Global Scientific JOURNALS

Nexus between Total Quality Management and Work Engagement of USM Non-Teaching Employees

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Abstract

Total Quality Management (TQM) has become the preferred approach for improving productivity in organizations and the concept of work engagement has emerged due to the focus on optimal functioning in the work context. The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study is to determine which domain of Total Quality Management using Baldrige Education Criteria best influences work engagement. The 182 permanent non-teaching staff of University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato were chosen as respondents using universal sampling technique. Results revealed that there were high levels of employees' feelings both towards the two measures which are the TQM and employee engagement. Further, findings showed that there was a significant relationship between measures and among the indicators of TQM, only leadership best predicts employees' work engagement. The study concluded that leadership is a key element for institution to shape its' future towards achieving the vision of making employee engaged and productive.

Keywords: *management, total quality management, work engagement, leadership, vigor, correlational design, Philippines*

Introduction

Organizations have acknowledged a reported downward spiral rates of commitment around the world. More than 80 percent of employees feel disconnected and 43 percent consider quitting their employment (Gallup, 2013), the recent statistics disclosed. In view of the fact that people spend more than a third of their life at their job committing themselves mentally, physically and psychologically, this shows that staff are no longer satisfied with traditional reward schemes and want to feel valued and appreciated by other leadership approaches (Hoole & Hotz, 2016). Given the significance of engagement from an organizational and individual point of view, it is evident that serious fluctuations in the level of engagement can possibly have severe implications for organizational results (Oliver, 2012) such as increase absenteeism, unproductive, upsurge turnover rate and dissatisfaction as has been observed in several studies.

The concept of work engagement has emerged due to the focus on optimal functioning in the work context (Bambale, 2014). Critical to both staff and employers is the commitment to work (Hoole & Hotz, 2016). Since, an engaged employee is one of the keys to unlocking increased profitability to the employers' advantage. The chain reaction is when a team is fully engaged that it works with more focus, energized, resilient, inspired and determined which produces more quality work leading to a more happy and satisfied customers (Chandrasiri, 2017). Quality is vital for organizational success. According to Singh and Ahuja (2015) Total Quality Management (TQM) is basically a management viewpoint, and becomes the desired approach to enhancing organizational quality and productivity. Moreover, Graham and Owusu (2015) illustrated TQM as a participatory system that empowers all staff within the organization to take accountability for enhancing performance. TQM's nature is reflected in the criteria used in the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) criteria that the nature of TQM is reflected.

Also, Ali (2013) proposed that TQM's primary benefit is to enhance outcome quality to increase the quality of outcomes for both customers and employees. The issue of higher education quality is becoming increasingly important in national strategies (Jarvis, 2014). In fact, in the Philippines, several policies have been implemented with regard to Quality. The basis of these policies is Section 1 of Article 14 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution and CHED Memorandum Order No. 46, Series of 2012.

Subsequently, TQM therefore focuses not only on product quality, but also on employee quality. Indeed, most effective implementation of TQM depends strongly on modifications in the engagement of staff as seen in their attitudes and operations (Adjei & Mensah, 2016). The employees who are affected most directly are those who are the agents of change in implementing TQM (Simmelink, 2012) or other programs for continuous quality improvement (Muthukumar, 2013). According to Arunachalam and Palanichamy (2017), TQM procedures generate beneficial impacts on staff by enhancing their satisfaction and commitment and enhancing their organizational efficiency as elements of work engagement. Indeed, many organizations that have implemented quality-management methods have encountered an enhancement in work engagement, especially with regard to employee attitude, engagement and efficiency (Rao, 2017). Thus, Tate (2015) stated that the relationship of the two constructs (TQM & work engagement) have been given little regard by most institutions.

Nowadays, poor result in performance ratings at University of Southern Mindanao (USM) among non-teaching staff compared to teaching force are observed wherein the staff were not energized, less inspired and get distracted while working. However, despite the many studies conducted showing the influences of TQM towards engagement of employees in relation to work (Hoole & Hotz, 2016; Zahari & Zakuan, 2016; & Arunachalam & Palanichamy, 2017), the researcher has not come across of the same sort published in the Philippines especially in State Universities and Colleges (SUC's).

