The Journal of Behavioral Science
2021, Vol. 16, Issue 1, 73-84
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ISSN: 1906-4675 (Print), 2651-2246 (Online)

The Journal of Behavioral Science (TJBS)

Original Article

The Role of Well-Being, Supervisor Support and Positive Feedback on Lecturers' Work Engagement

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Article Information

Received: *03.11.20*
Revised: *15.12.20*
Accepted: *16.12.20*

Keywords

educator, performance, affective well-being, job resource, survey

Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support and positive feedback as contributing factors to work engagement of lecturers in the context two countries in the South East Asia. A total of 134 lecturers of one university in Malaysia and one university in Indonesia were recruited through simple random sampling. The research instruments were Job Affective Well-Being Scale, Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, while the statement of positive feedback was given in a hardcopy form or via personal e-mail. Multiple regression analysis showed that job affective well-being ($\beta = 0.49$, $p = .01$) and perceived supervisor support ($\beta = 0.27$, $p = .01$) made significant contribution to the prediction of work engagement. However, positive feedback statement ($\beta = 0.02$, $p = .75$) was not a significant predictor of work engagement. Therefore, a better strategy of the implementation of positive feedback should be considered in future so that the factor of why positive feedback may not have contributed to work engagement of lecturers can be indicated. Moreover, future studies should incorporate the elements of trust and respect in supervisory support to explore their roles in maintaining employee's work engagement at workplace. The main implication of this research is it that the management of tertiary education should practice measures to increase perceived supervisor's support among lecturers so that there will be more engagement at workplace.

Studies on engagement has been existed across levels of education, from primary school to tertiary education (Faskhodi & Siyyari, 2018; Poortvliet et al., 2015). Since lecturers are the most important asset of tertiary educational institutions, the focus on engagement among lecturers has been researched across variety of issues and topics. For example, the outcomes of engagement among lecturers to the organizations (Harini et al., 2019) and individuals' job performance (Agbionu et al., 2018) were studied which justify the benefit of this construct to every aspect of the profession. In a study, organizational citizenship behavior also found to be one of general consequences of work engagement (Smithikrai, 2019). In order to extend the knowledge on work engagement, there were researchers who focus on identifying the dimensions (Othman et al., 2018) and factors of the constructs (Meilani, 2017) in the context of the profession of lecturer. Not to be ignored, there were researches that examine the differences of work engagement between male and female lecturers (Gulzar & Teli, 2018), work environment (Pranitasari, 2019; Tauhed et al., 2018) and type of job resources (Alzyoud et al., 2014). However, little is known on how well job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support and positive feedback blend together to enhance lecturers' work engagement.

Generally, work engagement is defined as a positive state of mind that brings satisfaction with one's work (Baran & Sypniewska, 2020). Due to enormous responsibilities and job demands, lecturers' well-being could be at risk and may affect their work engagement. As argued in the Job

Demand-Resource (JD-R) Theory, job demands can be the risk factor for burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). However, the undesirable outcome of job demands can be reduced by job resources and personal resources. Besides, the presence of sufficient job resources can also create another outcome which is work engagement. At individual level, work engagement was associated with employees' happiness (Othman et al., 2018), thus it is hypothesized that supervisor support and positive feedback can help boost work engagement as they are among desirable and important elements at the workplace (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Ling & Soon, 2019).

The focus of this study was to examine the factors that contribute to work engagement of lecturers. To represent lecturers' well-being, the construct job-related affective well-being was studied as one of the factors. Meanwhile, perceived supervisor support and positive feedback were added to represent job resources. This study could provide an insight on what needs to be done by the employees and their supervisors to create a better work environment in the context of academic setting in two countries of South East Asia.

Literature Review

Affective well-being is defined as the prevalence of positive affect over negative affect (Kahneman et al., 1999). Based on the issue raised earlier, affective well-being might be a factor that could improve engagement of lecturers despite the overwhelming responsibilities in their job scope. Despite that, how far does job-related affective well-being relate to work engagement? Past research showed that affective well-being is studied in relation to work engagement (Diener et al., 2020; Kong & Li, 2018; Ouweneel et al., 2012).

