

**EFFECT OF WORK ENGAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: INVESTIGATING
THE MODERATING ROLE OF POLYCHRONICITY**

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Abstract

Current study was aimed at investigating polychronicity as a potential moderator on the direct relationship between work engagement and job performance of the employees. Out of distributed 400 questionnaires, 300 questionnaires were received which were complete in all aspects. The respondents were serving in four major banks of Pakistan that had been operating in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Simple random sampling technique was used to collect data from the responding bank employees. Various tests of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypotheses. Results of the analysis showed that work engagement had positive and significant effect on employees' job performance and this effect was also significantly moderated by polychronicity. Current study provides various implications for the practitioners and reveals avenues for future research.

Key words: Work Engagement, Job Performance, Polychronicity

INTRODUCTION

Employees play an important role in all the organizations, especially in the service organizations due to their major contribution in performance of a wide variety of tasks. Employees or individual team members having work engagement perform more efficiently and effectively than the employees who have not work engagement. Various studies have found that work engagement

had contributed significantly towards achievement of in-role and extra-role employee performances of the employees (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009). Moreover, it is an admitted fact that employees prefer to work in the organizations where they have a strong sense of belonging. Although the principle of multitasking has gained attention of the scholars and a lot of coverage in the national press (BBC, 2009), progressive thoughts about work engagement also influence the extent to which the employees complete their job roles effectively and efficiently.

Polychronicity or task-switching behaviors are considered to be an important type of work behavior of the service jobs where employees prefer to opt for more than a mere one monotonous job task and prefer to engage in a variety of tasks (Arndt, Arnold, & Landry, 2006; Jang and George, 2012). According to the study of Arndt et al. (2006) and the study of Kantrowitz, Grelle, Beaty, and Wolf (2012), polychronicity was considered as a major predictor of employee performance. According to a study, it was revealed that majority of the employees wanted to engage themselves in different job tasks rather than performing a monotonous job task because they wanted to get rid of boredom and wanted to enhance their job performance (Poposki & Oswald, 2010). Polychronicity or preference to work on dissimilar tasks is also very common in young generation employees (Pilotta & Schults, 2005). According to Konig and Waller (2009), there is no significant difference in the meanings of polychronicity multitasking. However, they further argued that the term "polychronicity" is used as a construct and variable to describe an employee's preference to perform unrelated job tasks at workplace.

In service organizations, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities are more important than the procedures. Such importance may be attributed to the nature of employment in service sector where success is more dependent upon the employees rather than any other factors. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) defined employee performance as the expected outcomes of their obligatory job tasks that directly contribute towards their job performance and extra-role discretionary workplace behaviors that help in enhancing overall performance of the organization. Afterwards, extra-role discretionary workplace behaviors were termed as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and when employees put efforts in OCBs, they attain a certain degree of contextual performance. According to Kim, Kolb, and Kim (2013), work engagement positively and significantly affects job performance of the employees. The term "engagement" refers to the commitment and intensity with which a person pursues a specific type of success also known as the "mission" (Ashforth, 1995; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). Majority of the studies found work engagement as the major antecedent of an employee's job performance. None of the studies had found an indirect causal association of work engagement with employee performance. So, it is not of primary interest of the researchers to explore such relationship. However, the moderating role of polychronicity was needed to be investigated. In the study of Conte, Aasen, Jacobson, O'Loughlin, and Toroslu (2019), they required scholars to investigate whether or not polychronicity moderates the relationship of positive workplace behavior and job performance. Therefore, the researchers tried to investigate polychronicity as a potential moderator of the relationship between work engagement as a positive workplace behavior and job performance as a consequent outcome of work engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work engagement refers to the mental and physical or internal and external devotion of a person in his/her work. Such engagement into the work behaviors is referred to work engagement. According to Kahn (1990), the employees who devote their full capacity to their jobs (job engagement) were likely to have a broader understanding of the job, greater willingness to overcome work constraints and showed a higher level of performance. According to Rich et al. (2010), maintaining a level of performance is mainly dependent on the individuals who are fully engaged in their work/job tasks. Almost all of the studies published in earlier literature, work engagement brought significant positive outcomes, for both the individuals and the organizations. Kahn (1990) proposed the initial model of work engagement and argued that it represented the situation under which an employee had grip on his/her job role, noted a compassion, and devoted himself/herself to the job by exhibiting an unusual engagement. In work engagement, the employees display a great deal of enthusiasm towards their jobs. Enthusiastic job participation was first and foremost motivational principle that explained the concept of work engagement (Kanfer, 1990). Bakker and Demerouti (2008) defined work engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption into the work or job tasks. The first aspect of vigor describes high levels of energy and mental resilience and willingness to exert the best possible level of efforts. Dedication means that a person is enthusiastically involved in his/her work. Absorption means that a person is fully concentrated into his/her work. They found that workers having high level of work engagement were more creative, more productive, and more willing to exert extra efforts into their jobs. Therefore, it could be concluded that an employee having work engagement remain active, finds meaning in his/her work, and believes that such engagement can directly contribute towards better job performance.