Besides, with the critical levels of engagement and high level of employee disconnection, organizations therefore need to discover methods to motivate staff and increase their level of engagement. With all these setups, the researcher is keenly interested in knowing the strongest predictors of work engagement. Moreover, this research could provide a helpful additive to the work engagement literature and would be beneficial to any academic institution in solving organizational problems and issues such as increasing turnover, emotionally and mentally detached and vulnerable employees.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine which domain of Total Quality Management best influences employees' work engagement. Specifically, it aimed to attain the following objectives:
1. To assess the level of employees' feelings concerning total quality management in terms of:

1.1 leadership;
1.2 strategic planning;
1.3 student, stakeholder and market focus;
1.4 measurement, analysis, and knowledge management;
1.5 faculty and staff focus;
1.6 process management; and
1.7 results.

2. To ascertain the level of employees' work engagement in terms of:
2.1 vigor;
2.2.dedication; and
2.3 absorption.
3. To determine the significance on the relationship between total quality management and employees' work engagement.
4. To establish which domain of total quality management best influences employees' work engagement.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptualization of management approaches interaction is based on systems theory (Wubbels & Levy, 1993). The key concept of this theory rests on the view of circularity which means that all elements of the scheme are interconnected. It denotes that system-environment interactions such as those identified domain of TQM can be defined as input and output such as those recognized as gauges of work engagement of matter, thus, any modification in one portion of the scheme will result in modifications in other components of the scheme affecting the first portion, and so. In addition, the goal-directed conduct characterizes modifications observed in the system state referring to stakeholders that are components of TQM. Therefore, a scheme is considered to be organized in terms of the objective that can be understood to be the attitude towards work can be assumed to show reverse connectedness.

A quality management system (QMS) as output of TQM is labeled by the interactions between its parts (the seven BEC for performance excellence) and the connection that this system has with its employee-related setting and its reaction whether involved or otherwise. One or more of these interactions can be influenced when modifications are made in TQM thru QMS. Systemic change, however, is an extensive method where, in order to be effective, a basic change in one aspect of TQM needs basic modifications in other dimensions of work engagement so as to become rewarding (Zubair, 2013).

Thus, the theory of systems is a universal, general theory that indicates an attitude to organizational strategy (designing the organization to fit the surroundings) without carefully defining how to do it, but as long as stakeholders are notable among the research carried out for this purpose. They examined the application of system theory and found that the match between strategy and environment as

components of TQM was related to employee satisfaction as an end product of work engagement (Javanmardi & Liu, 2019).

In support to the proposition of Wubbles and Levy (1993), Gozukara and Simsek (2016) studied the link of leadership as one element of TQM and part of the organization system, that inspired subordinates to exhibit performance beyond the expectations and support that encouraged freedom of capabilities positively affected employee work engagement thru performance rating and output. Affirmative attitudes by leaders practicing authentic leadership inspired confidence in the followers to overcome internal and external challenges through innovation. This means that TQM positively correlates with work engagement. In addition, the admiration, trust, confidence, and respect from followers as a manifestation of the presence of implemented TQM in the system as stimulated engagement characteristics of employees where autonomy resulted in positive outcomes from personal efforts. Understanding the relationships between the leader and follower defines the physical, cognitive, and emotional roles that effect the work engagement and social support of the organization. Accordingly, employees who lack the resources as elements of TQM in the system and their role to the whole organization are least likely to invest into the energy and obligation in a specific role for a better output as a result of an engaged employee to work.

Nonetheless, Almutawa et al. (2015) also studied the link of providing employees with the necessary TQM practices like trainings, to that of employees work engagement. When the level of employees' motivation escalates, performance within the organization will also enhance. Seemingly, Hashemi et al. (2015) also appears to have created a connection between the two policies stating that having access to learning, development and advancement possibilities within the organization, which are all variables of TQM, plays a main role in employee satisfaction and productivity as end product of work engagement. Those with access to these possibilities in their employment are more driven, engaged or connected and innovative. Employees in low-opportunity positions, on the other hand, are defined as stuck in their job characterized by disengagement, leading in reduced career aspirations and reduced levels of organizational commitment or engagement.

Methodology

This research utilized a non-experimental, quantitative design using correlation techniques. Correlation was used to determine the degree to which two variables were connected and to check whether the population as a whole has a linear connection between the factors (Berwick & Ross, 2011). This technique was useful in this research to test the connection between Total Quality Management and Work Engagement. One of the fundamental problems in choosing how to perform a study is to first identify the suitable study design to achieve the specified objectives of the suggested research (Omair, 2015) in determining the methodology. Further, Stephen (2016) added that descriptive data do not always naturally happen in a numerical way. Questions are not immediately quantifiable but it can turn them into quantifiable questions and responses.

