

The Role of Meaningful Work as a Mediation of Political Organizations on Employee Engagement

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Abstract

Employee engagement can generate benefits for the organization and lead to positive work outcomes. However, sometimes the application of organizational politics can affect performance. Thus, meaningful work is needed for employees. The aim of this research is to examine the role of meaningful work mediation on the influence of political organizations on employee engagement. This study used a quantitative method with a cross-sectional survey design. The sample of this research is 317 employees obtained using convenience sampling technique. The scale in this study consists of employee engagement, meaningful work, and political organizations using a five-point Likert model. The results obtained in this study are significant meaningful work mediating the influence of political organizations on employee engagement. This study contributes as reference material in implementing interventions to increase employee engagement in order to gain benefits for the organization.

Keywords: *employee engagement, meaningful work, political organizations*

Abstrak

Keterlibatan karyawan dapat menghasilkan manfaat bagi organisasi dan mengarah pada hasil kerja yang positif. Namun, terkadang penerapan politik organisasi dapat mempengaruhi kinerja. Sehingga, diperlukan kebermaknaan kerja bagi para karyawan. Adapun tujuan dalam penelitian yaitu menguji peran mediasi meaningful work pada pengaruh *political organizations* terhadap *employee engagement*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan desain survei *cross-sectional*. Sampel penelitian ini sebanyak 317 karyawan yang diperoleh

menggunakan teknik *convenience sampling*. Skala dalam penelitian ini terdiri dari skala *employee engagement*, *meaningful work*, dan *political organizations* dengan menggunakan model *likert* lima point. Hasil yang diperoleh dalam penelitian ini yaitu *meaningful work* signifikan memediasi pengaruh *political organizations* terhadap *employee engagement*. Studi ini berkontribusi sebagai bahan referensi dalam menerapkan intervensi untuk meningkatkan *employee engagement* guna memperoleh keuntungan bagi organisasi.

Kata kunci: keterlibatan karyawan, pekerjaan yang bermakna, organisasi politik.

INTRODUCTION

Political organization is a phenomenon in organizations that can have a detrimental and damaging impact on employees, including stress, fatigue, turnover motives, job satisfaction, and employee commitment to the organization (Hochwarter et al, 2003; Miller et al, 2008; Chang et al. , 2009; Vigoda-Gadot & Talmud, 2010). There is still little research on the influence of political organizations on employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Albrech et al., 2015), even in Indonesia in particular there has been no research that explores this, even though the development of political organizations and employee involvement is very important to support competency development. and organizational success. Apart from that, the results of the pilot study of eighty-nine employees showed that 2 (2.247%) respondents were in the high work engagement category, 58 (65.169%) were in the medium category, and 29 (32.584%) were in the low category. This proves that work implementation is urgent to be explored further. This research wants to explore and expand several previous studies by examining how meaningful work mediates the influence of political organizations on employee engagement.

Landells and Albrecht (2016) stated in their study that the five dimensions of political organizations are establishing and cultivating relationships, constructing individual reputations, controlling resource decisions, influencing decision making, and using communication channels. Hochwarter and Thompson (2010) argue that political organizations can be defined as self-serving behavior that is planned and contrary to organizational goals so that it can harm other individuals, groups or entities. Furthermore, Kacmar and Baron (1999) revealed that political organizations are individual actions that aim to prioritize self-interest without paying attention to the welfare of others or the organization as a whole so that it can influence other people.

Employee engagement holds significant importance for organizations as it has been demonstrated to be a robust predictor affecting attitudes, behavior, and the overall performance of the organization (Albrecht, 2010; Carter et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2002) suggests that employee engagement is a mental condition positive and satisfying job-related and characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption. Employee engagement can be influenced by several factors, one of which is political organizations.

Previously, arguments have been made that political organizations can cause a decrease in employee engagement (Bryne et al., 2017; Landells & Abrecht, 2017). However, there are still few empirical research results that analyze the relationship between political organizations and employee engagement (Karatepe, 2013; Kane-Frieder et al., 2014). One theory that can be used to analyze the relationship between political organizations and employee engagement is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory by Bakker and Demerouti (2007).

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) suggest that the Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) theory provides a useful framework for examining the relationship between political organizations and employee engagement. Based on JD-R theory, Landells and Albrecht (2017) revealed that political organizations have a direct negative relationship with employee engagement, the higher the level of political organizations, the lower the employee engagement. Limited employee engagement has the potential to hinder the accomplishment of organizational objectives (Carter et al., 2016).

