

Unveiling Work Engagement Dynamics: A Holistic Exploration among Malaysian Private University Academics

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Abstract

The higher education landscape in Malaysia is undergoing rapid transformation, with private universities assuming a more significant role. Amidst challenges and opportunities, the concept of the New Academia, as outlined in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025), emphasizes the evolving role of academics towards a more entrepreneurial and demand-driven approach. This study delves into the work engagement of private university academics, recognizing its pivotal role in organizational success. Utilizing a research design integrating bibliometric analysis and the Delphi method, critical dimensions of work engagement are identified and ranked by 12 Academic Deans. Findings reveal a framework prioritizing factors such as rewards, pride in work and passion. Practical implications extend to human resource development, educational excellence, and policy refinement, underscoring the importance of fostering a supportive environment for academic staff to enhance engagement and ensure sustainable higher education advancement in Malaysia.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Delphi, Bibliometric, Higher Education, Private Universities

Introduction

Private universities are playing an increasingly important role in Malaysia's higher education system. One of the key challenges is to prepare academics for the demands of the 21st century workplace. The role of academics is expected to enlarge from the conventional roles of teaching and research to a more meaningful and broader definition encompassing all elements relating to the application of knowledge and even on institutional ranking (Delaney & Devereux, 2022) and student employability (Cotronei-Baird, 2020). It places a higher value on being demand-driven and entrepreneurship. However, private higher education institutions in Malaysia encounter several significant challenges, including a rising demand for tertiary education, imperative enhancements in teaching quality, the necessity for heightened research output, the retention and attraction of elite academic personnel, and the ability to bridge the gap between graduates' skills and the evolving needs of the labor

market (Ahmad Tajudeen, 2023; PwC, 2021; MEB, 2015-2025). Academic institutions that want to attain excellence and keep exceptional people must prioritize work engagement since engaged academics are more likely to be productive, satisfied and devoted to their organizations (Perkmann et al, 2020). Academic work engagement is crucial since it favorably affects performance and helps organizations succeed (Othman et al, 2021).

Past studies on work engagement applies the quantitative methods to collect data (Aboramadan, 2022; Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020; Jia et al, 2022; Christensen, Dystad & Innstrand 2020; Graça et al, 2021). However, this paper will highlight the applicability of two studies, namely Delphi study incorporating the Bibliometric approach. The Delphi method is a research methodology that uses controlled feedback (Dašić, 2023) strewn throughout a series of questionnaires to gather and analyse expert panel judgements (Barrios et al, 2020). It seeks to arrive at the most reliable consensus of opinions on a particular topic (Beiderbeck et al, 2021), which is work engagement in this study. It is a useful tool for forecasting future trends or solving complex problems (Alharbi & Khalifa, 2021). The bibliometric approach, which involves the statistical analysis of written publications, is used to evaluate the trends, impact, and dissemination of research employing the Delphi technique (Donthu, et al, 2021). This study aims to extend the existing literature by conducting a holistic exploration of work engagement dynamics among academics in Malaysian private universities.

Literature Review

The concept of engagement has been widely researched and studied, with various definitions and models proposed. While some definitions focus on the cognitive and behavioral components of engagement, others consider it more of an emotional state (Sahni, 2019). According to Kossva et al. (2022), work engagement was initially described by Schaufeli and his associates (Schaufeli et al., 2002) as a positive mental state at work with vigour, dedication, and absorption. In recent times, Mazzetti et al. (2022) defined work engagement as a desired psychological state that motivates staff members to devote all of their mental, emotional, and physical energy to their jobs. Regardless of the many definitions, it is widely accepted that engaged employees are those who are highly motivated, energetic, and dedicated to their work (Kashyap, Nakra & Arora, 2021). They bring their best selves to the job, are willing to go above and beyond what is expected of them and are more likely to stay with the company for a longer length of time (Nurtjahjani et al, 2022). On the other hand, disengaged employees are those who are not fully invested in their work and may exhibit behaviours such as absenteeism, low productivity, and high turnover (Madhani, 2020).

