



## Thriving Employee Engagement: A Scoping Review

Lianto<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Widya Dharma Pontianak, Indonesia

\*E-mail korespondensi: [lianto@widyadharma.ac.id](mailto:lianto@widyadharma.ac.id)

### ABSTRAK

*Employee engagement* sudah mendapat perhatian besar di kalangan akademisi dan praktisi dalam dua dekade terakhir ini. Para manajer sumber daya manusia percaya bahwa karyawan yang engaged akan dengan sukarela memberikan kontribusi melebihi kewajibannya untuk organisasi dan dengan demikian menjadi sumber daya yang vital bagi pertumbuhan organisasi. *Employee engagement* termasuk dalam daftar tiga prioritas teratas program sumber daya manusia yang wajib diperhatikan. Untuk menciptakan *sustained competitive advantage*, tingkat engagement yang kuat merupakan *conditio sine qua non*. Review article ini bertujuan memaparkan berbagai faktor anteseden dan konsekuen dari *employee engagement* untuk mendukung riset-riset selanjutnya. Metode yang dipakai adalah *scoping (literature) reviews* yang disajikan secara naratif.

### ABSTRACT

In the last two decades, scholars and practitioners have paid close attention to employee engagement. Human Resource (HR) managers believe that engaged workers will willingly contribute beyond their job requirements for the organization, becoming a significant resource for business success. The employee engagement is one of the top three HR program goals that must be taken into account. A high degree of engagement is a *conditio sine qua non* to achieve a sustained competitive advantage. This present review article aims to identify several factors of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement to support future researches. The method used is a scoping (literature) review presented in a narrative manner.

**Keywords:** employee engagement, self-efficacy, performance, organizational commitment

### INTRODUCTION

Organizations must have a sustained competitive advantage in order to survive. The organizations decide to adopt technology, expand market reach, implement supply chain management, and implement a variety of other strategic policies in order to gain a competitive advantage. However, if these things are easily imitated by competitors, the advantage gained will not be permanent. According to the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, in order to create a sustained competitive advantage, businesses must manage their resources in such a



manner that they have valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable traits (Barney, 1991; Ichrakie, 2013).

Recent studies emphasize employee engagement issues in the context of generating a sustained competitive advantage. This relatively new concept of engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Gruman & Saks, 2011) is recognized as one of the critical success factors because it can create effectiveness and innovation (Welch, 2011), task performance (Macey & Schneider, 2008), and sustained competitive advantage (Albrecht et al., 2015; Nair & Salleh, 2015). Since it was first proposed by Kahn (1990), employee engagement has piqued the interest of researchers in business, management, industrial psychology, and human resource management (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; Wollard & Shuck, 2011; Welch, 2011; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Albrecht et al., 2015).

The employee engagement is defined as employees' job involvement, in which they work and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Kahn, 1990). This participation fosters employee loyalty, which reduces the employees' intention to quit (Macey & Schneider, 2008). The employee engagement is also defined by Robbins & Judge (2013) as the employees' involvement, contentment, and enthusiasm in/with their work. The engaged employees are invested in the company's success and are driven to improve their contribution beyond their job requirements (Mercer, Carpenter & Wyman, 2007).

However, according to Gallup (2022) and statistics from a survey in 2021, the global level of employee engagement is quite alarming. The data was collected from full- and part-time employees in 160 countries or regions. According to the most recent statistics by Gallup (2022: 6), only 21% of employees were engaged at work. The remaining were the employees who were actively disengaged and not engaged. Gallup defined the actively disengaged employees as employees who are not only dissatisfied at work but also actively expresses their dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, not engaged employees continue to do their work, although not whole heartedly (Maria Angela Diva V.W, 2020). They work while looking at the clock and do not put in any energy or passion. On the other hand, engaged employees are involved, being enthusiastic, and committed to their job. They make positive contributions to the organization. They are the ones who drive the organization's fresh ideas, innovation, growth, and income. According to the statistics by Gallup (2022), 79% of global employees were actively disengaged or not engaged. This suggests that, on a worldwide scale, the workplace (job) is a source of dissatisfaction rather than self-fulfillment.

Furthermore, Gallup (2022: 153) revealed bleak conditions in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. In Indonesia, there were only 24% of employees who were actively engaged in their



jobs. The following **Table 1** depicts a bleak picture of Indonesian employee engagement among Southeast Asian countries.

