

# Resilience and Organizational Trust as Correlates of Work Engagement among Health Workers in Makurdi Metropolis

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## Abstract

Work engagement has received a great deal of attention among researchers in the recent years. It is often extolled as a key to organisational success and competitive advantage. Researchers in their various attempts have tried to link work engagement with different antecedents. In the same direction, the present study investigated resilience and organisational trust as correlates of work engagement among 202 health workers within the age range of 18-48 years in Makurdi metropolis of Benue State. Gender differences on work engagement were also examined. Data were collected using the Resilience Scale (RS), Organizational Trust Scale (OTS), and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed that resilience has a significant positive relationship with work engagement ( $p < .01$ ) while Organizational trust did not significantly relate with Work Engagement ( $p > .05$ ). The independent t-test also revealed no significant difference between male and female health workers in their work engagement ( $p > .05$ ). The implications for management of health institutions were discussed and recommendations were made.

**Keywords:** Resilience, Organisational Trust, Work Engagement, Health Workers

## 1 Introduction

In order to compete effectively in the contemporary world of work, organisations need employees who are psychologically connected and fully engaged in their work roles. Indeed, Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) claim that engagement is essential in the contemporary organizations given the many challenges they face. In addition, Macey, Schneider, Barbera and Young (2009) argued that organizations can gain a competitive advantage through increasing work engagement. It has often been extolled as the key to an organization's success and competitiveness as it leads to higher levels of performance and productivity (Mone & London, 2010).

There are however some reports that work engagement has been on the decline and there is a deepening disengagement among employees (Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006), stressing the importance of research on the construct in the contemporary organisations. For this reason, researchers have turned their searchlight to work engagement and its possible antecedents in recent times. Thus, work engagement has received a great deal of attention in organisational literature in the recent years. Macey and Schneider (2008) noted that there is a general agreement that work engagement is desirable, has an organizational purpose, and has both psychological and behavioral facets which involve energy, enthusiasm, and focused effort.

Although work engagement has been shown to predict not only favorable employee outcomes but organizational success and financial performance (Saks, 2006), Nigerian health workers in recent times have displayed negative attitude to work engagement. This negative attitude of health workers to work is evident in the incessant strikes by health practitioners and high emphasis been placed on economic benefits rather than the work itself, thus, compromising the health and lives of the citizenry. It has therefore become imperative to investigate the correlates of work engagement among health workers so as to suggest ways of enhancing this desirable work behaviour among them.

Many organizational and individual factors may be related to work engagement. For instance, researchers argue that resilience and organizational trust promote work engagement among workers in an organization (Othman, Ghazali & Ahmad, 2013; Moon, Park, & Jung, 2013; Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2014). According to Wagnild (2009), once a person understands how to respond to the many challenges of life with resilience, difficult times are not so overwhelming, defeating, or potentially destructive. People with resilience are able to respond to these difficulties with courage and emotional stamina, even in the presence of fear (Wagnild, 2009). Highly resilient individuals possess the type of attributes that employers look for in their employees; the type of attributes which, in part, may account for an overall increase in work engagement. Individuals who are resilient show more emotional stability when faced with adversity; are more flexible to changing demands, and are open to new experiences (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). Following its importance in organisations, Moon, Park, and Jung (2013) recommended that nursing departments and nurse managers should strive to develop programs for the promotion of resilience.

In the same vein, the presence of trust in the workplace is essential to organisational performance and competitiveness in an increasingly global economy. Research has demonstrated that an organisation's ability to develop trusting relationships is an increasingly important source of competitive advantage (Lamsa & Pucetaite, 2006). Individuals want to work in an environment of trust and respect where they have the ability to make

contributions to the organizational goals and objectives. An organizational climate of trust enables employees to surface their ideas and feelings, use each other as resources, and learn together.

Drawing from this brief background, resilience and organisational trust are constructs that have potentials for bringing positive behavioural outcome in an organisation. It is against this backdrop that this study investigates resilience and organisational trust as correlates of work engagement among health workers in Makurdi metropolis.

