han et al., 2020; Prasetyo et al., 2022; Wang & Rashid, 2022). However, the question of how academics can enhance their work engagement and foster

strong commitment to their organizations remains a compelling topic that both domestic and international researchers (Nhi et al., 2023). What's more, the policy of higher education has experienced significant transformations leading to its present highly internationalized state (Zheng & Kapoor, 2021). The Chinese government has adeptly modernized the higher education system by strategically embracing new approaches to shape the education market within the country. Beijing and Shanghai, as the two most developed cities in China (<https://www.studyinchina.com.my/web/page/top-tier-cities-still-first-choice-for-grads/>), should be the leaders in higher education and is meaningful to research due to the most innovative systems, they have the most typical representatives of Chinese universities (Cai and Liu 2014; Wu 2007). However, there is less research on work engagement of universities (Jia et al., 2022). Therefore, it is needed to conduct more research on it, especially under the setting of China public universities. This is of great significance for the reform of higher education institutions and the development of lecturers.

Work engagement has emerged as a popular research topic in the past. Work engagement refers to a favorable and gratifying state of mentality, typically distinguished by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Mugizi et al., 2020). Employees who exhibit high levels of work engagement experience include positive work, satisfaction, and well-being than those who do not (Nurtjahjani et al., 2023). Consequently, work engagement has become a crucial area of research. In this study, the JD-R model of employee engagement will be expanded to public universities as the primary source of information for the investigation. The JD-R model emphasizes mitigating the negative effects of work demands while helping to achieve work goals and stimulating personal growth and positive work engagement (Jdaitawi et al., 2021).

Higher resilience, job satisfaction, and lower morale distress are associated with increased workplace engagement (Clark et al., 2021). The factors contributing to work engagement encompass many aspects, while its outcomes include innovation, leadership development, etc. (Martin, 2020). This study will research organization-related resources organizational justice (Donglong et al., 2020), workplace satisfaction (Judge et al., 2020), performance feedback (Tagliabue et al., 2020), rewards (Aboramadan et al., 2020), work-related resources job autonomy (Othman et al., 2021) and personal-related resources workplace mindfulness (Dane & Brummel, 2014). Specific definitions are as follows Table 1:

Table 1

Definitions of Variables

Variables	Definitions	Sources
Organizational Justice	The concept of organizational justice refers to the organization members' perceptions of whether the organization that they are part of is treating them fairly.	(Donglong et al., 2020; Greenberg, 1990)
Workplace Satisfaction	Workplace satisfaction reflects an individual's contentment and fulfillment with their job role, work environment, and the conditions under which they perform their tasks.	(Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018)
Performance Feedback	Performance Feedback not only inspires the quality and quantity of past behavior but may also create opportunities to change future behavior.	(Lattal, 2014; Tagliabue et al., 2020)
Rewards	A well-designed reward system is an effective tool for promoting high performance and fostering commitment.	(Aboramadan et al., 2020)
Job Autonomy	Characterized as the degree to which employees are given freedom and independence over their work schedules and working processes.	(Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Othman et al., 2021)
Workplace Mindfulness	People differ in the degree to which they are mindful in their work settings – a concept we term workplace mindfulness.	(Dane & Brummel, 2014)
Work Engagement	Work engagement refers to a favorable and gratifying state of mentality, typically distinguished by vigor, dedication, and absorption.	(Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008; Mugizi et al., 2020)

Literature Review

Job Demands-Resources Model was often used in the research of engagement (Hakanen & Roodt, 2010), which was introduced by Demerouti and her colleagues firstly. The JD-R model, at its heart, is founded on the hypothesis that any work characteristics may be classified into one of two categories, which differ from one another in terms of their effect (Whitman et al., 2021). The demands of the job, on the one hand, and the resources available on the job, on the other. The JD-R model has been expanded in recent years to include personal resources, leading to a greater understanding of the reciprocal interactions between individual characteristics and working situations. This has resulted in a greater understanding of the reciprocal interactions between individual traits and working situations. Differences in the workplace, such as working conditions, the management conduct of superiors or the conduct of colleagues (Geisler et al., 2019).