**Table 1.** Employee Engagement Conditions in Indonesia and Southeast Asian Countries

Rank	Country	Engaged Employee (%)
1	Phillipines	31
2	Thailand	26
3	Cambodia	26
4	Indonesia	24
5	Vietnam	23
6	Myanmar	23
7	Laos	23
8	Malaysia	18
9	Singapore	13

*Source: Processed data from Gallup (2022)*

The engagement as a component is critical, according to Ratanjee and Emond (2013), since it is one of the drivers for the business operation, competitiveness, and organizational sustainability. Disparities in employee engagement rates highlight the importance of research. Exploring the key antecedents of employee engagement is becoming an important issue for today's businesses (James, McKechnie, & Swanberg, 2011). According to Taylor & Kent (2014), the engagement is part of the discussion between the organizations and the public. Through the engagement, the organizations with the public are able to make decisions that generate social capital. This library research is intended to provide a literature review on employee engagement that will be valuable to other academics.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The Scoping Literature Review method was employed to conduct this study. This method was a type of review aiming to identify the existing literature on a specific research question. It was also known as a mapping review or scoping study (Anderson et al., 2008). This type of review could also help to clarify ideas and discover gaps of knowledge. The Scoping Reviews, unlike the Systematic Reviews, did not seek to offer critically examined and synthesized solutions to specific issues. This method of review was designed to produce an overview or evidence map (Munn et al., 2018). Nonetheless, the scoping reviews were still systematic and needed a rigorous approach: creating a protocol, conducting a systematic and sufficiently comprehensive literature search, and properly documenting the methods.



## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The concept of employee engagement appeared along with the emergence of the Positive Psychology Movement in the 1990s. This movement focused on the positive aspects of the individual, e.g.: hope, wisdom, creativity, vision for the future, spirituality, and responsibility, instead of dysfunctional aspects. This movement was the antithesis of past psychological research which were considered overly concentrated on psychosis treatments (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Since its introduction, the positive psychology had been accepted by organizational behavior scientists by developing the Positive Organizational Behavior Movement. Various positive researches were developed with the ideas and constructs of happiness, hope, optimism, wisdom, altruism, empathy, and engagement as a result of this movement (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Jeung, 2011; Ludwig & Frazier, 2012).

The employee engagement had been widely acknowledged to have a relation with articles by Kahn (Shuck, 2011; Truss et al., 2013). The engagement, according to Kahn (1990), represented the extent to which the individuals were psychologically present in the execution of their roles/tasks. The employees that were psychologically present were attentive, linked, integrated, and focused on their jobs (Kahn, 1992). The engagement entailed tying organizational members to their jobs. People would be more engaged in their responsibilities by placing and expressing themselves physically, intellectually, and emotionally. According to Kahn, The employees would be more engaged in settings where they felt more psychologically meaningful and safe at work (Kahn, 1990). The engaged employees devoted their hands, minds, and hearts for the company (Rich et al., 2010). Each employee in the company would differ in the range (level) of the extent to which they committed themselves to the performance of their roles (Kahn, 1990).

In a study by Kahn (1990), the employees were asked to reflect on their engaged and not-engaged-experiences in the organization. Kahn came to the conclusion that the psychological states associated with the engagement included meaningfulness, security, and willingness. Further, Kahn defined the meaningfulness as the sensation experienced after contributing physical, cognitive, or emotional energy to the organization. The employees who experienced it felt that they were worthy, productive, and valued. They believed they could make a difference in the lives of others and at work. The employees who believed they had less of a role or that their part was less anticipated in performance experienced a meaninglessness. Further, the security was perceived as a situation in which people felt free to express and position themselves without fear of negative consequences to their self-image, status, or career. They felt comfortable in the settings where they believed they would not be harmed as a result of their engagement. Finally, the willingness was defined as the readiness



an individual's physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage in a specific situation. This factor measured the extent to which people were willing to engage in and position themselves as members of a social system.

In line with Kahn, Shuck & Wollard (2010) defined the employee engagement as a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state of an individual directed toward the intended organizational outcome. In contrast to other researchers, May, Gilson, & Harter (2004) contributed *via negativa* understanding. Contrary to the definition by Kahn (1990), they separated the engagement from job involvement and flow behavior. The job involvement referred to the degree to which an individual psychologically identified themselves with his or her job. The job was considered as important to one's self-image. Similarly, the flow behavior referred to an individual's cognitive state when he was completely engaged in his task and there was little difference between himself and his environment. The engagement differed from the job involvement and flow behavior since it focused on how individuals positioned themselves in performance. The engagement also included emotional and behavioral components in addition to the cognitive components. Furthermore, the employee engagement might be viewed as an antecedent to job involvement in the sense that the employees engaged in their role would identify themselves with their job.

