

Employee Engagement in the Education Industry in Klang Valley, Malaysia

Rammilah Hansaram @ Simranpreet Kaur Hansaram, Lye Yik
Min, Chen Yuet Hiong, Lye Sin Ling and Foo Yong Yang

UNITAR International University, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: rammilah@unitar.my

Abstract

In this study, five variables; team and co-worker relationships, work environment, leadership, training and career development, and organizational culture were examined, to examine the influence on employee engagement in Klang Valley, Malaysia. Using quantitative approach, data was collected using an online survey. The findings revealed that three hypotheses were supported; employee engagement and team and co-worker ($\beta = 0.377$, $t = 5.380$, $p < 0.05$); employee engagement and work environment ($\beta = 0.179$, $t = 2.035$, $p < 0.05$) and employee engagement and training and career development ($\beta = 0.304$, $t = 3.887$, $p < 0.05$). The result also revealed two hypotheses were not supported: employee engagement and leadership ($\beta = 0.008$, $t = 0.107$, $p > 0.05$) and employee engagement and organizational culture ($\beta = 0.038$, $t = 0.492$, $p > 0.05$). Based on the results of the study, it was found that team and co-worker relationships, work environment, and training and career development are significantly related to employee engagement. On the other hand, leadership and organizational culture have no significant relationship to the employee engagement.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Team and Co-Worker Relationship, Work Environment, Leadership, Training and Career Development and Organizational Culture

Introduction

A wide range of studies have been conducted on employee engagement since Kahn (1990) coined the concept of engagement, but there is still much research to be done around employee engagement (Sun and Bunchapattanasakda, 2019), including the education industry, especially since it has gained more prominence in the business eco-system. Employers who consider employee engagement may examine how employees look at the organization they work for, how they feel about it, and how positive they are as far as achieving the organization's goals. In addition, these aspects are related to their commitment, which is a characteristic unswervingly related to the concept of employee engagement (Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017). Today, employee engagement has become a major challenge in the workplace (Hammoud, 2017). This will not end as organizations continue to struggle to engage employees in the future due to the complexities and stringent regulations in many organizations (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Thus, there is a necessity to understand diverse employment relationship to be competitive in the contemporary workplace, which has

caused human resources scholars to focus their attention on the subject over the past decade (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017).

In Malaysia, the education industry is becoming more concerned with employee engagement (Sun and Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). This is because, they are also subject to market pressures like any other business organizations (Karuoya & Senaji, 2017), and they are also confronted to have quality of professional employees and faced obstacles in developing research works for many decades in the past until the present (Rugmai et al., 2016). Although many studies have been carried out in education, specifically, the early childhood segment is still under-represented in investigations of employee engagement. Therefore, this study focusses on private early childhood education center in Malaysia, specifically in Klang Valley to investigate the influencing factors on employee engagement because there is evidence that it contributed to high turnover rates that leads to voluntary resignation. This is line with Erdil et al (2014) who posited that employees are likely to leave their organizations but possess better enthusiasm for work if there is high employee engagement.

Literature Review

Employee Engagement

According to Makera (2018), a highly engaged workforce contributes significantly to an organization's success, where Social Exchange Theory (SET) provides better theoretical explanations for employee engagement (Saks, 2006). As a result, they compare alternatives before making decisions about the relationships in their lives. The theory of social exchange has been greatly applied to the workplace to explain the interaction of employees (O' Brian et.al., 2017). In a recent report published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in 2021, "Employee engagement: definitions, measures, and outcomes", it is stated that social exchange theory concerns the extent to which people perceive the favorable treatment they receive from others as reflecting a concern for their wellbeing. Therefore, such benefactors are considered more trustworthy and likely to provide valuable resources in the future. In this manner, employees who have had satisfying experiences with their organization are more likely to develop a psychological attachment to that of organizations. As a result of a social exchange relationship between employees and their employers also, employees are willing to engage in their work in exchange for the support and return of the organization (Kahn, 1990).

