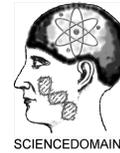


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Antecedents and Consequences of Work Engagement among Managers and Professionals in Nigeria

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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The purpose of this paper is to examine potential antecedents and consequences of work engagement in a sample of male and female managers and professionals employed in various Universities in Nigeria.

Study design: The study adopted the ipso facto research design

Place and Duration: Five Nigerian Universities (University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Ladoke Akintola University, Ogbomosho, Enugu State University, Enugu and University of Abuja) between January and April 2010.

Methodology: Data were collected from 242 respondents, (60.5 percent response rate) using anonymously completed questionnaires. Engagement was assessed by three scales developed by Schaufeli et al. (2003); vigour, dedication, and absorption. Antecedents included personal demographic and work situation characteristics as well as measures of need for achievement and workaholic behaviours; consequences included measures of work satisfaction and psychological well-being.

Results: The following results were observed. First, both need for achievement and workaholic job behaviour was found to predict all three engagement measures. Second, engagement, particularly dedication, predicts various work outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, intent to quit). Third, engagement, again, particularly dedication, predicted various psychological well-being outcomes but less strongly than these predicted work outcomes.

Conclusion: Our findings suggest that engagement at work is associated with positive work and individual well-being outcomes and that stable individual difference factors are a major contributor to levels of employee engagement. The respondents in our sample expressed relatively high intentions to quit their current jobs. It is not clear, however, what alternatives they are contemplating, particularly in light of the current world-wide economic downturn and high level of unemployment in the country. Such indication however may only be a pointer to

the fact that they are not too satisfied with their job and are only keeping it for lack of another one in the meantime. This raises the issue of whether the relatively young men and women in our sample will have to continue in jobs that they would prefer to change; a reality that likely erodes work engagement. Nigerian Universities therefore may be facing significant challenges as they make efforts to improve levels of employee work engagement. Organizations can increase levels of work engagement by creating supportive work experiences (e.g. control, rewards, and recognition) consistent with effective human resource management (HRM) practices.

Keywords: Managers; Nigeria; job satisfaction; career development; work engagement;

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are grappling with new challenges as they strive to remain competitive. These include increased financial turbulence, heightened performance pressures, new technology, an increasingly diverse workforce, and the globalization of business (Burke and Cooper, 2004; O'Toole and Lawler, 2006; Sisodia et al., 2007). Organizational leaders are increasingly concluding that a unique competitive advantage resides in their human resources: all other potential competitive advantages (e.g. technology, capital, and products) can be either bought or copied (Gratton, 2000; Lawler, 2003, 2008; Pfeffer, 1994, 1998; Burke and Cooper, 2005). Organizations need to unleash the talents and motivations of all their employees if they are to achieve peak performance (Burke and Cooper, 2007; Katzenbach, 2000; Leiter and Bakker, 2010; Ulrich, 1997). There is considerable evidence, however, that many organizations are falling short (Burke and Cooper, 2008; Sirota et al., 2005). Recent efforts to improve organizational performance have begun to emphasize positive organizational behaviour concepts and positive emotions (Cameron et al., 2003; May et al., 2004; Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). This includes concepts such as optimism, trust, and engagement. Much of the earlier organizational behaviour research focused on negative concepts and emotions such as job dissatisfaction, alienation, burnout, and intent to quit.

Work engagement has emerged as the most prominent positive organizational concept, particularly among organizational consultants (Leiter and Bakker, 2010; Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007, 2008). In fact practical interest in work engagement has outstripped the currently available research evidence. Issues such as what work engagement is, why it matters, how and why it benefits individuals and organizations, and if and how it can be increased, still need to be addressed.

