

Summary

The Effect of Person Organization Value Congruence Regarding Organizational Opportunities for Personal Development on Work Engagement: Moderating Role of Organizational Tenure

Mehmet Peker

Ege University

Nevra Cem Ersoy

İzmir University of Economics

Muazzez Deniz Giray

Independent Researcher

Work engagement can be defined as work-related emotional and psychological well-being (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Studies showed that work engagement is an important construct that is related to higher job performance (Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2013), higher organizational citizenship behavior (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008), higher well-being (Schaufeli, Taris, & Van Rhenen, 2008), and lower intention to leave the organization (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008). Studies investigating work engagement primarily focused on its outcomes, while factors affecting work engagement were relatively understudied (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kühnel, 2011). Therefore, this study aims to reveal the effect of a potentially important factor, namely value congruence regarding opportunities for personal development, on work engagement.

Studies have shown that job demands and resources are the most important proximal predictors of work engagement (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Halbesleben, 2010; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These studies examined the direct links between job demands and resources and work engagement, but only a limited number of studies have yet examined how employees perceived these resources provided by their organizations. Kahn (1990), on the other hand, argued that one of the best predictors of work engagement is the congruence between the values of employees and those of organizations. Hence, it is important to examine how employees perceive the job resources provided for them.

This study focuses on value congruence related to one specific job resource, namely opportunities for personal development. The job demands-resources model and the mediation model of burnout and engagement propose that value congruity is the central factor in explaining employee burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2005). According to these models, when the employee's values are in line with the organization's values, employees'

motivation and involvement increases; in contrast, when there is divergence, employees feel less engaged in their work (Leiter & Maslach, 2004). For instance, Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) showed that the congruence of employees' and organizations' values was related to employees' work engagement.

Opportunities for personnel development are employees' perceptions about the resources that are provided to them (Kraimer, Seibert, Wayne, Liden, & Bravo, 2011). Examples of these opportunities are various types of training related to career or personnel development and some types of mentorship. These opportunities are positively related to work motivation and organizational citizenship performance (Bartlett, 2001). In the current study, employees' values were indirectly measured via their recovery activities in leisure time. For this reason, we used the Mastery dimension of the Recovery Experiences Scale. This dimension is composed of items such as "attending foreign language courses" and "learning new hobbies". Because opportunities for personal development and mastery dimensions are conceptually similar, we focused on the congruency of these two constructs. Value congruency takes place when the organization provides opportunities for personal development and the employee engages in mastery activities outside of work, or when the organization does not provide opportunities for personal development and the employee does not engage in mastery experiences in leisure time. On the other hand, value discrepancy implies either that the employee engages in mastery experiences but the organization does not provide opportunities for personal development, or that the employee does not engage in mastery activities while the organization provides opportunities for personal development. The same type of conceptualization of value congruence was examined before. Brandstätter, Job, and Schulze (2016) investigated the degree of misfit between motivational

needs and supplies, showing that the fit between personal needs and environmental supplies influences burnout and physical symptoms. Theories and previous studies claim that value congruence is an important predictor of work engagement (e.g., Kahn, 1990; Leiter & Bakker, 2010). In other words, in addition to the existence of opportunities, the experience of value congruence related to personal development is expected to be positively related to employees' work engagement.

Hypothesis 1: There is a curvilinear relationship between value congruence regarding opportunities for personal development and work engagement.

Similar to individuals, organizations also have sets of values, shaped by their management and employees. Beginning from the attraction stage, organizations seek employees whose values are in alignment with theirs. Similarly, job applicants are also inclined to choose organizations that share their values (Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007). After recruitment, employees' values may be shaped by organizations through various processes, such as employee orientation or socialization. As employees' tenure increases, their values become even more similar to those of their organizations. Attraction-selection-attrition model (Schneider, 1987) also describes this process. The model asserts that job applicants are attracted to and prefer organizations with which they share values; similarly, organizations are likely to recruit employees whose values align with theirs; and lastly, employees who are not able to align their values with their organizations' tend to leave. Based on these arguments, we assert that the effects of value congruence regarding opportunities for personal development will be more similar for high tenure employees compared to their newly recruited counterparts.

According to attraction-selection attrition model (Schneider, 1987), job applicants seek organizations that hold similar values with their own and organizations want to hire employees who share similar values with theirs. However, other factors may influence this process in an opposite way. For example, job applicants may use impression management tactics by displaying values they do not actually share with the organizations (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Such factors may bring about low value congruence between employees and organizations. Although some studies show that value incongruence has a negative relationship with work engagement (Rich et al., 2010), there might be some factors influencing the association between value incongruence and work engagement. For example, Erdogan, Kraimer, and Liden (2004) showed that leader-member exchange and perceived organization support attenuated the negative effects of value incongruence on job and career satisfaction. Vogel, Rodell, and Lynch (2016) showed

that job crafting acted as a buffer in the employee work engagement and value incongruence relationship. Employees experience positive practices and adapt to their work context over time. Hence, employee tenure is an important factor that determines adaptation to a certain work environment (Reio & Sutton, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). In light of these, the following hypothesis was generated:

Hypothesis 2: Tenure will moderate the curvilinear relationship between value congruence regarding opportunities for personal development and work engagement. Specifically, the curve will be steeper for newly recruited employees.