Further, employee engagement is an essential component of businesses since it reflects on the employee's as well as the organizations' productivity. At the same time, it is also crucial to increase the value of an organization because the highly engaged employees have a higher retention rate and are more willing to help the company operate more effectively and efficiently. These are the essential characteristics of a successful business in the twenty-first century (Lapoint & Liprie-Spence, 2017). Kahn (1990) first introduced the concept of employee engagement as the process of harnessing the role and responsibilities of members in the organization; a way of making their work meaningful and enabling them to express themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally during their working day.

With these, employee engagement and turnover can be viewed in parallel terms since the engagement, although not as straightforward, could have an impact on retention as well. Previous research has also shown that there is a positive correlation between low employee

engagement and high turnover intention in both private and public sectors (T.Mukaita et al., 2020). When this happens, for organizations, this will contribute to higher cost. These include the cost of replacing, recruiting, and training new employees. Specifically, it is costly to train and replace employees who already have an established relationship in the company. Additionally, there will be productivity loss during the period of the vacancy for organizations when employees leave the organization. It would be impossible to recoup the investment the company made to develop the predecessor if the replacement would not perform as well as the predecessor (Prashant & Megha, 2013).

Team and Co-worker Relationship and Employee Engagement

According to Sakapas Saengchai, Parinya Siriattakul, and Kittisak Jermisittiparsert (2019), team and co-worker relationship means the relatedness that the people need to have and having worthwhile interpersonal relational communication with their colleagues. Since people today spend more time at work than anywhere else, there is a considerable negative impact of workplace loneliness on employee engagement (Jung et al., 2021). A coworker's relation is like friendship, loyalty, and acceptance among team members such as the level of confidence, trust, and respect that employees have for their leaders. Group and colleagues are alternate engagement stages that focus on the relationship-building aspect of employee engagement.

When there is a lack of high-quality connections between employees, it may threaten or destroy their interdependent relationships (Xu et al., 2020). Team and co-workers are a different phase that emphasizes the interpersonal synchronization element of employee engagement (Makera et al., 2019). This is concluded by Makera (2017) that employee engagement is not influenced by team and co-worker relationships. Consequently, the employees do not need to be in the group to perform their duties effectively. As a result, they may be distracted, and this is harmful to the organization. The results of the present study conflict with past research that indicated that team and co-worker relationships are strongly related to employee engagement. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is in keeping with prior empirical research:

H1: There is a significant relationship between team and co-worker relationships to employee engagement

Work Environment and Employee Engagement

The work environment of today is increasingly oriented towards flexible work approaches, technological advancement, and decentralization. There is a statistically significant correlation between work environment and employee engagement (Judeh, 2021). A positive significant relationship between the physical environment factors were linked to employee engagement and retention, supporting the importance of positive workplace climates. Engaged employees are more productive, employee engagement can provide a competitive advantage. To engage employees in their work, employers are increasingly responsible for providing a good and healthy work environment (Judeh, 2021).

There are different aspects of the workplace that can affect employee engagement in different ways. A supportive work environment encourages management to participate and demonstrate concern for workers' needs and feelings, allows employees to express their concerns, provides positive feedback, and allows them to develop new skills. Psychological

safety is promoted by meaningful and trusting interpersonal relationships in addition to helpful management, according to (Kahn, 1990). A supportive and honest work environment provides employees with a sense of security. It is possible for members of supportive workplaces to experiment and fail without fear of repercussions (Kahn, 1990). Popli and Rizvi (2016) revealed that working environments are important for employee engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis was postulated from the above discussion:

H2: There is a significant relationship between work environment to employee engagement.