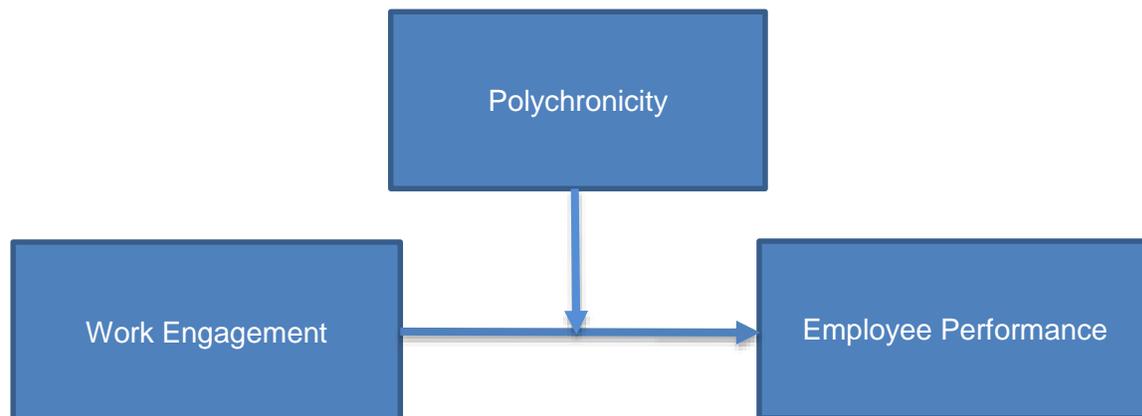
Employee performance refers to the degree of accomplishment of job tasks. A higher level of accomplishment by the employees is appreciated by the organizations. William and Anderson (1991) described job performance as the accomplishment of in-role (obligatory/mandatory task requirements) and extra-role behaviors (discretionary job behaviors that contribute towards smooth functioning of the organization). Therefore, job performance would include both in-role performance and extra-role performance in the shape of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). Job performance may also refer to the skill/talent of the employees to understand employment objectives and to attempt to achieve the anticipated workplace outcomes (Maathis and Jackson, 2000). Klehe (2004) found that the higher level of employees' job performance was associated with their communication skills, social knowledge, and commitment. They argued that there were certain associations of positive behaviors with the job performance. Sparrow, (2013) argued that employee engagement was directly associated with the positive workplace outcomes including job performance. Organizations usually shared ideas through crucial setups so that employees would perform better (Sparrow, 2013).

Employees have attitudes towards managing their time and the ways how they accomplish their goals. In this context, the term “polychronicity” gained a worldwide acceptance by the scholars and practitioners. According to Hall and Hall (1983), polychronicity may be defined as the tendency or involvement of an employee in several different tasks simultaneously. Kaufman,

Lane, and Lindquist (1991) and Kaufman and Lindquist (1999) argued that polychronic time use (performing multiple tasks at the provided time) was negatively associated with the role overload. They argued that polychronicity reduced the demands incurred by conflicting roles. However, later on, the definition of polychronicity was modified and the term “polychronic time use” was converted into simultaneous performance of multiple tasks. Some researchers also included multitasking into the construct of polychronicity (Arndt et al., 2006; Bluedorn, Kalliath, Strube, & Martin, 1999).

According to Cheng, Zhang, Wen, and Wang (2020), majority of the previous studies found significant effect of work engagement on employees’ job performance. Wu, Gao, Wang, and Yuan (2020) found significant effect of polychronicity on job performance. Asghar, Gull, Tayyab, Zhijie, and Tao (2020) investigated polychronicity and found that work engagement significantly mediated the relationship between polychronicity and job outcomes. However, a grey area in the literature invited us to investigate whether or not polychronicity plays a significant moderating role and strengthens or weakens the effect of work engagement on employee performance. By critically evaluating the relevant literature, we assumed that work engagement might be used to enhance employees’ job performance. Moreover, by recruiting the employees who are high on polychronicity so that the effect of work engagement could be amplified and the employees could perform better. Such hypothesized associations are depicted in the following conceptual framework (research model) of this study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses:

H₁: Work Engagement has significant effect on job performance of the employees.

