



***MEDIATING EFFECT OF MEANINGFUL WORK ON THE INFLUENCE
OF JOB RESOURCES, PERSONAL RESOURCES AND
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TOWARDS WORK
ENGAGEMENT***

ZAKI BIN ZAKARIA

FPP 2019 40



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By

ZAKI BIN ZAKARIA

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MEDIATING EFFECT OF MEANINGFUL WORK ON THE INFLUENCE OF JOB RESOURCES, PERSONAL RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TOWARDS WORK ENGAGEMENT

By

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August 2019

Chairman : Associate Professor Khairuddin Idris, PhD
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Having engaged workers are necessary to lead the way for the betterment of employees' and organizational performances. This is possible as engaged employees perform their duties with full of energy, passion and dedication. However, studies conducted worldwide revealed that majority of employees are falling under unengaged group. The same scenario happens among Malaysian employees. Thus, the main objective of this study is to determine the mediating effect of meaningful work on the influence of job resources, personal resources and transformational leadership towards work engagement among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia (PSDM). In this study, a research framework is being developed based on the combination of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, Khan's Theory of Psychological Condition of Engagement (KTPCE) and Transformational Leadership Style. Based on these theories, this study was conducted to determine whether job resources, personal resources and transformational leadership have significant influence on work engagement in the presence of meaningful work as the mediator.

This study adopted quantitative research paradigm in which data were collected from 364 respondents at Public Service Department of Malaysia (PSDM). The two identified working groups are Management & Professional Group and Implementer Group. In meeting all the five objectives of this study, a cross-sectional survey design was employed. The sample of this study was chosen by using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). The descriptive finding in answering objective one and two of the study confirmed that majority of employees at PSDM possessed high level of work

engagement, meaningful work, personal resources and transformational leadership. Only job resources have reported moderate level.

In answering objective three, four and five, SEM-AMOS analysis is being applied. For objective three, the result confirmed that personal resources and meaningful work have significant influence on work engagement. However, job resources and transformational leadership revealed non-significant result. In answering objective four, the result mentioned that job resources and personal resources have significant influence on meaningful work. However, transformational leadership produced non-significant result. For objective five, the mediating effect of meaningful work was tested using the bootstrapping technique. The result of the analysis indicated that meaningful work did mediate the influence of job resources and personal resources towards work engagement. Nevertheless, meaningful work did not mediate the influence of transformational leadership on work engagement. In conclusion, this study concluded that personal resources and meaningful work has direct influence towards work engagement. Meanwhile, job resources have indirect effect towards work engagement through meaningful work. On the other hand, transformational leadership reported non-significant influence towards work engagement in both direct relationship and mediation study.

This study contributed to the body of knowledge in terms of developing research framework from the context of public service in Malaysia. It also enriches the knowledge of meaningful work as mediator which is important from academic and public service perspective. More importantly, this study supports that both JD-R model and KTPCE theory are vital in increasing the level of work engagement among employees at PSDM. In addition, this study also highlighted the implications and recommendations for human resource development practitioners towards increasing the level of work engagement among employees in public service in Malaysia.

**Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah**

**PENGARUH PENGANTARA KERJA BERMAKNA DALAM HUBUNGAN
ANTARA SUMBER KERJA, SUMBER PERIBADI DAN KEPIMPINAN
TRANSFORMASI DENGAN KETERLIBATAN KERJA**

Oleh

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Ogos 2019

Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Khairuddin Idris, PhD
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Memiliki pekerja yang menunjukkan tahap keterlibatan yang tinggi adalah penting bagi meningkatkan prestasi individu dan organisasi. Ini disebabkan pekerja ini melaksanakan tugas dengan penuh iltizam, bersemangat dan berdedikasi. Walau bagaimanapun, kajian yang dijalankan di seluruh dunia memperolehi hasil dapatan bahawa kebanyakan pekerja menunjukkan tahap keterlibatan kerja yang rendah. Senario ini turut berlaku di Malaysia. Sehubungan itu, objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan kesan pengantara kerja bermakna dalam hubungan antara sumber kerja, sumber peribadi dan kepimpinan transformasi dengan keterlibatan kerja di kalangan pekerja di Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA). Kerangka utama kajian dibangunkan berdasarkan Model Tuntutan – Sumber Kerja, Teori Khan berhubung Keadaan Psikologi Keterlibatan dan Gaya Kepimpinan Transformasi. Berdasarkan teori dan model tersebut, kajian ini dijalankan untuk menentukan sama ada sumber kerja, sumber peribadi dan kepimpinan transformasi mempunyai hubungan dengan keterlibatan kerja bersandarkan kerja bermakna sebagai pemboleh ubah pengantara.

Kajian ini mengguna pakai pendekatan penyelidikan secara kuantitatif dengan kutipan data yang diperolehi daripada 364 responden di Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA). Dua kategori kumpulan pekerja yang terlibat iaitu kumpulan Pengurusan & Professional dan kumpulan Pelaksana. Bagi mencapai kesemua lima objektif kajian, reka bentuk kajian secara tinjauan keratan rentas telah digunakan. Sampel bagi kajian dipilih menggunakan teknik persampelan rawak berstrata setara. Analisa data dibuat melalui kaedah analisis deskriptif dan *Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)* menggunakan *Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS)*. Hasil analisis deskriptif bagi

menjawab objektif kajian satu dan dua mengesahkan bahawa majoriti pekerja di JPA mempunyai tahap yang tinggi bagi keterlibatan kerja, kerja bermakna, sumber peribadi dan kepimpinan transformasi. Hanya sumber kerja mencatatkan tahap yang sederhana.

