Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement

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Abstract

Purpose – Employee engagement has become a hot topic in recent years among consulting firms and in the popular business press. However, employee engagement has rarely been studied in the academic literature and relatively little is known about its antecedents and consequences. The purpose of this study was to test a model of the antecedents and consequences of job and organization engagements based on social exchange theory.

Design/methodology/approach – A survey was completed by 102 employees working in a variety of jobs and organizations. The average age was 34 and 60 percent were female. Participants had been in their current job for an average of four years, in their organization an average of five years, and had on average 12 years of work experience. The survey included measures of job and organization engagement as well as the antecedents and consequences of engagement.

Findings – Results indicate that there is a meaningful difference between job and organization engagements and that perceived organizational support predicts both job and organization engagement; job characteristics predicts job engagement; and procedural justice predicts organization engagement. In addition, job and organization engagement mediated the relationships between the antecedents and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to quit, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Originality/value – This is the first study to make a distinction between job and organization engagement and to measure a variety of antecedents and consequences of job and organization engagement. As a result, this study addresses concerns about that lack of academic research on employee engagement and speculation that it might just be the latest management fad.

Keywords Stress, Employees, Job satisfaction

Paper type Research paper

In recent years, there has been a great deal of interest in employee engagement. Many have claimed that employee engagement predicts employee outcomes, organizational success, and financial performance (e.g. total shareholder return) (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter *et al.*, 2002; Richman, 2006). At the same time, it has been reported that employee engagement is on the decline and there is a deepening disengagement among employees today (Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006). It has even been reported that the majority of workers today, roughly half of all Americans in the workforce, are not fully engaged or they are disengaged leading to what has been referred to as an "engagement gap" that is costing US businesses $300 billion a year in lost productivity (Bates, 2004; Johnson, 2004; Kowalski, 2003).

Unfortunately, much of what has been written about employee engagement comes from the practitioner literature and consulting firms. There is a surprising dearth of research on employee engagement in the academic literature (Robinson *et al.*, 2004). The purpose of this study was to investigate the antecedents and consequences of two

types of employee engagement: job and organization engagements. Previous research has focused primarily on engagement in one's job. However, there is evidence that one's degree of engagement depends on the role in question (Rothbard, 2001). Thus, it is possible that the antecedents and consequences of engagement depend on the type of engagement. In the next section, employee engagement is defined followed by a discussion of employee engagement models and theory and the study hypotheses.

What is employee engagement?

Employee engagement has become a widely used and popular term (Robinson *et al.*, 2004). However, most of what has been written about employee engagement can be found in practitioner journals where it has its basis in practice rather than theory and empirical research. As noted by Robinson *et al.* (2004), there has been surprisingly little academic and empirical research on a topic that has become so popular. As a result, employee engagement has the appearance of being somewhat faddish or what some might call, "old wine in a new bottle."

To make matters worse, employee engagement has been defined in many different ways and the definitions and measures often sound like other better known and established constructs like organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Robinson *et al.*, 2004). Most often it has been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005) or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs (Frank *et al.*, 2004).

In the academic literature, a number of definitions have been provided. Kahn (1990, p. 694) defines personal engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances." Personal disengagement refers to "the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances" (p. 694). Thus, according to Kahn (1990, 1992), engagement means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing an organizational role.

Rothbard (2001, p. 656) also defines engagement as psychological presence but goes further to state that it involves two critical components: attention and absorption. Attention refers to "cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role" while absorption "means being engrossed in a role and refers to the intensity of one's focus on a role."

Burnout researchers define engagement as the opposite or positive antithesis of burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). According to Maslach *et al.* (2001), engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Research on burnout and engagement has found that the core dimensions of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism) and engagement (vigor and dedication) are opposites of each other (Gonzalez-Roma *et al.*, 2006).

Schaufeli *et al.* (2002, p. 74) define engagement "as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption." They further state that engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but rather, it is "a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior" (p. 74).

In the academic literature, engagement is said to be related to but distinct from other constructs in organizational behavior. For example, Robinson *et al.* (2004, p. 8) state that:

... engagement contains many of the elements of both commitment and OCB, but is by no means a perfect match with either. In addition, neither commitment nor OCB reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement – its two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have an element of business awareness.

Organizational commitment also differs from engagement in that it refers to a person's attitude and attachment towards their organization. Engagement is not an attitude; it is the degree to which an individual is attentive and absorbed in the performance of their roles. And while OCB involves voluntary and informal behaviors that can help co-workers and the organization, the focus of engagement is one's formal role performance rather than extra-role and voluntary behavior.

Engagement also differs from job involvement. According to May *et al.* (2004), job involvement is the result of a cognitive judgment about the need satisfying abilities of the job and is tied to one's self-image. Engagement has to do with how individuals employ themselves in the performance of their job. Furthermore, engagement involves the active use of emotions and behaviors in addition to cognitions. May *et al.* (2004, p. 12) also suggest that "engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job involvement in that individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs."

