

Work engagement through social exchange mechanisms: does the role of knowledge-sharing behavior matter?

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the role of knowledge-sharing behaviors within the relationships between high-performance work systems (HPWS) and feeling trusted in work engagement.

Design/methodology/approach – The sample consisted from 107 employees working in financial services companies in Jakarta, Indonesia, who underwent an acquisition process. In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine the associations between HPWS and feelings of confidence in job commitment. In addition, the Sobel test was used to test the mediation effect of knowledge-sharing behavior.

Findings – This study found that HPWS have a positive relationship with work engagement and knowledge-sharing behaviors. Accordingly, the feeling trusted by supervisors has a positive, non-significant impact on knowledge-sharing behavior. Conversely, the feeling trusted by supervisors has a negative, non-significant impact on work engagement. Finally, this study also found that knowledge sharing does not lead to HPWS and feeling trusted does not improve work engagement.

Research limitations/implications – Although this study was conducted in a multicultural country, the analysis of cultural aspects is insufficient analysis. Therefore, future research should consider the cultural aspects to further this form of research.

Practical implications – Organizations should note that human resource management practices through HPWS play an important role in improving positive employee outcomes. In addition, companies through managers should manage their relationships with subordinates to optimize work engagement.

Originality/value – Financial services companies not only conduct a financial business, but also an information business. This paper is one of the quantitative studies that examines the work engagement of employees from financial companies that have gone through an acquisition process.

Keywords High-performance work systems, Feeling trusted, Knowledge-sharing behavior, Work engagement

Paper type Research paper



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Introduction

Organizational continuity is an important topic in organizational development studies. Work engagement (WE) is considered to be capable of generating discretionary effort that leads to positive organizational goals (Bailey *et al.*, 2017; Bakker *et al.*, 2011; Kodden and Groenvelde, 2019), which can maintain organizational continuity (Bailey *et al.*, 2017; Kodden and Groenvelde, 2019; Mozammel and Haan, 2016). This is due to the fact that WE is able to improve employee behaviors that focus on work and organizational effectiveness, high integrity, high enthusiasm, willingness to work hard and also high commitment to work (Aybas and Acar, 2017; Huang *et al.*, 2018; Kahn, 1990; Kaya and Karatepe, 2020; Lee *et al.*, 2016). Thus, WE, which is sometimes used interchangeably with the term employee engagement (Rahmadani and Schaufeli, 2020; Robijn *et al.*, 2020), is nevertheless a relevant topic and plays an important role in organizational studies (Juan *et al.*, 2018; Sonnentag, 2011).

Previous studies have shown that high-performance work systems (HPWS) are able to create a pleasant and productive work environment in terms of recruitment and selection processes, compensation and benefits procedures and employee development programs (Huselid, 1995; Oliveira and Silva, 2015). In addition, Huang *et al.* (2018) found that progressive HPWS programs based on employees' interests produce positive outcomes in terms of WE as mutually beneficial exchanges through the mechanism of social exchange. Thereupon, employees feel that the company is an investment in their employees through HPWS programs. According to Suharnomo and Priyotomo (2017), employees have become an important asset for the company, so employees should be considered by the human resource (HR) development function as the main object for implementing HPWS.

From an interpersonal perspective, feeling trusted (FT) by supervisors is closely related to job performance and organizational commitment (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Lau *et al.*, 2014). The FT becomes an individual perception or the trustor shows that the other party or the trustee voluntarily bears risks together with the trustor (Lau *et al.*, 2014). Another study found that the FT is a signal that an employee is valuable, which leads to high employee commitment (Pfeffer, 1998) and also high work effort (Kahn, 1990). The supervisor's trust in the subordinate usually occurs because of the difference in skills and power relationships between them (Lau *et al.*, 2014). The dialectic will occur as long as the consensus of trust is unfinished and also has a problematic potential, especially the positive or negative impact on the employee (Baer *et al.*, 2015).

Employee engagement and employee knowledge are also becoming an important topic in the field of organizational studies as they are related to the competitive advantage of organizations (Juan *et al.*, 2018; Sonnentag, 2011). Knowledge management practices affect employee engagement (Juan *et al.*, 2016), so the organization should address HR management practices. Improving knowledge-sharing behavior (KSB) is influenced by HR management practices (Karim and Majid, 2017). Moreover, Juan *et al.* (2018) used three dimensions of knowledge sharing (i.e. structural dimension, relational dimension and cognitive dimension) that had a significant positive effect on employee engagement (i.e. affective, character and cognitive dimensions). These results indicate that intensive interaction and communication with colleagues improves employee engagement.