The topic of work engagement among private university academics in Malaysia has been a subject of growing interest in recent years. Research has explored various factors that contribute to the productivity and satisfaction of these professionals, highlighting the importance of understanding their experiences and perspectives (Hee et al, 2020). One study examined the concept of internal marketing and its impact on job satisfaction and organizational performance among lecturers in Malaysia (Hussin et al., 2023). The findings indicate that it is essential for organizations to value their academic employees and ensure they possess the necessary skills, as this can lead to enhanced job satisfaction and commitment, ultimately benefiting the organization's performance (Hussin et al., 2023).

Another study delved into the perspectives of Malaysian academics on academic productivity, revealing that teaching was perceived as the most productive role, followed by research and administration (Agubosim et al., 2023). The study highlighted several factors related to productivity, some of which have important policy implications (Harahap et al., 2020). Furthermore, the Malaysian government has expressed concern over the high turnover rate of academics, particularly in private universities (Harun & Ahmad, 2022). This suggests that academicians in Malaysia face a significant number of challenges, underscoring the need for organizations to prioritize the well-being and professional development of their academic staff (Badiozaman, 2020).

Research has also explored the causes and contributors of stress among academicians in private universities in Malaysia (Isa & Shahar, 2021). The findings indicate that the stiff competition among private universities, coupled with the expectation to offer synergistic and value-added services to students, has placed significant demands on academicians (Rusli et al., 2023). This has led to work intensification, which can have detrimental effects on work-life balance and turnover intention among academics (Chiew et al., 2018).

Bakker and Schaufeli developed the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) at Utrecht University in 2004, which measures three aspects of work engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption (Botha, Van Dijk & Marais, 2023). Over the past 15 years, the instrument has gained a lot of popularity, in part due to academics' excitement about the novel positive psychology methodology (Schaufeli, 2021). About 30,000 employees' engagement records are available in an international database, and the UWES is accessible in 17 languages. Initially, the UWES had 24 items at first, but after seven were found to be unsound, they were removed, leaving 17 items. The scale is further condensed to nine items, which produces comparable, valid, and dependable work engagement scores (Schaufeli et al., 2019).

The underpinning theory applied in this research is the stimulus organism response model which was first developed by Robert Woodworth in 1929 and later expanded by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell in 1974. In the context of work engagement, this model has been particularly insightful, as it helps elucidate the factors that drive employee engagement and the subsequent effects on organizational outcomes (Akter et al., 2021). One key aspect of the S-O-R model is the recognition of the crucial role played by the "Organism" component, which encompasses the internal psychological and emotional states of the employee (Harrach et al., 2020). Sustainability empowerment, a concept that reflects the extent to which employees feel empowered to engage in sustainable practices at work, has been identified as a crucial determinant of work engagement (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020).

In line with the current understanding, the research questions aimed by this study are as follows: (1) What are the critical dimensions that best reflect work engagement of academics in Malaysian Private Universities? and (2) How are the critical dimensions that best reflect work engagement of academics ranked in order of importance?

Methodology

The research process flow chart in Figure 1 follows a sequential exploratory multi-method approach designed to determine and rank work engagement dimensions among academics

in Malaysian private universities. The study begins with a comprehensive literature review to establish foundational knowledge and context. The research is guided by several objectives: identifying the critical dimensions that best reflect work engagement (RO 1), and ranking these dimensions based on their importance (RO 2).

The method employs two qualitative approaches in a sequential manner (qual → qual) as per the recommendation of Rasli et al. (2024). The first phase involves a bibliometric analysis, using the Publish or Perish software to identify the top 18-20 highest H-indexed journal papers for content analysis. This phase aims to identify the critical dimensions of work engagement, addressing RO 1. The second phase employs the Delphi method, where experts provide input to achieve consensus on the critical dimensions. Kendall's coefficient of concordance is used to confirm the agreement among experts, resulting in a ranked order of importance for these dimensions, addressing RO 2.

