Full Length Research

Exploring employee work engagement in academia: A qualitative study

Ibrahim Al-Jubari

International Islamic University Malaysia. Email: aljubari@gmail.com

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Academic institutions need to engage academic staff members in order to make full utilization of knowledge they have and transmit it to younger generations to build better societies. Therefore, the main purpose of this study is to explore what really makes academic members engaged. Semi-structured interviews with six informants from academia were conducted to explore this issue. This study employs convenience sampling technique. The nature of the job and subjects taught, the feeling of responsibility and trust, the quality of relationship between lecturers and their immediate bosses were the major contributors to their engagement. However, organizational justice found to have little impact on their engagement.

Key words: Academia, employee, lecturers, informant

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a newly-considered construct that is attracting a lot of attention, not only among researchers but also among management practitioners as well. It has become a widely used and popular term (Robinson et al., 2004). Many organizations count on their workforce and try to engage them in order to remain viable and competitive. In fact, many studies have claimed that employee engagement predicts employees' outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance (Bates, 2004).

It is obviously known that organizations, regardless of size, scope and location, are formed of people and those people are the ones who take those organizations to the path of success or make them sink in a world of losses. No matter how big and financially strong the organization is, it may get badly affected if the drivers of success (employees) are not involved and engaged in their workplace. As such, most organizations are trying to make their employees happy to boost their productivity and performance.

In order to get the employees engaged, organizations need to have good relationship with the employees, fair allocation of organizational resources, make every channel of communication as effective as possible, make the workplace people-friendly, provide support to employees and care much about their well-being. All these elements will surely make a full utilization of the employees.

Objective of the study

Academic institutions are the factories of producing human minds and researches that contribute to building good societies. When the lecturers are engaged in their work, then it is more likely they will offer the best of their knowledge to younger generation who will participate in the process of the development of their societies in all fields. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the factors that make lecturers more engaged in their work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptualization of employee engagement can be traced back to Kahn’s study (1990) where he defined personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles and, in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically,
cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. On the other hand, personal disengagement is defined by Kahn (1990) as “the uncoupling of selves from work roles and, in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances”. When workers are engaged, they become physically involved in their tasks, cognitively alert, and emphatically connected to others (Kahn, 1990). They are aware of business context, and work with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. However, disengaged employees become physically uninvolved in tasks, cognitively unvigilant, and emotionally disconnected from others.

Another dimension of employee engagement can be drawn from the burnout literature where burnout research has shifted its focus to the positive side, namely job engagement. This development reflects a new trend toward a positive psychology that emphasizes human strengths and optimal functioning rather than malfunctioning and weaknesses (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It has been argued that engagement is the opposite pole of burnout. Engagement, though, is characterized by energy, involvement, and a sense of efficacy which Maslach and Leiter (1997) considered them as the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions namely, exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy, respectively. As engagement was measured by the burnout instruments where, according to Maslach and Leiter (1997) approach, low scores on exhaustion and cynicism, and high scores on efficacy are considered as indicators of engagement. Schaufeli et al. (2002), however, reported that engagement should be measured independently with a different instrument.

Therefore, Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. Unlike vigor and dedication that make a direct contrast with the first two burnout components (exhaustion and cynicism), absorption is found not to be the direct opposite of the last burnout dimension of reduced efficacy rather it was found to be another constituent element of engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Importance of Employee Engagement

Recently, increased research attention has been paid to employee engagement (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006) and that it has become a widely used and popular term (Robinson et al., 2004). Many organizations count on their workforce and try to engage them in order to remain viable and competitive. In fact, many studies have claimed that employee engagement predicts employees’ outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter et al., 2002; Richman, 2006).

Since employees are the most valuable assets to organizations in today’s marketplace, leaders have to adapt certain strategies in order to not only maintain the current position but also to move their organizations forward and this cannot be achieved unless and otherwise the most valuable assets are being engaged and their capabilities and competencies are completely utilized. Engaged employees are more likely not only to meet but also exceed the expectations of all people they come in contact with because they have every reason for doing so. The job characteristics that they have, leadership style they are being supported by, and the organizational culture and values they are enlightened which enable them to be more loyal, well committed, extremely productive, high performers, and try to engage customers on their part.

