

Teachers Work Engagement During Covid-19

Munirah Kamaruzaman, Shahlan Surat, Faridah Mydin Kutty
Faculty of Education National University of Malaysia

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Abstract

Workplace well-being and job performance are heavily influenced by teachers' work engagement. Scientific theories on work engagement have recently gained popularity around the world. Research on the subject has grown in popularity, particularly during COVID-19 pandemic. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by looking into the impact of work engagement level among teachers from Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. It is considered that the change in the teaching environment and the challenges it brought influenced the feeling of involvement that belonged to a certain set for professional activities, such as physically meeting pupils in a classroom. Data was acquired using an online questionnaire filled out by schoolteachers and then analysed using quantitative research methodologies in order to gain a deeper knowledge of the previously listed concerns. The findings of this study could be useful to any educational stakeholder, as the issues posed by the Covid-19 pandemic are still being addressed, and a cohesive human resources plan should be devised. As a result, the purpose of this study is to analyse the implications of engaged and disengaged teachers in these changing times, as well as to make recommendations for human resource management.

Keywords: Teachers Work Engagement, Covid-19, Online Learning, Remote Learning

Introduction

Despite the massive global changes wrought by COVID-19 in the lives of students, teachers, and parents, society has had the opportunity to put its ability to adapt to situations of sudden stress in which people are immersed in new personal, social, educational, and professional environments and tasks to the test. Because this health issue is likely to have a long-term impact on education, it may be a chance to rethink the curriculum, examine teaching-learning processes, and increase students' capabilities while reinforcing their learning abilities and maintaining their enthusiasm. Furthermore, in order for the programme and learning to continue, the post-crisis era must be anticipated (Daniel, 2020; UNESCO, 2020e). When schools in Asia were forced to close due to the pandemic, many students turned to online and remote learning as a way to avoid forced to learn. To reduce COVID-19 transmission in schools, several countries have implemented measures such as lockdown (total school closure), adoption of relevant technologies (Lee, 2021) promotion of personal hygiene, social distancing, masking, new teaching protocols, curricula adjustment, and distance learning as

precautionary measures (Donley, 2021). Despite this, various failures have been recorded that have hampered the effective adoption of new teaching and learning initiatives (Ghannam, 2021). During COVID-19, teachers' preparedness, competency, and perceived or real organisational support impeded education reform initiatives. Many instructors still favour face-to-face or, at the very least, hybrid techniques as a result of these setbacks (Oubibi et al., 2022) In terms of real organisational assistance, a study conducted jointly by UNESCO, the World Bank, and UNICEF indicated that just half of the nations examined had provided extra distance education teacher training.

Only around a third had provided instructors psychosocial assistance to help them deal with the circumstance. According to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report, only 81 percent of primary school teachers and 86 percent of secondary school teachers, respectively, have the minimum needed credentials, with significant regional variation (Ahrari et al., 2021). During this moment of the epidemic, the issue of teacher credentials provides still another obstacle to the use of transformative teaching practises. Physical, social, and psychological changes in the workplace, according to the research, have a significant impact on workers' work engagement and work values, which in turn predict job satisfaction (Papavasileiou, 2017). With all of the changes in education brought about by the pandemic, particularly those linked to teaching processes, it is critical to reevaluate the degree of teachers' professional involvement and the values they have placed in their work throughout the epidemic. Furthermore, investigating the impact of these two dimensions on teacher work satisfaction will fill a gap during this epidemic era.

Malaysia was no different, with three months of strict controls in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Classes have gradually resumed in recent weeks. Malaysia saw a new normal reopening of schools on July 22nd, with health standards and social separation laws in place. When the school was closed, the students and teachers were on holiday. What will happen next was unknown to the students. Teachers involved pupils in a variety of ways when there was no structure in place. Although some students have received instruction from a teacher, another teacher may merely deliver reading assignments and homework via a different channel. Despite the lack of school organisation and direction at first, teaching was to continue regardless of the pandemic. Educators are challenged to address the problem of well-being and self-care is limited (Horesh & Brown, 2020) and the techniques used Teacher educators to meet the mental health needs of teachers during this period of "emergent distance education" (Hodges et al., 2020) and "learning in the COVID-19 era" (Darling-Hammond, 2020). It is not really clear yet. The need for such research arises from the fact that studies on work engagement focusing solely on teachers, while increasing in quantity in recent years, are still in their infancy. As a result, a more focused examination into teachers' work engagement during the covid-19 pandemic could provide a new viewpoint on this idea. In primary schools, online learning may have a greater influence. It has been widely observed that numerous classroom instructors (i.e., non-specialist teachers who teach a variety of courses) have difficulty teaching in traditional classrooms. In normal circumstances, inappropriate training, negative attitudes, a lack of time, insufficient facilities and equipment, and low levels of teacher self efficacy, have all been identified as major barriers to teaching, resulting in poor quality programmes in primary schools (Gobbi et al., 2021). Furthermore, among primary school classroom instructors, connections were discovered between recollections of poor-quality school experiences and low levels of self-efficacy in teaching

.Self-efficacy is a set of beliefs regarding people's opinions of their ability to plan and carry out a given conduct (Bandura, 1986). Indeed, in the context of teaching, examining teachers' perceived competence in implementing a new curriculum, adapting learning situations and adjusting objectives to address diversity in the classroom (Hutzler & Barak, 2017) or managing students, time, space, and institution to teach highly active classes [20] Teachers' self-efficacy might be seen as a protective factor in general since it has been linked to a stronger readiness to adjust instructional approaches, especially in difficult conditions. Previous research has shown that instructors' self-efficacy has an adaptive effect on their behaviour (Gobbi et al., 2021).

