

DRIVERS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT OF STAFF MEMBERS OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN NAMIBIA

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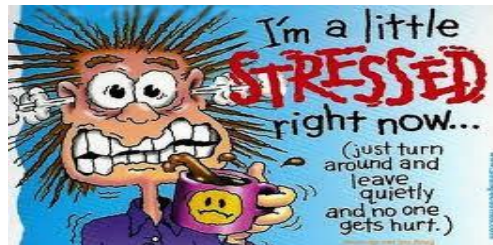


OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- Introduction
 - Research Objectives
 - BRIEF Literature: Overview of HEI in Namibia
 Drivers of work engagement
 - Methodology
 - Conclusions/Main Contributions
 - Recommendations
- Questions & Answers

Introduction...1

- Higher Education institutions confronted with a series of complex changes.
- Impact on employees - work conditions affect mental and physical health.
- Teaching and helping professions more vulnerable to occupational stress and burnout.



Introduction...2

- Expansion of Higher Education systems across the world during the 1980's and 1990's – resources have not kept pace.
- Perks of staff members diminished;
- Staff members – underpaid, demoralised, and demotivated;
- Workloads have increased;
- Increasing pressure to attract external funds to “publish or perish.”

Introduction...3

- HEI's across Africa (i.e. Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa) subjected to drastic changes during the last decade.
- Working conditions eroding, resources diminishing, workloads increase continuously, poor leadership and management, diminished perceptions of esteem and respect - compromise the well-being of individuals.
- Similar situation for **Namibian HEI's**.
- Role of HE in accomplishing Vision 2030.

Research Objectives

- ✓ To investigate the drivers of work engagement at a HEI in Namibia.
- ✓ To identify the most significant differences regarding driver variables and engagement dimensions based on demographic variables (age, gender, qualifications, job tenure, job position, years at the organisation, and type of contract) of staff members of a Higher Education Institution in Namibia.
- ✓ To investigate the impact of contributing and restraining factors on staff members' levels of work engagement.

Overview of HEI

- Traditional HEI's – relatively stable, resistant to change, little interference from government, elite systems (ivory towers).
- 1970's – 1980's - global shift towards **managerialism/corporatisation**.
- Corporate management principles, decreasing government funding, explicit performance and quality assurance criteria, increased authority and decision-making power of management.
- Difficult transition for staff members of HEI's.
- Higher education in Namibia – similar trends.

Overview of HEI - Namibia

- Small, fragmented Higher Education (HE) system - subjected to various economic, political and societal pressures.
- Remnants of Apartheid;
- Growing gap between rich and poor;
- Poor quality of high school graduates;
- Lack of consistent funding criteria to HEI's;
- High turnover rates;
- Lack of competencies and institutional support.

Drivers of Work Engagement: Literature Overview

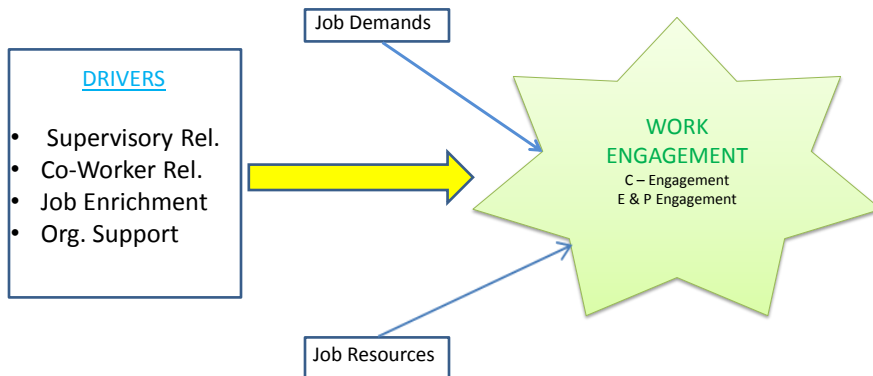


Figure 1. A conceptual model of the drivers of work engagement

Methodology...1

Research design

- Cross-sectional research design
- Both quantitative and qualitative data

Participants

- Academic staff ($N = 887$)
- Responses – ($n = 306$), 35%

Methodology...2

Procedure

- Structured questionnaire
- Permission sought from HR Director and Pro-vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
- Hard copies and electronic version of questionnaire; Collection boxes
- Reminder emails

Methodology...3

Measuring instruments

- Biographical Data
- The Antecedents (Drivers) Scales
- The Work Engagement Scale (WES)
- Open-ended Questions

Methodology...4

Data analysis

- SPSS 20.0
- Factor analysis
- Descriptive statistics
- Pearson's correlations
- Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)
- Regression analysis
- Content analysis

Methodology...5

Ethical considerations

- Permission to conduct research on campus
- Cover letter – voluntary and anonymous participation
- Accurate data capturing
- APA referencing

Main Conclusions/Contributions...1

- **Supervisory relations** are statistically significantly related to **Emotional and Physical Engagement**.
- **Co-worker relations** are statistically significantly related to **Emotional and Physical Engagement**.