This study was conducted at University of Southern Mindanao (USM), Kabacan, Cotabato. In the selection of the 182 respondents of the study, universal sampling technique was used. This was employed because the researcher considered the population of permanent non-teaching staff of the University which has only a total of 182 permanent non-teaching staff. The researcher also applied such method since the number of permanent non-teaching staff is too small to consider only. Further, Omair (2015) said that universal sampling is best suited if there is a moderate sample and entire investigation is expected to yield accurate information.

Besides, Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2013) added that 100 is enough for a descriptive research, therefore, 182 as the total respondents is sufficient to reach the goal. The researcher used the standardized survey questionnaire adapted from Wright (2005) for the Total Quality Management instrument and Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) for the employee work engagement instrument. The questionnaire was submitted for approval and validation by the panel of experts and it has a good validity index. The said questionnaire was also subjected to pilot testing on thirty contract of service non-teaching employees not included in the research. Cronbach Alpha findings were .983 and .932, respectively, for both independent and dependent variables. The findings confirmed reliability of the items in the questionnaire.

The survey questionnaires included two components to be answered by the employees. The first part was designed to determine the amount of agreement as to how they feel on the basis of Baldrige Education Criteria (BEC) implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM). It has seven indicators with a total number of 40 item statements. The second part aimed to measure the level of employee's work engagement. It has 17 items equally distributed to the three indicators namely *vigor* aspect, *dedication* aspect and *absorption* aspect. The survey questionnaire were checked by five experts to confirm its validity. The respondents answered the questionnaires by simply putting a check mark on the desired number that correspond to their personal knowledge and experience stipulated in the questionnaire. Ethical issues and concerns were also observed.

Results and Discussion

The general mean score obtained of employees' feelings towards Total Quality Management is 3.87 described as high and the standard deviation is 0.53. This implies that the TQM is oftentimes observed. The high level of employees' feelings towards Total Quality Management among employees' of University of Southern Mindanao (USM) is due to the high rating given by the respondents on student, stakeholders and market focus; measurement, analysis and knowledge management; and faculty and staff focus. The employees in these state university manifest that management approach on such aspect is often felt. There is a high employees' feelings towards management approach concerning students as customers. Thus, requirements and expectations of customers should be regularly examined by the USM Administration. Further revealed that top management reviews processes and performances thru employees to achieve its objective and to react to external changes. Besides, employees felt that management is exploiting various approaches on managing all those actively involved in accomplishing the work.

This findings is congruent to the views of various authors (Donlagic & Fazlic, 2015; Reich, et al., 2016; Bulsara & Thakkar, 2015; Mohammad, 2014; Zahari & Zakuan, 2016) who pronounced that employees feelings towards TQM would be increased by valuing students as important assets and provision of quality should be delivered. Therefore, students must be satisfied since satisfaction is one of the measurements of quality and employees must be trained to understand the flow of organizations for them to know that their actions make them attached. Thus, quality philosophy should be upheld by each and everyone in the institution.

Employees' Work Engagement

The other variable considered in this study is work engagement with an overall mean score of 3.96 described as *high* and its standard deviation is 0.74. This implies that the employees' work engagement is oftentimes manifested. Among the three indicators, *dedication* has a *very high* level. The high level of work engagement among non-teaching staff employees of USM is due to employees who find work full of meaning, proud on the work they do, they feel bursting with energy, making them continue working for very long periods at a time. They feel like going to work and always persevere even when things do not go well.

The employees in this institution felt vigorous, dedicated and absorbed. This means that they find it difficult to detach themselves from their job and made them feel happy, carried away and immersed while performing their work.

This findings is parallel to the views of the authors (Hoole & Hotz, 2016; Togia, 2014; BlessingWhite, 2012) who manifested that employee work engagement would be increased by making employees' job more challenging, tap organizational leaders as one component of TQM who has the potential to influence workforce and made them vigorous in the delivery of services. Additionally, TQM is one of the most essential elements for determining employees' predispositions to work engagement as well as enhances employees' motivation. Once employees' are engaged, they are fully aligned with the goals and objectives of the organization with the aim of going beyond the sense of commitment.

Correlation between Measures

The variables relationship test shows an important connection between Total Quality Management and work engagement that contributes to the study's null hypothesis being rejected. This means that the engagement to work depends somehow on Total Quality Management. Further, it also means that the leadership approach is related to employees attachment to work. *Leadership* as indicator of TQM is related to work engagement. This implies that leadership has to do with work engagement.