Leadership and Employee Engagement

Leadership is characterized by one's unique nature, character, and personality, so their personality separates them from others. Leadership styles are used in an organization to form a pattern of behavior, motivate others, and motivate them to work together toward a common goal (Hendrawan & Pogo, 2021). Employee orientation leadership style is a significant predictor of employee engagement. An organization's leadership style is usually associated with employee engagement, becoming the most important factor in fostering employee engagement (Fadillah et al., 2021). It is crucial that companies have a leadership style that enables them to reach their goals. As such, a leader must understand both the tasks performed and the characteristics of his subordinates to lead effectively (Hendrawan & Pogo, 2021).

For employees to be engaged in their jobs, an organization needs a good leader. Leaders and peers need to support one another, but a good leader creates a positive, healthy, friendly, and supportive work environment. As a result of a good leadership style, employees will be more satisfied and more engaged, resulting in increased performance. For leadership to be effective, employees must feel satisfied with their work, causing a sense of employee performance (Kertiriasih et al., 2018). Based on the above-mentioned studies, this study proposes:

H3: There is a significant relationship between leadership to employee engagement.

Training and Career Development and Employee Engagement

Another critical factor that affects employee engagement is training and career development. It helps employees become more engaged at work if they receive training and career development. Training improves service delivery, accuracy, and proficiency. It is at this stage that workers perform well when they are well trained, have the capability to adapt to the demands of the job, and are excited about improving their skills on the job (Saengchai et al., 2019). Career development has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement (Hendrawan & Pogo, 2021). These are s important factor that should be considered in the process of employee engagement (Siddiqui 2019). Training and development (TD) and employee retention are positively correlated.

In the same way, job security requires training and development, a company that systematically trains and develops its employees can improve the value of its market share (Maryam, 2018). Accordingly, based on the studies mentioned above, this study proposes:

H4: There is a significant relationship between training and career development and employee engagement.

Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement

Organizational culture is specifically determined by the conditions of teamwork, leadership, organizational characteristics, and administrative processes (Rohman et al., 2021). For organizations to achieve organizational goals, human resources are essential. A sustainable vision, mission, strategy, and values are key to supporting the company's future development (Hendrawan & Pogo, 2021). Employee engagement is also fostered by alignment to organizational mission and vision statements, positive peer treatment, and a policy of work-life balance (Shehri et al., 2017). The positive culture inside the organization contributes to better engagement of the employees. A negative organizational climate and dysfunctional employee attitudes can hinder effective organizational change (Parent & Lovelace, 2018).

Effective organizational performance relies heavily on organizational culture (Rohman et al., 2021). A study by Xu et al (2020) provides a meaningful and significant analysis of how key cultural factor impacts ostracism, felt obligation, and job engagement at work. It is also called collective programming of the mind, which differentiates the members of an organization from another. According to Hofstede (1989); Greenberg and Baron (2003); Pratiwi et al (2019); De Romario et al (2019), "beliefs, values, practices, and expectations are attributed to a particular organization" (Hofstede, 1989). This is a pattern or basic assumption that exists within a group when dealing with external adaptations and internal integrations, which have proved successful and are legitimate to be taught to new members as appropriate ways of accepting, thinking, and feeling related to these issues (Sukayana and Putri, 2019). Organizations with strong organizational cultures will be able to provide certainty for their members, as well as enable them to grow along with the organization (Prihantari and Astika, 2019). According to previous research (Fauzi et al., 2016; Kim and Chang, 2019), organizational culture influences and enhances employee performance. Therefore, this study proposes:

H5: There is a significant relationship between organizational cultures to employee engagement.

Methodology

In this study, measurements were used to examine the relationship between variables using a quantitative approach (Salkind et al., 2020). To be more specific, this study examined factors such as team and coworker relations, work environment, leadership, training and career development, and organizational cultures about employee engagement among employees in private early childhood education center. The total population was 250. This population was chosen due to the eligibility of the respondents in terms of their socio-demographic background and the permission from the owner to conduct this research in the company.

