Work Autonomy, Organizational Climate and Employee Engagement

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Meaningful interpretations of work environments by the employees play a significant role in satisfying psychological needs at work and are major engagement drivers. There has been a gap in research exploring multi-dimensionality of organizational climate, the extent to which organizations offer autonomy and empowerment to employees and generating consequences such as employee engagement. The current study explored these factors in relation to employee engagement. Dimensions of organizational climate chosen for the study were participation in decision making, supervisor's support, formalization, organizational goal clarity, innovation and flexibility, reflexivity, and pressure to produce. Organizational Climate Measure (Patterson et al., 2005), Work Autonomy Scale (Breaugh, 1985) and The ISA (Intellectual, Social and Affective) Engagement Scale (Soane et al., 2012) were administered on a convenient sample of 292 (215 males, 77 females) white-collar employees across Pakistan. Results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between participation in decision making, supervisor's support, innovation & flexibility, clarity of organizational goals, formalization and reflexivity, work autonomy and employee engagement. Results also indicated that pressure to produce had a strong negative correlation to participation in decision making, supervisor's support, innovation & flexibility, clarity of organizational goals, reflexivity and work autonomy. Furthermore, women in white-collar professions exhibited more employee engagement and perceived more work autonomy than men. The study carries implications for creating particular organizational environments to foster employee engagement at work.
Keywords: Work Autonomy, Employee Engagement, Organizational Climate, Participation in decision making, Supervisor's Support, Innovation & Flexibility, Formalization, Clarity of Organizational Goals, Pressure to Produce, Reflexivity

The amount of scientific research supporting the claim that an engaged employee is the key to highly innovative, productive and competitive organizations, has multiplied in past decades (Knight et al., 2017; Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). On the other hand, mainstream literature in organizational studies has argued that increased engaging behaviors (e.g., discretionary effort and time in work) are a result of employees' perception of reciprocal balance between their efforts and the supportive work environment (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014).

Employee Engagement is the employee's own choice to allocate their personal resources (i.e., cognitive, emotional, physical energy) to their work environment ((Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015). Positive employee attitudes, a happy workforce (Byrne et al., 2016), peak performance (Alfes, Truss, et al., 2013; Mackay et al., 2017) and success of organizational goals (Barrick et al., 2015) all have been linked to justify the importance of employee engagement. For this study, a three-dimensional employee engagement model was adopted from Soane et al. (2012). Based upon the importance given to the cognitive activity and its relationship to employee engagement throughout in previous research (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010), Soane et al. (2012) proposed the term *Intellectual Engagement* to capture the cognitive factor contributing to the performance of the engaged employee. The second dimension *social engagement* owed to earlier work by Kahn (1990) and other scholars (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Karanges et al., 2014) recognizing employee engagement as a result of social activity, mentioning connectedness and communication as a part of the work role. *Affective Engagement* was proposed in the backdrop of earlier work (Kahn, 1990; Crawford et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2011; Xanthopoulou et al., 2013; Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015) supporting the anticipated role of emotion in the engagement of a person.

Theoretical perspectives link employee engagement with surrounding organizational climate in different ways. Social-exchange theory suggests that employees are highly likely to respond reciprocally and repay their organizations in various ways as an act of exchange, to the resources (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Alfes, Shantz, et al., 2013) and treatment (Choi et al., 2015; Y.-H. Huang et al., 2016) they receive from their organizations. Job demands-resource theory holds that while job resources (e.g., characteristics in the job design which lead to work goals accomplishment) lead to high levels of employee engagement, job-demands (requirements of the job, which burdens the employee energies, e.g., workload and emotional strain) lead to low levels of employee engagement (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Organizational climate is the collection of conscious behaviors, consisting of shared feelings, perceptions, and attitudes, which may be positive or negative, but possesses the power to influence the behavior of employees (Barbera, 2014; Schneider et al., 2017). Ehrhart et al. (2013) concluded the term of organizational climate as a consensual agreement among members, regarding leadership style, human resource practices, and systems, established in the organization. How organizational culture is perceived by its employees influences their performance. For instance, a key component to employee engagement is the amount of support they receive from their working environment (Albrecht et al., 2018), and more importantly, how they perceive this support from various dimensions of organizational climate (Aninkan & Oyewole, 2014; Permarupan et al., 2013). Organizational climate is thus postulated as a domain-specific construct to be analyzed in the context of specific intended outcomes ((Peña-Suárez et al., 2013; Schneider et al., 2011, 2017) as high performance, positive psychosocial working conditions, health &safety, and innovation to stay competitive in business in the longer run (Kang et al., 2016; Torner, 2016; Shanker et al., 2017). Such competing demands generate pressures, which should be secured by approaching these tensions through multi-perspective organizational climate research (Torner, 2016; Schneider et al., 2017). For the current study, Participation in