In summary, although the definition and meaning of engagement in the practitioner literature often overlaps with other constructs, in the academic literature it has been defined as a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance. Furthermore, engagement is distinguishable from several related constructs, most notably organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and job involvement.

Employee engagement models and theory

Given the limited research on employee engagement, there has been little in the way of model or theory development. However, there are two streams of research that provide models of employee engagement. In his qualitative study on the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work, Kahn (1990) interviewed summer camp counselors and organizational members of an architecture firm about their moments of engagement and disengagement at work. Kahn (1990) found that there were three psychological conditions associated with engagement or disengagement at work: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. In other words, workers were more engaged at work in situations that offered them more psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, and when they were more psychologically available.

In the only study to empirically test Kahn's (1990) model, May *et al.* (2004) found that meaningfulness, safety, and availability were significantly related to engagement. They also found that job enrichment and role fit were positive predictors of meaningfulness; rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations were positive predictors of safety while adherence to co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors; and resources available was a positive predictor of psychological availability while participation in outside activities was a negative predictor.

The other model of engagement comes from the burnout literature which describes job engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout noting that burnout involves the erosion of engagement with one's job (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). According to Maslach *et al.* (2001), six areas of work-life lead to burnout and engagement: workload, control,

rewards and recognition, community and social support, perceived fairness, and values. They argue that job engagement is associated with a sustainable workload, feelings of choice and control, appropriate recognition and reward, a supportive work community, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work. Like burnout, engagement is expected to mediate the link between these six work-life factors and various work outcomes.

Although both Kahn's (1990) and Maslach *et al.*'s (2001) models indicate the psychological conditions or antecedents that are necessary for engagement, they do not fully explain why individuals will respond to these conditions with varying degrees of engagement. A stronger theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement can be found in social exchange theory (SET).

SET argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. A basic tenet of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain "rules" of exchange (Cropanzano and Mictchell, 2005). Rules of exchange usually involve reciprocity or repayment rules such that the actions of one party lead to a response or actions by the other party. For example, when individuals receive economic and socioemotional resources from their organization, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This is consistent with Robinson *et al.*'s (2004) description of engagement as a two-way relationship between the employer and employee.

One way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement. That is, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization. Bringing oneself more fully into one's work roles and devoting greater amounts of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources is a very profound way for individuals to respond to an organization's actions. It is more difficult for employees to vary their levels of job performance given that performance is often evaluated and used as the basis for compensation and other administrative decisions. Thus, employees are more likely to exchange their engagement for resources and benefits provided by their organization.

In summary, SET provides a theoretical foundation to explain why employees choose to become more or less engaged in their work and organization. The conditions of engagement in both Kahn's (1990) and Maslach *et al.*'s (2001) model can be considered economic and socioemotional exchange resources within SCT. When employees receive these resources from their organization they feel obliged to repay the organization with greater levels of engagement. In terms of Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement, employees feel obliged to bring themselves more deeply into their role performances as repayment for the resources they receive from their organization. When the organization fails to provide these resources, individuals are more likely to withdraw and disengage themselves from their roles. Thus, the amount of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources that an individual is prepared to devote in the performance of one's work roles is contingent on the economic and socioemotional resources received from the organization.

Study hypotheses

Figure 1 shows a model of employee engagement. At the core of the model are two types of employee engagement: job and organization engagements. This follows from

the conceptualization of engagement as role related (Kahn, 1990; Rothbard, 2001); that is, it reflects the extent to which an individual is psychologically present in a particular organizational role. The two most dominant roles for most organizational members are their work role and their role as a member of an organization. Therefore, the model explicitly acknowledges this by including both job and organization engagements. This also follows from the notion that people have multiple roles and as suggested by Rothbard (2001) as well as May *et al.* (2004), research should examine engagement in multiple roles within organizations.
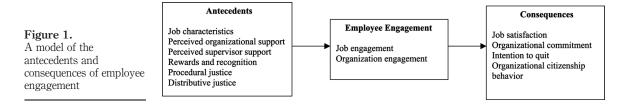
Antecedents of employee engagement
Although there is little empirical research on the factors that predict employee engagement, it is possible to identify a number of potential antecedents from Kahn's (1990) and Maslach *et al.*'s (2001) model. While the antecedents might differ for job and organization engagement, identical hypotheses are made for both types of engagement given the lack of previous research and this being the first study to examine both job and organization engagement.

Job characteristics. Psychological meaningfulness involves a sense of return on investments of the self-in-role performances (Kahn, 1992). According to Kahn (1990, 1992), psychological meaningfulness can be achieved from task characteristics that provide challenging work, variety, allow the use of different skills, personal discretion, and the opportunity to make important contributions. This is based on Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model and in particular, the five core job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback). Jobs that are high on the core job characteristics provide individuals with the room and incentive to bring more of themselves into their work or to be more engaged (Kahn, 1992). May *et al.* (2004) found that job enrichment was positively related to meaningfulness and meaningfulness mediated the relationship between job enrichment and engagement.