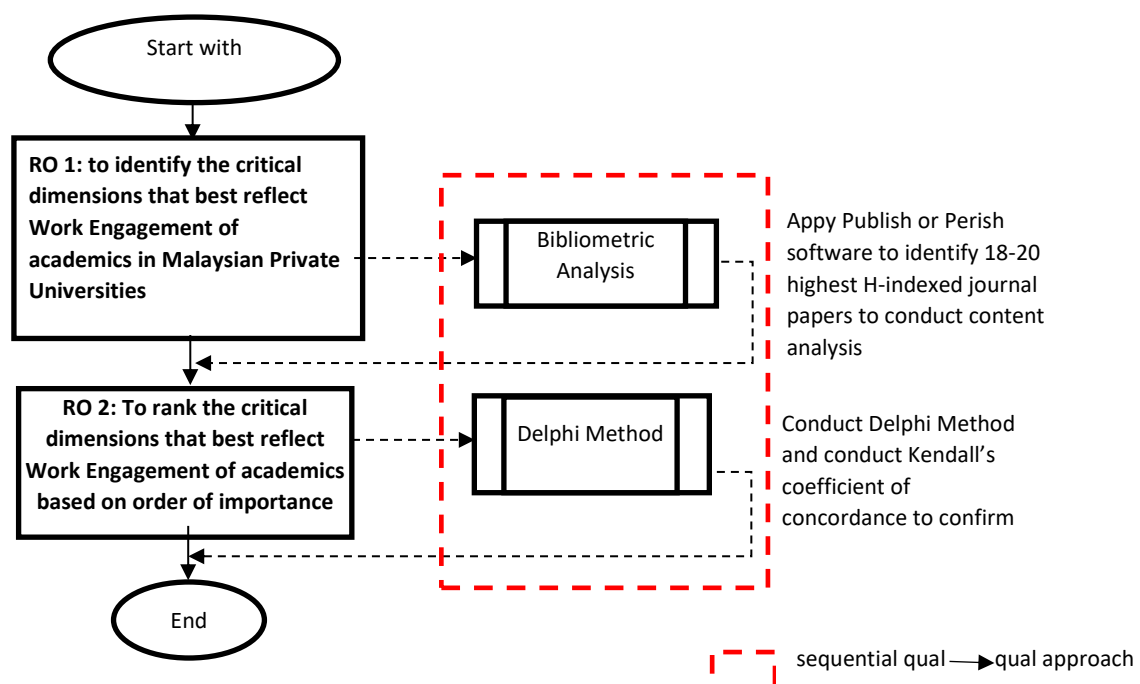


Figure 1: Sequential Multi-Method Research Flowchart

Bibliometric Analysis

The study starts with a search process using Publish or Perish (PoP) software as a tool to search bibliographic databases. The database sources used in the bibliographic search is Google Scholar, which is the largest database that provide literature that has gone through a process of review by experts (Haddaway, et al, 2017). In this analysis, the criteria were defined for all bibliographies to be included, including types of bibliographies consisting only of journals, article titles that included "work engagement", and a year limit of searches between 2020 and 2023.

Results		Help
Publication years:	2020-2023	
Citation years:	3 (2020-2023)	
Papers:	50	
Citations:	1715	
Cites/year:	571.67	
Cites/paper:	34.30	
Authors/paper:	2.88	
h-index:	21	
g-index:	41	
hI,norm:	13	
hI,annual:	4.33	
hA-index:	18	
Papers with ACC >= 1,2,5,10,20:	49,46,38,26,16	

Figure 2: Results of Bibliometric Analysis

The search identified 50 papers with 1715 citations for 2020 and 2023 (Figure 1). A total of 21 H-indexed and 41 G-indexed papers were identified in the search process (Figure 2).

