

Investigating the Relationship between Employee Engagement and Performance in Malaysia's Workforce

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Abstract

Employee engagement and performance are essential factors in enhancing organizational productivity and competitiveness, particularly within Malaysia's dynamic workforce. This study investigates the impact of employee engagement on performance and overall business success. Within the context of the Malaysian workforce, employee availability, safety, and meaningfulness are crucial in shaping effective engagement strategies. This research employed quantitative methods to gather data, using a questionnaire distributed via a Google Form link shared through WhatsApp and among acquaintances who are employees. A total of 159 responses were received. The study utilized simple random sampling, ensuring each participant had an equal chance of being selected. The questionnaire items were adapted from previous literature to ensure relevance and validity. The reliability scores for the independent variables were as follows: safety (0.940), meaningfulness (0.925), and availability (0.923). The dependent variable, performance, had a reliability score of 0.937. These Cronbach's alpha scores indicate a high level of reliability, as they fall within the strongly acceptable range of 0.9. The findings reveal a positive correlation between the independent variables (employee safety, meaningfulness, and availability) and employee performance. This suggests that enhancing these factors can significantly improve employee performance, thereby contributing to overall organizational success. Future engagement strategies should build on these findings, integrating technological advancements and a culture of continuous improvement to maintain a competitive edge in an ever-changing business landscape.

Keywords: Employee Safety, Employee Meaningful, Employee Availability, Employee Performance, Employee Engagement

Introduction

In contemporary business contexts, optimizing employee performance is a multifaceted challenge, influenced by various factors including employee availability, safety,

meaningfulness, and engagement (Abeje & Luo, 2023). Business leaders recognize that sustaining a high-performing workforce is imperative for navigating the challenges of today's rapidly evolving markets. The availability of employees, encompassing their dedicated commitment to work without scheduling conflicts, is a fundamental aspect of ensuring operational efficiency and productivity (Nienaber & Martins, 2020). Moreover, maintaining a safe work environment is essential for fostering employee well-being and performance, as unsafe conditions can hinder employee engagement and effectiveness (Dziuba et al., 2020). Similarly, cultivating meaningful work experiences for employees, where tasks align with personal values and contribute to a sense of purpose, is crucial for enhancing motivation and commitment, thereby driving performance outcomes (Dai et al., 2021). Despite the acknowledged importance of these factors, organizations often struggle to effectively address suboptimal employee performance, as evidenced by low levels of engagement, safety incidents, and meaningfulness. This persistent issue undermines efforts to drive innovation, productivity, and financial outcomes while exacerbating recruitment and retention costs. While the urgency to enhance employee engagement, safety, and meaningfulness is widely recognized, organizations often lack practical methodologies to systematically measure and address the underlying factors contributing to low-performance levels across these dimensions. Consequently, there is a pressing need for strategic interventions aimed at improving employee availability, safety, and meaningfulness to unlock the potential for enhanced performance and organizational success. By addressing these interrelated aspects comprehensively, organizations can cultivate a high-performing workforce that is motivated, engaged, and committed to achieving organizational objectives while fostering a culture of safety, well-being, and purpose.

Research Question

- a. Is there any significant relationship between employee availability and employee performance?
- b. Is there any significant relationship between employee safety and employee performance?
- c. Is there any significant relationship between employee meaningfulness and employee performance?

Research Objectives

- a. To study the relationship between employee availability and employee performance.
- b. To study the relationship between employee safety and employee performance.
- c. To study the relationship between employee meaningfulness and employee performance.

Literature Review

Theory: Work Engagement Theory of Kahn

The level of self-preference a person exhibits throughout work tasks fosters links between themselves and their jobs, which can boost role performance through self-investment on a mental, emotional, and physical level (Kahn, 1990). According to this study's interpretation of the Work Engagement theory, there should be three different types of engagement: cognitive, emotional, and physical. For instance, a person who invests cognitive resources in work (e.g., I should work hard) to improve role performance may not necessarily also spend emotional or physical resources on work (e.g., I am enthusiastic about my work) at the same time. According to this study, cognitive engagement is the degree of attention, concentration,

