3-2015

Participate or Else!: The Effect of Participation in Decision-Making in Meetings on Employee Engagement

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Abstract

In the scope of organizational life, few events are as universal or as influential as workplace meetings. In this study, we focused our attention on better understanding the relationship between meetings processes and post-meeting outcomes. More specifically, we investigated the relationship between participation in decision-making in meetings (PDM) and employee engagement, after controlling for the impact of meeting size and other demographic variables. We examined this from a theoretical perspective, providing particular consideration to the underlying basis of social exchange theory and norms of reciprocity at work in this relationship. Using a sample of working adults in the United States who were employees of organizations and attend meetings regularly, we found that PDM in meetings is related to employee engagement, even after controlling for job level, meeting size, tenure, and age. Additionally, perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement, such that the positive relationship is stronger when perceived supervisor support is high. Furthermore, meeting load also moderates the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement, such that the positive relationship is stronger when meeting load is high. This study is unique in its examination of how characteristics of the meeting setting may influence post-meeting outcomes such as employee engagement. Taken together, the findings suggest that PDM is associated with employee engagement, under certain conditions that are discussed.

Keywords: meetings, employee engagement, participation in decision making, perceived supervisor support, meeting load

Participate Or Else!:

How Participation in Decision-Making in Meetings Relates to Employee Engagement

In recent years, the rise in meetings has been somewhat of a phenomenon. Not only are there an estimated 11 million meetings in the workplace every day in the United States alone, but also meetings are a unique area of study in that they are almost universally used in businesses across the globe (Allen, Rogelberg, & Scott, 2008; Lehmann-Willenbrock, Allen, & Rogelberg, 2013; Rogelberg, Scott, & Kello, 2007). A meeting can be an opportunity for employees to participate in decision-making, – to share information, foster work relationships, and plan for the future (Tracy & Dimock, 2003). However, research also suggests that between 25 and 50 percent of all meetings are poor; therefore, additional meetings must be called to resolve issues that were supposed to have been resolved in the original meetings. These poor meetings, especially those that are seen as a waste of time, can have a negative relationship to employee morale (Allen et al., 2008).

Although meetings have many negative aspects (e.g. meeting load) we seek to esteem them in a more positive light by discovering features of well-run meetings that increase positive outcomes for organizations – such as employee engagement. Specifically, meetings where individuals openly participate in decision making may promote more positive outcomes for meeting attendees (Hinkel & Allen, 2013). Participation in decision making is the extent to which employers allow or encourage employees to share or participate in organizational decision-making (Probst, 2005). Previous research has shown that PDM in meetings relates to engagement but did not expressly investigate under what conditions this relationship exists (Hinkel & Allen, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which PDM in meetings relates to engagement while accounting for two theoretically meaningful moderators: meeting load and supervisor support. Building upon social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) literature, we argue that PDM in meetings relates to employee engagement. Focusing on meetings led by one's direct supervisor, we make the case that supervisor support moderates this relationship. Further, based on distinctiveness and salience research, we also expected meeting load to moderate this relationship. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of the study results.

Workplace Meetings Research

In the scope of organizational life, few events are as universal or as influential as workplace meetings (Asmuss & Svennevig, 2009; Holmes & Stubbe 2003; Perkins, 2009). Goals of the workplace meeting often include sharing information with colleagues, discussing problems, and deciding on what actions to take moving forward (Leach, Rogelberg, Warr, & Burnfield, 2009). In some cases, workplace meetings are one of the few opportunities that employees may have to voice their thoughts and ideas to organizational leaders (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). Unfortunately, meetings also have a reputation for often being a waste of time; in fact, it has been estimated that ineffective and unproductive meetings cost United States businesses $37 billion every year (Sheridan, 1989; Sisco, 1993). The full cost of wasted resources is not limited to monetary terms, but also extends to less favorable employee perceptions of the work environment, less positive job attitudes, lower job satisfaction, and higher intentions to quit (Leach et al., 2009). Other consequences include lower meeting attendance and diminished effort among participants, which impede an organization's ability to

accomplish goals (Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2011; Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, & Burnfield, 2006).

According to Angouri and Marra (2010), meetings are of critical importance to the well-being and smooth functioning of organizations. The leader of a meeting has a unique role in guiding the meeting, while ensuring progress on meeting goals and adherence to the agenda throughout. Additionally, the presence and actions of a meeting leader can help distinguish meetings from other events in organizational life and set a tone that is more formal in nature (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Pomerantz and Denvir (2007) suggest that the individual responsible for mediating a meeting has considerable influence in facilitating turn taking, discouraging inappropriate or counterproductive behavior, and inspiring positive, constructive contributions from meeting participants.

When designing a meeting, it is not only important to be mindful of the meeting structure, but also of the characteristics of the meeting participants themselves and how to elicit quality contributions from those participants. For example, Leach and colleagues (2009) found that the number of participants in a meeting is negatively related to attendee involvement. Employee's perceptions that meetings occur too frequently can also lead to a decrease in overall well-being (Rogelberg et al., 2006). Although there is much research that focuses on the negative aspects of meetings, the goal of this study is to discover how meetings may be used to achieve positive outcomes, such as employee engagement.