H₂: Polychronicity significantly moderates the relationship between work engagement and employee performance.

METHODOLOGY

Population of this study included employees of four major banks including SILK Bank Limited, Habib Bank Limited (HBL), Standard Chartered Bank Limited (SCB), and Allied Bank Limited (ABL) that were operating in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In order to enhance data reliability and

representativeness of the sampled employees, simple random sampling technique was used to collect data from the responding bank employees. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 384 was required sample size for this study. Out of distributed 400 questionnaires, 300 questionnaires were received which were complete in all aspects. The questionnaire used Polychronic Value Inventory (PVI) of Bluedorn et al. (1999) as a measurement scale to measure polychronicity of the employees. Work Engagement scale of Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) was used to measure work engagement of the employees. Job Performance scale of William and Anderson (1991) was used to measure job performance of the employees. Data were managed and analyzed through SPSS version 26 along with AMOS 22 to assess reliability and validity. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used to describe the properties of data, find reliability & validity, and test the hypotheses of this study through structural equation modeling (SEM).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The researchers applied confirmatory factor analysis and calculated Cronbach’s alpha coefficients to determine the reliability of the measurement scales used by this study. The results are depicted in the table given below:

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients (n= 300)

Scales	Number of items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Polychronicity	9	0.727
Job performance	7	0.861
Work engagement	8	0.893

The results revealed that all the measurement scales used by this study were having more than the threshold level of Cronbach’s alpha value. Polychronicity had Cronbach’s alpha value 0.727, job performance Cronbach’s alpha value 0.861, and work engagement Cronbach’s alpha value 0.893. Therefore, the researchers concluded that all the measurement scales used by this study were reliable.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

In order to evaluate the direct effect, structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied. The results of the analysis are depicted in the following figure:

Figure 1: Structural equation modeling (direct effect)



The results revealed that there was a significant and positive effect of work engagement of employees on their job performance. The effect was verified with the test statistics provided in the following table:

Table 2: Structural equation modeling (Direct effect)

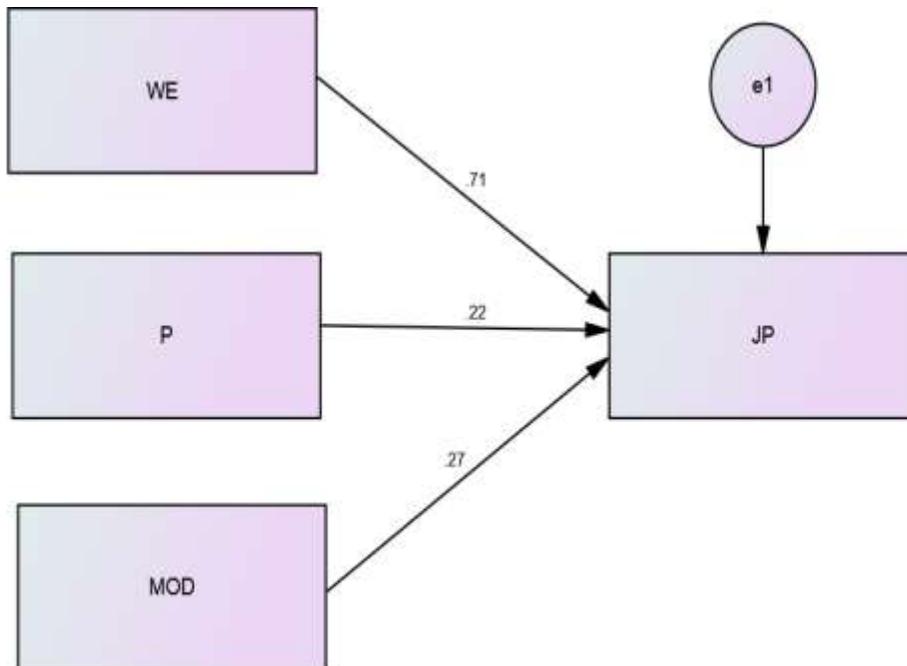
Variables	Estimates	p-value	Hypothesis	Decision
WE→JP	0.679	0.000	H1	Accepted

The results revealed that work engagement had affected job performance of the employees positively and the results were also statistically significant with significance value lesser than 0.05 level of probability and regression estimate of 0.679. Therefore, the researchers failed to accept the null hypothesis that there was no effect of work engagement of employees on their job performance. Consequently, they accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that work engagement of the bank employees positively affected their job performance.

