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Impact of Work Factors on Employee Engagement of Office Employees in Private Hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Area of the Study

As a significant determinant of engagement of employee, this study is to discuss the impact of work factors on engagement of office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Problem of the Study

To investigate the extent to which perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice affect employee engagement of office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Method of the Study

The data were collected from a randomly selected sample of 80 office employees who work in the Human Resources Department, the Accounts Department, the Information Technology Department, the Internal Audit Department, the Marketing Department, the Stores Department and Purchasing Department in three selected private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka by administrating a structured questionnaire, which consisted of 32 questions/statements with 5 points scale. The data analysis included the univariate and bivariate, analyses.

Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are that perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice were positively and significantly correlated with employee engagement of office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Conclusion of the Study

It is concluded that among the four employee work factors, perceived supervisor support, specially should be considered to enhance the engagement of office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka as a common work factor. Further, the enhancement of perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice will result in improved employee engagement to work.

Key Words: Employee Engagement, Perceived Organizational Support, Perceived Supervisor Support, Recognition, Procedural Justice, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The notion of employee engagement has attracted considerable interest from business and consultancy firms since 1990s and has more recently begun to attract wider academic attention (Welch, 2011). Markos and Sridevi (2010) said that employee engagement is a vast construct that touches almost all parts of human resource management facets. According to Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004) employee engagement emanates from two concepts: Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB). Without a workplace environment for employee engagement, turnover will increase and efficiency will decline, leading to low customer loyalty and decreased stakeholder value (Ram and Prabhakar, 2011). Therefore it is vital for the top management to foster positive, effective people along with

workplace policies and practices that focus on employee well-being, health and work/life balance. Further, managers should identify factors such as job characteristics, reward and recognition, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, procedural justice and distributive justice that may lead to employee engagement (Ram and Prabhakar, 2011; Saks, 2006).

Problem Background and Problem of the Study

The concept of employee engagement has been criticized for having substantial overlap with other similar constructs such as job involvement, motivation and commitment (Gupta and Kumar, 2013). In the academic literature, a number of definitions have been provided for employee engagement. According to Kahn (1990) 'engagement' means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing an organizational role. 'Employee engagement' refers to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker, 2002). Kahn (1990) pointed out three psychological conditions which are associated with engagement or disengagement at work-meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Saks (2006) proposed a model of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. It is argued that job engagement is related to six work-life factors, namely sustainable work load, feeling of choice and control, appropriate recognition and reward, a supportive work community, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work (Maslach, Schaufelli and Leiter, 2001, cited in Saks, 2006). In the study of Saks (2006) job characteristics, reward and recognition, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, procedural justice and distributive justice were considered as antecedents or work factors of employee engagement. Job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational citizenship behavior, intention to quit and organizational commitment were identified as the consequences of employee engagement (Ram and Prabhakar, 2011; Saks, 2006).

Employee engagement is a key business driver for organizational success. High level of employee engagement occurs when employees are involved in their work with commitment, enthusiasm and passion. Engagement, a complex concept is influenced by many factors- from workplace culture, organizational communication and managerial styles to trust and respect, leadership and company reputation. Saks (2006) identified six work factors namely job characteristics, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition, distributive justice and procedural justice which are affecting employee engagement. However, there is no empirical evidence regarding these phenomena in the Sri Lankan context. Then, it seems an empirical gap of the impact of employee work factors on employee engagement in Sri Lanka. *Therefore, the research problem addressed under this study is to investigate the extent to which perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice affect employee engagement of office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka***.**

Research Framework

Perceived organizational support: According to Ram and Prabhakar (2011), perceived organizational support was considered as significant predictor of employee engagement.