Bagi menjawab objektif kajian ketiga, keempat dan kelima, dapatan analisa SEM-AMOS telah digunakan. Berhubung objektif ketiga, keputusan menunjukkan sumber peribadi dan kerja bermakna mempunyai hubungan secara langsung terhadap keterlibatan kerja. Walau bagaimanapun, sumber kerja dan kepimpinan transformasi didapati tidak mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan keterlibatan kerja. Untuk menjawab objektif keempat, dapatan kajian menunjukkan sumber kerja dan sumber peribadi mempunyai hubungan langsung dengan kerja bermakna. Namun begitu, kepimpinan transformasi merekodkan hubungan yang tidak signifikan. Mengenai objektif kelima, kesan pengantara kerja bermakna diuji dengan menggunakan kaedah *bootstrapping*. Keputusan menunjukkan kerja bermakna menjadi pengantara dalam hubungan sumber kerja dan sumber peribadi dengan keterlibatan kerja. Namun begitu, kerja bermakna tidak mempunyai kesan pengantara antara hubungan kepimpinan transformasi dengan keterlibatan kerja. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa sumber peribadi dan kerja bermakna mempunyai hubungan secara langsung dengan keterlibatan kerja. Sumber kerja pula hanya mempunyai hubungan secara tidak langsung melalui kerja bermakna sebagai pengantara. Sebaliknya, kepimpinan transformasi didapati tidak mempunyai hubungan secara langsung mahupun tidak langsung dengan keterlibatan kerja.

Kajian ini memberi sumbangan terhadap disiplin ilmu dalam membangunkan satu kerangka kerja terutamanya dalam konteks perkhidmatan awam di Malaysia. Ia juga menyumbang kepada penambahan ilmu pengetahuan berkaitan kerja bermakna sebagai pengantara dari perspektif akademik dan perkhidmatan awam. Dapatan kajian ini juga menyokong Model Tuntutan – Sumber Kerja dan Teori Khan berhubung Keadaan Psikologi Keterlibatan yang terbukti penting untuk meningkatkan tahap keterlibatan kerja di kalangan pekerja di JPA. Pada masa yang sama, kajian ini juga menerangkan tentang implikasi dan cadangan kepada pengamal Pembangunan Sumber Manusia untuk meningkatkan lagi tahap keterlibatan kerja di kalangan pekerja di sektor awam di Malaysia.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average of Variance Extracted
B&B	Broad & Broaden Theory
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
COR	Conservation of Resource Theory
CR	Construct Reliability
DCM	Demand Control Model
EPU	Economic Planning Unit
ETP	Economic Transformation Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGM	Greater Good Motivation
GSES	General Self Efficacy Scale
GTP	Government Transformation Programme
HMT	Herzberg Motivational Theory
HRD	Human Resource Development
JCM	Job Characteristic Model
JD-R	Job Demand-Resources
JDRS	Job Demand Resources Scale
JPA	<i>Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam</i>
ICU	Implementation Coordination Unit
IDC	International Data Corporation
IIM	Institute of Integrity Malaysia
INTAN	National Institute of Public Administration
KTPCE	Kahn's Theory on Psychological Conditions of Engagement
KPI	Key Performance Index

LOT-R	Life Orientation Test - Revised
MACC	Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission
MAMPU	Malaysia Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires
MW	Meaningful Work
NBOS	National Blue Ocean Strategy
NIP	National Integrity Plan
NKRA	National Key Result Area
NKEA	National Key Economic Area
NTA	National Transformation Agenda
PCB	Public Complaint Bureau
PM	Positive Meaning
PMD	Prime Minister Department
POB	Positive Organizational Behaviour
PSDM	Public Service Department of Malaysia
PST	Public Service Transformation
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SET	Social Exchange Theory
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
WAMI	The Work as Meaning Inventory

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the background of study that includes public service transformation framework, global engagement report on Malaysian employees and issues in Job Demands - Resources Model. Next sections inform statement of the problems, research objectives, significance of the study and limitation of the study. Finally, operational definitions of the key terms conclude the chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Employees are the backbone of any organization. They are perceived to be unique in a sense that they can heavily influence the performance of an organization even with the presence of modern technology. As employees nowadays have been exposed with creativity and innovative thinking, they are considered to be the most valuable asset should they are properly managed. Thus, employees that are engaged or display high level of work engagement in their daily jobs are considered as key indicator because they will give their best effort to meet the organizations' vision and mission. In this aspect, work engagement has gained the momentum for the concept is seen to offer numerous benefits of having highly engaged workforce. According to Simpson (2009), the positive impact of work engagement towards individual and organizational outcomes has attracted the attention of organization and business industries. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe the number of studies on work engagement that increase rapidly in the past two decade (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018).

