THE EFFECT OF FLOW EXPERIENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AMONG ACADEMICIANS IN UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Science (Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Management
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JULY 2015

To my dearly loved parents,
Hj. Muhamad Bin Sulaiman
Hjh. Salmah Binti Yahaya

My siblings,
Norzilawati Binti Muhamad
Ariff Syahmie Bin Muhamad
Arif Syafwan Bin Muhamad
Arif Syazali Bin Muhamad
Arif Syafiq Bin Muhamad
Arif Sulaiman Bin Muhamad
Arif Saufi Bin Muhamad

And

My precious nephew and nieces,
Muhammad Naufal Bin Jefri
Auny Sofeya Binti Ariff Syahmie
Nur Sarah Adeena Binti Arif Syafwan
Ayra Safrina Binti Ariff Syahmie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful

Alhamdulillah, all praises to Allah for the strengths and His blessing in completing this thesis. Special appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Roziana Binti Shaari for her excellent supervision and constant support. You have been a tremendous advisor who has continually and persuasively conveyed the good spirit in regard to my research.

Thanks and appreciations are extended to faculty's admins, Kak Faizah, Kak Azlina, Kak Salida and Kak Zaidah for help and assistance on research management stuffs. Thank you for your assistance from day one I entered UTM.

To my beloved family who support me in everything I do. I would like to express my thanks and love. To my parents, Hj. Muhamad Bin Sulaiman and Hjh. Salmah Binti Yahaya, thanks for your full support. Thanks to my dearest Kak Long, and to all my heroes – my beloved brothers. To the in-laws, nephew and nieces cuties, tokwan, tokkhi, and relatives, greatest gratitude for your understanding and support.

Genuine thanks to all my friends especially Taufik, Dida, Zaza, Wawi, Sotam, Yana, Azrin, Raka, Amy and others for their kindness and moral support during my study. Thanks for the friendship and memories. The research journey is not easy, but I cherish every moment being with you guys.

Thank you very much…

ABSTRACT

Employee engagement has been receiving much attention in organizations because of its contribution in helping the employees to perform better thus facilitate organizations to grow. However, the complexities in implementing employee engagement require deeper understanding of its origins and practices. This study incorporates the flow experience and organizational perspective (organizational culture and work design) into its framework of study. The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of flow experience and organizational perspective on employee engagement level. The research employs quantitative approach via survey method. Questionnaires were distributed to a total of 306 academicians in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Statistical analysis shows that the level of engagement, flow experience, organizational culture and work design are moderate among academicians in UTM. Employees' gender and age group show a significant difference in effect towards employee engagement level, while level of education, length of service and academic field have no significance difference on employee engagement. Multiple regression analysis found that flow experience and organizational perspective (organizational culture, work design) have positive effects on employee engagement. Employee engagement is influenced by factors such as employees' enjoyment, total control, concentration, organizational culture, autonomy, task significance and skill variety. The major concerns and challenges in engaging employees are in the work design aspect, specifically task identity and feedback. Since the employee engagement, flow experience, organizational culture and work design are still on the moderate level, current human resource development systems do not put much focus on personal factors and organizational policies for employee engagement to be applied and nurtured. Theoretical contributions from the research suggest the development of a theoretical framework of personal and organizational perspective on employee engagement. This study underlines the essentials of management functions and its contribution in employee engagement among academicians in UTM.