1.1 Literature Review Work Engagement: Definition, Measures and Research Evidence

Work engagement has received increasing research attention over the past ten years, reflecting this emphasis (Kahn, 1992; Leiter, 2005; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004b; Schaufeli et al., 2003). Engaged workers are energetic, are positively connected to their work and feel they are doing their jobs effectively (Leiter and Bakker, 2010). It is a persistent and broad affective-cognitive state. Schaufeli et al. (2002), view it as a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour is characterized by high levels of energy, the willingness to invest energy in one's work and

persistence in difficult times; dedication is characterized by high levels of work involvement and feelings of pride and challenge from one's work; and absorption is characterized by deep concentration in one's work the sense that time passes quickly and one is reluctant to leave their work. Others have defined work engagement in slightly different but generally consistent ways (Harter et al., 2002; May et al., 2004; Sirota et al., 2005). The most commonly used measure of work engagement was developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) and comprises three components: vigour, dedication, and absorption. The accumulating research findings have shown that the measures of the three engagement concepts are reliable, stable, and valid (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007, 2008). Organizational behaviour researchers have considered work engagement as independent, dependent, and moderator variables in various studies. Let us have a sample of their results.

Engagement as an independent variable: Harter et al. (2002) found that levels of engagement were positively correlated with business-unit performance (e.g. customer satisfaction and loyalty, unit profitability, unit productivity, turnover levels, and safety) in almost 8,000 business units within 36 organizations. Engagement correlated 0.22 with a composite measure of performance, which increased to 0.38 when measurement error and restriction of range were taken into account. Salanova et al. (2005), in a study of front-line service workers and their customers, reported that work engagement predicted service climate which in turn predicted employee performance and then customer loyalty. Demerouti and Cropanzano (2010) and Schaufeli and Salanova (2007, 2008), based on their review of the work engagement literature, concluded that engagement is associated with positive employee attitudes, proactive job behaviours, higher levels of employee psychological well-being, and increased individual job and organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2008).

Engagement as a dependent variable: In a multi-sample study, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004a) found support for the job demands-resources model. Structural equation modeling revealed that job demands (workload, emotional demands) were positively related to burnout, but not to engagement and job resources (social support, supervisor coaching, and feedback) were positively related to engagement and negatively related to burnout. In addition, burnout fully mediated the impact of job resources on health problems, and engagement mediated the effect of job resources on turnover intention. The authors concluded that two underlying processes can explain these results, an effort-driven high-demand process leading to burnout, which then leads to health problems, and a motivational process in which available job resources foster engagement and affect behavioural work outcomes. Hakonen and Roodt (2010) come to similar conclusions. Mauno et al. (2005b), in a study of subjective job insecurity among either permanent or fixed-term employees reported lower work engagement among permanent employees. Mauno et al. (2005a) also found different predictors of work engagement in different organization sectors. Demerouti et al. (2001), in a study of employees from an insurance company, reported that high-work demands and high control were associated with higher engagement. Mauno et al. (2005a) also reported an association of high-time pressures with higher levels of engagement.

Engagement as a moderator variable: Leiter and Harvie (1998), in a study of a large-scale organizational change in a hospital setting, reported that work engagement moderated the relationship of supportive supervision, confidence in management, effective communication and work meaningfulness and acceptance of the change. In a study of the correspondence between supervisors and staff members during major organizational changes, Leiter and Harvie (1997) demonstrated supervisors' confidence in the organization, their work engagement and assessment of work hazards, contributed to predicting staff members' engagement, and supervisor cynicism and exhaustion contributed to staff member cynicism and professional efficacy. Salanova and Schaufeli (2008), in two large samples of Spanish

and Dutch managers and employees, reported that engagement (vigour, dedication) fully mediated the relationship of job resources (job control, feedback, and variety) and proactive work behaviours. It is important to study engagement because it is linked to positive individual and work-related outcomes (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007, 2008). The present study examines potential predictors and consequences of work engagement in a sample of men and women managers and professionals working in various organizations and industries in Nigeria. While there is some consensus on the workplace antecedents of engagement (e.g. support, feedback, and coaching) and consequences of work engagement (e.g. commitment, satisfaction), there is less agreement on personal characteristics (e.g. demographics and personality factors) associated with levels of work engagement. The question of who are engaged workers therefore needs additional attention. Schaufeli and Salanova (2007, 2008) found inconsistent or at best small effects due to demographic characteristics, and among personality factors, some evidence that individuals high on extraversion and low on neuroticism reported higher levels of work engagement. In addition, occupation type and organizational level had some effects on engagement; managers, executives, and entrepreneurs score relatively high on engagement while blue collar workers, police officers, and home care staff score relatively low on engagement.