The issue relating relationship between job-related affective well-being and work engagement have been more prevalent nowadays compared to decades ago. There are a few factors that may impact one's affective well-being when it comes to work engagement. It could be either the job scope itself, or the relationship with higher position individuals or co-workers or even from the state of relaxation involving the working space itself. For instance, abusive supervision which negatively related with work engagement (Poon, 2011) could lead to counterproductive work behaviors (Mackey et al., 2017) and subordinates' intention to quit (Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Accordingly, work engagement can also influence the relationship between employees' affective well-being and organizational citizenship behavior (Xu et al., 2019). On the other hand, positive affect was positively correlated with work engagement (Diener et al., 2020; Kong & Li 2018; Ouweneel et al., 2012). A significant relationship between job-related affective well-being and work engagement was also reported in previous study (Adil & Kamal, 2016).

Meanwhile, the support lecturers get from their supervisor should not be disregarded. Perceived supervisor support defines the degree to which a subordinate feel that he or she is supported and respected by his or her supervisor (Gok et al., 2015). Perceived supervisor support is considered as one factor that may affect work engagement. A study by Chen and Wang (2017) indicated that there was a negative relationship between abusive supervision and employees' job performance that was mediated by supervisory trust. Similarly, supervisor support has significant relationship with employees' engagement (De Ocampo et al., 2018; Holland et al., 2016; Wu & Parker, 2016). It was also supported by previous study by Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) which stated that supervisors' perceived organizational support was positively related to their subordinates' perceptions of supervisor support. Subordinates' perceived supervisor support, in turn, was positively associated with their perceived organizational support. Not only that but work engagement may also act as a mediator in the relationships between supervisor support and performance (Nasurdin et al., 2018), and between perceived support and innovative behavior (Doğru, 2018).

Meanwhile, as proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), another important element in job characteristics that could establish work engagement is feedback. In regard to educational setting, this is supported by Johari and Yahya (2016) and Ghenghesh (2013) whose research findings confirmed that feedback was positively correlated with job satisfaction. Specifically, in this study, positive feedback in workplace setting refers to the compliments or expressions during the performance sharing session provided by the supervisor to employees (Zheng et al., 2015). Xiao et al. (2017) revealed that performance feedback had a positive impact on work engagement and psychological empowerment in a way that it assisted employees to have sense of meaning, enhancing their sense of

autonomy and thus leading to better work engagement.

In addition, positive feedback is used to indicate that an expected or desired behavior was demonstrated, or to reinforce successive steps toward a goal (Sprouls et al., 2015). This is evident in a study that was conducted to investigate work involvement as a mediator between job characteristics and performance, in which job characteristics are formed by smaller dimensions namely skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (Johari & Yahya, 2016). The results showed that feedback significantly and indirectly influence job performance and the relationships were mediated by work involvement. On top of that, employee rewards and recognition could be a form of influential feedback and directly affect employee performance (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). It was further supported by a study by Kim et al. (2019) which intended to analyze the roles of work engagement as a mediator in the relationships between job and personal resources. They found that employees' outcomes, performance feedback is one of the components which affect job resources. It was found that performance feedback and other components which form both job resources and personal resources were positively associated with work engagement. These reviews showed that positive feedback could predict work outcomes such as work engagement of lecturer as investigated in this study. Hence, these past studies create the curiosity on the factors that contribute to work engagement of lecturers. Based on the findings of past studies related to the interrelationship among job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support, positive feedback, and work engagement presented, one hypothesis with three sub-hypotheses was proposed. Figure 1 is provided to show the linkage between the three independent variables with the dependent variable of this study.

H_11: Job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support and positive feedback significantly contributed to work engagement of lecturers.

H_11_a: Job-related affective well-being significantly contributed to work engagement of lecturers.

H_11_b: Perceived supervisor support significantly contributed to work engagement of lecturers.

H_11_c: Positive feedback significantly contributed to work engagement of lecturers.

