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Organizational Resources and Work Engagement as Related to New Ways of Working at Private Universities in Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract
In the wake of the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic, new ways of working, such as remote work, have been introduced on a large scale across all sectors, including in higher education. Focusing on faculty and staff members employed at two private universities in Bangkok, Thailand, this quantitative research study seeks to determine the impact of organizational resources, which includes training, autonomy, and technology support, on work engagement, which consists of factors, vigor, dedication, and absorption, in the context of remote work with gender, age, experience, and job tenure acting as control variables. Stratified sampling was used to determine the sample size. 329 valid responses were collected and analyzed using SPSS 21. Multiple linear regression was used to analyze the coefficients. The results indicate that organizational resources can strongly affect work engagement as related to the new ways of working. Institutions of higher learning need to provide sufficient organizational resources such as training and technology support to faculty and staff members to ensure their smooth transition from the traditional ways of working to the new ones and maintain a high level of work engagement. The managerial implications of this study can benefit organizations, including those in sectors other than education.

Keywords: Organizational Resources, Work Engagement, Remote work, New Ways of Working.

1. Introduction

With the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for social distance as mandated by the regulations adopted at the time, new ways of working have been adopted by many organizations, including in the higher education sector. In many ways, the pandemic has been an accelerator of trends. Practices that were emerging but had received little acceptance by consumers and users prior to the outbreak suddenly appeared to be the only appropriate responses to the spread of the virus. For example, lecturers long used to the traditional face-to-face teaching method had been reluctant to endorse online teaching. Older people may have been unwilling to shop online or

have food delivered to them, but with government-imposed lockdowns, they had no choice. Acceptance of such practices jumped as people adapted and, in the process, ended up adopting new technologies and new ways of shopping, working, and teaching. The working environment and working styles changed as a result as employees had to work from home and teachers lecture from home. The new ways of working, referred to as 'remote work' or 'online work' may be here to stay and replace at least in part the traditional face-to-face way of working. In switching to different working styles, organizational resources and support are essential for a smooth transition. This has been all the more the case as the new ways of working, while providing benefits and convenience to employees (for example, more time spent with the family, less fatigue not having to commute, etc) also have their limitations. They may adversely affect work engagement, which can then be less intense than when working on-site. With the need for employees to adapt to new working styles, work procedures, methods, and ways of interacting with one another might affect employees' work engagement as well.

Take universities, the organizations at the core of this article. They had no choice but to require lecturers to use different teaching platforms to deliver lectures to students. For faculty – and staff members – ways of teaching students, teaching outcomes, and student assessment became quite different from what they had hitherto known and experienced. How organizational resources were used to transit to these new working styles became critical to its success and the sustained work engagement of all university employees. Work engagement is widely discussed in organization management (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Duque et al., 2020), human resource management (Alzyoud, 2018; Aybas & Acar, 2017; Sekhar, Patwardhan, & Vyas, 2018), leadership (Amor, Vázquez, & Faíña, 2020; Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020), and strategic alignment (Ghonim et al., 2020; Simon, Breidahl, & Marty, 2018). Various factors have been shown to influence it, most notably organizational resources (Kodden & Hupkes, 2019; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018), working environment (Teo, Bentley, & Nguyen, 2020; Wood et al., 2020), and supervisor support (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020; Ibrahim, Suan, & Karatepe, 2019). Previous research on organizational resources and working engagement, however, mainly focuses on human resources management (Saks, 2022), the hotel industry (Asghar et al., 2021; Grobelna, 2018), and the health care industry (Zhang et al., 2018). Research studies on organizational resources and work engagement in higher education remain limited. This is especially the case with private universities in Thailand.

This research seeks to fill this gap and contribute some ideas to universities on how to transit into the new-ways-of-working era smoothly. Specifically, it aims to determine how organizational resources affect faculty and staff members' working engagement when switching to new ways of working. It focuses on the work engagement of lecturers and staff members at universities that have been integrating the new ways of working – remote work and online work – in their operations as influenced by gender, age, and job tenure. Out of the 60 Bangkok-based universities listed on Free Apply (2022), 27 are private (Universities-in-the-World, 2022) and located in sux different districts. Six (one per district) are the focus of this research. Additionally, this study aims to provide insights into what private universities should concern themselves about to maintain and improve the working engagement of their employees.

2. Literature Review

- Work Engagement

This research is based on Kahn's (1990) work engagement theory. Khan (1990) defined engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional) and active, full performances" (p. 700). Work engagement is critical for an organization to engage its employees to be performant. It is also part of successfully leading the organization to achieve its goal. Kahn's (1990) work engagement theory has been widely applied in different fields and industries, such as leadership (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020), nursing workforce (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020), and education industry (Perera et al., 2018).