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decision making, Supervisor's Support, Formalization (fixed work routines), Reflexivity (reflecting on group's objectives, strategies and processes concerning current or anticipated circumstances), Organizational Goal Clarity, Pressure to Produce, Innovation & Flexibility (freedom to conduct one's own work) were selected from the multi-dimensional construct of Organizational Climate by Patterson et al (2005) to see the relationship of various domains with the outcome of employee engagement.

Work Autonomy While organizational climate covers many aspects, an ample body of research finds work autonomy as another dimension strongly related to overall well-being and engagement of employee (Nie et al., 2015; Schüler et al., 2016). De Spiegelaere et al. (2016) and Vera et al. (2016) found out that work autonomy is a crucial element when we are trying to create a supportive work environment. Researches showed that internalization and integration features of the autonomous work experience should be there in order to create an effective and driving perception of the employee (Zhang et al., 2017; Heyns & Rothmann, 2018; Shin & Jeung, 2019). Internalization is created by making the task or work personally significant for employee and integration is transforming the self-view of the employee to create a sense of unity with the task; engagement increases as motivation to do work comes from the self -perception (Ahmed et al., 2017; Orth & Volmer, 2017).

Hackman & Oldham (1980) presented work autonomy as the two-dimensional concept. *Method autonomy* is the levels of discretion/ choice employees have to choose their preferred procedures to go about the work. *Scheduling autonomy* is the level of control employees feel to schedule/ sequence the timing of work activities. Breaugh (1985) added a third-dimension *criteria autonomy*- the level of choice of the employee to be able to choose the criteria on with performance should be evaluated.

Based upon the *self-determination theory* concerning the choices people make without external influences, increased levels of work autonomy leading to the increased levels of employee engagement have been observed (Deci et al., 2017; Rigby & Ryan, 2018). According to Garg & Dhar (2017), Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu (2018) and Saks (2019), employees show higher levels of engagement in their work as a sense of reciprocation (*social-exchange theory*) to the privilege of work autonomy. Chaudhary et al. (2011), Christian et al. (2011) and Menguc et al. (2013) also concluded a positive relationship of work autonomy and employee engagement due to the facilitation of resources (*job-demand theory*) for tasks allowing employees to invest more energy and personal effort in a work role.

As engagement is the result of perception and belief of employee about the give-and-take obligations sandwiched between the employee and the organization (Birtch et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2016), climates which support employee's career growth and self-fulfillment needs are expected to increase levels of engagement (Albrecht et al., 2018). Climate for autonomy is dependent upon the difference in people's cultural values. For instance, autonomy is positively associated with employee stress in eastern culture (e.g., China), demanding clear instructions from the mangers in collectivist and conforming cultures, and negatively related in western cultures (e.g., UK), where autonomy is equated with the opportunity for self-determination and individual's control over the job (Wu et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2018). Therefore, Hirst et al. (2008) and Rupp et al. (2018) concluded that the organizational climate, supportive of the autonomous work practices, will lead to prosperous consequences of organizational efficiency, only if they are harmonized with the appropriate settings as cultural values. Pakistan has one of the highest collectivistic cultures with autocratic

and conformity demanding social structures; nevertheless, globalization and exposures to organizational theory and practices that have had positive results may have their role in promoting autonomous environments. What dimensions of organizational climate would be positively related to employee engagement and the role of work autonomy in employee engagement in a highly collectivistic culture as Pakistan constitutes the focus of the present study.

This study aimed to explore the nature of relation between various dimensions of organizational climate (i.e., participation in decision making, supervisory support, formalization, innovation & flexibility, and pressure to produce), work autonomy and employee engagement amongst white-collar employees in Pakistan. Previous research shows that employees are more likely to engage in environments where they feel comfortable to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts freely (Hinkel & Allen, 2013; Tang et al., 2015; Eldor & Harpaz, 2016; Kim & Park, 2017), especially white-collar workers, as they may have less tolerance for micromanagement and organizational control (Najjar & Fares, 2017; Saraç et al., 2017; Schreurs et al., 2011) and they are more prone to switch jobs if not managed properly (Dyląg et al., 2013). Therefore, this study sampled the white-collar employees, in particular, to assess the facets of a supportive work environment that these specialized workers find engaging.

