

The impact of work role fit psychology essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In recent years there has been a growing concern relevant to the happiness of people and how this happiness is achieved. Seligman refers to happiness as the experience of joy and satisfaction and the sense that a person's life is meaningful and worthwhile. The 21st century workplace is not what it used to be in the past and organisations need to adapt to the changing nature of the workplace in order to survive in this new competitive, global economy. Within this new world of work, an organisation's survival is dependent on the ability to increasingly satisfy customer needs. The full engagement of employees can be seen to successfully reach this goal (Fay & Luhrmann 2004; Newell, 2002). Rothmann and Seligman (2002) point out that people who are only moderately happy lack enthusiasm in the workplace and are not actively and productively engaged in the world. Peterson, Nansook and Seligman (2005) suggest that there are three routes to an individual's happiness. These are: pleasure, meaning and engagement. As a route to happiness, it is seen that meaning and engagement are more likely to be under an individual's control than pleasure is (May et al., 2004; Seligman et al., 2004). Therefore, engagement and meaning are seen to be the most important factors that will be looked at.

Individuals spend most of their lives at work or engaged in work activities. Work is therefore an important factor for the existence of an individual's life (Harpaz, Honig, & Coetsier, 2002). Work-role fit, psychological meaningfulness and work engagement have become important research topics in this new working age (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engagement as described by Kahn (1990), refers to " harnessing of organisational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express

themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances.” When an individual is fully engaged in an organisation, productivity will be enhanced. The fit between an individual’s self- concept and his role within the organisation results in psychological meaningfulness (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). An individual experiences psychological meaningfulness when they are able to express their values and beliefs in their work. People will therefore seek out work roles that allow them to express their self-concepts. May et al. (2004) found that work role fit leads to psychological meaningfulness which in turn leads to work engagement. The problem comes in when individuals are not able to gain this sense of meaningfulness. The problem statement at hand can therefore be seen as an inability for individuals to establish a work-role fit that they find psychologically meaningful, thus leading to disengagement in the workplace. The basis for this study will look at how the constructs of work-role fit, psychological meaningfulness and work engagement interact with each other in order for an individual to be more productive in the work place.

2. Literature Review

Work-role fit

The perceived fit between an individual’s self-concept and his or her role within an organisation can be defined as work-role fit (May et al., 2004). Research suggests that a good work-role fit can lead to psychological meaningfulness as a person is able to express their beliefs and values openly (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004). Suggestions have been made that show that individuals will look for work-roles that allow them to express their true selves (May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Individuals who

<https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-work-role-fit-psychology-essay/>

experience high levels of work-role fit will see their jobs to be a calling and therefore will make an extra effort in order to accomplish tasks (Dik & Duffy, 2008). Low levels of work-role fit can be seen to cause individuals to recraft their jobs in order to gain more meaning (Wrzesniewski, 2003). Research proves that the closer the relationship between oneself and their work role, the more meaning and engagement will be derived (Berg et al., 2008).

Psychological Meaningfulness

The most important component in order to experience happiness is meaning (Peterson et al., 2005; Seligman, 2002). Happiness occurs when an individual pursues worthwhile achievements such as career accomplishments, love, knowledge and friendship (Nussbaum, 1992). Meaning can be conceptualised into two parts, namely, meaning of work and psychological meaningfulness (May et al., 2004).

The meaning of work can be defined by Bellah et al. (1985, p. 81) as the “degree of general importance that the subjective experience of working has in the life of an individual, at any given time.” Individuals can experience their work either as a job, a career or a calling. Individuals who view their work as a job are only engaged in their work to receive the material benefits that the job offers. These individuals only view their work as a means to an end (Bellah et al., 1985; Parry, 2006). Individuals who view their work as a career are concerned with continuous advancement and use up a considerable amount of time and energy to work activities (Bellah et al., 1985; Parry, 2006). However, if continuous advancement does not progress, frustration will occur and will result in an intention to leave the workplace

(Bellah et al., 1985). Individuals who view work as a calling can be seen to engage in work activities as work engagement gives them a sense of fulfilment (Bellah et al., 1985). Studies have shown that individuals who perceive work as a calling experience more rewarding relationships at work and spend more time engaged in those activities (Carvalho, 2005). According to Wrzesniewski et al. (2003), people who view their work as a calling are more committed to the organisation and will lead to higher levels of happiness.

The meaning of work refers to psychological meaningfulness being present. Kahn (1990, p. 703) defines psychological meaningfulness as “a feeling that one is receiving a return on investment of one’s self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy”. When individuals feel that they are useful and valuable in an organisation, they will experience a sense of psychological meaningfulness. Psychological meaningfulness therefore reflects a sense of purpose, so individuals who view work as a calling will experience more meaning in their work. Therefore, research shows that individuals who spend time on activities that they are interested in and who experience work-role fit will experience more psychological meaningfulness and higher work engagement (May et al., 2004).