As it is important for businesses, it has been reported that employee engagement is in a decline and there is a deepening disengagement among employees worldwide today (Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006). It has even been argued that the majority of workers today, roughly half of all Americans in the workforce, are not fully engaged or are disengaged, costing US businesses $300 billion a year in lost productivity (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004). In United Kingdom, estimates of the cost of disengaged workers on the British economy range between £37.2 billion and £38.9 billion (Flade, 2003). According to him, only 19% of the total British workforce are engaged while 61% and 20% are not engaged and actively disengaged respectively.

Antecedences of Employee Engagement

What makes engaged employees or what are the conditions to get such positive construct in organizations? The answer to this question can be found in previous studies where these conditions or antecedents have been identified. In his study on the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work, Kahn (1990) found that there were three psychological conditions associated with engagement or disengagement at work: meaningfulness, safety and availability.

To examine Khan Model, May et al. (2004) conducted
an empirical study and found that meaningfulness, safety
and availability were significantly related to engagement.
Meaningfulness refers to the "feeling that one is receiving
a return on investments of one’s self in a currency of
physical, cognitive or emotional energy" (Kahn, 1990). It
is measured by how much employees find their job has
purpose, significance, and importance and how much
they feel they are valued and appreciated in the
organization. Safety is defined as “feeling able to show
and employ one’s self without fear of negative
consequences to self-image, status or career” (Kahn,
1990). Availability consists of one’s “sense of having the
physical, emotional or psychological resources to bring
the self into his/her work role” (Kahn, 1990). In the same
study, it was also found that job enrichment and role fit
were positive predictors of meaningfulness; rewarding co-
worker and supportive supervisor relations were positive
predictors of safety while adherence to co-worker norms
and self-consciousness were negative predictors; and
resources available was a positive predictor of
psychological availability while participation in outside
activities was a negative predictor.

Another model of engagement comes from the burnout
literature which describes job engagement as the positive
antithesis of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). In their
structural model, Maslach argued that the presence of
specific demands (i.e. work overload and personal
conflicts) and the absence of specific resource (i.e.
control coping, social support, autonomy, and decision
involvement) predicts burnout, which in its turn is
expected to lead to various negative outcomes such as
physical illness, turnover, absenteeism, and diminished
organizational commitment.

Job demands are defined as “physical, social, or
organizational aspects of the job that require sustained
physical and/or mental efforts” (Demerouti et al., 2001). In
situations that require high effort to sustain an
expected performance level, those demands may
become stressors and, therefore, associated with
negative outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and
exhaustion. On the other hand, resources influence job
engagement through the motivational process (Schaufeli
and Bakker, 2004). Resources refer to “physical, social,
or organizational aspects of the job that may: (1) be
functional in achieving work goals; (2) reduce job
demands and the associated physiological and
psychological costs; and (3) stimulate personal growth
and development” (Demerouti et al., 2001).

In their recent study, Bakker and Demerouti (2007)
examined the Job Demands–Resources model (JD–R)
and hypothesized that job demands often lead to
emotional exhaustion and health problems, whereas job
resources facilitate high work engagement, as well as
buffering the effects of work demands on emotional
experience (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). As identified
from previous studied, job demands include workload,
time pressure, unfavorable physical environment, and
difficult interactions with customers. Job resources,
however, may include performance feedback, rewards,
job control, and social support of colleagues and
supervisors.