Furthermore, employees generally appreciate the decision making as a rewarding activity in itself and the tendency to reciprocate this favor, as put forward by the social-exchange theory, turns out to be the reason to engage them (Yoerger et al., 2015). Therefore, a positive relation between participation in decision making and employee engagement is predicted in the current study. Coherent with job-demand theory, increase in supervisor's support is likely to provide work-related knowledge (Buch et al., 2015) and may help to meet the job demands (Schaufeli, 2017; Van den Broeck et al., 2017), thus leading to a prediction of a positive relationship with employee engagement. Some researchers have also emphasized the importance of the presence of clear purpose to achieve and the clarity in the work goals and procedures, to make formalization of work in shaping a positive organizational climate (Buchwald et al., 2015; L. Huang et al., 2017). Therefore, in a highly collectivistic culture, a positive relationship of employee engagement with both clarity of goals and formalization is predicted. In contrast to western samples, Asian (collectivist cultures) studies have provided different results regarding autonomy and innovation in organizations. Jung et al. (2003), Cho & Xiang (2017), and Huang et al. (2018) found the negative relationship between autonomy and innovation, which can be explained by the difference of cultural values in collectivist cultures. On the other hand, flexibility is seen by some studies a strategic resource for innovation in organization, which balance the tug of war between control and change, as long as it is guided and aligned with the strategy and organizational goals (Schippers et al., 2008; Fida et al., 2015; Jena & Memon, 2018). Insofar as a supportive environment allows for personal space, time and freedom, a positive relationship is predicted between employee engagement and innovation and flexibility. The pressure to produce works both ways increasing the job demand on an employee due to high workload, time constraints and psychological resources to meet these work demands, and on the other side, it may stimulate the employee by providing challenges and learning opportunities (de Jonge et al., 2012; Holman et al., 2012). Kühnel et al. (2012) while studying the relationship between time pressure to work and engagement,

justified the argument of job-demand resource theory that pressure to produce, in the presence of job control (e.g., autonomy) is correlated to increased engagement in employees. Therefore, an increase in pressure to produce is less discomforting for employees in the presence of higher levels of work autonomy (Lopes et al., 2014). In the context of mixed evidence, the current study predicts a negative relationship between pressure to produce and employee engagement as theoretical background of self-determination theory emphasizing intrinsic motivation than external rewards or pressures, as well as other surrounding factors taken up in this research that imply a nurturing than pressurizing climate. Gender differences for autonomy and work engagement have rarely been prioritized in empirical studies and some researchers found no difference based on gender (Lee & Eissenstat, 2018). However, in this study significant gender differences were expected as some studies demonstrated males reporting higher levels of autonomy (Chang et al., 2015) and engagement (Suan & Nasurdin, 2016). Nonetheless, with the influx of a large number of qualified women in white-collar jobs, surprising differences among genders may also be expected (e.g., (Schaufeli et al., 2019), especially, when we consider a conformist society such as Pakistan, which is observing an increase in proportion of females signing up for complex jobs. In particular, the objectives of the study are as follows.

Objectives

1. To find out the relationship between organizational climate and employee engagement.
2. To find out the relationship between work autonomy and employee engagement.
3. To find out what dimensions of organizational climate predict employee engagement in Pakistani cultural context.
4. To find out whether work autonomy predicts employee engagement in the local cultural context.

Hypotheses

H1: Supportive organizational climate is linked to high levels of employee engagement so that

H1(a): Participation in decision making will have a significant positive correlation with employee engagement

H1(b): Supervisor's support will have significant positive correlation with employee engagement

H1(c): Innovation &flexibility will have a significant positive correlation with employee engagement.

H1(d): Clarity of organizational goals will have a significant positive correlation with employee engagement

H1(e): Pressure to produce will have a significant negative correlation with employee engagement

H1(f): Formalization will have a significant positive correlation with engagement of employees

H1(g): Reflexivity will have a significant positive correlation with engagement of employees

H2: Work autonomy will have a significant positive correlation with employee engagement.

H3: Males would show more autonomy and engagement and at work as compare to female white-collar employees.

Methodology

Research Design

A correlational research design was employed to determine relationships among organizational climate, work autonomy and employee engagement among Pakistani white-collar employees.