interest, and intensity of focus. This study uses Rothbard's (2001) research on absorption as its representative variable and defines cognitive engagement as a level of focus, concentration, engrossment, and concentrated intensity for a job. This study relies on a previous study (Russell and Barrett, 1999) as its representative variable and defines emotional involvement as happiness at work (i.e., core affect). The study's definition of physical engagement, which was developed by earlier research, is work intensity (density of energy consumed by work) (Brown and Leigh, 1996). In a previous study, the absorption, core effect, and work intensity were also used to quantify Work Engagement (Huang et al., 2022). The Work Engagement theory Kahn (1990) also led him to discover that safety, meaningfulness, and availability are the three important driving factors of WE.

Employee Availability and Employee Performance

Employee performance is a critical determinant of organizational success, influenced by various factors including the availability of employees within the workplace. Availability, defined as the extent to which an employee is present and accessible for work during specified periods, has garnered attention in organizational research due to its potential impact on productivity and efficiency (Follmer & Jones, 2018). In the organizational context, availability is commonly understood as the time an employee is exclusively committed to working for an employer, without external scheduling conflicts (Smith et al., 2019). This conceptualization emphasizes the importance of employees dedicating uninterrupted time to fulfilling their job responsibilities, thereby contributing to organizational goals (Demerouti et al., 2010). Research suggests a positive relationship between employee availability and performance outcomes (Garcia & Martinez, 2019). Employees who consistently adhere to their availability schedules demonstrate higher levels of productivity and task completion rates. Moreover, organizational policies that prioritize employee availability contribute to a culture of accountability and reliability within the workforce, fostering a conducive environment for achieving performance objectives.

Employee Safety and Employee Performance

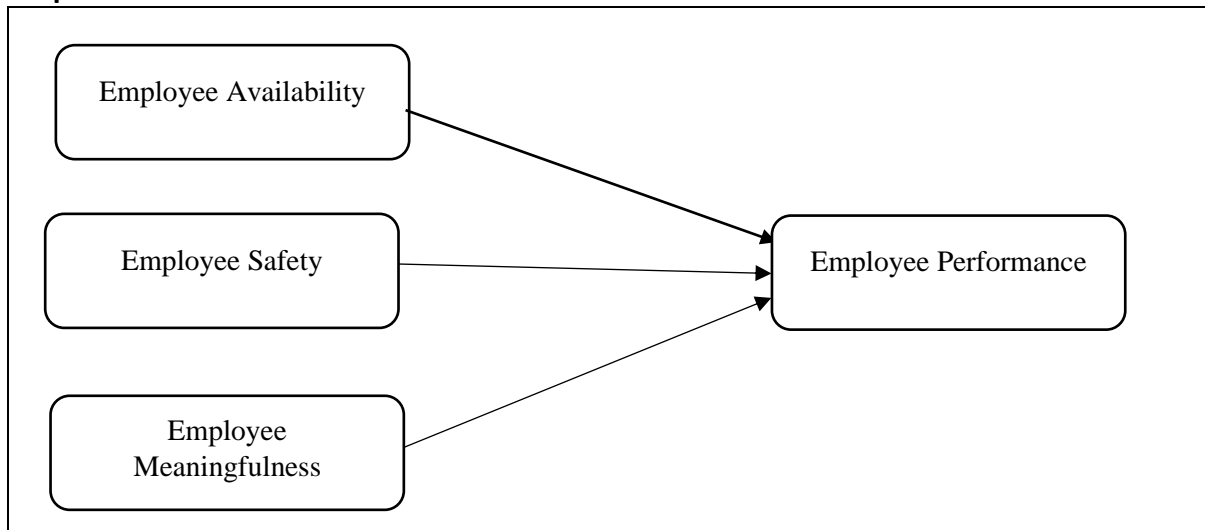
Employee safety encompasses various dimensions, including physical, psychological, and socio-environmental factors that contribute to ensuring the well-being and security of employees in the workplace. This conceptualization underscores the multifaceted nature of safety concerns, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to address diverse safety risks and hazards (Casey et al., 2017). Research suggests a strong positive relationship between employee safety and performance outcomes across different organizational settings (Dziuba et al., 2020). Employees who perceive their work environment as safe and conducive to their well-being are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment (Liu et al., 2019). Moreover, a safe workplace fosters a culture of trust and collaboration among employees, facilitating effective teamwork and communication. Several mechanisms have been proposed to explain the relationship between employee safety and performance. The Safety Climate Theory suggests that organizational safety practices and policies shape employees' perceptions of safety, influencing their behaviors and performance outcomes.

