

# The Mediating Role of Work Engagement in the Relationship between Personal Resources and Employees' Job Performance

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to examine the role of work engagement in the relationship between three personal resources (self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism) and employees' job performance. Three antecedents of work engagement such as self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism were proposed to enhance employees' job performance. Work engagement and job performance was proposed as the intervening and outcome variables respectively. The data of this study have been collected from a group of employees in the telecommunication technology industry through questionnaire survey. The data were analysed using SPSS. The findings revealed that work engagement antecedents including the three personal resources (self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism) have significant relationship with work engagement. Likewise; this study suggested that work engagement can improve the employees' job performance by presenting a significant relationship between work engagement and job performance. Finally, work engagement mediated the relationship between personal resources and employees' job performance.

**Keywords:** Personal Resources; Work Engagement; Telecommunication Companies

## INTRODUCTION

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. <sup>[1]</sup> Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. <sup>[2]</sup> In short, engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. Moreover, they are often fully immersed in their work so that time flies. <sup>[3]</sup>

The central aim of our study was to examine how personal resources influence the employees' job performance through work engagement. Personal resources are aspects of the self that are generally linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact upon their environment successfully. <sup>[4]</sup> We include three typical personal resources, namely, self-efficacy, <sup>[5]</sup> organizational-based self-esteem, <sup>[6]</sup> and optimism, <sup>[4]</sup> all of which have been recognized by <sup>[4]</sup> as fundamental components of individual adaptability.

Previous studies have shown that these personal resources are not only related to job performance, but also have positive effects on physical and emotional well-being. <sup>[7-8]</sup> Although people's perception of

and adaptation to environments is variable, depending on their levels of personal resources, these resource levels are cultivated by environmental factors. [9] In other words, it is proposed that personal resources may function either as independent, moderators or as mediators in the relationship between environmental factors and (organizational) outcomes, or they may even determine the way people comprehend the environment, formulate it, and react to it. [10]

The present study uses the personal resources as a starting point, and thus, primarily focuses on them as antecedents of work engagement, and job performance as the outcome variable of work engagement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Relationship between Personal Resources and Work Engagement

Personal resources are positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and refer to individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact upon their environment successfully. [11] It has been convincingly shown that such positive self-evaluations predict goal-setting, motivation, performance, job and life satisfaction, career ambition and other desirable outcomes. [12] The reason for this is that the higher an individual's personal resources, the more positive the person's self-regard and the more goal self-concordance is expected to be experienced. [11-12] Individuals with goal self-concordance are intrinsically motivated to pursue their goals and as a result they trigger higher performance and satisfaction. [12] Several authors have investigated the relationships between personal resources and work engagement. For example, [13] conducted a large cross-sectional study among 1,910 South African police officers, and found that engaged police-officers use an active coping style. They are problem-focused, taking active steps to attempt to remove or rearrange stressors. Further, in their study among highly skilled technicians, [14] Results showed that

engaged employees are highly self-efficacious; they believe they are able to meet the demands they face in a broad array of contexts. In addition, engaged workers have the tendency to believe that they will generally experience good outcomes in life (optimistic), and believe they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the organization (organizational-based self-esteem); [15] These findings were replicated and expanded in a two-year follow-up study. [16] The findings indicated that self-efficacy, organizational-based self-esteem, and optimism make a unique contribution to explaining variance in work engagement over time, over and above the impact of job resources and previous levels of engagement. As a final example, [17] in their study found that those with most personal resources scored highest on work engagement. Particularly resilience, self-efficacy and optimism contributed to work engagement, and were able to explain unique variance in engagement scores (in addition to social support from team members and colleague principals, opportunities for development, and social support from the intimate partner). Thus, resilience is another personal resource that facilitates work engagement, indicating that engaged workers are effective in adaptation to changing environments. In short, engaged workers possess personal resources, including optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience, and an active coping style, that help them to control and impact upon their work environment successfully, and to achieve career success. [18]

### Relationship between Personal Resources and Job Performance

Personal resources, has been conceptually and empirically demonstrated to be related to several types of performance over the short and long term. A longitudinal study by [19] found that personal resources were related to two types of performance outcomes, namely financial and supervisory performance ratings. Personal resources therefore have a direct additive value on the

bottom line of an organisation. Similarly, [20] found significant correlations between the overall personal resources construct and performance. The first sample made use of a self-rated performance questionnaire ( $r = .33$ ), while the second sample's actual performance data was used to correlate it with personal resources scores ( $r = .22$ ). [20] explain that the higher order core construct, personal resources, represents a motivation propensity to accomplish tasks and set goals. They state that personal resources represent "one's positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for success based on motivated effort and perseverance". [20] The presence of high levels of personal resources signifies a motivational force that drives one's effort and determination due to feelings of hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience. Extended effort and perseverance evidently result in a higher level of performance as perceived by the individual and manager. It is therefore argued that personal resources, represented by the overall core construct of personal resources, relate positively to job performance.

