Factors Influence Well Being and Work Engagement of Teachers in Multicultural Area of Three Southern Border Provinces (Pattani, Yala and Narathivas) of Thailand

Watcharin Noosomton  
Ph.D. (Industrial and Organizational Psychology), Lecturer  
Faculty of Education, Prince of Songkla University

Abstract

The purpose of this article was to study the effect of value and some psyches which affect the work engagement of teachers in the multicultural area of three southern border provinces among the situation of unrest occurred, are considered as crucial matter, because this reflects the ideology, affection, pride towards acceptance and upholds the educational purpose of teachers in the areas with work engagement and well-being which can helps teachers stand fast and perform their duties effectively and also be beneficial to the institutes, original affiliation to use this to be the way for promoting and developing the performance in term of policy to be in accordance with the cultural way by balancing Work Engagement and Well-being are characterized by the high level of job satisfaction, positive career aspiration, and extra role behavior. All concern to have a huge effect and being the most applications of positive psychology in the workplace. Then organizations need to address and understand the deeper needs of teachers in order to retain them and keep them motivated as “talented people demand meaningful work” and shift the effectiveness by increasing a sense of meaningful work, talent and value.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Well-being, Meaningful of work, Teachers in Multicultural Area
ปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อสภาวะปกติสุขและความทุ่มเทในการทำงานของครูในพื้นที่พหุวัฒนธรรมสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้
(ปัตตานี ยะลา และนราธิวาส)

วัชรินทร์ หนูสมตน
ปร.ด. (จิตวิทยาอุตสาหกรรมและองค์การ), อาจารย์
คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์

บทคัดย่อ
บทความวิชาการนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลของค่านิยมและคุณลักษณะทางจิตวิทยาที่ส่งผลต่อความทุ่มเทในการทำงานของครูในพื้นที่พหุวัฒนธรรมสามจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ ท่ามกลางสถานการณ์ความไม่สงบที่เกิดขึ้นซึ่งหากพิจารณาสถานการณ์ดังกล่าวแล้วจะส่งผลต่อความทุ่มเทในการทำงานของครูทั้งในด้านอารมณ์ความรู้สึกของครู ทั้งในด้านความการปฏิบัติสุขของครู การสร้างความสมดุลระหว่างความทุ่มเทในการทำงานและความเป็นปกติสุขเป็นคุณลักษณะที่ช่วยส่งเสริมให้เกิดความพึงพอใจในการทำงาน แรงบันดาลใจในการทำงานและพฤติกรรมของการทำงานในพื้นที่ดังกล่าว หน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องกับสถาบันการศึกษาต้องทำความเข้าใจในการสร้างเสริมและพัฒนาการปฏิบัติหน้าที่ของครูในพื้นที่ดังกล่าว ทั้งนี้หน่วยงานต้องกำหนดนโยบายและแนวทางในการทำงานและพัฒนาการที่สอดคล้องกับวัฒนธรรมในพื้นที่ดังกล่าว โดยการสร้างความสมดุลระหว่างความทุ่มเทในการทำงานและความเป็นปกติสุขเป็นคุณลักษณะที่ช่วยส่งเสริมให้เกิดความพึงพอใจในการทำงาน แรงบันดาลใจในการทำงาน และพฤติกรรมของการทำงานดังกล่าว หน่วยงานต้องกำหนดนโยบายและแนวทางในการทำงานและพัฒนาการที่สอดคล้องกับวัฒนธรรมในพื้นที่ดังกล่าว โดยการสร้างเสริมความรู้สึกต่อความหมายของการทำงาน ความท้าทายในการทำงาน และค่านิยมในการทำงาน

คำสำคัญ: ความทุ่มเทในการทำงาน สมดุลของความหมาย การสร้างความหมายในการทำงาน ครูในพื้นที่พหุวัฒนธรรม
Introduction
The 2010 report on the supply and demand of teachers in the three southernmost provinces of Thailand indicated that the teaching professional in these areas face the future possibility of a significant shortage of teachers. Similar concerns are presented in many studies (Watcharin, and Sajeemas, 2013). Importantly, these studies results, found that a large part of this attrition has been attributed to poor work related well-being and work engagement (Watcharin, Sajeemas, and Manop, 2011). Moreover, these have been attack on teachers in the areas and there is a growing fear that teachers have become the symbol and therefore a target group which the insurgents focus on and intend to attack. For insurgent groups, the teacher is regarded as a governmental official and a symbol of government who has to go to school and come back home by the same route and time every days, and is therefore easy target. In addition, the teacher is “less” because he or she does not have the same status as other government officials like soldier or police.