ABSTRAK

Penglibatan pekerja telah menerima banyak perhatian dalam organisasi kerana sumbangannya dalam membantu pekerja untuk berprestasi lebih baik sekali gus memudahkan organisasi untuk berkembang. Walau bagaimanapun, kesukaran untuk melaksanakan penglibatan pekerja memerlukan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang sumber dan amalannya. Kajian ini menggabungkan aliran pengalaman dan perspektif organisasi (budaya organisasi dan reka bentuk kerja) ke dalam rangka kerja kajian. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat kesan aliran pengalaman dan perspektif organisasi kepada tahap penglibatan pekerja. Kajian ini mengadaptasi pendekatan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan kaedah tinjauan. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada 306 ahli akademik di Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Analisis statistik menunjukkan bahawa tahap penglibatan pekerja, aliran pengalaman, budaya organisasi, dan reka bentuk kerja adalah sederhana dalam kalangan ahli-ahli akademik di UTM. Jantina pekerja dan kumpulan umur menunjukkan perbezaan yang signifikan terhadap tahap penglibatan pekerja, manakala tahap pendidikan, tempoh perkhidmatan dan bidang akademik tidak mempunyai perbezaan yang signifikan pada penglibatan pekerja. Analisis regresi berganda mendapati bahawa aliran pengalaman dan perspektif organisasi (budaya organisasi, reka bentuk kerja) mempunyai kesan yang positif terhadap penglibatan pekerja. Penglibatan pekerja dipengaruhi oleh faktor-faktor seperti kegembiraan pekerja, kawalan keseluruhan, tumpuan, budaya organisasi, autonomi, kepentingan tugas dan kepelbagaian kemahiran. Kebimbangan dan cabaran utama dalam melibatkan pekerja adalah dari aspek reka bentuk kerja, khususnya identiti tugas dan maklum balas kerja. Memandangkan penglibatan pekerja, aliran pengalaman, budaya organisasi dan reka bentuk kerja masih pada tahap sederhana, sistem pembangunan sumber manusia semasa tidak meletakkan fokus kepada faktor-faktor peribadi dan dasar organisasi penglibatan pekerja yang akan digunakan dan dipupuk. Sumbangan teoritik daripada kajian ini mencadangkan pembangunan kerangka kerja melalui perspektif peribadi dan organisasi tentang penglibatan pekerja. Kajian ini menekankan keperluan fungsi pihak pengurusan dan sumbangannya dalam penglibatan pekerja dalam kalangan ahli-ahli akademik di UTM.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
OCI	-	Organizational Culture Index
SET	-	Social Exchange Theory
ANOVA	-	Analysis of Variance
GWA	-	Gallup Workplace Audit

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Employee engagement is not a new concept. Since 1980s, the concept of loyalty and engagement has emerged as employers expected the employees to be loyal towards the organization, and in exchange, the employees were offered job security (Welbourne, 2007) and rewards. Employee engagement has gained popularity in the past thirty years (Arif and Ahmed, 2011). Ever since the organizations entered the era of globalization, engaged employees are needed as the employers seek for employees who are able to work willingly, instead of depending on their thoughts for rewards and punishments (Vazirani, 2007). Employee engagement is not only an evolving conception, but also helping the organizations grow bigger especially in business, management, industrial and organizational psychology, and also human resource development field (Wollard and Shuck, 2011).

1.1.1 Employee Engagement Overview

Although engagement concept was derived from a Western perspective, it is also an important issue in developing countries. The concept of engagement plays a main role in both Western and Eastern countries, including Malaysia. Each country is very different, depending on their diverse necessities and cultural differences. Western and Eastern cultures have been known to differ, particularly in regards to the need for organizational hierarchies, and their focus on individuals versus groups (Hofstede, 1980). The differences are likely to influence the ways in which employees respond towards their organization and systems are used to manage their performance. This in turn is likely to have implications in their levels of engagement and the influences which impact this.

In Western, this issue has been discussed since 1980s, particularly by The Gallup Organization. It helped the private and public organizations to grow through measurement tools, strategic advice, and education and they spent a great effort to connect employee engagement to productivity, employee retention, profitability, and customer service. In 2010, The Kingston Employee Engagement Consortium study on the level of employee engagement in the United Kingdom reported that only 8% of their respondents are strongly engaged with their work (Alfes, Truss, Soane, Rees and Gatenby, 2010). Study by The Gallup Organization in 2011, found that 1% of American employees are 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged' in their field of work. Most of the employees are emotionally and physically disconnected from their workplaces and likely to be less productive (The Gallup Organization, 2011).

In Eastern, Asia's economy is set to grow with higher value activities to support the growth. A study by Corporate Executive Board (2010) discovered that engaged employees give 57% more effort and are 87% less likely to resign than those who are disengaged. Yet, engagement and commitment is relatively lower among Asian employees. Blessing White's 2011 Global Engagement Report indicates that employees in China (17% engaged), followed by Southeast Asia (26% engaged), are the least engaged compared with those in America (33% engaged). Furthermore, a study by Hay Group (2013) found that commitment is lowest in Asia

Pacific, with 54% of the workforce intending to leave their companies within five years compared to 44% globally. These data displays a challenging picture in engaging and retaining Asian employees, and there are many driving forces behind these numbers. Study by Hewitt (2011) found that there is reduction of 4% on overall global average employee engagement score between 2010 and 2009 which is 56% in 2010, declines from 60% in 2009 due to regional score changes in Asia-Pacific, Europe, and North America. The economic downturn had a major impact on the organizations and affected the employee engagement levels and the global perceptions as well.