A report by Gallup (2017) states that only 15% of Indonesian workers feel engaged (i.e. they have high levels of commitment and enthusiasm), 76% are disengaged (i.e. they do not feel psychologically involved in their work) and the last 10% are actively disengaged (i.e. they are not only dissatisfied with their organization but also grumpy because their needs are not being met and show their dissatisfaction). In addition, Indonesia was ranked as a collectivist country with index number 14 compared to the USA as an individualist country with index number 91. These figures show that there is a need to deepen the understanding of engagement at work, especially in Indonesia as a collectivist country with where KSBs play a role through social exchange mechanisms.

Conceptual framework

Relationships between high-performance work systems and work engagement

Programs to improve skills, motivation and development opportunities can create a competitive work environment, potentially giving the organization an engaged employee. In this way, the organization can improve the job performance of its employees, increase their engagement and life satisfaction and decrease the turnover rate (Aybas and Acar, 2017). As explained earlier, Oliveira and Silva (2015) also found that HR management practices aimed at developing employees' knowledge, skills, motivation and commitment and increasing their willingness to contribute more to the organization have positive effects on WE. It is relevant to the premise that HR management practices are able to improve employees' work performance. Therefore, a formula is formulated in this study:

H1. HPWS have a positive relationship with WE.

Relationships between high-performance work systems and knowledge-sharing behavior

Currently, many organizations are striving to improve organizational management, so the organization must be able to implement HPWS to achieve beneficial value for the organization (Becker and Huselid, 1998). The value of an organization is determined by the knowledge that is created and shared within the organization. To achieve the high levels of knowledge sharing, appropriate HR practices are required based on employee motivation and skills (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). It follows that HPWS aim to create a conducive work environment so that the employee feels comfortable to share their knowledge (Zhu and Chen, 2014). Based on this statement, the formula can be formulated as follows:

H2. HPWS have a positive relationship with KSB.

Relationships between the feeling trusted and work engagement

The FT is an important tool for maintaining work performance. Therefore, it also has a positive effect on organizational behavior (Lau *et al.*, 2014) and sense of responsibility for work (Salamon and Robinson, 2008). FT becomes an important aspect, which builds high-quality interactions between leaders and subordinates through greater employee relational energy. When heightened relational energy was built, it also built smooth communication within organization. It will lead employees to perform high level of performance (Fan *et al.*, 2021). Based on this statement, the formula can be formulated as follows:

H3. FT has a positive relationship with WE.

Relationships between feeling trusted and knowledge sharing behavior

HR practices in organizations are used as a means to communicate the organization's goals to employees. On the other hand, these practices are also capable of developing positive relationships between the organization and the employees so that a positive relationship can develop between the two so that the interpretation of HR practices by employees is the basis for building trust in the workplace (Min *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, FT by supervisors will substitute the positive effect of proactive personality (Hao and Han, 2022), whereas employee proactive is one of knowledge-sharing beneficial in the context of organizational sustainability (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Based on this statement, the formula can be formulated as follows:

H4. FT has a positive relationship with KSB.

Relationships between knowledge sharing behavior and work engagement

A previous study found that knowledge sharing can increase employee job satisfaction (Juan *et al.*, 2016). Knowledge management enables employees to obtain solutions to their problems from their colleagues and address them with effectively. These conditions create a positive work environment in an organization and encourage employees to focus and engage in their work (Deci and Ryan, 1987). Based on this statement, the formula can be formulated as follows:

H5. KSB has a positive relationship with WE.

Knowledge-sharing behavior as a mediator

Individuals' behavior in the organization is influenced by trust, attitudes and values, as well as the organizational culture that prevails in the organization. Thus, a change in employee trust leads to an adjustment in knowledge sharing values, attitudes and behaviors (Juan *et al.*, 2016). One of the concepts of knowledge management is KSB that facilitates employee learning in the knowledge transformation process that occurs through the process of externalization, internalization and socialization. Therefore, it is more likely that the learning process between employees occurs through the process of mutual interaction between employees (Juan *et al.*, 2016). The availability of information and knowledge that an employee needs facilitates him/her to work optimally, being one of the determinants of engagement at work (Deci and Ryan, 1987). Based on this statement, the formula can be formulated as follows:

H6. KSB partially mediates the relationship between HPWS and WE.

