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Engaging employees to their jobs: Role of exchange ideology as a moderator

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This article examines whether employees' perceptions of supervisor support, distributive justice, procedural justice, and participation in decision-making are related to their job engagement. It also establishes if exchange ideology moderates between the relationships. A primary survey of 160 employees in Malaysia revealed that the four antecedents were positively and significantly related to employees' engagement to their jobs. It also showed that unlike procedural justice, the relationship between distributive justice and job engagement was stronger, when employees have high, rather than low exchange ideology. Likewise, the relationships between employees' perceptions of supervisor support and job engagement, as well as between employees' participation in decision-making and job engagement were stronger when their exchange ideology were high. The implications of the research findings, limitations of this study, and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Key words: Job engagement, exchange ideology, perceived supervisor support, distributive justice, procedural justice, participation in decision-making, Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

One of the best ways for organizations to have a competitive advantage over others is to, physically, psychologically, and emotionally engage employees in their jobs (Harrad, 2006; Khan, 1990). A global survey of 1,000 communications and human resource (HR) professionals in the first quarter of the last decade reported about 74% of them focused more on matters that are related to engaging employees than on any other HR issues in their organizations (Melcrum Publishing, 2005). They reasoned that if employees are fully immersed in doing their jobs, they would have higher productivity and lower attrition rate. Gallup Management Journal (2007) confirmed that disengaged employees have lower productivity and recorded a loss of more than US$ 334 billion, £ 37.2 billion, and S$ 4.9 billion annually in the U.S., U.K., and Singapore, respectively.

While some managers claim that employee engagement is just another management fad, academics are adamant that empirically, it is linked to the performance of individuals and organizations. There are reports that employee engagement is positively and significantly related to employees' productivity, creativity, innovativeness, customer service, as well as to their in-role and extra-role behaviours (Saks, 2006; Demerouti et al., 2001; Ng and Tay, 2010). Work engagement studies have since expanded as researchers across the globe attempt to establish country-specific antecedents and consequences of engagement to enable organizations to succeed.

Supervisors in most organizations are in a strategic position to make or break employees' determination and motivation to perform (Chen et al., 2002). They are mostly revered by employees in high power distance nations like Malaysia (Hofstede, 2001). Malaysians, irrespective of their ethnic backgrounds, learn early to respect their elders and individuals who have power and authority over them. Culturally, Malaysians have a deep sense of respect and gratitude; social and economic exchanges ("berbalas budi") form a big part of our socio-cultural heritage (Asma, 2001). It is therefore not uncommon to observe individuals returning a good deed with another.

Therefore, instead of focusing on the effects of other popular determinants of employees' work engagement

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such as job demands, job resources, and job characteristics (Demerouti et al., 2001; Ng and Tay, 2010; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), we focused on four antecedents that are related to the attitudes and behaviours of supervisors. We expect employees to respond positively to their jobs if they perceive their supervisors to be caring, reliable, just, and transparent. Specifically, we proposed that when employees perceive their supervisors are supportive (PSS) and allow them to make decisions that affect them (PDM), as well as if they use fair measures and procedures (PJ) to distribute or allocate resources and benefits (DJ), employees would reciprocate by engaging more in their jobs. We add to literature, by examining the extent to which employees' exchange ideology, based on the social exchange theory, moderates between each of these relationships. The aim is to enable HR managers to adopt more appropriate work practices to enhance employees' job engagement and thereby their performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of supervisors in determining employees' job engagement needs more empirical support to ensure that management would assist them to fulfill their important responsibility towards employees. We seek to establish the extent to which perceived supervisor support (PSS), distributive justice (DJ), procedural justice (PJ), and participation in decision-making (PDM) are positively related to employees' engagement to their jobs. We expanded Saks (2006) work by determining if the relationships between each of the four antecedents and employees' job engagement are stronger when employees' exchange ideology is high.

Employee engagement

The term "employee engagement" is more contemporary than employee commitment due to the growing research interest in employees' work behaviours (for example, engagement) instead of their attitudes towards work (for example, commitment). However, the underlying principles of employee engagement and commitment are similar as they describe employees' drive or motivation to go that extra mile to perform (Saks, 2006). Saks aptly describes employee engagement as "an old wine in a new bottle" because like commitment, it is reportedly related to employees' job involvement, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction, their in-role and extra-role behaviours, as well as their turnover intention (Cheng et al., 2003).