The workload and control conditions from the Maslach *et al.* (2001) model also suggest the importance of job characteristics for engagement. In fact, job characteristics, especially feedback and autonomy, have been consistently related to burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). From a SET perspective, one can argue that employees who are provided with enriched and challenging jobs will feel obliged to respond with higher levels of engagement. Therefore, *H1* is the following:

H1. Job characteristics will be positively related to (a) job engagement and (b) organization engagement.

Rewards and recognition. Kahn (1990) reported that people vary in their engagement as a function of their perceptions of the benefits they receive from a role.

Antecedents	Employee Engagement	Consequences
Job characteristics Perceived organizational support Perceived supervisor support Rewards and recognition Procedural justice Distributive justice	Job engagement Organization engagement	Job satisfaction Organizational commitment Intention to quit Organizational citizenship behavior

Furthermore, a sense of return on investments can come from external rewards and recognition in addition to meaningful work. Therefore, one might expect that employees' will be more likely to engage themselves at work to the extent that they perceive a greater amount of rewards and recognition for their role performances. Maslach *et al.* (2001) have also suggested that while a lack of rewards and recognition can lead to burnout, appropriate recognition and reward is important for engagement. In terms of SET, when employees receive rewards and recognition from their organization, they will feel obliged to respond with higher levels of engagement. Thus, the second hypothesis is as follows:

H2. Rewards and recognition will be positively related to (a) job engagement and (b) organization engagement.

Perceived organizational and supervisor support. Psychological safety involves a sense of being able to show and employ the self without negative consequences (Kahn, 1992). An important aspect of safety stems from the amount of care and support employees' perceive to be provided by their organization as well as their direct supervisor. In fact, Kahn (1990) found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships as well as supportive management promoted psychological safety. Organizational members felt safe in work environments that were characterized by openness and supportiveness. Supportive environments allow members to experiment and to try new things and even fail without fear of the consequences (Kahn, 1990). In their empirical test of Kahn's model, May *et al.* (2004) also found that supportive supervisor relations was positively related to psychological safety.

Social support is also one of the conditions in the Maslach *et al.* (2001) model and a study by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that a measure of job resources that includes support from colleagues predicted engagement. A lack of social support has also consistently been found to be related to burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 2001).

Two variables that are likely to capture the essence of social support are perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS). POS refers to a general belief that one's organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). The basic premise of organizational support research is SET. In particular, POS creates an obligation on the part of employees to care about the organization's welfare and to help the organization reach its objectives (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). Although POS has been found to be related to a number of favorable outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance) (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), no previous study has related it to employee engagement.

However, one reason that POS might lead to positive outcomes is through employee engagement. In other words, employees' who have higher POS might become more engaged to their job and organization as part of the reciprocity norm of SET in order to help the organization reach its objectives (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). In other words, when employees believe that their organization is concerned about them and cares about their well-being, they are likely to respond by attempting to fulfill their obligations to the organization by becoming more engaged. In addition, because employees tend to view their supervisor's orientation toward them as indicative of the organization's support (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002), PSS is also likely to be an important predictor of employee engagement. In fact, a lack of support from supervisors has been

found to be an especially important factor linked to burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). In addition, first-line supervisors are believed to be especially important for building engagement and to be the root of employee disengagement (Bates, 2004; Frank *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, *H3* and *H4* are as follows:

H3. Perceived organizational support (POS) will be positively related to (a) job engagement and (b) organization engagement.

H4. Perceived supervisor support (PSS) will be positively related to (a) job engagement and (b) organization engagement.

Distributive and procedural justice. The safety dimension identified by Kahn (1990) involves social situations that are predictable and consistent. For organizations, it is especially important to be predictable and consistent in terms of the distribution of rewards as well as the procedures used to allocate them. While distributive justice pertains to one's perception of the fairness of decision outcomes, procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of the means and processes used to determine the amount and distribution of resources (Colquitt, 2001; Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). A review of organizational justice research found that justice perceptions are related to organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, withdrawal, and performance (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001). However, previous research has not tested relationships between fairness perceptions and employee engagement.

The effect of justice perceptions on various outcomes might be due in part to employee engagement. In other words, when employees have high perceptions of justice in their organization, they are more likely to feel obliged to also be fair in how they perform their roles by giving more of themselves through greater levels of engagement. On the other hand, low perceptions of fairness are likely to cause employees to withdraw and disengage themselves from their work roles. Fairness and justice is also one of the work conditions in the Maslach *et al.* (2001) engagement model. A lack of fairness can exacerbate burnout and while positive perceptions of fairness can improve engagement (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Therefore, *H5* and *H6* are as follows:

H5. Perceptions of procedural justice will be positively related to (a) job engagement and (b) organization engagement.

H6. Perceptions of distributive justice will be positively related to (a) job engagement and (b) organization engagement.

