
Saudi Arabia Women Teachers' Psychological Capital towards Work Engagement

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Abstract — Education in Saudi Arabia is ranked at number 84 in the Global Competitiveness Report 2016 -2017. In Saudi Arabia, most female teachers work in segregated public or private schools for female students. Through past research, it was reported that in Saudi Arabia, the overall ratio of engaged employees in Saudi Arabia is lesser than the world's average rate. The study examined the link between psychological capital and work engagement of these women teachers. 414 questionnaires were obtained from Saudi women teachers from three main cities in Saudi Arabia-Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam. The findings revealed that psychological capital has an influence on work engagement on Saudi women teachers and the Ministry of Education in Saudi needs to invest in further improving and developing their performance towards achieving its education goals and put the country at par with other countries of the same income level and cultural background.

Keywords - *psychological capital, work engagement*

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I. Introduction

Work engagement is important for determining an organisation's future (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Employees have high expectations towards pursuing dynamic involvement in organisational activities and actively seeking work contexts where they believe they are treated with respect and fairness (Burke & Ng, 2006). 'Work engagement', is defined as the process of positively motivating employees cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally towards fulfilling organisational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Aiming to meet the challenges of employee engagement in today's organisations, researchers in their recent studies focused on positive organisational behaviour (POB), in particular, psychological capital (SPC) (Luthans, Avolio, Avey & Norman, 2007). Luthans et al., (2007) found significant positive relationships between psychological capital and work outcome. Other researchers (Viseu, Rus, & de Jesus, 2015; Avey, Wernsing & Luthans, 2008) also found that psychological capital is also strongly associated with work engagement. Their studies revealed that employees who are higher in psychological capital are likely to have more positive emotions and subsequently be more engaged. They also tend to exhibit more organisational citizenship behaviour and less deviant behaviours.

In the Global Competitiveness Report 2016 -2017, a yearly report from the World Economic Forum, Saudi education is ranked at number 84 (Schwab, 2016). This ranking standard does not match the standards achieved by other oil countries in the region. Even though the budget allocated for education in Saudi is high (USD56 billion), they still did not meet the standards. In addition, it has been noted also that female participation in the

labour market in Saudi Arabia is concentrated in the education sector. 77.6% of the total working women in Saudi pursue their careers in education and (Saudi Arabia Ninth Development Plan, 2010). Baki (2004) suggested that although these women may seek careers in non-traditional jobs, they often end up in the teaching profession. It is often presumed that Saudi women will be left with no choice but to teach in segregated girls' schools. Hence, in recent years, Saudi women have made the rational choice to specialize in education where the job opportunities are concentrated. This concentration of females in education rises out of the cultural justification of teaching as a "suitable" job for women. Not surprisingly, Alharbi (2011) also found that teaching is not a favoured job amongst Saudi's men.

To be employed as Saudi Arabia's teachers can actually satisfy their financial needs, as the salary is very high (starting from 2,200 USD) and they get compensation (133 USD) every year. Due to this positive aspect, women teachers stay in the teaching job even though they may not like teaching; which then raises the question about their psychological situation and how happy they are in their job. In Saudi Arabia, most female employees work in segregated schools for female students either in public or private schools. Baki (2004) found in her study that most of the teachers are actually graduates specialized in other fields other than education, but due to culture bound practiced, they have to reluctantly become teachers (Baki, 2004). Thus, these female graduates who turned out to be teachers do lack interest in doing their jobs and as such this affects their work engagement. There is a need to investigate the situation on the psychological capital and work engagement of the women teachers in Saudi.

II. Work Engagement

Schaufeli (2012) defined engagement as an involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, and energy. Engagement also has been defined as employee involvement or empowerment, workforce engagement (McManus, 2007), and commitment as well as job satisfaction (McBain, 2007). In their definition, Schaufeli and Salanova, (2008) distinguished engagement from involvement where engagement is viewed as passive and involvement as active. Engagement among employees, as further explained by Cateeuw, Flynn, and Vonderhorst (2007), is the extent where employees are satisfied with their job; feel valued and experience harmony, teamwork and trust. Earlier on, Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) related engagement to positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind characterized by dynamism, dedication, as well as absorption. Dynamism involves energy and the willingness to give extra effort to complete a job. Dedication, on the other hand, involves inspiration, pleasure and satisfaction, enthusiasm, and challenge. Lastly, absorption is what is described as how immersed someone is in his or her work. Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) distinguish work engagement as the relationship between an employee and his work or the relationship between an employee and his organisation. Researchers from various studies of engagement (Kahn, 1990; McBain, 2007) implied that engagement involves the use of flexible behavior or emotional commitment. The flexibility results in a willingness to go beyond expectations and to do more than minimum requirement. From the report from Towers Perrin as cited by Frank, Finnegan, and Taylor (2004), engagement involves voluntary choice of the employees who are willing to give extra effort to the organisation including time, energy, as well as expertise and brainpower.