Participation in Decision Making in Meetings

PDM in meetings is defined as the degree to which employees are allowed or encouraged to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in the formal meeting setting (Probst, 2005). Once organizations have created a work environment that employees perceive as safe,

PDM may have the potential to influence employee attitudes and behaviors (Long, 1979). The opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas allows employees to feel that they are being heard by supervisors and managers, valued for their contributions, and included in the organization in a meaningful way. This opportunity also creates a sense of belonging. However, the extent to which PDM is present largely depends on not only a safe environment, but also the employees' desires to participate (Long, 1979).

Past studies have found that individuals' levels of participation in meetings was positively related to performance and greater commitment in carrying out the course of action decided upon during those meetings (Rosenberg & Rosenstein, 1980; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1996). Interestingly, it is incumbent upon leaders to recognize these participation opportunities and nurture their facilitation accordingly (Nelson, Zaccaro, & Herman, 2010). Studies have also found PDM to be positively related to job satisfaction and job performance (Lam, Chen, & Schaubroeck, 2002). However, the relationship between PDM and employee engagement is more effective when an organization takes steps to encourage participation rather than attempt to force it (Stohl & Cheney, 2008).

Participation in Decision Making in Meetings and Overall Employee Engagement

Given that PDM consists of the expression of ideas, feelings, and opinions, we argue that employees who contribute their thoughts and ideas in meetings with organizational leaders will also have a desire to engage in their work more fully (i.e. employee engagement). Employee engagement may be thought of as the degree to which employees bring their whole selves to work and are immersed in serving their organizations (Cowardin-Lee, & Soyalp, 2011; Kahn, 1990). Employee engagement is a state of mind that consists of three components: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Baker, 2003). Vigor can be described as having a strong

energy for the work, persistence, and resilience. Vigor is apparent in many hospitals and organizations that require high degrees of scheduling resilience (Rutter, 1987). Dedication is present when individuals feel that the work is motivating and challenging, as well as instilling feelings of pride that strengthen commitment. Absorption involves becoming immersed in the work role, so that one's work role may become somewhat inseparable from the worker's overall identity (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) such as what is experienced by politicians (Rose, 1967) or firefighters (Allen, Baran, & Scott, 2010).

Researchers studying networks of communication have found that engaged employees tend to connect to centralized employees through the use of various communication strategies (Cowardin-Lee, & Soyalp, 2011). However, past studies have found that optimal engagement of employees is not possible if centralized employees, such as managers and executives, possess only low to moderate levels of engagement themselves. Achieving the highest levels of employee engagement requires that key participants provide both technical and socio-emotional support (Bono & Judge, 2003; Cowardin-Lee, & Soyalp, 2011). Consistent with social exchange theory (Homans, 1973), it is believe that such support would be reciprocated by individuals by increasing their engagement in work activities. Thus, technical support without an effort to connect with employees on a human level and build effective, mutually beneficial working relationships constrains the development of employee engagement. Fostering higher levels of employee engagement at all levels of the organizational hierarchy can do much to encourage higher quality relationships (i.e. reciprocity and social exchange) and produce higher quality outcomes.

Research suggests that there are many benefits to employee engagement, such as highly engaged employees being more committed to organizational success, having stronger ties with

team members, developing more effective collaborative relationships, performing more organizational citizenship behaviors, and producing higher quality results (Anitha, 2014; Cowardin-Lee, & Soyalp, 2011; Gallup, Inc., 2013; Soane et al., 2012). In recent years, organizations have started to realize the benefits of employee engagement, and are taking greater action to increase opportunities for face-to-face communication whereby build trust among employees (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Our research indicates that the workplace meeting, if used properly, can be a powerful tool to achieve these ends.

Given the tremendous benefits of employee engagement, we examined how it may be related to one key feature of many workplace meetings: participation in decision-making. Research indicates that PDM provides a positive resource for employees and changes their perceptions of their work environment (Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004). Studies suggest that employees view the opportunity to participate and be heard in the decision-making process as a reward (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). Because of this, employees are subsequently motivated to improve performance and engagement to reciprocate and return the favor in order to achieve a balance in the relationship. The expectation for such give and take is referred to as the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960).

Past studies also suggest that employees are more likely to become psychologically engaged in environments where they are able to express their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs without fear of punishment (Kahn, 1990). In fact, one previous study examined the relationship between PDM in meetings and positive outcomes for meeting participants. Hinkel and Allen (2013) found that PDM is related to employee engagement. Consistent with Kahn's (1990) original theory of engagement, it is believed that when individuals feel adequately safe to participate in their meetings, they will be more likely to also become engaged in the ideas,

inventive thinking, and decisions they make in those meetings. Thus, consistent with these ideas and previous research (Hinkel and Allen, 2013), the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: PDM is positively related to employee engagement.

