Impact of Empowerment & Emotional Labor on Teacher’s Work Engagement: A Moderating Role of Job Experience

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ABSTRACT

Teaching profession is one with highest demand regarding empowerment and emotional labour. Emotional labor is the management of emotions for performance excellence (Hochschild, 1983). This study has examined the relationship among the emotional labour, teacher’s overall empowerment and their work engagement. The study also aimed to determine either the job experience moderates the empowerment and work engagement relation. A sample of 223 university teachers of 14 different universities was selected. 145 respondent’s data was found complete to be used for analysis. Valid scales like Utrecht Work Engagement was used to measure overall work engagement, Cuckar & Mann’s Emotional Requirement Inventory scale was used for measuring emotional labor and Short & Rinehart scale was used to measure the teacher empowerment. SPSS statistical software was used for data analysis. Different SPSS tools were used to measure the strength and significance of studied relationships. Moreover, a model was built to measure the overall work engagement of university teachers. A significant relation was found b/w empowerment, work engagement and emotional labor whereas the role of job experience was found to be insignificant. This study further suggested future research direction.

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1. Introduction

Now a days, teachers are playing an extended role beyond teaching and transmission of knowledge. Teachers are more focusing on student’s personality development, self-esteem, motivating them to encourage the dynamic business environment challenges (as cited in Xiongyong et. al., 2012). Universities are gradually converting into service institutions which are recognizing students as customers (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004). In higher education institutions, students are mature enough, can freely communicate with their teachers particularly the research
graduates who need to work closely with their supervisors on their research projects (Sarkhosh & Rezaee, 2014).

The teachers’ job demands and their roles at higher education level in Pakistan are directly increasingly turning significant due to continuous changes (Karen & Cassidy, 2013; Ogbonna & Harris, 2004). Several researchers are evident that unlike other professions, academia also have numerous and at times contradictory job requirements like work overload, reduced autonomy, emotional requirements, lack of social and moral support, participation in research work and role ambiguity persuades the intensity of work engagement and stress (Høigaard, Giske & Sundsli, 2011; Ogbonna & Harris, 2004; Constanti & Gibbs, 2004). Kinman and Jones (2004) also stated that teaching, research and assessment is now becoming more of a psychosomatic sprain. Reports like Asthana, 2008; UCU, 2008a have also draw attention towards emerging challenges faced by university teachers like practicalities of rising student numbers, need to contribute in research work and added administrative duties (as cited in Cassidy & Berry, 2013).

Due to diverse and challenging job demands, university teachers have to perform emotional labour increasing intensity (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004; Ogbonna & Harris, 2004). To deal with diverse students and to perform a variety of distinct tasks like research, student’s supervision and counseling, they require various degrees of emotional displays which result in high level of dissatisfaction (Ogbonna & Harris, 2004). Constanti and Gibbs (2004) examine in their study that university teachers are oppressed in a three dimension relationship concerning to students, job responsibilities and role expectations and senior management expectations. With drastic change in business environment, in addition to Gibbs three way relations, now universities is expected another relation to cope up with the changing demands. Large-scale educational reform is occurring in both developed countries like Canada, the USA, the UK and developing countries like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. The change strategies includes development of curriculums with integration of universities and business which addresses the future demands of business, enhancing the student practical exposure by assigning projects, researches to solve real business problems study visits, etc. The development and execution of changed business strategies necessitate the teachers’ empowerment (Segedin, 2011). Teacher empowerment became a catch phrase in the late 1980's. At that time, policy analyst began to worry that the ambitious reforms they conceived during the decade would come too little if teachers’ classroom practices are ineffective. Policy makers acknowledged that successful outcomes of more courses, longer school days, and tougher graduation standards or back to basics curricula all hinged on the attitudes and capacities of classroom teachers implementing those reforms (Lichtenstein & Milbery, 1991).

As stated in the literature explored by Lichtenstein & Milbery (1991), two general strategies can be developed to deal with the teacher and business organizations problems. One strategy involved raising standards for individuals entering the profession and the other focused to empower the teachers to participate in university decision making. Unfortunately, like other professions, teaching is also done under the supervision of head of institution or department (director) who are supposed to make centralized decisions and give directions to others. Teacher’s job is to execute the principal decisions and lecturing according to their set curriculum. This made the teachers’ job bored, indignant, and discontented. Their opinion and involvement has no worth which resulted in reduced performance and other behavioral problems. Their jobs need to be redesigned. A healthier choice is to empower them as autonomy and self-determination allows them to get involved completely in their job. They adopt more creative teaching techniques and thus both teachers and student’s performance went up. Moreover, empowerment constructs the teachers to be effective leaders. The objectives of the study are to examine the relationship of work engagement with emotional labor, to determine how the empowerment influences the work engagement of university teachers and to study the role of job experience as moderator in empowerment, emotional labor and work engagement relationship.

