JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ENGAGEMENT MODERATED BY TRUST

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study was to empirically examine the effect of job satisfaction and trust on work engagement. The study population consisted of randomly selected academic staff working in public universities, to which questionnaire survey was distributed for the collection of primary data. A total of 700 questionnaires were distributed to 4 public universities staff. Based on the study findings obtained, job satisfaction statistical and significantly affected work engagement, and trust significantly moderated such relationship. The study findings confirmed that work engagement among academic staff in public universities contributes towards the accomplishment of the vision and mission of the universities to ultimately become centers of excellence. The study will be a significant contribution to the existing literature and will particularly help the institutions such as universities in terms of admiring job satisfaction and trust as well work engagement. The study's findings and subsequent recommendations will be useful of job satisfaction and trust can work towards bringing about work engagement among academicians

Keywords: Work engagement, job satisfaction, trust, academic staff, higher education, social exchange theory, attribution theory

INTRODUCTION

For the survival and competitiveness in the current dynamic economic environment, organizations need proactive employees those that show initiative in engaging to their work role and remaining committed to displaying high performance standards (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). To this end, the employers are faced with the challenge of understanding the importance of

employee engagement in their organizations as modern organizations require a workforce that is engaged (Chughtai & Buckley, 2011).

In today's dynamic environment, organizations are struggling to keep their talented employees. There are several researches that correlate job satisfaction with employment, a more in-depth examination is needed to understand the satisfaction in the workplace, which increases work engagement (Garg, Dar & Mishra, 2018).

In the context of academics, professionals are core to the functioning of any university (Pienaar, 2008). The lack of well-qualified and committed academic staff will lead to the failure of sustained performance and quality in the long-term. Moreover, in higher education, institutions are more dependent on intellectual, creative abilities and commitment of the academic staff compared to other institutions and organizations. This makes it crucial to have staff that is fully engaged in their work.

Prior studies have evidenced the connection between an engaged workforce and performance. More specifically, in Wah's (1999) study, he employed a survey involving 656 executive officers from different countries and found engaging employees to be the fourth-most significant management challenge following the creation of customer loyalty, mergers and alliances management and costs reduction. This is compounded by the results reported by the Gallup Organization that found approximately 20% of the employees in the U.S. were disengaged from their work while 54% were neutral towards it as explained in Fleming, Coffman & Harter (2005). According to the authors, disengaged employees cost the U.S. over $300 billion annually for productivity loss. Another research from the Gallup and Towers Perrin cited by Momal (2003) and Seijts and Crim (2006), indicated that employee disengagement is as problematic in other various countries. Another study revealed that merely 14% of over 85,000 employees throughout 16 countries displayed work engagement (Aselstine & Alletson, 2006).

More importantly, both job satisfaction and work engagement play a major role in retaining staff and this has garnered significant attention from authors in management literature. They found job satisfaction to predict absenteeism, burnout, and turnover as well as quit intention (Shields & Ward, 2001; Lu, While & Barriball, 2005; Gupta & Shaheen, 2017). Added to this, work engagement, job satisfaction, job performance and retention were evidenced to be significantly related (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Laschinger & Leiter, 2006; Simpson, 2009; Lu, Lu, Gursoy, and Neale, 2016).

However, research on the relationship between job satisfaction, work engagement, and trust appears to be non-existent in literature and hence, this study offers new empirical and theoretical insights into this relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Engagement

The first attempt to apply the concept of work engagement has been often attributed to Kahn (1990; 1992). According to him, employees differ in the long-run in terms of their perception as to their level of expressing their preferred selves in their workplace.

Work engagement is the antithesis of job burnout, with the latter referring to the erosion of engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Burnout can be defined using three dimensions namely, exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency, with engagement characterized as the opposite of these dimensions. In other words, energy is replaced by emotional exhaustion, involvement replaces cynicism, and efficacy replaces lack of professional achievement. On the basis of Maslach and Leiter's (1997) assumption, job engagement can be gauged through the inverse scores of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) scale. But based on other prior studies like Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002), engagement and burnout are two distinct states that should be measured independently by two different instruments.

