

Socio-Demographic Factors in Work Engagement: A Study Among Upper Primary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' work engagement is related to their classroom behavior and students' achievement and motivation. The present study aims to understand role of sociodemographic factors in work engagement of Upper Primary school teachers. The sample of the study includes 112 Upper primary school teachers from various schools of Kerala with an age between 24 and 58. Utrecht work engagement scale was the tools used for this study. Data was analyzed using SPSS. Result indicates that there is a significant difference in work engagement with regard to demographic variables like length of teaching experience and type of school.

Keywords: School teachers, Work engagement

Engagement at work has emerged as an important aspect of employee performance. For organizations to thrive, or even survive in these turbulent times, they need employees who are engaged at all levels (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). Kahn (1990) first conceptualized work engagement as “harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Maslach and Leiter (1997) viewed work engagement as the “antipode” of burnout. Schaufeli et. al (2002) defined work engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”. Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being that can be seen as an antipode of job burnout. Work engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, a willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and challenge. Finally, absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby times passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Work engagement enables individuals to invest considerable effort in their work and to be highly focussed. Work engagement is different from workaholism. Contrary to workaholics,

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engaged workers lack the typical compulsive drive that is characteristic of any addiction, including an addiction to work. For engaged workers, work is fun and not a compulsion.

Engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastically involved in their work (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008). Some demonstrated direct and indirect benefits of work engagement include: the positivity of the experience itself (Schaufeli et al., 2002); good health (Rothbard, 2001); reduced turnover intentions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004); improved individual performance (Kahn, 1990); greater business-unit performance (Harter et al., 2002); and improved managerial effectiveness (Luthans & Peterson, 2002).

Hogaard et al. (2011) investigated work engagement and teacher efficacy and their relationship to job satisfaction, burnout and the intention to quit among newly qualified teachers and found that work engagement and teacher efficacy are positively related to job satisfaction but negatively related to job burnout and the intention to quit.

Work engagement is the result of various social psychological processes. Work engagement is contagious. Engaged workers seem to spread their energy and inspire colleagues with their optimism and enthusiasm creating a positive team climate (Bakker, 2021)

Most of the studies on work engagement have used Job-Demands Resource (JD-R) model as an explanatory framework. (Demerouti, Bakker, Machinery, Schaufeli, 2001; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli, & Bakker, 2004). The JD-R model thus proposes that high job demands and a lack of resources may create a fertile breeding ground for burnout and reduced work engagement respectively (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). On the other hand, high job resources combined with either a high or low level of job demands may result in high motivation and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) carried out a study to examine the level of work engagement and whether socio-demographic and job-related characteristics influence work engagement level of Indian business executives. Study variables included gender, age, education, income, nature of organization, position in organizational hierarchy, and job tenure. A total of 404 business executives from select public and private sector organizations in India participated in the study. The study results suggest above-average level of work engagement among Indian business executives. Findings also suggest significant differences in the work engagement level of employees with different demographic and job characteristics, such as age, nature of organization, position in the organizational hierarchy, income, etc. Gender, education, and organizational tenure failed to contribute to understanding of work engagement.

Research evidence with respect to relation between age and work engagement have also been mixed. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) in their multi-country study on testing the psychometric properties of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) reported no significant correlation between age and work engagement for the overall sample.

Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) also found no significant differences in the work engagement levels of employees of different age groups.

Avery et al. (2007) in a study among UK employees reported that engagement decreases with age, that is, younger employees displayed higher engagement levels than the older

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ones. Further, Robinson, Hooker, & Hayday (2007) conveyed that engagement is highest among younger (age < 20 years) and older employees with a decline in the mid-career.

Rothmann (2005) in their study among employees of a higher educational institution found that employees with less than 5 years of work experience scored significantly higher on vigor dimension of engagement as compared to employees with more than 10 years of experience. Avery et al. (2007) found that employees with higher organizational tenure were less engaged than those with lower organizational tenure.

Xu and Cooper-Thomas (2011) did not find any significant association between tenure and engagement. Robinson et al. (2007) is of the view that engagement varies with the length of service in organization depending upon the kind of experiences provided by the organization.

Köse(2016) found that gender, marital status, age, branch and the educational status were not statistically significant factors on teachers' work engagement, but the effect of seniority variable is statistically positive and significant. Based on the findings that teachers' work engagement increase the seniority.

Shukla et.al (2015) Results indicate significant differences in engagement scores for three demographic variables under study i.e., gender, marital status and experience. Female employees in the organization were more engaged to their jobs as compared to their male counterparts. Engagement levels of married and senior employees were also found to be high.

Sharma and Rajput (2021) studied the level of work engagement of university teachers in India and examined whether demographic factors influence work engagement. Demographic factors included gender, age, years of experience, designation, employment status, educational qualification, and marital status. Data collected from 282 university teachers were statistically analyzed. The finding of the study revealed the above-average level of engagement among university teachers. Results showed that the work engagement level differed significantly with age, employment status, designation, and marital status. However, no significant difference in work engagement was found based on gender, educational qualifications, and years of experience.