As a result of this situation, many teachers have begun to request to move out of these areas. This has reached a rate of 1,342 teachers per year (Watcharin, and Sajeemas, 2013). However studies have found that there are also some teachers (eleven per one) who stand fast and performed their duty in such situations with sacrifice and did not desire to move out to other areas. Against this background, up to 11% of teachers in these areas are estimated to experience work-related psychological distress, a level much higher than in the general population (Watcharin, Sajeemas, and Manop, 2011). The purpose of this paper, then, is to explore the related goals of enhancing the well-being and work engagement of the teachers in these areas and identifying factors that might facilitate that. The findings of this paper contribute to reappraisal and reflection on value and meaning of work in which the concept of work as an ideology of performance, personal psychological in which job satisfaction and work engagement are closely linked with personal identity and a sense of well-being.

The research project
In this context, the study of effect of value and some psyches which affect the work engagement of teachers in the multicultural area of three southern border provinces among the situation of unrest occurred, are considered as crucial matter, because this reflects the ideology, affection, pride towards acceptance and upholds the educational purpose of teachers in the areas with work engagement and well-being which can helps teachers stand fast and perform their great own duties effectively and also be beneficial to the institutes and original affiliation to use this to be the way for promoting and developing the performance in term of policy to be in accordance with the cultural way. Even if, the study of work engagement in the Thai context has been quite rare, but it can conduct to these kind of studies as below:

What is 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 practical rather than theoretical 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. 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 (OCB) (Robinson et al., 2004). As a result, employee engagement has the appearance of being somewhat faddish or what some might call, “old wine in new bottle.” Indeed, engagement is all about commitment; the word come from the Old French (en+gage) meaning “to pledge oneself.” Although not quite so life-altering, the concept of employee engagement is also about the extent to which one is committed, dedicated, and loyal to one’s organization, supervisor, work and colleague. When the ones truly committed, motivation becomes a lot less relevant-they are in it for the long haul (Paul L. Marciano, 2010).

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 in term of “engagement” is rooted in role theory, in particular the work of Erving Goffman (1961). Role theory studies the various roles individuals occupy in society as well as the social expectations and behavioral boundaries attributed to such roles (Bailey and Yost, 2007). Goffman (1961, p. 94) define engagement as the “spontaneous involvement in the role” and a “visible investment of attention and muscular effort.”

Later on, Khan (1990) published his finding from qualitative studies, the first on camp counselors and the second on member of an architectural firm. As Khan (1990:694) define employee engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work role; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performance”. By the way, Kahn (1990 : 694) defined 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”. Thus, according to Kahn (1990, 1992), engagement means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing an organizational role.

From Goffman (1961) and Khan (1990), it can separate into two key components of engagement that are “spontaneity” as well as “variability” as can explain as follows:

First, for engagement is “spontaneous” and voluntary. It might concern to our acceptance of the unwanted role, but it might be forced us to perform it, even if, we cannot be ordered to engage. Secondly, engagement is “variable” as Kahn’s studying (1990) found that the same person could be engaged in one role and not in another.

From Kahn’s studies (1990,1992), it can be conclude that “Engagement” is a psychological state that occurred to response on performance role. However, there is evidence that one’s degree of engagement depend on the role in question. Also, it finds that assigning meaning of work, securities and variety in work are related to the characteristics of a person, so that he will or will not engage himself to his role in work and the effects of work. Thus, it is possible that the antecedents and consequences of engagement depend on the
type of engagement.