The last model of the antecedents and consequences
of job and organization engagement was recently
developed by Saks (2006). The results indicated that
there is a meaningful difference between job and
organizational engagement. It was found that perceived
organizational support predicts both engagements while
job characteristics only predicted job engagement.
Furthermore, procedural justice predicted organizational
(SET) as the basis of his theoretical rationale, that is,
employees will choose to engage themselves to varying
degrees and in response to the resources they receive
from their organization. Engaged employees are more
likely to have a high-quality relationship with their
employer leading them to also have more positive
attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

LMX and Employee Engagement

High quality of relationship between supervisors and their
subordinates seems to have a great impact on employee
engagement since higher quality of LMX leads to higher
level of satisfaction, job commitment and reduced
intentions to leave the job. Hassan (2005). It is also
argued that employee who receive higher economic and
socio-emotional exchange resources are more likely to
try to bring themselves deeply in their jobs and to be
more engaged as a repayment to the organization
resource. According to Saks (2006), employees who
perceive higher organizational support are more likely to
reciprocate with greater levels of engagement in their job
and in the organization. Engaged employees are also
more likely to have a high-quality relationship with their
employer leading them to also have more positive
attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is defined as the people’s
perception of fairness and justice in the organizations
(Adams, 1965). In work place, people tend to compare
themselves with their counterparts within the same
organization or different organizations that perform the
same task, or they tend to compare their efforts (inputs or
what they give) in achieving a job with the output( what
they get as a result of achieving that task) such as pay,
recognition, promotion and alike. Organizational justice
has three components as most of the researches
mention. They are: Distributive justice, Procedural justice,
and Interactional justice. In the following part, those components will be highlighted.

**Procedural justice**

Procedural justice deals with the fairness of the procedures and policies taken place to determine the outcome (distributive justice) that employees receive in return. In other words, it is how salaries are determined and how promotion policies are being dealt with.

To be perceived as fair and just, Leventhal et al. (1980), proposed six criteria of procedural justice. They are the consistency rule, the bias-suppression rule, the accuracy rule, the correct ability rule, the representativeness rule, and the ethicality rule. These criteria are highlighted below:

Firstly, the consistency rule, which means that allocation procedure should be consistent with all members of the organization and should last for long time. Secondly, the bias-suppression rule, during the allocation process, the decisions of those who are involved in the decision making process should be biased-free and should abandon their personal interests. Thirdly, the accuracy rule, suggesting that during the process, accurate information should be collected and used in making decisions. Fourthly, the correct ability rule, which is concerned about the process, should have some mechanism to correct inaccurate decisions. Fifthly, the representativeness rule, stating that the needs, values, and opinions of all parties involved should be represented in the process. Lastly, the ethicality rule suggests that the allocation process must be compatible with fundamental moral and ethical standards of the perceiver.

According to Tyler and Lind (1992), procedural fairness might be used as the basis by which employees establish longer relationships with their employers, enhancing their loyalty toward the organization. Other several studies have been conducted to support the idea that perception of procedural justice is positively correlated with organizational commitment (Kee et al., 2004) and negatively correlated with withdrawal intentions (Ansari et al., 2000). It is also reported that the procedural justice has an immediate effect on peoples' behavior and predict their outcomes.

**Distributive Justice**

Distributive justice is based on the idea of employees' perception of how an organization distributes and allocates resources (Adam, 1965). According to him, distributive justice is contributed to equity theory and they are interchangeably used where employees compare the ratio of what they get (the outcomes of the job) to the ratio of what they give (input and contribution). If it is found out that outcomes are considered to be less than others doing the same job and have the same contribution, in this case the inequity exists. According to Greenberg and Cohen (1982), there are three principles that influence the allocation and distribution of the organization resources namely, equity, equality and need.

**Equity:** In which a person receives benefits according to what he or she contributes to the organization which means matching outcome to inputs. For instance, a person who works full time deserves more than the one who works part time.

**Equality:** It is based on the idea that all members must get equal opportunities and benefits regardless of their contribution or any other differences such as offering employees medical services which should cover all employees and not only those who perform well in their jobs.

**Need:** This is last aspect that influences the resources allocation decision making by which people with pressing needs are more eligible to get resources to prevent them from suffering.

Many studies have been conducted to examine the influence of distributive justice on employees’ behavior such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Distributive justice influences satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions, Hassan, (2005). It is also reported that distributive justice is significantly associated with job and pay satisfaction. Furthermore, Stecher and Rosse (2005) recently showed significant negative relationships between distributive justice and negative emotion, intent to leave and intent to reduce efforts.