Cites	Per year	Rank	Authors	Title	Year	Publication	Publisher
h 215	215.00	1	M Aboramadan	The effect of green HRM on employee green behaviors in higher education: the mediating mechanis...	2022	International Journal of Or...	emerald.com
h 16	16.00	2	E Namaziandost, T...	The impacts of reflective teaching and emotion regulation on work engagement: Into prospect of ef...	2023	Teaching English ...	researchgate.net
h 7	7.00	3	NAA Abdelwahed, ...	Developing Employee Productivity and Performance through Work Engagement and Organizational ...	2023	Societies	mdpi.com
h 134	134.00	4	G Mazzetti, E Robl...	Work engagement: A meta-analysis using the job demands-resources model	2023	Psychological ...	journals.sagepub.com
h 103	51.50	5	R Topchyian, C Woe...	Do teacher status, gender, and years of teaching experience impact job satisfaction and work engag...	2021	Education and Urban Soci...	journals.sagepub.com
h 106	53.00	6	AB Bakker, J van W...	Do personal resources and strengths use increase work engagement? The effects of a training interv...	2021	Journal of Occupational H...	psycnet.apa.org
h 165	82.50	7	AO Ojo, O Fawehin...	Examining the predictors of resilience and work engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic	2021	Sustainability	mdpi.com
h 245	122.50	8	V Greenier, A Dera...	Emotion regulation and psychological well-being in teacher work engagement: a case of British and...	2021	System	Elsevier
h 8	8.00	9	M Porter, J Wang	Personal resources and work engagement: A literature review	2022	The Journal of Continuing ...	journals.healio.com
h 65	32.50	10	R Allande-Cussó, J...	Work Engagement in Nurses during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A cross-sectional study	2021	Healthcare	mdpi.com
h 1	1.00	11	LC Chi, TC Tang, E T...	Psychometric properties of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale for Students (UWES-S) in the Taiwan...	2022	Current Psychology	Springer
h 96	48.00	12	Y Han, Y Wang	Investigating the correlation among Chinese EFL teachers' self-efficacy, work engagement, and refle...	2021	Frontiers in Psychology	frontiersin.org
h 2	1.00	13	M Willmer, J Weste...	An exploratory analysis of work engagement among women with and without disordered eating	2021	BMC Women's Health	Springer
h 78	78.00	14	M Oubibi, A Fute, organizational support and career satisfaction among Chinese teachers: the mediation effects of j...	2022	Sustainability	mdpi.com
h 79	39.50	15	R Oksa, M Kaakine...	Professional social media usage: Work engagement perspective	2021	New media & ...	journals.sagepub.com
h 4	2.00	16	R Dwiyaniti, T Na'i...	Work Engagement: The Role of Affective Wellbeing and Supervisor Support	2021	International Journal of ...	academia.edu
h 13	13.00	17	A Fute, B Sun, M O...	Assessing teaching compassion, work engagement and compassion fatigue among teachers during ...	2022	Psychology Research and ...	Taylor & Francis
h 18	18.00	18	F Nurtjahjani, RW B...	The relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Moderated mediation...	2022	Organization ...	emerald.com
h 180	90.00	19	TA Bhutto, R Faroo...	Green inclusive leadership and green creativity in the tourism and hospitality sector: Serial mediatio...	2021	Journal of Sustainable ...	Taylor & Francis
h 97	48.50	20	LE Van Zyl, A Van O...	Work engagement and task performance within a global Dutch ICT consulting firm: The mediating r...	2021	Current Psychology	Springer
h 66	33.00	21	JM Calvo, J Kwatra, ...	Burnout and work engagement among US dentists	2021	Journal of patient ...	journals.lww.com
h 70	35.00	22	NA Baghdadi, ...	The relationship between nurses' job crafting behaviours and their work engagement	2021	Journal of Nursing ...	Wiley Online Library

Figure 3: 21 H-Indexed Journals

A content analysis was carried out and were placed according to themes of work engagement. For the purpose of this bibliometric study, the researcher will only concentrate on the 18-20 articles with H-index as follows. The articles were grouped according to the themes.

Table 1

Content Analysis

Dimensions	Themes	Related Articles
Bursting with Energy (Vitality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving state • Invigorated by work • Possess physical and mental resources • Sustainable and healthy energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katou, A.A., Budhwar, P.S. & Patel, C. (2020). • Dwiyaniti, R., Na'imah, T. & Hamzah, H. (2021). • Wijayati, D.T., Rahman, Z., Fahrullah, A., Rahman, M.F.W., Arifah, I.D.C. and Kautsar, A. (2022).
Strong & Vigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and mental strength • High energy and enthusiasm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Han, Y. & Wang, Y. (2021). • Anasori, E., Bayighomog, S.W., De