### **Relationship between Work Engagement and Job Performance**

Researchers noticed in their study that a highly engaged employees "is service-minded and client-oriented in their work, which can be noticed in their quick, calm and patient reaction towards clients." [21] To date, only a few quantitative studies have shown that work engagement is positively related to job performance. [22] Nevertheless, the results look promising. [23] Showed that engaged employees received higher ratings from their colleagues on in-role and extra-role performance, indicating that engaged employees perform well and are willing to go the extra mile. Further, in their survey among Dutch employees from a wide range of occupations, [24] found that work engagement is positively related to in-role performance, whereas workaholism is not. These findings were expanded in another study among 327 secretaries. [24] found that

engaged secretaries scored higher on in-role and extra-role performance than their non-engaged counterparts. In addition, results suggested that engaged secretaries had more influence on daily business. They were more often asked to carry out additional, challenging tasks, including personnel pre-selection, the organization of trade exhibitions and conventions, and website maintenance. [25] conducted a study on engagement and performance among 105 school principals and 232 teachers. Their study showed significant and positive associations between school principals' work engagement scores and teacher-ratings of school principals' performance and leadership. More specifically, results of structural equation modeling showed that engaged principals scored higher on in-role and extra-role performance. In addition, engagement was strongly related to creativity; the higher school principals' levels of work engagement, the better they were able to come up with a variety of ways to deal with work-related problems. Finally, engaged school principals were seen as transformational leaders – being able to inspire, stimulate and coach their co-workers. [26] Conducted an important study among personnel working in Spanish restaurants and hotels. Contact employees from 114 service units (58 hotel front desks and 56 restaurants) provided information about organizational resources, engagement, and service climate. Furthermore, customers from these units provided information on employee performance and customer loyalty. Structural equation modeling analyses were consistent with a full mediation model in which organizational resources and work engagement predicted service climate, which in turn predicted employee performance and then customer loyalty. In their recent study among Greek employees working in a fast-food restaurant, [27] expanded this research, and made a compelling case of the predictive value of work engagement for performance, on a daily basis. Participants were asked to fill in a survey and a diary booklet for five

consecutive days. Consistent with hypotheses, results showed that employees were more engaged on days that were characterized by many job resources. Daily job resources, like supervisor coaching and team atmosphere contributed to employees' personal resources (day-levels of optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem), which, in turn, explained daily engagement. Importantly, this study clearly showed that engaged employees perform better on a daily basis. The higher employees' levels of daily engagement, the higher their objective financial returns.

### Research Theoretical Framework

Figure 1 presents research framework, which explains the relationship between personal resources as antecedent of work engagement and employees' job performance as outcome of employees' work engagement.

### Hypothesis

On the basis of the previous theoretical analysis, we hypothesized:

*H1: Personal Resources have a significant relationship with work engagement.*

*H2: work engagement has a significant relationship with employees' job performance.*

*H3: work engagement mediates between Personal Resources and employees' job performance.*

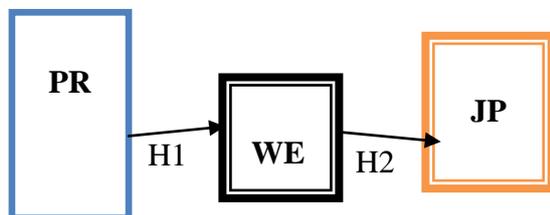


Figure 1: Research Framework

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

Participants were full-time employees, obtained from a variety of telecommunication organizations. We

contacted 120 employees. Nature of this research is quantitative. The research looks to evaluate the relationship between the independent variables such as personal resources, intervening variable such as work engagement and outcome variable such as job performance.

### Measures

The questionnaire for personal resources was developed by [5]. The work engagement is measured using the scale developed by [2]. Job performance is divided into two categories; task and contextual performance. The job performance scale aims to assess whether an individual is performed with his or her job. This scale, developed by [8].