In recent times, there has been a growing focus on researching factors influencing the employee's work engagement. A study conducted on faculty members employed in public sector universities across different locations in Sindh revealed that the link between employee silence and work engagement is entirely mediated by organizational justice (Pirzada, et al.,

2020). There were significant and positive correlations observed between organizational justice, distributive justice, interpersonal justice, and lecturers' work engagement in two universities in Hanoi of Vietnam (Minh et al., 2020). In Macedonian public universities, the satisfaction of academics played a mediating role between university physical assets, educational quality, academics' self-based identity, skill-based identity, and academics' engagement. This emphasizes the importance of academics' satisfaction in fostering engagement in their work (Prodanova & Kocarev, 2023). Research conducted on academics employed in the Palestinian higher education sector revealed that the connection between servant leadership and work engagement is completely mediated by job satisfaction (Aboramadan et al., 2020). The study of Presbyterian University of East Africa indicated that job feedback had a significant and positive impact on employee engagement (Kariuki & Makori, 2015). Study involved 532 academicians working in four public universities located in different regions of Jordan revealed that autonomy, social support, and performance feedback significantly influenced academicians' work engagement (Alzyoud et al., 2015). In Amhara Regional State public universities, work environment, leadership, reward, organizational support, and work motivation were found to have statistically significant correlations with employees' engagement (Kassahun & Raman, 2021). Research about academics in a public university located in the Southern region of Malaysia revealed that autonomy and social support were the two dimensions in job resources significantly and positively related to work engagement (Othman et al., 2021). Study had showed that individual employees' mindfulness has a positive effect on their work engagement, and this relationship is mediated by their level of recovery. Additionally, team mindfulness positively influences the connection between individual mindfulness and work engagement (Liu et al., 2020). Also, study conducted on frontline university faculty demonstrated the significant mediating role of work engagement between trait mindfulness and emotional exhaustion (Bi & Ye, 2021). Overall, these studies shed light on various factors influencing work engagement in university settings, offering valuable insights for enhancing employee engagement in higher education institutions.

Research Methodology

The population in this study is academics in Beijing and Shanghai public universities in China, the term "public school" generally refers to educational institutions primarily funded by the government through various administrative fee. There are around three thousand public universities in China. In this study, the unit of analysis is focused on academics who currently or previously worked for public universities in Beijing and Shanghai, China. The reason for choosing Beijing and Shanghai is that these two cities are the most developed and have the highest concentration of universities in China, making them highly representative (Borsi et al., 2022).

This study adopts a combination of positivist ontology, empirical epistemology, and quantitative methodology. In accordance with the positivist paradigm, researchers assume the role of neutral observers, ensuring that their values, beliefs, and biases do not influence the research outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this study, 500 questionnaires will be used to collect primary data from academics in public universities in in Beijing and Shanghai, China, the G*Power application was used to determine the minimum sample size (Erdfelder, Faul & Buchner, 1996). This method will conduct thorough analysis of the determinants of work engagement, particularly through regression and structural model analysis. Statistical software like SPSS and Smart PLS will be used to analyse the results and provide empirical evidence in this research.

Research Questions

The research question represents a crucial concern and ultimate goal of the study, which the findings should illuminate (Barroga & Matanguihan, 2022). As such, it should be concise and focused, and researchers must prioritize addressing it. For this research, the most obvious problem is the need for research into the work engagement toward academics in the context of Chinese higher education (Jia et al., 2022). Furthermore, most previous studies have focused on the impact of job resources on individual outcomes, with little attention given to organization-level outcomes (Schneider & Pulakos, 2022). So, this research will conduct from organization-relate, work-related and personal-related resources (Saks et al., 2022; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), to study work engagement of public universities in Beijing and Shanghai. Therefore, the following research questions are proposed for this study

RQ: *What is the relationship between organizational justice, workplace satisfaction, performance feedback, rewards, job autonomy, workplace mindfulness and work engagement in public universities in Beijing and Shanghai, China?*

Research Objectives

The research objective outlines the primary purpose and justification for investigating the research question, providing an overview of the expected results. These objectives serve as a guide for the research process, determining the methods used to achieve them. Therefore, the proposed research objectives for this study are as follows

RO: *To determine the relationship between organizational justice, workplace satisfaction, performance feedback, rewards, job autonomy, workplace mindfulness and work engagement.*

A Proposed Conceptual Framework

Building upon the JD-R model, the framework of this study (Figure 1) considers six types of resources as the independent variables, work engagement is regarded as the dependent variable. In this study, job resources will be researched from three aspects, organization-related resources, work-related resources, personal-related resources.