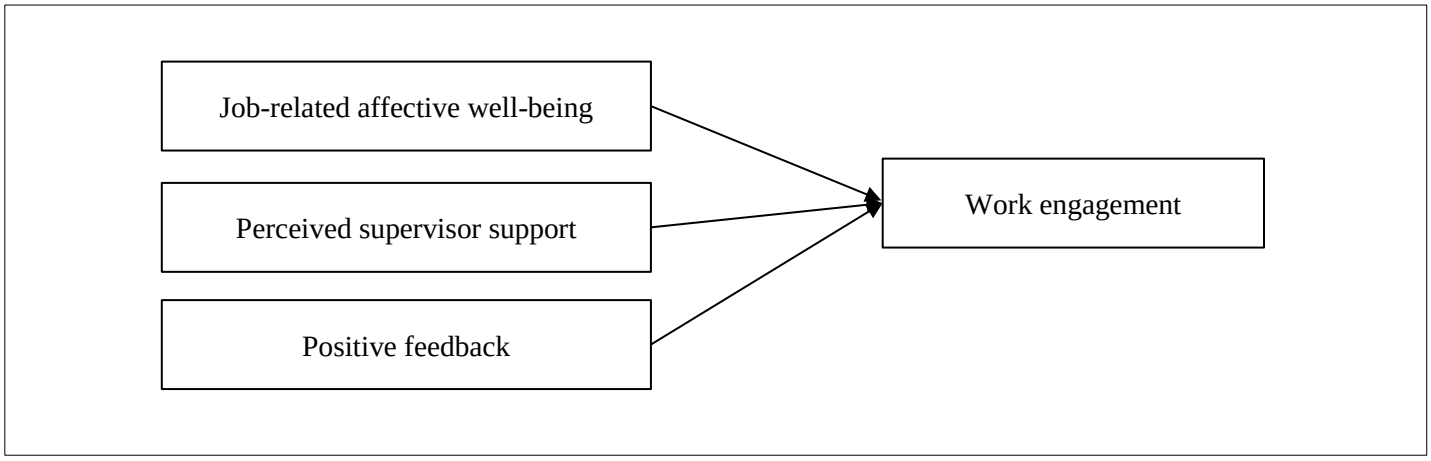
Method

Sample and Population

The population of this study were the lecturers at universities in Malaysia and Indonesia. This study was conducted in one university from each of the countries. A sample frame was made for each of the universities and the simple random sampling technique was used to recruit participants for the study. Half of the selected participants were given positive feedback while the other did not receive any positive feedback. This step is to create two conditions for the participants so that the influence of positive feedback can be analyzed. At the end of the data collection, a total of 131 responses were gathered which comprised of 69 Malaysian and 62 Indonesian.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



Instruments

A questionnaire packet was prepared in Google Form for this research. It consisted four sections which started by the demographic section, job-related affective well-being survey, perceived supervisor support survey and work engagement survey. The questionnaires were distributed in Malay and Indonesian versions, depending on the origin of the respondents. The Job-related Affective Well-being Scale (JAWS) and The Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) has been translated to Malay Language and Indonesian Language through direct translation as previously mentioned in a paper (Capitulo et al., 2001). Then, two experts were referred to improve the translated versions. The experts were given an evaluation form containing each of the translated items and the original items in English. Some modifications, based on experts' evaluations such as the usage of unfamiliar or inappropriate terms in targeted language, were done before finalizing the instruments. Similar translation process was conducted for both languages. On the other hand, the variable positive feedback was provided in the form of complimentary e-mail. The complimentary e-mail was also prepared in two different languages. All instruments that were used in this research are described as follows.

Demographic Section

This section gathers basic information on the background of the respondents. There were four items added for this research namely age, gender, race, and years of service as a lecturer. Multiple response types were employed based on the characteristics of the responses expected for each of the items.

Job-related Affective Well-being

This variable was measured by using the Job-related Affective Well-being Scale (JAWS). It was first developed in English by Van Katwyk et al. (2000). For this study, the 20-item version of the JAWS which comprised of ten positive items and ten negative items was adapted. The JAWS possessed sufficient internal reliability across different population in different countries which ranging from $\alpha = .81$ to .93 (Basińska et al., 2014; Malik & Noreen, 2015). The example of items is "my job made me feel calm" for positive item and "my job made me feel angry" for negative item. The 5-point Likert scale was applied.

Perceived Supervisor Support

The Survey of Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) is a modified version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) which was first introduced by Eisenberger et al. (1986). The modified version was first emerged in a study conducted by Kottke and Sharafinski (1988). For this study, the 6-item version of the PSS was used as recommended in a previous study (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) was also reported that the 6-item PSS has high internal reliability with $\alpha = .89$. There are five positive items and one negative item. Example of item is "my supervisor strongly considers my goals and values". The 7-point Likert scale was applied following the original scale used by the developer.