It is the goal of every organization to have highly engaged workforce because the benefits of work engagement is huge. Bazigos and Harter (2016) highlighted research by McKinsey and Co that found work engagement to be the strong benchmark that denotes company's long-term image and performance. They also reported that higher level of work engagement will contribute significantly for various positive outcomes such as improving customer satisfaction, generate revenue growth and lead to higher productivity. In another research, Bakker, Demerouti and Sanz-Vergel (2014) stated that it is vital for public and private organizations to possess high level of work engagement since it will contribute to high creativity, organizational citizenship behaviour and improve overall task performance. Similarly, many earlier studies have also confirmed positive influence of work engagement on many positive organizational outcomes such as low turnover, high commitment,

strong financial result and improve organizational performances (Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005; Bates, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

For individual benefits, work engagement has been reported for multiple positive results namely low absenteeism and turnover, improved quality of work and health condition of employees (Baldoni, 2013). Work engagement can also stimulate employees to be more creative, innovative and entrepreneurial (Gawke, Gorgievski & Bakker, 2017). On top of that, an engaged employee is also found to be creative and stimulates bottom-up innovation at the workplace (Bazigos & Harter, 2016). In another related study, Schaufeli, Taris and Bakker (2006a) have conducted a survey among Dutch employees in which they found that work engagement has positive association with in-role performance while workaholic is not.

For public service employees, having high level of work engagement at workplace is important to record successful implementation of many government programmes and initiatives. This is in line with the responsibilities of Malaysian public service in negotiating, controlling, facilitating and performing various tasks that are related towards delivering efficient service deliveries for the whole nation. Specifically, public service is expected to play pertinent roles in fine-tuning the national economic and social initiatives (JPA, 2014a). In fact, the introduction of Government Transformation Programme (GTP) in 2009 is considered the biggest plan that includes all 25 ministries which aims at transforming the way public service agencies perform in order to improve service deliveries to Malaysians (GTP Roadmap, 2010).

In line with GTP, government has launched the National Transformation Agenda (NTA) to ensure the positive well-being of Malaysian through many programmes such as '1 Malaysia: People First, Performance Now', National Key Result Area (NKRA), Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) and National Key Economic Area (NKEA) in 2010. The main objective of these programmes is to enhance service delivery to people and speed up national development growth (GTP, 2010). As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the foundation of NTA is anchored by 10th and 11th Malaysia Plan (2010 – 2020) that pave ways for Malaysia to be a fully developed nation by the year 2020. In reaching this noble objective, GTP, ETP and 1 Malaysia concept are vital elements to ensure its success. All these special programmes require public service workforce to exhibit high level of work engagement in ensuring the successful implementation of these initiatives.



Source: GTP (2010)

Figure 1.1: National Transformation Agenda

On top of that, The Eleventh Malaysian Plan (2015) has seen the government to take another bold initiative by implementing National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) in the current Eleventh Malaysia Plan from the year 2016 till 2020. The main idea of NBOS is on strategic collaboration among various government agencies to implement many high impact national projects at low cost yet rapidly executed. More pragmatically, the 11th Malaysia Plan urges public sector employees to display strong focus and fully engaged in their role performance as the vision is to ensure a better Malaysia for all Malaysians. This is indeed an enormous task as this five-year-plan reaffirms government commitment towards fulfilling NTA that is based on prosperity and well-being of the citizens. Meaning to say, Rakyat or public will be the main centrepiece in the current Malaysian Plan. Specifically, it is different from previous Malaysian Plans in the essence of new concept of ‘people economy’ and more importantly, it will get the same priority as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and per-capita income. In achieving the objective of NBOS, public service employees are required to stay focused, dedicated and engaged in ensuring the successful implementation of this special initiative.

Furthermore, this is an era of public service transformation in which government staff are highly encouraged to apply creativity and innovative thinking to carry out their daily tasks. The intention of all these initiatives is clear; to ensure efficient service can be delivered to people at large within shorter time. Consequently, it can increase the overall public satisfaction towards performances of government agencies (JPA, 2014b). Therefore, it is high time for employees in the public service to get engaged by displaying high level of work engagement as they are expected to play