Employee Meaningfulness and Employee Performance

Employee meaningfulness refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their work as meaningful, purposeful, and aligned with their personal values, beliefs, and goals (Chaudhary, 2022). This conceptualization emphasizes the intrinsic motivational factors that drive employees to derive satisfaction and fulfillment from their work beyond extrinsic rewards or

incentives (James, 2020). Empirical evidence suggests a robust positive relationship between employee meaningfulness and performance outcomes across various organizational settings (Mostafa & Abed, 2020). Employees who find their work meaningful are more likely to exhibit higher levels of motivation, commitment, and discretionary effort. Moreover, meaningful work fosters a sense of purpose and identity among employees, leading to greater job satisfaction and job performance. Several mechanisms have been proposed to elucidate the relationship between employee meaningfulness and performance.

Proposed Framework



Hypothesis

H1- There is a significant relationship between employee availability towards employee performance.

H2- There is a significant relationship between employee safety towards employee performance.

H3- There is a significant relationship between employee meaningfulness towards employee performance

Methodology

The quantitative study utilized a cross-sectional survey as its research design. A sample of participants was drawn from employees within the Klang Valley area, with data collection facilitated through an online platform. The study adopted a correlational approach to study the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance. The sample size comprised 159 employees aged 18 years and above, selected through convenience sampling, wherein individuals were randomly approached and invited to partake. Before their involvement, all respondents provided informed consent. The survey consisted of seven items for each variable: employee availability, employee safety, employee meaningfulness, and employee performance. Participants rated their experiences using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data collection employed a self-administered questionnaire, with clear instructions provided to respondents, who were allotted sufficient time for completion. Statistical analysis of the gathered data was performed using SPSS software.

Findings

Demographic analysis

Table 1

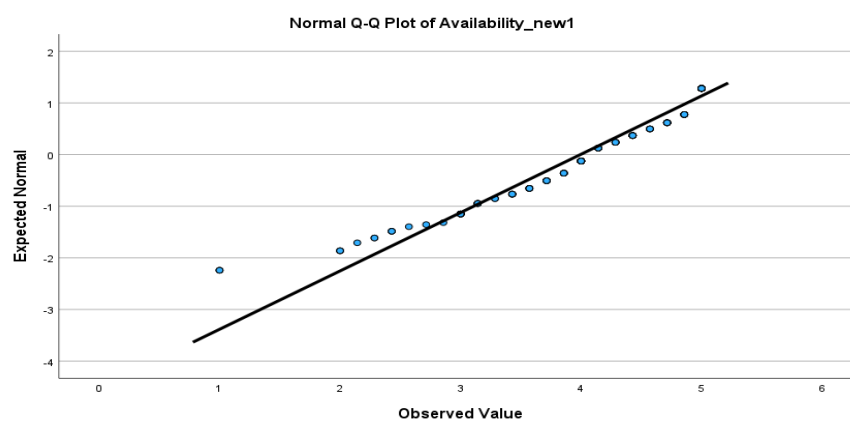
Demographic Analysis

		Statistics					
		age	gender	race	religion	education_level	employment_status
N	Valid	159	159	159	159	159	159
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.7170	1.4151	2.0126	2.0503	1.6730	1.8428
Median		1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	1.0000
Mode		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Std. Deviation		1.12583	.49430	.98075	1.07208	.67970	1.25554
Variance		1.267	.244	.962	1.149	.462	1.576
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		5.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	5.00

Based on Table 1 above, there were 159 respondents who answered the survey, and no data is missing. The age reported with mean at 1.7170 with the standard deviation at 1.12583. For the gender, the sample shows a mean of 1.4151 and standard deviation of .49430. The sample also shows that the mean for race is 2.0126 with the standard deviation at .98075, while religion means is 2.0503 with a standard deviation of 1.07208 respectively. The sample also indicates that education’s level means is 1.6730 with a standard deviation of .67970. Lastly, the sample shows employment status with the mean of 1.8428 with the standard deviation at 1.25554.