Bibi et.al (2021) conducted a study on relationship of demographic variables and employee engagement in the education sector in India. Their results revealed that age, job type, gender, marital status, experience and academic qualification were not statistically significant on teachers' work engagement, but the impact of age was statistically significant.

Work engagement has many beneficial effects on organisation. So, most organisations always prefer engaged workers for the smooth functioning of their organisation. Engaged teachers are more likely to transfer and spread their energy and inspire colleagues with their optimism and enthusiasm creating a positive team climate (Bakker,2021). So, the present study is an attempt to study the demographic factors in work engagement among Upper primary school teachers.

Objective

- To study the role of type of school on work engagement among upper primary teachers.

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- To study the role of length of teaching experience on work engagement among upper primary school teachers.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant difference in work engagement with regard to type of school. (aided /unaided)
- There is a significant difference in work engagement with regard to length of teaching experience.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample of the study includes 112 Upper primary school teachers from various schools in Kerala with an age between 24 and 58years with length of teaching experience between 1 and 33years.

Instruments

- **Personal data sheet:** This included the details such as age, sex, educational qualification, years of teaching.
- **Work Engagement Scale:** Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and his colleagues (2002) was used to measure work engagement of employees. This scale consists of three subscales: absorption (6 items); vigor (6 items); dedication (5 items). Altogether the scale consists 17 items which are rated on a 6 point frequency-based scale (0=never, 6=Always). The Cronbach alpha for the scale was found to be 0.92. Scale has reasonable construct validity.

Procedure

The investigator contacted Upper Primary school teachers of selected organizations and requested for an appointment. After getting an appointment, the investigator met these teachers formally and explained the importance, purpose, and application of the research work. After getting consent from them, all the standardized instruments along with the background information schedule were sent to the employees individually by the means of a google form and requested them to respond to the instruments. They were assured that; the given information will be only used for research purposes and will protect their privacy. All the doubts related to the instruments were cleared. The scoring of each scale was done as per the instructions in the manual. Then the scored data was entered into a spreadsheet for further statistical analysis

RESULTS

Table No. 1: mean standard deviation and t value for work engagement and its dimensions based on type of school.

Variables	Type of school	N	Mean	SD	t
Vigor	Aided	62	31.18	3.221	2.911**
	Unaided	49	28.88	5.061	
Dedication	Aided	62	28.26	1.966	3.282**
	Unaided	49	26.47	3.680	
Absorption	Aided	62	30.08	3.897	2.983**
	Unaided	49	27.49	5.252	
Overall work engagement	Aided	62	89.52	8.022	3.382**
	Unaided	49	82.84	12.673	

**p<.01

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To know whether there are a significance in overall work engagement among aided and unaided upper primary school teachers, a t-test was computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

From the table, it is evident that the overall work engagement and the dimensions of school teachers differ significantly ($t= 3.382, p<.01$) between aided and unaided teachers. Aided teachers were more engaged at work when compared to unaided teachers, which implies that aided school teachers are high in vigor, dedication, and absorption. In support to the results, Manikandan and Sarath(2014) also found that teachers from aided, government and unaided schools have no significant difference in work engagement.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and t value for work engagement and its dimensions based on length of teaching experience.

Variables	Length of teaching experience	N	Mean	SD	t
Vigor	1-10years	51	28.78	5.017	3.215**
	Above 10 years	61	31.28	3.110	
Dedication	1-10years	51	26.69	3.253	2.536**
	Above 10 years	61	28.08	2.571	
Absorption	1-10years	51	27.63	5.261	2.698**
	Above 10 years	61	29.97	3.903	
Overall work engagement	1-10years	51	83.10	12.07	3.163**
	Above 10 years	61	89.33	8.563	

** $p<.01$

To know whether there is a significance in overall work engagement among upper primary school teachers with regard to the length of teaching experience, t-test was computed and the results are presented in Table 2.

From table 2, it can be seen that work engagement and its dimensions differ significantly among school teachers with regard to the length of teaching experience($t=3.163,p<.01$) When analyzing the mean scores, it is evident that teachers with above 10 years of teaching experience are more engaged at work when compared to those teachers with less than 10 years of teaching experience. Robinson et al. (2007) believe that engagement varies with the length of service in the organization depending upon the kind of experiences provided by the organization. Contrary to the result of the present study, Topchyan and Woehler (2020) found that Length of teaching experience did not have any significant effect on work engagement.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study indicate that work engagement differs significantly with regard to certain demographic factors like the type of school and length of teaching experience. From this study, it is found that aided upper primary school teachers are more engaged at work compared to unaided upper primary school teachers. It was also found that work engagement is high for teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience. So, educational policymakers should take measures to foster work engagement among unaided school teachers. And also newly joined teachers should be given proper training and supportive working environment to enhance their engagement at work.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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