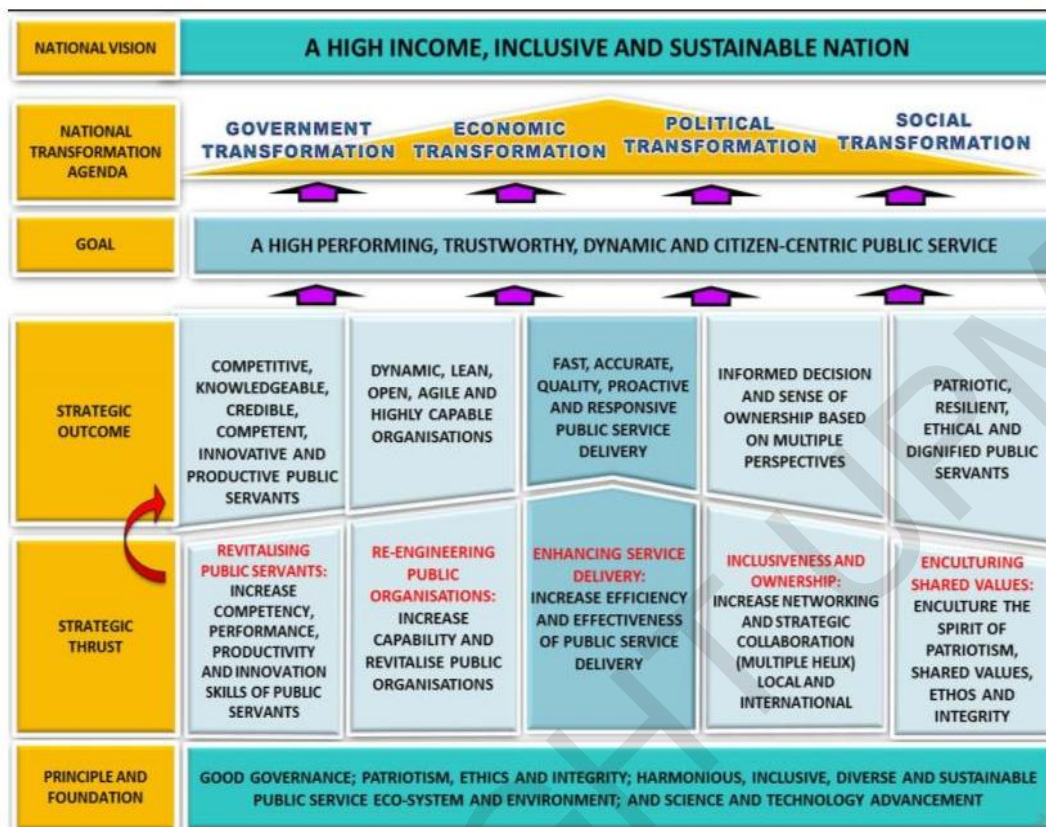
pertinent roles in implementing various transformation programmes that have been laid down by the government.

1.2.1 Public Service Transformation (PST) Framework

There are approximately 1.6 million government employees in Malaysia's public service that are scattered all over the country. It is indeed a huge number and generally, they are working either at federal, state, district or local authorities. In Malaysian public service, there are few government schemes that are sufficient to cater for specific job categories. Such schemes include security personnel (police and armed forces), educational sector (teachers and lecturers) and healthcare profession (medical staff and nurses). Excluding these job categories, the total number is left with 250,000 government employees that are working in 25 federal ministries, 770 public agencies, 13 state governments and 154 local authorities (New Straits Times, 2017).

In line with the NTA towards becoming a high-income developed nation by the year 2020, the Public Service Department of Malaysia (PSDM) has been given the mandate to lead the transformation of the public service. This was clearly mentioned by Chief Secretary to the Government (KSN) in his speech at the 13th Public Service Premier Gathering (MAPPA XIII) on 11th March 2013 at Putrajaya (INTAN, 2013). He stated that a new paradigm in the context of the national transformation requires public service to be more flexible and agile in delivering its services to the people. He subsequently announced that the public service transformation would be spearheaded by PSDM in order to ensure that the public service remains relevant and current.

Subsequently, PSDM has developed The Malaysian Public Service Transformation Framework (PSTF) in 2014. As shown in Figure 1.2, the main objective of PSTF is to set the direction for public service at all levels (federal, state and district) in order to attain the national vision of a high income, inclusive and sustainable nation. In this aspect, NTA will be the main highlight in which various transformation programmes involving government agencies, economy sector, political landscape and social well-being must be carried out successfully. This is necessary as public service will be the key player in NTA that needs them to remain competitive, fully engaged and resilience in realizing the objective of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020.



Source: JPA (2014b)

Figure 1.2: Public Service Transformation Framework

There are four main components of a PSTF; i) Public Service Transformation Framework; ii) Strategic Thrusts; iii) Strategic Measures; and iv) Initiatives and Quick Wins. For the first component, PSTF lays the foundation for the overall performance of public service in which certain principles must be uphold such as good governance, ethics, integrity, harmonious and inclusive. In the second component, there are five strategic thrusts that guide the implementation of public service transformation in government agencies. The third component deals with strategic outcome where each government agency has to detail out the actions that need to be taken in implementing the transformation programmes. The fourth component concerns the initiatives and quick wins. In brief, quick wins is the short term initiatives to start off the transformation program. After it is implemented, each government agencies is required to set up transformation action plan to monitor the implementation of the proposed initiatives. The main idea of this approach is to highlight the identified initiatives that will become quick win to attain the intended outcome in the near future (JPA, 2014b).

The initiative of PSTF by PSDM is to introduce the new working culture by public service employees. This is in line with an era in where public service has to accommodate and adapt to the changing needs of the citizens. Changes to the public service are important to ensure that the people benefit from the attainment of high

impact outcomes through the services rendered by the public service. Meaning to say, service deliveries must be designed around the needs of the people or Rakyat and not to accommodate the needs of the organizations. For PSDM, successful implementation of these transformation programmes requires their staff to display high level of work engagement and get cooperation of every member in the organization. As the lead agency in bringing transformation concept for the entire public service, engaged employees at PSDM are expected to play their role performance with passion, dignity and pride. Otherwise, transformation programmes for the benefit of Rakyat will not be able to achieve the aspirations as it fails to gain the full support from all members of the organization.