Consequences of employee engagement
The driving force behind the popularity of employee engagement is that it has positive consequences for organizations. As indicated earlier, there is a general belief that there is a connection between employee engagement and business results (Harter *et al.*, 2002). However, engagement is an individual-level construct and if it does lead to business results, it must first impact individual-level outcomes. Along these lines, there is reason to expect employee engagement to be related to individuals' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

Although neither Kahn (1990) nor May *et al.* (2004) included outcomes in their studies, Kahn (1992) proposed that engagement leads to both individual outcomes (i.e. quality of people's work and their own experiences of doing that work), as well as

organizational-level outcomes (i.e. the growth and productivity of organizations). Furthermore, the Maslach *et al.* (2001) model treats engagement as a mediating variable for the relationship between the six work conditions and work various outcomes and like burnout, should be related to outcomes such as increased withdrawal, lower performance, job satisfaction, and commitment (Maslach *et al.*, 2001).

There are a number of reasons to expect engagement to be related to work outcomes. For starters, the experience of engagement has been described as a fulfilling, positive work-related experience and state of mind (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003) and has been found to be related to good health and positive work affect (Sonnentag, 2003). These positive experiences and emotions are likely to result in positive work outcomes. As noted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engaged employees likely have a greater attachment to their organization and a lower tendency to leave their organization.

According to SET, when both parties abide by the exchange rules, the result will be a more trusting and loyal relationship and mutual commitments (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Thus, individuals who continue to engage themselves do so because of the continuation of favorable reciprocal exchanges. As a result, individuals who are more engaged are likely to be in more trusting and high-quality relationships with their employer and will, therefore, be more likely to report more positive attitudes and intentions toward the organization.

In addition, there is some empirical research that has reported relationships between engagement and work outcomes. For example, engagement has been found to be positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to intention to quit, and is believed to also be related to job performance and extra-role behavior (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that engagement was negatively related to turnover intention and mediated the relationship between job resources and turnover intention. Therefore, it is predicted that job and organization engagement will be related to work outcomes as follows:

H7. Job engagement will be positively related to (a) job satisfaction, (b) organizational commitment, and (c) organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to (d) intention to quit.

H8. Organization engagement will be positively related to (a) job satisfaction, (b) organizational commitment, and (c) organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to (d) intention to quit.

Finally, given that the antecedents are expected to predict engagement and engagement predicts the outcomes, it is possible that engagement mediates the relationship between the antecedents and the consequences. This is consistent with the Maslach *et al.* (2001) model and is all the more likely given that most of the antecedents (e.g. job characteristics, POS, justice perceptions) have been associated with various work outcomes. Furthermore, several studies have found that engagement mediates the relationship between antecedent variables and outcomes (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003). Therefore, the final hypothesis of this study is the following:

H9. Job and organization engagement will mediate the relationship between the antecedents and the consequences.

Method

Participants

Participants included 102 employees working in a variety of jobs and organizations. The average age was 34; 60 percent were female. Participants had been in their current job for an average of four years, and in their organization an average of five years. They had on average 12 years of work experience. The sample is slightly younger than the median age of population in the area (36.9) and the percent of female participants in the study is somewhat higher than the percent of females in the population (52 percent).

Procedure

The data for this study was collected by students enrolled in a graduate course in research methods at a large Canadian University in Toronto. At the time of the study, the unemployment rate in the area was 7.71 percent. Each of 24 students in the course was asked to distribute the survey to five currently employed individuals as part of a class project on survey research. The survey included a cover letter/consent form that informed participants about the purpose of the study. Participants were asked to complete the survey as part of a study on employee work experiences and attitudes. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Participants returned their survey in a sealed envelope to the students who then handed them over to the lead investigator. A total of 102 surveys were returned representing a response rate of 85 percent.

Measures

Job and organization engagement. Two six-item scales were designed for this study to measure job engagement and organization engagement. Items were written to assess participant's psychological presence in their job and organization. A sample item for job engagement is, "Sometimes I am so into my job that I lose track of time" and for organization engagement, "One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organization." Participants indicated their response on a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

A principal components factor analysis with a promax rotation resulted in two factors corresponding to job and organization engagements. All of the job engagement items except one loaded 0.70 or higher with cross-factor loadings less than 0.20. The one item loaded below 0.30 and had a higher cross-factor loading so it is was removed from the job engagement scale resulting in a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.82$). All six of the organization engagement items loaded 0.75 or higher and all of the cross-factor loadings were less than 0.30 ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Antecedents of engagement. Job characteristics were measured by six items from Hackman and Oldham (1980) with each item corresponding to a core job characteristic (autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance, feedback from others, and feedback from the job). Participants indicated the extent or amount of each characteristic in their job using specific seven-point anchors such as (1) very little to (7) very much ($\alpha = 0.79$). POS was measured by the eight-item short-form of the survey of perceived organizational support (SPOS) and PSS was measured by the four-item scale adapted from the SPOS (Rhoades *et al.*, 2001). Participants' responded using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. A sample item for POS is "My organization really cares about my well-being" and for