Sample

The sample of the present study comprised of a convenient sample of 292, men (N=215), women (N=77) white-collar employees -whose major tasks are cognitive, involving verbal and quantitative knowledge, data and information, etc.(Najjar & Fares, 2017), with ages ranging from 21- 60 years and above. Furthermore, to make online form more convenient for professionals, age brackets with 5-year intervals were used. Data was collected from various occupational sub-groups of white-collar employees, thus, most of the survey participants were IT personnel (e.g., software developers, computer programmers) and managers (e.g., finance, HR, marketing professionals). (See Table 1 for sample demographics).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N=292)

Variables	Categories	f (%)
Gender	Male	73.6
	Female	26.4
Age	21 to 25	22.9
	25 to 30	45.2
	31 to 35	19.2
	36 to 40	8.9
	41 to 45	1.0
	46 to 50	.7
	51 to 55	.7
	56 to 60	.3
	61 and above	1.0
Marital Status	Single	59.6
	Married	39.7
	Divorced	0.7
Family System	Nuclear	46.2
	Joint	53.8
Education	Bachelor's (14 Yrs. of education)	13.7
	Master's/ BS/BE/BBA (Hons.) (16 Yrs. of education)	58.9
	MPhil/ MS (18 Yrs. of education)	25.3
	Any Other (Professional Qualification)	2.1
Job Type	Permanent	81.8
	Contract	16.8
	Part-time	1.4
Job Role	Management	80.8
	Consultant	4.5
	Administrative Staff	6.2
	Self-employed/Partner	1.4
	Researcher	2.4
	Contractual Employee	4.8
Industry	Service	73.6
	Manufacturing	26.4
Overall Working	Less than 1 year	9.6

Experience	1 to 3 Yrs.	31.8
	4 to 6 Yrs.	25.7
	7 to 9 Yrs.	8.6
	10 Yrs. or above	24.3
Tenure with Current Organization	Less than 1 year	39.0
	1 to 3 Yrs.	41.4
	4 to 6 Yrs.	9.9
	7 to 9 Yrs.	4.5
	10 Yrs. or above	5.1

Note. f= Frequency; %= Percentage

Measures

Following are the assessment tools used to collect data for this research. English versions of all scales were used for this research.

Demographics Questionnaire The demographic sheet comprised of 10 questions. These questions were related to gender, age, marital status, family system, educational background, industry in which participants were employed, job type and role in the current organization, duration of the current job as well as the overall experience.

Organizational Climate Measure (Patterson et al., 2005) As Patterson et al., (2005) note**,** it is unlikely that researchers will be interested in all the dimensions of Organizational Climate at once(Patterson et al., 2005), so the multidimensionality of the questionnaire (i.e., 4 quadrants and 17 scales) put it at the advantage to use it as per requirements of the study. Researchers might want to measure dimensions related to their interests and research questions due to two major factors; (a) Applying all 17 scales will make the logistics of the administration, and evaluation of resulting data from the questionnaire too cumbersome, (b) It will also indicate the lack of theoretical focus (Patterson et al., 2005). Therefore, the emphasis on the use of questionnaire in a "more refined way by selecting scales most applicable to the research question being posed" (Patterson et al., 2005, p. 399). There is a long list of research studies (e.g., Ancarani, Di Mauro, & Giammanco, 2009; Weng, McElroy, Morrow, & Liu, 2010; Remneland-Wikhamn & Wikhamn, 2011; Davenport, Dalle Mule, & Lucker, 2014; Kang, Matusik, Kim, & Phillips, 2016 and more), where researchers have chosen the quadrants as well as scales according to the needs of study and the theoretical approach they were using. Seven scales, each to be rated on a 4-point likert rating were used in the study. These were Participation in Decision Making, Supervisor's Support, Innovations & Flexibility, Reflexivity, Clarity of Organizational Goals, Pressure to Produce and Formalization.

Work Autonomy Scale (Breaugh, 1985) This measure consists of three sub-dimensions with three items (7-point Likert Scale) each. Internal Consistency alpha values were high on all three dimensions; Method Autonomy (.90), Scheduling Autonomy (.90), and Criteria Autonomy (.84). Scores were computed by summing responses across items; no reverse coding is used in this measure.

ISA Employee Engagement Scale (Soane et al., 2012) The ISA (Intellectual, Social and Affective) Engagement Scale consists of three sub-dimensions with three items (7-point Likert Scale) each. Cronbach's Alpha showed high levels of internal consistency for all dimensions; Intellectual Engagement (.92), Social Engagement (.89), and Affective Engagement (.89). Scores were computed by summing responses across items with no reverse coding.

Procedure

Data were collected using the online questionnaire, developed on Google Forms. Links to the online questionnaire were shared to selected LinkedIn connections via personal message. There were no missing items due to mandatory lock algorithms by Google Forms; this way survey was only submitted if all mandatory items were filled.