Who are your engaged workers? Two lines of previous research are likely to shed some light on this question. First, there is a considerable body of work examining the relationship of need for achievement and positive individual contributions (McClelland, 1985; Steers and Braunstein, 1976). Individuals scoring high on McClelland's need for achievement strive to excel, they seek out feedback on how they are performing, they are more concerned with reaching their objectives than with whatever rewards might follow from this success, they set challenging but realistic goals, and they spend lots of time thinking about how they might do things better. Second, an emerging stream of research has shown relationships of workaholic behaviours and work engagement-type outcomes (Burke, 2007; Burke and Cooper, 2008). Workaholism is generally seen as a stable individual difference characteristic. Mudrack (2007), for example, has developed measures of two workaholic behaviour patterns (non-required work, control of others) that were likely to be associated with levels of work engagement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A search through Nigerian literature showed a paucity of research in the study of Nigerian workers generally in relation to work engagement generally the present study seek to examine potential antecedents and consequences of work engagement among University Staff in Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Research

The following general hypotheses, building on the reviews of Schaufeli and Salanova (2007, 2008) were considered:

- H1. Personal demographic characteristics such as age and gender would be unrelated or only weakly related to levels of work engagement.
- H2. Particular stable individual difference characteristics (e.g., workaholic behaviours, need for achievement) would be positively related to levels of work engagement.

- H3. Work engagement would in turn be positively associated with both work outcomes such as job and Career satisfaction and indicators of psychological well-being such as low levels of exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Procedure

Data were collected between January and April 2010 from University Staff in five Nigerian Universities (University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Ladoko Akintola University, Ogbomoso, Enugu State University, Enugu and University of Abuja). Approximately, 400 Staff were contacted of which 242 provided completed questionnaires, a 60.5 percent response rate. Questionnaires were completed anonymously in English Language which is the official language of Nigeria. The respondents are best described as a large convenience sample of Nigerian University Staff in a variety of Public Universities in Nigeria.

2.2 Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Over half were male (60 percent), almost all worked full-time (93 percent), over half were 30 years of age or younger (61 percent), most were Married (62 percent), with children (64 percent). 95 % of the sample were University Graduates, 42 % of them worked 40 hours a week or less, 33% were in middle of their Career, 66% of them were supervising others staff, while 46 % were earning over N800, 000 per annum as income, Respondents fell into several functions: Lecturers (16%); Professional Administrators, (14%); Accountants/Auditors, 13%; Technologists (11%), and Executive Officers, 9 percent.

2.3 Measures

Work engagement. Three aspects of work engagement were measured using scales developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004b).

Vigour was measured by six items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.72). "At my work I feel bursting with energy" dedication was assessed by five items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.88). "I am proud of the work that I do." Absorption was measured by six items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.74) "I am immersed in my work" respondents indicated their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale

(1 – Strongly disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, and 5 – strongly agree).

Personal demographics and work situation characteristics. A number of personal demographics (e.g. age, gender, education, marital, and parental status) and work situation characteristics (e.g. organizational level and job status) were measured by single items (Table 1). These included the following measures.

2.3.1 Stable individual difference characteristics

Need for achievement (Nach) was measured by a five-item scale (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.62) developed by Steers and Braunstein (1976). One item was "I try very hard to improve on my past performance at work."