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to conduct the analysis. For hypotheses testing, the Pearson correlation coefficients were used. The mediation analysis was tested using multiple linear regression.

The first part of the analysis focused on the descriptive analysis of the respondents. 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 I.

Table I: Reliability Statistics

| Variable | Cronbach alpha |
|----------|----------------|
| PR       | .923           |
| WE       | .905           |
| JP       | .959           |

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 .905 to .959.

Descriptive analysis of the respondents: The descriptive analysis focused on the variables such as gender, age, marital status and job status. Male

responders represented 60.4 % while female responders were 39.6%. 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 goes 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 77% and 75% respectively. While employees; who have contract jobs represented 23% and single staff were 25% of the total respondents.

The correlation data shows the relationship between the independent, intervening and dependent variables of study as shown in Table II. The table displays correlation coefficients between these variables. The correlation coefficients are a measure of the strength of the association between any two metric variables. [8] The results of the Pearson correlation has shown that most of the dimensions of the independent variables and dependent variables were positively correlated to each other.

**Table II: Correlations between Variables**

| Relationship | Correlation | Hypothesis |
|--------------|-------------|------------|
| PRWE →       | .654        | Supported  |
| WEJP →       | .768        | Supported  |

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

The results of Table II demonstrated that there is significant positive relationship between personal resources (PR) and work engagement (WE) at ( $r=.654$ ;  $p=0.037$ ) and the correlation is significant if the  $p=.01$ . The correlation shows that there is significant relationship between personal resources and work engagement. Hence the alternative hypothesis is supported. Similarly, the results have shown that there is a significant high correlation between work engagement (WE) and job performance (JP) ( $r=.768$ ;  $p=.01$ ), so the proposed alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Similarly, this study examines the mediation role of work engagement between

personal resources and job performance. As it can be seen from Table III, work engagement partially mediates (Partial Mediation) between personal resources and job performance, because as shown in the table the strength of  $c'$  is reduced compared to  $c$  and yet  $c'$  is significant. Hence, Sobel test was conducted in order to verify the result. The parameters such as  $a=.541$ ,  $sa=.078$ ,  $b=.525$  and  $sb=.094$  were used in equation of Sobel test. The calculated  $z$  value in Sobel test is 4.16711855 and it is bigger than 0 so the mediation is partial mediation.

**Table III: Mediation results**

| Construct | Path | Beta | S <sub>error</sub> | Med.    |
|-----------|------|------|--------------------|---------|
| PR-WE-JP  | c    | .467 | .087               | Partial |
|           | a    | .541 | .078               |         |
|           | b    | .525 | .094               |         |
|           | c'   | .183 | .092               |         |

The aim of this paper is to analyse the relationship between personal resources and work engagement, and also to analyse the relationship between work engagement and job performance. Therefore, three hypotheses were proposed in order to achieve the aim of the paper. The first hypothesis proposed that there was a positive relationship between personal resources and work engagement. Hence, this meant that an employee who has high level of personal resources in their jobs, will translate that resources into high level of work engagement towards their organization and jobs into getting involved in activities that are outside their job requirements. This means that due to that high level of engagement, they will reciprocate from the personal resources to good job performance. [11-12] Likewise, the proposed second hypothesis predicted that there was a positive relationship between work engagement and employees' job performance. The outcome results have supported the prediction of the hypothesis and there was a significant relationship between work engagement and employees' job performance. This shows that when the employees get high level of work engagement, their perceptions towards their

company increase and this also increases their job performance.

In addition, the third hypothesis examined the role of work engagement in the relationship between personal resources and employees' job performance. The findings had shown that work engagement mediates the relationship as partial mediation as shown in Table III. For example, the strength of  $c'$  is reduced compared to  $c$  and yet  $c'$  is significant. The results of this paper had agreed the previous studies conducted on an international level which had always shown that with the assertion of personal resources in employees work engagement has a positive influence on employee job performance. [11-14]

## CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the paper was to analyse the relationship between work engagement antecedents such as personal resources, work engagement and job performance. The adopted measures of this study have shown remarkable level of reliability as shown in Table I. Three hypotheses were developed; all of them were supported. Based on the findings of the study, the personal resources have a significant relationship on work engagement. The proposed hypothesis of work engagement and job performance was also supported, which means there was a significant relationship between work engagement and job performance. Finally, work engagement partially mediated between personal resources and employees' job performance.

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