A total of 1600 white-collar employees across Pakistan were requested via personal message, containing purpose of study, instruction and confidentiality assurance, to participate in the study and submit their response. 292 responses were received. Participants were thanked after the submission of response for their contribution to the study.

Results

Reliability of all the measures was analyzed to check the internal consistency of items and ranged from moderate to high (See Table 2).

Table 2
Psychometric Properties of the study scales (N =292)

Scale	k	M (SD)	α
Participation in Decision Making	6	15.69 (3.38)	.75
Supervisor's Support	5	14.89 (3.02)	.88
Innovations and Flexibility	6	16.34 (3.76)	.88
Clarity of Organizational Goals	5	13.85 (3.08)	.85
Pressure to Produce	5	13.05 (2.43)	.60
Formalization	5	13.68 (2.37)	.55
Reflexivity	4	13.87 (2.83)	.83
Work Autonomy	9	43.52 (12.63)	.93
Employee Engagement	9	50.45 (9.71)	.90

Note: k=number of items, M= mean, SD=standard deviation, α=Cronbach's Alpha

Pearson correlation was used to investigate the relationship between dimensions of Organizational Climate, Work Autonomy and Employee Engagement (See Table 3).

Table 3
Inter-correlation among Participation in decision making, Supervisor's Support, Innovation & Flexibility, Clarity of Organizational Goals, Pressure to Produce, Formalization and Reflexivity, Work Autonomy and Employee Engagement (N=292)

Variables	SS	I & F	COG	PTP	FOR	REF	WA	EE
PDM	.43**	.48**	.49**	-.36**	.19**	.42**	.38**	.38**
SS	-	.61**	.51**	-.27**	.17*	.56**	.48**	.47**
I & F		-	.57**	-.33**	.16**	.65**	.52**	.45**
COG			-	-.32**	.26**	.59**	.46**	.42**
PTP				-	.03	-.25**	-.28**	-.18**

Variables	SS	I & F	COG	PTP	FOR	REF	WA	EE
FOR					-	.14*	.04	.14*
REF						-	.60**	.54**
WA							-	.54**

Note. **=.01, *=.05, PDM= Participation in Decision Making, SS= Supervisor's Support, I&F= Innovation & Flexibility, COG= Clarity of Organizational Goals, PTP= Pressure to Produce, FOR= Formalization, REF= Reflexivity, WA= Work Autonomy, EE= Employee Engagement

Results indicated significant positive correlations of employee engagement with work autonomy, participation in decision making, supervisor's support, formalization, reflexivity, innovation and flexibility and clarity of organizational goals supporting the predictions of Hypothesis1. Employee engagement showed a significant negative correlation with pressure to produce consistent with prediction in this regard. Work autonomy showed a significant negative correlation with pressure to produce and significant positive correlation with all the rest of aspects of organizational climate except formalization where the correlation was positive but not significant. There was also a non-significant correlation between pressure to produce and formalization.

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted with forward selection method yielded a four-variable model in which Work Autonomy, Reflexivity, Supervisor's Support and Participation in Decision Making were statistically significant in predicting employee engagement. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Summary of multiple hierarchical regression with forward selection method to predict the Participation in decision making, Supervisor's Support, Innovation & Flexibility, Clarity of Organizational Goals, Pressure to Produce, Formalization, Reflexivity and Work Autonomy on Employee Engagement (N = 292)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Work Autonomy	.42	.04	.54	.26	.05	.34	.23	.05	.30	.22	.05	.29
Reflexivity				1.15	.20	.33	.88	.22	.26	.81	.22	.24
Supervisor's Support							.57	.18	.18	.49	.19	.19
Participation										.30	.15	.11
	$F (1,290) = 121.23, p < .001$			$F (2,289) = 83.51, p < .001$			$F (3,288) = 60.63, p < .001$			$F (4,287) = 46.95, p < .001$		
	$R^2 = .29, p < .001$			$R^2 = .37, p < .001$			$R^2 = .39, p = .002$			$R^2 = .40, p = .046$		

Note: SE = Standard Error, β = Beta

The value of R^2 indicated that work autonomy can explain 29% variance in employee engagement, ($F (1,290) = 121.23, p< .001$). Work Autonomy was found to be the most significant predictor, β = .42, $t = 11.01, p< .001$, of Employee Engagement. In Model 2nd, Reflexivity was added secondly. The value of R^2 indicated that 37% variance in employee engagement can be explained by the model 2, ($F (2,289) = 83.51, p< .001$). R^2 change indicated that Reflexivity can explain 8% variance in Employee Engagement while controlling for the Work Autonomy. In the 3rd Model, Supervisor's Support was added. The value of R^2 indicated that 39% variance in Employee Engagement can be explained by the Work Autonomy, Reflexivity and Supervisor's Support combined, ($F (3,288) = 60.63, p< .001$). R^2 change indicated that Supervisor's Support can explain 2% variance in Employee Engagement while controlling for the Work Autonomy and Reflexivity.

