

The Effect of Employee Engagement on The Job Performance of Nurses

Rabiatul Adawiyah Ma'arof¹, Norsiah Mat²

^{1,2}School of Business Management, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM).

Abstract:

Healthcare industry can be considered as one of important industry which indirectly become the major players in the economic growth for Malaysia. Within hospital setting, nurses as frontline staff, form the largest group of healthcare professionals. Therefore, the performance of nurses is acknowledged as an important element of quality healthcare since nurses in most hospitals have highest level of direct patient care. Despite the studies that have been conducted to investigate the factors that influenced job performance of nurses in Malaysia, this study intends to examine the relationship between employee engagement and job performance of nurses in public hospitals. This study involved nurses from four public hospitals in Peninsular Malaysia and the data were gathered through a set of self-administrated questionnaires in the form of booklet. All study hypotheses were tested using multiple regression. Statistical results confirmed the positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and task performance and contextual performance of nurses. The study suggests some recommendations and conclusion for future research directions.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Job Performance, Nurses.

1. Introduction

Healthcare industry can be considered as an important industry because it attends to address the basic needs of people and their survival [1]. In Malaysia, the healthcare delivery is under administration of Malaysia Ministry of Health, which is divided into two system, namely public healthcare and private healthcare [2]. Public healthcare which highly subsidized by the government [3] are used by majority of Malaysian population while private healthcare is targeting well-off members of population. Since healthcare industry is regard as service-based organization, the performance of their human resources affects the quality of service delivered to clients (patients and patient's families) [4]. In fact, within hospital setting, nurses as frontline staff form the largest group of human resources of healthcare professionals [5]. According to [6] and [7], it is important to study about nurse's

profession because their job performance is regard as an important element of delivering high quality of services and nurses have highest level of direct patient care [4] as compared with others within hospital setting.

However, in Malaysia healthcare, job performance of nurses has been declining over the past several years due to shortage of nurses [8]. According to [9], even though the number of nursing workforce has been increases over the past few years, unfortunately the nurse-to patient ratio is still high, which is 1:309. This ratio is considered high as compared to World Health Organization's recommendation nurse-to-patient ratio, which is 1:200 for developing country like Malaysia. As a consequence, nurses in public hospitals are overworked [8] and performs their duties in stressful environments [10], and these would affect their job performance as well as quality delivery to patients.

There were many factors that contributed to job performance of nurses. Thus, this study aims to examine the relationship between employee engagement and job performance of nurses in Malaysia public hospitals which could further added to body of knowledge. In this study, the job performance of nurses is measure in the forms of task performance and contextual performance.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Employee Engagement (EE)

For the past years, there are a numbers of employee engagement definitions presented in academic and practical perspective [11]. [12] first defined engagement as the 'simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performance'. While, Gallup organization viewed employee engagement based on practitioner's perspective. Employee engagement is referring to 'individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work' [13]. In nursing context, engagement is viewed as 'the dedicated, absorbing, vigorous nursing practices

that emerges from settings of autonomy and trust and results in safer, cost effective patient outcomes' [14].

However, despite various definitions of employee engagement in literature, this study determined employee engagement as 'a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption [15]. According to [16], vigor refers to high levels of energy and enthusiasm that person brings to work, dedication characterized by strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance and pride, and absorption refers to bring fully concentrated and happily immersed in one's work.

2.2. Job Performance

Job performance is known as important element in determining organization's outcomes [17]. Similarly, in hospital setting, job performance of nurses is regard as central topic since nurses' attitudes and behaviors are important in determining the quality of healthcare services [7]. [18] defined job performance as actions that can be altered, behavior and product that contributed to organization's objective. While, [19] refers job performance as employee' behavior that yield positive effects for the individual and valuable to the organization.

Previous researchers and human resource professional once perceived job performance as unidimensional construct [20], meanwhile [21] and [22] argued that job performance is a multidimensional construct that comprised of task performance and contextual performance. According to [22], although the measures of task performance and contextual performance have different predictors, but they contribute independently to ratings of overall job performance.

According to [23], the existing measure of nurses' job performance need to update since there is development in nursing roles. In fact, findings from study done by [24] noted that nurses engage in both task and contextual performance behaviors. Therefore, this study measured job performance of nurses in terms of task performance and contextual performance using scale developed by [7]. Task performance refers to behaviors that contribute directly to organization's technical core while contextual performance refers to behaviors that maintain the broader social environment in which technical core must function [7].