**Interactional Justice**

Interactional justice is referred to the way that organizations treat its people and how they look towards them. According to Colquitt et al. (2001), interactional justice refers to the quality of treatment experienced by individuals in their interactions with supervisors. It is considered to have two elements namely, interpersonal justice and the informational justice. The former is about are treating employees with integrity and in a respectful and truthfulness manner. The latter is concerned with all the necessary information related and needed by employees.

**METHODS**

Six informant interviews were conducted with academic members, 4 male and 2 females. Three of them were full
Table 1. Employee work engagement themes in academia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Employee work engagement</th>
<th>Representative comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Nature of the job: teaching is very noble profession</td>
<td>“Teaching is actually my passion”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I enjoy teaching”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Responsibility and meaningfulness: Feeling of Amanah</td>
<td>“I’m carrying a responsibility”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I feel responsible”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>Quality of relationship: relationship with supervisors and students</td>
<td>“I have confidence in my supervisor”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“respect for me as a person, dignity”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“good relationship with the boss”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>Perception of organizational justice: distributive &amp; procedural</td>
<td>“What I’m earning is far below, far, far below, from what my counterparts are earning outside”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5</td>
<td>Performance &amp; productivity: enhanced when engaged</td>
<td>“I feel so much committed to the students and to the course”</td>
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<td>“it really affects my performance”</td>
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**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Five themes have been identified from the data concerning the employee work engagement. A summary of those themes are shown in the Table 1, and subsequently are discussed.

**Employee work engagement themes**

**Theme 1: Nature of the job**

With reference to the first theme; from the first interview question, most of the informants mentioned that they are fond of teaching. This has been viewed by the fifth informant as:

“Basically, I think the most important thing is that I’m interested in the job. Teaching is actually my passion.” (Informant 5).

To add to their enjoyment of teaching, they stated that the subjects taught also made them engaged and immersed in their teaching; as they claimed:

“I think firstly because I enjoy teaching and then another factor is the subject I’m teaching. It is communication. It is quite dear to me. I like teaching it. Another thing is that giving the knowledge students have to know” (Informant 6)

The view of the sixth informants is supported by the second informant by stating:

“I like teaching. Second, I like the subject.” (Informant 2)

Based on this, it can be argued that the nature of the job...
itself in the academia is a major factor of engaging lectures in their work. Furthermore, not only the liking of the job, but also the liking of the subject taught by them has an effect on their engagement. Referring back to the informants’ statements regarding the most influential factors that affect their engagement, it can be noted that whenever a lecturer like teaching and take it as joyful job to do, the more likely he or she will be engaged.

Theme 2: Responsibility and meaningfulness

In this theme, it is observed that most of the informants have noted that they feel responsible towards people and the community. This responsibility makes them more involved and engaged. They tend to do extra role to fulfill this great responsibility on their shoulders. This responsibility is to contribute to the knowledge and research that will be reflected on the society as a whole. When lecturers feel responsible towards their Ummah (society), they will be engrossed and immersed to satisfy this responsibility. Some representative statements are presented:

“As a Muslim I feel like I have a responsibility towards Allah and towards my people and toward the nation and the ummah and toward everybody around me. Although there might be some challenges that is not my goal, my goal is to attain the Redha Allah (blessing from Allah)”. When you do your job, it should be to the best of quality, the best of all quality, why? Because you are paid and in the Day of Judgment you will asked for whatever you are paid, how you got the money, whatever you do. So, based on these, I feel like whatever I’m doing, I have to really engage myself, I have to deeply immerse to see the meaning, to find meaning in that work, find meaning. (Informant 1)

From this statement, it can be observed that the feeling of the responsibility is a factor of engagement. One of the reasons is because the goal is far beyond the materialistic aspects, which is to attain the blessing from Allah (Redha Allah). This goal can be achieved through immersing and engaging in workplace as to find meaningfulness of the job performed.