Overseas employee engagement trends and patterns show various findings, thus, it is crucial to further study on employee engagement, in order to increase performance effectiveness. Globalization era and the internationalization of business climate have applied different pressures and demands on Malaysia's industries. The cornerstone of the New Economic Model (NEM) through Government Transformation Programme (*Program Transformasi Kerajaan*) in 2011 is to produce vibrant private and government sectors in creating high value jobs and place Malaysia in the global market to sustain high income growth (Najib, 2011). Both private and government sectors should work together to accomplish the programme (Suraiya and Ahmad, 2011). It is because, the sectors play a critical role in setting policies, deliver services, and endorse laws and regulations that could affect the employees and citizens. The effectiveness of the institution is determined primarily by ability, motivation, and integrity of the civil service and the quality of its leadership (Najib, 2011). Global Workforce Study in Malaysia by Towers Watson in 2010 found that only 28% of the employees are engage in their work (Ruge, 2011). Hence, parallel with the concerns of organizations about the performance of their employees, it is crucial to study more on employee engagement because it can assist performance growth (Rini Wati, 2010).

1.2 Background of Research

In the context of employment agreement, employees would direct themselves physically, emotionally, and cognitively throughout the task accomplishment, and can be distinguished as a combination of obligation to the organization and its values (Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees are more productive, as they can be more competitive, customer-focused, and less tempted to leave. Wagner and Harter (2006) stated employees that have been engaged usually demonstrated 27% less physical absenteeism than their colleagues. Once engaged, employees' enthusiasm would go slightly higher, resulting in a 20% increase in individual improvement of performance (The Gallup Organization, 2001). Furthermore, engaged employees are found to have less industrial accidents on the job (Wagner and Harter, 2006), thus significantly reducing the employee compensation claims and related legal charges. The implementation of employee engagement in the workplace is crucial for lack of employee engagement will decrease organizational success. There are many factors that can influence organizational success in one organization, and most likely the problems are always caused by personal factors, which is the employee themselves (Macey and Schneider, 2008). It shows that the personal perspective of the employee is the key to organizational success as bad employees' performances can cause flourishing business empires to collapse. The personal factors of an employee are said to be the reason why organizations cannot succeed (Wan, 2012), and this issues has been widely discussed, but the interventions hardly take place.

However, the concept of employee engagement nowadays is debatable, as it is also associated to other constructs, such as motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty. According to Chaudhary, Rangnekar, and Barua (2011), the organizations and researchers are aware that concerns must be given to the employee engagement issues. Macey and Schneider (2008) highlighted, employee engagement is a blend of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement, and feelings of empowerment. In addition, the research result from Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) proved that the concept of work engagement can be reliably measured and can be discriminated from related concepts like job involvement, and organizational commitment. Therefore, employee engagement

appears to be the master of all concepts (Cawe, 2006), and by implementing employee engagement, the other constructs need to be met.

Despite the powerful contribution of employee engagement towards work performance (Wan, 2012), it is hard to get employees to engage in their work. According to Renewal Group (2012), in our modern world, people do not regularly respond physically by fighting or fleeing, but they react emotionally instead. Personally, people who fight by arguing or being stubborn, flee by disengaging mentally and emotionally, which reduces commitment, and freeze by shutting down their creativity. In the third quarter of 2011, 71% of American employees are 'not engaged' or 'actively disengaged' in their work, meaning they are emotionally disconnected from their workplaces and most likely become less productive (The Gallup Organization, 2001). Until now, there are still an on-going discussion and researches to find the methods and solutions to solve this problem. Previous researches relate performance problem with motivation (Clark, 1998; Argon, 2010), commitment (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, and Jackson, 1989; Hakanen, Schaufeli, and Ahola, 2008), job satisfaction (Saari and Judge, 2004; Fauziah and Kamaruzaman, 2009), loyalty (Chen, Tsui, and Farh, 2002; Fazlzadeh, Faryabi, Darabi, and Zahedi, 2012) and other constructs, but still, performance problem is mainly caused by low employee engagement level (Chaudhary et al., 2011).