Work engagement is very important for employees. Schaufeli (2012) stated that engagement attaches the workers to their job effectively, makes the employees see work as challenging. Engaged employees are working with their full, genuine selves, and they have a natural motivating interest in their work (Kahn, 1990). Moreover, Britt, Adler, and Bartone, (2001) found that engaged employees have a tendency to perceive their work as being meaningful, significant, and personally valuable; therefore, engagement has been confirmed to help individuals develop benefits from stressful work. Finally, work engagement is associated with many positive work attitudes such as commitment, satisfaction, and involvement (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006).

Accordingly, the existence of one engaged employee makes it possible that there will be other engaged workers in the workplace. Other benefits of work engagement to the workplace are that it relates positively to organisational commitment (Demerouti et al., 2001) and has also been shown to have positive effects on one's job performance and extra-role behavior. Recent longitudinal study conducted by Timms, Brough, O'Driscoll, Siu, and Lo (2014) investigated employees' use of flexible work arrangements and relationship to work

engagement, with turnover intentions and psychological strain also used as criterion variables for comparison purposes.

III. Psychological Capital

Psychology is the main field which the psychological capital was developed (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital is characterized by hope, optimism, flexibility and self-efficacy (Luthans et al., 2007). These are the constructs in psychological capital, relevant in the present business context characterized by heavy competition and lots of uncertainty. Present business context poses a new challenge every day that an employee needs to face with determination and perseverance. Employees who are positive cope better with these situations compared to their peers, hence show better and favourable work performance and attitudes (Sridevi & Srinivasan, 2012). This type of employees, the engaged ones, are able to help organisations endure through turbulent times. Therefore, employees' psychological capital is important.

Psychological capital is defined as "An individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering towards goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success" (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 3). Psychological capital meets the criteria for inclusion in positive organisational behaviour. It positively focused on human strengths, measurable, and research indicates that it is a developable construct that can have a direct impact on performance (Luthans et al., 2007). It is a state-like construct developed at the individual level of analysis. Positive psychological capital is differentiated from human, social, and economic capital. Traditional economic capital is what you have (finances and assets), human capital is what you know (experience, education, skills, knowledge, and ideas), and social capital is who you know (relationships and networks). Positive psychological capital determines who you are (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) (Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

IV. Relationship between Psychological Capital and Work Engagement

Employee's psychological capital is significantly related to employees' work engagement through positive emotions (Avey et al., 2008). This means that the employees' positive resources, as in psychological capital and positive emotions, are related to the desired attitude of engagement. In addition, Sweetman and Luthans, (2010)'s proposition that psychological capital would be positively associated with work engagement was made based on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggested by Demerouti et al. (2001). Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model implies that there is an interaction between job-and-personal resources and job demands to predict work engagement that consequently predicts performance. Demerouti and Cropanzano's (2010) proposal was seconded by Hodges (2010) who also found that psychological capital and work engagement are correlated directly and significantly.

Nigah, Davis and Hurrell (2012) explored the mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between new employees' satisfaction and work engagement. Nigah et al. (2012) study found that satisfaction with work engagement relationship was fully mediated by psychological capital, which means that psychological capital has positive relationship with work engagement which is in line with the findings drawn from Gruman and Saks (2011). These researchers declared that the establishment of the relationship between psychological capital and work engagement signifies a new research area. Hodges (2010) found significant correlations between psychological capital, employee engagement, and performance. Results indicated initial evidence supporting the presence of a contagion effect where employees reporting to the managers participating in the psychological capital intervention experienced an increase in their own psychological capital levels over a six-week period.

Sridevi and Srinivasan (2012) asserted that employees who are higher in psychological capital would have more positive emotions, as a result they are more engaged and optimistic, which in turn exhibit less deviant behaviour and more of organisational citizenship. This assertion was made based on the findings from Avey et al. (2008) study who suggested that positive emotions may mediate the relationship between psychological capital and the attitudes of cynicism and engagement, and between psychological capital and the citizenship and

deviant behaviours. In sum, this study stresses that psychological capital can contribute to better understanding and support of the importance of work engagement.