Additionally, *strategic planning* as indicator of TQM is linked to work engagement. This implies that strategic planning as a management approach has to do with work engagement. Also, *student, stakeholder and market focus* as indicator of TQM is associated to work engagement. This signifies that student, stakeholder and market focus as a management approach have something to do with work engagement. Moreover, *measurement, analysis and knowledge management* as indicator of TQM is related to work engagement. This denotes that measurement, analysis and knowledge management as a management approach contributes to employees' work engagement. *Faculty and staff focus*, on the other hand, as domain of TQM is correlated to work engagement. This indicates that faculty and staff focus as a management approach is related to work engagement. Besides, *process management* as indicator of TQM is associated to work engagement. This connotes that process management as a management approach has to do with work engagement. *Result* as indicator of TQM is linked to work engagement. This signifies that result as a management approach influences work engagement.

The findings are parallel to the concept of Gozukara et al. (2010) who stated that the administration approach towards quality and development has a positive impact on

work engagement than any reward. While, Rao (2017) added that when applied, TQM procedures have a positive effect on the empowerment of employees. The declaration postulated that empowerment looked at a good cooperation in life and engaged top management. And this empowerment can lead to enhance engagement and job satisfaction, better choices and better results as claimed by Yunis et al. (2013). In addition, Clark (2016) supported that by providing employees with the required training, learning and development leads to improved organizational efficiency and work engagement. Consequently, Hashemi et al. (2015) also agreed that access to having access to opportunities for learning, growth and advancement plays a main role in the fulfillment and productivity of the workforce. Those with access to these possibilities in their employment are more driven, engaged and innovative. In comparison, low-possibility workers are defined as being stuck in their employment, leading to reduced aspirations.

Influence of TQM on Employees' Work Engagement

Shown in Table 1 is the regression analysis of TQM on employees' work engagement. Among the seven indicators of TQM, only *Leadership* and *Results with* significant value of .009 and .032 respectively revealed substantial influence on employees work engagement. However, only *Leadership* best predicts work engagement with the lowest significant value of .009.

The computed R^2 value is .341 which means that 34.1% of the variance of employees work engagement can be explained by the variance of TQM. This means further that 65.9% is attributed to other variables not covered in this study. As revealed in the F value of 12.856 with a probability value of .000 which is lower than 0.05 level of significance set in this study suggesting that Total Quality Management significantly influences employees work engagement, hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. Furthermore, the results revealed that the best predictor for work engagement is leadership having the higher unstandardized Beta coefficient of .333.

The findings corroborate with the idea of Anagnoste (2017) that a strong leadership is the cause of successful firm is a powerful management, particularly in terms of excellent quality system functioning. Further, Black (2015) contend that even in the field of music, leadership is a pervasive and important theme. Likewise, United States Merit System and protection Board-US MSPB (2015) confirms that leadership is one of the most significant and vital components in determining predispositions of employees to work, while at the same moment improving employee motivation and reducing turnover. Alias and Aris (2016) opined that increase quality outcomes characterized by greater productivity as element of work engagement for both customers and employees' is the main advantage of TQM.

Table 1

Regression Analysis of the Influence of TQM on Employees' Work Engagement

Total Quality Management (Indicators)	Employees' Work Engagement			
	B	β	T	Sig.
Leadership	.333	.280	2.646	.009*
Strategic Planning	.067	.076	.859	.392
Student, Stakeholder and Market Focus	-.095	-.076	-.771	.442
Measurement, Analysis and Knowledge Management	.130	.105	.979	.329
Faculty and Staff Focus	-.033	-.028	-.303	.762

Process Management	.070	.067	.769	.443
Results	.300	.231	2.168	.032*
R	.584			
R²	.341			
F	12.856			
Q	.000			

*p<.05

Conclusion

Conclusions are drawn in consideration of the results of the study. The findings support the theoretical assumptions of significant relationship between TQM and work engagement of respondents and affirm that there is a specific domain in TQM that can predict employees work engagement. Seemingly, the study concludes that TQM particularly leadership of top management can make employees attached to work. This is articulated from the statements of Ahmade (2013) that strategy is seen as a system/process that should generate the culture of complete dedication to vision and mission in the staff. TQM should go beyond manufacturing activities and involve all employees in the organization as individuals are the efficient instruments that can be easily used in conversion. The result of the study confirms the systems theory of Wubbels and Levy (1993) which stated that all aspects of the system are linked. This means that leadership is considered as part of the organization system who inspired subordinates to exhibit performance beyond the expectations thru performance rating and output and that any change or decision made by a leader always affect other unit/s or output.

Thus, this study implies that leadership is a key element for any organization to shape the future and guide organizational members towards achieving the vision of making employees engage in order to have better results since success of quality system was largely due to a strong leadership.

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