From a given population of 250 and based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size required was 152. To ensure an acceptance response acceptance level, three follow-ups were done over 14 days. Initially, a return rate of 40 percent within a time frame of one week. Therefore, due to the low and slow response from the respondents, second and third follow-ups were done via phone calls and WhatsApp messages. Hence, in two weeks, a total

of 152 questionnaire responses were received. This shows a 100% percent return rate from the respondents. Convenience sampling was used to sample the current study population. The source of the data was obtained from the Human Resource Department educational institutions.

The unit of analysis refers to individuals that are non-managerial employees who have participated in the study. The instrument is designed as self-administered that the respondents shall respond to the independent variables and dependent variables. The questionnaire consists of two sections: Section A on demographic settings of the target population and Section B on variables to be studied. Data is collected on respondents' demographic profiles in Section A of the questionnaire. The questionnaire can be used to gather demographic data, consisting of age, gender, marital status, education level, and work experience of the respondents. In Section B of the questionnaire, a total of five independent variables (team and co-worker relationship, work environment, leadership, training and career development, and organizational culture) and a dependent variable (employee engagement) were examined using a five-point Likert scale. The scale is ranging from 1. = strongly disagree 2. = disagree, 3. = neutral, 4. = agree, and 5. = strongly agree, was used in this study to measure all the variables.

Findings

To gather this data, the online platform used is Google Forms. We distributed questionnaires to the targeted employees.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

There are 152 respondents to this survey. Of a total of 170 sets of questionnaires sent out to the targeted respondents, 152 completed questionnaires were received. This represents a response rate of 81 percent. According to American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), (2015) the response rate of 60 percent is considered acceptable. The highest scored ages were 71, 46.7 percent between the ages of 21 – 30 years old, followed by 44, that is 28.9 percent between 31 – 40 years old. Another 29 respondents or 19.1 percent are from 41 – 50 years old. There are 6 respondents or 3.9 percent from the age group between 51 – 60 years old. Lastly, 2 respondents or 1.3 percent come from the age group between 61 years and above.

The respondents who are single were 96, 63.2% which is higher than the married status, which was 56, 36.8%. There are 2 majority groups of the respondents, consisting of 53 or 34.9 percent were secondary certificate and below (equivalent to SPM/UEC) and degree/professional holders. This is followed by 32 people, or 21.1 percent respondents with certificate/diploma holders and Masters/Ph.D. holders 14 people or 9.2 percent. The years of work experience indicated most of the respondents are 68 people or 44.7 percent with less than 5 years working experience. This is followed by 23 people or 15.1 percent who were from 6 to 10 years group. There are 22 or 14.5 percent were from 11 to 15 years. In addition, another 21 people or 13.8 percent were from 16 to 20 years of work experience, and a minority, that is 18 people or 11.8 percent had a working experience of more than 21 years.

Reliability Test for Actual Data Collection

The following Table 1 demonstrates the Cronbach Alpha score for the dependent and independent variables.

Table 1

Dependent Variable	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Employee Engagement (EE)	6	0.82
Independent Variable	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha
Team and Coworker Relationship (TCR)	6	0.87
Work Environment (WE)	6	0.84
Leadership (LS)	6	0.91
Training and Career Development (TCD)	6	0.86
Organizational Culture (OC)	6	0.87

The Cronbach's alpha for the dependent variable of employee engagement was 0.82. Results of the reliability analysis for independent variables of team and coworker relationship were 0.87, the work environment was 0.84, leadership was 0.91, training and career development were 0.86 and lastly, organizational culture was 0.87. Table 1 shows the summary of Cronbach's alpha for all the variables in the study.