Rothbard (2001) 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) further stated 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 in work.” It consists of 3 components: vigor, dedication, absorption. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In short, engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. Moreover, they are often fully immersed in their work so that time flies (May et al., 2004). Later the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale : UWES (Sceufeli and Bakker, 2003) and it was applied in terms of behavioral study and positive roles of performance widespread. However, there were the study of this variable rather a little in the context of Thai society.

Hence, the study of effect of psychological characteristics which affect the work engagement of teachers in the multicultural area of three southern border provinces, among the situation of unrest occurred, are considered as crucial matter because this reflects the ideology, affection, pride towards acceptance and upholds the educational purpose of teachers, as well as being a way which helps teachers stand fast and perform their great own duties effectively by spirituality on the educational development to students and youth in the locality, and also be beneficial to the institutes and original affiliation to be the way for promoting and developing the performance type in this areas, in terms of policy, to be in accordance with the cultural way of locality on the way of harmony of living together with abiding peace.

What is Well-being ?

The science of psychology, although originally the investigation of the human mind, has over time applied its knowledge more to naming and fixing what is considered broken or abnormal. “Positive” psychology is psychology turning back to its root in looking at working flourishing mind. As it has separate new idea by bringing together the work of sociologists, anthropologists, clinical psychologists, biologists, humanistic psychologists, philosophers and
common sense. For the first time there is a united scientific focus examining all that causes us to thrive and flourish, both individually and culturally.

Interestingly, the research findings are beginning to show that the range of strategies healthy people use to further their own development are in contrast many mainstream approach employed among mental health professionals. What work for people when they mentally unwell, the major focus in psychology in recent years, are not the same strategic used by ordinary and extraordinary individuals dealing with all the good and bad that life has to offer. The strategies and beliefs used by healthy people are much more similar to the key principles and practices advocated by positive psychology. Then many parties, such as educators, the public sector and individuals are utilizing the work of positive psychology, such as work engagement and well-being. There is no idea if life cannot take something from knowing more about what support human flourishing. Being happy is highly valued goal in most societies (Diener, 2000).

Definitions of happiness can be divided into those that emphasize a life of virtue, meaning, and personal growth (eudaimonic well-being), involve a positive cognitive evaluation or judgment of one’s life (life satisfaction), or involve pleasant affective experience (positive emotional or mood states). In relation to happiness om the workplace, many researches have mostly focused on happiness in the form of positive judgments (e.g. job satisfaction) or pleasant experiences (e.g. moods and emotions), but a wide array of happiness-related concepts have been studied. These constructs include job satisfaction, affective commitment, engagement, and vigor (Fisher, 2010). However, the focus on happiness at work can also have positive consequences, particularly in worker well-being (Fisher, 2010).

General well-being is much more than happiness, although, people often use it to refer to happiness. Happiness, well-being and being “satisfied with life” become intertwined as the best ways to describe a “functioning” life. “Subjective” well-being is the best term used to refer both cognitive and emotional quality of “happiness” and well-being forms the basis of how positive emotion can be measured. Positive psychology measure everything that affects our quality of life. From our sense of humor to how good we are solving problems and recovering from overcome adversity.

Then, positive psychology can help us to understand what we can do to increase positive thinking and feeling, in such a way that is not a battle. Fighting and trying to overcome weakness and fear, or even imagining that we can never feel more negativity. Knowing our strengths and using our emotion positively, allow action and experiences to become easier and happier, both in the short and long term, to live more authentically in the whole of our lives, with the “good” and the “bad”.