supervisor support, "My supervisor cares about my opinions" ($\alpha = 0.89$ for both scales). Rewards and recognition was measured by a ten-item scale designed for this study. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they receive various outcomes for performing their job well. They responded using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) to a small extent to (5) a large extent to items such as, "A pay raise," "A promotion," "Praise from your supervisor," and "Some form of public recognition" ($\alpha = 0.80$). Colquitt's (2001) seven-item scale was used to measure procedural justice and his four-item scale was used to measure distributive justice. Participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) to a small extent to (5) a large extent. A sample item for procedural justice is, "Have you been able to appeal the (outcome) arrived at by those procedures," and a sample item for distributive justice is, "Does your (outcome) reflect the effort you have put into your work?" ($\alpha = 0.89$ for procedural justice and $\alpha = 0.92$ for distributive justice).

Consequences of engagement. Job satisfaction was measured by Cammann *et al.* (1983) three-item scale. A sample items is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" ($\alpha = 0.84$). Organizational commitment was measured by the six-item affective commitment scale used by Rhoades *et al.* (2001). A sample item is, "I feel personally attached to my work organization" ($\alpha = 0.90$). Intention to quit was measured by Colarelli's (1984) three-item scale. A sample item is, "I am planning to search for a new job during the next twelve months" ($\alpha = 0.82$). Participants responded to all items for the above scales using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Organizational citizenship behavior directed to the individual (OCBI) and organization (OCBO) was each measured by four-items each from Lee and Allen (2002). Participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) never to (5) always. A sample item from the OCBI scale is, "Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems" ($\alpha = 0.75$) and a sample item from the OCBO scale is, "Take action to protect the organization from potential problems" ($\alpha = 0.73$).

Items for all scales used in the study are listed in the Appendix.

Results

Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of the study variables. First, it is worth noting that there is a significant moderate correlation between job and organization engagements ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). However, the results of a paired *t*-test indicated a significant difference, t (101) $= 2.42$, $p < 0.05$. These findings indicate that while the two measures of engagement are related, they are also significantly different with participants indicating significantly higher job engagement ($M = 3.06$) than organization engagement ($M = 2.88$). Second, as expected, the antecedents are related to job and organization engagement. Third, job and organization engagement were significantly positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior, and negatively related to intention to quit. To test the study hypotheses, multiple regression analyses were conducted.

Antecedents of employee engagement

In order to test the hypotheses for the antecedents of employee engagement, multiple regression analyses were conducted in which each measure of engagement was

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Job engagement	3.06	0.82	(0.82)												
2. Organization engagement	2.88	0.85	0.62 ***	(0.90)											
3. Job characteristics	4.93	1.09	0.48 ***	0.36 ***	(0.79)										
4. Perceived organizational support	3.44	0.75	0.44 ***	0.58 ***	0.42 ***	(0.89)									
5. Supervisor support	3.71	0.87	0.25 **	0.34 ***	0.33 ***	0.61 ***	(0.89)								
6. Rewards and recognition	2.75	0.73	0.23 *	0.28 **	0.26 **	0.60 ***	0.51 ****	(0.80)							
7. Procedural justice	3.16	0.89	0.25 **	0.41 ***	0.37 ***	0.47 ***	0.37 ***	0.41 ***	(0.89)						
8. Distributive justice	3.15	0.96	0.22 *	0.33 ***	0.33 ***	0.53 ***	0.39 ***	0.43 **	0.55 ***	(0.92)					
9. Job satisfaction	3.73	0.93	0.52 ***	0.57 ***	0.41 ***	0.58 ***	0.37 ***	0.44 ***	0.39 ***	0.51 ***	(0.84)				
10. Organizational commitment	3.05	1.00	0.53 ***	0.69 ****	0.43 ***	0.51 ***	0.26 **	0.25 **	0.37 ***	0.23 *	0.61 ***	(0.90)			
11. Intention to quit	2.63	1.17	−0.41 ***	−0.44 ****	−0.36 ***	−0.41 ***	−0.29 **	−0.21 *	−0.34 ***	−0.31 **	−0.69 ***	−0.68 ***	(0.82)		
12. OCBI	3.70	0.66	0.24 *	0.27 *	0.22 *	0.31 **	0.19	0.18	0.10	0.12	0.07	0.24 *	−0.05	(0.75)	
13. OCBO	3.17	0.78	0.39 ***	0.42 ***	0.46 ***	0.36 ***	0.21 *	0.21 *	0.35 ***	0.15	0.25 **	0.56 ***	−0.29 **	0.51 ***	(0.73)

Notes: $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$; and reliabilities are in parentheses

Table I.
Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and intercorrelations of study variables

regressed simultaneously on all six of the antecedent variables. As shown in Table II, the results indicate that the antecedent variables explained a significant amount of the variance in job engagement ($R^2 = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$) and organization engagement ($R^2 = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$). With respect to the study hypotheses, both job characteristics (0.37, $p < 0.001$) and organizational support (0.36, $p < 0.01$) were significant predictors of job engagement. Organizational support was also a significant predictor of organization engagement (0.57, $p < 0.001$), and procedural justice approached significance (0.18, $p < 0.10$). These results provide support for *H1a*, *H3a*, *H3b*, and *H6a*.