## **2.1 Literature Review**

### **2.1.1 Work Engagement**

The concept of employee work engagement was introduced to the management literature over two decades ago. Kahn (1990), one of the foremost researchers to introduce the concept defines employee engagement as the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles. Since its conceptualization, employee engagement has enjoyed a high level of attention in the research literature. Everyday usage of the term 'engagement' refers to different things including involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, and energy (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

There is no agreement among scholars on a particular conceptualization of work engagement. Scholars often define engagement in terms of (1) organizational commitment, more particularly affective commitment (the emotional attachment to the organization), continuance commitment (the desire to stay with the organization), and (2) extrarole behaviour (discretionary behaviour that promotes the effective functioning of the organization). Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) therefore observed that the way practitioners conceptualize engagement risks confusing it with different constructs.

Harter (2009) simply defines work engagement as the involvement with and enthusiasm for work. In a more detail manner, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Finally, 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 & Bakker, 2004). In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. According to Marcum (2014), engagement occurs when people undertake tasks related to their competence, learn continuously, immerse themselves and persist because of the value they attribute to the work.

Employee engagement is a variable that has received and is increasingly receiving attention as a key determinant of employee performance (Macey, Schneider, Barbera & Young, 2009). Great workplaces are often characterized by the level of employee engagement. Studies suggest that fostering employee engagement will lead to higher levels of performance (Mone & London, 2010). Also, Hodges (2010) noted that one of the major contributions employee engagement makes to the management literature is its role in helping to explain business outcomes. He further observed that at least ten meta-analyses have been conducted to analyze relationships with performance measures such as customer loyalty, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, absenteeism, shrinkage, patient safety incidents, and quality. Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004) argue that engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. They therefore recommend that organizations must develop and nurture engagement, which is a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

Extant literature on employee engagement reveals that it has proximal organisational outcomes (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Richman, 2006). Given its huge benefits to the organization, the individual and organisational factors that influence work engagement need to be closely examined in attempt to foster its growth in the organisation. The present study is therefore, focused on investigating resilience and organisational trust as correlates of employee engagement.

### **2.1.2 Resilience and Work Engagement**

Resilience is a relatively new concept in management and psychological literature. Thus, Othman, Ghazali, and Ahmad (2013) noted the scanty nature of literature on the subject matter. Masten and Reed (2002) simply defined resilience as a positive reaction or adaptation process in situations of adversity. To Luthans (2002b), resilience is the positive psychological capacity to rebound or 'bounce back' from adversity, conflict, and failure or even positive events, progress, and increased responsibility.

Researchers and management practitioners argue that resilience has a significant relationship with positive organizational outcomes. For instance, Caverley (2005) reported that resilient employees exhibit low burnout and absenteeism rates. Resilient individuals possess a 'staunch acceptance of reality, a deep belief, often buttressed by strongly held values, that life is meaningful and an uncanny ability to improvise' (Coutu 2002). It

has also been suggested that resilient people are dogged people and can thrive and grow through setbacks and difficulties. It is construed as preservation of good functioning and outcome despite exposure to serious trauma or long-term adversity, but also as a precursor process that make successful adaptation and maintenance of competence possible (Masten, Best, & Garmezy 1990).

Empirical studies linking resilience and work engagement also report a positive relationship between the two variables. Othman, Ghazali, and Ahmad (2013) examined the relationship between resilience and work engagement. Their sample comprised of 305 staff nurses working in two public hospitals in Peninsular Malaysia. Statistical results using regression analysis indicated that resilience was positively related to work engagement. In a related manner, Moon, Park, and Jung (2013) examined effects of resilience on work engagement and burnout of clinical 182 nurses who worked in hospitals in “J” Province using a descriptive survey design. Results indicated that resilience had 26.3% of the influence on work engagement and 50.5% of the influence on burnout. Ugwu and Amazue (2014) in a similar study also found that resilience significantly predicted work engagement behaviour among teachers in South Eastern part of Nigeria. The researchers further argued that despite the negative feelings employees may have, resilient ones still have the resources to surge on and stay engaged.

