

Is Feeling Trusted by Supervisor Able to Improve Work Engagement?

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Abstract: This study examines the role of feeling trusted between the relationships between high-performance work systems and work engagement. Data were collected from 107 employees which work at the financial services companies in Jakarta, Indonesia. This study used structural equation modeling (SEM) in order to explore the associations between high-performance work systems and work engagement. Furthermore, Sobel Test was used to test the mediation effect from feeling trusted. This research found that high-performance work systems have positive relationship with feeling trusted and work engagement. Surprisingly, feeling trusted has negative impact to the work engagement. Last, this research revealed that feeling trusted cannot leads the high-performance work systems to improve work engagement. Despite this research conducted in multicultural country but it has paucity from cultural aspects analysis. Accordingly, future research should consider the cultural aspects to advance this form of research further. The theoretical and practical contributions will be discussed later

Keywords: work engagement; high-performance work systems; feeling trusted

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1 Introduction

Work engagement (WE), some researchers used with term employee engagement (Rahmadani & Schaufeli, 2020; Robijn et al., 2020), still to be relevant topic in organizational studies (Juan et al., 2018; Sonnentag, 2011). Some previous studies shown that work engagement has important role to improve positive employee behavior that oriented on working and organization effectiveness, high integrity and enthusiasm, and also improving the commitment to work (Aybas & Acar, 2017; Huang et al., 2018; Kahn, 1990; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Lee et al., 2016). Later, work engagement believed able to produce discretionary effort that leads to achieving organization forth maintaining organization continuity (Bailey et al., 2017; Bakker et al., 2011; Kodden & Groenveld, 2019; Mozammel & Haan, 2016; Naser et al., 2018).

Through Human Resources Practices (HR Practices), such as recruitment and

selection, compensation and employee performance measurements, and also employee development programs, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) able to form a convenient and productive work environment (Huselid, 1995; Oliveira & Silva, 2015; Zhu & Chen, 2014). Those mechanisms was accommodated with social exchange theory explaining that HPWS based on employee needs will produce positive outcomes in the form of work engagement as mutually beneficial exchange (Bendickson et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2018). Employee will perceive that HPWS as representations of investment later they feel that they become an important asset that owned by organization (Suharnomo & Priyotomo, 2017). Hence, human resources development function represents the core unit to implement HPWS optimally then responsibly to the level of employee work engagement (Pierse, 2012).

From the interpersonal point of view, feeling trusted (FT) by supervisor has significant correlation with individual positive

outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Lau et al., 2014). Several previous research also believed that feeling trusted becomes a signal that the employee is valuable, so it will increase the commitment (Pfeffer, 1998) also employees work engagement (Kahn, 1990). Feeling trusted by supervisor usually derive within organization along with the differences between their capabilities and power (Lau et al., 2014). The dialectics will persist because the consensus regarding feeling trusted has not been completed yet and will be problematic, especially the positive or negative impact to the employee (Baer et al., 2015).

According to Gallup (2017), only 15% Indonesian worker feels engaged (i.e., high engagement and also high enthusiasm), 76% not engaged (i.e., not engaged into their work), and last 10% actively disengaged (i.e., worker not merely unhappy in their organizations, but also peevish because their needs are not fulfilled and indeed showing their unhappiness). Those statistical numbers revealed that the necessary to deepening the understanding of work engagement topic in Indonesia considering the crucial role of work engagement to the organizational sustainability. Furthermore, the topic regarding work engagement is critical, beside it able to improve added value, work engagement also prevent indirectly to the fraud behavior (Hasan et al., 2020; Mozammel & Haan, 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work engagement

Kahn (1990) introduced the construct of engagement and defined that as voluntary attachment from the organization member toward each work in their organizations. Shortly, engagement means psychologically present when taking a role in the organization. Therefore, organization member able to

express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while taking out work roles. Many previous scholars assumed that engagement highly depends on and containing the same elements with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). However, both of them have different point of view. OCB is the individual behavior and involvement to their organizations, while engagement is not about individual attitude, but the level of individual attention and involvement to their work. Furthermore, OCB involving informal and volunteer attitude that able to helping colleagues and organization, whereas engagement weight to the formal job roles (Perdhana & Dewi, 2017; Saks, 2006; Shi, 2021).

2.2 High-performance work systems and work engagement

High-performance work systems (HPWS) planned as an integral part of HR practices that are partially but connected one another and designed to develop employee that impactful to the company performance through developing employee competencies and well-being in the work environment. HPWS able to allowing employee to contribute and encouraging employee to obtain high motivation and effort (Huselid, 1995). On the other hand, HPWS also aims to produce positive employee outcomes through designing and organizing incentive programs for employees (Becker & Huselid, 1998). Consequently, employee perceptions toward HPWS presents an important role because it related to the employee discretionary effort (Den Hartog et al., 2012). So that when organization obtains a positive discretionary effort from their employees, the organization will have capabilities to encounter dynamic business environment (Bendickson et al.,

2016) also ready to compete in the global market (Suharnomo & Priyotomo, 2017).

