The Relationship between Job Demands and Positive Emotions on Work Engagement among Academic Staff in Algeria: A Conceptual Paper

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ABSTRACT

An organization requires employees that are full of energy and interpersonal trust; they are passionate and enthusiastic about their jobs and are completely focused on their professional objectives. In other words, an organization requires a higher level of work engagement among its employees. As a result, it is becoming increasingly crucial for organizations to design in a way that allows employees to unleash their full potential and become more engaged at work. Organizations also need employees that are emotionally invested in their jobs and willing to go above and beyond to help their organizations succeed. The present study examines the link between job demands, positive emotions, and work engagement using the Broaden-and-Build theory and the job demands-resources model of work engagement. A cross-sectional poll was performed with more than 364 academicians from Algerian public institutions who were chosen using stratified random sampling. The current paper confirms previous findings on the relationship between job demands, positive emotions, and work engagement. The latest study backs up prior research on the link between job demands, positive emotions, and work engagement. As a consequence of these findings, managers may be able to boost employees' work engagement by focusing on people with lower job demands and more positive emotions.

Keywords: Job Demands, Positive Emotions, Work Engagement, Algeria, Academic staff

INTRODUCTION

Several researchers in organizational behavior have explained that enhancing human potential is very important in improving organizational performance (e.g., Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). The increased attention to positive organizational behavior, such as work engagement, inspires scholars to continuously emphasize theory building and perform relevant research about this area. Such efforts would enable a more effective application of positive traits and behavior among employees in the workplace (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Given today's competitive and dynamic environment, various organizations face greater challenges in attracting and retaining talented employees, which are critical in determining an organization's performance and sustainable competitive advantage. Besides, it is also equally important for an organization to prepare an avenue that allows employees to unleash their full potential and be engaged in their work. The above issues concern the corporate sector and the higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly the universities. Undoubtedly, human resources would be a crucial factor in enabling the universities to produce competent graduates and enhance the institutions' position internationally.

Several researchers in organizational behavior have explained that enhancing human potential is very important in improving organizational performance (e.g., Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). The increased attention to positive organizational behavior, such as work engagement, inspires scholars to continuously emphasize theory building and perform relevant research about this area. Such efforts would enable a more effective application of positive traits and behavior among employees in the workplace (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Given today's competitive and dynamic environment, various organizations face greater challenges in attracting and retaining talented employees, which are critical in determining an organization's performance and sustainable competitive advantage. Besides, it is also equally important for an organization to prepare an avenue that allows employees to unleash their full potential and be engaged in their work. The above issues concern the corporate sector and the higher education institutions (HEIs), particularly the universities. Undoubtedly, human resources would be a crucial factor in enabling the universities to produce competent graduates and enhance the institutions' position internationally.

Prior empirical studies recognized that enhancing human potential improves organizational performance and employee well-being (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes,

2002; Koyuncu, Burke, & Fiksenbaum, 2006; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). In line with such progress in academic literature, the positive antithesis of burnout, i.e., work engagement, has emerged (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). This indicates that continuous efforts should be devoted to scientific study in developing human strengths, unique talents, and optimal functioning or competency, rather than merely focusing on individual's weaknesses or malfunctioning, such as stress and burnout (Bakker et al., 2008; Burke & El-Kot, 2010; Mauno, Kinnunen & Roukolainen, 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2003; Stairs, 2005; Noor, 2022). Human capital is an important asset and a source of competitive advantage for today's modern organizations, which are confronted with a fast-changing environment (Endres & Mancheno-Smoak, 2008; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). There is an increasing tendency for employees to have to deal with unanticipated decision-making more frequently (Masson, Royal, Agnew, & Fine, 2008). Thus, having a group of engaged workers would benefit the organizations. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) noted that engaged employees have greater creativity and are more productive. Besides, they are willing to put in extra effort to achieve their goal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rising interest among the practitioners, consulting firms, and scholars in the study of work engagement in recent years indicated that the concept of work engagement is not just a passing management fad (Leiter & Bakker, 2010). A considerable amount of research and analyses have been conducted in the last few years to build up the understanding of engagement at work. Studies on work engagement complement the previous findings on burnout to better understand what organizations can do to improve employees' performance. This is because several work engagement studies were stimulated by the research on burnout (Maslach & Leither, 1997). Intense job demands, role conflicts, lack of resources, and other work stressors are the causes of burnout (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Al-Frijawy, 2022). Evidence of burnout resulting in withdrawal behavior and health problems is well documented in the literature (e.g., Cropanzano, Rupp & Byrne, 2003; Lewig, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard, & Metzer, 2007).