2.3.2 Workaholic behaviours

Two workaholic behaviour scales developed by Mudrack (2007) were included. One, non-required work, had four items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.82). An item was "Thinking of ways to improve the quality of work provided to customers and/or co-workers." The other, control of others, also had four items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.74). One item was "Fixing problems created by other people." A wide range of outcome variables were included in this study covering both work and extra-work domains. These variables were consistent with those typically used in studies of work and well-being more generally (Barling et al., 2005; Schabracq et al., 2003).

2.3.3 Work outcomes

Job satisfaction was measured by a seven-item scale (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.80) developed by Kofodimos (1993). An item was "I feel challenged by my work." Respondents indicated their levels of satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale (1 – very dissatisfied, 3 – neutral, and 5 – very satisfied).

2.3.4 Career satisfaction

It was measured by a five-item scale (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.88) developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). One item was "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career." Respondents indicated their levels of satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale (1 – very satisfied, 3 – neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and 5 – very dissatisfied).

2.3.5 Job stress

It was measured by a nine-item scale (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.59) developed by Spence and Robbins (1992). An item was "Sometimes I feel like my work is going to overwhelm me." Intent to quit (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.84) was measured by two items (e.g. "are you currently looking for a different job in a different organization?"), using a yes/no format. This scale had been used previously by Burke (1991).

2.3.6 Psychological well-being

Psychosomatic symptoms was measured by 19 items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.85) developed by Quinn and Shepard (1974). Respondents indicated how often they experienced each physical condition (e.g. headaches) in the past year on a four-point frequency scale (1 – never, 4 – often).

2.3.7 Emotional exhaustion

It was measured by a scale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996). The scale had nine items (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.74). One item was "I feel emotionally drained from my work." Responses were made on a seven-point frequency scale (1 – never, 7 – daily).

2.3.8 Work-family conflict

It was measured by a nine-item scale (a $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.83) developed and validated by Carlson et al. (2000). Three forms of conflict, time-, strain- and behaviour-based were each measured by three items. One item was "My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like."

Table 1. Personal and Work Characteristics of Respondents

| Characteristics | N | % |
|------------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 146 | 60.3 |
| Female | 96 | 39.7 |
| Work status | | |
| Full time | 226 | 93.4 |
| Part time (contract) | 16 | 6.6 |
| Marital status | | |
| Married | 150 | 62.0 |
| Single | 92 | 38.0 |
| Parental status | | |
| Children | 156 | 64.5 |
| No children | 86 | 35.5 |
| Education | | |
| School cert | 12 | 5.0 |
| Bachelors | 185 | 90.0 |
| Masters/phd | 35 | 5.0 |
| Hours worked | | |
| 40 or less | 102 | 42 |
| 41-50 | 100 | 41.3 |
| 51 and above | 39 | 16.1 |
| Age | | |
| 25 or less | 73 | 30.2 |
| 26-35 | 103 | 42.6 |
| 36-45 | 26 | 10.7 |
| 46 and above | 40 | 16.5 |
| Length of marriage | | |
| 1-5 years | 36 | 37.5 |
| 6-10 | 13 | 13.5 |
| 11-20 | 26 | 27.1 |
| 21-25 | 17 | 17.7 |
| 26 and above | 04 | 4.2 |
| Income (naira) | | |
| 1 million or less | 62 | 25.6 |
| 1-2.5 million | 134 | 55.4 |
| 2.6-3.0 million | 30 | 12.4 |
| 3.1million and above | 16 | 6.6 |
| Supervisory duties | | |
| Yes | 161 | 66.5 |
| No | 81 | 33.5 |
| Functions | | |
| Lecturers | 82 | 33.9 |
| Administrators | 60 | 24.8 |
| Technologists | 33 | 13.6 |
| Accountants | 39 | 16.1 |
| Executive officers | 28 | 11.6 |

3. RESULTS

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The three work engagement measures were significantly and positive inter-correlated (p , 0.001): vigour and dedication, 0.53; vigour and absorption, 0.54; and dedication and absorption, 0.50. These values were consistent with those reported by Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) who found these to typically be about 0.65. The mean values for the engagement scales were also moderately high and fairly typical of employed managerial and professional samples: vigour, 3.5; dedication, 3.3; and absorption, 3.5.