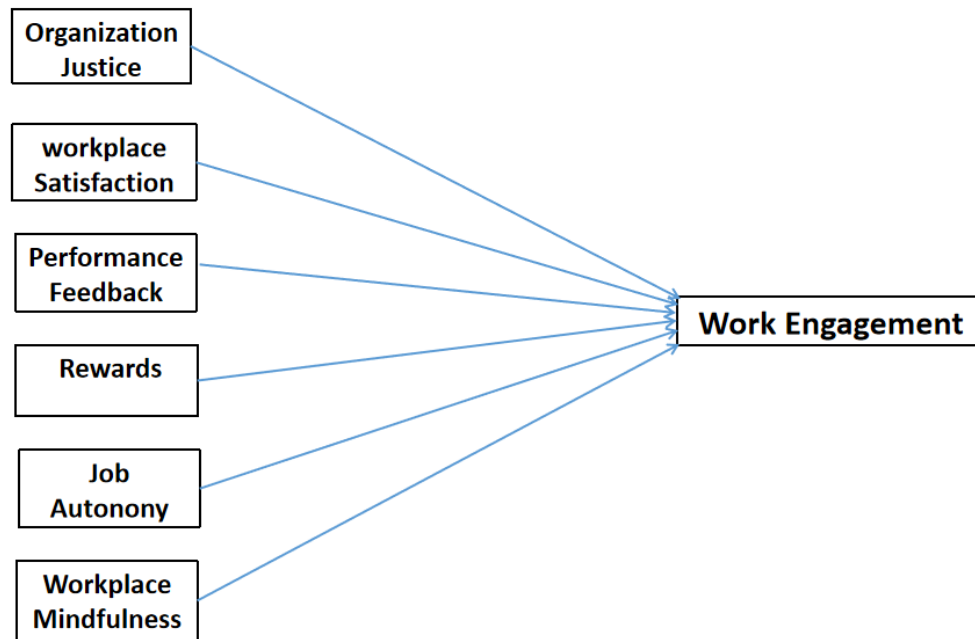


Figure1. Conceptual Framework

Significance of the Study

This study has important theoretical significance, because it is an extension of the JD-R model and a systematic study of the work engagement of researchers in Chinese public universities. Work engagement is a vital factor for the success of all organizations, including public institutions. It will play a significant role in developing a robust work culture, reducing staff turnover, increasing productivity, strengthening work and student relationships, and positively impacting on the research of university.

This study also has important practical significance. Work engagement can contribute to creating a positive culture within public universities, resulting in reduced attrition rates, improving productivity, deeper connections with colleagues and students, and increasing revenue. Additionally, it will help management understand the needs and demands of their employees, allowing them to create solutions to improve morale and working conditions which have a positive impact on their job performance, leading to higher levels of students' satisfaction.

So, it is essential that workers feel as if they are contributing to their job, failing to do so will result in a loss of interest and excitement for the task. This is because individuals have a stronger connection to their job. They have a relationship between the public universities they work for and the level of performance they attain in their jobs. In addition, this leads to general contentment, which is beneficial for public universities' productivity, morale, and other areas of operation. Actively engaged employees are more likely to contribute to their universities and recognize the advantages of what public universities want to do and voluntarily participate, it will result in high adoption rates and sustained interest over a longer length of time.

Conclusions

By conducting extensive literature reviews and applying the research model, this study aims to conceptualize the relationship between job resources and work engagement, specifically

focuses on academicians in public universities in Beijing and Shanghai, China. Moreover, this framework encourages future research to explore the possibility of incorporating mediators or moderator for testing and validation, it has important theoretical significance as its extension of the JD-R model. If the results of testing this conceptual framework align with the study's hypotheses, it would have significant implications for practice, particularly for policymakers in the higher education sector. This study also has important practical significance, because its proactive approach would contribute to creating a more engaged and productive academic workforce.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations, because it only focuses on Beijing and Shanghai of China and could be conducted in other cities or even other countries in the later stage. In addition, this research is limited to public universities, and later research can be carried out in private universities to ensure the universality and extensibility of the research results.

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