Employee engagement can be increased through meaningful work, in line with May et al. (2004) who argued that meaningful work has a strong positive relationship with employee engagement. Based on several studies, meaningful work has a significant relationship with employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Albrecht & Su, 2012; Kahn & Heaphy, 2012). Kahn (1990) suggests that meaningful work is the feeling of being useful, useful and valuable to employees when doing work. Albrecht (2015) suggests that meaningful work is a positive psychological state referring to the extent to which employees believe that they have an important and meaningful role in achieving goals that are useful in carrying out work.

This research assumes that meaningful work mediates the influence of political organizations on employee engagement. Landells and Albrecht (2017) suggest that meaningful work has a link between the influence of political organizations on employee engagement. Kahn (1990) suggests that meaningful work is relevant as a mediator of the influence of political organizations on employee engagement, but this assumption has not been tested

empirically. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the role of mediating meaningful work on the influence of political organizations on employee engagement.

METHOD

A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design is used to address a specific research problem. Therefore, this research design is suitable to answer the research hypothesis. Data was collected online from 317 employees obtained using the convenience sampling technique. Respondents in this study consisted of 147 (46.372%) male employees and 170 (53.628%) female employees, the majority of whom had worked at the company for 4 to 9 years (34.385%). In addition, the age of the respondents ranged from 20 to 65 years ($M = 35.079$ years, $SD = 10.291$).

Political organizations, measured using the political organizations scale (18 items) adapted from Landells and Albrecht (2019), and consist of five dimensions, namely relationship, communication, resources, reputation, and decisions. This scale is assessed with a Likert scale of 5 points (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and has good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$). Work engagement is measured using the work engagement scale (UWES-3 items) adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2017). This scale consists of three factors, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption, which are assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), and have adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.95$). Meaningful work is measured by the meaningful work scale (6 items) adapted from Spreitzer (1995). This scale is assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and has adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.90$).

The researcher first conducted a descriptive statistical analysis to explain the demographic characteristics of the research respondents. Next, perform a correlation analysis between the observed variables using the Pearson correlation method. Descriptive statistical analysis and correlation were performed using JASP version 0.17.1.0. Then, structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the research hypothesis. This is because SEM is a full power statistical test that focuses on testing the measurement model and structural model together, so that it can confirm the theoretical model based on the empirical data that is built. SEM analysis in this study used Mplus software version 8.00.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistical analysis and variable correlation are presented in Table 1. The average score of political organizations is 2.278, meaningful work is 3.404, and employee engagement is 3.833. Overall, the descriptive statistics show that employees have higher than average meaningful work and employee engagement, with lower than average political organizations. Pearson's correlation analysis shows that political organizations have a negative relationship with meaningful work ($r = -0.448, p < 0.001$) and employee engagement ($r = -0.212, p < 0.001$). Meanwhile, meaningful work has a positive relationship with employee engagement ($r = 0.287, p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, correlation between variables (below the diagonal) and r square (above the diagonal)

Variables	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Political organizations	1	5	2.278	0.791	(0.500)	0.201	0.045
2. Meaningful work	1	5	3.404	1.310	-0.448***	(0.751)	0.082
3. Employee engagement	1	5	3.833	0.987	-0.212***	0.287***	(0.573)

Note. * $p < 0,05$, ** $p < 0,01$, *** $p < 0,001$.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) testing initially involved the assessment of the suggested measurement model, wherein each construct encompassed aspects related to political organizations (5 items), meaningful work (6 items), work engagement (3 items). The results yielded only moderately good matches (Table 2). Although all standardized loading factor values in the first model are significant (Table 3), the model fit index parameters, especially the RMSEA, show an unacceptable fit. Thus, re-specification of the measurement model is carried out by correlating errors between indicators/items. The results of the model respecification resulted in a better fit and generally accepted (Table 2), with a chi-square value = 108.370 ($df = 69; p = 0.001$), CFI (0.980 > 0.90), TLI (0.974 > 0, 90), RMSEA (0.042 < 0.05), and SRMR (0.049) which is less than 0.10. In addition, the AIC value (12477.794) in the model re-specification is smaller than the AIC (12535.126) of the first model. Therefore, the model specification shows the measurement model is fit or better than the first model.