Kahn (1990,) explains that, "…in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (p.694). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) reiterate by describing engagement as, "…the positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (p.295)." According to May et al. (2004), employees would be psychologically prepared to be more involved or engaged in their jobs if they find their work meaningful, and if their co-workers and supervisors are supportive.

However, Maslach and Leiter (1997) define engagement as the inverse of job burnout. They suggest that unlike burnout employees, those who are cognitively, physically, and emotionally engaged in their jobs rarely complain about being exhausted, and neither are they cynical, nor unproductive. Instead, positive employees are completely energized, optimistic, and deeply motivated to immerse themselves in their jobs and become productive. Saks (2006) argues that Maslach et al. (2001) only describe the psychological conditions for engagement. This, he claims, does not fully explain why individuals would vary the extent of their engagement based on the different situations they are in. He proposes that the socio-emotional conditions in the work environment such as organizational justice and empowerment could affect the extent employees are willing to engage in their work. Like others, he used the social or organizational exchange theory to describe how employees would reciprocate when they perceive their needs are met by the different sources or stakeholders (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Saks, 2006).

Unlike Kahn (1990, 1992), Saks (2006) separates work engagement into two parts, employees' engagement to their jobs, and to their organizations. He said that when employees are engaged in their jobs, they become so involved that they lose track of time. They are mindful of their respective roles and how they can contribute more effectively and efficiently towards the achievement of their personal and organizational goals. On the other hand, Saks describes organizational engagement as employees' deep involvement in their organization because they feel proud to be associated and to be part of the organization. He reports that job characteristics and perceived organizational support are significantly and positively related to employees' engagement to their jobs and organizations, respectively.

Exchange ideology

The fundamental premises of social exchange are, obligation, gratitude, and trust between stakeholders (Blau, 1964). If there are mutual economic, social, and emotional benefits between them, management could expect their employees to perform well. For example, if employees perceive their supervisors care for their well-being, they would reciprocate by working harder to "repay" their superiors (Harrad, 2006). Social exchange theory (SET) provides the theoretical explanation why employees would choose to be more or less engaged in their jobs. The exchange ideology (EI) which is anchored

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on SET describes the extent to which employees would vary their engagement depending on their perceptions of support they receive from different sources. For example, if employees perceive they are valued and supported by their supervisors and organizations, they would reciprocate by being more involved in work that are related to their supervisors and organizations, respectively (Chen et al., 2002; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Eisenberger et al. (1986) report a negative but significant relationship between perceived organizational support and absenteeism when school teachers have high, rather than low exchange ideology. Those with high exchange ideology responded positively towards their caring and supportive schools. Witt (1991) reveals that exchange ideology moderates the relationship between employees' perceptions of work environment and their organizational citizenship behaviours. According to Ladd and Henry (2000), coworkers who share the spirit of comradeship are more conscientious when their exchange ideology is high.

To the best of our knowledge, there are no published studies that have established exchange ideology as a moderator between the four antecedents and employees' job engagement. We expect employees' perception of supervisor support, participation in decision making, procedural justice, and distributive justice to be positively related to their job engagement. We also propose that employees with high exchange ideology (EI) would have higher job engagement than those with low EI.

Perceived supervisor support (PSS)

At work, employees would respond positively to supportive domains such as their organizations, supervisors, team members, and customers (Riketta and Van Dick, 2005; Siders et al., 2001; Tay and Lees, forthcoming). The first-line supervisors, according to Maslach et al. (2001), are particularly responsible for employees' engagement or disengagement. May et al. (2004) concur with Kahn (1992) that secured employees would perform well if they perceive their supervisors and colleagues support them. Burnout and dissatisfied employees perform poorly if they perceive their supervisors do not support them. In Taiwan, Cheng et al. (2003) found that supervisors who care for their subordinates' well-being are related to their organizational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, turnover intention, and job performance.