H7. KSB partially mediates the relationship between FT and WE.

The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1.

Research methods

Participants and procedure

This study was conducted among employees of financial services companies in Jakarta, Indonesia, who experienced acquisition processes in 2019 during the period from October 2020 to January 2021. Acquisitions are still the most popular business strategy to improve and develop (Febriani, 2018), as acquisitions are a development method that brings about fundamental changes in the company externally (Abdullah *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, according to CNBC (2020), 2019, several public company in Indonesia have made

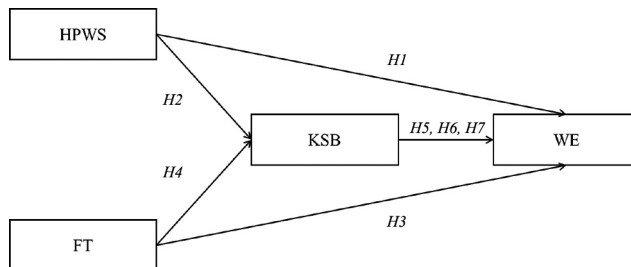


Figure 1.
Model representative

acquisitions with higher value of financial services companies. This study used convenience snowball sampling approach to collect data. The online questionnaire was distributed to potential author's friends who were full-time employees. Further those author's friends asked to name other potential participants, and so on. A total of 129 agreed to participate, but 22 questionnaires were not included because they did not complete the survey instrument. Our final sample was 107, representing a response rate of 46.50%. The gender composition was 54.21% women and 45.79% men. This study used respondents from acquired and acquiring companies, because previous studies have shown that there is no difference between employees working in an acquired and an acquired company in the context of discretionary efforts that translate into WE consequences (Edwards and Edwards, 2013). Later then, Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations of all variables.

As shown in Table 2, the composite reliability (CR) value of four variables, namely, HPWS, FT, KSB and WE is above 0.60, which is above the accepted value (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). However, the average variance extracted (AVE) value of HPWS and FT is less than the ideal value of 0.50. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE value is designed to be a conservative estimate in the context of the validity of the measurement model, so the researcher can conclude that the convergent validity and design are sufficient based on the CR value. As the CR values are above the minimum limit in all variables, the internal reliability regarding the measurement values is still acceptable.

The fit indices are above the minimum accepted threshold. For a good fitting model, the normalized chi-squared with degree of freedom (χ^2/df) must not exceed the value of five (Bentler, 1985), while the results in Table 3 show the number 1.19 or < 5. Meanwhile, the

No.	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Age	32.74	5.31						
2	Gender	0.50	0.50						
3	HPWS	5.59	1.25	0.14	0.16	<i>0.83</i>			
4	FT	4.88	1.72	0.16	0.07	0.51**	<i>0.74</i>		
5	KSB	5.25	1.24	0.16	0.12	0.59**	0.44**	<i>0.80**</i>	
6	WE	5.74	1.08	0.11	0.12	0.72**	0.20**	0.48**	<i>0.93</i>

Notes: $N = 107$. The corresponding reliabilities (Cronbach's α) are indicated by italics values. Age is measured in years. Gender is indicated as 0 = female, 1 = male. ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Source: Author owns

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics
and correlation

No.	Variable	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	1	2	3
1	HPWS	0.75	0.28	0.11	0.09			
2	FT	0.67	0.23	0.11	0.09	0.51**		
3	KSB	0.86	0.56	0.11	0.09	0.59**	0.44**	
4	WE	0.96	0.88	0.08	0.08	0.72**	0.20**	0.48**

Notes: ASV (average shared variance); MSV (maximum shared variance); AVE (average variance extracted); CR (composite reliability); HPWS (high-performance work systems); FT (feeling trusted); KSB (knowledge sharing behavior); WE (work engagement). The inter-item correlations among constructs are represented by diagonal (bold values); ** $p < 0.01$

Source: Author owns

Table 2.
CR, AVE, MSV, ASV
and inter-scale
correlations for
variables

Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI) and goodness of fit index (GFI) must exceed the value of 0.9 (Bentler, 1985; Browne and Cudeck, 2016). The results of the structural model of this study show that the TLI is 0.96, CFI is 0.97 and GFI is 0.90, with all three > showing 0.9. Furthermore, the generally accepted value for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) must not exceed 0.05 (Browne and Cudeck, 2016). In this study, a reasonable value of 0.04 or < 0.05 was determined, so the structural model fit value presented in Table 3 is a reasonable goodness of fit.