Consequences of employee engagement
To test the hypotheses for the consequences of employee engagement, multiple regression analyses were conducted in which each of the outcomes was regressed on job and organization engagement. As shown in Table III, the engagement measures explained a significant amount of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$), organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), intention to quit ($R^2 = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), OCBI ($R^2 = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$), and OCBO ($R^2 = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$). Both job and organization engagement predicted job satisfaction (0.26, $p < 0.01$ and 0.41, $p < 0.001$), organizational commitment (0.17, $p = 0.06$ and 0.59, $p < 0.001$), intention to quit (-0.22, $p = 0.06$ and -0.31, $p < 0.01$), and OCBO (0.20, $p < 0.10$ and

Variables	Job engagement	Organization engagement
Job characteristics	0.37***	0.12
Perceived organizational support	0.36**	0.57***
Supervisor support	−0.05	−0.03
Rewards and recognition	−0.03	−0.13
Procedural justice	0.01	0.18*
Distributive justice	−0.06	−0.05
R^2	0.30	0.39
F	6.55***	9.74***

Notes: *$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; and values in table are standardized β coefficients

Table II.
Multiple regression analyses predicting employee engagement

	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Intention to quit	Organizational citizenship behavior-individual	Organizational citizenship behavior-organization
Job engagement	0.26***	0.17*	−0.22*	0.11	0.20*
Organization engagement	0.41a	0.59a	−0.31***	0.20*	0.30***
R^2	0.37	0.50	0.21	0.08	0.20
F	29.18a	48.78a	14.21a	4.29**	12.64a

Notes: *$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$; a$p < 0.001$; and values in table are standardized β coefficients

Table III.
Multiple regression analyses for engagement predicting consequences

0.30, $p < 0.01$). However, for OCBI organization engagement approached significance (0.20, $p = 0.10$) and job engagement was not significant. These results provide support for *H7a-H7d* and *H8a-H8c*, and *H8e*.

Mediating effects of employee engagement

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), three conditions must be met to establish mediation. First, the independent variable(s) (the antecedents of engagement) must be related to the mediator (employee engagement). Second, the mediator (employee engagement) must be related to the dependent variable(s) (the consequences of engagement). Third, a significant relationship between the independent variable(s) (antecedents of engagement) and a dependent variable(s) (consequences of engagement) will be reduced (partial mediation) or no longer be significant (full mediation) when controlling for the mediator (employee engagement). Conditions one and two have been met as described above. For condition three, the antecedents must first be related to the consequences.

In order to test for a mediation model in which engagement mediates the relationship between the set of antecedents and each consequence, additional regression analyses were conducted in which the consequences were regressed on the antecedents alone and then again with the engagement measures controlled. For job satisfaction, the antecedents explained 42 percent of the variance but dropped to 15 percent ($p < 0.001$) with the engagement measures controlled. For organizational commitment, the antecedents explained 35 percent of the variance but only 5 percent (ns) when the engagement measures were controlled. For intention to quit, the antecedents explained 24 percent of the variance but only 6 percent (ns) with the engagement measures controlled. For OCBI, the antecedents explained 12 percent of the variance but only 5 percent (ns) with the engagement measures controlled and for OCBO, the antecedents explained 31 percent of the variance but only 13 percent with engagement controlled ($p < 0.01$).

In summary, the results provide partial support for *H9*. For all of the outcomes, the variance explained by the antecedents was substantially reduced when job and organization engagement were controlled, and in fact, reduced to non-significance for organizational commitment, intention to quit, and OCBI. Overall, these results suggest that the relationship between the antecedent variables and the consequences is partially mediated by job and organization engagement.

Discussion

There has been a great deal of interest in employee engagement in recent years especially among practitioners and consultants. Although much has made about the importance of employee engagement for organizational performance and business results, there is little empirical evidence to back up these claims leading one to speculate that engagement might just be the "flavor of the month" or the latest management fad. The purpose of this study was to test a model of the antecedents and consequences of job and organization engagements based existing models of engagement and SET. This study provides one of the first empirical tests of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement and makes a number of contributions to this new and emerging area.

First, this study approached engagement as role specific with respect to one's job and organization. In fact, the results demonstrate that job and organization engagements are related but distinct constructs. Participants' scores were significantly higher for job engagement compared to organization engagement. In addition, the relationships between job and organization engagement with the antecedents and consequences differed in a number of ways suggesting that the psychological conditions that lead to job and organization engagements as well as the consequences are not the same. As well, both job and organization engagements explained significant and unique variance in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and OCBO. These findings are the first to suggest that there is a meaningful distinction between job and organization engagements.