Work engagement drives personal energy into physical, cognitive, and emotional energy (Gerards, de Grip, and Baudewijns (2018). It has been determined to be an antecedent of work motivation, work satisfaction, and work performance (González-Gancedo, Fernández-Martínez, & Rodríguez-Borrego, 2019; Motyka, 2018). It has also been found to be related to empowerment and autonomy and as such to increase employees' work engagement (Maden, 2015). Moreover, since it generates a sense of fulfillment in one's work, it is synonymous with vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigor in this context refers to having a high degree of energy and being mentally adaptable at work, willing to put in the effort, and persevering even in the face of difficulties. As to dedication, it is to be understood as having sense of enthusiasm, pride, meaningfulness, inspiration, and willingness to face challenges at work. Finally, absorption refers to the capacity to be fully concentrated on one's work, enjoy one's work, and not be aware of the passing of time.

- Organizational Resources

Organizational resources are related to employee experience upstream in the organization (Ahmed & Othman, 2017). Organizational resources can also be defined as a system level in terms of physical and psychological facets in the organizational environment (Simon et al., 2018). According to Demerouti et al. (2001), organizational resources contribute to the functioning of a firm and its achieving its organizational goals. They can also reduce unnecessary job demands, keep extra costs under control, and motivate employees' growth, learning, and development (Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2019). Moreover, they directly and indirectly influence job resources, organizational climate, and work engagement (Jaeyoung, Rocco, & Shuck, 2020). With the change of the working style from on-site face-to-face work to online distance working. three dimensions of organizational resources have become even more prominent: training, autonomy, and technology (Salanova et al., 2019). To begin with, firms need to provide training to help and support their employees to adapt to the new ways of working as it is critical for workers to feel that they are not on their own and are given opportunities to develop themselves. They also need to ensure that they give employees autonomy and flexibility in deciding how to manage their own tasks and develop their own working style working from home rather than micromanage every step. Technology is an equally critical dimension as people must use the online platforms, tools, and devices when working from home. In the case of lecturers and staff members, this includes emails, Microsoft tools, online meeting programs, online teaching programs, to name a few. Moreover, it is critical that the technology provided be easy-to-use, useful, and efficient.

- Organizational Resources and Work Engagement

Sufficient organizational resources positively influence work engagement. This is especially the case with supervisors and co-workers' support (González-Gancedo et al., 2019). Moreover, research shows that organizational physical resources, such as a firm's working atmosphere, working environment, and working conditions and psychological resources, such as mental support by supervisors and recognition by co-workers can sustainably increase employees' engagement (Biggs, Brough, & Barbour, 2014; Kodden & Hupkes, 2019). The following hypothesis can therefore be developed:

H1: *Organizational resources impact work engagement as related to new ways of working at private Bangkok-based universities.*

- Gender

Given the differences between males and females and the traditional roles they have been ascribed in society, gender is one of the most important control factors in research. In societies where the traditional way of thinking still prevails, males are supposed to have more power and be the main source of family support, whereas females' main role is to take care of the kids and family (Brimeyer, Perrucci, & Wadsworth, 2010). Moreover, there is a great body of research on gender differences and gender discrimination in the workplace (Lee & Eissenstat, 2018; Metin Camgoz et al., 2016; Sia, Sahoo, & Duari, 2015). Job demands and work engagement are found to be different between the two genders. However, with the advance of new technologies making many tasks far less physically demanding, women have been playing a greater role in the employment market. Working styles are changing as is work engagement in relation to gender. Thus, the following hypothesis can be articulated:

H2: *Gender is associated with work engagement as related to new ways of working at private Bangkok-based universities.*

- Age

Age is also a common control variable. Different age groups have different educational backgrounds and experiences. This is especially the case today as, when the youngest generations were born (generation Y and generation Z), information technology (IT), the internet, and various other electronic devices already existed. They take new technologies for granted and readily accept them and are swift to learn the latest developments. Older generations, on the other hand, may find learning new technologies more challenging and not learn as fast as the young ones. Moreover, Hoole and Bonnema (2015) found that different age group has different work engagement levels. According to Huber and Schubert (2019), the younger age cohorts have more passion and energy to learn new things as compared with older or senior groups. They are more willing to engage in their tasks. Since in this research, faculty members and employees need to apply new ways of working and use different platforms and electronic tools to conduct online work, some might learn and get used to the new systems faster. Older employees who are used to more traditional ways of working may require more time and effort to be truly cognizant of new technologies. The following hypothesis can thus be proposed:

H3: *Age is associated with work engagement as related to new ways of working at private Bangkok-based universities.*

- Job tenure

Job tenure is frequently mentioned in studies on work engagement (Bayona, Caballer, & Peiró, 2020), job satisfaction (Abate, Schaefer, & Pavone, 2018), and organizational commitment (Baek, Han, & Ryu, 2019). There is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job tenure (Whitney, 2017). Moreover, the longer the job tenure of employees, the greater their knowledge of the work, and experience in the organization. Newly hired employees typically need more time to get used to a new job, new environment, new supervisors, and new co-workers and more input from employees employed with for the organization for a longer time. However, if the nature of the job is routine and the same day after day, there will be no new incentives and motivation and work engagement is likely to recede (LaFave, Lewis, & Smith, 2016). On the other hand, if each day brings new experiences, work engagement is likely to be positively influenced. Thus, the hypothesis can be formulated:

H4: *Job tenure is associated with work engagement as related to new ways of working in private universities.*

Based on the all the concepts discussed above, the following conceptual framework was developed:

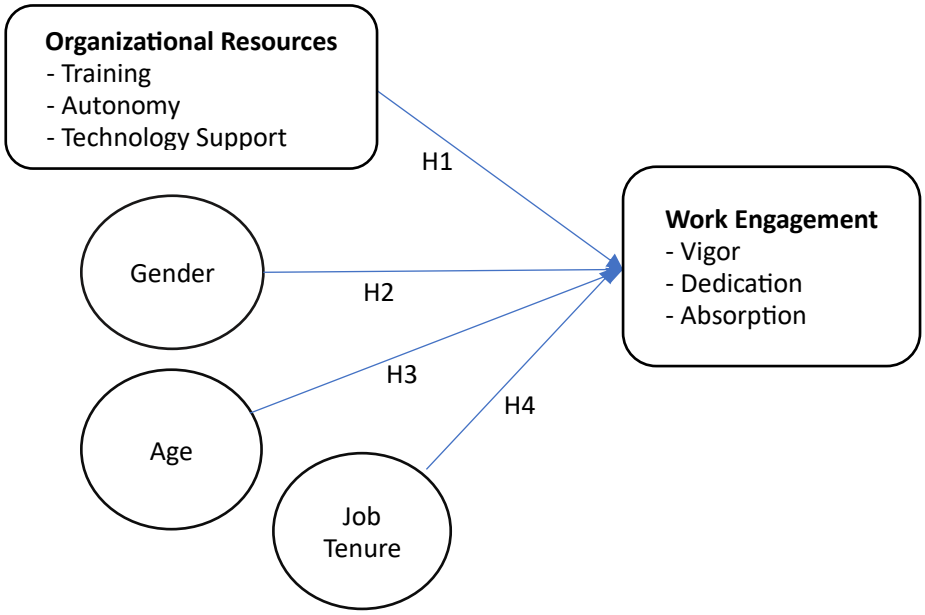

Figure 1: Research Conceptual Framework (created by authors for this study)

3. Methodology

Sample and Data Collection Procedure

Participants of this study are faculty and staff members working at two private universities in Bangkok. As previously mentioned, there are 27 private universities operating 6 different districts in Bangkok (Universities-in-the-World, 2022). The stratified sampling method was used in this study to randomly select universities in the 6 districts in Bangkok – one university per district. Data was collected through a self-administrated survey questionnaire. The researchers contacted each university to get permission to send online questionnaires to faculty and staff members. 1,000 surveys were sent to the targeted universities. There were 336

respondents. Since 7 responses were missing data, only 329 were deemed to be valid, which represents a 32.9 percent response rate. Information on the participants demographics is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

Gender	Male: 162 (50.8%)
	Female:167 (49.2)
Age	18-25 years old: 22 (6.7%)
	26-35 years old: 146 (44.4%)
	36-45 years old: 40 (12.2%)
	46-55 years old: 56 (17%)
	56-65 years old: 57 (17.3%)
	66-75 years old: 6 (1.8%)
	More than 76 years old: 2 (0.6%)
Job tenure in the organization	Less than 1 year: 56 (17%)
	1-3 years: 113 (34.3%)
	3-5 years: 64 (19.5%)
	5-7 years: 24 (7.3%)
	7-10 years: 41 (12.5%)
	More than 10 years: 31 (9.4%)

- *Measurement*

As explained above, in this study, organizational resources include three dimensions: training, autonomy, and technology support. The way to measure training and technology was developed by Brown and Mitchell (1991) and the autonomy measurement scale by Sekhar et al. (2018). Training contains 4 items, autonomy 3 items, and technology 4 items. As to the measurement of work engagement, which also includes three dimensions, vigor, dedication and absorption, it was developed by Salanova et al. (2003). Vigor contains 6 items, dedication 5 items, and absorption 6 items. All the questions related to organizational resources and work engagement were rated using five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”).