In the 4th Model, Participation in Decision Making was added. The value of R^2 indicated that 40% variance in Employee Engagement can be explained by the Work Autonomy, Reflexivity, Supervisor's Support and Participation in Decision Making combined, ($F (4,287) = 46.95, p< .001$). R^2 change indicated that Participation in Decision Making can explain 1% variance in Employee Engagement while controlling for the Work Autonomy, Reflexivity and Supervisor's Support.

Mean scores of both genders (male and female) on all variables (Participation in decision making, Supervisor's Support, Innovation & Flexibility, Clarity of Organizational Goals, Pressure to Produce, Formalization, Reflexivity, Work Autonomy, and Employee Engagement) were compared by using independent sample *t*-test. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Independent Sample t-test to find out Gender Differences in all variables (N=292)

	Men (n=215)	Women (n=77)	t (290)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M (SD)	M (SD)			LL	UL	
Participation in Decision Making	15.58 (3.33)	16.01 (3.51)	-.97	.332	-1.32	.45	.12
Supervisor's Support	14.71 (3.07)	15.38 (2.85)	-1.66	.098	-1.45	.12	.23
Innovations and Flexibility	16.22 (3.72)	16.68 (3.90)	-.90	.367	-1.44	.10	.12
Clarity of Organizational Goals	13.72 (3.05)	14.21 (3.16)	-1.20	.230	-1.30	.53	.16
Pressure to Produce	12.99 (2.35)	13.25 (2.42)	-.81	.421	-.90	.38	.11
Formalization	13.55 (2.35)	14.06 (2.39)	-1.65	.101	-1.13	.10	.02
Reflexivity	13.73 (2.88)	14.25 (2.67)	-1.36	.174	-1.25	.23	.25
Work Autonomy	42.53 (12.60)	46.27 (12.40)	-2.24	.026	-7.02	-.46	.30
Employee Engagement	49.87 (10.33)	52.08 (7.54)	-1.99	.048	-4.40	-.02	.24

Note: *M= mean, SD=standard deviation, CI=confidence intervals, LL=Lower Limit, UL=Upper Limit*

Results indicated a statistically significant difference between mean scores of males and females on work autonomy and employee engagement supporting Hypothesis 3. Cohen's *d* (1998) values were very large indicating significant differences in deviations from the mean across both groups (males and females). Mean scores revealed that males (*M*=42.53, *SD*=12.60) perceive lower levels of autonomy at work than females (*M*=46.27, *SD*=12.40). Further, males (*M*=49.87, *SD*=10.33) show lower levels of engagement at their job as compare to females (*M*=52.08, *SD*=7.54). Overall, the results supported Hypothesis 1 of a supportive organizational environment to be linked with higher levels of employee engagement and the predictive role of its various dimensions as reflexivity, supervisor's support and participation in decision making. Hypothesis 2 of higher levels of work autonomy to be highly correlated with employee engagement was also supported and autonomy turned out to be the most significant predictor of the former as well. Significant gender differences on work autonomy supporting Hypothesis 3 showed women to be more engaged in their jobs and experience more work autonomy than men.

Discussion

The present research was conducted to study the relationship among organizational climate, work autonomy and employee engagement. Following the job demand-resource theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), the results supported the concept of organizational climate as a job resource (Albrecht et al., 2015), depicting a collective perception of work environment as an antecedent to favorable outcomes. Besides, this study also strengthens the findings of Ancarani et al. (2018) that the construct of organizational climate works as a manifold phenomenon (Patterson et al., 2005) consisting of different sub-dimensions that play their part at different levels in shaping the workplace.

Participation in Decision Making was found a significant predictor of employee engagement aligning with the findings of Hinkel & Allen (2013), Yoerger et al. (2015) and Ancarani et al. (2018). This study lines up with previous studies that employees find the opportunities to participate in the process

of decision-making as valuable and rewarding (Benn et al., 2015; Yoerger et al., 2015).