Nonetheless, by simply focusing on the burnout experience alone, it is inadequate to justify why some individuals always feel enthusiastic, energetic, dedicated, and enjoy their work even though they are always busy or occupied with various tasks (Leiter & Bakker, 2010). Moreover, prior research findings indicated that it is not always true that employees who are encountered with

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long working hours and other demanding requirements in the job would experience burnout. In contrast, certain employees view dealing with different job demands and working hard as pleasurable or enjoyable (Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Bakker, 2009). Empirical evidence obtained from the survey among dentists in the Netherlands, Finland, and the United Kingdom showed that the majority of them find that their job is stimulating and engaging despite high job demands (Brake, Bouman, Gorter, Hoogstraten, & Eijkman, 2007; Denton, Newton, & Bower, 2008; Hakanen, Bakker,& Demerouti, 2005).

A review of the literature shows that there has been a considerable amount of interest dedicated to working engagement in the last few decades. Some authors argue that this is because it foretells employee outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance in total shareholder return (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Richman, 2006). Another reason for the rising popularity of studying engagement may be its antecedents, which come from work environment characteristics and human resource management practices rather than employee or individual characteristics. The engagement has antecedents that companies can control, allowing improved engagement with planned intervention strategies. Even though studies on work engagement are substantial, most of the studies were conducted in telecommunication companies (Brummelhuis, Bakker, Hetland & Keulemans, 2012; van Doornen, Houtveen, Langelaan, Bakker, van Rhenen & Schaufeli, 2009), health sector (Hakanen, Schaufeli & Ahola, 2008; Lin, Oi-ling, Kan & Xin-wen, 2009; Weigl, Hornung, Parker, Petru, Glaser & Angerer, 2010), hotels (Burke, Koyncu, Jing & Fiksenbaum, 2009; Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005), insurance companies (Demerouti, Bakker, De Jonge, Janssen, & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Xu & Thomas, 2011), banks (Hassan & Ahmed, 2011; Koyuncu, Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2006), and education (Adekola, 2011; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen & Nurmi, 2009).

However, not much attention has been given to the issues of work engagement among the university's academicians. If there were studies conducted in the educational sector, they were more focused on the students and teachers (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Basikin, 2007; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006; Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen & Nurmi, 2009). For example, Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2006) studied the teachers' working conditions and related to teachers' well-being, such as burnout, and how work engagement influences health problems and organizational commitment in Finland. On the other hand, Salmela-Aro, Tolvanen, and Nurmi (2009) studied how students' achievement strategies gauged during university studies would affect work burnout and work

engagement 10, 14, and 17 years later. Thus, this study sought to extend the body of research on work engagement by investigating issues of work engagement among university academics.

Many authors have agreed that teaching is considered to be one of the most stressful occupations, and this is due to a high workload, inadequate salary, large class sizes, emotional demands, student misbehavior and the perceived low status of the profession (Burke & Greenglass, 1994; Carlson & Thompson, 1995; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006; Konermann-van Hunsel, 2012; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). Studies have shown how the high levels of teaching commitments, the pressure to attract external funding, and the high levels of role conflict (e.g. among the triple demands of teaching, research, and administration) constitute important sources of job-related stress for academics, while role conflict has, in turn, been linked to high levels of job dissatisfaction and anxiety (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua & Stough, 2001; Kinman, 2001; Winefield, Boyd, Saebel & Pignata, 2008; Sonnentag & Frese, 2003; Winefield et al., 2003).In Australia, Rea (2011) found that research and teaching staffs in universities work very long hours to cover their workloads and they are the most dissatisfied. As a result, nearly half of the academic workforce in Australian universities intends to move to overseas universities or leave the higher education in the next 10 years (Burke, 2011). In other part of the globe, Alrai (2010) found that 776 university professors with PhD from Jordanian universities left their work between September 2007 and September 2008, and this number comprise of 17 percent of the total number of professors working in universities. Among the reasons these academics left the universities was lack of satisfaction. Studies on job demands, positive emotions and work engagement have shown mixed results when tested in various settings. While majority of studies have shown significant relationships and influence of job demands and positive emotions on work engagement (Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2008; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van Rhenen, 2009; Taipale, Selander, Anttila, & Natti, 2011; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009; Salanova et al., 2014; Clark et al., 2014; Hazelton, 2014; Croom, 2015; Goswami et al., 2016; Green et al., 2017; Burić & Macuka, 2018; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2017; Van Den Tooren & Rutte, 2016).

In the academic setting, many authors believe that job demands, especially the workload, can diminish faculty commitment to the institution (Daly & Dee, 2006; Gilbert, 2000; Griffin, 1998). There is evidence showing how the academic workload and work pressure has constantly been rising due to the expansion of the higher education, and this has been believed to contribute to the increase in stress level among the academicians (Metcalf, Rolfe & Weale,2005: Singh & Bush, 1998). In a study involving 471 academic staff in South African higher education

institutions, Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) found that workload was negatively related to work engagement while autonomy and social support were positively related to work engagement. In another study, work pressure was negatively related to work engagement when tested on 274 teachers in the Netherlands (Lorente, Salanova, Martinez & Schaufeli, 2008).