- *Data Analysis*

This research applied SPSS version 19 to conduct the data analysis. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in table 1. Regarding he validity of the factor analysis of the scales, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is equal to 0.914, and the P-value of the significate level of Bartlett’s test is less than 0.001. According to Cooper, Schindler, and Sun (2006), a KMO value greater than 0.7 and Bartlett’s test p-value less than 0.05 are good, which means that the validity of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is good enough. At this stage, this research validity of the scales is acceptable.

Table 2: Correlations among Variables, Internal Consistency, and Convergent Validity

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite reliability coefficient	Gender	Age	Job Tenure	Training	Autonomy	Tech	OR	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	WE
Gender	-	-	(1)	0.045	-0.02	-0.011	-0.096	-0.155**	-0.094	-0.105	-0.117*	-0.095	-0.119*
Age	-	-		(1)	0.469**	0.053	0.044	0.033	0.048	0.059	0.017	0.048	0.045
Job Tenure	-	-			(1)	0.092	0.047	0.069	0.075	0.068	0.047	0.073	0.069
Training	0.763	0.920				(1)	0.780**	0.724**	0.912**	0.665**	0.706*	0.615**	0.740**
Autonomy	0.779	0.891					(1)	0.770*	0.934**	0.631**	0.653**	0.636**	0.713**
Tech	0.737	0.913						(1)	0.900**	0.731**	0.688**	0.675**	0.779**
OR	0.903	0.898							(1)	0.734**	0.743**	0.699**	0.810**
Vigor	0.81	0.960								(1)	0.711**	0.693**	0.897**
Dedication	0.792	0.924									(1)	0.720**	0.910**
Absorption	0.747	0.861										(1)	0.884**
WE	0.906	0.916											(1)

Remark: *p≤0.05; **p≤0.01 Tech, technology; OR, organizational resources; WE, work engagement; Gender, dummy variable ("male=1; female" =0); Age ("18-25 years old=1: 26-35 years old=2; 36-45 years old=3; 46-55 years old=4; 56-65 years old=5; 66-75 years old=6; more than 76 years old=7"); Job Tenure ("Less than 1 year=1; 1-3 years=2; 3-5 years=3; 5-7 years=4; 7-10 years=5; more than 10 years=6")

The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency. Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2018) determined that a Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 is good for internal consistency. The details of Cronbach's alpha and correlation results are shown in Table 2.

4. Results and Discussion

As can be seen in Table 2, all Cronbach's Alpha factors are greater than 0.7, which indicates that the reliability and internal consistency are good enough as we just saw above. The composite reliability coefficient is used to assess the construct validity. According to Raykov (1998), the value of the composite reliability coefficient should be at a minimum of 0.7. As shown in Table 2, all factors of the composite reliability coefficient are greater than 0.7, which statisfies the requirement. The researchers applied an OLS simple regression to test the linear regression of organizational resources and work engagement in relation to the new ways of working. Details of the test are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	Constant	1.476	0.121		12.232	0.000	1.239	1.714		
	Gender	-0.03	0.028	-0.035	-1.081	0.281	-0.085	0.025	0.949	1.054
	Age	0.004	0.011	0.011	0.31	0.757	-0.019	0.026	0.776	1.289
	Job tenure	-0.001	0.01	-0.003	-0.092	0.927	-0.02	0.018	0.771	1.297
	Training	0.245	0.04	0.332	6.151	0.000	0.167	0.324	0.344	2.909
	Autonomy	0.066	0.039	0.097	1.685	0.093	-0.011	0.144	0.301	3.325
	Technology	0.366	0.042	0.458	8.635	0.000	0.283	0.45	0.358	2.797

R^2=0.677

Adjusted R^2 = 0.671

As shown in Table 3, the multiple regression analysis of gender, age, job tenure, and organizational resources in terms of training, autonomy, and technology affect work engagement. The beta coefficients of training (β=0.245, p=0.000), autonomy (β=0.066, p=0.093), and technology support (β=0.366, p=0.000) are all positive, which means the organizational resources in terms of training, autonomy, and technology support positively influence work engagement. Moreover, since the p-value of training and technology support is less than 0.05, it is statistically significant. However, the p-value of autonomy is equal to 0.093, which is greater than 0.05, which that this dimension is not significant. Still, since the two other dimensions of organizational resources are significant, H1 (Organizational resources impact work engagement as related to new ways of working at private Bangkok-based universities) is supported.