Table 2. Measurement model fit index

Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA	AIC
First model	175.702	74	0.000	0.948	0.936	0.055	0.066	12535.126
Re-Specified model	108.370	69	0.001	0.980	0.974	0.049	0.042	12477.794

Recommended fit indices = chi square (χ^2/df) ≤ 2 , comparative fit index (CFI $\geq 0,90$), tucker–lewis index (TLI $\geq 0,90$), root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA $\leq 0,05$),

standardized root mean square residual (SRMR < 0,10), and Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) must be smaller than other models.

CFA results on model respecification show standardized loading factor (SLF) values for all indicators in each construct, namely political organizations (0.551–0.710), meaningful work (0.738–0.830), work engagement (0.606–0.779) above the threshold value, namely 0.50. So it can be said that each indicator is valid and has a high correlation value with the measuring construct. The same is true for the AVE value (0.500–0.751) which is above the threshold value of 0.50, so that the indicators in this study are able to measure the same concept as the latent construct, or it can be said to be convergently valid. Then, the CR value (0.799–0.947 > 0.70). Thus, the indicators in this study show good consistency in measuring the construct.

Table 3. Results of the measurement model with confirmatory factor analysis

Variables	Indicators	SLF First model	SLF Re-Specified model	SE	AVE	CR
Political organizations	Rel	0.746	0.710	0.041	0.500	0.829
	Com	0.627	0.551	0.049		
	Res	0.591	0.627	0.044		
	Rep	0.582	0.624	0.045		
	Dec	0.686	0.551	0.051		
Meaningful work	M1	0.794	0.812	0.023	0.751	0.947
	M2	0.750	0.738	0.029		
	M3	0.809	0.802	0.024		
	M4	0.813	0.742	0.030		
	M5	0.808	0.830	0.021		
	M6	0.849	0.825	0.022		
Work engagement	Vig	0.785	0.779	0.048	0.573	0.799
	Ded	0.609	0.611	0.051		
	Abs	0.601	0.606	0.049		

Evaluation of discriminant validity (Table 1) shows that the r-square value of the correlation matrix for each construct is smaller than the square root of AVE (provided as a diagonal value in the table), so that each indicator is able to measure its respective construct. Structural equation modeling analysis was used to test the research conceptual model (Figure 1), which shows that political organizations have a negative effect on meaningful work ($\beta = -0.649, p < 0.001$), and work engagement ($\beta = -0.243, p = 0.021$). In addition, meaningful work has a positive effect on work engagement ($\beta = 0.233, p = 0.023$).

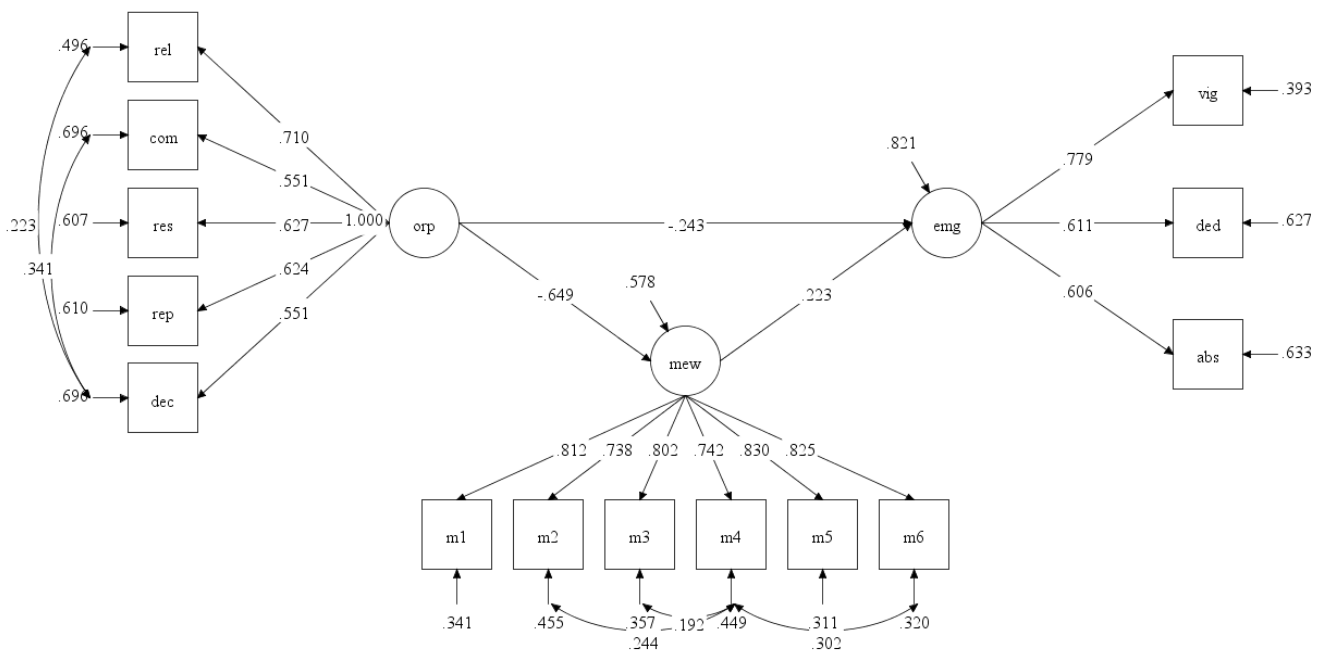
Table 4. Results of structural equation modeling