### **2.1.3 Organisational Trust and Work Engagement**

Trust is another concept that has received attention in different areas of social science literature including psychology (Ratnasingham, 1998). Despite the vast amount of writings on trust and its related concepts, Ramo, (2004) noted that a “conceptual confusion” exists in the literature on trust. While trust is a concept in everyday colloquial use, it has proved notoriously difficult to define in the organizational literature (Connell & Mannion, 2006).

Despite the difficulty in defining the concept of trust, a comprehensive analysis of the literature reveals some consensus. Many researchers look at trust as the general confidence and optimism in occurring events or believing in others in the absence of compelling reasons to disbelieve (Smith & Birney, 2005). Trust is a psychological state that is based on dependency to reflect the coordination, positive beliefs and expectations and to assume risks and ambiguity between parties (Esen, 2011). Organizational trust involves the employees’ expectations about corporate relations and behaviours. It is organizational support given to employees by building and maintaining honest and sincere relations. Supporting employees, focusing on solving problems and forming organizational structures consistent with climate, help in developing and maintaining trust (Mishra & Morrissey, 1990). On the other hand, insensitive organizational practices, inappropriately high executive salaries, deficient working conditions, job insecurity, unfair practices contribute to decline in trust in organizations (Albrecht & Travaglione, 2003; Hartog, 2003).

Research indicates that as trust increases, social complexity in organizations falls. Moreover, trust increases strategic flexibility and supports greater organizational adaptability. Hence, levels of trust among organizational members assist in determining the effectiveness of collective action at both interpersonal and institutional levels (Smith and Birney, 2005). While trust is difficult to create, it can be easily and quickly destroyed. Thus, the building of intra and inter organizational trust requires broad relational vigilance, openness, commitment and respect which are attributes that few firms seem to be able to successfully manage or even endure (Dovey, 2009).

The establishment of trust within the organization is a worthwhile effort in organizations where work engagement is desired. To Ruppel and Harrington (2004), increasing trust will heighten employees’ willingness to take risks and will lead to greater creativity and work engagement. Thus, establishment of trust within the organization is a worthwhile effort in organizations where work engagement is desired (Ruppel & Harrington, 2004). Trust has been described as a fundamental ingredient for collaboration among organizations (Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998), and employees’ trust can be causally related to collaborative climates that encourage work engagement (Ruppel & Harrington, 2000).

Researchers have claimed that organisations that create a culture of mutual trust between management and employees are known for high performance. The high performing organizations according to Costigan and Berman (1988) have high trust among co-workers as well as among management because they empower their employees. This empowerment requires management to place trust in the workers to finish the task(s) they are assigned to complete. Hence, trust in supervisor has been reported to be positively correlated with a subordinate’s work engagement (Ellonen *et al.*, 2008). According to Chandler *et al.*, (2000), the uncertainty and complexity inherent in work engagement suggest that employee’s trust in management is central to the development of an innovation-supportive culture because trust enables people to take risks without fear of/ or undue penalty for failure.

A study on the relationship between organisational trust, psychological empowerment and employee engagement among 715 employees from seven commercial banks and four pharmaceutical companies in South-Eastern Nigeria found that organisational trust is a predictor of work engagement (Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2014). The result of this study indicates that organisational trust is a strong component of organisational intervention.

### 2.1.4 Gender and Work Engagement

There are some indications that work engagement is a gendered concept. Schaufeli and Baker (2003) indicated that men scored significantly higher than women in all three aspects of work engagement: Vigour, dedication and absorption. However, these differences were shown to be relatively small and therefore, lacked practical significance.

Similarly, Banihani, Lewis, and Syed (2013) integrated gender into the notion of work engagement in order to examine whether the notion of work engagement is gendered. Their study was based on a review of the literatures related to work engagement and gendered organisations. They found that work engagement is gendered concept as it is easier for men to demonstrate work engagement than for women. Ugwu (2013) also reported that among age, gender and occupational groups, only gender showed a significant difference in response to work engagement scale. These are indications that gender may also influence work engagement of employees in a way.