Work Engagement

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used to measure the work engagement by utilizing three important dimensions which are vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The UWES consists of 17 items such as "to me, my job is challenging" and "time flies when I'm working". The UWES has been systematically translated into Malay Language in a previous study therefore it is adopted in the present study (Yew et al., 2017). The Malay Language version showed sufficient internal reliability with $\alpha = .70$ in Malaysia setting. The 7-point Likert scale was also applied for this scale.

Positive Feedback

The feedback was made as if it was given by student. Positive feedback for this research were given in the form of complimentary statement such as "your passion comes through in your teaching and seems to be a part of what makes you an effective lecturer. I'm glad I took this course with you". Similar content of email was given to every participant according to their respective languages which are Malay and Indonesian. The positive feedback was given through email a week before the distribution of the questionnaire packet.

Procedure

This study involved correlational research design. For ethical clearance, the authors applied and received an approval from the Human Research

Ethics Committee (Reference Number: 2019-0057-01) of the university before proceeding with data collection procedure.

Online survey was employed in this study. A participation notification e-mail was first distributed to respondents a week before they were going to receive the questionnaire link. In order to ensure that the participants receive the feedback, the complimentary emails were sent to their official email addresses which they are obligated to check regularly. Besides, only lecturers who currently active and work full time in both universities were included in this study. Hence, the participants were supposedly to receive the email well. For the group that was set to receive a positive feedback, a complimentary e-mail was sent before the distribution of the questionnaire link. Also, a series of remainder e-mail was also planned to improve the number of responses. The procedure was conducted within the second semester session 2019/2020 and it took one and a half month to be completed.

Result

The descriptive statistics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. The study was participated by 134 university lecturers aged M = 43.63 (SD = 8.96). A slightly higher number of female university lecturers took part in the study (n = 71), compared to male university lecturers (n = 63). These included Malay (n = 64) and Indonesian (n = 62). Compared to other duration of working, most of the respondents who took part in the study have been committed to their work for 20 years and more (n = 56) and more than 30 university lecturers (n = 34) have been working for six to ten years. In terms of the presence of feedback, 72 of university lecturers were given positive feedback whereas the others were not. The detailed information of respondent characteristics is shown in Table 1 while the distribution of main variables scores is shown in Table 2.

Meanwhile, the main variables scores are shown in Table 2. The mean and standard deviation were observed to determine the level of job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support and work engagement of the respondents. The mean of each variable are higher than the real mean score of the instrument. It shows that the level job-related affective well-being perceived supervisor support and work engagement of the respondents are high.

Table 1

The Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Variable	Category	*F*	%
Gender	Male	63	47.00
	Female	71	53.00
Race	Malay	64	47.80
	Chinese	2	1.50
	Indian	3	2.20
	Indonesian	62	46.30
	Others	3	2.20
Duration of working	1 to 5 years	21	15.70
	6 to 10 years	34	25.40
	11 to 19 years	18	13.40
	20 years and above	56	41.80
Presence of feedback	1	72	53.70
	0	62	46.30

Note. 0 = No positive feedback was given and 1= positive feedback was given.

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation of Main Variables Scores

Main Variables	*M*	*SD*
Job Related Affective Well-Being	81.99	9.81
Perceived Supervisor Support	25.56	5.34
Work Engagement	82.99	12.29

To test the hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis had been conducted with job affective well-being, perceived supervisor and positive feedback as predictors and work engagement as the criterion. The summary of the analysis is shown in Table 3. The prediction model for work engagement signifying that job affective well-being and perceived supervisor support statistically significantly predicted work engagement, F (3, 129) = 33.07, p < .001, R2 = .44. Together, job affective well-being, perceived supervisor explained 44% of the variance in work engagement. Other than that, Table 4 provided the coefficient value of each of the predictors. The result showed job affective well-being and perceived supervisor support are making significant contribution to the prediction of work engagement, but presence of positive feedback does not.

In conclusion, the respondents reported high level of job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support and work engagement. Further multiple regression analysis showed that only job-related affective well-being and significant predictor of work engagement. Thus, H_11_a and H_11_b were accepted whereas H_11_c was rejected in this research.