The concept and measures by Kahn were used by the majority of employee engagement studies (e.g. Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Harter et al., 2002; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Saks, 2006; Truss et al., 2006). Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001) created another definition, although in the same direction, that defined the engagement based on the traits associated with it, namely energy, participation, and efficacy. The three characteristics of burnout, which included exhaustion, cynicism, and ineffectiveness, were the polar opposites of engagement. Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday, in Welch (2011), described the employee engagement as a positive attitude toward the organization and its values. The engaged employees were aware of the business environment and collaborated closely with colleagues to improve performance that benefited the organization.

The engagement and extra-role behavior, specifically organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), were contrasted by Macey & Schneider (2008). The discretionary character of OCB was an example of engaged behavior. In the OCB, the individual decided to behave in ways other than the mandatory (formal) role.

Measurement dimensions of the employee engagement consisted of a variety of psychological conditions divided into three categories: physical engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement. According to Kahn (1990), people put and expressed



themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in the performance of their roles. Kahn (1990; 1992) also added that the three psychological conditions comprised the employees' interests, values, and competence. The objectives and values that existed within the organization, from the perspective of the organization, were a source of attachment and commitment that encouraged the employees to identify themselves with the organization. This situation enabled individuals to exhibit adaptive behavior that was consistent with the organization's long-term objectives (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

A study by Saks (2006) revealed that the employee engagement was associated to key dependent variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and the OCB. In accordance with these findings, Alfes et al. (2013) discovered that human resource management (HRM) practices had an influence on the employee outcomes (i.e. OCB and turnover intentions through the mediation of employee engagement; meanwhile, the relationship between employee engagement, OCB, and turnover intention was moderated by perceived organizational support and Leader-Member Exchange).

Several researches on the employee engagement had been conducted in order to identify the antecedents and their influence on organizational performance. As shown in **Table 2** below, Wollard & Shuck (2011) characterized each of the 21 antecedents of employee engagement at the individual level and organizational level.

**Table 2.** Antecedents of Employee Engagement (EE) at the Individual Level and Organizational Level

Individual Level	Organizational Level
Absorption*	Authentic corporate culture*
Availability to engage	Clear expectations*
Coping style	Corporate social responsibility*
Curiosity	Encouragement
Dedication*	Feedback
Emotional fit	Hygiene factors
Employee motivation	Job characteristics*
Employee/work/family status	Job control
Feelings of choice dan control	Job fit*
Higher levels of corporate citizenship*	Leadership
Involvement in meaningful work*	Level of task challenge*
Link individual and organizational goals*	Manager expectations*
Optimism	Manager self-efficacy*
Perceived supervisor support*	Mission and vision
Self-esteem, self-efficacy	Opportunities for learning
Vigor*	Perception of workplace safety*
Willingness to direct personal energies	Positive workplace climate*
Work/life balance*	Rewards*
Core self-evaluation*	Supportive organizational culture*
Value Congruence*	Talent management
Perceived Organizational Support*	Use of strengths*

\* Empirical evidence was already available (Wollard dan Shuck, 2011)

There were 18 antecedents with no empirical support among the 42 found. Wollard & Shuck (2011) provided a research gap for future researchers to investigate the relationship between the employee engagement and its antecedents in diverse organizational and industrial settings. Today's employees, according to Bersin (2014), as reported by Forbes Magazine, required something different. They expected more meaningful employment, and they wanted the employers to benefit them in some form.

Several studies had been conducted in order to establish an employee engagement model focusing on investigating the antecedents and their consequences. Saks (2006) hypothesized and examined the hypothesis, concluding that incentives, recognition, and perceived organizational justice might be the antecedents of employee engagement. Xanthopoulou et al. (2008) examined personal resources, namely self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism, as critical antecedents for the employee engagement. Furthermore, Rich, Lepine, & Crawford (2010) discovered a positive and significant relationship between key self-evaluations, such as self-esteem, locus of control, emotional stability, and engagement. Besides, Bal, Kooij, & De Jong, (2013) discovered a significant relationship between HRM development practices and engagement through the mediation of psychological contracts. Similarly, Alfes et al. (2013) discovered the influence of HRM practices on a variety of employee outcomes, including the employee engagement. A recent study by Albrecht et al. (2015) supported the evidence linking the HRM strategies (e.g., recruitment and selection, socialization, training and development) with the employee engagement, which had an influence on establishing competitive advantage.