In addition, this study used a cross-sectional design and a self-report questionnaire, so there may be method bias. Therefore, Harman’s one-factor technique was used in this study. The first factor explained only 27% of the variance, which accounted for less than 50% of the variance, indicating that there is no problem of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Data analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the direct relationships between HPWS, FT and WE and the mediating effect of KSB on the model. In this study, a two-stage mediation process was used to test the mediating relationship recommended by Hair et al. (2009). The significance between two variables, the direct effects of HPWS and FT on two variables is the first step in the two-step mediation analysis, followed by the mediated or indirect effect suggested by Hair et al. (2009) – (HPWS → KSB → WE) and (FT → KSB → WE). The two-stage mediation analysis in the pathway analysis of SEM, shown in Figure 2, was used to determine whether or not mediation was present and also to account for the type of mediation (i.e. full or partial mediation). Following Hair et al. (2009), this study also used the Sobel-based mediation test methodology to assess the criteria of mediation.

Hypothesis testing

The results of the analysis of SEM are shown in Figure 3 and Table 4. This shows that HPWS are directly related to WE ($\beta = 2.18, p < 0.01$), indicating that a higher level of HPWS in the organization improves WE. In addition, HPWS also have a positive influence on KSB

Table 3.
Structural model fit indices

Description	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	P	NFI	CFI	GFI	TLI	RMSEA
Hypothesized model	70.332	59	1.19	<0.05	0.86	0.97	0.90	0.96	0.04

Source: Author owns

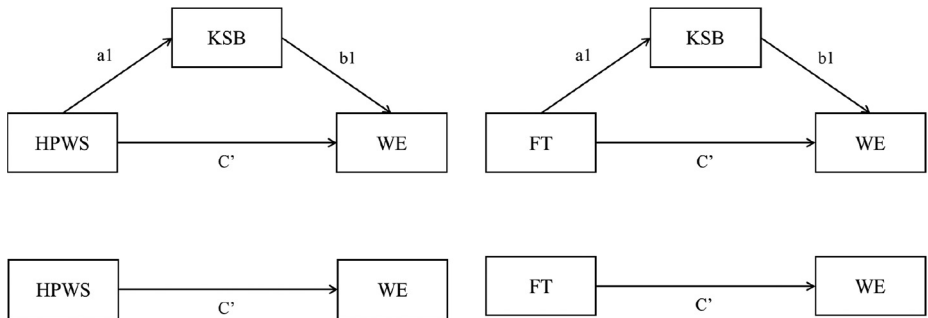


Figure 2.
Theoretical model of mediation

($\beta = 0.71, p < 0.01$), indicating that the more HPWS implemented in the organization, the better employees' KSB. These results confirmed the hypotheses (*H1* and *H2*), indicating that there is a direct effect of HPWS on WE and KSB. Figure 3 also shows that FT is negatively non-significantly associated with WE ($\beta = -0.41, p > 0.01$), suggesting that the more an employee feels trusted by his or her supervisor, the lower his or her WE may be. Later, FT found that there was a positive non-significant correlation with KSB ($\beta = 0.29, p > 0.01$), suggesting that employees' sense of trust potentially improves their KSB. KSB, on the other hand, is negatively non-significantly correlated with WE ($\beta = -1.91, p > 0.01$). These results rejected the hypotheses (*H3, H4* and *H5*).

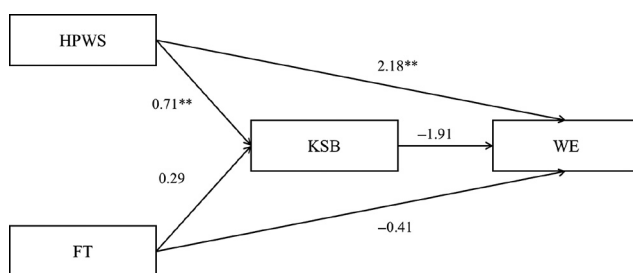
According to the method of Hair *et al.* (2009), there are two statements showing no mediation when (a) significant, (b) is significant and also (c) are significant, as well as when (a) or (b) are both not significant. The results in Figures 3 and 4 show that KSB does not mediate the effects of HPWS on WE and does not mediate WE. These results indicate that HPWS have a direct positive impact on WE beyond the need to complete KSBs. In addition, FT by supervisors had a negative, non-significant impact on WE without the need to complete the knowledge-sharing process. Therefore, these results rejected the hypotheses (*H6* and *H7*).