Chen and Francesco (2000) describe employees' personal attachment to their supervisors as "personalism." Unlike an abstract like an organization, supervisors are visible and proximally closer to their subordinates; they are in a good position to influence employees' work attitudes and behaviours (Becker and Kernan, 2003; Chen and Francesco, 2000; Cheng et al., 2003). As implementers of organizational policies and procedures, supervisors could motivate employees to be more

engaged in their jobs by providing timely and constructive feedback, and adopting fair rewards and promotion (Cheng et al., 2003). We suggest that employees' perception of supervisor support is positively related to their job engagement, and this relationship would improve if their exchange ideology is high rather than low.

Distributive justice

Employees often compare the amount of their work loads, salary, bonuses, and other benefits with that of others, either within the same organization or between organizations in the same industry. Their desire for organizational justice such as distributive and procedural justices must not be ignored as there would be reprisals. Distributive justice refers to employees' perceptions of organizational fairness in distributing their limited resources and benefits (for example, recognition and rewards) among employees (Greenberg, 1990). It is based on Adams' (1965) equity theory that describes how individuals would compare the ratio of their input or effort to the outcomes, such as rewards they receive with that of others (Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Reports of similar input-outcome ratios would reflect perceptions of fair and equitable distribution of rewards but unequal ratios would suggest that some employees are treated unjustly and denied of distributive justice. Whenever employees experience any organizational unfairness or injustice, they may try to correct the situation by reducing their input, clocking in fewer hours of work, and thereby lowering their productivity (output). Others may even resort to adopting counter productive work behaviors instead of working harder and engaging in their jobs. In our study, we hypothesized that the more employees perceive they are fairly rewarded for their contributions, the more engaged they would be in their jobs. We also expect employees to be more engaged if they have high rather than low exchange ideology.

Procedural justice

Procedural justice describes the extent to which employees perceive their management has diligently adopted fair procedures and practices in making decisions about them (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Folger and Konovsky, 1989). Employees expect the decision-making process to be consistent, unbiased, and ethical (Leventhal, 1980). In addition, they want management to consider their views before making the final decision and to provide avenues for redress if a decision is deemed unfair. When there is procedural injustice, employees would be less engaged, do less work, complain more, be absent more often, and even leave their organizations (Cropanzano et al., 2007). This study therefore proposed a positive relationship between employees' perceptions
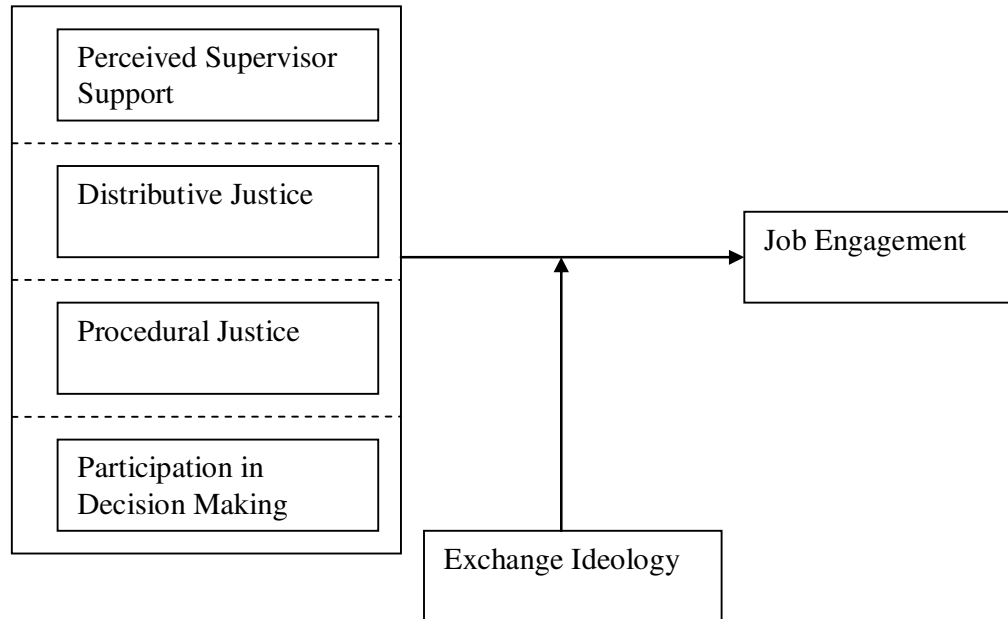
Figure 1. Research model**.**

of procedural justice and their job engagement. It also expects this relationship to be stronger when employees' exchange ideology is high.