3.2 Predictors of Work Engagement

3.2.1 Personal demographic, work situation and personality factors

Hierarchical regression analyses were first undertaken in which three measures of work engagement were regressed on three blocks of predictors. The first block of predictors ($n = 5$) consisted of personal demographic characteristics (e.g. age, marital status, and level of education). The second block of predictors ($n = 4$) consisted of work situation characteristics (e.g. organizational level, organizational, and job tenure). The third block of predictors ($n = 3$) consisted of the measure on Nach and the two-workaholic job behaviours. When a block of predictors accounted for a significant amount on increment in explained variance on a given outcome variable (p , 0.05), all measures within such blocks having significant and independent relationships with this outcome (p , 0.05) were identified. The sample size for all regressions reported in this manuscript was 241.

Table 2. Work engagement, work situation and personality factors

| Parameters | <i>R</i> | <i>R</i> ² | <i>DR</i> ² | <i>P</i> |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Work engagement | | | | |
| Vigour | | | | |
| Personal demographics | 0.27 | 0.08 | 0.08 | 0.01 |
| Gender (0.30) | | | | |
| Marital status (0.20) | | | | |
| Work situation | 0.34 | 0.12 | 0.12 | 0.001 |
| Organisational size (0.14) | | | | |
| Personality | 0.51 | 0.26 | 0.14 | 0.001 |
| Non-required work (0.38) | | | | |
| Nach (0.12) | | | | |
| Dedication | | | | |
| Personal Demographics | 0.35 | 0.12 | 0.12 | 0.001 |
| Marital status (0.25) | | | | |
| Education level (0.17) | | | | |
| Gender (0.13) | | | | |
| Work situation | | | | |
| Organisation level (0.18) | 0.39 | 0.15 | 0.03 | NS |
| Personality | 0.53 | 0.28 | 0.13 | 0.001 |
| Non-required work (0.28) | | | | |
| Nach (0.18) | | | | |
| Absorption | | | | |

Table 2 continues.....

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| Personal Demographics | 0/31 | 0.09 | 0.09 | 0.001 |
| Education level (0.21) | | | | |
| Work situation | 0.37 | 0.13 | 0.04 | 0.05 |
| Personality | 0.52 | 0.26 | 0.13 | 0.001 |
| Nach (0.28) | | | | |
| Non-required work (0.24) | | | | |

The following comments are offered in summary (Table 2). First, all three blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on vigour. Men, single employees, employees in smaller organizations and those scoring higher on non-required work or on Nach reported higher levels of vigour (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.30, 0.20, 0.14, 0.38, and 0.12, respectively). Second, two of the three blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on dedication (not work situation characteristics). Respondents who were single, less highly educated, men, and those scoring higher on non-required work or on Nach indicated higher levels of dedication (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.25, 0.17, 0.13, 0.28, and 0.18, respectively). Third, all three blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on absorption. Managers having less education, working in smaller organizations, and reporting higher levels of Nach and on non-required work indicated higher levels of absorption (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.21, 0.23, 0.28, and 0.24, respectively).

Two general observations are worth noting. First, men, respondents having less education, single individuals, and individuals working in smaller organizations were more work engaged. These findings, though indicating stronger and more consistent relationships than hypothesized, were, in general, supportive of our H1. Second, both Nach and one workaholic job behaviour (non-required work) were significant predictors of work engagement supporting our H2. These findings address the question of “who are your engaged employees?”

3.2.2 Consequences of work engagement

Consistent with previous research on the consequences of work engagement, indicators of both work outcomes and psychological well-being were included. These were the following.

3.2.2.1 Predictors of work outcomes

Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical regression analyses in which four work outcomes were regressed on three blocks of predictors (personal demographics, work situation characteristics, and measures of work engagement). Work engagement accounted for a significant increment in explained variance in all cases. Let us first consider job satisfaction. All three blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance.