Main Conclusions/Contributions...2

- **Job enrichment** is statistically significantly related to **Emotional and Physical Engagement**.
- **Organisational support** showed a statistically significant relationship to **Emotional and Physical Engagement**.

Main Conclusions/Contributions...3

- **Co-worker relations, Job enrichment and Organisational support** significantly predicted **Cognitive engagement**.
- **Co-worker relations** and **Job enrichment** significantly predicted **Emotional and Physical engagement**.

Main Conclusions/Contributions...4

- Older (more senior) staff members experienced more job enrichment. Associate professors and professors experienced the highest levels of job enrichment.
- Staff members with post-graduate degrees are more engaged in their work activities than employees with lower level qualifications.
- Staff members with doctoral degrees demonstrated the highest level of job enrichment.
- No significant differences were found in the engagement levels of tenured and non-tenured staff members.
- Staff members who had been with the university for less than one year valued their relationships with supervisors the most. In contrast, employees with the longest tenure valued supervisory relations the least.

Main Conclusions/Contributions...5

Contributing Factors of Employees with Low and High Scores on Emotional and Physical Engagement

Contributing Factors	Category 1 (Low E&P engagement)		Category 3 (High E & P engagement)	
	Frequency (n = 95)	Rank	Frequency (n = 88)	Rank
1. Office equipment and technology	89	1	61	1
2. Support from colleagues and supervisor	74	2	45	3
3. Personal resources	34	3	47	2
4. Nature of the job	28	4	18	5
5. Working conditions and environment	22	5	20	4.5
6. Resources	20	6	20	4.5
7. Remuneration and benefits	14	7	9	6.5
8. Management policies and procedures	8	8	4	8
9. Research and publishing opportunities	6	9.5	3	9
10. Opportunities for professional development	6	9.5	6	7
11. Infrastructure	5	10	9	6.5

Main Conclusions/Contributions...6

Restraining Factors of Employees with Low and High Scores on Emotional and Physical Engagement

Restraining Factors	Category 1 (Low E&P engagement)		Category 3 (High E & P engagement)	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
1. Work overload	61	1	41	2
2. Management and supervisory styles	43	2	34	3
3. Lack of resources	42	3	43	1
4. Interactions with colleagues	39	4	19	6
5. Management and administrative policies and procedures	38	5	21	5
6. Working conditions and environment	20	6	23	4
7. Quality of students	15	7	7	8
8. Remuneration & benefits	13	8	14	7
9. Lack of professional development opportunities	6	9	6	9
10. Lack of research and publishing opportunities	3	10	3	10.5
11. Negative public perceptions of the university	2	11	3	10.5

Recommendations....1

- Working environment and conditions were identified as a significant factor detracting from staff members' ability to engage in their work activities. An attractive physical work environment plays an important role in the work-related well-being of staff members.

Recommendations....2

- Work engagement is threatened by excessive job demands and insufficient job resources. Interventions should therefore be aimed at reducing job demands, and increasing the job resources of employees.

Recommendations....3

- Invest in additional manpower such as administrative assistants, tutors, and teaching staff to relieve academics of administrative tasks and large classes.
- Re-evaluate infrastructure to ensure that staff members have access to effective and efficient technical and administrative support.
- Training on improving the quality of teaching should be made compulsory.

Recommendations....4

- Need for mentorship program as part of organisational development strategy.
- Staff members with doctoral degrees must receive the recognition in terms of status and compensation (should include full scope of work).
- In terms of supervisor-employee relationships, supervisors and head of departments have to receive training targeting the following areas: leadership skills, conflict management, and interpersonal skills.

Recommendations....5

- Develop human risk management plans to address potential human resources risks (i.e. absenteeism, fraud and corruption, staff turnover, employee disengagement, safety risks, diversity problems etc.) which may arise, in order to avoid the incidence of continuous crisis management.
- Rigorous talent management strategies has to be implemented that focus on the retention and development of staff members.

Recommendations...6

- Embark on an aggressive campaign to sway the negative public perceptions by redefining and communicating the core values of the University of Namibia, as well as recognizing and rewarding the display of these values by staff members.
- Extensive consultations have to take place between academics and management, to build an institutional culture of transparency and integrity, especially where decisions affecting the work of academics are concerned.

THANK YOU