1.2.2 Global Engagement Report on Malaysian Employees

Despite numerous benefits of having engaged workforce, global engagement report from the year 2012 until 2017 by various organizations concluded that there was indeed dismal engagement rate among Malaysian employees. In 2012, Towers Perrin confirmed that only 25 percent among 800 Malaysian employees was engaged during their role performance (Rasli, Tat, Chin & Khalaf, 2012). Then, a global engagement study by Gallup (2013) stated there was indeed poor engagement level among employees worldwide. The report mentioned only a mere 13 percent of global employees were engaged on their job, 63 percent were not engaged (unengaged) and the remaining 24 percent was actively disengaged. For report on Malaysian employees, the engagement level was not even fared better in which only 11 percent was engaged, 81 percent fall under disengaged group and the remaining 8 percent was actively disengaged. On top of that, Gallup's report has identified few countries namely Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore as having the highest percentage of unengaged employees in the world.

On separate note, studies from other organizations also revealed the same outcome of low engagement rate among employees in Malaysia. For example, a Singaporean based company named International Data Corporation (IDC) has conducted a survey in 2016 among professional employees in Malaysia. The study concluded only 23 percent of Malaysians professionals are engaged and satisfied at work (Jiminez, 2016). This percentage was found to be the lowest engagement score in Asia Pacific region compared to Singapore (25%), Hong Kong (28%), Australia (42%), Philippines (59%) and India (59%).

Interestingly, separate survey carried out by Jobstreet.com in July 2016 on the well-being of Malaysian workforce reported there were twice as many unhappy employees as there were happy employees. In total, there were 5,256 respondents took part in this survey. Specifically, the result concluded only 25 percent of Malaysian workforce is engaged, while 23 percent chose to be neutral and the remaining 52 percent were disengaged (New Straits Times, 2016). Finally, the latest research undertaken by AON Global Engagement Report 2017 placed Malaysia and Singapore as having the least engaged employees among major Asian markets with

the engagement score of 59 point. Other countries in Asia that reported higher engagement score are Philippines and Thailand at 65 point, China with 67 point and India at 69 point (HR Asia, 2017).

Based on these reports, it shows that majority of Malaysian employees are disengaged at the workplace. This phenomenon does not augur well for the positive well-being of employees. As a consequence, it will lead towards many negative outcomes that affect both individual and organization. However, these reports involve Malaysian employees in various sectors, it would not fair to state that employees in public sector in Malaysia are also experiencing low level of work engagement. This is due to the fact that there is no such study being conducted among employees in public service. As such, this issue is considered as an important gap in the current study. Therefore, the researcher will conduct a separate research on this issue in order to determine the level of work engagement level among employees in the public sector.

1.2.3 Issues in Job Demands – Resources Model

In studying work engagement concept, the most cited theory is Job Demands – Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015). This model was introduced by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001a) which previously was known as JD-R Model of Burnout. The main reason of this model is to understand the antecedents of burnout. Specifically, this model stated that working conditions at any workplace can be divided into two wide categories namely job demands and job resources. Employees that face with high job demands such as job workload, time pressure and emotional drain will lead to exhaustion (burnout). On the other hands, if employees are lacking of job resources like feedback, supervisor support and rewards, this scenario will contribute towards disengagement.

Then, the JD-R model of burnout was re-modified by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) in which they introduced personal resources as another important antecedent that can foster work engagement at the workplace. Examples of personal resources are self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem and optimism. Overall, the JD-R model has identified job resources and personal resources as the main antecedents that will increase level of work engagement even with the presence of job demand. JD-R model proposes that employees that possess ample job resources and personal resources will be able to diminish the negative impact of job demand. Findings by scholars have demonstrated that employees who have ample work resources in performing their role will be able to overcome job demand at the workplace (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Meaning to say, employees that are fully engaged in their role performance by showing vigor, dedication and absorption (work engagement) are able to work effectively even with the presence of high job demand.

Despite being widely applied in studying work engagement in many organizations, JD-R model does not take into account the dynamic role of leadership. Instead, leadership aspect has been placed as another variable under job resources. According to Breevart, Bakker, Hetland and Hetland (2014a), leadership aspect has been associated with supervisor support in the job resources. In doing so, the impact of leaders cannot be measured separately as in the JD-R model, all dimensions in job resources are included as a single latent construct (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In reality, leaders have immense impacts on employees in any organization. This issue is highlighted by Schaufeli (2015) when he stressed out on the need to study the impact of leadership in its own right as leaders have profound roles in balancing both of job demands and job resources. He integrated engaging leadership in the current JD-R model as leaders are functional in enabling their followers to work in a productive and healthy working condition. However, most studies that involve leadership style and work engagement are concerning transformational leadership (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Breevart, Bakker, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen & Espevik, 2014b).