Measures of Central Tendency

Table 2 displays the Mean Score for Employee Engagement, team and Coworker Relationship, Work Environment, Leadership, Training and Career Development, Organizational Culture.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
EE	152	2	5	3.73	0.58
TCR	152	2	5	3.80	0.61
WE	152	2	5	3.72	0.57
LS	152	1	5	3.79	0.63
TCD	152	2	5	3.72	0.60
OC	152	3	5	3.85	0.60
Valid N (listwise)	152				

Based on Table 2, it shows the mean and standard deviation of each variable, which allows us to study the responses from the respondents to this study. The mean for dependency average mean of employee engagement (EE) is 3.73 and the standard deviation is 0.58. The highest average mean of the independent variable is the organizational culture (OC) with a mean of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.60. While Team co-worker relationship (TCR) recorded a mean of 3.80 and a standard deviation of 0.61 followed by leadership (LS) with a mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 0.63 and the least amount of mean is the training and career development (TCD) and work environment (WE) with a mean of 3.72. The above table also indicate that all the mean variables recorded are above 3.75. It was found that the standard

deviation for all the variables indicated above 0.70 and this means that all the respondents agree with the statements stated for each variable (Pallant, 2016).

Normality Test

Table 3 shows the result of the Normality Test.

Table 3

	Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Skewness (Pearson)
EE	0.985	152	0.107	-0.062
TCR	0.971	152	0.003	0.114
WE	0.956	152	<0.001	0.507
LS	0.958	152	<0.001	-0.235
TCD	0.981	152	0.038	0.147
OC	0.972	152	0.004	0.160

Shapiro–Wilk test are the most widely used methods to test the normality of the data. Based on the data, the survey showed not normal distribution. Table 3 showed the P value EE 0.107, TCR 0.003, WE < 0.001, LS < 0.001, TCD 0.038 and OC 0.004. From the above results, EE is normally distributed but other variables are not normally distributed. To confirm whether other variables distribution is normally distributed, the skewness (Pearson) test was performed. The result demonstrates the skewness fall between -1 to 1. Therefore, it is confirmed that the variables are normally distributed.

Correlation Analysis

The following Table 4 indicates the correlations results.

Table 4

Correlations		EE	TCR	WE	LS	TCD	OC
Pearson Correlation	EE	1.000					
	TCR	0.683**	1.000				
	WE	0.653**	0.620**	1.000			
	LS	0.506**	0.462**	0.687**	1.000		
	TCD	0.668**	0.561**	0.694**	0.580**	1.000	
	OC	0.549**	0.551**	0.613**	0.647**	0.619**	1.000

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

Based on the above result, there is a significant strong positive relationship between team and coworker relationship and employee engagement where $r = 0.683$, $p < 0.01$; work environment and employee engagement where $r = 0.653$, $p < 0.01$; and training and career development and employee engagement where $r = 0.688$, $p < 0.01$. As for leadership and

employee engagement, there is a moderate positive relationship where $r = 0.506$, $p < 0.01$ and organizational culture and employee engagement where $r = 0.549$, $p < 0.01$.

Regression Analysis

Table 5, 6 and 7 discuss the regression analysis.

Table 5

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.776 ^a	0.603	0.589	0.373

a. Predictors: (Constant), OC, TCR, LS, TCD, WE

Table 6

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.874	5	6.175	44.328	<.001 ^b
	Residual	20.338	146	0.139		
	Total	51.212	151			

a. Dependent Variable: EE
b. Predictors: (Constant), OC, TCR, LS, TCD, WE

Table 7

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.418	0.233		1.796	0.075
	TCR	0.358	0.066	0.377	5.380	<0.001
	WE	0.183	0.090	0.179	2.035	0.044
	LS	0.008	0.072	0.008	0.107	0.915
	TCD	0.296	0.076	0.304	3.887	<0.001
	OC	0.037	0.074	0.038	0.492	0.623

a. Dependent Variable: EE

R-squared is defined as the percentage of the response variable variation that is explained by the predictors in the model collectively. So, an R-squared of 0.603 (60.3%) of the variability of the dependent variable (EE) is explained by the 5 independent variables (TCR, WE, LS, TCD and OC) shows that R² is 60.3% of the total variance in employee engagement. Therefore, following Falk and Miller (1992) criteria, recommended that R² values should be equal to or greater than 0.10 for the variance explained of a particular endogenous construct to be deemed adequate. The ANOVA shows the overall significance of the model, which has F (44.328) with a p-value estimated < 0.001. This can be concluded that the model exists.