2.3. Employee Engagement (EE) and Job Performance Relationship

According to [25] and [26], there is limited empirical studies on employee engagement particularly on the relationship between employee engagement and job

performance (task performance and contextual performance). In contrast, [35] claimed that there is strong support that employee engagement predicts task and contextual performance as well as health and well-being outcomes such as stress, strain, and burnout. Similarly, [27] stated that engagement can predicted in-role behavior, extra-role behavior, and proactive behavior. An engaged employee is more likely to stay and committed in their current workplace [28], performs better than disengaged employee [29] and more likely to participate in extra-role activities [30]

Hence, based on previous literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is significant relationship between employee engagement and job performance.

H1a: There is significant relationship between employee engagement and task performance.

H1b: There is significant relationship between employee engagement and contextual performance.

3. Methodology

3.1. Samples and Procedures

After getting approval from the Medical Research Ethical Committee (MREC), 588 set of questionnaires in the form of booklet were distributed to the nurses and their respected immediate supervisors (sisters) of the four public hospitals in Peninsular Malaysia. Immediate supervisors were requested to evaluate not more than four nurses under their supervision on how well nurses in their unit completed varieties of activities. A total of 461 responses were received and 445 were usable, yielding 75.68% as an acceptable response rate.

3.2. Instruments

For the purpose of this study, two instruments were used to measure the study variables. Employee engagement was measured using shortened-9 items version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Uwes-9) derived by [31] with scale ranging from 1 = never to 7 = always. While, job performance of nurses was measured using Nursing Performance Scale developed by [7], which comprised of task performance and contextual performance activities. The scale ranging from 1 = much below average to 7 = much above average.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 and Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of respondent's profile (nurses and immediate supervisors) which includes their age, gender, marital

status, race, educational qualification, and department/unit. Based on Table 1, all sisters were female (100.0%) and majority were in the age between 41 – 50 years old (58.7%). The remaining 42 (29.4%) and 17 (11.9%) sisters were in the age between 31 – 40 years old and 51 – 60 years old respectively. Most sisters were married (94.4%), while the percentage of those who are single is 5% and others is 2.1%. Majority of sisters were Malay (84.6%), followed by Indian (9.8%), and Chinese (5.6%). In terms of educational background, most sisters had their diploma (86.7%) while the remaining sisters had degree (13.3%). With regard to department/unit, most of sisters came from medical (21.7%), followed by pediatric (16.1%), surgical (15.4%), obstetrics and gynecology (14.7%) and the least is emergency and multidisciplinary unit (1.4%).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Immediate Supervisors (Sisters)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Female	143	100.0
Age:		
31 – 40 years old	42	29.4
41 – 50 years old	84	58.7
51 – 60 years old	17	11.9
Marital Status:		
Single	5	3.5
Married	135	94.4
Others	3	2.1
Race:		
Malay	121	84.6
Chinese	8	5.6
Indian	14	9.8
Education:		
Diploma	124	86.7
Degree	19	13.3
Department/Unit:		
Medical	31	21.7
Surgical	22	15.4
Orthopedic	19	13.3
Pediatric	23	16.1
Obstetrics & Gynecology	21	14.7
Emergency	2	1.4
Critical Care	11	7.7
Multidisciplinary Unit	2	1.4
Anesthesiology	8	5.6
Ophthalmology	4	2.8
Total	143	100.0

Meanwhile, in Table 2, majority of nurses were female (97.3%) and the remaining were male nurses (2.7%). Most nurses were in the age between 21 – 30 years old (63.6%) while 137 nurses were in the age between 31 – 40 years old. The remaining 20 (4.5%) and 5 (1.1%) nurses were in the age between 41 – 50 years old and 51 – 60 years old respectively. Most nurses were married (64.3%), while the percentage of those who are single is 34.6% and others is 1.1%. Majority of nurses were Malay (89.0%), followed by

Chinese (11.0%), and Indian (58.5%). In terms of educational background, all of nurses had diploma (100.0%). With regard to department/unit, most nurses came from medical (25.4%), followed by pediatric (18.2%), orthopedic (11.9%), obstetrics and gynecology (11.7%) and the least is multidisciplinary unit (2.2%).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Nurses

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Female	433	97.3
Male	12	2.7
Age:		
21 – 30 years old	283	63.6
31 – 40 years old	137	30.8
41 – 50 years old	20	4.5
51 – 60 years old	5	1.1
Marital Status:		
Single	154	34.6
Married	286	64.3
Others	5	1.1
Race:		
Malay	396	89.0
Chinese	11	2.5
Indian	38	8.5
Education:		
Diploma	445	100.0
Department/Unit:		
Medical	113	25.4
Surgical	49	11.0
Orthopedic	53	11.9
Pediatric	81	18.2
Obstetrics & Gynecology	52	11.7
Emergency	12	2.7
Critical Care	37	8.3
Multidisciplinary Unit	10	2.2
Anesthesiology	23	5.2
Ophthalmology	15	3.4
Total	445	100.0