Another important element that JD-R model does not explain clearly is how and why employees that have both job and personal resources at the workplace are able to increase their level of engagement (Albrecht, 2013). JD-R model stated that work resources (job and personal resources) play both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational roles without elaborating in detail. According to Kahn's (1990) who is the founder of engagement concept, the tendency of employees to decide whether to get engaged or not at the workplace has strong connection with psychological approach especially on psychological meaningfulness (meaningful work) that act as a mediator. He argued that whatever resources an individual possess at his disposal, engagement will only occur when an employee experienced the 'psychological presence' during the role performance. This is another important study gap that must be given proper attention as work engagement is closely related with psychological aspect. In saying this, the two variables in the form of transformational leadership and meaningful work are the other important antecedents that must be integrated into the current JD-R model.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Work engagement generally will lead towards many positive outcomes for the betterment of individual and organizations (Rich, Le-pine & Crawford, 2010). However, not many studies have been conducted on work engagement issues among employees in Malaysian public service. For example, past studies can be found to include special education teachers in Penang (Ghani, Ahmad & Ibrahim, 2014) and nurses in government hospitals (Choo, Mat & Al-Omari, 2013; Othman & Nasurdin, 2013). As government staff has been identified as facilitator and will play the major roles towards achieving NTA and Vision 2020, it is vital to have a research regarding work engagement concept from public service perspective. This will enrich the knowledge of work engagement in Malaysia as most of the previous studies are

conducted in Europe and United States (Shimazu, Schaufeli, Miyanaka & Iwata, 2010).

Global engagement report from 2012 till 2017 by AON Employee Engagement Report (2017), IDC (2016), Jobstreet.com (2016), Gallup (2013) and Towers Perrin (2012) clearly revealed the poor state of work engagement among employees in Malaysia. However, this low engagement rate cannot be applied to the employees in public sector as all the above mentioned reports were conducted among Malaysia employees in general. This is because the previous studies involved Malaysian employees that worked in various sectors that cover private, public, small medium enterprise, government linked companies and self-employed. For that reason, this study solely focuses on work engagement level and issues among public service employee is timely. It will provide an answer to question on whether the low level of work engagement in Malaysia is also applicable to the public service or not.

According to Saks and Gruman (2014), there is lack of consensus on work engagement concept, meaning, valid measurement and well developed theory. Separate research by Shuck and Wollard (2010) also revealed that there is no consensus among academic scholars on the antecedents and outcomes of work engagement. This is due to different scholars have different views, understanding and opinions on this unique construct. Furthermore, work engagement is a unique construct that is related to vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002a) and has a wider scope than job satisfaction, job involvement or job commitment (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011). Therefore, this study is relevant as it attempts to develop the research framework in studying work engagement from public sector perspective in Malaysia.

Another pertinent issue is the premise of JD-R model simply stated the more work resources (job resources and personal resources) an employee has at the workplace, the more engaged he will be. In saying this, JD-R model fails to explain what will be the most important resources in fostering work engagement and reason for it to contribute more impact than other resources (Saks & Gruman, 2014). For example, the variables of supervisor support and leadership have been placed under job resources. Are these two variables equally contributing towards fostering work engagement? This is the main reason why Schaufeli (2015) did not agree that leadership is just treated as ordinary factor in JD-R model. He pointed out that leadership aspect must be studied separately as leaders have pivotal role in managing job demands and work resources that will promote work engagement among followers. Thus, Schaufeli (2015) integrated engaging leadership in the JD-R model as he termed leadership as a distinct feature and goes beyond mere resources.

Undoubtedly, leaders have profound impact on followers towards attaining organizational goals as they have the ability to motivate their staff in fostering work engagement. Their roles are totally different from supervisor support that provides guidance on completing daily tasks. Furthermore, the influence of leadership style on

work engagement has not widely been investigated (Carasco-Saul, Kim & Kim, 2015). Based on literatures, most studies pointed out that transformational leadership has been cited as the most preferred leadership style that is reported to have positive relationship towards work engagement (Schaufeli, 2015; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Breevart et al., 2014a). Considering this fact, this study will take transformational leadership as separate variable to be integrated into the proposed research framework.

In the meantime, Khan (1990) theory has mentioned clearly that an employee will only be engaged when he or she experienced 'psychological present' during role performance even with the presence of ample work resources. He mentioned three psychological states in the form of meaningfulness, safety and availability. Studies by Rothmann and Oliver (2007) and May, Harter and Gibson (2004) found that psychological meaningfulness (meaningful work) has the highest correlation towards engagement. In this aspect, JD-R model does not explain the underlying psychological process that motivates an employee to get engaged at the workplace. As mentioned by Schaufeli and Taris (2014), JD-R specified job resources and personal resources lead to certain psychological states and outcome but does not explain why this would be so. For them, the failure of JD-R to provide insight on psychological mechanism is considered as limitation that needs alternative theoretical framework. Moreover, there is little attempt by scholars to integrate Khan's (1990) theory within JD-R model even though Khan theory has strong explanation regarding psychological perspective (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Scholars have elaborated the importance of placing meaningful work within the context of engagement theories as this will enable researcher to have deeper understanding on the motivational role in getting employees to get engaged (Albrecht, 2013; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Stringer, 2008). In fact, meaningful work has reported significant and positive association towards work engagement (Sonntag, Dormann & Demerouti, 2010). More importantly, scholars have found that meaningful work is underrepresented in many models and theories that focus on work characteristics including engagement (Albrecht, 2013; Fairlie, 2011). Based on the Khan (1990) theory and scholars views, it is imperative to have psychological condition (meaningful work) as a mediator in studying work engagement concept. In fact, there are several studies that placed meaningful work as a mediator towards work engagement. For instance, a study done by Albrecht (2013) concluded meaningful work mediates the influence of job resources towards work engagement. Another research by Albrecht and Su (2012) among Chinese telecommunication employees also confirmed that meaningful work mediates the influence of feedback on work engagement. Hackman and Oldham (1975) that developed Job Characteristic Model (JCM) stated meaningful work plays significant role as psychological states that mediates the influence of personal resources towards job outcomes including engagement. As a result, this study has selected meaningful work as a mediator that will be integrated into the JD-R model. This will be able to provide a research framework that considers Khan (1990) theory from psychological aspect which is vital to explore among employees in the Malaysian public service.