Previous researches had also created models to investigate the consequence variables of employee engagement. According to Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002), the employee engagement increased customer satisfaction, productivity, and profitability while decreasing labor turnover. In line with the study, Saks (2006) improved the positive relationship between the engagement and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, OCB, and reduced the intention to quit. Supporting previous studies, Hoxsey (2010) confirmed that the engagement could minimize absenteeism. Rich et al. (2010) showed that there was a positive influence of engagement on the task performance (in-role) and citizenship behavior (extra-role). Further, Gruman & Saks (2011) also discovered a significant relationship between the engagement and performance. According to Robertson, Birch, & Cooper (2012), the employee engagement was an excellent predictor of employee productivity levels.

Aside from investigating the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement, previous researches had suggested that future studies are suggested to investigate and



establish engagement models involving numerous new constructs. Pawar (2008) emphasized the importance of investigating workplace spirituality dimensions could be a successful method for generating a more pleasant work environment and engaged employees. Saks (2011) proposed that future studies should also include the workplace spirituality as a predictor of employee engagement and compare it to a number of other variables. According to Roof (2015), the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement could also be a solution to the worldwide issues of falling engagement. Saks (2006) advised that future studies should investigate the self-efficacy as an antecedent for the engagement. Wollard & Shuck (2011) made similar recommendations, arguing that the self-efficacy was a construct that, in theory, might be a significant predictor of engagement. According to Macey & Schneider (2008), the engagement was a consequence of contingent conditions in the workplace. The engagement antecedents were better studied using categories that represented individual differences. The person-organization fit was identified as one of the predictors of the development of engagement.

Furthermore, Saks (2006) advocated the role of exchange ideology between the relationship between the engagement and its antecedents in achieving the employee engagement. The mainstream of research positioned the exchange ideology as a moderator (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Witt, 1991; Witt, 1992; Witt & Broach, 1993; Orpen, 1994; Ladd & Henry, 2000; Witt, Kacmar, & Andrew, 2001; Redman & Snape, 2005; Scott & Colquitt, 2007; Lin, 2007; Pazy & Ganzach, 2010; Takeuchi, Yun, & Wong, 2011; He et al., 2014; Ahn, Lee, & Yun, 2016). There had been relatively limited studies on the role of this construct as a mediator (Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002; Ravlin et al., 2012; Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2014). The following **Table 3** summarizes previous researches investigating antecedents and consequences of the employee engagement:

**Table 3.** Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement

No	Research Title	Authors	Research Results
1	Business-unit –level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis	Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes (2002)	Employee engagement affected the achievement of customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, and reduced the employee turnover.
2	Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement	Saks (2006)	The employee engagement was influenced by rewards, recognition, and perceived justice. The engagement, on the other hand, was positively associated to satisfaction, commitment, citizenship behavior, and reduce the intention to quit.



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| 3  | Working in the sky: A diary study on work engagement among flight attendants   | Xanthopoulou et al. (2008)        | There wa a significant relationship between personal resources, including self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism, and employee engagement.   |
| 4  | Job engagement: antecedents and effects on job performance   | Rich, Lepine, & Crawford (2010)   | There was a positive and significant relationship between the core self-evaluations, such as self-esteem, locus of control, and emotional stability, and the engagement. Furthermore, the engagement was able to mediate the relationship between value congruence, perceived organizational support, and core self-evaluations and two dimensions of job performance, including the task performance and OCB. |
| 5  | Performance management and employee engagement   | Gruman & Saks (2011)              | The employee engagement had a positive and significant effect on the organizational performance.   |
| 6  | Job and work attitudes, engagement and employee performance: Where does psychological well-being fit in?                       | Robertson, Birch, & Cooper (2012) | The employee engagement was such a good predictor to improve the employee productivity levels.   |
| 7  | How do developmental and accommodative HRM enhance employee engagement and commitment?   | Bal, Kooij, & De Jong (2013)      | There was a significant relationship between HRM development practices and engagement through the mediation of psychological contracts.  |
| 8  | The link between perceived human resource management practices, engagement and employee behaviour: A moderated mediation model | Alfes et al. (2013)               | Through the mediation of employee engagement, the HRM strategies affected the employee outcomes (e.g., OCB and turnover intentions).   |
| 9  | Employee engagement, human resource management practices and competitive advantage: an integrated approach                     | Albrecht et al. (2015)            | The HRM practices such as recruitment and selection, socialization, training, and performance management had a significant relationship with the engagement, which would eventually contribute to a competitive advantage for the organization.  |
| 10 | Testing the effects of employee engagement, work environment, and organizational learning on organizational commitment         | Hanaysha (2016)                   | The employee engagement had a positive and significant effect on the organizational commitment.  |
| 11 | The influence of employee engagement on the work-life balance of employee in the IT sector                                     | Pandita & Singhal (2017)          | The employee engagement had an effect on work-life balance.  |
| 12 | The effect of self-efficacy and employee engagement on job performance: A longitudinal field study                             | Carter et al. (2018)              | The HR Management practitioners must boost their self-efficacy and employee engagement in order to improve the organizational performance.   |
| 13 | Enhancing the employee engagement: The mediating role of exchange ideology   | Lianto, Eliyana, & Fauzan (2018)  | The exchange ideology mediated the influence of self-efficacy and person-organization fit on the employee  |