Participation in decision making

Participation in decision making (PDM) describes the extent to which employees are allowed to decide on matters that concerns them and their work (Wagner and Gooding, 1987). Past literature reports some positive and significant relationships of PDM and employee job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Locke and Schweiger, 1979; Tay and Lees, forthcoming). If supervisors empower employees to make decisions (PDM), they would feel valued and would reciprocate by enhancing their organizational citizenship behaviour (VanYperen et al., 1999) and performance (Lawler, 1986; Tay and Lees, forthcoming). Therefore, individuals with strong, rather than weak exchange ideology are likely to be more engaged in their jobs if they are allowed to participate in making decisions. This study examined the extent to which employees are allowed to make decisions that concern them and is positively related to their job engagement. This relationship is anticipated to be strong rather than weak when employees' exchange ideology is high.

RESEARCH MODEL

Figure 1 shows the proposed research model. This study hypothesized that perceived supervisor support,

distributive justice, procedural justice, and participation in decision-making are each positively related to employees' engagement to their jobs and that their exchange ideology would moderate between each of these relationships. We expect that, employees with high rather than low exchange ideology would motivate employees to be more engaged in their jobs.

RESEARCH METHOD

Sample and data collection procedures

A primary survey was conducted in the Klang Valley in Malaysia in 2008. A total of 250 questionnaires were conveniently distributed electronically and personally to employees employed in the service (for example, financial, wholesale, construction, retail, food and beverage) and manufacturing industries. Of these, 170 completed questionnaires were returned, reporting a response rate of about 68%. However, 10 of the returned forms had gross missing data and they were excluded from further analysis. Participation in the survey was strictly voluntary and data obtained from each of the participants were aggregated to protect their anonymity and for confidentiality purposes. A pilot study of 30 cases prior the actual survey revealed that except for a minor rearrangement of the sequence of some items in the measures, there were no other major changes that was required to improve the questionnaire.

Measures

The five-item job engagement (JE) scale was adopted from Saks (2006). Past authors who used the same scale recorded an average internal reliability of about 0.82. A sample item for job engagement is, "I really "throw" myself into my job." The respondents evaluated all the JE items based on a five-point Likert scale whereby, 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The exchange ideology (EI) scale was adopted from Eisenberger et al. (1986). The five-item scale measured the extent to which employees are willing to stretch their work efforts based on the treatment they receive from stakeholders in the organization. One sample of the exchange ideology item (reversed scored) is, "How hard an employee works should not be affected by how well the supervisor treats him or her." The respondents recorded their views based on a five-point Likert scale anchored at, 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Like Rhoades et al. (2001) and Saks (2006), we adopted and adapted the four-item PSS scale from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1990) by replacing the word organization with the term supervisor to evaluate employees' perception of supervisor support. "My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values," is a sample of the PSS item. The participants were asked about their agreement or disagreement on each item based on a five-point Likert scale whereby, 1 = strongly disagree, and 5 = strongly agree.

This study used Leventhal's (1976) four-item scale to measure employees' perceptions of distributive justice (DJ). Each item referred respondents to an outcome (for example, pay or promotion) and they were asked about the appropriateness of that outcome, given their contributions.

The participants for example, were asked, "Does your pay (an outcome) reflect what you have contributed to the organization?" They indicated their opinions based on a five-point Likert scale anchored at, 1 = to a small extent, and 5 = to a large extent. Colquitt's (2001) seven-item scale measured our participants' perceptions of procedural justice. An example of the procedural justice item is, "Have those procedures been applied consistently?" Their opinions were measured based on a five-point Likert scale whereby, 1 = to a small extent, and 5 = to a large extent.

This study adopted Vroom's (1960) five-item participation in decision-making (PDM) scale to measure employees' perceptions of the extent to which they have a say in making work decisions. A sample of the PDM item includes, "To what extent are you able to decide how to do your job?" The employees were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale with end points of, 1 = to a small extent, and 5 = to a large extent.