Second, this study found that a number of factors predict job and organization engagement. While POS predicted job and organization engagement, job characteristics predicted job engagement and procedural justice predicted organization engagement. Third, the results of this study indicate that job and organization engagement are related to employees' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. In particular, job and organization engagements predicted job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and OCBO while only organization engagement predicted OCBI. Furthermore, organization engagement was a much stronger predictor of all of the outcomes than job engagement. Fourth, like several other studies (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003), the results of this study suggest that employee engagement partially mediates the relationship between antecedent variables and consequences.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that employee engagement can be understood in terms of SET. That is, employees who perceive higher organizational support are more likely to reciprocate with greater levels of engagement in their job and in the organization; employees who are provided with jobs that are high on the job characteristics are more likely to reciprocate with greater job engagement; and employees who have higher perceptions of procedural justice are more likely to reciprocate with greater organization engagement. Engaged employees are also more likely to have a high-quality relationship with their employer leading them to also have more positive attitudes, intentions, and behaviors.

Implications for research
The results of this study suggest that employee engagement is a meaningful construct that is worthy of future research. There are several avenues to consider. One area would be to investigate other potential predictors of job and organization engagement. The present study included a number of factors associated with Kahn's (1990, 1992) and Maslach *et al.*'s (2001) engagement models. However, there are other variables that might also be important for both job and organization engagement. For example, human resource practices such as flexible work arrangements, training programs, and incentive compensation might also be important for engagement. Future research could include a broader range of predictors that are linked to particular types of role engagement. Along these lines, future research should attempt to flesh out the types of factors that are most important for engagement in different roles (e.g. job, organization, and group).

Future research might also consider individual difference variables that might predict employee engagement. Several personality variables including hardiness, self-esteem, and *locus* of control are related to burnout and might also be important for engagement (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Self-efficacy has also been recognized as an important factor in burnout and engagement (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). There is also some evidence that individuals with a strong exchange ideology are more likely to feel obliged to reciprocate a benefit (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Thus, the relationship between various antecedents and engagement might be stronger for individuals with a strong exchange ideology. Future research might test the moderating effects of exchange ideology for the relationship between antecedents and engagement.

A final area for future research is to study the potential effect of experimental interventions on employee engagement. There is some evidence that exchange-inducing interventions can invoke a sense of obligation on the part of individuals who feel obliged to reciprocate (Ganzach *et al.*, 2002). Thus, future research might investigate the extent to which interventions can create a sense of obligation that leads individuals to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement. For example, training managers to be more supportive might be effective for improving perceptions of organizational support and caring. Job design interventions that provide employees with more autonomy and variety in their work as well as career management interventions might also be effective. This is likely to be a fruitful area for future research given the increasing interest on the part of organizations to improve employee engagement and address the so-called "engagement-gap."

Implications for practice

The results of this study also have some practical implications. First, POS was the only significant predictor of both job and organization engagement. Interestingly, this is the one antecedent variable in the study where SET has been used to explain employee attitudes and behavior. In the context of this study, it would appear that the caring and concern associated with POS creates a sense of obligation on the part of employees who reciprocate with greater levels of job and organization engagement. Thus, organizations that wish to improve employee engagement should focus on employees' perceptions of the support they receive from their organization. Organizational programs that address employees' needs and concerns (e.g. surveys, focus groups, and suggestion programs) and demonstrate caring and support (e.g. flexible work arrangements) might cause employees to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement.

Second, an important practical implication for managers is the need for them to understand the importance of social exchange for employee engagement. In particular, managers need to provide employees with resources and benefits that will oblige them to reciprocate in kind with higher levels of engagement. Although the results of this study highlight the importance of job characteristics and social support, there might be other factors that are more important for different employees. Thus, a "one size fits all" approach to employee engagement might not be the most effective. Managers should find out what resources and benefits are most desired by employees and most likely to create a sense of obligation that is returned with greater levels of engagement.

Finally, managers should understand that employee engagement is a long-term and on-going process that requires continued interactions over time in order to generate obligations and a state of reciprocal interdependence (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

In addition, engagement needs to be viewed as a broad organizational and cultural strategy that involves all levels of the organization (Frank *et al.*, 2004), a series of actions and steps (Shaw, 2005) that require the input and involvement of organizational members (Robinson *et al.*, 2004), and consistent, continuous, and clear communications (Kress, 2005).

Study limitations

The results of this study should be considered in light of its limitations. Similar to other studies in this area (May *et al.*, 2004; Rothbard, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003), this study used cross-sectional and self-report data. This limits the conclusions one can make about causality and also raises concerns about common method bias. With respect to causality, we cannot be sure that the antecedents cause engagement or that engagement causes the consequences. While these linkages are consistent with the literature on engagement (Kahn, 1990, 1992) burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), and SET (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) it is possible that engaged employees have more positive perceptions of their work experiences or that some of the consequences cause engagement. Longitudinal and experimental studies are required to provide more definitive conclusions about the causal effects of employee engagement and the extent to which social exchange explains these relationships.