Further Saks (2006) confirm the positive relationship between perceived organizational support and job and organizational engagement. Thus, the first hypothesis of this study was as follows:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between the perceived organizational support and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Perceived supervisor support: Saks (2006) found that there is no relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement. However these findings contradict with the findings of Ram and Prabhakar (2011), where the positive relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement was confirmed. Based on the arguments and empirical evidence, the second hypothesis of this study was as follows:

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between the perceived supervisor support and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Recognition: Ram and Prabhakar (2011) confirm the positive relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and employee engagement. But Saks (2006) did not find a significant connection between rewards and recognition and employee engagement. Hence, the third hypothesis of this study was formulated as:

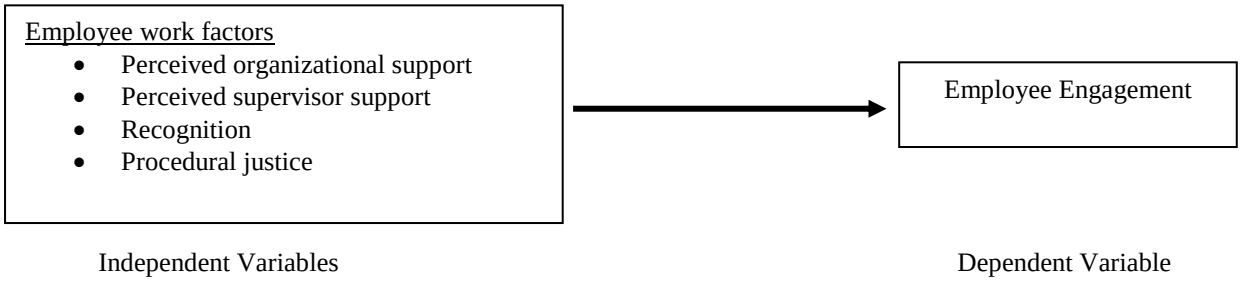
Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between the recognition and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Procedural justice: There are two forms of organizational justice: distributive justice and procedural justice (Ram and Prabhakar, 2011). Saks (2006) confirm the positive relationship between procedural justice and employee engagement. Further, Ram and Prabhakar (2011) found that procedural justice is positively related to employee engagement. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis of this study was formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between the procedural justice and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Relevant conceptual model of this study is shown in figure 1. Dependent variable of employee engagement is influenced by four independent variables- perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice.

Figure 1: The relationship between employee work factors and employee engagement



Method

Study Design

The objective is to establish the relationships between these independent variables and the dependent variable. Therefore, the type of investigation of this study was correlational rather than a causal study. This study was analytical in nature rather than exploratory or descriptive, because according to Sekeran and Bougie (2010), studies that engage in hypotheses testing usually explain the nature of certain relationships, or establish the difference among groups or the independence of two or more factors in a situation. This was a field study because it examined the employee work factors affecting employee engagement of the office employees in the natural working environment of the Healthcare Industry. None of the variables were controlled or manipulated. As the study was conducted in the natural environment where events normally occur, it is a non - contrived setting: no any artificial or contrived setting was created for the study. The survey method characterized by a self administered structured questionnaire was selected as the method of data collection in this study. This study was purely based on primary data. The non-contrived field-setting environment was used to collect the primary data.

The survey was carried out among the sample of 80 office employees who works in the Human Resources Department, the Accounts Department, the Information Technology Department, the Internal Audit Department, the Marketing Department, the Stores Department and Purchasing Department in three selected private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The sampling method of the survey was simple random sampling.

Measures

The variables in the research model: employee engagement, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice were measured through a questionnaire with a five point scale, which was completed by the respondents using their experiences. The variables of the study constitute interval scales.

The dependent variable of the research model was measured by an instrument consisting of 12 statements developed by Gallup organization. The development of the Gallup Workplace Audit (Q12) was based on more than 30 years of accumulated quantitative and qualitative research, which measures the extent to which employee are “engaged” in their work (Harter, Schmidt, Killham and Asplund, 2006). The employee engagement of office employees was measured in terms of 12 indicators as expectations, availability of materials & equipment,

opportunity to do what employees do best, recognition, caring, encouragement of employee development, consideration of employee opinions, mission/purpose of the company, commitment of fellow employees to quality work, having a best friend, progress and opportunities to learn and grow (Harter *et al*, 2006). The employee engagement was measured by their responses to the questionnaire with a five point Likert scale of 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree'.