(Stamina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical power • Dynamism and liveliness. 	<p>Vita, G. & Altinay, L. (2021).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hakanen, J. J., Bakker, A. B., & Turunen, J. (2021).
Enthusiastic (Eager)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passionately committed to one's work • Strong sense of meaning • Feeling deeply connected • Invested in one's professional endeavors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Van Zyl, L.E., Van Oort, A., Rispens, S. & Olckers, C. (2021). • Gomez-Salgado, J., Dominguez-Salas, S., Romero-Martin, M., Romero, A., Coronado-Vazquez, V. & Ruiz-Frutos, C. (2020). • Ahmad, N., Ullah, Z., AlDhaen, E., Han, H. & Scholz, M. (2022). • Wontorczyk, A.; Roznowski, B. (2022).
Inspired (Stimulated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignites motivation • Bridge between initial spark and long-term pursuit of inspired goals • Commitment, perseverance, and focus • Turn fleeting inspiration into tangible results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zhang, M., Zhang, P., Liu, Y., Wang, H., Hu, K. & Du, M. (2021). • Rabiul, M.K. & Tan F. Y. (2021). • Bakker, A. B., & van Wingerden, J. (2021). • Ozturk, A., Karatepe, O.M. & Okumus, F. (2021).
Feel like going to work (Passionate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeper sense of energized enthusiasm • Readiness to tackle the day's challenges • Passionate state of readiness and excitement • High energy, strong motivation, and deep sense of purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhutto, T. A., Farooq, R., Talwar, S., Awan, U. & Dhir, A. (2021). • Ojo, A.O., Fawehinmi, O., Yusliza, M.Y. (2021). • Topchyan, R., & Woehler, C. (2021). • Parr, J.M., Teo, S. & Koziol-Mclain, J. (2020).
Happy Intensely Working (Enchantment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy, excitement, and satisfaction, • Overall sense of happiness • Deeper immersion and intrinsic motivation • Broader range of positive emotions • Active role in shaping work experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenier, V., Derakhshan, A. & Fathi, J. (2021). • Aboramadan, M. (2022). • Bhutto, T. A., Farooq, R., Talwar, S., Awan, U. & Dhir, A. (2021). • Oksa, R., Kaakinen, M., Savela, N., Ellonen, N., & Oksanen, A. (2021).
Proud of my work (Dignity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profound connection to work • Sense of ownership and responsibility • Continuous drive to strive for excellence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chua, J. & Ayoko, O.B. (2021). • Chi, LC., Tang, TC. & Tang, E. (2023). • Fute, A., Sun, B. & Oubibi, M. (2022).

Immersed in work (Concentration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intense focus ● Effortless engagement ● Positive emotions ● Complete flow state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mazzetti, G., Robledo, E., Vignoli, M., Topa, G., Guglielmi, D., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2023). ● Baghdadi, N.A., Abd-El Aliem, S.M. & Alsayed, S.K. (2020). ● Namaziandost, E., Heydarnejad, T., Azizi, Z. (2023).
Get carried away (Captivation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engulfed in task with enthusiasm and drive ● Losing track of time and external realities ● Intense focus and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Oubibi, M.; Fute, A.; Xiao, W.; Sun, B.; Zhou, Y. (2022). ● Abdelwahed, N.A.A. & Al Doghan, M.A. (2023). ● Nurtjahjani, F., Batilmurik, R.W., Puspita, A.F. and Fanggalda, J.P. (2022).

Delphi Method

The study seeks to collect authoritative insights on work engagement of private university academics in Malaysia. The selection of experts is based on their specific knowledge, experience and relevance to study topic. According to Table 2, a total of 12 experts participated in the Delphi methodology.