Supervisor Support as a Moderator

Studies indicate that most employees who are engaged have positive working relationships with their supervisors and are able to trust their supervisors' knowledge and expertise (Cowardin-Lee, & Soyalp, 2011). According to Kossek and colleagues (2011), employees view supervisors as supportive if they perceive that the supervisor acts with employee well-being in mind. Specific types of support can be emotional, technical, or instrumental in nature (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009). In order to be most supportive, we believe a supervisor must be supportive in all of these ways. Supervisors must reliably engage in behaviors that show concern for the employee, such as taking time to listen or making efforts to be flexible with the work schedule.

Given that a positive relationship between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement exists in the literature (Cowardin-Lee, & Soyalp, 2011) and the finding that employees' perceptions of supervisors influence perceptions of the organization (Kossek et al., 2011), we believe that the relationship between PDM and employee engagement is somewhat dependent upon the environment in which employees find themselves, at least from a support perspective. Specifically, organizational support theory suggests employees who feel supported will be more likely to be committed to the organization, put in more effort than is required, and exhibit fewer withdrawal behaviors (Eisenberger, Jones, Aselage, &Sucharski, 2004). For example, studies suggest that when a manager is concerned with organizational commitment in

general, his or her employees tend to be focused on how committed an organization is to their own particular needs (Eisenberger et al., 2004).

In the context of meetings, supervisor support may facilitate the environment that lends itself to both participation as well as engagement. Specifically, when individuals feel supported by their supervisor, they reciprocate that respect by attempting to show similar support, respect, and effort toward the supervisor. Thus, consistent with social exchange theory, it is believed when employees feel supported by their supervisor, the relationship between PDM and engagement will be stronger which reflects the increase in psychological safety afforded them in the meeting context (Kahn, 1990). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2*: Perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between PDM and employee engagement, such that there will be a stronger, positive relationship when perceived supervisor support is high.

Meeting Load as a Moderator

Due to the interdependent nature of the modern work environment, there has been an increasingly high frequency of meetings in many organizations (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). In this study, we examined whether or not meeting frequency may be related to the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement, such that employees who attend fewer meetings will tend to remember the meetings they do attend as being more salient and more important. However, our interest was not in only meeting load per se, but rather how more limited opportunities to interact with one's supervisor can result in the few opportunities available exerting a disproportionately strong relationship with engagement.

Support for such an expectation is found in various studies on distinctiveness and memory, such as those conducted by Schmidt (1991) and Rajaram (1996). According to these

studies, memories that are isolated and distinct may be more salient due to greater processing within the brain. Although some other studies have contradicted this finding (ie: Hunt, 2009), we believe that such disagreement may be resolved by further study in order to parse the intricate complexities of the distinctiveness relationship. In terms of our research, we seek to investigate if there is a bias towards more salience of novel events that impacts the relationship between PDM and employee engagement.

One prior study has specifically found a positive relationship between meeting load and feelings of exhaustion, as well as a positive relationship between meeting load and perceived work load (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). Although this information alone may be interpreted to suggest that increased meeting load would have a negative relationship with at least one component of engagement, vigor, we believe that the relationship may be more complex. Specifically, we believe there will be a significant, positive relationship between PDM and employee engagement for both those with higher supervisor-led meeting load and those with lower supervisor-led meeting load, but the relationship will be stronger for those with lower meeting load. As those with higher supervisor-led meeting load participate in decision-making, the increase in employee engagement may many times be somewhat offset by other factors, such as exhaustion and the feeling that each additional meeting contributes relatively less to the social exchange relationship. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Meeting load moderates the relationship between PDM and employee engagement, such that the positive relationship is stronger when meeting load is low.

Methods

Sample and Procedure

In order to test our hypotheses, data were collected from participants via an online survey tool (i.e. surveymonkey). Working adult participants were recruited by students who received extra credit for doing so in their undergraduate level psychology course. Each student was to contact 10 working adults and invite them to participate. A total of 35 students sent invitations for a total of 350 potential respondents. A total of 297 participants completed the survey for a response rate of 84%. Due to the nature of the study, only participants who indicated they were full-time employees and attended meetings regularly with their supervisor were included in the study (*N*=261). All measures were given in electronic format and were untimed. The majority of respondents were female (53.6%), middle-aged (M = 40.48 years, SD = 12.84), and relatively experienced in terms of tenure with their current organization (M = 5.54 years, SD = 6.31).

Given the cross-sectional nature of the study design, we implemented a number of procedures to mitigate common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). First, we followed the recommendation of Podsakoff and colleagues (2003), and we assured participants that they were being given complete anonymity. Doing so mitigates concerns of evaluation apprehension influencing results. Second, we mitigated concern over response apprehension by informing participants that there were no right or wrong answers, and they should answer the questions as honestly as possible. Third, we followed another recommendation by Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) and counterbalanced question order on the survey instrument. The reason for this is that priming effects, item-context induced mood states, and any other biases that may be caused by the location of a measure on a survey are less likely to influence the results in a significant way. We created five different versions of the survey; each

version placed measures in a different order. Fourth, following recommendations by Podsakoff and colleagues (2003), as well as Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski (2000), we made an effort to include the best items possible and kept the questions straightforward. This includes using only scales that have been shown to be reliable and valid in other published studies. Thus, to the items on our survey avoided double-barreled questions and used the simplest language possible. Fifth and finally, following Podsakoff and colleagues (2003), we used different scale endpoints and formats for the predictors, moderators, criterion, and control variables. For example, participation in decision making was assessed using 5-point rating scales from 1 being "never" to 5 being "always," and perceived supervisor support was measured using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 bring "strongly disagree" to 5 being "strongly agree." It also should be noted that recent published reviews of common-method bias suggest the concern may be inflated and we review this as we discuss this potential limitation in the discussion section (Conway & Lance, 2010).