Balancing Work Engagement and Well-being

Generally, high well-being in workplace and work engagement are characterized by the high level of job satisfaction, positive career aspiration, and extra role behavior or non-core role participation. All concern to have a huge effect and being the most applications of positive psychology in the workplace, as we spend a large part of our lives at work and proportionately (Cartwright, S. and Holmes, N. 2006). Then organizations need to address and understand the deeper needs of employees
in order to retain them and keep them motivated as “talented people demand meaningful work” (Havener, 1999). In the environment that matches own individual persons is effective organization shift the effectiveness by increasing a sense of meaningful work, talent and value. The concept of meaningful work, an important element in self-identity and self-worth, also reflects the growing interest in the field of positive psychology which emphasizes the need to focus on actively developing the positive aspects of life and work rather than just attempting to identify and address the negative aspects (Seligman, 2002). Then, work place well-being and engagement are central constructs in studies of employee effectiveness and productivity. Well-being and work engagement have traditionally be understood in term of satisfaction at work, enjoyment of work, and happiness with one organizational culture. Indeed, many studies suggest that employee satisfaction was strong tied to key organizational health indicators, such as productivity, turn over. In the contrast, not being happy at work can not only affect our sense of well-being during office hours, but can significantly affect other areas of our life in negative way. So, it is necessary for consideration back to organizations need to address and understand the deeper need of employees in order to retain employees and keep them motivated as “talent people demand meaningful work.” Retention of key employees, effective management of change, and greater organizational commitment, and work engagement must be widely agreed and understood the definition of meaning in workplace and state that the essence of meaning is “connection” and linked to positive outcomes for both the individual and organization including improvements in organizational performance and individual well-being.

According to a recent review, work engagement and well-being are positively associated, for instance, with mental and psychosomatic health, intrinsic motivation, efficacy beliefs, positive attitudes towards work and the organization, and high performance. Furthermore, well-being comes by many routes. Seen in this light, developing one’s strengths and virtues in the major realms of living—of which work is one—becomes an important task. Work engagement with its positive outcomes both in and outside work seems to be among this desired task. (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007).

Bakker et al. (2006) conducted a study on engagement and performance among 105 school principals and 232 teachers. Their study showed significant and positive associations between school principals’ work engagement scores and teacher-ratings of school principals’ performance and leadership. More specifically, results of structural equation modeling showed that engaged principals scored higher on in-role and extra-role performance. In addition, engagement was strongly related to creativity; the higher school principals’ levels of work engagement, the better they were able to come up with a variety of ways to deal with work-related problems. Finally, engaged school principals were seen as transformational leaders – being able to inspire, stimulate and coach their co-workers. Similarly to Watcharin et al. (2011), which research was to develop and examine the validity Linear Structure Equation Model of work engagement of teachers in the multicultural area of the three southern border provinces among the situation
of unrest occurred in these areas of Thailand, was found that the casual variable had direct effect on work engagement in the positive way, which were organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, shared value and job satisfaction had effect coefficient equal to .37, .34, .10 and .09, respectively. Hence, in the context of teacher performance in three southern border provinces of Thailand which has a risk of performance among the unrest situations, the support of “desirable well-being” is extremely crucial. This indicates the ideology, affection and pride of teachers who want to create educational benefits which makes a result of engagement for teachers to have both physical and mental force and dedication. This is in accordance with the report of Saks (2006), Hakanen. et al (2006) and Watcharin and Sageemas (2013) found the related values with safety and feeling of meaningfulness of oneself. Then, if any member in the organization upholds in meaningful value of performance, he or she will increase positive attitudes for the performance (Kahn, 1990) and create the way of behavior to be the same as the meaningful value. This is in accordance with the royal words of the King Rama 9 on 9 October, 1973 that

“...teacher career is specific and different from other careers. On the other hand, teacher cannot hope the compensation by rank, richness or material benefits to be the main. The benefits got are from mental which anyone who is a real teacher has already been satisfied and proud...” (Wilai, 2006 . in Thai).

Therefore, work engagement and well-being reflected the level of cognitive and the positive relationship of persons and organization they belonged to be members. This cognitive was about admiration feeling which those persons feel towards their organization and linked their own unique to match with their organization in terms of strongly positive relationship expressing the unique of the members (Paille, 2008).