Method

Participants

The sample consists of 204 employees (102 women and 102 men) employed in different sectors, such as service, finance, and construction, in İzmir. The mean age of participants was 36.1 years ($SD = 8.7$). More than half had bachelor's degree (60%). The mean tenure of employees was 6.9 years ($SD = 6.4$).

Measures

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The 17-item original version of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002) which was adapted to Turkish by Eryılmaz and Doğan (2012) was used to measure work engagement. The scale includes three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption. Items were scored on a scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". High scores on all three dimensions indicated high work engagement. Internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha) for the vigor, dedication, and absorption scales were .87, .87, and .84, respectively.

Recovery Experience Scale. The Recovery Experience Scale is a 16-item instrument developed by Sonnentag and Fritz (2007) and aims to assess psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control. This scale was adapted to Turkish by Koçak et al. (2016) and reviewed by Koçak (2017). In the current study, only the 4-item mastery dimension was used. Typical examples of mastery experiences include taking a language class or learning a new hobby, which refer to off-the-job activities. Responses were obtained on a 5-point Likert-type scale that varied between (1) "I do not agree at all" and (5) "I fully agree". The Cronbach's alpha of mastery dimension was .86.

Job Resources. Opportunities for personal development were measured with the 3-item scale developed by Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli,

and Schreurs (2003) and adapted to Turkish by Koçak (2013). The items refer to opportunities for personal development provided at work. Items were scored on a scale ranging from (1) “strongly agree” to (6) “strongly disagree”. Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

Results

Prior to the main analyses, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to ensure that the measurements were distinct constructs. The results showed that after removing item 15 and releasing four error covariances between the items in the Work Engagement Scale, the model provided acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(222, N = 204) = 411.17, p < .001, RMSEA = .07, TLI = .90, CFI = .91$.

As outliers are specifically influential in polynomial regression and response surface analyses, Cook’s distance and leverage values of participants were examined, and 10 outliers were removed. Hypothesis 1 asserted a curvilinear relationship between value congruence and work engagement. The difference score between mastery experience of employees and organizational opportunities for personal development was computed prior to analyses. After controlling for age and gender, results showed that value congruence ($\beta = -.18, p < .011$) and value congruence squared ($\beta = -.32, p < .001$) were significantly related to work engagement.

In order to overcome the disadvantages related to the use of distance scores in value measurements (Edwards, 1994a, 2001; Kristof, 1996), response surface analysis was implemented based on the equation given below¹:

$$WE = b_0 + b_1OD + b_2ME + b_3OD^2 + b_4OD \times ME + b_5ME^2 + e$$

The results showed that the interaction term (opportunities for personal development \times mastery experiences) was significant, which provided initial support for Hypothesis 1. In the second step, the sum of $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$ was found to be significantly different than zero, and in the third step 10000 bootstrap resamples were generated to estimate whether the confidence intervals of the slope included 1 and the confidence intervals of the intercept included 0. The results supported the expectations. In the last step, the sums of $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$ and $b_1 + b_2$ were found to be not significantly different than zero. Overall, these results provided support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the curvilinear relationship between value congruence related to opportunities for personal development and work engagement is moderated by employee tenure. The

interaction term produced by multiplying value congruence squared and tenure was significantly related to work engagement ($\beta = .22, p = .016$), which provided support for Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

The study results showed that in addition to the job resources provided by organizations, congruence of value attributed to those resources by employees is important in explaining work engagement. Moreover, the findings also showed that the influence of value congruence on work engagement is more pronounced for newly recruited employees. The findings of this study have important implications for both theory and practice. First of all, study findings suggest that conceptualizing value congruence as a job resource-specific construct has potential to contribute to research. Secondly, results also confirm the claims of the attraction-selection-attrition model in explaining the influence of tenure on the relationship between value congruence and work engagement. Practitioners may also benefit from the findings of this study. In order to foster work engagement, they may consider the value attributed to a specific job resource by employees. Secondly, in the personnel selection process, they can seek a match between the values of employees and those of the organization to increase potential work engagement levels. Lastly, the findings also imply that newly recruited employees might be prioritized as they were found to be more adversely influenced by value incongruence compared to employees with longer tenure.

Future studies can contribute to this study’s findings in several directions. First of all, revealing the factors that cause value incongruence may be beneficial. In this regard, growth need strength and growth mindset have potential to explain why some but not all employees attribute value to the opportunities for personal development provided by their organization. Secondly, revealing value congruence related to which job resources have positive relationship with work engagement may contribute to the research in this area. We propose that job resources specified as “motivators” in Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman’s (1959) two-factor model may be especially prone to the influence of value congruence.

As in any study, this study has several limitations. First, use of difference scores to conceptualize value congruence has several disadvantages (Kristof, 1996). Future studies may investigate value congruence by endorsing a different methodology. Secondly, self-report measures have their drawbacks. This study tried to avoid

1 WE: work engagement, OD: Opportunities for personal development, ME: mastery experiences.

this bias by constructing an indirect measure of value congruence, but future research can adopt a different strategy by using aggregate measures of job resources and test whether the same findings are observed.

In conclusion, this study stresses the importance of value congruence related to a specific job resource in explaining the effects of job resources on work engagement. In addition to the studies that documented the positive influence of job resources on work engagement, this study further suggests that considering employees' value congruence related to the job resources may have its merits, especially for newly recruited employees.