Discussion

The aim of this study is to propose a model to analyze the influence of HPWS and FT on WE by KSB mechanism. In addition, this study used employees of financial services companies that went through an acquisition process in 2019.

Theoretical implications

The result shows that HPWS have a positive effect on WE. It is consistent with previous studies in which HPWS aim to improve employees' positive mood under various programs designed to increase employees' WE (Huang *et al.*, 2018; Oliveira and Silva, 2015). Similarly,



Sources: Authors' own; *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$

Figure 3.
Hypothesis testing
results

Hypothesis	Path	β	CR	p	Result
<i>H1</i>	HPWS \rightarrow WE	2.18	0.80	<0.01	Supported
<i>H2</i>	HPWS \rightarrow KSB	0.71	0.35	<0.01	Supported
<i>H3</i>	FT \rightarrow WE	-0.41	-1.29	>0.01	Not supported
<i>H4</i>	FT \rightarrow KSB	0.29	1.37	>0.01	Not supported
<i>H5</i>	KSB \rightarrow WE	-1.91	-0.78	>0.01	Not supported

Table 4.
The results of testing
hypothesis

HPWS create a supportive work environment where employees feel comfortable to share their knowledge (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020; Zhu and Chen, 2014), i.e. the more HPWS are implemented in an organization, the more employees will actively share their knowledge. Employees need information and knowledge to perform optimally (Deci and Ryan, 1987) and to be engaged. In the condition that employees feel that they receive some form of benefit, they will translate it toward additional effort, because employees feel it is some obligation (Zaman and Ansari, 2021). Therefore, social exchange mechanism was depicted in voluntarily additional efforts from employees (Blau, 1964).

Nevertheless, this study shows that KSBs do not have a mediating effect, especially among employees who have experience with the acquisition process. It is possible that employees feel that knowledge-sharing practices require more time and energy, so employees who engage in too many knowledge-sharing activities may feel disengaged from their work (Ford *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, in the terms of post-acquisition condition, employees required to learn new procedures and manage some synergy, which is consuming time. In contrast to previous work by Salamon and Robinson (2008), who found that FT can increase job responsibilities, this study found that FT instead increased employee workload. Moreover, FT increases employees' prestige, so they feel obligated to do their job to maintain their prestige. This can have negative consequences for the employee, including WE (Baer *et al.*, 2015; Wang and Huang, 2019).

Practical implications

There are several recommendations for HR practices, knowledge sharing. First, from the perspective of HR practices, organizations need to take an initiative to initiate the knowledge-sharing process such as sharing information and knowledge with employees (Suharmomo *et al.*, 2020). Second, the HR manager should prepare the HR practices well so that the job descriptions and the positions of the employees are clearly explained so that the employees are engaged in their work. Third, managers need to set the relationship level, in the context of trust for employees, and workload of their employees evenly to prevent their employees from getting exhausted.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study has several limitations: First, the use of random sampling may collect irrelevant data. For example, this study used the perceptions of HPWS perceptions of in financial services firms. However, we assume that HPWS are appropriate for managers and higher positions who are more knowledgeable about the performance of HR. Second, the use of electronic questionnaires may collect biased data. This occurred because there was a possibility of obtaining respondents who did not meet the criteria of this study. Based on the previous statement, future studies should be well prepared and use structured sampling methods. Moreover, this study, which was conducted in a multicultural country,

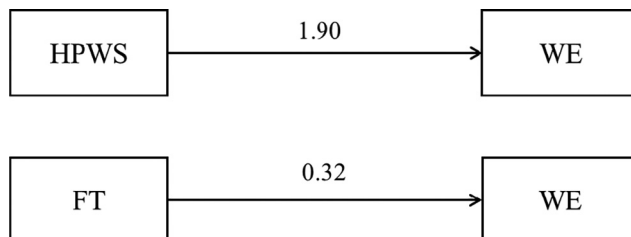


Figure 4.
Hypothesis testing
results and mediation

Source: Author owns

unfortunately ignored the cultural aspects, although culture is a crucial aspect for understanding and deepening human behavior (Suharnomo and Syahruramdhan, 2018). In addition, cultural aspects also need to be considered as they are related to KSB and the FT by supervisors. Countries with a strong collective culture, which includes Indonesia, tend to have a high intensity of brainstorming activities (Perdhana *et al.*, 2019).

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