2. Theory and Hypothesis

2.1 Empowerment

Employee empowerment, a new managerial concept, which started to emerge in late 1980s (Hanold, 1997). Empowerment is defined as the development of sense of autonomy, self-determination and self-efficacy in organizational members (Simit and Moul, 1998 & Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Empowerment has different dimensions and many essentials that have varieties of roles throughout the different phases of its process. It involves a self-motivated process in a dynamic environment (Robbins et. al., 2009). In literature researchers defined empowerment differently. Some defined it as process to give authority to people who possess the feeble position in organization (Ugboro & Obeng, 2004), others defined empowerment is to award more power to employees in
performing their job (Pearson & Chatterjee, 1996). It is to build a sense of owners of work (Koçel, 2003).

2.1.1 Teacher empowerment
In the literature, research on teacher empowerment become visible in the late 1980’s (Edwards, Green, & Lyons, 2002). Empowerment is a person belief that they have the capability, knowledge and skills to betterly handled the uncertain situations and dynamics of jobs (Bogler & Somech, 2004). According to Short & Johnson (1994), it is processes of developing competence to own responsibility of their own career development and better handle job concerns. Therefore, teacher’s empowerment results in improved performance, advance teacher’s status, increased knowledge and participation in decision making (Maeroff, 1998). It is power given to faculty that they may take decisions regarding their courses, curriculum, research work of students and their assessment criteria, thus improving the quality of lectures, student projects and research work.

Six dimensions of teacher empowerment were explored in literature (Short & Rinehart, 1992). These dimensions include decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact (as cited in Somech & Bogler, 2004). Short (1994a) explains the six dimensions in detail. Decision making refers to teachers’ involvement in critical decisions like scheduling classes, changing curriculum to meet constantly changing environment dynamics, assigning projects, etc that directly affect their jobs. Professional growth is concerned with opportunities and resources that the institute provides to his faculty to grow and develop professionally by learning and expanding their skills. Status refers to the respect, power, identification and admiration that the teachers can receive from administration, peer, social group and students. Self-efficacy is an individual perception that they have enough skills and ability to facilitate students and are capable of developing curricula. Autonomy is the teachers’ believe that they have control over various aspects of their jobs, including scheduling, curriculum development, selection of textbooks and assessment criteria, assigning projects to their students and planning instruction.

Empowering teachers as leaders is one of the effective techniques to raise the quality of education to developed countries, to put teachers at the center of the reform movement, to keep good teachers in education, to persuade new teachers into the profession, and to reverse a general trend toward treating them as managerial employees. By introducing these new paradigms, the teaching profession will become a truly rewarding experience.

2.2 Work Engagement
Work engagement is defined as individual’s involvement in their job. Schaufeli et. al. (2002) define it as an encouraging, affirmative and work oriented psychological state that is explained by various dimensions; vigor, dedication, and absorption. These dimensions emerge by different studies conducted in different time periods. Vigor is concerned with physical strength and health. It further defined as higher levels of energy, effort and mental resilience at work to face challenges, expanded job demands and uncertainties. Dedication refers to the respect, power, identification and admiration that the teachers can receive from administration, peer, social group and students. Self-efficacy is an individual perception that they have enough skills and ability to facilitate students and are capable of developing curricula. Autonomy is the teachers’ believe that they have control over various aspects of their jobs, including scheduling, curriculum development, selection of textbooks and assessment criteria, assigning projects to their students and planning instruction.

Kahn (1990) initially described engagement as a distinctive, imperative and motivational concept: the developing of an employee’s self in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional energies to work role performances. Employee’s job engagement and organizational engagement terms were used alternatively but Saks (2006) differentiated both types of engagement. He defined organizational engagement as a person’s attachment to his/her company, whereas employee engagement is the extent to which employees are essentially concerned with their job and own the responsibility of their performance.

2.3 Emotional Labor
Emotional labor is the process of managing and controlling of ones’ emotions at work to fulfill the emotional requirements of job (as cited in Xanthopoulou et. al., 2013). It’s an individual effort in regulating their emotions as per generally accepted social norms (as cited in Karim, 2009). Initially a sociologist, Arlie Russell Hochschild addressed and explored the emotional labour concept (Seçer; 825). He described it as “the management of the feelings to create mimic and bodily displays that can be observed by everyone”. In the educational context, Hochschild (1983), defined students are like to customers, and working in a university and teaching students are
similar to managing an organization that sell products and service to customers. Teaching profession is one of the professions in which emotions management is highly demanded (Hargreaves, 1998; Zhang & Zhu, 2008). Numerous studies observed various drivers of performing emotional labor like professional efficacy, identity, norms and scripts (Sutton, 2004 and Isenbarger & Zemblys, 2006). But, none of the researcher studied the motive of performing emotional labor as work engagement strategy. Emotional hassles, emotionally stimulating interactions like peers/boss/ misbehavior (Heuven, Bakker, Schaufeli, & Huisman, 2006) and emotional dissonance, a discrepancy perceived and felt emotions, are deemed to be significant predictors of emotional labor (Holman, Martinez-IÇigo, & Totterdell, 2008).