Measures

Participation in Decision-Making in Meetings. Participation in decision-making in meetings was measured using a modified version of a nine-item scale developed by Siegel and Ruh (1973). This scale focused on the extent to which employees are provided an opportunity to take part in the making decisions within the meetings they attend. In the instructions, participants were told to think of how often supervisors in supervisor-led meetings performed a variety of behaviors encouraging PDM, such as requiring employees to take part in decisions that are relevant to their jobs. Sample items include "Require employees to participate in decisions that relate to their jobs" and "Ask for employees' views concerning company decisions." Each of these items is on a 5-point scale, with 1 being "never" to 5 being "always."

Employee Engagement. Employee engagment was measured by using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), consisting of 16 items used to assess vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The instructions either read “Think about the work that you do. Please indicate how frequently the following are true of you at work:” or “Think about the work that you do. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Items were rated on a 5-point scale, with 1 being “never” to 5 being “always” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Sample items include “I am proud of the work that I do” and “I am immersed in my work.”

Meeting Load. We assessed meeting load using a four-item measure, with two items from Baran and Shanock (2010) and two items from Luong & Rogelberg (2005). Items included the number of meetings attended in a given week as well as the amount of time spent in meetings. A sample item is “How many meetings do you attend in a given week?” Because number of meetings and time in meetings are not comparable values, items were converted to z-scores and then combined to form the composite (see Table 1).

Meeting Size was assessed by a one-item measure asking participants “On average, how many people attend your work related meetings?” (Cohen, Rogelberg, Allen, & Luong, 2010).

Perception of Supervisor Support. We measured perception of supervisor support measured using a five-item measure from May, Gilson, and Harter (2004). In the instructions, participants were told “Think of your direct supervisor. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.” Sample items included “My supervisor is willing to help me when I need a special favor.” Each of these items is on a 5-point scale, with 1 being “strongly disagree” to 5 being “strongly agree.”

Demographic Variables. Demographic variables included age, gender, tenure, and job level. Of these variables, job-level showed a significant correlation with study variables. We therefore included it in all subsequent analyses (Becker, 2005).

Results

Table 1 contains the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and alpha reliability estimates for all measures (see Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

Hypothesis 1 stated that PDM is directly related to employee engagement. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. First, job level, age, meeting size, and tenure were entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance (R^2= .08, p < .05). Next, participation in decision-making (β =.10, p <. 10) and perceived supervisor support (β =.34, p < .05) were included and found to significantly relate to employee engagement (ΔR^2 = .15). Therefore, H1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement, such that the positive relationship is stronger when perceived supervisor support is high. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted (see Table 2). First, job level, age, meeting size, and tenure were entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance. Next, participation in decision-making (β =.10, p < .10) and perceived supervisor support (β =.34, p < .05) were included and found to significantly relate to employee engagement. Finally, the full interaction was tested. Perceived supervisor support was found to moderate the relationship between participation in decision-

making and employee engagement (ΔR^2 = .02; β = .14, p < .05). Additionally, the interaction was graphed and was in the direction hypothesized (see Figure 1). Therefore, H2 was supported.

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Figure 1 about here

Hypothesis 3 stated that meeting load moderates the relationship between PDM and employee engagement, such that the positive relationship is stronger when meeting load is high. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted (see Table 3). First, job level and tenure were entered, with the result accounting for a significant amount of variance. Next, participation in decision-making (β =.23, p < .05) and meeting load (β = .15, p < .05) were included and found to significantly relate to employee engagement (ΔR^2 = .05; β = .04, p < .05). Finally, the interaction term was included and found moderate the relationship between participation in decision-making and employee engagement (ΔR^2 = .02; β = -.14, p < .05). Additionally, the interaction was graphed and was in the direction hypothesized (see Figure 2). Therefore, H3 was supported.

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Figure 2 about here

Discussion

This study indicates that PDM in meetings is related to employee engagement long after the meeting has ended. Employees generally consider the opportunity to engage in decision

making as a valuable and rewarding (Allen et al., 2003; Wayne et al., 1997). Therefore, when employees participate due to their own volition or encouragement that may come from the meeting leader, there is a tendency for employees to seek balance in the social exchange relationship and reciprocate by becoming more deeply involved in their work and more engaged. Although the effect size in the regression of employee engagement on PDM in meetings may seem relatively small, previous research on engagement and meetings has found that other meeting processes also have relatively small, but meaningful correlations with engagement (Allen & Rogelberg, 2013). Further, it should be noted that a small effect size may appear trivial for one meeting, but when combined across the breadth of meetings in a given day, week, month, or year, this can have a compounding effect. That is, if we can improve engagement as an outcome of meetings by 5% for the 11 million meetings in the U.S. on a given day, the effect would be noticeable.