5. Regression Analysis

In this study, regression analysis was used to test the relationship between employee engagement and job performance of nurses in terms of task performance and contextual performance (H1a-H1b). the regression analysis result in Table 3 is indicates that employee engagement is positively and significantly related to job performance of nurses. The result shows that employee engagement was able to explain 4.60% of the observed variations on task performance (R^2 change = 0.05, F-change = 21.44, $p < 0.001$) and 6.40% of the observed variations on contextual performance (R^2 change = 0.06, F-change = 30.09, $P < 0.001$). Therefore, these findings support H1a and H1b.

Table 3. The Regressions of Employee Engagement and Job Performance

Predictor	Criterion Variables
-----------	---------------------

	Task Performance	Contextual Performance
	Std. β	Std. β
Employee Engagement	.22**	.25**
R ²	0.05	0.06
R ² change	0.05	0.06
F-change	21.44	30.09

Note: **p<0.001

6. Discussions

The main objective of this study was to examine the association between employee engagement and job performance of public hospitals nurses at Peninsular Malaysia. The job performance of nurses was measured in terms of task performance and contextual performance. The findings of this study present that employee engagement had a significant and positive effect towards task performance and contextual performance. That is to say, when nurses experienced high employee engagement, their job performance (task performance and contextual performance) will increase. As the frontline staff within hospital setting, nurses would be expected to engage in both task performance and contextual performance. It is because generally, nurses were engaged in a wider range of behaviors in their daily jobs which are more discretionary in nature [7].

The result of this study is in line with previous findings that employee engagement had a significant and positive effect on job performance [32,33]. In addition, [34] stated that the more engaged the employee were, the more they displayed task and contextual performance. Further, in nursing context, an engaged nurse was performing better than those disengaged nurses because they have positive emotions, open to new experiences and passionate in taking care of patients (Bhatti et al., 2018) which eventually increase their job performance as well as delivering high quality of care.

7. Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

Based on the study outcomes, the findings of this study provide several opportunities for improvement. First, the low R² in Table 3 of the model suggest that there might be other factors which could also affect job performance of nurses. It is recommended that future researcher may expend the scope by adding other variables. Second, this study is limited to nurses and their immediate supervisors working in four public hospitals in Peninsular Malaysia. So, future research could expend the scope of investigation by incorporating nurses and their immediate supervisors from other public hospitals throughout Malaysia. A larger sample in the same industry would improve the generalization of the findings.

8. Conclusion

As a conclusion, this study has provided empirical evidence on the association between employee engagement and job performance of nurses. Hence, it shows that in hospital setting, delivering high quality service in terms of patient care depends on attitude (employee engagement) and behaviors (job performance) of nurses. This study also noted that nurses were engage both in task and contextual performance behaviors when performing their roles and responsibilities as nurses.

9. References

- [i] Bhatti, M.A., Mat, N., & Juhari, A.S., "Effects of job resources factors on nurses job performance: Mediating role of work engagement", *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance*, 2018.
- [ii] Ujan, I.A., Abdullah, Z.S., Haider, Z., & Suhaimi, M.A., "Review of Malaysia tenth health plan 2011-2015", *Journal of ISOSS*, 3,2, 2017, pp. 289-294.
- [iii] Quek, D.K.L., "The Malaysian Health Care System: A Review", in *Intensive Workshop on Health Systems in Transition*, Kuala Lumpur, April 29-30, 2010.
- [iv] Ali, M., & Qun, W., "Factors contributing job satisfaction and job performance of nurses in the healthcare industry", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Development Research*, 3,1, 2019, pp. 7-22.
- [v] Burke, R.J., Moodie, S., Dolan, S.L., & Fiksenbaum, L., "Job demands, social support, work satisfaction and psychological well-being among nurses in Spain", *ESADE Business School Research Paper*, 2012.
- [vi] Cohen, A., & Golam, R., "Predicting absenteeism and turnover intentions by past absenteeism and work attitudes: An empirical examination of female employees in long term nursing care facilities", *Career Development International*, 12, 5, 2007, pp. 416-432.
- [vii] Greenslade, J.H., & Jimmieson, N.L., "Distinguishing between task and contextual performance for nurses: Development of a job performance scale", *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 58,6, January 2007, pp. 602-611.
- [viii] Manogaran, P., & Muthuveloo, R., "The antecedents of job performance among nurses working in Malaysia government hospitals, age being a moderator", *The Malaysia Journal of Nursing*, 11,1, 2019.
- [ix] Ministry of Health Malaysia., "Health facts 2017", 2017, retrieved from www.moh.gov.my/.
- [x] Bhatti, M.A., Alshagawi, M., & Juhari, A.S., "Mediating role of work engagement between personal resources (self-efficacy, the big five model) and nurses' job performance", *International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare*, 11,3, December 2017, pp. 176-191.
- [xi] Macey, W.H., & Schneider, B., "The meaning of employee engagement", *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1, 2008, pp. 3-30.