Respondents in shorter marriages, men, younger respondents, those having longer organizational tenure, those working in smaller organizations, those having shorter job tenure, those at higher organizational levels, and managers scoring higher on dedication, scoring higher on vigour, and lower on absorption indicated more job satisfaction (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.30, 0.13, 20.21, 0.24, 20.16, 20.25, 0.15, 0.40, 0.24, and 20.20, respectively).

Two of the three blocks of predictors accounted for a significant increment in explained variance on career satisfaction (not personal demographics). Respondents at higher organizational levels, those scoring higher on dedication, and higher on vigour, and lower on absorption, indicated more satisfaction with their careers (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.12, 0.55, 0.22, and 20.40, respectively).

Two blocks of predictors accounted for significant increments in explained variance on job stress (not personal demographics). Managers having longer organizational tenure, those scoring higher on vigour, and those scoring higher on dedication, indicated higher levels of job stress (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.20, 0.24, and 0.16, respectively).

Finally, two blocks of predictors (not work situation characteristics) indicated a significant amount or increment in explained variance on intent to quit. Men, younger respondents, those that were single, more educated respondents, respondents scoring lower on dedication, and on vigour, but scoring higher on absorption indicated a greater intent to quit (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.29, 0.31, 0.19, 0.13, 20.36, 20.21, and 0.19, respectively). More research is needed to determine whether the findings involving absorption are real or a statistical artifact.

Table 3. Work engagement and work outcomes

| Parameters | <i>R</i> | <i>R</i> ² | <i>DR</i> ² | <i>P</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------|
| Work outcome | | | | |
| Job satisfaction | | | | |
| Personal demographics | 0.24 | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.05 |
| Length of Marriage (0.30) | | | | |
| Gender (0.13) | | | | |
| Age (20.21) | | | | |
| Work situation | 0.44 | 0.20 | 0.14 | 0.001 |
| Organisational size (20.16) | | | | |
| Job tenure (20.25) | | | | |
| Organisational level (0.15) | | | | |
| Engagement | 0.67 | 0.45 | 0.25 | 0.001 |
| Dedication (0.48) | | | | |
| Absorption (20.20) | | | | |
| Vigour (0.24) | | | | |
| Career satisfaction | | | | |
| Personal Demographics | 0.21 | 0.04 | 0.04 | NS |
| Work situation | 0.26 | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.05 |
| Organisation size (0.12) | | | | |
| Engagement | 0.61 | 0.38 | 0.30 | 0.001 |
| Dedication (0.55) | | | | |
| Absorption (20.40) | | | | |
| Vigour (0.22) | | | | |
| Job stress | | | | |
| Personal Demographics) | 0.20 | 0.04 | 0.04 | NS |
| Work situation | 0.26 | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.05 |
| Organisation tenure (0.20) | | | | |
| Engagement | 0.38 | 0.14 | 0.07 | 0.001 |
| Vigour (0.24) | | | | |
| Dedication (20.16) | | | | |
| Intent to quit | | | | |

Table 3 continues.....

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| Personal Demographics | 0.36 | 0.13 | 0.13 | 0.001 |
| Gender (0.29) | | | | |
| Age (20.31) | | | | |
| Marital status (0.19) | | | | |
| Education level (20.13) | | | | |
| Work situation | 0.39 | 0.16 | 0.03 | NS |
| Engagement | 0.56 | 0.31 | 0.15 | 0.001 |
| Dedication (20.31) | | | | |
| Vigour (20.21) | | | | |
| Absorption (0.19) | | | | |

3.2.2.2 Predictors of psychological well-being

Table IV shows the results of hierarchical regression analyses in which three measures of psychological well-being were regressed on the same three blocks of predictors. The measures of work engagement accounted for a significant increment in explained variance on all three indicators of well-being. Let us first consider exhaustion. Two blocks of predictors (not work situation characteristics) accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on exhaustion. Female professionals scoring lower on dedication, and Male professionals scoring higher on absorption, reported higher levels of exhaustion (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.11, 20.25, and 0.19, respectively).