Recently, there is a new demand for employee to continuously engage in the organization (Anitha, 2014). Since employee engagement is related to individual emotions (Asakawa, 2004), further investigation that relate into this aspect is highly demanded. For example, an engagement requires employees to enjoy their work because it is the principle ingredient of engagement and without enjoyment, one cannot remain engaged in a long-term (Reavis, 2008). Development Dimensions International (2005) highlights employee engagement as the degree to which employees enjoy, believe and value their work. Some people do not enjoy their work and this holds back performance in so many ways thus might lead them to disengage from their work (Wentworth-Ping, 2012). Therefore, enjoyment is important and can influence employee engagement level. Besides, engaged employees are those who are physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and feel aligned with the purpose of the organization (Loehr and Schwartz, 2006). Indeed, it shows

that concentration and full attention while doing the work is equally important. No matter how challenging the task given, the employees could perform well if they have their full concentration. Wollard and Shuck (2011) highlighted that motivated employees would be focused and directed their energies toward organizational outcomes. However, in order to exploit the employee engagement, thus enhancing performance, intervention in terms of increasing employee enjoyment, control towards work and concentration is needed.

This implies that the employee engagement requires a concept that can foster its implementation. Enjoyment, total control, and concentration are the constructs that refer to flow experience (Bakker, 2008; Koufaris, 2002). Due to that, this study investigates on how to increase employee engagement from the perspective of employees' personal which particularly refers to the flow experience theory (Brinkhuis, 2008; Chu, 2010). Since personal perspective such as employees' emotions and thought is related to employee engagement (Renewal Group, 2012), it is important to identify the effect of flow experience on employee engagement. Level of enjoyment is a strong tool which plays an important role to make employees more engaged in their work (Viljoen, 2009). According to Koufaris (2002) and Handel (2009), flow experience is one of the positive psychology constructs and flow experience theory suggests that a flow state leads to enjoyment, total control, and concentration.

For current research, it is interesting to take this research further on organizational perspectives. According to Macey and Schneider (2008), it is the organization's responsibility to create environments that can truly engage the workforce. Work design or job characteristics and organizational culture are the main forces to employee engagement when it comes to organizational perspective (Hackman and Oldham, 1974; Marcoulides and Heck, 1993; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). As employee engagement should be measured as a significant element of an organization's human resource and social system, a full understanding on how to optimize performance in the organization involves understanding the organizational culture. Unfortunately, according to Pentilla (2004), most managers tend to focus on the employee weaknesses which is a way of destroying enthusiasm, when the real opportunity comes to utilize people's strengths which is through good organizational

culture. The organizational culture that encourages and enables good behaviours and emotions are likely to have highly engaged employees and becomes more productive (Cameron, 2005). According to Wallach (1983), organizational culture can be characterized into three types of sub-cultures which are bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative culture. Ogbonna and Wilkinson (1990) study found that an organizational culture is a combination of more than one sub-cultures, although one of the sub-culture will turn out to be dominant compared to others. Good organizational culture will have a balance combination of each sub-culture (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000). Additionally, work design generates different influences on engagement and job performance (Kahya, 2007). The nature of the job will influence the level of employee engagement. For instance, the Job Characteristic Model developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975), emphasized that when employees perceive their jobs as meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile, and feels individually responsible for the results of their work, they will perform well. Hence, this means that work design plays a fundamental role in engaging people at work.

Since enjoyment, total control, and concentration are important elements to increase the level of employee engagement in an organization (Koufaris, 2002), this study attempts to integrate Flow Experience Theory in order to identify its influence on employee engagement level. Indeed, this study also integrates organizational perspective because organizational culture and work designs are important to foster engagement among employees, thus the elements of organizational are included in the study. The development of flow experience and employee engagement framework is seen as a contribution to the field of study. More than that, the organizational perspectives approach is applied to provide a more comprehensive picture of flow experience and employee engagement.