Capabilities development programs and motivation enhancement able to provide competitive work environment, thus the organization possibly to obtain an engaged employee. So that organization able to enhance employees work performance, high work commitment, well-being, and reduce turnover rate (Aybas & Acar, 2017). Accordingly, Oliveira and Silva (2015) also drawn that human resource management practices designed to improve employees knowledge, capabilities, motivation, effort, and the willingness to contribute more to the organization. Employee knowledge particularly becomes an important aspect to maintain the organization toward continuously development (Prapti et al., 2021). Those relevant with premise that human resource management practices capable to enhance employee performance. Thereby, this research formulates a formula:

H1: HPWS has a positive relationship with WE

2.3 High-performance work systems and feeling trusted

HPWS implementation able to improve employee trust toward organization, because HPWS which is the embodiment of HR practices considered as a relevant signal from trust. Those happened because the satisfactory practices from HPWS seen as organization promoter toward psychological safety then drives to the mutual trust environment (Searle et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2019). Employee perceives being trusted by supervisor because they depict HPWS as a investment that given by supervisor to employees, so that feeling trusted by supervisor may be consequences from HPWS practices. Nevertheless, HPWS practices is not the only one factor to improve

the perception of feeling trusted by supervisor, but it depends how supervisors implement HPWS by creating a trusting work environment (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018). Based on this statement, the formula can be drawn as follows:

H2: HPWS has a positive relationship with FT

2.4 Feeling trusted and work engagement

Feeling trusted also become an important instrument to maintain performance development. According to Lau et al. (2014), feeling trusted positively impacted to organizational behavior. Moreover feeling trusted able to increase the sense of responsibility from each employee taxes (Salamon & Robinson, 2008), its because perceived trust from supervisors may increases the confidence level by employee (Suharnomo & Kartika, 2018). Based on this statement, the formula can be drawn as follows:

H3: FT has a positive relationship with WE

2.5 The mediation role of feeling trusted between high-performance work systems and work engagement

Previous studies proved that HPWS able to drive organization toward enhancement work engagement then improving organizational competitiveness (Aybas & Acar, 2017; Mihail et al., 2013; Oliveira & Silva, 2015). Feeling trusted also triggers the work engagement from employees. According to Lau et al. (2014), the enhancement of work engagement mechanism occurs when supervisors assigns some important work and depends on subordinates when in difficult situation. Hereinafter, feeling trusted capable to enhance individual positive outcomes through responsibility feelings at work (Salamon & Robinson, 2008). Based on this

statement, the formula can be drawn as follows:

H4: FT has a mediating effect on the relationship between HPWS and WE

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

The key respondents were contacted first to ask their availability joining the survey. After that they were asked about another potential respondent which meet the survey criteria that could join this survey. Furthermore, due to Covid-19 restrictions, questionnaire was distributed via electronic message between period of October 2020 until January 2021. Respondents in the study was

voluntary and they were confidential. This study conducted exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling with the reason that minimizing cost and time consumed (Etter & Perneger, 2000), it also optimally used in the pandemic condition.

3.2 Participants

A total of 200 questionnaire were distributed via electronic messages, and 129 agreed to participate, but 22 questionnaires did not qualify because they did not complete the survey content. Our final sample was 107, representing a response rate of 46.50%. The gender composition consisted between 49.53% female and 50.47% male, later their mean age was 32.74 (SD = 5.28).

Table 1. Demographic features

		<i>F</i>	(%)			<i>F</i>	(%)
Age	> 36 years	29	27.1	Education	High School	5	4.67
	31–36 years	32	29.91		Undergraduate	92	85.98
	25-30 years	40	37.38		Post-Graduate	10	9.35
	< 25 years	6	5.61	Tenure	1-5 years	34	31.78
Gender	Female	53	49.53		6-10 years	49	45.79
	Male	54	50.47		Above 10 years	24	22.43

Source: Author owns

Notes: *N* = 107

3.3 Measurements

This study used three self-reported scales to measure work engagement, feeling trusted, and high-performance work systems. All indicators within variables were translated form English into Bahasa Indonesia in order to gaining simple sentences, avoiding repetition nouns, and avoiding dual analogy (Brislin, 1970). Responses for all indicators were

measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (= completely disagree) to 7 (= completely agree). Furthermore, work engagement was assessed with the three items version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2019). Those items summarize all the dimension of UWES from previous namely vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Table 2. CR, AVE, MSV, ASV, and Inter-Scale Correlations for Variables

Variable	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	1	2
1 WE	0.95	0.88	0.08	0.08		
2 HPWS	0.75	0.28	0.11	0.09	(0.72)	
3 FT	0.82	0.34	0.11	0.09	(0.20)	(0.51)

Source: Author owns

Notes: ASV (Average Shared Variance); MSV (Maximum Shared Variance); AVE (Average Variance Extracted); CR (Composite Reliability); HPWS (High-Performance Work Systems); FT (Feeling Trusted); WE (Work Engagement); The inter-item correlations among constructs are represented by diagonal (Bold values).