Additionally, Schaufeli et al. (2002) viewed work engagement as a distinct phenomenon that comprises of positive antipode of workplace burnout. They contended that burnout and engagement are independent but negatively correlated mind states rather than the two poles of a continuum. As a consequence, they referred to work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related mind state, whose characteristics include vigor, dedication and absorption (p.24).

Prior studies dedicated to work engagement concept revealed that employees who are engaged have a greater tendency to go above and beyond for their organizations and that it has a positive impact on performance in multiple contexts (e.g., Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Schaufeli, Bakker & Van Rhenen, 2009; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2007).

Owing to its importance in employee performance and retention, engagement has garnered increasing attention in the past ten years among academicians. The concept however is still relatively new in the context of universities (Saks, 2006), particularly in Jordan. The notion of engagement has progressed in answer to its contributions to enhancing the effectiveness of employees in the workplace.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a topic that has obtained wide interest from employees to researchers alike. The topic has been significantly linked with several other organizational phenomena like motivation, performance, leadership, attitude, conflict, morale, among others. Job satisfaction generally means a general attitude towards an object (the job). In particular, Lofquist and Dawis (1969, p.53), Locke and Henne (1986, p.21) defined the concept similar to the above description

and close the definition provided by Locke (1976, p.1300) that described it as a pleasurable emotional state that stems from the appraisal of the experiences on the job.

Prior job satisfaction studies indicated its significant effect on the understanding of the influences of several other variables – in this regard, job satisfaction studies were analyzed based on its relationship to work attitudes, like commitment (e.g., Huang & Hsiao, 2007), performance (e.g., Ashill, Carruthers & Krisjanous, 2006) and organizational culture (Chen, 2004). Moreover, job satisfaction was also examined in various contexts like construction (e.g., Dabko, Salem, Genaidy & Daraiseh, 2008), tertiary education (e.g., Oshagbemi, 2003; Castillo, Cocklin & Cano, 1999; Mertler, 2002; Sweeny, Hohenshil & Fortune, 2002; Testa & Mueller, 2009), healthcare (Rad & Yarmohammadin, 2006) and institutions of higher learning in various nations (Lacy & Sheehan, 1997; Oshagbemi, 2000).

To begin with, Srivastava (2013) examined the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment in his study involving 247 middle level managers working for private organizations. The findings revealed the positive relationship of job satisfaction with organizational commitment. On the other hand, Oshagbemi (2000) focused on the effects of gender on job satisfaction in the case of UK academics, using 554 faculties, but found no direct effects of gender on job satisfaction. His findings however indicated an interaction effect that revealed female academics of higher ranks to be more satisfied with their jobs compared to their male counterparts. Higher ranking academics are more satisfied with their jobs, with age and gender having minimal to no effects. Generally, research on university academic staff is still scarce.

In a related study, Baotham (2011) found a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job performance among Thai employees working in Rajamangala University of Technology, Thanyaburi. On the basis of the reviewed literature, research examining the job satisfaction-work engagement relationship is still few and far between. Based on the above review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1:Job satisfaction is positively related to work engagement

Trust

Studies dedicated to trust often describe it as a personality trait or disposition of the trustor that affects the level to which he generally places his trust on others. Trust, according to Rotter (1967) is a generalized expectancy that words/promises of others could be depended on, and he was among the pioneering authors to provide a discussion on trust as a personality form. Meanwhile, Kee and Knox (1970) contended that trust is not only dependent on past experience, but also on disposition factors (e.g., personality). Such personality-dependent form

of trust was named as dispositional trust by Kramer (1999) and trust propensity by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995).