Regarding gender (β=-0.03, p=0.281), the beta coefficient of gender is negative, it was coded male=1, female=0, which means that compared with male respondents, female respondents have more influence on their work engagement. However, the p-value is greater than 0.05 and is not significant. Therefore, H2 (Gender is associated with work engagement as related to new ways of working at private Bangkok-based universities) is not supported. The next variable is age, (β=0.004, p=0.757), at this point, the beta is equal to 0.004 which is positive. This means that the older age groups have more impact on their work engagement. However, the p-value is greater than 0.05, an indication that it is not statistically significant; hence, H3 **(**Age is associated with work engagement as related to new ways of working at private Bangkok-based universities) is not supported. Finally, regarding job tenure (β=-0.001, p=0.927), since the p-value is greater than 0.05, it is not significantly influent, therefore, H4 (Job tenure is associated with work engagement as related to new ways of working in private universities) is also not supported.

In addition, the R square is 0.677 and the adjusted R square equal to 0.671, which means the independent variables can explain 67.1% of the dependent variable. The other 32.9% are infected by other factors that this study did not cover. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is used to detect multicollinearity. According to Hair (2009), the value of VIF should be less than 10 in order to conduct an unbiased estimation. Since the VIF values range from 1.054 to 3.325, which are lower than the standards, multicollinearity is not a major issue in this research study. This indicates that organizational resources in terms of training and technology support are essentially primary factors influencing faculty and staff members working at private universities, using new work styles. In other words, to make faculty and staff members adapt faster adapt to these new ways of working, more training using technology to conduct online teaching or hybrid classes, and t more technology support are the best ways to ensure a smooth tradition from traditional working styles to new ways of working.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research aims to investigate the work engagement of faculty and staff members of a Bangkok-based private university in relation to the new ways of working. The results indicate that organizational resources strongly influence work engagement. Of the three dimensions of organizational resources (training, autonomy, and technology support), training and technology support are the most significant influences on faculty and staff members' work engagement. These findings are consistent with prior research studies that tested and confirmed a similar direction in other sectors (Gerards et al., 2018; Salanova et al., 2017; Van Steenbergen et al., 2018). Work engagement for the purpose of this study, also consists of three dimensions, which are vigor, dedicator, and absorption. Whenever universities decide to change the ways of working, either as they were mandated during the pandemic or to keep up with the changing times and technology in the coming years, organizational resources are critical to help faculty and staff members adapt to the new ways of working and the technology that support such work styles, maintain, or even increase their work engagement, and possibly enhance their performances. Apart from resistance to change, a common occurrence in most organizations, a fast-changing work environment, however, might frighten and frustrate some faculty and staff members, especially elder ones, who may find it difficult or may lack the motivation to acclimatize themselves to the latest technological innovations; hence the need in such cases to

pay even more attention to the way organizational resources, first and foremost training and technology support, are used. These findings are in line with prior determinations that communication technology is critical to maintaining work engagement when people work remotely (Ter Hoeven et al., 2016). It is therefore, strongly suggested that private or public universities and organizations provide adequate training and substantial resources to employees before they switch from on-site traditional work style to off-site, hybrid, online distance work, or any other new ways of working that may emerge in the future when artificial intelligence becomes the norm rather than an exception as is the case today. This includes in particular providing organizational working platforms, online meeting platforms, internal working systems, to name a few. Chaudhry et al. (2017) found that training and development can significantly influence an organization's performance and work engagement and suggested that when an organization decides to change or adapt to a new work style or a new work environment, such as change should be accompanied by enough training to the employees to familiarize them with the new work conditions.

On the technology side, the stability and security of the systems, in particular data security, are crucial to ensure a successful switch to remote work. Organizations should provide internal real-time update systems and since some employees may not be good with computers, programs and platforms should be easy-to-use. Jokela (2010) found that technology's ease of use is positively related to work engagement and performance and ease of use of the technology also can reduce human errors and mistakes. Providing suitable autonomy to faculty and staff members is another important issue closely linked to new ways of working. Employees need autonomy. This includes the autonomy to let them decide how to perform their tasks, use their time, and micromanage themselves. This is critical to ensure employees' commitment and maintain robust work engagement. Finally, it goes without saying that future similar studies should be conducted in fields other than education as new ways of working, most notably working form home, are more likely to be developed in those industries.

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