Table 2
Panel of Experts List

Code for Experts	Current Institution	Highest Academic Qualification	Current Position/Title
Expert A	INTI International University	PhD	Director of Postgraduate School
Expert B	Quest International University	PhD	Head, School of Hospitality
Expert C	University Polytech Malaysia	PhD	Program Coordinator, Institute of Graduate Studies
Expert D	Sunway University	PhD	Head – Department of Business Analytics
Expert E	MILA University (formally known as Manipal University)	PhD	HOD Postgraduate Studies
Expert F	International University of Malaya Wales	PhD	Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science
Expert G	Taylor’s University	MLaws	Senior Lecturer and Programme Director for Master of Laws programme
Expert H	University Malaysia of Computer Science	PhD	Senior Lecturer

	and Engineering (UNIMY)		
Expert I	Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia	DBA	Senior Lecturer/MBA Program Coordinator
Expert J	Malaysian Technology Development Corporation	MTec	Senior Vice President
Expert K	Monash University	PhD	Lecturer
Expert L	SEGi University	PhD	Head of Department (Languages)

Before the questions were sent to the experts, a pilot test was conducted by three respondents. By identifying flaws and ambiguities, assessing participant understanding and optimizing survey flow, pilot testing ensures accurate and reliable data collection (Renner et al., 2023; Clibens et al, 2023; Abdalnour et al, 2023). The first respondent endorsed several points identified in the bibliometric analysis and further emphasized the critical role of leadership. She reiterated that strong leadership is essential for enhancing work engagement among private university academics, indicating a clear understanding of the open-ended questions. Similarly, the second respondent demonstrated comprehension by offering specific examples supporting the identified themes. For the dimension “Bursting with Energy”, she commented that “good references with relevant and well-founded ideas are essential for a high-quality study”. In the dimension “Enthusiastic”, she viewed it as “a suitable and relevant issue that can help build a strong literature review”. Therefore, both respondents confirmed the validity of the first-round questions. The third respondent, however, proposed additional themes: 1) conducive work environment, 2) support and guidance, and 3) bonding and co-worker relationships.

Findings

Round 1 of Delphi Method

From endorsement of the pilot testers, the table of themes identified from bibliometric research was forwarded to the panel of experts. They were asked to review each theme and provide insights based on their agreement, disagreement or any additional comments or suggestions they wish to add. They are also invited to add themes or factors not captured in the themes that should be considered.

The expertise and insights from the first round have been crucial in shaping the direction of this study. Following the responses given, the second-round questionnaire, which builds upon the consensus and insights gathered in the initial round and prepared Table 3.

Table 3

Grouping of Keywords into Themes based on Round 1 Delphi Method

Themes/Strategies	Keywords	Keyword Counts
1. Bursting with Energy (Vitality)	Thriving state, invigorated by work, possess physical and mental resources, sustainable and healthy energy, work life balance, perseverance	4
2. Strong & Vigorous (Stamina)	Physical and mental health, higher energy and enthusiasm, physical power, dynamism and liveliness, organisational fit, growth mindset	2
3. Enthusiastic (Eager)	Passionately committed to one's work, strong sense of meaning, feeling deeply connected, invested in one's professional endeavours, exemplary leadership	2
4. Inspired (Stimulated)	Ignites motivation, bridge between initial spark and long-term pursuit of inspired goals, commitment, perseverance and focus, turn fleeting inspiration into tangible results, student success, religiosity	2
5. Feel like going to work (Passionate)	Deeper sense of energized enthusiasm, Readiness to tackle the day's challenges, passionate state of readiness and excitement, higher energy, strong motivation and deep sense of purpose, conducive working environment	9
6. Happy Intensely Working (Enchantment)	Joy, excitement and satisfaction, overall sense of happiness, deeper immersion and intrinsic motivation , broader range of positive emotions, bonding and co-worker relationship, transparency in workload assignment.	3
7. Proud of My Work (Dignity)	Profound connection to work, sense of ownership and responsibility , continuous drive to strive for excellence, work ethic	5
8. Immersed in Work (Concentration)	Intense focus, effortless engagement, positive emotions, complete flow state, support and guidance (clear instructions), accountability/policy issues, intellectual curiosity	2
9. Get carried away (Captivation)	Engulfed in task with enthusiasm and drive, losing track of time and external realities , intense focus and engagement	1
10. Rewards	Transparency in remuneration and promotion, lifelong learning, mentorship/guidance, performance appraisal, autonomy	5
Total keywords		35

In the second round, the aim is to refine the understanding on the importance of each dimension by focusing on the ranking based on order of importance. The experts were asked to rank the dimensions based on the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Least Important