RESULTS

The study used the SPSS statistical software package for Windows, version 15.0, to analyse the data sets. All the negatively worded items in the scales were reversed scored to make them comparable to the rest of the positive items. The hierarchical regression analysis was adopted to establish the interaction or moderating effect of exchange ideology on the relationships between each of the four antecedents and employees' engagement to their jobs. Further discussion summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants, and Table 1 shows the correlations between the research measures.

Demographic characteristics of employees

In this study, about 59% of the 160 employees who participated in the survey were females. In terms of ethnicity, about 56% of the respondents were Malaysian Chinese, 36% were Malays, 7% were Malaysian Indians, and the remaining 1% was from other ethnic groups. The ethnic composition reflected the approximate distribution of the Malaysian workforce employed by the private sector industries such as in the financial and banking, consulting, media, and other professional organizations. Nearly two-thirds of the participants were relatively young; about 6% of them were below 25 years old, 64% were between 25 and 34 years old, and 30% were 35 years old and above.

Some 23% of the 160 respondents were non-executives while the rest held executive (42%) and managerial (35%) positions. Nearly half of them had at least a basic degree and the rest had diplomas, as well as A and O levels academic qualifications. In terms of salary, 55% of the respondents each earned a gross monthly salary of RM 3000 or less, 40% of them earned between RM 3001 and 7000, and the remaining 5% earned above RM 7000. In terms of tenure, about 69% of the participants were employed in their existing organizations for 5 years or less, 17% between 6 and 10 years, and the rest (14%), more than 10 years.

Correlations and internal reliabilities of the measures

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients that describe the size and direction of each measure. A correlation coefficient close to 1.0 is said to be large in size and has a positive direction in the relationship. The coefficients ranging between 0.03 and 0.42 revealed very low to moderate correlations. The table shows that, except for its significant correlations with the dependent variable (job engagement), exchange ideology was independent or not correlated with the other independent variables. This is a reasonable initial indication of what might be the role of exchange ideology in the proposed relationships. In general, if the identified moderating variable is initially uncorrelated to the predictor variables, it could facilitate and ease the analysis and interpretation of the multiplicative interaction term (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Besides, the small correlation coefficients between exchange ideology and other independent and dependent variables (between 0.04 and 0.25) potentially support its distinctiveness as a possible moderator. This however would have to be confirmed with at least a hierarchical regression analysis.

The internal reliabilities of the six scales used in this study are recorded in parentheses as shown along the diagonals in Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha of between 0.76 and 0.89 revealed that the scales have appropriately measured what they were supposed to measure. They were higher than the minimum criterion of 0.70 suggested by Hair et al. (2010), and mostly consistent with those reported by Saks (2006).

Moderating relationships

The study used the moderated hierarchical regression analysis to test the research hypotheses. Prior to creating

Table 1. Correlations, means, standard deviations, and scale reliabilities.

Variables	Mean	S.D	11	22	33	44	55	6
Job Engagement	3.71	0.64	(0.81)					
Perceive supervisor support	3.50	0.63	0.14*	(0.86)				
Exchange ideology	2.95	0.87	0.25**	0.07	(0.89)			
Distributive justice	3.42	0.60	0.15*	0.13*	0.04	(0.79)		
Procedural justice	3.10	0.58	-0.03	0.40**	-0.06	0.33**	(0.84)	
Participation in decision making	3.36	0.56	0.29**	0.42**	-0.06	0.33**	0.35**	(0.76)

The internal reliability coefficients of each scale are in parentheses along the main diagonal; S.D = standard deviation; M = Mean; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

the interaction terms, we mean-centered and transformed the item scores of the independent variables to z-scores before multiplying them with each other as suggested by Aiken and West (1991). This reduced the likelihood of multicollinearity between the predictor variables and the interaction term, and eased interpretation of the interaction results. Based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) recommendation, we examined the extent to which exchange ideology (EI) moderated the relationships of PSS, DJ, PJ, PDM, and employees' job engagement.