This research is unique in that it is the first real attempt to investigate how the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement may be related to other factors, such as perceived supervisor support and meeting load. For employees who feel that their boss is supportive, the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement is stronger. This finding is partly explained by organizational support theory, which suggests that employees are more likely to go above and beyond in the performance of their duties if they feel supported in by the organization, and whether or not their immediate supervisor supports them is a key determinant of whether or not they feel that the organization supports them (Eisenberger et al., 2004).

Employees are much more likely to be focused on the needs of their organization if their supervisors are concerned with supporting them. Being supported may show that the company

values the employee, will meet their socio-emotional needs, and will in some way reward employees who perform their responsibilities to a greater degree than is required (Eisenberger et al., 2004). In other words, this finding provides critical insight on how to positively influence employee motivation to excel by taking action to ensure they feel supported.

The influence of PDM in meetings on employee engagement is also moderated by meeting load. For employees who have lower meeting load, and perhaps fewer such opportunities to interact with supervisors, there was a stronger relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement. One reason for this may be due to meetings that occur less frequently being relatively more important. Therefore the rare opportunity for employees to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas (the occasion to engage in PDM in meetings) will be able to exert relatively greater influence on post-meeting outcomes, such as employee engagement. Some research by Schmidt (1991) and Rajaram (1996) suggests that more distinct events are more salient in an individual's memory, are processed to a greater degree, and therefore exert more of a relationship in the decision making processes. In other words, this research may suggest a bias towards novel events, at least in the particular context of meetings.

Empirical Implications

This study is truly unique in its contribution to meetings literature because of its focus on the context of workplace meetings as a potential antecedent for employee engagement. It also suggests that certain benefits can accompany incorporating greater participation in meetings and suggests that there may be a great deal of untapped potential in meetings. As meetings have become increasingly common in recent years (Cohen et al., 2011), prior research has given much attention to work environment characteristics in general, but not the influence of meetings specifically (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). This study further illustrates the promise that meetings

hold in influencing post-meeting outcomes, and sets the groundwork for future studies investigating the effects meetings can have on a myriad of aspects of performance. The implications of this are far reaching indeed. Given that meetings may be designed and utilized to achieve particular long-term outcomes, organizational leaders may begin to treat meetings with a newfound respect and consider ways in which seemingly small and subtle alterations to meetings can do a great deal to bring about desired outcomes.

This research has implications for engagement research as well. This study reveals the importance of social factors, such as perceived supervisor support, in how employees view their work environment. It also suggests the importance of a psychologically safe work environment, which is a necessary precursor to engagement (Kahn, 1990). Despite employee engagement having gained popularity and attention in recent years, much of the recent literature has been written from the perspective of practice and not theory (Karanges, Beatson, Johnston, & Lings, 2014; Saks, 2006). In the past, social exchange theory has been used to help explain the development of employee engagement (Saks, 2006), and our findings support the role of social exchange theory in facilitating engagement, but our research also takes a closer look at the complexities of this exchange in the effort to facilitate employee engagement.

Finally, this research also has implications for workplace environmental characteristics in general, as it pertains to meeting culture and outcomes. The present study is in line with research by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) that asserts the importance of norms of reciprocity in the work environment; supervisors providing greater resources and support tend to be viewed favorably by employees, and employees in turn make an effort to return the favor through greater engagement and higher levels of performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005; Karanges et al., 2014). The present study also investigates the particular methods through which engagement

may be encouraged and facilitated with relatively little effort on the part of management. Rather than levels of engagement depending entirely on characteristics of individual employees, this study reveals that there may be a great deal of opportunities that organizations have to structure work events in order to maximize engagement in their current workforce. As a whole, this study illustrates how interactions during meetings that may initially seem unimportant can, in actuality, facilitate social exchange, close the gap between individuals' personal and professional identities, and plays a key role in the development of engagement.

Practical Implications

A key finding of this study is that increased employee engagement is associated with greater PDM in workplace meetings. If future studies suggest that PDM in meetings possesses a causal influence on employee engagement, then one of the ways to maximize the benefits of meetings may be to take steps to encourage participation in decision-making during work meetings. However, research suggests that thus may need to be done in a way so that PDM in meetings is perceived as genuine (Stohl & Cheney, 2008). In order for such expression in meetings to be authentic, the meeting environment must be perceived as safe and secure; participants must feel that they are allowed to voice their relatively unfiltered thoughts and ideas wholeheartedly with confidence and not fear negative consequences, such as undeserved anger or disrespect. Feelings of anxiety and excessive worry prevent genuine PDM in meetings from occurring.