Conclusion, Contributions and Limitations

This study is conducted mainly to investigate the five variables: team and co-worker relationships, work environment, leadership, training and career development, and organizational culture influence on employee engagement in Klang Valley, Malaysia. The result of the study is summarized in the following table.

Table 8

Hypotheses of Study	Hypotheses result
H1: There is a significant relationship between team and coworker relationship to employee engagement.	Supported ($\beta = 0.377$, $t = 5.380$, $p < 0.05$)
H2: There is a significant relationship between the work environment to employee engagement.	Supported ($\beta = 0.179$, $t = 2.035$, $p < 0.05$)
H3: There is a significant relationship between leadership to employee engagement.	Not supported ($\beta = 0.008$, $t = 0.107$, $p > 0.05$)
H4: There is a significant relationship between training and career development to employee engagement.	Supported ($\beta = 0.304$, $t = 3.887$, $p < 0.05$)
H5: There is a significant relationship between organizational cultures to employee engagement.	Not supported ($\beta = 0.038$, $t = 0.492$, $p > 0.05$)

The results are in line with Saengchai and others (2019); Kuipers and Giurge (2017) who integrated employee engagement that lead toward strategic human resource management that is essential for achieving organizational goals. This further supported by other researchers who state that without effective employee engagement, an organization cannot succeed (Saengchai et al., 2019). Consequently, companies should always take note of the fact that to increase employee engagement, it is crucial that it fosters good working relationships among co-workers and between departments; improves the work environment; and provides training and career development opportunities for the employees to achieve the institution's goals.

The findings of this study contribute to practical knowledge and thus are essential for the founder, chief executives, managers, and other stakeholders to focus its effort on the significant influencing factors, which will improve the performance and efficiency of employees. One of the strategies is to investigate Human Resource practices that can improve employee engagement (Chughtai, 2013). Besides, the result of this study will help stakeholders in the formulation of policy and in making suitable decisions regarding employee engagement management practices and retention. This is in line with Kamau et.al (2020) who supports the assertion that employee engagement has a role to play in the retention of employees in organizations.

The academic implications of this study can be divided into two aspects, namely factors influencing employee engagement in the context of the private institution for children's education and the research design used in this study. Many previous studies have not examined employee engagement in the context of the private institution for children's education. This study fills in this research gap. Future research will be guided by the framework examining the factors that influence employee engagement. The model developed in this study will aim to define the significance of the factors that influence employee engagement. In this study, five factors as well as five hypotheses have been developed. Future researchers can use this model to investigate other aspects of employee engagement among the employees of the private institution for children's education, and it complements existing literature. In addition, policymakers and private organizations can make use of the study to specifically understand how team and coworker relationships, work environment, training, and career development impact management system adoption.

When conducting this study, a few limitations have been identified. Firstly, in accordance with previous research, a cross-sectional design was employed in this study. Using this method of data collection, the type of information deemed necessary and sufficient has been determined. Based on a cross-sectional approach, which has been proven successful in some previous studies, this result is not adversely impacted by this method. However, the longitudinal approach may have been able to capture efficient behavior at different points in time. Second, the current study relied on the survey method due to the multifaceted nature of the employee engagement construct. It may nonetheless be helpful in this area to conduct personal interviews with future researchers to complement the information obtained through the survey method. Future studies also can consider including more private institutions for children's education study, so that the result can contribute reference literature to society. In addition, future should be conducted through face-to-face interviews to validate responses and enhance the quality of the data collected. Even though this method may prolong the study, it would provide more accurate results. Furthermore, the accuracy of the collected data will be improved, and the conclusion will be strengthened.

Contribution

Rammilah Hansaram carries out the write-up of the research. Foo Yong Yang is responsible for the formation of the research framework. Lye Yik Ming and Chin Yuet Hiong conducted data collection and editing. Lye Sin Ling carries out data analysis.

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