

# The Impacts of Supervisor Support on Employees' Engagement

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## ABSTRACT

The paper aims at studying the impacts of supervisor support on employees' engagement of the Malaysian Telecommunication companies. The instrument used to measure the supervisor support and employee engagements were validated and data were collected from 109 employees at lower and middle managerial levels to analyse the above relationship. The data were analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed that supervisor support has significant relationship with employees' engagement. Hence; this study suggested that supervisor support can improve the employees' engagement by presenting a significant relationship between supervisor support and employees' engagement.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organizational Support; Job Satisfaction; Telecommunication Employees

## INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is defined in general as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values. When an employee is engaged, he is aware of his responsibility in the business goals and motivates his colleagues alongside, for the success of the organisational goals. The positive attitude of the employee with his work place and its value system is otherwise called as the positive emotional connection of an employee towards his/her work. Engaged employees go beyond the call of duty to perform their role in excellence. Engagement at work was first conceptualised by [1] as the "harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles". He added that in engagement "people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". There are various factors that define an employee as an engaged employee. The concept has

evolved taking into account the various behaviours exhibited by an employee that is positively productive. [1,2]

This paper identifies the key variable that describes employee engagement and identifies the strength of impact of employee engagement. The proposed key variable is supervisor support.

Generally, supervisor support has been described as the extent to which employees perceive that supervisors offer them support, encouragement and concern. [3-5] More specifically, supervisor support entails the provision of work-related help by the supervisor to their employees in performing their job. [6-8] According to, [9] supervisor support in the workplace can be in three forms, including emotional support (i.e. showing empathy, acceptance and care), informative support (i.e. giving feedback or guidance in work) and material support such as preparing budget, aids, resources and tangible assistance that are related to work to improve the employees'

motivation, performance and effectiveness.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Supervisor Support**

According to organizational support theory, <sup>[10]</sup> supervisor support (SVS) facilitates changes in employees' levels of affective commitment. <sup>[11-13]</sup> Supervisor support is defined as employees' views concerning the degree to which their supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being. <sup>[14]</sup> As agents of the organization, supervisors are responsible for directing and evaluating employees' job performance. Thus, employees often view their supervisor's feedback as indicative of the organization's orientation toward them. <sup>[15-17]</sup> Moreover, because employees are aware that their supervisor's evaluations of their job performance are often communicated to executives, who are seen as the representatives of the organization, the association between Employees Engagement and supervisor support is further strengthened. <sup>[18]</sup>

Supervisor support leads for employees to high commitment through job satisfaction and motivation. Shriesheim, and <sup>[19]</sup> came up with their tenet in the book of Personnel Psychology and they opined that Supervisor consideration refers to a leader behaviors concerned with promoting the comfort and wellbeing of subordinates. It is hypothesized that employees who believe their superiors are considerate leaders will perform high commitment than those who do not perceive that their managers as such (Johnston, M.W., Parasuraman, A., Futrell, C.M. and Black, B.C, 1990). De Cotiis and Summers (1977), Morris and Sherman (1981) and Zaccaro and Dobbins (1989) all found empirical evidence supporting the view of supervisory consideration. Supervisor consideration again refers to the degree to which supervisors are supportive, friendly and considerate, consult subordinates and recognize their contribution.

### **Employees Engagement**

Research confirms that engagement leads to higher financial performance,

higher customer satisfaction and higher employee job performance. An employee with 'high' engagement might therefore be expected to outperform those with 'low' engagement, all else being equal. Engagement has increasingly been seen as a way of measuring employees' commitment to their organizations and their jobs and as a way of creating more highly effective workplaces. <sup>[20-22]</sup> Many HR consultants use engagement models in an attempt to market to organisations the possibility of creating more effective and efficient employees who will deliver greater organisational benefits and better organisational performance. <sup>[23,24]</sup> Clearly, organisations respond to this because they have identified the need to invest in human capital to achieve maximum efforts from their employees and to be able to create success in highly competitive global markets. Engagement is an organization's measure of its investment in human capital. In other words, as the organisation invests in the human element at work, then employees are more likely to be engaged at work. <sup>[25]</sup>

Not surprisingly, research has emerged that gauges the organisational and economic benefits of an engaged workforce. A study by the US Gallup Institute <sup>[25]</sup> noted that through the use of engagement initiatives organisations reported higher profit margins (44%), increased employee productiveness (50%) and customer loyalty increased by up to 50%. <sup>[26]</sup> On the other hand, it was suggested by <sup>[26]</sup> reporting on Gallup research that disengaged employees cost the US economy approximately 300 billion dollars a year due to low activity from disengaged workers. Further, Crabtree (2005) reported that engaged employees are less likely to suffer from stress or adverse health implications related to work. In Australia these costs are similar to those reported in the US study when adjusted for population size. <sup>[27]</sup> Many claims have been made regarding the increased performance driven from engaged employees, these are made in the professional literature (consultants) and lacks the academic rigor.

