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The Influence of Job Demand, Respect, and Rapport on Work Engagement of Employees in the Foodservice Sector

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Abstract

Many foodservice operators in Malaysia depend on superior services to entice customers to keep visiting their business. The researchers chose a purposive convenience sampling, and questionnaires were distributed to 303 employees in the foodservice industry in three selected districts in Terengganu, Malaysia. Results of the inferential analysis revealed that there are positive relationships between two of the independent variables, respects, and *Rapport* with the dependent variable, job engagement. Job demand, however, has no significant impact on Job Engagement. We proposed that trust, efficient communication, mutual respect, and the honest relationship has a strong impact on employees' engagement with their job.

Keywords: Job Engagement; Job Demand; Rapport; Foodservice Industry

1.0 Introduction

The food service industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors in Malaysia. Many researchers expect the Malaysian consumer's expenditure pattern on foodservice to continue to rise in the future and grow at a faster rate. An increase in income has the propensity to lead the rise in demand for foodservice products. It also becomes the most prominent consumer demand in Malaysia. Many changes occurred in foodservice in Malaysia 10 years ago. The foodservice sector is a profitable industry in the world, and it is one of the hospitality sub-industries that have regularly experienced change and growth by time (Gregoire & Spears, 2010). The foodservice industry is considered to be one of the fastest-growing industries in the global market and has undergone significant changes during the last few decades (Gu & Kim, 2002). The positive trend of this industry in recent years is related to globalisation and the robust economic growth in many countries.

The foodservice industry is among one of the largest sectors that contribute significantly to Malaysia's economic growth. The food service industry in Malaysia is competitive, multi-cultural and progressive which continues to increase in diversity and size (Ibrahim & Othman, 2014). Furthermore, foodservice plays an important role globally, and particularly in Malaysia due to tourism development and the phenomenon of Malaysians eating out (Fareed Ismail et al. 2013). As the foodservice landscape evolves, customer awareness and complexity increases, and competition intensify, foodservice operators are facing more significant challenges in sustaining their competitive position and retaining existing beneficial customers (Abdullah & Kanyan, 2013). Thus, as the industry grows and becomes more complex, foodservice operators have started to strategies their companies to gain competitive advantages within the industry. Therefore, the business operators must

respond to the changing market needs and find more creative and flexible means for driving competition in this rapidly changing and dynamic market.

The Malaysian foodservice operation contributes to the growth of the national economy and provides job opportunities for its citizens. The Malaysian government is one of the organisations that help Malaysian foodservice operations in Malaysia. The government provided support and encouraged Malaysian to be an entrepreneur or businessman. This support will increase the number of foodservice operators because this type of business is easy to enter and operate.

1.1 Problem Statement
When there is a high volume of foodservice operators in a particular market, it will inevitably increase competition. Due to the fierce competition, many foodservice operators turn into superior services to entice customers to keep visiting their business. Hence, food operators need to create a positive working environment to develop efficient and competent employees. According to Weitz et al. (1992), work engagement is a critical element that will affect organisational effectiveness, innovation, and competitiveness.

Work engagement is a vital element in occupational well-being for both employees and organisations (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Both employees and employers should play their roles in the organisation to be successful. In foodservice operation employees are one of the most critical values because they are the representative of an organisation. Employee communication is the first perception of interactions with customers that can make a role to gain an impact of a high reputation and build a good relationship with the customer (Chen et al., 2011).

1.2 Objectives of the Study
This study aims to identify the relationship between work engagement of employees with job demand, respect, and Rapport. This study also aimed to identify the main variables which can influence the work engagement of employees in the foodservice industry. Furthermore, this article hopes to provide some recommendations to improve the work engagement of the employees. The researchers choose the three largest districts in Terengganu, namely Kuala Terengganu, Kemaman and Dungun as the location for distributing the questionnaires