The findings of the current study also confirm the past studies (Swanberg et al., 2011; Vera et al., 2016; Holland et al., 2017) regarding the role and importance of supervisor's behavior toward employees. This study also put forward a unique perspective in the manner that employees whose work is knowledge and expertise intensive are strongly influenced by the support of their supervisor/ immediate manager.

The pressure to produce was not only negatively correlated with employee engagement but also with the significant correlates (Innovation & Flexibility, Clarity of Organizational Goals, Formalization) and predictors (Work Autonomy, Participation in Decision Making, Supervisor's support and Reflexivity) of engagement. These findings of the study were supported by other models in the literature. According to Job Demand Resource Theory (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014), the pressure to produce places demands on the employee and is positively associated with burnout which is established to be the contrast of engagement by various studies (Montgomery et al., 2015; Schaufeli, 2017). Additionally, the negative correlation of Pressure to Produce with employee empowerment indicators (e.g., Participation in Decision Making, Work Autonomy) also communicated that increased work pressure reduces not only employee perception of autonomy at their job but may also contribute to restricting the opportunities for employees to involve in the decision-making process, resulting in decreased engagement.

Although Innovation & flexibility dimension was found to be significantly correlated with employee engagement, the stepwise regression model in this study did not find it to be the significant predictor of engagement. However, research literature provides evidence of the predictive power of perceived flexibility at work (Jena & Memon, 2018; Ugargol & Patrick, 2018).The reason for conflicting results in the current study can be associated to the difference in cultural values as compare to western samples where flexibility is equated with empowerment, and research comprising eastern (collectivist cultures) concluded otherwise (Jung et al., 2003; Zheng & Tian, 2019). The reason for this may lie in the image of leaders/managers, in collectivist cultures, who have a clear vision and convey about how the job should be done.

The current results did not find clarity of organizational goals as a significant predictor of engagement of employees although other studies (Davis & Stazyk, 2015; Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2016) did support the proposition. How employees translate organizational goals as personally stimulating may be incorporated in future research projects to further investigate this relationship.

Formalization, although was observed to be statistically significantly correlated to employee engagement was non-significant as a predictor. The reason may be its insignificant relationship with both work autonomy (the most significant predictor) and also with pressure to produce (the negatively correlated dimension of organizational climate). Formalization has a significant role in dynamic work environments. Formalization is either taken as a drawback or as a pathology of organizations (Rockart & Mitchell, 2009; Gagné & Bhave, 2011) or as a phenomenon to facilitate work activities, increase coordination and facilitate interdependent teamwork (Juillerat, 2010; Rand & Torm, 2012). A strong correlation prompts for further investigating the surrounding environments that present formalization as a motivator.

The study also supported a positive relationship between Reflexivity and Employee Engagement. Reflexivity was found to be the second-best predictor for employee engagement next to work autonomy. These results emphasized on the significance of human concern to adapt to their environment by reviewing their work goals, methods, achievements and reflecting upon previously set objectives, strategies and chosen work procedures (Gorli et al., 2015; Schippers et al., 2017). Even though there is a deficiency in the literature regarding exclusive researches exploring the relationship of engagement with reflexivity, some studies have concluded that reflexivity is a significant predictor of desirable outputs in work and organizational studies, e.g., team efficiency and effectiveness (Carmeli et al., 2013; Konradt et al., 2016), diversity management (Bouten-Pinto, 2016), innovation in organizations (Farnese et al., 2016) and job performance (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2017), which can be referred as consequences of employee engagement. Reflexivity was also found to be positively correlated to constructs (e.g., Participation in Decision Making, Work Autonomy, Innovation, and Flexibility) which are crucial to promoting employee empowerment and discretion at work. This shows that reflexivity is the vital requirement in dynamic and continuous learning work conditions (Schippers et al., 2015; Farnese & Livi, 2016; Pihkala & Karasti, 2016), specifically when we want to engage the white-collar employees, whose work is knowledge-intensive, unstructured and non-routine. The negative correlation of Reflexivity with Pressure to produce demonstrated that in demanding working conditions, there is little room left for employees to ponder upon their objectives, strategies, and progress. This reflection is a particularly important factor when we are considering the effective execution of work projects (Konradt et al., 2016; Schippers et al., 2017).

A highly significant positive correlation between dimensions of Organizational Climate and work autonomy also signposted the importance of different factors influencing employee discretion at work environment involved in the promotion of autonomous behavior. These findings corroborated the prior literature on work autonomy and participation in decision making (Han et al., 2010; Volmer et al., 2012), supervisor's support (Gillet et al., 2013; Park & Jang, 2017), innovation & flexibility (Cai et al., 2013; Orth & Volmer, 2017), clarity of organizational goals (Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2016; Patanakul et al., 2016).