With regards to its definition, trust has been defined in various ways in literature, with some authors relating the concept to a personality trait/disposition of the trustor that affects the level to which he trusts the trustee. Pioneering dvocates of this notion include Rotter (1967) who explained trust as a personality form in that it is an expectancy where others' words and actions could be depended upon. This personality-based aspect of trust was referred to by Kramer (1999) as dispositional trust and by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) as trust propensity. The latter defined it as the inclination of an individual to leave himself vulnerable to the actions of another on the basis of his expectations such other will conduct a specific action that is important to him, regardless of whether or not he can oversee or control him (p.712).

Majority of the authors are of the consensus that trust is a major factor that could enhance firm's competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness competing for human talents, long-term stability and the organizational well-being (Cook & Wall, 1980; Huff & Kelley, 2003; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd, 2000; Laschinger, Finegan & Shamian, 2001). In relation to this Gilbert and Tang (1998) explained that trust influenced the perceptions and confidence of employees in their organizations and their beliefs regarding whether or not their organizations' actions are to their own best interests.

In related studies, O'Brien (2001) and Reina and Reina (1999) related that trust can encourage creativity and critical thinking among employees because when leaders facilitate an environment conducive to trust, employees perceive more freedom to express themselves, in terms of their ideas, and hence, they perform beyond the organization's expectations. Along a similar line of argument, Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Winograd (2000) revealed that higher levels of trust in organizations led to success and innovation.

In some other related studies, Chugtai and Buckley (2011) tested trust influence on the work engagement among employees and found a positive relationship between the two. They specifically tested trust in supervisors and propensity to trust the same on the employees' work engagement, in their study involving 168 research scientists working in 6 Irish science research centers. Also, Hassan and Ahmed (2011) reported that interpersonal trust is a predictor of work engagement of employees in their study that involved 395 Malaysian bank employees.

Following Chugtai and Buckley's (2008) argument, this study expects the trust and work engagement relationship to be mutually supportive, and it leads to an upward spiral effect. Based on empirical evidence, a climate of trust could lead to extensive and various advantages for individuals working in the organizations. Prior studies also reported that increased trust directly/indirectly leads to positive workplace behaviors and attitudes, including organizational

commitment and work engagement among employees (e.g., Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Tanner, 2007).

Aside from looking into the direct relationships of trust, studies also examined its moderating role; for instance, Alfes, Shantz and Truss (2012) looked into the moderating role of trust on the HRM practices-performance and well-being relationship of 613 employees and line management in U.K. service sector. Their findings indicated the moderating effect of trust on such relationship. Otken and Cenkci (2011) also found the moderating effect of trust on the relationship between paternalistic leadership and ethical climate, in their study that involved 227 Turkish employees.

In the context of Israel, Vigoda-Gadot and Talmud (2010) studied the relationship between organizational politics and organizational commitment among 142 academicians in one of Israel's major research universities and found trust to moderate the relationship. Similarly, in Taiwan, trust was found to moderate the relationship between justice and commitment among 450 Taiwanese teachers (Ting, 2013). Despite the existence of studies that examined trust's moderating role, only a few studies have determined whether or not it moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement, particularly in the context of academicians. Hence, the present study tests the moderating role of trust in the job satisfaction–work engagement relationship in Jordanian academics working in public universities. On the basis of the above reviewed literature, the following hypothesis is proposed to be tested;

H2: Trust moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement

Research Framework

This study's research framework is developed on the basis of Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964) and Emerson (1976), and the Attribution Theory by Haider (1958) and the reviewed literature (see Figure 1).

The social theory posits that social behavior stems from a process of exchange, with the exchange objective being the maximization of the benefits and the minimization of costs. The theory also proposes that people weight the potential benefits and risks in their social relationships and when the risks outweigh the benefits, they put an end to the relationships. Because social exchange is built on obligations as opposed to contracts, trust is among the most significant aspects of social exchange theory. Trust is explained by the following scenario – when a partner provides benefits to the other side, he trusts that the other will reciprocate it, in which case, the mutual action return that benefits the partner throughout the time develops trust.