Consultant measures of engagement are not publically available for scrutiny and validity testing by independent research. It is necessary to be wary in the interpretation of the statistics presented by consultant groups. Nevertheless, these statistics illustrate the contribution and importance of engagement research to organisations, employees and to national economies. [28] Harnessing this human element is seen to be the key to greater profitability and productivity as well as to a greater understanding of the functioning of people as an organisational asset. [28]

To be engaged from an employee's perspective is equally important. Arguably, employees want the best possible relationship with their organisation and they want to be provided with the best possible circumstances, environment or management initiatives that will make them happier, feel valued and feel involved in the organization. [29]

### The Relationship between Supervisor Support and Employees' Engagement

Supervisor support was found as one of the main criteria identified as a fundamental factor to inform employee engagement. Effective supervisor support is a higher-order, multi-dimensional construct comprising self-awareness, balanced processing of information, relational transparency, and internalized moral standards. [30] Research studies show that engagement occurs naturally when supervisors are inspiring. Supervisors are responsible for communicating that the employees' efforts play a major role in overall business success. When employees work is considered important and meaningful, it leads obviously to their interest and engagement. Authentic and supportive supervisor is theorized to impact employee engagement of followers in the sense of increasing their involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work (Schneider et al., 2009). The supervisor support factor that was measured comprised indicators of effective supervisor and perceived supervisor support. Supervisor

and employees relationship is another aspect that emphasizes explicitly the interpersonal harmony aspect of employee engagement. Kahn (1990) found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships, as well as a supportive supervisor, promote employee engagement. An open and supportive environment is essential for employees to feel safe in the workplace and engage totally with their responsibility. Supportive environments allow members to experiment and to try new things and even fail without fear of the consequences (Kahn, 1990). May et al. (2004) found that relationships in the workplace had a significant impact and as one of the components of employees' engagements.

### Research Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework refers to the theory that a researcher chooses to guide him/her in his/her research. Thus, a theoretical framework is the application of a theory, or a set of concepts drawn from one and the same theory, to offer an explanation of an event, or shed some light on a particular phenomenon or research problem. Figure1 presents research theoretical framework, which explains the relationship between supervisor support and employees engagement.

### Hypothesis

The hypothetical model of the study is elaborated in the theoretical framework diagram which is shown in Figure 1.

Items include supervisor support, which is to give emotional and material support for employees. Employees' engagement is also shown in the figure as the dependent variable of the study. Hence, the following hypothesis is offered to be tested: *H1: Supervisor support has significant relationship with Employees engagement.*

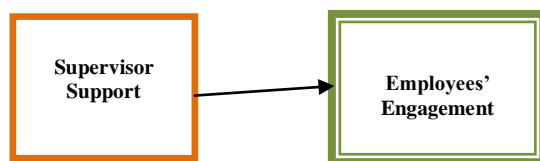


Figure 1: Research theoretical framework

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

Participants were full-time employees, obtained from a variety of telecommunication organizations operating in Malaysia. We contacted 274 employees. The useable questionnaire was 109. Nature of this research is quantitative. The research looks to evaluate the relationship between the independent variable of supervisor support and dependent variable of employees' engagement.

### Measures

The questionnaire for supervisor support concerns about three main things in supervision of the employees such as respecting the views and ideas of the employees, collaborative approach in supervision and safe feedbacks. This study uses the scale developed by Palomo (2010) and the two items are 'My supervisor is respectful of my views and ideas', 'My supervisor has a collaborative approach in supervision' and 'My supervisor gives feedback in a way that feels safe'.

The employees' engagement is used to measure by using scale developed by Rich (2010). The scale is used to measure employees' focus and effort at job. The sample items of the scale include 'At work, my mind is focused on my job' and 'I exert my full effort to my job'.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive analysis of the respondents: The descriptive analysis focused on the variables such as gender, age, marital status and job status was documented in Table I. Male responders represented 46.8% while female responders were 53.2%. Most of the respondents (33%) were aged between 25 and 29 years old, 18.3% of the respondents were between 21 and 24 years. Same percentages go to those between 35 and 39 years old. 23.9% of the respondents were between 30 and 34 years old, 4.6% of the respondents were above 40 and 49 years old and 1.8% of the respondents were above 50 years old. Majority of the respondents were having job

permanent and were married in a percentage of 86% and 83% respectively. While employees; who have contract jobs represented 16% and single staff were 17% of the total respondents.

Table I: Demographic Information

Variables	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	46.8
Female	53.2
Age (in years)	
21-24	18.3
25-29	33
30-34	23.9
35-39	18.3
40-49	4.6
Above 50	1.8
Marital status	
Married	49.6
Single	47
Job Status	
Permanent	67
Contract	33

At the end of gathering data, the reliability of the scales was analyzed. An analysis was performed in the study to ascertain the reliability of the measures by using Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient; 0.60 being the acceptable reliability coefficient level in terms of research standards as shown in Table II.

Table II: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach alpha
SVS	.857
EE	.769

As it can be seen in Table I, the measures of the study are reliable because all the variables have an acceptable reliability coefficient which ranged from .76908 to .857.

The correlation data shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of study is .416, which is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Table III displays correlation coefficients between these variables. The correlation coefficients are a measure of the strength of the association between any two metric variables (Hair et al., 2003). The results of the Pearson correlation has shown that the independent variable of supervisor support and dependent variable of employee engagement were positively and moderately correlated to each other.

**Table III: Correlations between Variables**

Relationship	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Hypothesis Support
SVS → EE	.416*	Yes

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

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study was to analyse the relationship between supervisor support and employee engagement. The adopted measures of this study have shown remarkable level of reliability as shown in Table II. The proposed hypothesis of supervisor support and employees' engagement was supported. Based on the findings of the study, the emotional and material support from organizational supervisors has a significant impact on employees' engagement.

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