Another informant also has stressed on the Amanah (trust) and responsibility as one of the factors. He stated that:

“When I’m teaching I feel I’m carrying a responsibility and Amana and trust. So, because of that, I have to fulfill my responsibility. And by that I have to do the best and the fullest that I can.” (Informant 6).

This feeling of carrying responsibility and doing the job the best and fullest of quality is stressed in our Islamic values. Prophet (PBUH) urged us to do the best and fullest of quality when he said: “Verily Allah likes if you do a job, you do your best” (Reported by Abu Ya’ la al - Musili).

Another informant also stated:

“I like teaching because it is a very noble profession and knowledge is for sharing. When you share the knowledge, ok, you feel the pride that is why I chose this line of job.” (Informant 5).

This informant values the knowledge and sharing it. This is more related to Islamic teaching. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah that: “When a man dies, his acts come to an end but three; recurring charity, sadaqahjariah, or knowledge by which people benefit, or pious offspring who pray for him”.

The fourth informant also shared the same views with the rest of the informants. He further elaborated that:

“This is my responsibility. I will be asked. If my boss doesn’t ask me, Allah will ask me. So, I feel so much engaged in the work. And I feel so much committed to the students and to the course. So, this is it, really.” (Informant 4).

This sense of fear of Allah and self control is also stressed in Quran, Surah Al-Tawbah, verse 105, “And say: Work (righteousness): Soon will Allah observe your work, and His Messenger, and the Believers.”

The third informant stressed that the meaning of engagement related to the objectives of teaching. He claimed that in engaging himself in his work, besides teaching, he also is involved in conducting research.

“As a lecturer, you are an academician. When you are lecturing you have two purposes: 1 to lecture, and, 2 to engage in research, Academic research. So, when you are engaging in lecturing, you are contributing knowledge, and to younger generations”. (Third informant).

He further explained about his engagement towards doing research as part of his job as a lecturer as:

“Then, when you contribute to research, then you are changing the society generally. So, being like that, this gives a kind of motivation and inspiration for academic members to be able to achieve those goals.” (Third informant)

From the aforementioned statements, there is strong indication that fulfilling the responsibility, finding meaning, the Amanah and trust, the contribution to knowledge and to produce younger generations and etc. are the most
influential aspect of employee work engagement. So, when the role is meaningful and has significance, lecturers tend to get immersed in their roles to see the meaning and satisfy the responsibility. However, all of the informants have stressed on their responsibilities in relations to Islamic moral and values. Those informants, as Muslims, advocate that no matter what, Muslims must fulfill their responsibilities and do their jobs in their best and fullest of quality regardless of any kind of reward they may receive from their jobs. Doing work in the best quality makes people internally-satisfied and makes them also feel the rewards from Allah, The Most Generous.

This is in line with previous study conducted by Kahn (1990). He found that there were three psychological conditions associated with engagement or disengagement at work: meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness refers to the “feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one’s self in a currency of physical, cognitive or emotional energy” (Kahn, 1990). It is measured by how much employees find their job has purpose, significance, and importance and how much they feel they are valued and appreciated in the organization. So, lecturers feel the importance of their role and the meaningfulness which is a predictor of employee engagement.

Another condition suggested by Kahn (1990) is availability which consists of one’s “sense of having the physical, emotional or psychological resources to bring the self into his/her work role”. In the same study, it was also found that job enrichment and role fit were positive predictors of meaningfulness. The finding of this study supports Kahn (1990). It was highlighted by the informants when they mentioned about doing extra role and trying to perform discretionary efforts.

In summary, role fit and liking is antecedent of meaningfulness and meaningfulness is a predictor of engagement.

**Theme 3: Quality of relationship**

Relationships in workplace are one of the most influential factors that affect the organizational process. High quality of relationship with managers, co-workers, customers are major in ingredients of successful business. In academia, it is also an important factor that makes lecturers get engaged in their work. This can be seen in the following informants’ statements regarding the impact of the relationship with their supervisors.