Path	β	S.E	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Political organizations → Meaningful work	-0.649	0.048	-13.604	0.000

Meaningful work → Work engagement	0.233	0.098	2.277	0.023
Political organizations → Work engagement	-0.243	0.106	-2.300	0.021
Indirect effect	-0.144	0.048	-2.523	0.012
Total effect	-0.394	0.066	-5.865	0.000

Structural equation modeling analysis also reports the indirect effect of political organizations on work engagement mediated by meaningful work ($\beta = -0.151, p = 0.012$). Finally, overall political organizations have an effect on work engagement ($\beta = -0.394, p < 0.001$).

Figure 1. Structural equation modeling



The first hypothesis is the negative influence and significance of political organization on meaningful work. The results of this study indicate that political organization has a negative influence on meaningful work. This is caused by the political organization forming the perception of employees that the work they do is not appreciated, belittled, and not respected. Kahn (1990) suggests that the political organization that occurs in an organization can greatly influence the desire of employees to maximize their role in an organization. The work environment that is in a climate of political organization makes employees feel the value of work has no meaning so that it becomes unimportant.

This research also reveals that there is a positive and significant significant effect of meaningful work on employee engagement. Employees who always have a positive perception of their function and role in an organization have an influence on employee engagement. This

is in line with Albrecht (2015) which states that meaningful work has a positive relationship to employee engagement. The results of this study are also in line with several previous studies which show that meaningful work has a positive effect on employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Albrecht & Su, 2012; Albrecht, 2013; Kahn & Heaphy, 2014; Byrne et al., 2017). Meaningful work is undermining employee perceptions that their roles in the organization are very important to one another so as to increase employee engagement.

Furthermore, our research also reports that there is a negative influence of political organization on employee engagement. These results are in line with research conducted by Crawford et al. (2010) which revealed that political organization is a barrier to increasing employee engagement. In addition, previous studies also revealed that one of the factors that can reduce employee engagement is political organization (Byrne et al., 2017; Landells & Albrecht, 2017). Then, Hochwarter and Thompson (2010) argued that political organizations can be defined as self-serving behavior that is planned and contrary to organizational goals so that it can harm other individuals, groups, or entities. This is what can cause a decrease in employee engagement.

The final finding in this study is about the influence of political organization on employee engagement mediated by meaningful work. This finding is in line with research conducted by Landells and Albrecht (2017) which suggests that meaningful work has a link between the influence of political organizations on employee engagement. Furthermore, Kahn (1990) suggests that meaningful work is relevant as a mediator of the influence between political organizations on employee engagement. The findings in this study can strengthen the assumptions of Kahn (1990). Meaningful work is a strong influence mediator between political organizations on employee engagement.

This study aims to contribute to the literature on the relationship between political organization, employee engagement, and meaningful work which can then be used to support the effectiveness of organizational performance. Furthermore, this research is expected to provide a practical contribution to organizational effectiveness in achieving goals. This can be used by organizations to help employees improve employee engagement and meaningful work and to understand political organization as a barrier to increasing employee engagement so that organizations can work effectively.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that meaningful work plays a mediating role in the influence of political organizations on work engagement. Although this research provides the benefits of theoretical and practical models, it also has some drawbacks that require further examination. Given that the research data relies on self-reports collected at a specific moment, there is a chance of measurement bias occurring. So it is necessary to examine the measurement bias needs to be considered. In addition, cross-sectional studies are difficult to interpret causality. Therefore, future longitudinal studies are the main option in determining cause and effect relationships, especially when testing mediation models. Furthermore, the sample involved in this study only consisted of the majority of employees in Indonesia. So, for further studies, a representative sample can be involved so that the research findings can be generalized.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that there is no potential conflict of interest in connection with the research and/or publication of this article.

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