This is in accordance with the previous research result which found that to create the value of persons to feel they are a part of team or group made a result of preach unique value of the group and could be the effective prediction towards the job satisfaction, existence and performance way (Abrams, Ando, and Hinkle, 1998) even in the organizations or in the areas which had the difference of population and had multi-culture. This was because the encouragement of shared value from performance of team or group can lead to unique development or identification which reflected the realization of worthy to be the part of group (Luijter, van der Zee, and Otten, 2008). Moreover, the related value with the intention and responsibility to perform the duties of teachers also reflected the “attributes of being a teacher with heart” which originated from the attributes of work which he or she was responsible for. Moreover, the feeling of friendship and image happened among the members group of personnel within school acquired the affection with the work and desired to be the teacher further in order to create benefits to the organization (Nongluck, 1997 in Thai). As overall, although the multicultural area of the three southern border provinces was regarded as the areas which had variety and difference in the race but the desirable shared value in the performance of teachers in the area seemed not to have much difference. This is concordant with the conclusion of Mio et al (2006) who mentioned about the
value in the people group who had multi-culture that the study of shared value was usually expected to be the prediction of value of person in the organization or society because it usually used the average scores of value of persons who lived in that culture to be the conclusion of overall attributes. However, the value of individual in the same culture might not be the same as every person, especially any organization, society or culture which formed different direction. In contrast, if any organization, society or culture had good form of creation and could be the same system by covering all organization, society and culture, the members would have the behavior which was rather in accordance with the shared value of the group of people that they being the members. Thus, to apply the value studied in the organization, society or culture appropriately, the applicator has to consider that whether the study uses the sample which are the substitute of population really, whether the interpretation is identical, how much the distribution of value score is and how the analytical statistics is clear and appropriate.

Several theories support the conceptual link between strengths and well-being. One such example is Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory. Research on self-determination theory (SDT) examines the factors that facilitate intrinsic motivation, self-regulation and wellbeing. The concept of strengths fits well with this paradigm. Specifically, strength-based employee development may enhance employees’ ability to meet their psychological needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness; according to SDT, when behavior is regulated for the fulfillment of these innate needs, an individual is able to achieve more effective functioning, leading to psychological growth and well-being (Ryan and Deci. 2000). Research by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) on the concept of self-concordant motivation also supports strength-based development as an employee well-being enhancement strategy. These authors assert that one is more motivated to achieve goals that are congruent with one’s own values.

Such recommendation need to consider back to a form of happiness achieved by living virtuously and attaining goals that have intrinsic merit. To examine one potentially important means to enhancing employee well being and work engagement. However, development work engagement is not necessarily the only means for enhancing employee well-being. But it shall be also examined the potential utility of expressing kindness and gratitude, visualizing best possible self and savoring. Author hoped that this paper may add to what is fast becoming an ‘upward spiral’ of research aiming to improve quality of life by offering a solid framework for understanding and measuring the teachers well-being.

Future of work engagement and recommendation

From a theoretical point-of-view, it is important that research on work engagement and well-being starts to use more elaborated research designs where causality is tested rigorously (using experimental or longitudinal designs) and where predictors and outcomes of work engagement and well-being are measured objectively. Moreover, it is worth to focus on the mechanisms through which work engagement and well-being leads to favorable outcomes by getting insight in the processes that it initiates or is involved in. It is, for instance,
conceivable that self-regulation – i.e. goal-directed behavior – is facilitated when people are engaged in their work because they have the energy (can do) and the motivation (want to do) to undertake action. This can help them not only to achieve better performance but also to increase their chances for a better career development and quality of works life.

As overall, although the multicultural area of the three southern border provinces was regarded as the areas which had variety and difference in the race but the desirable shared value in the performance of teachers in the area seemed not to have much difference. Thus, to apply the value studied in the organization, society or culture appropriately, the executives related to the determination of educational policies should support work engagement to teachers by determining the strategies which emphasize well-being, especially in terms of shared value for all value of work, concordant with community’s way of life in each area as well as co-determining the methods to lead into practical plan in order to embed work engagement to become the morale of mind which teachers have to uphold. These policies can take affect to the performance and well-being in accordance with the way of system development of governmental officials which concentrate to the highest benefits to the educational system, society and nation in the future.

References


Watcharin, N. & Sajeemas, N. (2013). “Analysis of multiple group of factors influencing work engagement among teachers who did not desire to move out and who were reluctant in the unrest areas of Thailand.” King’s Mongkut University of North Bangkok. (in Thai)