Discussion

This study explored a contemporary issue that relates to lecturers' work behavior in universities in Malaysia and Indonesia. The findings in this research showed that job affective well-being is making contribution to the prediction of work engagement at least among lecturers in these two institutions. Affective well-being is a factor which may lead to resilience (Chen et al., 2015) and motivation (Ilies & Judge, 2005). Employee affective or psychological well-being is important to institutions as it has been shown to be positively related to creativity (Lin et al., 2014) and job performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). This indicates that when an individual is having positive affect toward the job, it enhances the ability of the individual to be more confident about his or her own capability.

This is in line with a study by previous study which claimed that in contrast to a good well-being, one would feel demotivated at work and hence might be thinking of resigning when facing uncomfortable situation in workplace whether it is the location or

Table 3

Model Summary of Work Engagement

Model	*R*	R^2	*SE*	Change Statistics				
				R^2	*F*	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
	.66	.44	9.35	.44	33.07	3	129	.00

Table 4

Coefficient Value for Work Engagement

	β	*t*	*p*
Presence of Positive Feedback	.02	0.32	.75
Job Affective Well-Being	.49	6.58	.00
Perceived Supervisor Support	.27	3.65	.00

the people involved (Poon, 2011; Mackey et al., 2017; Pradhan & Jena, 2017). Apart from that, job affective well-being encourages one to be positively engaged with his or her workplace (Xu et al., 2019). This is because positive emotions help people not only to survive, but also to thrive when confronted with adverse situations (Uncu et al., 2006). Thus, whenever how hard a situation may be for the day, the enjoyment and passion of a profession will keep one to be persistent in continuing whatever works that need to be done. There are also studies which indicated that high engagement group employees demonstrated higher psychological well-being and personal accomplishment (Robertson & Cooper, 2010; Shuck & Reio Jr, 2014). Thus, this indicates that the relationship between these two variables goes by vice versa.

Moreover, perceived supervisor support is making contribution to the prediction of work engagement. Supervisors are portrayed as the agent of an institution or organization (Eisenberger et al., 2002) which implemented the policies and practices in order to create a favorable workplace for employees, which in turn boost their emotional and psychological resources by reducing the stress or tension created from the work demands (Peng et al., 2019). Effective supervisor support is a higher-order, multi-dimensional construct comprising self-awareness, balanced processing of information, relational transparency, and internalized moral standards (Christian et al., 2011). Hence, this study provided more support for the main argument of the JD-R Theory. As previously mentioned, the job resource component of the theory was represented by perceived supervisor support. Thus, the results support the theory that perceived supervisor support could contribute to work engagement despite the demanding job scope of lecturers.

It is in accordance with studies by Iqbal et al. (2020) and Swanberg et al. (2011) which stated that supervisor support enhances the level of satisfaction of the employee and decreases turnover intention. This study is also in line with the finding among Indonesian sample (Goestjahjanti et al., 2020) which reported that social support has a moderating influence on the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction. Chen and Wang (2017) described the opposite condition in which there was a negative relationship between abusive supervision and employee job performance. Apart from that, as stated in literature previously, work engagement may act as a mediator in the relationships between supervisor support and performance (Nasurdin et al., 2018) between perceived support and innovative behavior (Doğru, 2018) and between supervisor support and turnover intentions (Pattnaik & Panda, 2020). Furthermore, personal resources, job resources and mainly supervisor support and organizational support can reinforce workers' engagement (Bakker et al., 2016; Van Woerkom et al., 2016) and at the same time enforcing their intrinsic hobby towards their job (Siu et al., 2013).

Finally, presence of positive feedback is not making contribution to the prediction of work engagement. This finding is the opposite of a study which discovered that performance feedback had a positive impact on work engagement, employee performance and psychological empowerment (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Xiao & Chen, 2017). However, it was consistent to a study by Ajibola et al. (2019) which indicated that the relationship between performance appraisal feedback and employee engagement was not statistically insignificant.