While the results of this study might have been affected by method bias, there are several reasons to place some confidence in the results. First, the results indicated that participants' job and organization engagement scores were significantly different from each other. Second, the relationships between each measure of engagement and the antecedents and consequences differed in a number of meaningful ways. For example, job characteristics predicted job engagement but not organization engagement, and organization engagement but not job engagement predicted OCBI. Third, the fact that both job and organization engagements were significant predictors of four of the outcome variables (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and OCBO) suggests that they are independently related to these outcomes. This pattern of results reduces concerns about common method bias as does the fact that all of the scales in this study were multi-item and had high reliability (Spector, 1987).

Finally, the data collection involved a snowballing approach rather than a random sampling method. As a result, some caution is required in generalizing the results to the larger population. On the positive side, the sample did not vary greatly from the population with respect to age and gender.

Conclusion

Although employee engagement has become a hot topic among practitioners and consultants, there has been practically no empirical research in the organizational behavior literature. This has led to speculation that employee engagement might just be the "flavor of the month" or a fad with little basis in theory and research. The results of this study suggest the following:

· there is a meaningful distinction between job engagement and organization engagement;

· a number of antecedent variables predict job and organization engagement;

- job and organization engagement are related to individual consequences;
- job and organization engagement mediate the relationship between antecedent variables and consequences; and
- SET provides a meaningful theoretical basis for understanding and studying employee engagement.

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Appendix
Job engagement
I really "throw" myself into my job.
　Sometimes I am so into my job that I lose track of time.
　This job is all consuming; I am totally into it.
　My mind often wanders and I think of other things when doing my job (R).
　I am highly engaged in this job.

Organization engagement
Being a member of this organization is very captivating.
　One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organization.
　I am really not into the "goings-on" in this organization (R).
　Being a member of this organization make me come "alive."
　Being a member of this organization is exhilarating for me.
　I am highly engaged in this organization.

Job characteristics

How much autonomy is there in your job? That is, to what extent does your job permit you to decide on your own how to go about doing the work?

To what extent does your job involve doing a "whole" and identifiable piece of work? That is, is the job a complete piece of work that has an obvious beginning and end? Or is it only a small part of the overall piece of work, which is finished by other people or by automatic machines?

How much variety is there in your job? That is, to what extent does the job require you to do many different things at work, using a variety of your skills and talents?

In general, how significant or important in your job? That is, are the results of your work likely to significantly affect the lives or well-being of other people?

To what extent do managers or co-workers let you know how well you are doing on your job?

To what extent does doing the job itself provide you with information about your work performance? That is, does the actual work itself provide clues about how well you are doing – aside from any "feedback" co-workers or supervisors may provide?

Rewards and Recognition

A pay raise.
 Job security.
 A promotion.
 More freedom and opportunities.
 Respect from the people you work with.
 Praise from your supervisor.
 Training and development opportunities.
 More challenging work assignments.
 Some form of public recognition (e.g. employee of the month).
 A reward or token of appreciation (e.g. lunch).

Distributive justice

Do the outcomes you receive reflect the effort you have put into your work?
 Are the outcomes you receive appropriate for the work you have completed?
 Do your outcomes reflect what you have contributed to the organization?
 Are your outcomes justified given your performance?

Procedural justice

Have you been able to express your views and feelings during those procedures?
 Have you had influence over the outcomes arrived at by those procedures?
 Have those procedures been applied consistently?
 Have those procedures been free of bias?
 Have those procedures been based on accurate information?
 Have you been able to appeal the outcomes arrived at by those procedures?
 Have those procedures upheld ethical and moral standards?

Perceived organizational support

My organization really cares about my well-being.
 My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
 My organization shows little concern for me (R).
 My organization cares about my opinions.
 My organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor.
 Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
 My organization would forgive a honest mistake on my part.
 If given the opportunity, my organization would take advantage of me (R).

Perceived supervisor support

My supervisor cares about my opinions.

My work supervisor really cares about my well-being.

My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values.

My supervisor shows very little concern form me (R).

Job satisfaction

All in all, I am satisfied with my job.

In general, I do not like my job (R).

In general, I like working here.

Organizational commitment

I would be happy to work at my organization until I retire.

Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me.

I really feel that problems faced by my organization are also my problems.

I feel personally attached to my work organization.

I am proud to tell others I work at my organization.

I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

Intent to quit

I frequently think of quitting my job.

I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months.

If I have my own way, I will be working for this organization one year from now (R).

OCBI

Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.

Adjust your work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.

Give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems.

Assist others with their duties.

OCBO

Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image.

Offer ideas to improve the functioning of the organization.

Take action to protect the organization from potential problems.

Defend the organization when other employees criticize it.

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