This research is conducted amongst Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) academic staff. According to the former Vice Chancellor of UTM, Prof. Dato' Ir. Dr. Zaini Ujang (2012), UTM strives to be a global branded university and aims to provide leadership and contribution through research and innovation, based on UTM Strategic Trust. High performance and innovative research in the universities requires inspirational, authentic, and emerging research leaders (Jusoff and Samah, 2008). The challenge in setting up global universities or also called “flagship”

universities is very much influenced by retaining talent among employees, particularly research and development lecturers (Zaini, 2012). In this research, employee engagement is focused among UTM academicians/lecturers as they are the key persons that will help UTM achieve its aim to provide leadership and contributions through research and innovation. Lecturers also serve as researchers at UTM (Zaini, 2012). High-quality researchers developed throughout a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience (Jusoff and Samah, 2008). To improve and to achieve the university's aim, it is important for UTM to strive towards assisting the academicians/lecturers in conducting research. The academicians' engagement level is considered as the key to talent retention that enables university to provide leadership and contribution through research and innovation (Zaini, 2012). Moreover, academicians' engagement is important to develop sustained competitive advantage (Zaini, 2012), and the result, creating UTM's unique value that is rare and difficult for competitors to imitate (Bhatnagar, 2007).

1.3 Statement of Problem

This study revolves around the ambiguity and complexity to implement employee engagement in the workplace. Employee engagement is important, but the complexities surrounding the employee engagement entail a deeper understanding of the practices involved so that the process of attaching and engaging employees in organizations can be facilitated. While employee engagement level is more influenced by emotions, feelings, and personal factors (Wentworth-Ping, 2012), further study to investigate on how the aspects of enjoyment, nature of work, concentration can facilitate employee engagement is fundamental.

According to Ferguson (2005), demographic factors could also have significant effects on employee engagement level. According to Johnson (2004) study, women tend to find additional fulfillment in their jobs and are more engaged

than men. Ananth (2009) research stated that as age increase, employee contribution and engagement will also increase. A study by Buckingham (2001) indicates negative relationship between length of service and employee engagement. The above statements show that the level of employee engagement is related to demographic factors. Therefore, identifying the level of employee engagement with regards to their demographic factors is essential. It is because, individual differences may affect individuals' ability to engage or disengage in their role performance (Anitha, 2014). Their differences such as gender, age, length of service, and education level will lead to different perceptions and judgement about their work.

Organizations require constantly engaged workforce in order to smoothen work processes. However, when employee engagement and related concerns are the causes of obstacles, being in control of the organizational goals is easier said than done (Rice, 2008). Wentworth-Ping (2012) clarifies that low work performance and disengagement from work resulted from employees who do not enjoy their work. Lack of collaboration and empowerment are likely to disengage employees and distract employees' willingness to exert extra effort (Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009). Cleland, Mitchinson, and Townend (2008) besides Loehr and Scwartz (2006) stated that employees feel engaged when they are given autonomy to make decisions, able to control their own work, emotionally connected, and mentally focused on what they are doing. Accordingly, in order to utilize the employee engagement, the barriers should be removed or at least minimized. In addition, intervention in terms of increasing employees' work enjoyment, control towards work and concentration is needed.

According to Koufaris (2002) and Handel (2009), enjoyment, total control, and concentration are the elements of the flow experience. Hence, the flow experience impact on employee engagement is important to be given further study. Kahn (1990) proved that employee engagement is similar to the flow experience proposed by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), a situation whereby an employee is so mentally, physically, and emotionally involved in their work. Reavis (2008) stated without enjoyment one cannot remain engaged for a long-term while Kumar and Swetha (2011) declared that organization must give the employees autonomy to control their own work in order to sustain employee engagement. Meanwhile,

Wollard and Shuck (2011) highlighted that the employees who concentrate towards organizational outcomes, are the most engaged. It shows that the flow construct of enjoyment, control, and concentration can influence employee engagement implementation. Since the integration of flow experience theory into employee engagement is still limited, this research aims to identify the impact of flow experience on employee engagement level.

Additionally, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2009) stated that employee engagement is concerned with employees' attachment to their colleagues, bosses, and organization as well as building an environment where employees are enthusiastic to connect with their work and truly care about accomplishing an excellent job. Towers Perrin's (2008) research found that employees were dissatisfied with many aspects of their work, such as countless workloads, leadership issues, ambiguous work design, and unsupportive culture. This proves the importance of an organization's actions in influencing the levels of employee engagement. The organizational factors such as organizational culture and work design play important roles in determining their engagement at workplace (Demerouti, 2006; Turpin, Phahlamohlaka and Marais (2009). Organizations wish people to offer more effort and produce innovative ideas to boost up services and increase performance (Skapinker, 2005). It is important to view the organizational perspectives that can assist in the implementation that could help in increasing the employee engagement level in workplaces since an organization plays a vital part in contributing towards its success.