			engagement.
14	Employee engagement at a higher education institution in South Africa: Individual, team and organisational levels	Ndoro & Martins (2019)	The highest degree of engagement was at the team level. The employee engagement was the lowest at the individual level. The findings highlighted the importance of interventions to improve the employee involvement at the individual level in higher education institutions in order to enable complete adoption of mission-aligned practices.
15	Effect of organizational culture on employee performance: A mediating role of employee engagement in Malaysia educational sector	Abdullahi, Raman, & Solarin (2021)	The employee engagement was able to mediate the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance.

*Source: Processed data (2023)*

Although it was a relatively recent construct in the fields of organizational behavior and performance management (Gruman & Saks, 2011), the employee engagement had been extensively researched in order to determine its antecedents and consequences. Rich et al. (2010) discovered that value congruence between employees and the organization, perceived organizational support, and core self-evaluation were positively associated to the employee engagement for contextual factors (organizational/work environment perspective level). Saks (2006) investigated and found that the incentives, recognition, and procedural justice could be the antecedents of employee engagement.

Considering that the engagement was a construct at the individual level, it must first produce individual-level outcomes before it could contribute to corporate outcomes (Saks, 2006). The antecedents of individual perspectives were discovered in the study by Xanthopoulou et al. (2008) which investigated the personal resources, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism, as major predictors of employee engagement. Similarly, Rich et al. (2010) also found a positive and significant relationship between the core self-evaluations (i.e. self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability) and the engagement.

Previous studies had also found positive and significant relationships between the employee engagement and a variety of organizational outcomes. Harter et al. (2002) proved that the employee engagement produced organizational outcomes such as customer satisfaction, productivity, profitability, and lowered the labor turnover. According to Hoxsey (2010), the engagement reduced the absenteeism, confirming an ancient saying that “happy employees are healthy employees.” Gruman & Saks (2011) established a substantial relationship between the engagement and performance. They advocated for making the employee engagement a relevant approach to the performance management. Robertson et al.



(2012) established and evaluated a hypothesis which found that the employee productivity levels would be better predicted if the work attitudes, engagement, and well-being were all predicted concurrently than if the work attitudes were just partially predicted.

## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The employee engagement concept was related to the principles of commitment and employee involvement. When the engaged employees were aware of their roles within the firm, they would work beyond the responsibilities entrusted to them. This concept could be a useful tool in assisting the organizations in obtaining a competitive advantage (Anitha, 2014). The engaged employees were not only more content with their jobs, but they were also more productive (Luthans & Peterson, 2001). Further researches are required to develop an understanding of the psychological processes supporting the engagement, the precise meaning of engagement constructs, real-life experiences of engaging and being engaged, power and engagement issues, and engagement processes at the micro and macro levels of the organization (Truss et al., 2013).

The study by Saks (2006) concluded that the employee engagement was an important construct deserved more investigations. Saks recommended that future researchers are suggested to consider exploring variables of individual differences, such as self-esteem, locus of control, and self-efficacy. According to Wollard & Shuck (2011), the optimism and self-efficacy were conceptually recognised constructs (Macey & Schneider, 2008) that could play a role in strengthening the antecedent model supporting the employee engagement.

The employee engagement as a topic had been increasingly important in terms of company success. According to Saks & Gruman (2011), focusing on the employee engagement was the greatest strategy to develop the performance management in modern organizations. The performance management was considered to be overly dominated by formal and administrative phases, making it less relevant to daily activities. The organizations might attain closer and more controlled results to the performance by concentrating on the engagement.

As explained earlier, any organization in the twenty-first century should have a sustained competitive advantage. Ownership of valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable organizational resources was required for the sustained competitive advantage.



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