Literature Review

For the past few years, work engagement has become a rising concern for human resources professionals and others. The definition suggested by Schaufeli et al (2002) is, however, the starting point for most studies on this issue. The engagement is defined as a pleasant, rewarding, work-related state of mind marked by vigour, dedication, and immersion. The writers that devised this way to define work engagement understand the three major components of this definition, energy, devotion, and absorption, as follows. The mental resilience demonstrated in productive activities, as well as high levels of energy, are described as the vigour dimension. The dedication component, the second important notion, is defined as a deep commitment to one's work that is accompanied by feelings of significance, challenge, pride, enthusiasm, and inspiration. Last but not least, the absorption dimension denotes when an employer is entirely focused and enthusiastic about its job, as well as having difficulty detaching from its responsibilities. Work engagement is also defined as an employee's amount of physical and mental energy directed into work, as well as their readiness to invest their efforts, persistence, participation, feeling of importance, passion, and pride in their workplace (Misu, 2022); Kahn (1990), who claimed that engaged people are more productive at work because they are physically, emotionally, and intellectually immersed in the job (Frederick & VanderWeele, 2020) was the first to introduce the notion. Employees who are more engaged in their job feel psychological safety (trust and security at work), a sense of significance, well-being, and happiness, according to the researchers (Dawson et al., 2017)

Recently, there has been a steady increase in interest in studying teachers' work engagement, as suggested by a 2018 study (Perera et al., 2018), motivated by a desire to gather evidence that shows a link between teachers' behaviour, beliefs, and emotional dimension, and the results obtained by their students. A teacher's job has a number of distinct characteristics that distinguish it from other professions. Teaching is a difficult profession emotionally, physically, and cognitively, according to recent studies (Van Wingerden et al., 2019). Furthermore, prior to the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, recent research were emphasising the necessity for western cultures to have instructors competent of educating children in a digitalized and globalised environment (Van Wingerden et al., 2019). In the same way, research into this sector, specifically evaluating teacher work engagement, is still limited, despite the necessity for such data. There is still a significant need to map instructors' motivating and engagement patterns (Klassen et al., 2013; Yerdelen et al., 2018). Teachers' involvement is usually assessed in the context of being a mediator for other areas of a teacher's life, such as satisfaction or well-being (Colomeischi, 2017)

Research Objective

- 1- To identify the level of teacher work engagement.
- 2- To measure differences in teacher work engagement based on gender.

Methods

The method employed in this study was the quantitative design using cross sectional survey. The sampling technique that was used in this research was random sampling. The sample consisted of 361 teachers (male =159, female=202) from primary public school around Kuala Lumpur. The questionnaire was classified into different parts. The first part of the questionnaire was about the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents namely gender, age, religion and race. Then, the second part focused on the teachers work engagement using Teachers Work Engagement Scale. This scale was developed by Klassen et al (2013) to measure dimensions of teachers work engagement namely cognitive – physical engagement, social social engagement with colleagues and students and emotional engagement. This scale had been used in several researches on teachers engagement and had been found to have high reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha was 0.86 for cognitive – physical engagement, 0.82 for emotion emotional engagement and 0.91 for social social engagement with colleagues and students.

Results

Out of 361 respondents who took part in this research, 159 respondents were male and 202 respondents were female, which demonstrate 44% and 55.9% respectively. The results of descriptive analysis show that all elements of the teachers work engagement in Kuala Lumpur are at a high level which is cognitive – physical engagement ($m=3.94$, $SD=0.787$), emotional engagement ($m= 3.91$, $SD=0.734$), and social social engagement with colleagues and students ($m=3.99$, $SD=0.794$). In term of gender and work engagement, an independent sample t-test is conducted to compare the difrencess of teachers work engagement between male and female. The result tabulated indicates that there was no significance difference in score for male and female ($t = 0.996$, $p>0.05$). The mean value between gender had (mean = 3.678; SD 0.5061) for male and (mean= 3.678; $SD= 0.4232$) for female. It implies that there was no differences toward work engagement for those male and female.

Discussion

The first objective of the current research was to identify the level of teacher work engagement. In this regard, descriptive statistics were used to study the level of work engagement among teachers. There are three elements studied consisting of cognitive, emotional and social. The researcher has collected data through a questionnaire to measure the variables studied. high level of work involvement is an important element to increase motivation and satisfaction in carrying out responsibilities. In addition, the findings show that teachers still feel fun and enthusiastic in conducting online classes due to the use of sophisticated teaching aids. Han et al (2016) say that teachers who are always enthusiastic in carrying out tasks can reduce the risk of stress in the workplace and also reduce the tendency to change jobs. Furthermore, Fitriasari (2020) describes the enthusiasm derived from high levels of energy and resilience in performing tasks causes a teacher to have a strong retaining wall if hit by a problem.

Second, the research endeavored to test differences in teacher work engagement based on gender. Meanwhile, the results of t test on teacher engagement showed the same level of involvement. This shows that male and female teachers also have cognitive levels, social and emotions that are not different. This study is in line with studies (Tshilongamulenzhe & Takawira, 2015; Vorina et al., 2017) that state gender does not play a role on job engagement. In contrast, enthusiasm, dedication and absorption are influenced by the environment and relationships within the organization.

This study is seen as important in contributing to the value of teacher professionalism. A teacher who is able to carry out tasks happily in the workplace will have a positive impact on his or her level of performance. Teacher engagement is important in making the classroom active, happy and impactful. This study also contributes to a broad understanding of the literature related to the factors of teacher work involvement in this critical era. Knowledge of each of these elements needs to be identified and understood by all parties involved with the world of education.

Corresponding Author

Shahlan Bin Surat

Faculty of Education National University of Malaysia

Email: drshahlan@ukm.edu.my

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