Two blocks of predictors (not personal demographics) accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on work-family conflict. Professionals working in larger Universities, Professionals at lower organizational levels, and Professionals scoring higher on absorption, indicated higher levels of work-family conflict (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.20, 20.17, and 0.25, respectively).

All three blocks of predictors accounted for a significant amount or increment in explained variance on psychosomatic symptoms. Older, Professionals in shorter marriages, Professionals working in smaller organizations, Professionals scoring lower on vigour and Professionals scoring higher on absorption indicated more psychosomatic symptoms (Bs $\frac{1}{4}$ 0.56, 20.29, 20.17, 20.35, and 0.26, respectively). In all three analyses (exhaustion, work-family conflict, and psychosomatic symptoms) Professionals indicating higher levels of absorption also reported more negative psychological well-being. Professionals indicating higher levels of vigour and dedication also reported fewer psychosomatic symptoms and lower levels of exhaustion, respectively. Although the three work engagement components are significantly and positively inter-correlated, they seem to sometimes relate to outcomes in opposite directions. It may well be that absorption is a particularly debilitating form on work engagement having adverse consequences. These latter findings may also be a statistical artifact rather than a valid result however.

These results provided support for our H3. Again, two more general observations are worth noting. First, dedication was more strongly and consistently related to both work and well-being outcomes than were with the two other engagement measures. Second, work engagement accounted for greater increments in explained variance on the work outcomes than on the indicators of psychological well-being.

Table 4. Work engagement and psychological well-being

| Parameters | R | R2 | DR2 | P |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|-------|
| Psychological well being | | | | |
| Exhaustion | | | | |
| Personal demographics | 0.33 | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.001 |
| Gender (0.34) | | | | |
| Work situation | 0.38 | 0.14 | 0.03 | NS |
| Organisational size (0.20) | | | | |
| Organisation level (20.17) | | | | |
| Engagement | 0.38 | 0.14 | 0.04 | 0.05 |
| Dedication (20.25) | | | | |
| Absorption (0.19) | | | | |
| Work-family Conflict | | | | |
| Personal Demographics | 0.21 | 0.04 | 0.04 | 0.05 |
| Work situation | 0.32 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.01 |
| Organisation size (0.20) | | | | |
| Organisation level (20.17) | | | | |
| Engagement | 0.38 | 0.14 | 0.04 | 0.05 |
| Absorption (0.23) | | | | |
| Psychosomatic symptoms | | | | |
| Personal Demographics | 0.31 | 0.10 | 0.10 | 0.001 |
| Age (0.56) | 0.53 | 0.28 | 0.13 | 0.001 |
| Length of Marriage (20.29) | | | | |
| Work situation | 0.39 | 0.16 | 0.06 | 0.01 |
| Engagement | 0.48 | 0.23 | 0.07 | 0.001 |
| Vigour (20.35) | | | | |
| Absorption (0.26) | | | | |

4. DISCUSSION

This research examined the potential antecedents and consequences of work engagement in a large sample of Professionals and professionals working in various organizations and industries in Nigeria. An increasing number of organizations are concluding that they need to unleash the untapped potential of all their employees if they are to compete successfully in an increasingly demanding global market place (Adekola, 2010, Burke and Cooper, 2008; Lawler, 2008).

The results indicated that both personal demographic and work situation characteristics and stable individual difference motivations represented by need for achievement (McClelland, 1985) and workaholic job behaviours (Mudrack, 2007) were consistent and strong predictors of all three engagement factors: vigour, dedication, and absorption (Table II). The consistent relationships of personal demographic and stable personality factors with levels of work engagement were at odds with earlier conclusions of Schaufeli and his colleagues and warrant further study.