Work Engagement

In recent years, work engagement has become an important topic. Work engagement can be defined as “the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles by which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances” (Kahn,

1990, p. 694). Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between work engagement and organisational outcomes. Engaged workers are seen to contribute to the success of an organisation by showing motivation and commitment to the organisation (Koyuncu, Burke, & Fiksenbaum, 2006). Employees that are disengaged tend to detach themselves from their work roles and remove themselves from work situations (Koyuncu et al., 2006). Work engagement can therefore be seen as an important factor for organisations to take into account.

It can be confirmed that many research studies have proven the positive relationship between work-role fit, psychological meaningfulness and work engagement. However, many research studies do not pertain to the South African context and therefore this research study will focus on these variables within the South African context.

3. Research Objective and Questions

In the literature study, the constructs of work-role fit, psychological meaningfulness and work engagement have been defined and the relationships between them have been described. The objective of this research study is to investigate the relationships between work-role fit as the independent variable, psychological meaningfulness as the mediator and work engagement as the dependent variable amongst working adults in South Africa. It will be determined whether there is a positive or negative relationship between these variables when considering working South Africans as well as determining the impact that work-role fit and psychological meaningfulness have on the engagement of workers.

Research Questions

Does psychological meaningfulness mediate the relationship between work-role fit and work engagement?

Is psychological meaningfulness positively related to work engagement?

Does work-role fit predict work engagement?

4. Research Method

4. 1 Research Design

In order to determine the relationships between work-role fit as the independent variable, psychological meaningfulness as the mediator and work engagement as the dependent variable, a cross-sectional, survey/questionnaire design will be used.

4. 2 Participants

A convenience sample will be taken from working adults within the South African context. This sampling method will be used as the selection of participants is done at the convenience of the researcher and the availability of the participants. It is important to note that the sample size being used should be large enough to generalise the findings to the greater population and should also provide a good understanding of the relationship between the variables selected within the selected population. Participants will be working adults of a diverse nature and the sample should consist of 640 random individuals.

4. 3 Procedure

<https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-of-work-role-fit-psychology-essay/>

The Questionnaire is based on the importance of well-being within the working environment. Individuals from different companies will be approached and asked to participate in the research study. When consent is given, questionnaires will be handed out to individuals to complete and send back within a certain time. The participants will be male and female and no demographic make up of individuals will be discriminated against. Only the sections in the questionnaire relevant to this research study will then be used.

4. 4 Measuring Battery

The first instrument used in this study is the Utrecht Work Engagement scale (UWES) which was developed by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker (2002). It is aimed at measuring work engagement. The instrument consists of 9 items and is scored on a frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). Typical items include, " At my work, I feel that I am bursting with energy" (vigour); " My job inspires me" (dedication); " I feel happy when I am working intensely" (absorption). A high score on these items indicate a high level of engagement at work. In previous research (Rothmann & Storm, 2003), the reliability of this instrument was found to be adequate. Rothmann and Storm (2003), found alpha coefficients ranging from 0. 68 to 0. 91.

The Psychological conditions scale which was developed by May, Gilson and Harter (2004) will be aimed at measuring psychological meaningfulness. The instrument consists of 14 items that measure the degree of psychological meaningfulness that individuals experience in work-related activities. A

typical item is “ The work I do in this job is very important to me.” A high score indicates a high level of psychological meaningfulness. In previous research (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010), the reliability of this instrument was found to be adequate. Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) found an alpha coefficient of 0. 90.

4. 5 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analyses will be carried out using the SPSS program.

Descriptive statistics involving means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis will be used to analyse the data. Factor analyses will be used to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments. A Pearson product-momentum correlation will be used to determine the relationships between the variables with a 95% confidence interval and a p-value smaller or equal to 0. 05. Multiple regression will also be used to test the overall significance of the entire model. First, there will be a test to determine if there is a significant relationship between work-role fit and work engagement. Then, a significant relationship between work-role fit and psychological meaningfulness will be determined. Lastly, it will be determined if psychological meaningfulness is a significant predictor of work engagement when there is control for work-role fit

5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical research is of vital importance for this research study. Ethical guidelines are put in place to make sure that certain requirements are met, the behaviour that is expected from the researcher as well as the consequences of deviant or unprofessional behaviour (APA, 2003). Ethics

focuses on the protection and fair treatment of all participants. In order to be ethical, the researcher should put the safety and security of participants first. The aim of the research study will be discussed with all participants in order to ensure trust. Participants will be informed that their participation in the research study is completely voluntary and they may leave the project at any time. Consent will be gained from each participant before proceeding with the study. The participants will also be made aware that they can remain anonymous as is their right to privacy and that the information will only be used for educational purposes.

6. Value-add of the Study

Work-role fit and work engagement is becoming increasingly important in this new and constantly changing world of work. The study will provide a manager with valuable information on the importance of an employee's fit within the organisation, the importance of work engagement for the success of an organisation, as well the importance of psychological meaningfulness. This research study will be focused on South African citizens where diversity is rich.