The results reported in Table 2, summarizes the relationships of the antecedents, the interaction effects of exchange ideology, and employees' job engagement. Step by step, the study regressed employees' job engagement on PSS, DJ, PJ, and PDM.

In step 1, a predictor variable was individually entered in the regression equation, followed by entry of both the predictor and exchange ideology in step 2. In step 3, the two variables and a multiplicative term (predictor x exchange ideology) were entered to determine the interaction effect. Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest that there would be a moderation relationship if the interaction term is significant after the inclusion of the two main effects. Based on Aiken and West's (1991) suggestion, we plotted employees' perceptions of the dependent variables against each of the independent variables. We then observed the direction and position of the high versus low exchange ideology linear slopes (namely one standard deviation below and above the mean of the z scores) to confirm the moderated relationships. Results from the plotted diagrams are not included in this article due to space limitation.

Table 2 shows that PSS, DJ, PJ, were each significantly and positively related to employees' job engagement at $p < 0.01$, while PDM was significantly related to job engagement at $p < 0.001$. The regression results also showed that the relationship between perceived supervisor support and job engagement was moderated by employees' exchange ideology. There was a significant change in R^2 after the inclusion of the multiplicative interaction term in the relationship ($\Delta R^2 = 0.01$, $p < 0.05$). The interaction slopes in the plotted diagram confirmed that high perception of PSS was associated with high job engagement when employees'

exchange ideology was high, rather than low.

Table 2 also reports that the interaction between distributive justice and exchange ideology increased the amount of variance accounted for in employees' job engagement ($\Delta R^2 = 0.02$, $p < 0.05$). Their plotted figures showed that employees' high perception of distributive justice was associated with their high job engagement when their exchange ideology was high and not low. In addition, the findings reported significant interaction effects of participation in decision making and exchange ideology on employees' engagement to their jobs ($\Delta R^2 = 0.03$, $p < 0.01$).

However, the research findings did not support any moderated relationship between procedural justice and employees' engagement to their jobs. The slopes in the plotted diagram confirmed that the link between high procedural justice and job engagement were the same regardless of whether the exchange ideology was high or low. In summary, except for procedural justice, there were interaction effects of exchange ideology and the three antecedents (PSS, PDM, and DJ) on job engagement.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this study was to explore and extend Saks' (2006) work on employees' job engagement model in an emerging and developing Asian economy like Malaysia. It examined the interaction effects of exchange ideology on the relationships of perceived supervisor support, distributive justice, procedural justice, participation in decision making, and employees' engagement to their jobs. Like Saks, we found a positive and significant relationship between perceived supervisor support and employees' job engagement. However, unlike Saks, we found that if employees' PSS and exchange ideology are high, so would their engagement to their jobs be high.

The practical implication of this finding is that, if management wants to encourage their employees to be physically, cognitively, and emotionally involved in their jobs until they lose track of time, they would have to ensur that their supervisors value and treat their employees well. Employees are more likely to work hard

Table 2. Regression results showing exchange ideology as a moderator between the relationships of four antecedents and job engagement.

Variables	Job engagement	
	β	ΔR^2
Step 1		0.02*
Perceived supervisor support (PSS)	0.14*	
Step 2		0.06**
PSS	0.12*	
Exchange ideology (EI)	0.24**	
Step 3		0.01*
PSS	0.12*	
EI	0.24**	
PSS x EI	0.02*	
Step 1		0.02*
Distributive justice (DJ)	0.15*	
Step 2		0.06**
DJ	0.14*	
Exchange ideology (EI)	0.24**	
Step 3		0.02*
DJ	0.15*	
EI	0.23**	
DJ x EI	0.07*	
Step 1		0.00
Procedural justice (PJ)	0.03	
Step 2		0.06**
PJ	0.01	
Exchange ideology (EI)	0.25**	
Step 3		0.00
PJ	0.01	
EI	0.24**	
PJ x EI	0.04	
Step 1		0.09***
Participation in decision making (PDM)	0.29***	
Step 2		0.07***
PDM	0.30***	
Exchange ideology (EI)	0.27***	
Step 3		0.03**
PDM	0.31***	
EI	0.27***	
PDM x EI	0.05*	

β is the standardized regression coefficients; n=160; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

and immerse themselves in their jobs if they perceive their supervisors care for their well-being. The result suggests that, Malaysians perhaps have a good sense of appreciation and gratitude, and that management should invest more resources in training and coaching supervisors to value and treat their employees well. This would motivate employees to reciprocate by being more engaged in their work and in the long term, benefit both the organizations and customers. Afterall, happy employees make customers happy too.