Previously, most of the researches on employee engagement are done within profitable organizational context (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999). Employee engagement issues seem to be a universal problem (Cawe, 2006) therefore, it is also interesting to investigate this matter within the university context. Engagement level of academicians can be a major factor in a university success towards transforming it into top ranking university. UTM visions to be recognized as a world class centre of academic and technological excellence (Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Office of Corporate Affairs, 2012). However, based on 2013/2014 QS world university rankings, UTM is still at the 358 rank (QS World University Rankings, 2014) and that shows UTM management really needs to put more efforts in achieving the

vission, in order to increase its rank among other well-known worldclass universities. It is important to make sure that UTM management and the academicians play their roles according to the direction of achieving the vision. By considering the importance of this issue, this study aims to investigate the effect of flow experience and organizational perspective on UTM academicians' engagement. By increasing the employee engagement level, perhaps the ranking of the university will rise and provide better service to the society.

In conclusion, the research problems of this study are surrounded by the fact that there is the lacking in suitable framework and difficulty in engaging employees at the workplace. The attempt of this study is to investigate the antecedents of engagement from the perspective of Flow Experience Theory and Organizational Perspective (will be explained in Chapter 2). Therefore, the main research question that this study attempts to answer is: What is the impact of flow experience and organizational perspective on the level of employee engagement?

1.4 Research Questions

There are three research questions prepared for this research, which are:

1) Which demographic factors (gender, level of education, age, length of service, academic field) has significant differences with employee engagement among UTM academicians?
2) What is the effect of flow experience (enjoyment, total control, and concentration) on employee engagement level among UTM academicians?
3) What is the effect of organizational perspective (organizational culture and work design) on employee engagement level among UTM academicians?

1.5 Research Objectives

There are three objectives developed with regards to the paper, which are:

1) To identify which demographic factors (gender, level of education, age, length of service, academic field) have significant differences with employee engagement among UTM academicians.
2) To investigate the effect of flow experience (enjoyment, total control and concentration) on engagement level among UTM academicians.
3) To examine the effect of organizational perspective (organizational culture and work design) on engagement level among UTM academicians.

1.6 Research Hypotheses

There are three main hypotheses developed in this research. The research hypotheses are listed as below:

H1: There are significant differences between employee engagement level and demographic factors.

H2: Flow experience (enjoyment, total control, concentration) has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H3: Organizational perspective (organizational culture, work design) has a positive influence on employee engagement.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

This section discusses the definitions of terminologies that is used in this research. The conceptual definition enlightens the meaning of the concept and explanation by other researchers, while the operational definition describes the variables as indicators for the research constructs, as well as the definition of the terms specifically used for this research.

1.7.1 Conceptual Definitions

Employee engagement

Kahn (1990, p. 694) defines engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' to their work tasks; in engagement, people engross and direct themselves physically, emotionally and cognitively while performing their jobs." Thus, according to Kahn (1990), engagement signifies that psychological domains are present when performing organizational role namely meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Rothbard (2001) also identified engagement as psychological occurrence that entails two critical components, which are the attention and absorption. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, (2001) characterized engagement into energy, involvement, and efficacy, the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Similarly, Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002, p. 74), described employee engagement as a positive, satisfying, job-related emotional state that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. It also involves mental and emotional connection to their jobs (Gibbons, 2006), formation of positive relationship, providing challenging opportunities through change programs, and genuine leadership (Thompson, 2009). In addition, Antonison (2010) agreed that vigour, dedication and absorption are three highly correlated factors to employee engagement.

Flow Experience

Flow experience is another concept that is related to engagement. Initially, Csikszentmihalyi (1975) defines flow experience as the "holistic sensation" that, people feel when they act with full involvement. When an individual is having flow experience, he or she will immerse in the activity. Csikszentmihalyi reported that feelings in control, an increased chance of learning new skills, and a balance between challenges and skills are essential to flow experience. Ellis, Voelkl, and Morris (1994) defined flow as the finest experience that is the result of a situation in which challenges and skills are equal. According to these authors, such a state facilitates the occurrence of flow-related experience, such as positive effect, excitement, and intrinsic motivation. According to, Ghani and Deshpande (1994) total concentration and enjoyment are related to flow experience. Additionally, Bakker (2005) defined flow as a condition of consciousness where people become absolutely immersed in an activity, and enjoy it intensely. According to Demerouti (2006), flow experience is a multifaceted construct that is in line with a broad idea of occupational mental health, (well-being) as well as not only affective aspects but also cognitive and motivational facet. Chiang, Sunny, Cheng, and Liu (2011) referred flow to a state in which someone focuses completely on a pleasant activity.