Engaged employees are regarded as elated productive employees. For instance, engaged employees are frequently exposed to positive emotions, such as joy, happiness, and passion, better health, self-creation, and the transfer of their own engagement to other employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Besides, Salanova et al., (2011) conducted their study on university and secondary school students. They concluded that positive emotions (satisfaction, enthusiasm, and comfort) predict work engagement in the future. Fredrickson (2001) argued that states of positive emotions are triggered, especially when people are in enjoyable situations. Employees who are engaged are regarded as a pleasing situation. "Employees who are engaged in work are enthusiastic, vigorous and committed entirely to work tasks since they extract fulfilment from these factors" (Salanova et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the authors anticipated that the engagement at work might result from positive emotions (Salanova et al., 2010). The perspective that considers work engagement as a result of positive emotions advocates work engagement might elucidate the reason for positive emotions through building resources and broadening cognitive (Salanova et al., 2010). Common experiences related to positive emotions that prevail in the place of work can lead to an effective and positive state and more persistent work engagement. Salanova et al. (2014) concluded that positive emotions projected task engagement and work. Goswami et al., (2016) carried out their research on 366 employees full-time from multinational companies in India. The authors concluded that the positive humor of leaders is associated with positive emotions in the workplace and is correlated with the work engagement of employees. However, studies recommended more research to be conducted in the future that focuses more on encouraging positive emotions in the workplace. In addition, researchers proposed carrying out more research in the future, which evolve on encouraging positive emotions in an empirical perspective or by intervention means to examine its added value to envisage work engagement (Ouweneel et al., 2012; Goswami et al., 2016). Work engagement thrives at work through positive emotional experiences; highly engaged employees tend to experience quick learning, career expansion, improvement, and personal growth (Green et al., 2017). In a study covering 179 employees with different positions varying from administrative staff, supervisors, specialists, and managers, Mendes and Stander (2011) concluded

that enthusiastic employees feature positive emotions toward their work environment; therefore, they are engaged more. Training (2012) found that positive emotions, which comprise confidence, empowerment, inspiration, and enthusiasm, play an important role in maximizing engagement at work.

Given all that has been mentioned so far, recognizing that the level of work engagement amongst employees remains weak, hence; this indicates an urgent need to conduct further research to well-understand the causes of this problem, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa region (especially in Algeria). For that purpose, a further extensive measure could be held.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study selects a quantitative research method depending on the accompanying motivations. This article intends to examine the relationship between positive emotions, job demands, and work engagement. In addition, another aim of this investigation is to explore the most important factors influencing work engagement. This study is cross-sectional research whereby data is collected, analyzed, and summarized while conclusions are drawn at a specific date. Individuals (academics) employ as the unit of analysis. The preceding data in the investigation has been gathered at a single moment (cross-sectional study) via spreading questionnaires. Thus, a questionnaire is suitable for analyzing diverse attitudinal and behavioral constructs in this cross-sectional study.

The higher education sector in Algeria includes 50 universities, all of which are public institutions (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2020). These institutions exist in three diverse regions (east, west, and middle) of Algeria. There are 11 universities in the west region, 17 universities in the middle region, and 22 in the east region (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2018). In this examination, every two universities have been randomly chosen from different country regions (Algeria), the western, eastern, and middle regions. The estimated total population acquired through the summation of the quantity of scholarly staff in every college is 7,184 (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2022). Following Krejcie and Morgan (1970), when the population size ranged from 7000 to 8000, the appropriate sample size in this study should be ≥ 364 academics. However, the sample size was multiplied by two to minimize error in sampling and take care of the nonresponse rate issue (Hair et al., 2008). Hence, 728 were chosen as the entire number of questionnaires. From Lecturer Class B to professors, the academic position is the sampling element or the reasonable respondents to participate in this analysis. The sampling techniques used in this study were both stratified and

simple random sampling techniques. Besides that, a sample of members from every stratum might be marked using a simple random sampling when the population has stratified in a certain significant manner, such as academic level, gender, age, position, and experience.

CONCLUSION

This research has analyzed and produced a preliminary conceptual model for the characteristics to provide insight to work engagement literature as positive emotions become more salient when the job demands of academic staff are high. Future academic research may find this conceptual framework interesting. Future studies may examine the link between these components to comprehend them better. The analyses of the interaction effects are in response to Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) call to investigate the interaction effects of job demands as explained in the JD-R model. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) commented that the majority of the researchers are keener in analyzing the main effects of JD on work engagement rather than the interaction effects. This situation occurs mainly due to the difficulties in detecting significant interaction effects (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, examining such interaction effects is theoretically important to understand the possible boosting potential of resources (e.g., positive emotions) as explained in the Broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001).

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