Moving on the attribution theory proposed by Haider (1958), it explains trust's moderating effect on the relationship between satisfaction and engagement. According to Weiner (1995), the attribution theory is able to explain a trust-relevant phenomenon. The prediction is such that in an environment characterized by low trust, academics tend to be more likely to relate negative outcomes to situational causes, and not as likely to attribute positive ones to external causes. On the other hand, in an environment characterized by high trust, academics tend to be more likely to relate positive outcomes to situational causes and to attribute positive experiences to external causes.

Moreover, it is important to understand job satisfaction consequences as they have a significant impact on job performance, organizational commitment, turnover intentions and they have potential to influence human resource policies and practices as evidenced in prior studies (e.g., Rayton, 2006; Armutlulu & Noyan, 2011). Several justifications have been proposed as to the reason behind the increasing attention towards job satisfaction among scholars. First, the attitudes and perceptions of workers towards their jobs are important to organizations and as such, job satisfaction has a significant effect on workers' behavior in various ways, particularly in relation to productivity and absenteeism. To this end, satisfied employees are not as likely to leave their jobs and look for alternative ones (Ambrose, Huston & Norman, 2005; Rosser, 2004).

In the higher education, the changing role of governance and the loss of trust in the self-steering ability of academics, instead of strategic decision making, accountability and assessments, is shifting the balance between the relationship of management and external stakeholders (Kalpazidou & Langberg, 2007). The current claim states that higher education is losing trust of the society at large, and this is advocated by those that want higher education accountability to the state and the latter's power over the institutions. In this regard, trust is extensively viewed as a critical aspect that leads to successful personal and business relationships. In fact, trust offers the partner organizations the chance to form the education direction and develop a lasting legacy for the sustainability of the universities' long-term plans.

Interestingly so, the trust concept has received relatively low attention in the academic field in comparison to other fields like management and psychology, despite the fact that literature does contain studies that involve trust between teachers (Hargreaves, 2002) and trust in institutions of higher learning (Ghosh, Whipple & Bryan, 2001). Nevertheless, the analyses in these studies failed to concentrate on trust among academic staff in institutions of higher learning and its moderating role in the job satisfaction-work engagement relationship.
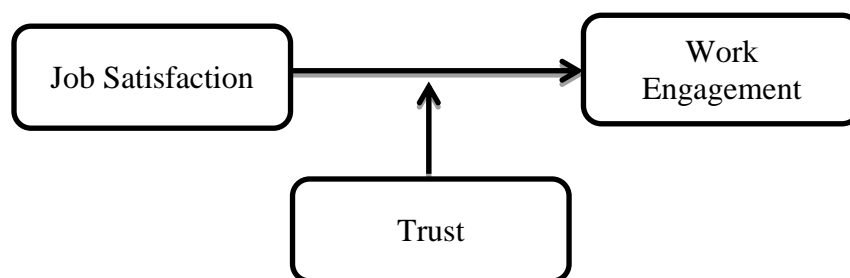
Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Study Participants

The participants were academic staff from four Jordanian higher education universities (N = 532). 430 male and 102 respondents participated in this study. The average age was 51. In addition, the majority of the respondents (459) were married, followed by unmarried respondents, which were 73. 223 of the respondents had below $2000, while 286 of them had a salary amid $2001-$3000, but only 23 had from $3001-$4000. A majority of the respondents 295 respondents worked with university from 1-3 years. In addition, most of the respondents 226 were in present position from 1-3 years. All respondents were PhD degree.