This study also found that employees who feel empowered through their participation in decision making (PDM) would become more engaged in their jobs when their exchange ideology is high. In practice, management should walk the talk by trusting their employees more and allowing them to decide on matters that affect them and their work. This would enhance their confidence and desire to be more engaged in their work and perhaps improve their productivity.

Malaysian employees, like their western counterparts, view organizational justice seriously and management should not ignore this. Their perceptions of it could drive them to be engaged or disengaged in their jobs. This study empirically confirmed that their perceptions of distributive and procedural justices were positively and significantly related to their job engagement. However, unlike procedural justice, distributive justice and exchange ideology explained a significant increase in the variance accounted for in employees' job engagement. This study extended Saks' (2006) work by reporting that employees who perceive a fair distribution of resources and benefits are motivated to invest more time and energy in their work when their exchange ideology is high. The more employees perceive there is distributive justice, the harder they would work and be more engaged in their jobs if they have a high sense of gratitude. Management should therefore not underestimate the power of employees' desire for distributive justice.

Interestingly, the relationship between procedural justice and job engagement was not moderated by employees' exchange ideology. Future studies could perhaps examine if exchange ideology has an interaction effect on the relationship between procedural justice and employees' engagement to their organizations instead of to their jobs. It is possible that the more employees appreciate their transparent organizations for implementing fair and consistent procedures, the more they would be engaged to their organizations when their exchange ideology is high. Alternatively, like Witt (1991), exchange ideology could be examined as a multiplicative interaction between employees' perceptions of procedural justice and their organizational citizenship behavior instead of job engagement.

In summary, from the perspective of theory, the findings from this study allude to some extent that employee engagement is grounded on the social exchange theory. In practice, the results suggest that organizations should provide employees with better supervisor support, empowerment, and fair distribution of rewards as these would drive them to be more engaged in their jobs when their exchange ideology is high. Sincere social exchanges between employees and employers will go a long way in building mutual trust and benefits.

Limitations and future research

Like other cross sectional studies, there are limitations in this study. As the data was collected at one point in time, it is not possible to generalize the results over a wider population. It also suffers from one source biasness since the self-reported data was collected from only the employees and no other sources. Therefore, the results from this study should be interpreted cautiously. In future, researchers should perhaps have a larger sample size to increase the power and significance of the moderation relationships (Aguinis, 1995). A longitudinal data collection would be more appropriate to address biasness from the influences of recent events, experiences and circumstances. It would also enable the establishment of causal relationships between each of the antecedents and employees' job engagement.

Future studies could identify other antecedents of employee engagement and moderators. This may include leader-member exchange (LMX) instead of PSS, interpersonal justice instead of procedural justice, and others. In Malaysia, differences in gender, ethnicity, religious backgrounds, and generational age diversity, are some options worth examining as moderators in the relationships between the antecedents and employees' job engagement. In addition, perhaps, exchange ideology could be examined as a mediator instead of moderator in future employee engagement studies.

Conclusion

The research findings revealed that employees would be more engaged in their jobs if they are supported by their supervisors and if they are empowered to make decisions. Likewise, if they are treated justly through the implementation of fair distributive practices, they are likely to immerse themselves in their jobs. We extended Saks' (2006) work in employee engagement by including participation in decision making as an additional antecedent and exchange ideology as the moderator.

We found that except for procedural justice, the relationships of PSS, PDM and DJ and employees' job engagement were stronger when employees' exchange ideology was high rather than low. If organizations are serious about getting their employees to go that extra mile and to be totally focused on doing their jobs well, then, they must be willing to invest more in grooming their supervisors to be more caring and trusting, as well as

ensuring that they practice fair distributive practices. This could perhaps ensure that organizations succeed even during turbulent times.

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