1.4 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the mediating effect of meaningful work on the influence of job resources, personal resources and transformational leadership towards work engagement among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia. Specifically, the objectives of this study are listed as the following:

- i. To determine the level of work engagement among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia;
- ii. To determine the level of meaningful work, job resources, personal resources and transformational leadership among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia;
- iii. To determine the influence of job resources, personal resources, transformational leadership and meaningful work on work engagement among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia;
- iv. To determine the influence of job resources, personal resources and transformational leadership on meaningful work among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia; and
- v. To determine the mediating effect of meaningful work on the influence of job resources, personal resources and transformational leadership towards work engagement among employees in Public Service Department of Malaysia

1.5 Significance of the Study

Work engagement is vital for any department in government ministries and agencies to record the desired result. Furthermore, government workforce staff has been given task with huge responsibilities towards the successful implementation of many national agendas and initiatives such as NTA, NBOS, NKRA and NKEA, to name a few. Even though work engagement studies have increased especially in Europe and United States (Shimazu et al., 2010), different scenario where not so many research have been attempted in studying work engagement among public service organizations in Malaysia. Therefore, it is high time to have a separate research on work engagement from public service perspective due to numerous positive impacts towards employees' well-being.

As mentioned earlier, government staff are the backbone of the nation in attaining a developed nation status by the year 2020. Therefore, they must be fully committed and engaged in their roles as they are the pillars in making this noble objective achievable. There is no doubt that highly motivated and engaged government workforce is highly sought in ensuring our national agenda is sustainable. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of work engagement from government servant perspective in terms of their experiences, emotion and behaviour roles. This is in line with the national aspiration that needs government staff to be committed at work, showing strong character, dedicated and energetic in delivering effective services

with the aim of uplifting this country to be on par with other developed nations. Understanding the level of work engagement among Malaysian public service is essential as the target of becoming a fully-developed country cannot be achieved if majority of employees in the public sector belong to disengaged groups.

This study will also be able to identify specific factors or antecedents that will lead towards fostering work engagement among government workforce in Malaysia. This is vital as the complexities of working in certain agencies require different set of factors that boost work engagement level at the workplace. Evidently, there are also not many researches available on meaningful work as a mediator in any study involving government staff in Malaysia. Thus, this study that places positive psychology of meaningful work as a mediator towards promoting work engagement is an important avenue to explore. Moreover, work engagement is a unique construct that is dealing with individual feeling, emotion and perception.

Finally, the findings from this research are useful for government ministries and agencies to have better understanding regarding work engagement concept among public sector employees especially its antecedents, issues and outcomes. This is because unhappy feeling at the workplace will contribute towards mediocre performance which strongly relates to wasteful of time, money, energy and meaningful resources of organizations. For public service, improving this situation is crucial to enhance the overall intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of government employees in this 21st century. Subsequently, having a pool of energetic, motivated and engaged employees in the public service will lead towards performance enhancement that will spur nation building which is a vital step towards achieving a fully developed nation status.

1.6 Scope of the Study

As the size of government sector is too big and consists of hundreds of agencies scattered around Malaysia, it is quite impractical for the researcher to meet each government agency in Malaysia. This will also be too time-consuming to do. As a result, the researcher plans to conduct data collection in Putrajaya as it is the main government administrative centre that consists of all government ministries and agencies. As such, this finding might not be true in other settings such as at local authorities, state agencies, municipal council and district offices.

This study confines itself to an understanding of work engagement concept in public sector among two categorical groups namely Management & Professional and Implementer group. Meaning to say, the researcher plans to get responses from PSDM staff that consist of these two groups in which their grades are ranging from Grade 11 to Grade 54. Hence, this finding cannot be generalized to top management level (JUSA C and above).