Following the review of literature on the subject matter, the following hypotheses were set in this study:

**Hypothesis 1:** There will be a significant relationship between resilience and work engagement.

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be a significant relationship between organizational trust and work engagement.

**Hypothesis 3:** There will be a significant sex difference on work engagement among health workers in Makurdi Metropolis.

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1 Design

This study is a cross sectional survey which allows for the collection of responses from health workers using questionnaires to determine whether or not, resilience and organizational trust predict work engagement.

### 3.2 Participants

The study consisted of 202 health workers sampled from General Hospital and Federal Medical Centre in Makurdi metropolis. Out of the participants, 106 (52.5%) were males, 91 (45.0%) were females and 5(2.5%) did not indicate their sex and their ages ranged from 18-48. A total of 86(42.6%) respondents were single at the time of collecting data, 86 (42.6%) were married, 16 (7.9%) of the respondents separated from their partners, 13(6.4%) lost their partners and 1(.5%) did not indicate their marital status. On their job categories, 45(22.3%) of the health workers were laboratory technicians, 52(25.7%) were medical doctors, 2(1.0%) were surgeons, 7(3.5%) were pharmacists while 96(47.6%) were general health practitioners.

### 3.3 Instruments

Data for this study were collected using three instruments: Resilience Scale (RS); Organizational Trust Scale (OTS); and, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).

**Resilience Scale (RS):** The resiliency scale was empirically developed years earlier, partly based on the questionnaire responses of individuals who had been separately identified as resilient via prototype-derived scores. High scores correspond with high levels of resiliency. A few of the items have reasonable face-validity (“I quickly get over and recover from being startled.”), but most are relatively subtle (“I like to take different paths to familiar places.”) (Block & Kremen, 1996). Items from both measures were interspersed and presented to participants as a single paper-and-pencil measure, using a four-point response scale ranging from 1 (disagree very strongly) to 4 (agree very strongly).

**Organizational Trust Index:** The Organizational Trust Index (OTI) measures organizational trust in five dimensions: Competence, openness and Honesty, concern for employees, reliability and identification. The Organizational Trust Index assists organizations of any size in understanding the crucial dimensions of trust in particular settings. The 29-item OTI has an excellent alpha reliability of .95, indicating that the instrument is stable over time and internally and externally consistent. Alpha reliabilities for the five subscales, each of which measures one dimension of trust, were also excellent, ranging from .85 to .90. The results of confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling provide strong evidence that the Organizational Trust Index is valid.

**Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES):** The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was used to collect data on work engagement in this study. The scale was developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). According to Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2004), the UWES is the most popular measure of engagement. The UWES consists of 17 items on the three underlying dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli 2007). The internal consistencies (Cronbach’s alpha) of the UWES-17 ranged between 0.75 and 0.83 for vigor, between 0.86 and 0.90 for dedication, and between 0.82 and 0.88 for absorption. Items are rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). High scores on this scale indicate high level of work engagement while low scores indicate low engagement.

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The Pearson product moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between resilience and work engagement as well as the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement. Also descriptive statistics such as frequencies and simple percentages were used in analysing demographic characteristics of the respondents.

## 4. Results

This study examined resilience and organizational trust as correlates of work engagement among health workers. Results obtained in this study are presented in the tables below.

**Table1: Pearson Correlation showing relationship between resilience and work engagement among health workers**

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	r	P
WE	202	26.67	6.67	200	.67	.000
Resilience	202	21.53	6.58			

The results presented in table 1 show a significant positive correlation between resilience and work engagement,  $r(df=200) = .67, p < .01$ ). This finding implies that higher level of resilience is likely to lead to higher level of work engagement. Based on this finding, hypothesis 1 in this study is confirmed.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation showing relationship between organizational trust and work engagement among health workers**

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	r	p
WE	202	10.41	2.77	200	-.10	.161
Org. trust	202	20.62	6.98			

The results presented in table 2 above show that there was no significant relationship between organizational trust and work engagement  $r(df=200) = -.10, p > .01$ ). This implies that organizational trust is not related to work engagement. This finding did not confirm the second hypothesis in this study as the result did not reach statistical significance.