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Work Engagement
Work engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by intensity, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2008). Furthermore, vigour can be described by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Dedication refers to being actively involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge. Absorption will be determined by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. Employees who have a proactive personality are more likely to design their jobs by increasing their structural and employment resources and improve their job challenges. Job crafting, in turn, can be an indication of top work engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption) and high job performance (Bakker et al., 2012). Macey et al., (2009) viewed the term of engagement in the other ways which see engagement as an overarching umbrella term containing different types of participation including trait engagement (i.e. engagement as the expression of individual personality traits), work involvement and organisational citizenship. The employees should create job challenges and job resources because managers have many jobs and setbacks to response and give feedback regularly to their employees. Moreover, managers may set priorities and focuses on specific departments that are vulnerable to economic turmoil, social and cultural changes, the government's policy and legal requirements. From the situation, it may be particularly important for employees to show proactive behaviour and optimise their work environment (Bakker et al., 2008). Engaged employees are not addicted to their work; however, they are committed to offering their full commitment to their employer and they always trying to improve their performance (Hanaysha, 2016; Gorgievski et al., 2010; Rich et al., 2010). They are engaged in activities that not work-related that will make them enjoy their life. Moreover engaged employees, unlike workaholics, do not work hard because of a heaLTHY and irresistible inner drive, but because for them working is fun (Bakker et al., 2008). Engaged employees are very energetic and are enthusiastic about their work. They are always fully immersed in their work during working hours, and they can have some fun with their co-workers at appropriate times (Müceldili and Erdil, 2016).

2.2 Job Demand
Job demands refer to those physical, mental, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and, or psychological effort and are therefore associated with specific physiological and, or mental costs (Demerouti et al. 2001). Job demand is an emotionally demanding interactions or high work pressures and physical, mental, social or organisational aspects of the job. This will result in sustained physical and, healthy mental from cognitive or emotional strength and therefore associated with specific physiological mental costs. Van Emmerik et al. (2009) proposed that such demand has the potential to wear out of the individual energy. Job demands such as part conflict, role ambiguity, and work-overload have

consistently contributed to adverse employee's mental outcomes. This will, in turn, will eventually create anxiety, depression, ill-health, and negative work-family spill-over. Furthermore, job demand will change employee behaviours and attitudes towards their work environment and the people around them. Physical and mental effort associated are with specific physiological and material costs that are related to those aspects of job demand. Human resources management requires individuals to address and confront external/internal requirements in stressful situations to solve stressful problems on a personal matter. By evaluating the mental and emotional demand, management will be able to see the big picture of the job and home demand.

   Respect involves the feeling of care and loving towards others. Even though the term respect is a universal concept judging from the extensive usage of the word itself, respectful behaviours vary by definition and is a complex concept after all. The moral study by Rogers (2018) showed that employees should show respect for others regardless of who they are. In this study, the dimensions of *Respect* include attention and value, knowledge and responsibility (Porter, 2019; Cooper-Thomas, Xu and M. Saks, 2018). The first dimension indicates a cherished service that signals to other people similar to meeting them for the first time. Attention here also carries the need to be sympathetic, cherishing and concern to be involved in engagement with the participation of others. Other than that, this dimension urges the need to value differences in others and not viewing it as a barrier to be overcome. The second dimension, understanding, is about trying to understand a person in his terms from various attitudes and behaviours. Knowledge is difficult, because the different individual has different ways of thinking and reactions to different situations. We must try to understand each people one by one to understand clearly on that person. We must understand a person's consciousness, his activities and his purposes that they mostly like to care because we should not predict a person the same as other people. We must take time and put add on more effort according to our ability to understand other people. We must remove the mindless bad thinking about others person is stereotyping and at the same time must always practice promoting mindfulness (Siti Haryati and Ndubisi, 2011). Care respect is what is known as meeting the needs of others morally and highlights an individual responsibility as a care respecter in a community. This dimension involves caring for a person in the sense of helping them to pursue their end, acting to promote their goods and assisting them to satisfy their need and want. We propose that a positive relationship exists between respect and relationship quality. Khan, Sheraz, and Maher (2018) and Bies (2010) suggested four criteria that describe civil interaction between employers and employees, which includes respect. The four principles are truthfulness, honour, dignity, and justification.

2.3 Respect
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2.4 Rapport
Scholars defined rapport as the quality of relationships characterized by satisfactory communication and mutual understanding (Carey et al. 1986). The definition of *rapport* is challenging to describe (Fatima and Di Mascio, 2018). Many of the descriptions suggest affinity as an experience of a good relationship (Kaski, Niemi and Pullins, 2018). Furthermore, Viet et al. (2018) suggested rapport as a form of ties by referring to psychotherapist-client interactions (Viet et al., 2018). Rapport consists of two essential dimensions (1) enjoyable communication and (2) personal connection. Customers and employees perceived rapport as critical element in the development of relationships in the service contexts (Siti Haryati and Ndubisi, 2011). Locke et al. (2018) proposed that the concept of rapport in the workplace as a dimension of a working alliance between employer and employee interactions. The studies also approached the relationship between social identification and workplace output from an assortment of behavioural contexts. Moreover, behavioural outcomes motivated

by organisational identification are usually tailored to organisational citizenship behaviour (Van Dick et al., 2006) and extra-role behaviour. Many studies had delved into personal resources as the critical factors of work engagement. Individual resources are positive self-evaluations that are linked to resiliency and refer to their own sense of their ability to control and impact their environment successfully (Hobfoll et al., 2003).