Measuring instrument

Work engagement was measured by 17 items developed by Schaufeli and Baker (2003). Job satisfaction was measured by using 22 items developed by Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1967). In this study, trust is the moderating variable. Trust is operationalized as individuals' confidence and expectation about the actions of their organizations (Tyler, 2003). Trust was measured by using 7 items developed by Tyler (2003). In this study, participants was asked to rate their degree of agreement for each of the items statement based on five-point scale whereby, 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Job Satisfaction and Work Engagement

Results in Table 1 shows that 28.6% (R^2 = .286, F = 212.45, p < .01) of the variance in work engagement was significantly explained by job satisfaction. In the model, job satisfaction (β = 0.535, p<0.01) was found positively related to work engagement. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. The results demonstrate that academics who are satisfied with their job are more engaged in what they do.

Table 1: Model Summary of Job Satisfaction and Work Engagement

Independent variables	Dependent variable Work Engagement Std Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Job satisfaction	.535**	14.57	.000	1.00	1.00
R²	.286				
Adj.R²	.285				
F change	212.45				
Sig F change	.000				
Durbin-Watson	1.78				

Trust Moderating Job Satisfaction and Work Engagement

To test Hypothesis 2, hierarchical multiple regression analysis is performed. As shown in Table 2, job satisfaction variable was entered in Step 1 and explained around 28.6% of the work engagement variance. The result showed that the job satisfaction has a significant influence on work engagement (β = .535; t = 14.576; p < .001). The result when the moderator is entered at Step 2 and explained around 30.0% of the variance in trust and job satisfaction to work engagement (β = .436; t = 9.187; p < .001).

When the interaction item is entered at Step 3, R-Square has increased by 1.1% and explained around 31.1% of the work engagement variance (β = .922; t = 5.383; p < .001). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Result for Moderating Effect of the Trust

Predictors	Model 1 Step 1	Model 2 Step 2	Model 3 Step 3
Job satisfaction (Beta)	.535	.436	.922
Trust (Beta)		.154	.674
Interactive Terms			
Satisfaction *Trust			-.917
R²	.286	.300	.311
Adj. R²	.285	.297	.308
R² change	.286	.014	.011
Sig F change	.000	.000	.005
Durbin-Watson			1.82

The moderating effect of trust on the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement is shown in Figure 2. The results demonstrate that academics who worked in a low trust environment tend to be less engaged with their work as compared to those who worked in a high trust environment, even when both had high job satisfaction. However, the gap in work engagement in a low and high trust environment is smaller between those who had high job satisfaction as compared those with low job satisfaction.
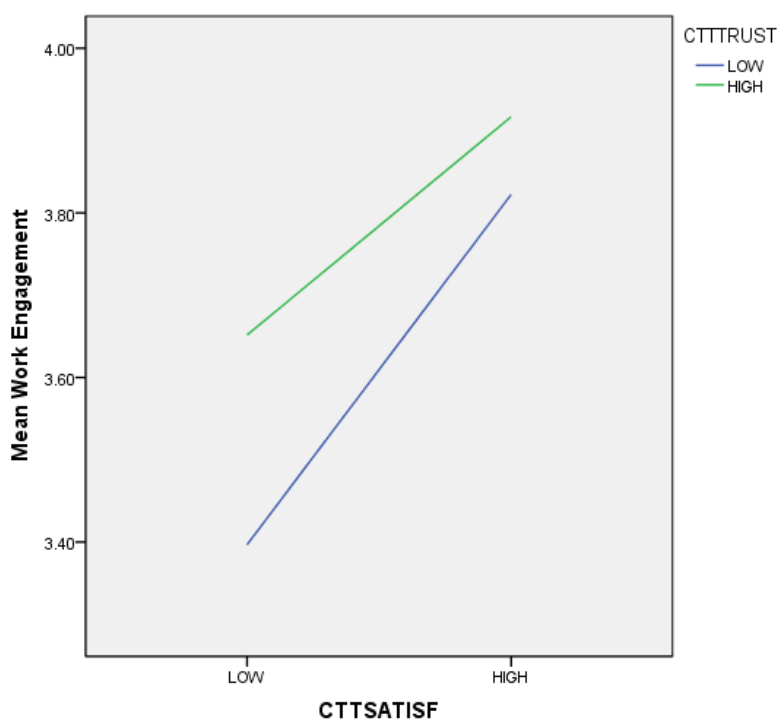