Second, managers reviewing this study can realize the importance of fostering supportive relationships with employees. As indicated by Karanges and colleagues (2014), the opportunity for employees to truly identify and become immersed in their responsibilities depends partly on how much they know about other member's of their team and the responsibilities, or duties, of

those other members. By learning more about the organization and its other members and building social exchange relationships, individuals are much better able to increase their identification with their organization, experience a greater sense of belonging, and more fully integrate their professional and personal identities (Karanges et al., 2014). Given the importance that a manager's actions can have on employees' view of the organization as a whole and employee performance, it is also in the best interests of the organizations to monitor supervisor performance, ensure such positive relationships are being created and maintained, and intervene as necessary. Assessing levels of perceived supervisor support is not difficult; it may be measured quickly and effectively through use of an anonymous survey.

Third, this study indicates that organizations may want to put considerable thought into determining the frequency, design, and structure of meetings that most appropriately suits their needs (Luong & Rogelberg, 2005). For example, meetings that occur frequently but are inefficient may be little more than a drain on resources. Meetings that occur less frequently may be relatively more important, but because of this present a greater opportunity to be used to promote positive post-meeting outcomes.

Limitations

Although this study presents a step forward in our understanding of how the context of meetings can be utilized to promote optimal outcomes, our analyses would be incomplete without mentioning limitations that are present in this study. It must be noted that the data was obtained through participants' self-report ratings on an electronically administered survey. Using this correlational method of inquiry was convenient and suitable for the task of the initial investigation into this area. However, such research is incapable of being used to establish causal relationships. Theory does support causal inferences of our results, but the potential for causal

relationships must be explored through experimental research. For example, one could manipulate the amount of PDM allowed in meetings. Future survey research in this area may benefit from using a time lag and assessing at least some variables using multiple raters.

In the relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement, one possibility is that there is a reciprocal influence at work. For example, Simbula and Guglielmi (2013) suggest that factors such as job satisfaction and work engagement have a reciprocal relationship. One way in which causal evidence may be generated is to collect data at more than one point in time and (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Even if evidence of a causal relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement is found, it is likely that the degree to which this relationship holds true can depend greatly on a variety of other factors, such as the dynamics of the relationship between meeting participants and the facilitator of the meeting.

One reason why we believe PDM in meetings may possess an influence on employee engagement is because the act of individual expression allows participants the opportunity to verbalize their thought processes to a group. In doing so, participants are able to come to a better understanding of what they themselves believe, as well as receive feedback from others who come from a different perspective and have different information. Meeting attendees likely value the opportunity to receive information that can help them perform their duties, and these employees may feel inclined to put in extra effort into the fulfillment of their responsibilities in order to maintain balance in the social exchange relationship.

As previously mentioned, another limitation is that our study was susceptible to common-method bias. This is due to the fact that that the variables were assessed simultaneously on a common, single instrument (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although we cannot definitively rule out the existence of this confounding factor, several steps were taken to

mitigate this concern, as mentioned in the methods section. However, researchers Conway and Lance (2010) refer to the idea that relationships between self-reported variables are routinely upwardly biased as a misconception. They reviewed previous studies and argued that the reality is much more complex. For example, one of their conclusions was that "same-method observed score correlations are actually quite accurate representations of their true-score counterparts" (Conway & Lance, 2010, p. 327).

Also, some research questions are simply more suited to survey research of this design. For example, we sought to examine perceived supervisor support as a key variable in our analysis. It would be illogical to assess this type of variable in any way other than self-report (Conway & Lance, 2010). Further, according to Chang, van Witteloostuijn, and Eden (2010), the presence of complicated regression models mitigates concerns regarding common method bias. For example, the presence of two significant moderating influences in our analyses helps alleviate common method bias concerns. Taken together, we believe it unlikely that common-method bias can explain the relationships discovered in this study. However, future research is needed using a variety of methods and processes to verify and extend the current findings.

Future Directions

This study serves as a strong foundation for future meetings research, as well as research in the areas of both participation in decision-making and employee engagement. The present study is not the first to investigate the relationship of characteristics of meetings on post-meeting outcomes. For example, Cohen-Powless and colleagues (2003) have investigated how adherence to meeting start and end times can impact the satisfaction of meeting participants. Additionally, Rogelberg and colleagues (2010) examined the unique relationship of meeting satisfaction on job satisfaction, and Luong and Rogelberg (2005) found that higher frequency of meetings is

negatively related to daily well-being. Yet, one path for future study that has not been explored is to examine in more detail the moderating influence of meeting load on meeting outcomes; for example, it may be important to discover why exactly the positive relationship between PDM in meetings and engagement is stronger when meeting load is lower. Perhaps our assumption is indeed accurate, and fewer meetings may lead to the influence of PDM in meetings being more salient in participants' minds or those with lower meeting load tend to only be placed in meetings that are more relevant to them or involve a smaller group of participants. Another possibility is that participants who have a lower meeting load tend to not experience as many of the negative feelings about the meetings, and this allows the influence of PDM in meetings to have a stronger relationship with post-meeting outcomes. Without future research, we cannot yet be certain.