The perceived organizational support of the office employees in private hospitals was also measured by the questionnaire, which was a standard questionnaire known as "the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support" originally developed by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa in 1986. This questionnaire originally contained 36 question statements. Because of the difficulty in administrating such lengthy questionnaire, four statements were selected to be used for this study. Consideration of employee opinions, employee's well-being, willingness to help with job problems and responses to the employee's complaints were the indicators used to measure perceived organizational support. The perceived organizational support was measured by their responses to the questionnaire with a five point Likert scale of 'strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree'.

The perceived supervisor support of office employees in private hospitals was measured by five statements. First three statements were selected from the questionnaire for measuring supervisor career support which was originally developed by Greenhaus Parasuraman and Wormley in 1990. Fourth and fifth statements were selected from the studies of Elias and Mittal (2011) and Rhoades, Eisenberger and Armeli (2001) respectively. The perceived supervisor support was measured in five indicators which included supervisor support for acquiring additional education and training, opportunities to develop skills, feedback, assistance for work related problems and employee's well-being. The five point Likert scale of 'strongly agree, agree, neither disagree nor agree, disagree and strongly disagree' were used in the questionnaire to measure the perceived supervisor support.

The recognition of office employees was measured by six statements. Recognize employees through praise, appreciation and public applause, training and development opportunities, promotions, freedom (Saks, 2006), friendly relationship with supervisor and importance of non-monetary rewards were the indicators used to measure recognition. The five point Likert scale of 'strongly agree, agree, neither disagree nor agree, disagree and strongly disagree' were used in the questionnaire to measure the recognition.

Procedural justice was measured using five statements which were selected from the survey of organizational justice, developed by Colquitt in 2001. The procedural justice was measured under 5 indicators which included employees' ability to express their views, consistency, free from bias, accuracy of the information and correctability. The five point Likert scales of 'strongly agree, agree, neither disagree nor agree, disagree and strongly disagree' were used in the questionnaire to measure the procedural justice.

Validity and Reliability

The inter item consistency reliability was examined with Cronbach's Alpha test. This test was carried out using 20 responses of the office employees. The results of Cronbach's Alpha test are given in the Table 1, which suggest that the internal reliability of each instrument was satisfactory.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

Instruments	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Employee Engagement	0.756
Perceived Organizational Support	0.841
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.727
Recognition	0.739
Procedural Justice	0.740

The content validity of the instruments was ensured by the conceptualization and operationalization of the variables using the available literature and indirectly by the high internal consistency reliability of the instruments as denoted by the Alphas.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data collected from primary (questionnaire) source were analyzed using the computer based statistical data analysis package, SPSS (version 16.0) for validity, reliability and relationship testing. The data analysis included univariate and bivariate analyses.

Results

To investigate the responses for independent and dependent variables of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka, univariate analysis was used. The results of the univariate analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Univariate analysis

	Office employees				
	EE	POS	PSS	Recognition	PJ
Mean	3.6240	3.3344	3.8375	3.4979	3.3075
Median	3.6667	3.5000	4.0000	3.5000	3.4000
Mode	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.60
Std.Deviation	0.40544	.61101	0.54942	0.48428	.052766
Variance	0.164	0.373	0.302	0.235	0.278
Skewness	-0.245	-0.964	-0.802	-0.533	-0.537
Std. errors of Skewneess	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.269	0.269
Kurtosis	-0.349	0.925	2.700	-0.102	-0.229
Std. errors of Kurtosis	0.532	0.532	0.532	0.532	0.532
Range	1.67	2.75	3.20	2.17	2.20

According to Table 2, as per means, employee engagement, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice of the office employees are more than the moderate level.

The bivariate analysis, Pearson's Correlation between perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice with employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: The Pearson's Correlation between Independent Variable and Dependent Variable

	Office employees			
	POS	PSS	Recognition	PJ
Correlation	0.443	0.563	0.423	0.348
Sig. (1-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

According to the Pearson's correlation coefficients of perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice in relation to employee engagement of office employees, all independent variables are positively and significantly correlated with employee engagement. However, perceived supervisor support is the independent variable with the highest correlation coefficient regarding office employees when compared with the other variables and linkage of perceived organizational support, recognition and procedural justice with employee engagement of office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka is significantly positive.