V. Procedures and Findings

In this study, the population was the entire women teachers in public schools in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam. Total population of women teachers from the three cities were 71,620. This sampling frame was the women teachers in Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam and a total of 700 questionnaires were administered. The unit of analysis was the women teachers. Descriptive analysis and correlation analysis were conducted.

Work engagement was evaluated using the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) as suggested by Seppala et al. (2009) on a 7-point Likert scale. Psychological capital was measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) on a 7-point Likert scale. The PCQ was a self-reported 24-items questionnaire (Luthans et al., 2007). The total number of respondents was 414 comprising of Saudi women teachers from three main cities in Saudi Arabia-Jeddah, Riyadh and Dammam. The teachers have wide range of experience. Majority of the teachers had 1-5 years of teaching experience (115; 27.8%). While 80 (19.3%) teachers had 6-10 years of experience and 81 (19.6%) with 11-15 years of experience. 75 teachers (18.1%) had 16-20 years of experience and only 63 teachers (15.2%) had more than 21 years of experience. From a total of 414 respondents, 261 were aged between 30 and 39. This group of respondents made up 63.1% of the sample. 140 were aged above 40 and this made up 33.8%. Finally only 13 were aged between 20 and 29 and this was 3.1%. In terms of education, majority 320 teachers (77.3%) had Bachelor's degree, whilst 85 teachers (20.5%) had diploma and 2.1 per cent had masters or PhD. Those 68.6 % of the 414 women teachers were working in primary schools, whilst 31.4% worked in intermediate and secondary schools. With regard to the monthly household income, a total of 238 respondents (57.5 %) earned between SAR7000 and SAR 11,999 per month, followed by 156 respondents (37.7%) earned between SAR12,000 and SAR 16,999. There were only 20 respondents (4.8%) earning more than SAR 17000. Majority of the teachers were married 377 only 37 were single.

Table 1 gives an illustration for the mean of the two variables with their standard deviations. The mean was applied as a measure of central tendency, which indicated that the mean values of the constructs were above their midpoint level (4). This shows that the respondents' perception towards these constructs were above average.

Table 1

Results of Descriptive Statistics for Constructs

Constructs	Mean	Standard Deviation
Psychological Capital (SPC)	5.20	1.06
Work Engagement	5.37	1.21

When Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between the two constructs, it was found that there is a significant positive relationship of 0.597 between psychological capital and work engagement.

Table 2

Results of Discriminant Validity for CFA Model

	SPC	WE
Psychological Capital (SPC)	0.822	
Work engagement (WE)	0.597	0.877

Note: Diagonals represent the square root of the average variance extracted while the other entries represent the correlations.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the correlation analysis found that psychological capital has a significant positive influence on work engagement. Psychological capital is thus important in promoting the well-being and adaptive functioning, as well as experiences of positive emotions of the Saudi women teachers which lead them to be engaged in their jobs. Positive emotions not only make people feel good in the present, but they extend those feelings to the future and make those individuals function well. In other words, when women teachers create positive emotions through psychological capital (maybe through feeling optimistic, have hope on the future, being resilience, has feeling of self-efficacy) this in turn encourage them to repeat this experience of being positive by engaging themselves to their work and feel enthusiastic, vigorous and absorbed in the work they are engaged in.

The results seem to come in agreement with JD-R model which assumes that there may a positive relationship between psychological capital and work engagement. These findings are similarly in agreement with findings from many previous studies which reported that psychological capital has positive effects on work engagement. Luthans et al., (2007) also found significant positive relationships between psychological capital and work outcome.

Other researchers such as Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova (2006) revealed that psychological capital can contribute to better understanding and support of the importance of work engagement. Similarly, Karatepe and Karadas (2015) suggest that employees who are high in psychological capital feel energetic and dedicated and are immersed in their work. Therefore, in the setting of women teachers in Saudi Arabia's public schools, this study found that psychological capital has positive effects on work engagement. Results showed that psychological capital among women teachers in Saudi Arabia public schools positively influences their work engagement.

This study focused on work engagement and psychological capital of Saudi female teachers. The findings hope to contribute understanding to the Saudi Arabia's education system to continue develop possible workable methods to improve education outcomes. It is important for decision makers represented by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia to know what could hinder female teachers' engagement and then help to build higher performance. In addition, the findings will also add to the current knowledge of management to further understand on work engagement. As for the Saudi teachers, the findings could endow them with positive encouragement to continue building their career as teachers. It is important to bring to their attention what they can achieve in the teaching field, rather than wishing to move to another job. Whilst Smith's (2012) study focuses on what organizations can do to create employee commitment, this study reveals that every person in schools must play his or her role in applying appropriate knowledge and skills.

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