A unique contribution of this study is the confirmation of positive association between Reflexivity and Work Autonomy, for the reason that a thorough literature search didn't offer any preceding study confirming a strong correlation between these two constructs. Moreover, these two constructs were found to be the most significant predictors of Employee Engagement in this exploration. It can be concluded that the tendency of organizational climate to facilitate the reflection, upon the tasks that they have completed and identify ways to improve performance (Pihkala & Karasti, 2016), is as crucial as the facilitation of the work environment to adopt autonomous practices, for employees who are involved in innovative, complex, and unstructured work roles and responsibilities (De Spiegelaere et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017), in order to increase their engagement levels at work.

Another major hypothesis of this study which emanated as expected was the strong positive correlation between Work Autonomy and Employee Engagement. Regression analysis strengthened the significance of Work Autonomy in engaging white-collar employees. As the strongest predictor in the model, it showed that autonomous work practices should be adopted by organizations as well as managers to increase engagement levels of employees. Shantz et al. (2013), Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2014), Zhang et al. (2017), Orth & Volmer (2017), and various other studies concluded this strong relationship between autonomy and engagement by studying variety of organizational aspects and contexts.

Results also gave insight into group differences that females feel more work autonomy than males, which is leading to higher engagement in female white-collar employees as compared to males. Enns et al. (2015) contrastingly to the findings of this study displayed fewer perceptual levels of work autonomy in females. However, Bakker & Xanthopoulou (2013) and Chang et al. (2015) further established with reference to higher levels of perceived autonomy by females in substantively complex jobs, which endorsed results of this study as females who partaken were knowledge workers, dealing with non-routine and unstructured work responsibilities. Bakker & Xanthopoulou (2013), Albdour & Altarawneh (2014), and Lu et al. (2016) studying employee engagement also supported the results of this study by displaying the higher levels of engagement in females as compared to males.

Limitations and Suggestions

The study met some limitations. Firstly, it was a cross-sectional study, hence there is a need for the longitudinal design of measurements. Assessments across time span can give a better understanding of changes in variables, for instance, changes in organizational goals and their clarity as well as changing trends in participation in decision making that are associated with employee engagement.

Secondly, involving all these measures in one study resulted in a long questionnaire, including demographics, for participants that might lead to boredom or time taking for

busy professionals, who were the focus of this study. Thus, the use of a short questionnaire is recommended to maintain the interest of the subjects.

Another major point was the use of a self-report questionnaire, which may depict employee perception of the situation, or there may be chances of primacy and recency effects influencing the responses of participants.

One more limitation of the study was the limited number of organizational climate dimensions. It may be effective and comprehensive to use more aspects and factors comprising climate of the organization to get a better more inclusive picture of variables in work environment influencing the employee engagement.

Implications

The study provides empirical support for the influencing factors in a climate of the organization, work autonomy and their interpretation by employees on engagement levels. Practical implications of this study are very wide, from the organizational level to individual job design and immediate manager level. Higher management and executives of the organizations can identify which areas of the work environment to focus on and what changes should be made on macro-level to keep employees engaged. HR and people managers can set their objectives and plan employee relations and design jobs keeping in mind the needs of employees to participate in decision making, reflect upon their objective, strategies, and progress at work. Immediate managers/ supervisors should (a) prioritize to include subordinates in decision making, grant them increased possible levels of autonomy especially if sub-ordinates are white-collar employees (b) support, help and encourage subordinates to involve in reflective process on their work, so employees feel control over their tasks and responsibilities (c) consider the levels of work pressure employees are facing and should create a balanced job structure and assignments to avoid burnouts and increase engagement. Organizational change agents can use the findings of the study to access, evaluate, and intervene the high impact areas of organizational climate which matters most in order to make the change-making process more target-oriented and effective.

Conclusion

This study showed that Work Autonomy, Reflexivity, Supervisor's Support, and Participation in decision making have a positive impact on Employee Engagement. Findings of the study supported previous literature regarding the positive influence of Work Autonomy, Participation in decision making and Supervisory support, but also uniquely contributed about the positive impact of Reflexivity on Employee Engagement. Meanwhile, the negative impact of Pressure to Produce on Employee Engagement was consistent with previous researches studying Burnout and Job Demand-Resources models. Group differences between genders showed that females in white-collar work roles were found to be more engaged due to perceived autonomy at work as compared to males. Hence, the researchers conclude that supportive aspects of organizational climate and autonomy at work leads to high engagement in employees.

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