“Basically, when you have good relationship with your boss, positive rapport with him, so there is no doubt it will increase your productivity. It will enhance your work, because it has direct impact on what you do. Sometimes he directs you to do something and sometimes he provides you with necessary facilities to do things. He has also to coordinate all the activities in the department. So, if all of this is well coordinated, then automatically it will affect your engagement.” (Informant 3).

In the aforementioned statement, the informant highlighted the issue of coordination and the supervisors’ support that will definitely lead to enhancement of work and increased productivity. Kahn (1990) mentioned that there are three psychological conditions associated with engagement, one of which is safety. Safety is referred as the ability of the employees to provide opinions related to the management and employment without being alarmed of the unpleasant implications from the top management (Kahn, 1990). From the interviews, it is observed that the lecturers have positive predictions of safety. The safety is later linked with the availability; as the informant claimed that the good quality of relationship with immediate supervisor resulted in the increment of productivity. The availability is also viewed as the lecturers are given appropriate facilities to perform their responsibilities.

Also, in the same study, it was found rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations were positive predictors of safety. So, supportive supervisor can enhance the engagement of employees and this is the case in academia.

Another informant has also mentioned that he was engrossed in his job because of many elements, one of which is confidence he had in his boss and trust he received from him. As he claimed that:

“The reasons why I was engrossed are many. One of them is the fact that I have confidence in my supervisor, and I have the trust, he gave me trust. I happened to be a lecturer and I have so much confidence to deliver. So, I felt it is a kind of promise I had to deliver. So, these are some of the reasons I felt I was engaged in my work.” (4)

Another informant opined that he engrossed in his job due to the respect to his supervisor. He states that:

“If you have a good relationship with him and what is good relationship? Good relationship when there is something you need to know, you will be told. This is one, the communication part. Respect, respect for you as a person, dignity. Just respect.” (Informant 1)

According to LMX theory of leadership, there are two types of relationships that leaders may have with their subordinates: the in-group and the out-group. The in-group members will be given more attention in terms of trust, empowerment and allocated resources. They are more trusted, given more privileged information, receive more benefits and alike. Furthermore, they are more dependable, highly involved and more communicated.
Leaders encourage them to undertake more responsible activities (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). Those followers frequently interact with their leaders and have their leaders' support, confidence, encouragement, and consideration. This is all based on the mutual liking, respect and trust (Dansereau et al., 1975).

Those who are in the in-group try to repay their organizations by being loyal, committed, and might not think of leaving the organization. The out-group, on the other hand, would tend to perform their jobs as it is described in their employment contracts rather than taking on extra role. As a result, the in-group members try to be more committed to their jobs, spend a great deal of time and mental and physical efforts toward achieving the tasks assigned to them and pleasing their leaders, and even go beyond the employment contract which means they perform extra roles that they were not asked to do (Liden et al., 1997).

In this study, however, part time lecturers perceived their relationship with their immediate bosses do not give much impact on their engagement. This might be due to the minimal interactions between them. One of them claimed that:

"We hardly have interaction in that sense. Even we have some interactions with boss, we discuss more on administrative work." (Informant 6)

It could be concluded that good supervisor-subordinate relationship is reflected on lecturers' engagement at their work. When there is adequate flow of right information when needed and providing lecturers with facilities they need to perform their jobs are important in enhancing this relationship.

**Theme 4: Perception of organizational justice**

Organizational justice is defined as the people’s perception of fairness and justice in the organizations (Adams, 1965). Across the informants, it seemed that organizational justice has an effect, not major effect, on employee work engagement, especially part time lecturers. Most of them have mentioned that they only receive per hour rate and no other benefits. Also, they mentioned that the procedures followed to determine the allocation of organizational resources is so simple and they almost receive the same amount. It is seen from one of the interviewees who mentioned that:

"Because full time employment is not given, although you are working as part time, you only think to finish and get away and get someone who will pay you more. So, it is definitely meaning here that distributive justice affect one’s engagement". (Informant 1)

The claimant is supported by the other part-time lecturer too:

"See. As part timers, we really have no say what so ever. We don’t have even benefits. It is zero benefits. All what we do is we teach and get paid per hour. That is it. No other benefits what so ever." (Informant 6)

In addition, another part-time lecture shared the same view, as he stated that:

"As a part time lecturer, actually we are not entitled for what we can say privilege. But full time, I think so." (Informant 2)

Thus, if distributive justice is perceived, this will be a good predictor of positive human behaviors. This supports previous studies that distributive justice influences satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions, Hassan, (2005). It is also reported that distributive justice is significantly associated with job and pay satisfaction. More recent studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between distributive justice and pay satisfaction (Roch and Shanock, 2006), job satisfaction (Hassan, 2002). Furthermore, Stecher and Rosse (2005) recently showed significant negative relationships between distributive justice and negative emotion, intent to leave and intent to reduce efforts.

Full time lecturers also supported the previous argument. They have mentioned that when they perceived injustice in allocating the organizational resources, their engagement may be affected negatively and they may intend to leave their jobs and try to find who pays more. This issue has been viewed by one of the informants:

"I have 15 years experience in the academia and I’m an accountant. From experience, what I noticed that what my colleagues are earning outside the academia can’t be compared with what I’m earning. What I’m earning is far below, far, far below, from what my counterparts are earning outside." So, It is going to affect negatively provided you know how much you are contributing. (Informant 3)

Procedural justice, On the other hand, may not have such effect on lecturers' engagement. Most of the informants mentioned that procedures determining resources are centralized and their institutions don’t have much contribution in that sense. And they have to meet certain criteria to get promoted and thus increase in pay. They used the term “publish or perish”. On the contrary, with relation to procedural justice, one of the informants suggested that:

"So, it is to publish or to perish. If you don’t publish,
so you are moving directly to perish. So, in other words, so when you publish, it has a lot of effect on your promotion because normally every year they have evaluators and part of the evaluation mechanism is publication, your publications and curricula activities.” (Informant 3)

To summaries this, justice is important in every aspect of peoples’ life and it is the responsibility of managers to be fair and just to their subordinates. Islam also teaches urges us to deal with others in a fair and just manner. Allah, The Al-Mighty, spoke to His Messenger in this manner urging people to be just and fair to each other when He said: “O My slaves, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and forbade it also for you. So avoid being unjust to one another.” (Saheeh Muslim).

Also, being a just leader is very rewarding as it is asserted by Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) when he said: “There are seven categories of people whom Allah will shelter under His shade on the Day when there will be no shade except His. [One is] the just leader”(Saheeh Muslim).

Theme 5: Performance and productivity

It is argued that satisfied and happy employees tend to have positive behaviors at their workplace. They are most likely to be more productive and better performers as perceived by one of the informants as:

“But because of the engagement, and the level of commitment, any day I feel I can’t come to the class, I will communicate to my students and I feel bad and I make replacement class, on my own, nobody will ask. I don’t wait until my boss or superiors ask me why you are not in this class today. I don’t wait. Because I feel I’m obliged.” (Informant 4)

The third informant has contradicting views when he suggested that:

“Generally, when there are negative interactions in the workplace, there is no way it will affect you. It will affect health, family. There is a lot of consequences, multiplier effect. So, it depends on the way you look at it. When a workplace is not suitable for engagement, it will affect you. When it affects, it affects a lot of thing, even your health, even the family and the society.” (Informant 3)

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the predictors and antecedents of employee work engagement in academia. The results of the study have shown several predictors that enhance academic members’ engagement. Nature of the job and feeling responsibility, trust and Amanah and quality of relationships with supervisors were the top contributors to their engagement.

Perception of organizational justice seemed to have little impact on engagement. Thus, these predictors should be enhanced so that lecturers get engaged in their work. Engaged lecturers will surely contribute to the delivery of knowledge to students so that a greater good of the whole society can be enhanced through producing skilled and knowledgeable students. Those students will participate in the process of building their own societies.

REFERENCES