Most Important

Round 2 of Delphi Analysis

Thematic analysis of the first round Delphi was tabulated for the second round. Themes of work engagement was consolidated into dimensions for the expert to rank. In Round Two, the themes were then ranked by the same experts to test for consensus and variation of mean ranks using Kendall’s coefficient of concordance (Wells-Di Gregorio et al., 2022) and c² analysis (Evans et al., 2021) respectively. c² analysis was used to confirm if the variations in the mean ranks are random or not. The Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W), which measures the degree of dimension agreement among the experts was computed for the scored ranking after the second round of the Delphi method was complete, i.e. to test the following hypothesis:

Ho: the expert rankings are inconsistent (response disagreement)

In addition, based on the p-value and contrasting the Chi-square test statistics with the critical value, one can ascertain the statistical significance of Kendall's Coefficients of Concordance (W) (Akanni et al., 2015). The metric Kendall's W is employed to ascertain the predetermined rank score (Alenazi et al., 2020; Siegel, 1957). A significant Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) shows that participants agree to the ranking of the dimensions based on order of importance. Consensus is evident if the p-value is less than 0.05 and the W is close to 1.

The p-value will be high (greater than 0.05) if the Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W) is low, suggesting that the experts' ranking is inconsistent; following which, a third round of the Delphi process would be needed.

Table 4
Second Round of the Delphi Method

Dimensions										
Expert	Bursting with Energy (Vitality)	Strong & Vigorous (Stamina)	Enthusiastic (Energetic)	Inspired (Stimulated)	Feel like going to Work (Passionate)	Happy Intensely Working (Enchantment)	Proud of my work (Dignity)	Im	Ge	Reviewards (Benefits)
								me	t	
								re	car	
								d	rie	
								in	d	
								W	aw	
								ork	ay	
								(Co	(Ca	
								nc	pti	
								ent	vat	
								ra-	ed)	

									tio n		
E 1	2	7	5	3	1	6	8	10	9	4	
E 2	6	4	8	10	9	5	7	3	2	1	
E 3	3	4	5	2	6	1	8	7	9	10	
E 5	4	1	5	9	7	8	2	6	3	10	
E 6	5	8	7	6	2	4	9	3	1	10	
E 7	2	3	4	5	10	9	7	8	1	6	
E 9	1	2	4	5	8	7	9	6	3	10	
E 11	2	3	6	5	8	9	4	7	1	10	
E 12	1	2	3	4	10	8	9	5	6	7	
M e a n	2.89	3.78	5.22	5.4 4	6.78	6.33	7.00	6.1 1	3.8 9	7. 56	
G r o u p R a n k	1	2	4	5	8	7	9	6	3	10	

Kendall's W: 0.262; p-value: 0.012; c^2 test statistics = 29.242; $df = 9$; $c^2_{0.05} = 16.914$; Asymp. Sig. = 0.000; n = 32

In this study, the Kendall's W value of 0.262 indicates a weak degree of agreement between the raters on the ranking of the work engagement dimensions by the experts. The high c^2 test statistics of 29.242 is greater than $c^2_{0.05} = 16.914$ implies that the variations in the mean ranks are not random variations. The p-value of 0.000 further confirms that group consensus has been achieved from the panel of experts, thus there is no requirement to conduct the third round of the Delphi method. The weak Kendall's W is acceptable in social science studies such as this as per past studies by Tee et al. (2022), Kok et al. (2023) and Mohd. Noor et al. (2023).

Based on Table 4, the ranking of the ten dimensions is presented in Table 5. Bursting with

energy (vitality) with mean ranking of 2.89 is ranked as the least important dimension while Rewards (benefits) with mean ranking of 7.56 is the most important dimension.