** p < 0.01

The CR value from three variables, namely WE, HPWS, and FT are above 0.60 which above the accepted value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, the AVE value of HPWS (0.28) and FT (0.34) that are below the ideal value of 0.50. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE value within the area of the validity of the measurement model is

classified as a conservative estimation, so based on the CR value, the study is competent to conclude that convergent validity and construction are sufficient. Based on those statement, as a result that CR values of the two variables are above the minimum limit, the internal reliability regarding the measurement items is acceptable yet.

Table 3. Structural model fit indices

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	p	NFI	CFI	GFI	TLI	RMSEA
Hypothesized Model	26.089	24	1.09	0.35	0.92	0.99	0.94	0.99	0.03

Source : Author owns

Fit indices are above the minimum acknowledged threshold. For the good fit model, the normalized chi-square with degree of freedom (χ^2 / df) must not pass from five (Bentler, 1985), while the results in table 2 reveals the number 1.09 or < 5. Furthermore, the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative The Fit Index (CFI) and the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) must outpaced 0.9 (Bentler, 1985; Browne & Cudeck, 2016) while the results of the structural model of this study show that the TLI is 0.99, CFI is 0.99 and GFI is 0.94 where all three aspects displays good results or > 0.9. Moreover, the generally accepted value for Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) must not exceed than 0.05 (Browne

& Cudeck, 2016). Fortunately, this study reveals an appropriate number of 0.03 or < 0.05, so that the structural model fit value which is displayed in table 2 shows the adequate goodness-of-fit.

Furthermore, current study used cross-sectional design and self-reported questionnaire survey instrument, so potentially encounter common method bias problem. So that this study conducted Harman’s single factor test. The first factor explained only 28.62% of the variance, which was lower than 50% variance and indicates that there is no common method variance problem in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.4 Data Analysis

The direct relationship between HPWS and WE as well as whether FT mediates the direct relationship in this study was conducted by structural equation modelling (SEM). One-step mediation process to test the hypotheses from the mediator recommended by Hair et al. (2009). First this study employed the direct effect between HPWS and WE later than the second is to used mediation analysis (HPWS → FT → WE). The mediation analysis using SEM path analysis was used to determine

whether the mediation exist or not, and more than that to examine the type of mediation (i.e., fully or partially). Sobel-based mediation test was used in this study to assess the criteria of mediation, as follow: 1) If a, b, and c are significant but the result of direct coefficient value is $c < b$, entitled partial mediation; 2) If a and b are significant but c is not, entitled full mediation; 3) If a significant, b is significant, and also c is significant, but the value of coefficient is $c = b$, entitled not mediation; and last 4) If a or b or both are insignificant, entitled not mediation.

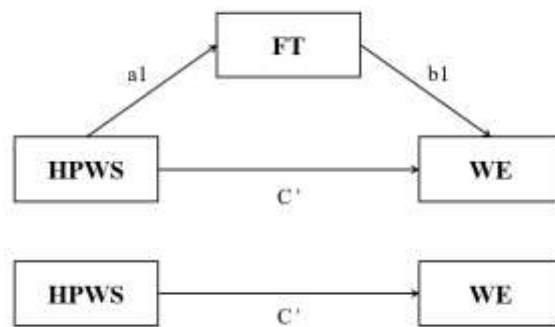


Figure 1. Theoretical model of mediation

3.5 Hypotheses Test

The results of SEM analysis are displayed in Figure 3, which reveals that HPWS is associated directly with WE ($\beta = 2.19$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that the implementation of HPWS in organization will encourage the level of work engagement. In addition, HPWS also positively affected FT ($\beta = 1.05$, $p < 0.05$), indicates that HPWS will

improve the feeling of trusted by supervisor. These results have proved hypotheses (H1 and H2), which indicates that there is a direct effect of HPWS on WE and FT. Furthermore, Figure 2 also reveals that FT negative not significant associated with WE ($\beta = -0.45$, $p > 0.05$), meaning that the feeling trusted by supervisor instead potentially diminish their work engagement. Those results have rejected hypotheses (H3).