Work engagement, in turn, was found to have fairly consistent, but moderate, relationships with several work outcomes and indicators of psychological well-being (Tables III and IV). Engagement, it seems, has potentially positive consequences for both employees and their employing organizations. Why should work engagement be associated with valued individual and organizational-level work and well-being outcomes? Work engagement is a positive, satisfying, feeling, and motivational state of well-being at work. Engaged employees have more energy, are more job involved and more strongly identified with their work (Leiter and Bakker, 2010). Work engagement diminishes job burnout. Work engaged employees will embrace more challenging work; engaged workers use more of their talents. Engagement seems to produce an upward spiral in which “the rich get richer”;

in work terms, engaged workers invest more in their work acquire more skills, and then commit themselves to even more challenging assignments which in turn leads to increasing levels of work engagement.

What characteristics and experiences foster work engagement. On the one hand, some individual personality characteristics (e.g. need for achievement, proactive personality) are associated with higher levels of work engagement. On the other hand, work engagement results from job resources such as support and encouragement at work, feedback on performance about one’s job performance, opportunities to use a wide variety of skills, discretion in how one undertakes one’s job, chance to learn, initiatives that reduce the negative effects of workplace demands, and when employees values fit their organization’s vision and mission. Both individual and organizational factors play an important role in the experience of being truly work engaged.

The accumulating research findings on work engagement have added considerably to our understanding of implications for building more effective organizations. The research that has considered the organizational environment associated with high levels of work engagement has reported that organizational support plays a central role (Demerouti et al., 2001). Fortunately there is some understanding of the processes on mechanisms that underlay levels of support (Leiter and Maslach, 2010). Leiter (2005) offers a comprehensive look at interventions in the workplace designed to enhance engagement with work. Increasing engagement with work is a challenging and complex undertaking. As the research findings show, engagement stems from the employees contact with a work environment.

Leiter (2005) offers a conceptual framework to build engagement with work that considers the targets of intervention, strategies for intervention and potential consequences. Intervention targets include energy at work, involvement with one’s work, and efficacy at work. Intervention strategies involve both individuals and organizational or workplace levels. It is critical to remember that individuals have different views and values about work – which can change over time – and that employees must participate in building engagement at work. Finally, the six areas of work life considered in the present study can serve as targets for change (e.g. workload, control, rewards, and recognition).

Schaufeli and Salanova (2007, 2008) suggest a number of ways to build work engagement. These include: (a) enhancing the person-job fit: Matching individual and organizational needs (b) developing a meaningful psychological contract that links personal goals of individual employees with organizational resources; (c) surveys of employee demands and resources and their association with positive and negative outcomes; (d) job redesign that reduces stressors and increases resources; (e) Leadership development that build a positive

emotional climate in the workplace; and (f) developing training programs that are targeted at both organizational health and individual well-being.

5. CONCLUSION

Our findings suggest that engagement at work is associated with positive work and individual well-being outcomes and that stable individual difference factors are a major contributor to levels of employee engagement. They are consistent with the results of an increasing number of recent studies (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006; Hakanen et al., 2005; Langelaan et al., 2006; Montgomery et al., 2003; Sonnentag, 2003) reflecting the importance of understanding and increasing employee engagement. Our findings extend our understanding of engagement in ways that have practical implications such as those suggested by Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) who suggest that selection, goal setting and the articulation of a challenging “contract” between the individual and the organization are ways to heighten engagement.

The respondents in our sample expressed relatively high intentions to quit their current jobs in the current year. It is not clear, however, what alternatives they are contemplating, particularly in light of the current world-wide economic downturn and high level of unemployment in the country. Such indication however may only be a pointer to the fact that they are not too satisfied with their job and are only keeping it for lack of another one in the meantime. This raises the issue of whether the relatively young men and women in our sample will have to continue in jobs that they would prefer to change; a reality that likely erodes work engagement. Nigerian Universities therefore may be facing significant challenges as they make efforts to improve levels of employee work engagement.

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