- [xii] Kahn, W.A., "Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work", *The Academy of Management Journal*, 33,4, 1990, pp. 692-724.
- [xiii] Harter, J.K., Schmidt, F.L., & Hayes, T.L., "Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement at work and business outcomes: A meta-analysis", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 2, 2002, pp. 268-279.
- [xiv] Bargagliotti, L.A., "Work engagement in nursing: A concept analysis", *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, September 2011.
- [xv] Schaufeli, W.B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A.B., "The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 3,1, 2002, pp. 71-92.
- [xvi] Salanova, M., Agut, S., & Peiro, J.M., "Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: The mediation of service climate", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90,6, 2005, pp. 1217-1227.
- [xvii] Krishnaveni, R., & Monica, R., "Factors influencing employee performance: The role of human resource management practices and work engagement", *International Journal Business Performance Management*, 19,4, 2018, pp. 450-475.
- [xviii] Viswesvaran, C., & Ones, D.S., "Perspectives on models of job performance", *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 8,4, 2000, pp. 216-226.
- [xix] Fritz, C., & Sonnentag, S., "Recovery, health, and job performance: Effects of weekend experiences", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 10, 3, 2005, pp.187-199.
- [xx] Bhatti, M.A., Hussain, M.S., & Al Doghan, M.A., "The role of personal and job resources in boosting nurses' work engagement and job performance", *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 37,2, 2018, pp. 32-40.
- [xxi] Campbell, J.P., McHenry, J.J., & Wise, L.L., "Modeling job performance in a population of jobs", *Personnel Psychology*, 43, 1990, pp. 313-333.
- [xxii] Motowidlo, S.J., & Van Scotter, J.R., "Evidence that task performance should be distinguished from contextual performance", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 4, 1994, pp. 475-480.
- [xxiii] Seren, A.K.H., Tuna, R., & Bacaksiz, F.E., "Reliability and validity of the Turkish version of the job performance scale instrument", *The Journal of Nursing Research*, 26,1, February 2018, pp. 27-35.
- [xxiv] Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E., & Euwema, M.C., "Job resources buffer the impact of job demands and burnout", *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 10,2, 2005, pp. 170-180.
- [xxv] Kim, W., Kolb, J.A., & Kim, T. "The relationship between work engagement and performance: A review of empirical literature and a proposed research agenda", *Human Resource Development Review*, 20, 10, 2012, pp. 1-29.
- [xxvi] Rana, S., Pant, D., & Chopra, P. "Work engagement and individual work performance: Research findings and an agenda for employee relationships", *Journal of Emerging technologies and Innovative Research*, 6,5, May 2019, pp. 17-32.
- [xxvii] Sonnentag, S., "Recovery, work engagement, and proactive behavior: A new look at the interface between nonwork and work", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 3, pp. 518-528.
- [xxviii] Karatepe, O.M., & Olugbade, O.A., "The effects of job and personal resources on hotel employees' work engagement", *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28,4, 2009, pp. 504-512.
- Xxix) George, G., & Joseph, B., "A study on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational citizenship with reference to employees working in travel organizations", *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 10, 2, 2015, pp. 33-44.
- [xxx] Ancarani, A., Mauro, C.D., Giammanco, M.D., & Giammanco, G., "Work engagement in public hospitals: A social exchange approach", *International Review of Public Administration*, 2017.
- [xxxi] Schaufeli, W.B., Bakker, A.B., & Salanova, M., "The measurement of work engagement with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study", *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 66,4, 2006, pp. 701-716.
- [xxxii] Carter, W.R., Nesbit, P.L., Badham, R.J., Parker, S.K., & Sung, L.K., "The effects of employee engagement and self-efficacy on job performance: A longitudinal field study", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2016.
- [xxxiii] Ismail, H.N., Iqbal, A., & Nasr, L., "Employee engagement and job performance in Lebanon: The mediating role of creativity", *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, September 2018.
- [xxxiv] Reijseger, G., Peeters, M.C., Taris, T.W., & Schaufeli, W.B., "From motivation to activation: Why engaged workers are better performers", *Journal of Business Psychology*, March 2016.
- [xxxv] Saks, A.M., "Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement revisited", *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 2019.