Table 2

Normality Test



In order to determine normality graphically, the researcher used the output of a normal Q-Q Plot. If the data are normally distributed, the data points will be close to the diagonal line. If the data points stray from the line in an obvious non-linear fashion, the data are abnormally distributed (Prasad et. al., 2020). From Table 2 above, the data is normally distributed.

Reliability Analysis

Table 3

Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Employee Availability	.923	7
Employee Safety	.940	7
Employee Meaningfulness	.925	7
Employee Performance	.937	7

To assess the reliability of the survey instrument used in this study, a reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Cronbach's alpha is a commonly used measure of internal consistency reliability, indicating the extent to which items within a scale consistently measure the same underlying construct (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The survey was administered to a sample of 150 employees from various departments within the organization. The survey consisted of 7 items to measure each variable. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.923, 0.940, 0.925, and 0.937, indicating high internal consistency reliability for the survey instrument for each variable. According to guidelines proposed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for research purposes. Therefore, the survey instrument used in this study demonstrates satisfactory reliability.

Correlations

Table 4

Correlations Analysis

		Meaningful_new1	Safety_new1	Availability_new1	Performance_new1
Meaningful_new1	Pearson Correlation	1	.803**	.733**	.743**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	159	159	159	159
Safety_new1	Pearson Correlation	.803**	1	.691**	.736**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	159	159	159	159
Availability_new1	Pearson Correlation	.733**	.691**	1	.834**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	159	159	159	159
Performance_new1	Pearson Correlation	.743**	.736**	.834**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	159	159	159	159

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

Table 4 above shows the result of the correlation analysis. Correlation analysis was used in this study to show the significant relationship between independent and dependent variables. Since the p-value of each independent variable (employee availability, employee safety and employee meaningfulness) is less than the significance value of 0.01, thus the variables are statistically highly significant towards the dependent variable (employee performance).

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a significant positive relationship between employee availability, safety, meaningfulness, and performance within the Malaysian workforce context. These results underscore the importance of considering multiple dimensions of the work environment in fostering optimal employee performance. Firstly, the positive relationship between employee availability and performance highlights the critical role of scheduling practices and workforce management strategies in enhancing productivity. In the Malaysian workforce, where industries often operate in dynamic and demanding environments, ensuring adequate employee availability is essential for maintaining operational efficiency and meeting business demands. Secondly, the study findings affirm the importance of employee safety as a key determinant of performance outcomes. In Malaysia, where occupational safety and health concerns are increasingly prioritized, organizations that invest in creating safe work environments demonstrate a commitment to employee well-being and organizational success. The positive relationship observed between safety and performance underscores the potential benefits of implementing comprehensive safety protocols and fostering a culture of safety consciousness within Malaysian workplaces. Thirdly, the study highlights the significance of employee meaningfulness in driving performance outcomes. In the Malaysian context, where cultural values and personal fulfillment are highly esteemed, organizations that provide employees with opportunities for meaningful work experiences are likely to see improvements in motivation, engagement, and commitment. The positive relationship between meaningfulness and performance suggests that aligning job tasks with employees' personal values and goals can lead to enhanced job satisfaction and performance outcomes in the Malaysian workforce.

Findings

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the interplay between employee availability, safety, meaningfulness, and performance within the Malaysian workforce. The positive relationships observed underscore the importance of holistic approaches to workforce management that consider various dimensions of the work environment. By prioritizing strategies to enhance employee availability, safety, and meaningfulness, organizations in Malaysia can create a conducive work environment that promotes employee well-being, engagement, and performance. These findings have significant implications for organizational leaders and policymakers seeking to optimize workforce performance and drive sustainable business success in the Malaysian context. Further research exploring the specific mechanisms underlying these relationships and investigating potential moderating factors is warranted to inform evidence-based practices and interventions for enhancing employee performance in Malaysia's dynamic and diverse workforce.

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