The results of simple regression analysis of the four independent variables (perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice) against the dependent variable (employee engagement) are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Results of Simple Regression Analysis

Variables	Perceived Organizational Support	Perceived Supervisor Support	Recognition	Procedural Justice
Method	Linear	Linear	Linear	Linear
R Square	0.196	0.317	0.179	0.121
Adjusted R Square	0.186	0.308	0.168	0.110
F	19.010	36.238	17.005	10.758
Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.002
B-constant	2.645	2.029	2.385	2.739
b-Value	0.294	0.416	0.354	0.268

According to Table 4, all the independent variables are positively related with the dependent variable.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis and simple regression analysis, it was found that perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, recognition and procedural justice were positively and significantly correlated with employee engagement. Then, there is statistical evidence to support to accept all the four hypotheses formulated for the study.

The first hypothesis was that there is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It was confirmed that the perceived organizational support of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka has a positive and significant relationship with their engagement.

The second hypothesis was that there is a positive relationship between the perceived supervisor support and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The statistical testing supported to accept that perceived supervisor support of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, in Sri Lanka has a positive relationship with their engagement.

The third hypothesis was that there is a positive relationship between the recognition and employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It was substantiated that there is a positive relationship between the recognition and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The fourth hypothesis was that there is a positive relationship between the procedural justice and the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It was confirmed that there is a positive relationship between the procedural justice and employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The findings of this research study shall be important on the theoretical as well as practical scenario. As this research model was substantiated, the findings of study are important to improve the employee engagement of the office employees in this industry.

As a major way of enhancing the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals, the programs relating to the enhancement of the perceived organizational support of the office employees are to be implemented successfully. Expectations, availability of materials and equipment, opportunity to do what employees do best, recognition, caring, encouragement of employee development, consideration of employee opinions, mission of the company commitment of fellow employees to quality work, having a best friend, progress and opportunity to learn and grow are the few ways of upgrading the employee engagement of office employees through the consideration of employee opinions, employee's well-being, willingness to help with job problems and responses to the employee's complaints (dimensions of perceived organizational support). The top management of the private hospitals should consider these factors and enhance the perceived organizational support of the office employees to gain maximum contribution to achieve the organizational objectives. Thus, organizations that wish to improve employee engagement should focus on employees' perceptions of the support they receive from their organization. Organizational programs that address employees' needs and concerns (e.g. surveys, focus groups and suggestion programs) and demonstrating caring and support (e.g. flexible work arrangements) might cause employees to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement.

In the context of enhancing employee engagement through perceived supervisor support, top management should rethink about how to maintain employee engagement of the office employees through perceived supervisor support. Supervisor support for acquiring additional education and training, opportunities to develop skills, feedback, assistance for work related problems and employee's well-being (dimensions of perceived supervisor support) are the few ways of upgrading the employee engagement of office employees through perceived supervisor support. Further, one of the implications of the findings is that firms should ensure that supervisors have the necessary skills to coach and counsel employees as appropriate.

Recognition is another significant way of enhancing employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Therefore, the top management and authoritative personalities should have cultivated the management practices focusing the recognition. Few ways of enhancing employee engagement through recognition are praise, appreciation, public applause, training and development opportunities, promotions and freedom (dimensions of recognition).

To increase the employee engagement of the office employees in private hospitals in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the management should develop fair procedures to determine the outcome distribution or allocations to enrich the procedural justice. Here procedures means processes used by the management that may lead to decision outcomes, such as procedures used to determine salary increment, promotions, disciplinary actions, grievance settlement etc. These procedures should ensure employees ability to express their views, consistency, free from bias, accuracy of information and correctability (dimensions of procedural justice).

The results of this study suggest that employee engagement is a meaningful construct that is worthy of future research. Saks (2006) identified two types of employee engagement namely job and organization engagement. Therefore, future research could investigate the impact of employee work factors on job and organization engagement. Future research might also consider the impact of employee work factors on employee engagement of different workers in the job hierarchy and in different industries. However, there are other variables that might also be important for employee engagement. For example, job characteristics, rewards, distributive justice, human resource practices such as flexible work arrangements, training programs etc. might also be important for engagement. Future research could include a broader range of predictors that are linked to particular types of role engagement (e.g. job, organization and group).

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