Second Order Factor

In order to evaluate the moderating effect of polychronicity on the relationship between work engagement and job performance, second order factor was computed by using structural equation modeling. The results of the analysis are depicted in the following figure:

Figure 2: Second order factor



The results revealed that effect of work engagement along with the moderation of polychronicity was significant on job performance. This effect was verified with the test statistics provided in the following table:

Table 3: Second order factor (Indirect effect)

Variables	Estimates	p-value	Hypothesis	Decision
P→ JP	0.706	0.000	H2	Accepted

The previous results revealed that work engagement had affected job performance of the employees positively with significance value lesser than 0.05 level of probability and regression estimate of 0.679. However, when the polychronicity was used as the moderating variable in that relationship, a rise was seen in the regression estimate which increased from 0.679 to 0.706. Such increment in the regression weights indicated that polychronicity significantly (significance value was lesser than 5% confidence interval) affected the relationship between work engagement and job performance. Therefore, the researchers failed to accept the null hypothesis that there was no moderating effect of polychronicity on the relationship between work engagement and job performance. Consequently, they accepted the alternative hypothesis and concluded that polychronicity significantly moderated the effect of work engagement on employee performance.

DISCUSSIONS

The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of work engagement on job performance of the employees with potential moderating role of polychronicity. This study found significant direct effect of work engagement on job performance of the employees along with the significant moderating role of polychronicity on relationship between work engagement on job performance. The findings of current study are supporting the previous findings of Matusitz and Breen (2009); Sekhar, Patwardhan, and Vyas (2018); and Wang and Chen (2020) who found that work engagement had significantly and positively contributed towards job performance of the employees. Current study found polychronicity as the significant moderating variable on relationship between work engagement and job performance. This finding partially supported the findings of earlier studies that had found positive effects of polychronic use of time had many potential positive outcomes (Jang & George, 2012; Kaufman et al., 1991; Kaufmann-Scarborough & Lindquist, 1999). This study partially supported the findings of Rich et al (2010) who found that employees having tendencies towards polychronicity showed higher job performance. The findings, as discussed in review of literature section of this paper, supported the findings of majority of the previous studies that were cited by Cheng et al. (2020) which found significant effect of work engagement on employees' job performance. Similarly, this study supported the findings of Wu et al. (2020) where it was found that polychronicity had significant effect on employee performance. As the moderating role of polychronicity was not yet evaluated on the relationship between work engagement on job performance, this study evaluated it and found it to be statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

Current study was aimed at finding effect of job engagement on job performance and investigating the moderating impact of polychronicity on the association between job engagement and job performance. It was found that job engagement had significant effect on job performance and polychronicity significantly moderated the relationship between job engagement and job performance. Hence, it was concluded that the employees engaged in their work had showed a higher level of job performance. Those employees performed even better when they also had a tendency towards polychronicity. By providing variety of job tasks, organization's additional managerial costs would also be reduced. For example, front-line employees who perform several duties at once, such as answering the phone and delivering updates to clients, may be delegated to another office job can significantly reduce the organization's total costs. Therefore, organizations need to inculcate the environment that persuades work engagement and provides different/ varied job tasks so that they could demonstrate a higher level of job performance.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study would be very helpful for the managers and practitioners as it guides them to enhance job performance of the employees. This study guides if the job performance employee of employees needs to be enhanced, the organizations should recruit polychronic individuals who have a greater tendency to work on a variety of tasks to achieve higher organizational sustainability as required by the current vibrant and highly dynamic modern arena. The implementation of current findings would save organizations' financial resources spent on recruitment where lesser polychronic employees would be recruited to achieve higher levels of job performance rather than hiring more employees who would exhibit lower level of job performance. Moreover, polychronic employees having higher work engagement would maintain pleasant working relationships with their managers or supervisors.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the fact that the study has many strengths, it also carried some limitations that could be used as the recommendations for future studies. The results of this study are based upon self-reported survey which might have some response bias or other issues regarding understanding of the items of the measurement scales. Such biases could be mitigated by using some alternative technique such as qualitative data techniques. Future studies are invited to investigate some other moderating variables or mediating variables to further clarify this relationship. Moreover, moderated mediation or mediated moderation could also be used to reach at clearer sound conclusions with more implications for theory and practice. This research was carried among bank employees which might have caused slight issues regarding generalizability of the findings. Therefore, this study can be replicated in other service sectors such as telecommunications and education sectors. It could also be replicated in manufacturing sector. Another important avenue for future research might be the exploration of gender differences. Based on the conclusions of this research, more research is invited to investigate the moderating and mediating effects of polychronicity on relationships between other variables other than employee performance such as effect on organizational outcomes such as team performance or organizational performance. It is recommended to use job satisfaction and organizational commitment along with polychronicity

that might prove to be an interesting addition into the existing literature.

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