**Table 3: Independent t test showing difference between male and female health workers on work engagement**

	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Std	df	t	P
Work engagement	Male	105	64.70	20.19	190	-.31	.754
	Female	87	65.57	17.70			

The results presented in Table 3 above indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female health workers on work engagement ( $t(df=190) = -.31, p > .05$ ). This means that both male and female health workers have almost the same level of work engagement. Therefore gender is not a correlate of work engagement. Based on this finding, research hypothesis 3 is not confirmed.

## 5.0 Discussion

This study examined resilience and organizational trust as correlates of work engagement among health workers. Data were collected and analysed using relevant statistical techniques.

It was found that there is a significant positive relationship between resilience and work engagement. This implies that the higher the level of resilience, the higher the level of work engagement of health workers. It further implies that health workers who have the potential to endure and overcome all forms of negative events in the organization tend to put up high level of work engagement. This finding further shows that resilient workers are psychologically connected to their work even in the face of challenges that would ordinarily discourage or serve as barriers to those who lack this virtue. Resilient workers operate on the principle that 'no mountain is insurmountable'. They are optimistic and always believe that nothing can frustrate them from achieving organizational goal. This finding is congruent with Othman, Ghazali, and Ahmad (2013) who found that resilience was positively related to work engagement. The finding also agrees with Ugwu and Amazue (2014) who also found that resilience predict work engagement behaviour among teachers in selected mission schools. In a nutshell, the current finding and the other previous ones point to the fact that resilient individuals show high level of work engagement.

It was also found in the study that no significant relationship exists between organizational trust and work engagement. This means that organizational trust is not likely to cause a change in the level of work engagement among health workers. In other words, organizational trust in the health sector does not lead to increase or decrease level of work engagement. This finding might be surprising because it contradicts the

expectation of a common man and even the findings of so many previous studies on the subject matter. This however, might be due to the dynamic nature of human behaviour. Human beings have the tendency to betray trust. Consequently, when organisations create environment of trust, it may rather pave way for many workers to engage less in their job simply because organization is friendly to them and they tend to betray the branch of olive extended to them by engaging more in personal assignments rather than what they should be doing for the organization. This finding is a clear demonstration of betrayal of trust both in our personal lives and in the work places.

As earlier mentioned, this finding contradicts findings by many other researchers such as Ruppel and Harrington (2000) who found a significant relationship between trust and work engagement. They argued that since trust was defined to be the willingness to assume risk, increasing trust will heighten employees' willingness to take risks and will lead to greater creativity and work engagement. They therefore submitted that the establishment of trust within the organization is a worthwhile effort in organizations where work engagement is desired. This finding also contradicts Ugwu, Onyishi, and Rodríguez-Sánchez, (2014) who found that organisational trust is a significant predictor of work engagement. The inconsistency in the current and previous findings is explained in relation to dynamic nature of human behaviour.

The third finding in this study revealed that there is no sex difference in work engagement. This implies that male and female workers show the same or almost the same level of work engagement. This finding is interesting as it goes a long way to account for why sex discrimination should be eliminated in the work place since male and female are the same in terms of work engagement. This result however contradicts several other findings including those of Schaufeli and Baker (2003) who indicated that men score higher than women in all three aspects of work engagement; Banihani, Lewis, and Syed (2013) who found that work engagement is gendered concept as it is easier for men to demonstrate work engagement than for women; and, Ugwu (2013) who also reported that among age, gender and occupational groups, only gender showed a significant difference in response to work engagement scale. This disagreement in finding demonstrates the need for further investigation on the role of gender in work engagement of employees.

The study concludes that resilience has strong positive relationship with work engagement. However, the relationship between organizational trust and work engagement and the role of gender need further investigation. Based on findings of this study, it is recommend that management of Health institutions should motivate resilient workers in order to sustain and promote work engagement and they should not only trust their workers, but also take a step further to monitor them and motivate them to put in their best to achieve organizational goals.

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