In the meantime, measuring work engagement across various ministries and agencies is tough considering the difference in nature and working environment in each government departments. Therefore, the researcher plans to conduct this research at Public Service Department of Malaysia (PSDM) or known as JPA which is considered as one of the most important central agencies under the Prime Minister Department (PMD). First and foremost, PSDM has been given a special task in formulating human resource policy for all employees in Malaysian public service. In this aspect, work engagement is considered as one of the important variables under human resource policy that PSDM aims to study and introduce it to all public servants in Malaysia. Thus, this research excludes other government major schemes like teachers, polices, lecturers, doctors and army personnel as the nature of their duties are simply compound to their working environment.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

In this study, the dimension of work engagement is measured through vigor, dedication and absorption. As engaged employee is strongly related to emotional and psychological perspective, the researcher has to trust that all respondents have knowledge on this subject matter and participate voluntarily. However, any respondent that is not willing to disclose their experiences in the discussion of work engagement is beyond the control of the researcher. On the other hand, there might be cases in which respondents just participated in order to get favourable result as they represent PSDM good image. Meaning to say, the researcher has to assume all respondents have answered all the questionnaires honestly without taking into account any personal problems and intention that they might involve at that particular time.

In addition, the number of instruments in this study is 107 items. For some respondents, the length to answer all the questionnaires might be burdensome. As such, there is tendency for respondents to answer it without given much thought. In this case, the researcher has to assume all the responses received are based on the true respondents' working experience at PSDM. In terms of research design, this study applies quantitative research and thus might eliminate other important variables that are not being asked in the questionnaires. It might exclude other important factors and variables that can be asked if the researcher applies qualitative technique such as interview sessions with respondents.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Work Engagement is referred to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that was characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002). In this study, the level of work engagement is measured using the three dimensions as suggested by Schaufeli et al. (2002) namely 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 (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Meaningful Work refers to the feeling of individual that felt worthwhile, useful and valuable as if they made a difference and not taken for granted. They felt the ability to give something to others, to the work itself and also able to receive return from the work (Khan, 1990) In this study, the level of meaningful work is measured using three dimensions which are positive meaning, meaning making and greater good motivation (Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012).

Positive Meaning is related towards the psychological meaningfulness that what one is doing has personal significance. It included the sense that people judge their work to matter and be meaningful (Steger et al., 2012).

Meaning Making is related to work that is considered as an important source of meaning in life that individual benefited from it. It also contributed towards personal growth and helped capture the broader life context of people's work (Steger et al., 2012).

Greater Good Motivation is related to the desire to make a positive impact on the greater good for individual and colleagues at the workplace. It stated that work will be more meaningful if it has broader impact to others as well (Steger et al., 2012).

Job Resources refer to physical, psychological, social and organizational aspects of the job that: i) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; ii) are functional in achieving work goals; and iii) stimulate personal growth, learning and development process (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In this study, the level of job resources is measured with four variables that are autonomy, feedback, supervisor support and social support.

Autonomy is referred to the freedom, independence and discretion allowed to employees in scheduling their work and determining the procedure for carrying it out (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Feedback is referred to employees obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of their performances (Hackman & Oldham, 1975).

Supervisor Support is related to those in charge showed concern for their workers' feelings and needs, encourage them to voice their concerns and motivate them to develop new skills (Deci & Ryan, 1987).

Social Support is referred to the employees' perception concerning the degree to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986).

Personal Resources is referred to aspect of the self that are generally linked to resiliency and refer to individual's sense of their ability to control and impact upon their environment successfully (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2007). In this study, the level of personal resources is measured with three variables which are self-efficacy, optimism and resilience.

Self-efficacy is about individuals' convictions (or confidence) about his or her abilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action needed to successfully execute a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Optimism is associated with the tendency of employees that believe positive things will come to them and that they can carry this good fortune into the future and control their own destiny (Carver, Scheier, Miller & Fulford, 2009).

Resilience is referred to the positive psychological capacity to rebound, to 'bounce back' from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility (Luthans, 2002).

Transformational Leadership can be defined as leaders are able to motivate and uplift their staff towards meeting organizational goals. It is also being associated with influential leaders that are able to motivate employees to perform more than what they are expected to do. Transformational leaders set more challenging expectations and achieve higher standards of performance. In this study, the level of transformational leadership is measured by four dimensions namely idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Idealized Influence is related to the extent in which leaders instil a sense of pride, go beyond self-interest, display power and confidence, talk about values, beliefs and ethics besides emphasize the collective mission. Leader is seen as role model (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Inspirational Motivation is referred to a leader that talk optimistically and enthusiastically about the future and what needs to be accomplished, articulating a compelling vision of the future and expressing confidence that goals can be achieved (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Intellectual Stimulation is about leaders that encourage followers to examine critical assumptions, seek different perspective and to suggest new ways of looking at how to perform tasks. Followers have been encouraged to make decision making and becoming innovative (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

Individualized Consideration is involved teaching and coaching, attention to individual-level needs, abilities and aspiration besides focusing on helping others to develop their strengths. This contributes towards individual development and team growth (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

1.9 Summary

This chapter presents an overview of the research. It begins with the introduction and background of the study that highlight the issues in the JD-R model, transformational era in public service and two major concerns namely poor engagement report about Malaysian employees and major issues in public service. Then, it continues with the explanation of statement of the problem, research objectives and significance of the study. This is followed by scope and limitation of the study. This chapter ends with a brief statement about the conceptual and operational definition of terms used in this study. In the next chapter, review of literature on the selected variables will be discussed in detail.

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