Organizational Perspective

Organizational perspective is a list of organizational factors that might have an impact on the operation of the organization (Sroufe, 1990). The organizational objective, business processes, IT processes, business needs, and future plans have a great impact in the organizational design process and needs to be viewed at carefully from the physical perspective. According to Turpin et al. (2009), the organizational perspectives represent the subjective views of the groups (formal and informal) and individuals involved in any research.

1.7.2 Operational Definition

Employee engagement

Employee engagement refers to the emotional connections employees feel towards their employment organization that tends to influence their behaviours and level of effort in related work activities. The more engaged employees with their organization, the more effort they will give towards the job. Employee engagement involves mental and physical connection with both work and organization.

For this research, employee engagement is measured using 12 questions derived from the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) as published in Buckingham and Coffman (1999). The questions tackle issues such as understanding one's work expectation, having the resources perform well, recognition and praise, encouragement to develop, being listened to and friendship at work (Bates, 2004). Previous studies highlighted that there are 12 key expectations at workplace, that when satisfied, form the foundation of employee engagement (The Gallup Organization, 2001; Bates, 2004). The engagement index slots employees into one of three categories, namely actively disengaged, not engaged, and engaged.

Flow Experience

Flow experience in this research refers as the optimal psychological state described as the experience of intrinsically enthusiastic people, who are attached in work-related activities. Employees who experience flow would be in a state where they are being absorbed in the activity they are involved in. In this study, flow experience consists of three components, namely, enjoyment, total control, and concentration. The definitions for each of the components for this research are presented below:

Enjoyment: Refers to the employees' working pleasure and being intrinsically enjoyful in their work and organization. It is a positive state of emotion, which

gives employees contentment or keen satisfaction, thus they will define their job as interesting, enjoyable, exciting, and fun.

Total control: Refers to the employees' power to have control over their environment and their own actions. The employee has authority to influence or direct employees' own behaviour, thus feeling clearer, calmer, in control and devoid of frustration during work.

Concentration: Refers to the employees' full attention and focus towards their work-related activity. It is the cognitive process of selectively absorbed on the aspects of the work and environment while ignoring other things. The employees with full concentration and commitment will feel intensely absorbed, focus, and deeply engrossed in their work.

For this research, flow experience is measured using an instrument adapted and modified from Ghani, Supnick and Rooney (1991) as published in Koufaris (2002). The instrument is used to measure the level of employees' enjoyment, total control, and concentration at work. It consists of 12 items, four items for each of the components. The level of flow experience is determined based on the total scores of the 12 items responses (low, medium, high).

Organizational Perspective

Organizational perspective on this research refers to the extent of employees' feelings towards the organization's practices that can influence the engagement level. For this research, two organizational perspectives are selected, namely, organizational culture and work design. The operational definitions of each of the factors are presented below:

Organizational culture: Refers to the values and behaviours that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization. Organizational culture consists of bureaucratic, innovative, and supportive sub-cultures. Good organizational culture comprises of a balanced combination of each sub-cultures. **Bureaucratic culture** refers to systematic, stable, well-

structured, ordered, regulated, and this culture is usually based on appropriate control and power-oriented. **Innovative culture** refers to a creative, result-oriented, challenging, entrepreneurial, ambitious, and risk-taking culture. **Supportive culture is** defined as a people-oriented, trusting, harmonious, safe, and collaborative work environment. The UTM's organizational culture is measured using Wallach's (1983) Organizational Culture Index. It is an instrument used to measure the level of organizational culture at three dimensions as bureaucratic, supportive, and innovative. The level of organizational culture is determined using the total score of the responses.