Table 5

Ranking of Dimensions (1 = least important, 10 = most important)

Dimensions/Mean Ranking	Ranking
Bursting with energy (vitality)/2.89	1
Strong & vigorous (stamina)/3.78	2
Get carried away (captivated)/3.89	3
Enthusiastic (eager)/5.22	4
Inspired (stimulated)/5.44	5
Immersed in work (concentration)/6.11	6
Happy intensely working (enchantment)/6.33	7
Feel like going to work (passionate)/6.78	8
Proud of my Work (dignity)/7.00	9
Rewards (benefits)/7.56	10

Existing research has explored various antecedents and consequences of work engagement, including job resources, personal resources, and performance outcomes (Susilo & Mangundjaya, 2020). One factor that has received limited attention in the work engagement literature is the role of rewards (Rai & Chawla, 2021). Rewards, which encompass both monetary (e.g., bonuses, pay raises) and non-monetary (e.g., recognition, praise) forms of compensation, may serve as a key motivational driver for employees, influencing their overall level of work engagement (Okpebholo & Sheikh, 2020). Engaged employees are known to be highly proactive, innovative, and efficient in their work, contributing to improved organizational outcomes (Reig-Botella et al., 2024). The addition of "rewards" as a dimension of work engagement could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape employee engagement and, ultimately, organizational performance; what more since rewards was found to be the most important dimension in this study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study provides theoretical and methodological contributions by offering insights into work engagement among private university academics in Malaysia through a multi-method approach, integrating bibliometric analysis and the Delphi method (Nair et al, 2023). This methodological integration enhances understanding by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, while the adaptation of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for measurement underscores the applicability of academic frameworks in organizational contexts (Serrano et al, 2019). By identifying and ranking factors influencing work engagement, such as rewards and passion, the study contributes to theoretical understanding, informing future research and organizational interventions aimed at enhancing work engagement not only within private universities in Malaysia but also in broader organizational settings worldwide (Yaqoob & Kitchlew, 2022; Albrecht, Green & Marty, 2021).

The study's practical contribution is threefold. Firstly, it aids private universities in planning and human resource development by furnishing a framework for enhancing employees' abilities, knowledge, and organizational skills, thereby boosting productivity through motivated staff (Murali, 2023; Aremu, Ayeni & Adekanmbi, 2023). Secondly, it influences the quality of graduates entering the workforce, stressing the importance of academic nurturing for an intellectually vibrant society, aligning academic interests with educational excellence to avoid performance discrepancies (Behluli et al, 2022; Mahavongtrakul et al, 2021). Lastly, it benefits private universities and informs the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025, facilitating improvements or realignment based on feedback for sustainable educational advancement (Alsayed, Albahtity & Gomaa, 2023; Zakaria & Zurcher, 2023; Saleem, et al, 2022; Wan, Sirat & Razak, 2020). Overall, the findings offer practical guidance for enhancing organizational effectiveness, educational quality, and policy formulation within the private higher education sector in Malaysia, leading to positive outcomes for individuals, institutions, and society as a whole.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study on work engagement among private university academics in Malaysia provides valuable insights into the factors that influence work engagement in the higher education sector (Hussin et al., 2023). However, as the research focused solely on private universities, there is an opportunity to expand the scope of investigation to explore the generalizability of the findings across different educational contexts (Harun & Ahmad, 2022). Comparative studies could shed light on the similarities and differences in work engagement drivers across various educational institutions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Nair, et al, 2023).

Given the limitations of the Delphi method (expert bias) and self-reported data, future research could explore mixed-method approaches incorporating objective organizational data such as performance metrics, promotion rates, and turnover alongside subjective perceptions of engagement (Khodyakov et al., 2023; Niederberger & Spranger, 2020). The tests could cover more diverse expert panels including experts from various educational sectors or regions to reduce potential biases in the Delphi method (Taylor, 2020).

Since rewards and passion are key factors identified in the study, future research could focus on designing and testing intervention strategies. These could expose how specific reward systems (monetary and non-monetary) or motivational strategies can enhance work engagement in universities (Yan & Yu, 2020). A comparative analysis of reward structures could be investigated on how different reward structures (performance-based, tenure-based) influence work engagement across various types of higher education institutions.

The study's findings are relevant to the Malaysia Education Blueprint, but future research could evaluate the long-term effects of policy implementations (Mohamad et al., 2023). The study could investigate how changes in educational policy based on such frameworks affect academic work engagement and organizational success over time. International comparative policy research could also be conducted to look at how similar policies in other countries impact the education sector, providing a global perspective on best practices for higher education reforms.

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