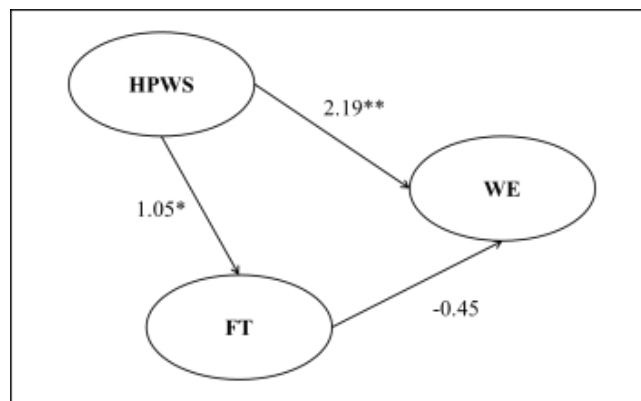


Figure 2. Hypothesis test results
** $p < 0.01$
* $p < 0.05$

According to the method from Hair et al. (2009), there are two statements that reveal no mediation if (a) significant, (b) is significant, and also (c) significant as well as if (a) or (b) both are insignificant. These draw evidence from the results in Figure 2, that feeling trusted failed to mediate both schemes that the effect of high-performance work systems on work engagement and feeling trusted on work engagement. Those results present that HPWS directly positively affected work engagement. Moreover, feeling trusted impacted negatively but not significantly on work engagement, hence these results have rejected the hypotheses (H4).

4. Findings

This research aims to propose a model that analyzes the influence of HPWS and FT on WE through KSB mechanism. Moreover, this study used employees as respondents from financial services companies.

4.1 Theoretical Implications

The results show that HPWS positively impacted work engagement, it proves with previous studies that drawn HPWS aims to improve employees' positive mood within several programs that adhered to boost employee work engagement (Huang et al., 2018; Oliveira & Silva, 2015). Likewise, HPWS also created a supportive work environment that eases the employee to adapt with work and organization dynamics, finally affecting the improvement of work engagement (Cooke et al., 2016). Well-supported work environment due to the existence of motivation-based, further impacted the work environment that is full of trust (Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2018), hence become

more committed to the organization's aims and goals. HPWS is able to build employee trust toward the organization, because HPWS is considered to become such a form of investment from the organization to their employees, so that the employee believes there is a trust from the supervisor or management (Searle et al., 2011; Ugwu et al., 2014). Those mechanisms have clearly been accommodated through social exchange theory between supervisor-subordinate relationships (Almadana et al., 2021).

Statistics show that the relationship between feeling trusted by the supervisor and work engagement is negative but not significant, meaning that the enhancement of feeling trusted potentially instead reduces work engagement. Feeling trusted by the supervisor was also found not to mediate the mechanism of HPWS-work engagement. Those results indicated that when the supervisor encounters difficulties and depends on their subordinate results, the employee's enthusiasm toward their jobs decreases, but not significantly. According to Lau et al. (2014), those mechanisms are caused when subordinates feel trusted by their supervisors, which results in the emergence of workload enhancement. At the same time, trust from the supervisor will increase employees' reputation, which directly impacts the responsibility to maintain reputation, those two essential of human activities in society (Perdhana, 2014), hence improves the level of employee exhaustion (Baer et al., 2015), those antithesis from work engagement (Conway et al., 2016). (Monks et al., 2013)

4.2 Practical Implications

According to the results from this study, several recommendations may be proposed regarding HPWS, feeling trusted by

supervisor, and work engagement mechanisms. First, organizations throughout their managers need to conduct HPWS maturely. For example, more clearly HRM manages employees job descriptions, the more employee work optimally, so they can maintain their engagement. Second, employees supervisors need to fairly-organized their relationships level and workload with each employee. Those strategies needed to anticipating the employee exhaustion from several employees. It follows with Baer et al. (2015) stated that the more managers spread their trust with their employees equally, the more decreasing the significance of the negative impact of feeling trusted by supervisor.

5. Limitations and Recommendations

This research has several limitations, first, the cause of this study used convenience sampling method, it potentially obtains data that not matched with the studies conceptual. For example, this research used the employees perceptions of HPWS, but we assumed that HPWS is appropriate for managers and top positions which they have better understanding regarding performance through HR practices. Secondly, electronic questionnaires potentially acquire biased data. It emerges the opportunity to obtain irrelevant respondents. Based on statement before, future research should concern to the preparation according to sampling methods. Furthermore, although this study conducted in multicultural country, unfortunately it excluded the cultural aspects, whereas culture is a crucial aspect to understanding and deepening human behavior (Suharnomo & Syahruramdhan, 2018). In addition, cultural aspects also related to feeling trusted by supervisor. In the current era, organizations have diverse cultures, so

that the study regarding trust mechanisms between supervisor-subordinate between different cultures is worth to emphasize.

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