The result of this study found that positive feedback is not making significant contribution to the prediction of work engagement may be because it was given only once in the context of e-mail or hardcopy which is put in the pigeonhole. According to Weir (1976) and Syptak et al. (1999), feedback is one crucial element in the features which determines job satisfaction where individuals should receive regular, timely feedback on how they are doing and feel they are adequately challenged in their jobs from superiors. Besides that, rather than delayed feedback and as in this study, an accurate, impactful feedback which involved one-to-one meeting with the superior was shown to improve employee self-awareness, self-confidence, motivation, and performance (Marthouret & Sigvardsson, 2016; Hardavella et al., 2017). This is because immediate feedback tends to be much more specific since the details of the situation are more apparent than they would be at any later point in time (Michaelsen & Schultheiss, 1989).

Implications

This study provides an overview of several factors which may contributes to work engagement among lecturers therefore adds more support on the importance of individuals' affective well-being to the industrial and organizational context. Even though individual aspect takes a bigger impact on the work engagement of lecturers compare to social

aspect, the role of supervisor in giving appropriate support is required. Significantly, the relation between perceived supervisor support and work engagement is also adding another support for the JD-R Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) which explaining the role of job resource as a buffer in the negative relationship between lecturers' job demands and work engagement.

Yet, positive feedback was found to be not associated to lecturers' work engagement in this study. This showed that the study on effective positive feedback in the lecturers' work setting needs more attention. Even so, it is presumed that lecturers' contentment and the elements of trust and respect as the result of both job-related affected well-being and perceived supervisor support can effectively enhance work engagement among lecturers. Furthermore, practical strategy that utilizing the role of supervisor in preserving lecturers' job-related affective well-being can be planned in every level of management of the universities of these two countries.

Limitations

This research could be more impactful with a better planned feedback. The positive feedback which was received through email might not as meaningful to the lecturers hence the impact of feedback could not be proven in this research. In other word, establishing an authentic positive feedback in a study was one of the limitations in this study. Authentic feedback could only be implemented by recruiting the students of the respective lecturers which causing the confidentiality of the study would be hardly maintained. Other issues related to the nature of the positive feedback provided in this study have also been discussed in the previous section.

Other than that, it was found that obtaining adequate number of responses from university lecturers is hardly achieved. This led to the implementation of a series of remainder e-mails and data collection period extension in this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

A better strategy of the implementation of positive feedback should be considered in future. First, students should be also included in the study to provide authenticity to the positive feedback received by the lecturers. Immediate and timely feedback should also be planned to maximize its effect to the lecturers' motivation to stay engaged at workplace.

On the other hand, next researchers are suggested to consider for effective token of appreciation to encourage responses among lecturers. For example, food vouchers that can be redeemed from café around the campus can be included in questionnaire packet or email. Either paper voucher or digital voucher can be determined based on the mode of survey. Plus, lecturers can be given the option to give the voucher to others to attract more responses for the research.

Other than that, it is argued that the role of trust and respect to supervisors in workplace to the work engagement of lecturers should not be ignored. Trust and respect can be conceived by loosening the over-controlling behavior of micro supervision on lecturers. So, the study of the role of supervisor support on work engagement of lecturers to be expanded by focusing on issues related to trust and respect should be conducted in future studies.

Finally, a comparison on the work engagement of lecturers in Malaysia and Indonesia is also suggested. Although these two countries are deemed to have common characteristics such as history, culture and religion, there might be differences in the issue related to engagement at workplace. Therefore, an extensive research to compare the work engagement of lecturers in the two countries is recommended.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, there is lack of study that determine the benefit of the combination of job-related affective well-being, perceived supervisor support and positive feedback to enhance lecturers' work engagement. However, past studies provided the evidence that there is a significant relationship between all those three independent variables with work engagement separately. Thus, this study provided an insight on behavior of lecturers at their workplace in the perspective of psychology and management.

In brief, this study revealed that job-related affective well-being and perceived supervisor support significantly contributed to work engagement of lecturers, but positive feedback did not. Compared to most of study, the contrast finding may be due to the nature of feedback. However, other factors might also be the source of the opposing results. Therefore, more studies should be carried out in the future to really indicate the factor of why positive feedback may not have contributed to work engagement of lecturers.

Acknowledgement

This paper is based on the research project entitled Lecturers' Mental Health and Work Engagement: A Diary Study on The Role of Perceived Supervisor Support. The authors would like to extend their gratitude to Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia, for the Matching Research Grants (Code: 2019-0238-106-01) that helped fund the research.

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