3.0 Methodology

In this section, the article will describe and explain the research framework, the data collection method, and procedures. Also, in this section, we will discuss the sampling technique and how to analysis the raw data. It details the process necessary for obtaining the information needed to answer the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, this article also discusses the research method, sampling design, construction of questionnaires, data collection process and the process of analysing the raw data. This article focuses on the relationship between three dependent variables and one dependent variable. The three independent variables chosen by the researchers are rapport, respect and job demand, and the dependent variable is employees' work engagement at Kuala Terengganu, Dungun and Kemaman. These employees chosen as the respondents are those working in the foodservice industry.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The researchers created a theoretical framework to visualise the relationships between the independent and dependent variables which the researchers will try to solve the research problems. Figure 1 below shows the theoretical framework of the research.
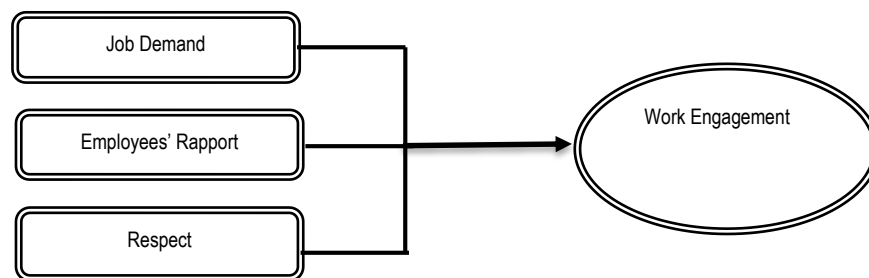

Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

The researchers postulate that any changes in the independent variables will influence the changes of the dependent variable. In this paper, we will examine how the changes in the independent variables, namely employee's rapport, respect and job demand that can affect the level of employee work engagement. It shows the process flow in gathering the data starting from the design of the research until the process of data collection and data analysis.

3.2   Sampling Method

In this paper, the sampling method chosen is a purposive convenience sampling, and the sample comes from employees in the foodservice sector in the state Terengganu, Malaysia. In this paper, the researchers calculated the population size before determining the size of the respondents. In addition, the researchers discuses the population and sample size in the next section.

3.2.1 Population

A population is any entire group of entities that share some set of characteristics and that comprise the universe for the research problem. The study involves three districts of Terengganu, which include Kuala Terengganu Dungun and Kemaman. The researchers chooses the three districts because the regions have the largest population of foodservice workforce in Terengganu. It is estimated that there are 20,000 employees who work in the foodservice sectors in these three districts.

3.2.2 Sample size

The employees are chosen as the respondents because the employees the sample can represent the population. The researchers distributed about 380 questionnaires as the sample. Researchers already decided to spread the survets among the employees work in the foodservice sector at Kuala Terengganu, Dungun and Kemaman randomly.

3.2.3 Sampling Technique

In any research, the sampling technique is an essential process because the article evaluates the accuracy and reliability of findings to be able to generalise the results to the population. The first task is in a proper sampling technique for this research, the researchers need to define the sampling frame (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). In this article, the sampling frame

consists of employees who are working the foodservice industry mainly in restaurants, eateries, coffee shops food courts and canteens. Moreover, a purposive convenience sampling adopted as the sampling method. Convenience sampling refers to the collection of information from members of the population who are conveniently available at a specific time and place as chosen by the researchers. There is because the food operators operated on different days and working hours.

3.3 Questionnaire
The questionnaire is the leading research instrument to help the researcher to achieve the objectives of the research and answer all research questions. The data consists of 5 sections which include the demographic profiles, three independent variables, and one dependent variable. Once the questionnaires are collected, each item is coded and edited for analysis. For example, the first question in Section an equals A1. In this research, the researchers adopted the Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis as the main data analysis tools.

3.4 Pearson Correlation
Correlation analysis is an analysis that helps to support the studies of primary data and evaluate whether the independent variables have a significant influence on the dependent variable. Furthermore, the analysis helps to determine the strength and direction of the relationship (positive or negative) between the variables. The researchers also examine the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. A correlation score (r) between -1 and +1 indicates the range of strength of the associations between variables. The closer, the score to 1, the stronger is the relationship between the variables. Table 1 shows all the scores for correlation analysis.