In the modern world of teleconferencing, virtual meetings, and remote workers we would be remiss were we not to broach the subject of these types of contexts. It would be difficult to draw any correlational conclusions to the long-distance or virtual meetings that are becoming increasingly utilized by today's businesses. Future research could possibly examine the varying relationships that virtual meetings offer in contrast to those that are face-to-face.

Another path for future research is to more closely examine how the perception of supervisor support can serve as an encouragement for meeting participants to reciprocate their positive feelings by engaging in meetings, actively contributing to the best of their ability, and continuing their above and beyond mentality in other areas of their work life. The underlying social factors in this relationship are explained by the literature on social exchange theory and norms of reciprocity, but studies investigating the application of this research to meetings remain sparse.

There are likely many complexities of the interactions among meeting attendees that are yet to be discovered. One interesting finding in this study was that there was a significant, positive relationship between PDM in meetings and employee engagement for employees with high-perceived supervisor support, but a slightly (i.e. not statistically significant, but interesting) negative relationship between PDM and engagement for employees with low perceived supervisor support. It may be insightful for future research to determine if PDM in meetings can in fact have a negative impact on employee engagement in certain circumstances, such as when perceived supervisor support is very low.

Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to examine the relationship between PDM and employee engagement, as well as how that relationship might be impacted by perceived supervisor support and meeting load. When supervisors provide support to employees and allow greater participation in meetings, employees in turn develop a desire or sense of obligation to reciprocate. This reciprocity seems to enable employees to develop a greater passion for their work, a stronger sense of meaning, and a more complete immersion into their professional role, all of which are characteristics of engaged employees. Given the importance of the workplace meeting in organizational life, it is hard to overestimate the potential of this research

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and reliability coefficients of key variables

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Age	40.48	12.84	-								
2. Gender	1.54	0.50	-.01	-							
3. Tenure	5.54	6.31	-.06	.09	-						
4. Job Level	2.92	1.05	-.06	.06	.25*	-					
5. Meeting Load	0.00	0.77	-.06	-.15*	.07	.01	-				
6. Meeting Size	9.18	6.01	.07	.03	-.01	.10	-.07	-			
7. Perceived Supervisor Support	3.83	0.78	.10	.03	-.04	.01	.06	.04	(.91)		
8. Participation in Decision Making	3.16	0.79	.06	-.03	-.05	.10	.06	.01	.38**	(.87)	
9. Employee Engagement	3.48	0.68	.03	.03	.15*	.26**	.16*	.08	.38**	.25**	(.93)

Note. N=261. Alpha coefficients are reported on the diagonal in parentheses.

*$p < .05$

Table 2

Moderated Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Perceived Supervisor Support onto the Participation in Decision Making and Employee Engagement Relationship

	Perceived Supervisor Support				
Model	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE_B	β
Step 1	.08*	.08*			
Constant			2.13	1.05	
Meeting Size			.01	.01	.05
Tenure			.01	.01	.09
Age			.00	.00	.05
Job Level			.15	.04	.24*
Step 2	.23*	.15*			
Constant			2.83	.97	
Meeting Size			.01	.01	.04
Tenure			.01	.01	.12
Age			.00	.00	.01
Job Level			.14	.04	.21*
Participation in Decision Making			.09	.05	.10
Perceived Supervisor Support			.30	.05	.34*
Step 3	.25*	.02*			
Constant			2.76	.96	
Meeting Size			.00	.01	.03
Tenure			.01	.01	.11
Age			.00	.00	.01
Job Level			.13	.04	.20*
Participation in Decision Making			.08	.05	.09
Perceived Supervisor Support			.32	.05	.37*
PDM X PSS			.14	.06	.14*

Note. $N = 261$.

* $p < .05$

Table 3

Moderated Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Meeting Load onto the Participation in Decision Making and Employee Engagement Relationship

	Meeting Load				
Model	R^2	ΔR^2	B	SE_B	β
Step 1	.08*	.08*			
Constant			2.11	1.06	
Meeting Size			.01	.01	.07
Tenure			.01	.01	.07
Age			.00	.00	.05
Job Level			.16	.04	.24*
Step 2	.16*	.08*			
Constant			2.23	1.02	
Meeting Size			.01	.01	.08
Tenure			.01	.01	.09
Age			.00	.00	.04
Job Level			.14	.04	.21*
Participation in Decision Making			.20	.05	.23*
Meeting Load			.14	.06	.15*
Step 3	.18*	.02*			
Constant			2.37	1.01	
Meeting Size			.01	.01	.08
Tenure			.01	.01	.10
Age			.00	.00	.03
Job Level			.14	.04	.22*
Participation in Decision Making			.20	.05	.23*
Meeting Load			.14	.05	.15*
PDM X ML			-.16	.07	-.14*

Note. $N = 261$.