Figure 2: Interaction of Job Satisfaction and Trust in Predicting Work Engagement

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationships among job satisfaction, trust and work engagement and the findings showed a significant and positive relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement. This indicates that highly satisfied academics are engaged in their work. This finding is supported by prior empirical studies regarding the two constructs (e.g., Avery, McKay & Wilson, 2007; Brunetto, Shacklock & Farr-Wharton, 2012; Durand, 2008; Vansteenkiste, De Witte & Lee, 2008; Torres, 2014; Lu et al., 2016). This finding can be attributed to the explanation that individuals who are happy and satisfied at work are generally more motivated, eager, excited and passionate of their work, despite the challenges they face. It is thus expected that highly satisfied people at work are also highly engaged in their work. Although majority of the study sample are new at work (less than 3 years of tenure), the findings

showed their satisfaction concerning the feedback of the Dean, job opportunities, friendly work environment, their autonomy, and their participation in decision making. Such satisfying feeling leads them to display work-engagement.

Regardless of the lack of hypothesis testing concerning the relationship between tenure and satisfaction, it is notable that the finding in this study indicated that feeling of satisfaction with work does not hinge on the number of working years but more on the treatment of employees. It has long been argued that the longer the employee tenure, the higher they will feel satisfied as they have already adapted to the work environment but the findings in this study proved otherwise.

This study tested the moderating role of trust between job satisfaction and work engagement, and the findings indicated that work engagement among academicians in a low-trust environment is lower compared to those in high trust environment although both displayed high job satisfaction. This finding may be attributed to the fact that the Jordanian academic staff still requires transparency in decision-making when it comes to their jobs and career development. For instance, the management should be transparent in their decisions concerning staff promotion as this would encourage confidence of staff on management and in turn, staff will be satisfied with the decision reached, and will ultimately show positive attitude in the universities. This perception suggests that universities should create a balance of relationship between top management of universities and academics.

More importantly, the presence of trust and transparency in universities working environment pave the way for academic staff to garner information on the universities' planning and direction. This will in turn, increase their positive regard for management, particularly when management focuses on relevant issues such as complaints on management style, facilities provided, and equal opportunities for career development. In other words the flow of information throughout the Jordanian universities' environment will bring about the academics' job satisfaction and work engagement.

CONCLUSION, FURTHER RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's findings provide evidence on the importance of job satisfaction in improving work engagement among academicians in universities. They highlighted the moderating role of trust on the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement and offered insights into the processes through which job satisfaction and trust can work towards bringing about work engagement among academicians. The findings also reaffirm the importance of trust as a critical determinant of organizational success, particularly in universities. This study recommends that further research be conducted to identify potential intervening variables that

will determine the discrete level relationships between satisfaction and work engagement. Empirical studies are also recommended to be conducted to test this study's model to determine the mutual reinforcing trust-work engagement relationship.

The current findings have indicated that job satisfaction was perceived by the academics to contribute to their engagement towards work. Since there was a direct relationship between job satisfaction and academics' work engagement, it is suggested that the university's management to consider providing positive working environment, involving the academics in decision making, rewarding and recognizing contribution made by the academics and giving more control and flexibility to the academics in terms of planning and carrying out their work as way to enhance the academics' job satisfaction. In terms of the role of trust, the findings of the present study have demonstrated that trust had some influence in academics work engagement and job satisfaction.

Therefore, to create a culture of trust in the academic setting, the university's management must ensure that they have a good quality of leadership especially among the top university management, encourage more academics to be involved the university's decision making, treat the academics with fairness regardless of position or personal characteristics, learn how to delegate tasks and empower the academics, act and speaks consistently, be approachable and often interact with the academics, and always ask for feedback. Apart from that, the university's management also needs to consider the role of job satisfaction and trust when planning for enhancing academics' work engagement.

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