Table 1: Measurement Score of the Correlation Analysis

Correlation Score	Correlation level
0.8 and 1.0	Very strong
0.6 and 0.8	Strong
0.4 and 0.6	Moderate
0.2 and 0.4	Weak
0.0 and 0.2	Very Weak

It is appropriate to use the Pearson Correlation Matrix since the researcher is using interval or ordinal measurements of scale, and it depends on normality. The researchers also want to determine whether the coefficient result is statistically significant or not.

3.5 Regression Analysis
Regression is another statistical analysis for measuring the linear association between the dependent and independent variables. A regression analysis aims to estimate how much the aggregate changes in the independent variable influence the changes in the dependent variable. Using this analysis, the researchers can determine the combined effect of the changes in the independent variables (predictors) on the dependent variable (criterion variable). Furthermore, the analysis will help the researcher to determine the most dominant independent variable that influences the changes independent variable.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Correlation Coefficient
Based on the figures in table 2, the researchers discovered that the predictor variable, job demand has a robust correlation with work engagement indicated by the correlation value (r) shows the amount of 0.841. Hence, we conclude that there is a significant, reliable and positive association between job demand and work engagement. As for respect, we discovered that the correlation value (r) between the variable *respect* (connection) and the dependent variable equals to 0.741. This figure showed that respect among employees in the foodservice sector and their work engagement is meaningful, positive and reasonably active. Similarly, this paper showed that the association between rapport and job engagement is significant, positive and moderately healthy. The correlation value between the two variables (r) equals to 0.697. The researchers thus conclude that all independent variables have a positive and significant association with the dependent variables and Job Demand has the most active association followed by Respects and Rapport.

Table 2: Rules of Thumb about Correlation Coefficient Size.

	Work Engagement	Job demand	Respects	Rapport
Work Engagement	1	0.841**	0.741**	0.697**
Job Demand	0.841**	1	0.669**	0.662**
Respects	0.741**	0.669**	1	0.785**
Rapport	0.697**	0.662**	0.785**	1

4.2 Multiple Linear Regressions

As shown in Table 3, the analysis of the Regression analysis indicates that changes in two predictors, job demand and respect has a significant influence on the changes of the criterion variable (work engagement). The relationship between the predictor, job demand on work engagement has a Beta value of 0.604 that indicates the most active association. The second most active association is demonstrated by the relationship between employee's respect, and work engagement, rapport, however, is not significant in influencing the work engagement as shown by the considerable value of 0.075. Furthermore, the regression model produces an r squared value of 0.768 that indicates the influence of two predictors, job demand and respect among the employees in the foodservice sectors or equals to 76.8% changes in the criterion variable.

Table 3: Result Summary of the Regression Analysis

	r value	r Square	Sig. value	Beta Value	F Value	T-Value
Regression Model	0.876	0.768	0.00		327.986	
Job demand			0.00	0.604		15.357
Respect			0.00	0.271		5.687
Rapport			0.075	0.084		1.789

The figures in Table 3 also provide information about the effects of individual predictors. In this Table, researchers use two types of information which are coefficients and significance tests. The researchers found that job demand has a significant and most potent influence on the changes in the independent variables, job engagement with a Beta Value of 0.604 and Sig. amount of less than 0.050. Respect has a significant and the lowest association with job engagement with a Beta value of 0,271. In this analysis, the researcher's also discovered that rapport has no significant association with job engagement among employees in the foodservice sector at Kuala Terengganu, Dungun and Kemaman.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

To increase employees' job engagement, foodservice operators can often build excellent communication with the owner and their employees. Employers should be able to utilised training sessions, memos, newsletters, FAQs, and regular meetings to create a better relationship and respect with employees. Gorgievski et al. (2010), they have stressed the importance of communication, especially in difficult times or during times of change because it can reduce uncertainty. Employees will engage with the company when the company fulfils their need and want. For example, the company should give rewards to successful employees. It is highly beneficial in motivating employees. The company can attract high potential employees. Also, these high-quality employees are more likely to stay when incentive programs are in place. To keep them engaged, consider putting more resources into career development and training. Work engagement may broaden the meaning and effects of employee's attitudes on their tasks and responsibility (Tyler and Blader, 2003). Employees with high levels of energy and identification with their work have many resources available and seem to perform better. It is even conceivable that engaged workers create their job resources over time.

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