* $p < .05$

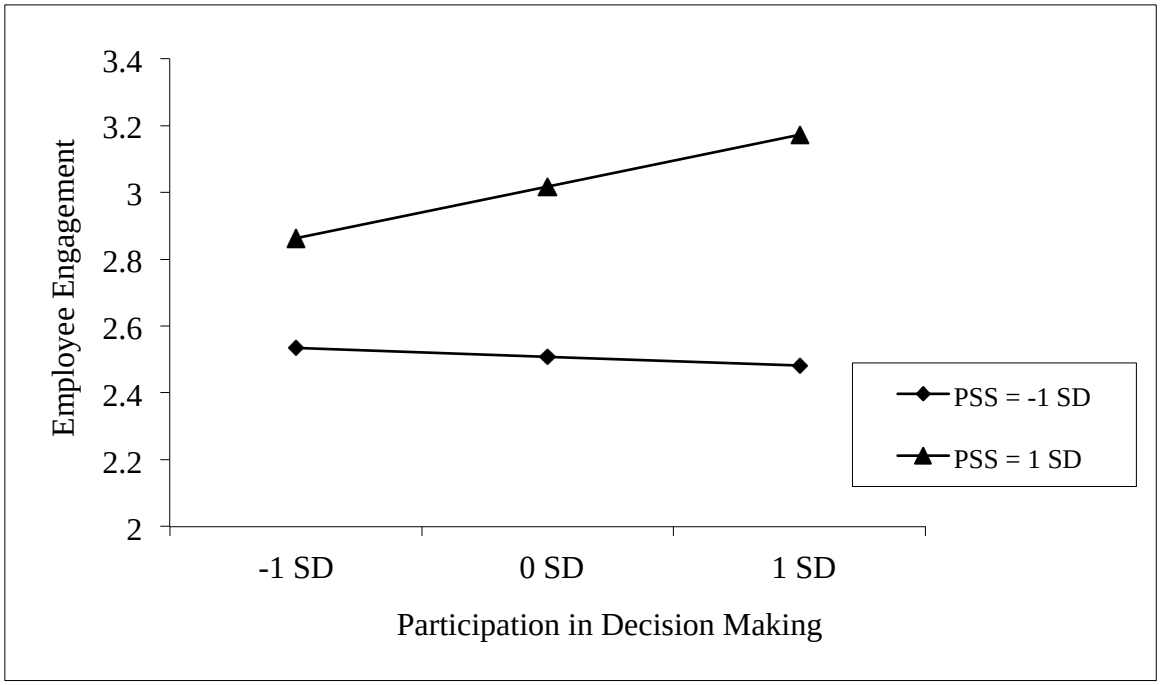

Figure 1. Moderating effect of Perceived Supervisor Support on Participation in Decision Making and Employee Engagement

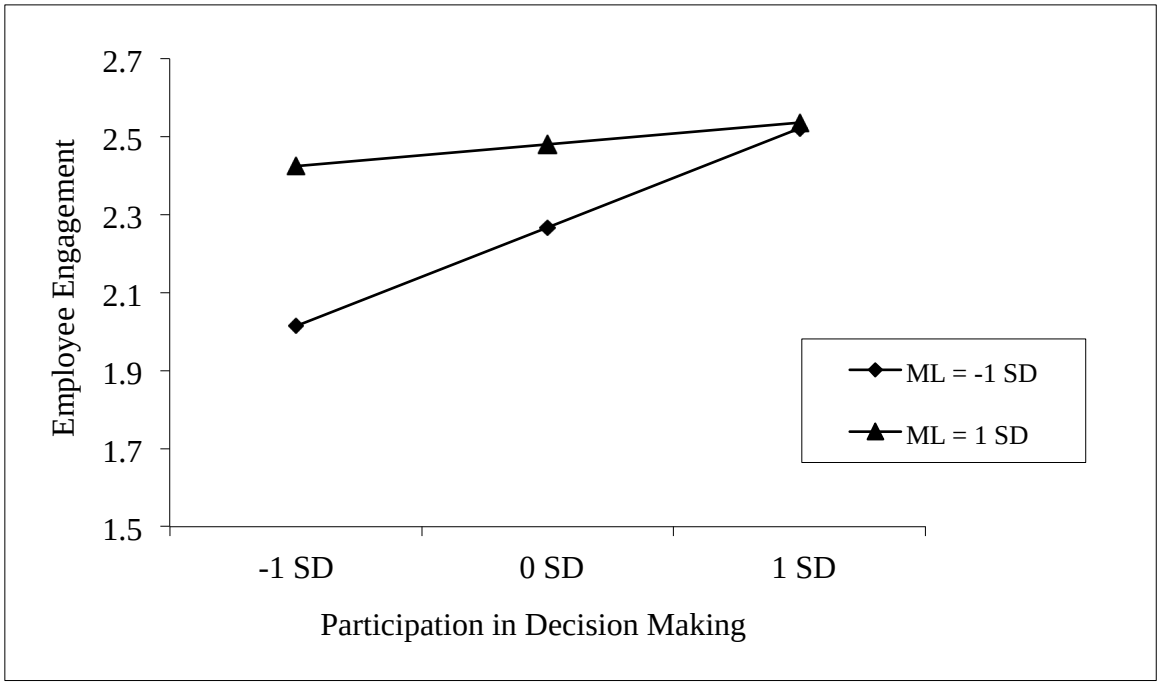

Figure 2. Moderating effect of Meeting Load on Participation in Decision Making and Employee Engagement

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