Work design: Refers to the arrangements, principles, and techniques to complete a certain task or to work. It seeks at outlining and organizing tasks, duties, and responsibilities into a single unit of work for the success of certain objectives. In simpler terms, it refers to the what, how much, how many and the order of the tasks for a job. For this research, work design is also interdependently used as job/work characteristics, which consist of skill variety, task identity, task significant, autonomy, and feedback. **Skill variety** reflects the degree to which a job requires employee use different skills to complete a work. **Task identity** refers to the extend which the job involves a whole piece of work. **Task significant** refers to the extent in which the job influences the lives or work of others. **Autonomy** reflects to the degree in which a job allows freedom to schedule work, make decisions, and choose the methods to perform tasks. **Feedback** is defined as the extent to which others in the organization offer information regarding one's performance. Adapted Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) by Morgeson and Humprey (2006) is used to measure work design for this research. It consists of 18 items that describe the characteristics of the work. The items focus on measuring the five characteristics of work design based on the total score of the respondent's response.

1.8 Significances of Study

This research contributes to the theory and practice. It proposes a framework that incorporates flow, organizational factors, and employee engagement. Based on the background of this research it shows that employee engagement is important, whereby the implementation and the improvement of it will support the organizational success. The linkages between flow and employee engagement field are literally explored and added unique knowledge in both fields. Furthermore, the combination of both personal context as flow and organizational context in organizational culture and work design will assist in studying employee engagement in a broader perspective. This study can contribute to better understanding to other researchers on the relationship between employee engagement, flow experience, and organizational perspective.

As for its practical contributions, employee engagement practices can be utilized by the management by engaging employees through the usage of flow experience theory. Csikszentmihalyi (1996, 1990 and 1975) notes that flow is a factor that will call for passionate engagement in people and the willingness to be involved in actions and activities. By doing so, they will experience flow with great enjoyment and as the result perceived the actions and activities as highly motivational. If the employers understand flow experience and associate it with employee engagement, they might be able to develop the strategies that facilitate enjoyment, thereby making working conditions pleasurable. Once flow is experienced, repeating work with deep enjoyment becomes feasible. To have and be able to apply this knowledge in work life should make the job more enjoyable and inspiring for both employer and employee. The issues and challenges of employee engagement in the organization can create a higher understanding level among top management of the organization. As a result, this information can build their awareness on developing employee engagement and give the reason why the flow experience should be applied at the central level and integrated into organizational main agenda.

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to UTM academicians. Therefore, non-academic staff such as from the university's library, college offices, bursary, and registrar is not included in this study. A survey was distributed to the academicians and they were selected because they are considered as the focal point in an organization that have positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, students, colleagues, top management and organization which influences their willingness to perform at work. Academicians from the UTM faculties have equal chance to be selected as the research respondents. As UTM strives to be a global branded university and leading in research leadership (Zaini, 2012), the employee engagement level is believed to offer an approach to withhold employees' capability. As the result, this will allow the university to increase competitive advantage by creating their significance that is exclusive and difficult for other universities to copy (Bhatnagar, 2007).

Previously, most employee engagement research was conducted at profitable organizations (Anand and Banu, 2011; Andrew and Sofian, 2011; Arif and Ahmed, 2011). As profitable organizations strive to achieve monetary benefits from engaged employees (Chat-Uthai, 2013), universities may have different reasons to engage its employees. Strong leadership, engaged workforce, bold vision of the university's mission and goals, and clearly expressed strategic plan to translate the vision into real targets and programs is fundamental for the establishment of a world-class university (Jamil, 2009). Therefore, the UTM academicians must be totally engaged in their work, in order to achieve its target, which is to be an international well-known research university.

This study only investigates employee engagement and its relationship with both flow experience (enjoyment, total control, concentration) and organizational perspective (organizational culture, work design). Other variables that related to employee engagement were excluded from this research. The variables for this study are prepared within the perspectives of personal and organizational. There are a number of factors in employee engagement drivers, but independent variables are selected based on their connection to Flow Experience Theory and organizational

perspective. The study focuses on the integration of Flow Experience Theory and organizational perspective as a theoretical foundation to determine the relationship between enjoyment, total control and concentration and also organizational culture and work design to employee engagement in the workplace.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents an overview of the study by giving out outlines on the background of the problem, which directs to the research questions, objectives and hypothesis that have developed. The conceptual and operational definitions for the research variables were also presented in this chapter. Besides, the scope of the research is also stated together with a brief discussions on the significance of the study.

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