2.4 Employee Empowerment and Work Engagement

Employee engagement is not only one of the significant outcomes of empowerment but empowered employees are more willing to reciprocate with higher levels of work engagement (Avolio et al., 2004). Moreover, several job resources social support, performance feedback, empowerment, etc are positively associated with work engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007).

According to Squire-Kelly, Valerie Denise (2012), empowered teachers are able to teach according to international standard and raise the quality of education. Previous studies are evident that education institutions which empower their faculty, they are able to formulate and execute professional teaching practices. These modern techniques are beneficial for both teachers and students and result in more positive outcomes. In literature, empowerment and employee engagement are found as strategies for increasing employees job satisfaction and performance (Spreitzer 1995, Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). Employees are more engaged when they have supportive job resources, such as managers and peers support and empowerment. Job resources ensure the employees success whereas empowerment affects the attitudes and behaviors (Schaufeli, 2007).

Other findings in the literature also support the positive relationship between empowerment and work engagement (Laschinger et. al., 2009). As already discussed, job engagement directly influences the employee’s behavior and attitude. Apparently no study found in Pakistani context which investigated the relationship between university teachers’ empowerment and engagement. Does job engagement strengthen the relationship with empowerment, or in the contrary, does it weaken the relationship? Previous researches showed positive relationship between job engagement and empowerment.

**Hypothesis1:** Higher the teachers’ empowerment higher the work engagement.

2.5 Employee Emotional Labor and Work Engagement

The emotional labors of the teachers are high as compared to any other profession. They continually had to adjust their emotional expression that let to negatively influence their work engagement (Sheue, 2015). An employee, who provides services to customers, focuses to emotional demands and dissonance, which may influences their work engagement (Schaufeli et. al., 2002). Engaged workers possess high levels of energy, zeal, enthusiasm, etc and are deeply involved in their jobs. Jobs like teaching that involves high interactions with their customers (students), employees (teachers) are often expected to display positive emotions and suppress the negative ones (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). Liu (2010) examined and found a direct relationship between emotional labor and job engagement. Highly emotional demanding jobs like teaching and nursing have a significant and negative relationship with employees’ well-being (work engagement) (Xanthopoulou et al, 2013)

**Hypothesis2:** There is a significant relation exist b/w Emotional Labor and Work Engagement

**Hypothesis3:** The level of overall work engagement measured by empowerment and emotional labor is different is different with changing the work experience

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**
3. Methods

3.1 Participant Procedure
This study was done with 223 lecturers/teachers of 14 different universities of Pakistan. Data was collected using the convenient non-sampling method. Of all the 223 questionnaires distributed, 177 were received back; only 145 were completely filled and used for analysis. Of the participants, 72% were married, 28% single. The 64% were males, 36% were females. 57% (n=83) were lecturers, 35% (n=51) were Assistant professors, 3% (n=6) were Associate professors and 4% (n=6) were Professors. 10% (n=15) had Graduation degree, 51% (n=74) had Post Graduation degree and 39% (n=56) had PhD degree. Respondents concerning job experiences, only 22% had experience of <=1 year, 29% had an experience of 1-3 years, 20% had an experience of 3-5 years, 14% had an experience of 5-7 years, 6% had an experience of 7-10 years and 9% had an experience of above 10 years.

3.2 Measures
This is a quantitative study based on questionnaire survey. Quantitative data is collected using Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Cukur (2009) developed scale was used to measure the emotional labor. Teacher empowerment was measured using the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) (Short & Rinehart, 1992). The SPES measures teachers’ overall perception of empowerment. The Empowerment scale measures. Five-point Likert scale from (1) “Strongly Agree” to (5) “Strongly Disagree” were used. Different demographics like Age, gender, length of service and hours of employment are also recorded for comparative analysis. Employee Empowerment is measured using the 16 items. Emotional Labor is measured using 8 items & work engagement measured using 9 items.

4. Results
The study aimed to examine the significant relationship that exist b/w teacher’s empowerment, emotional labor, and teachers’ work engagement. Both types of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were done using SPSS (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Independent sample T-Test, Regression and Correlation analysis were used to test hypothesis, build models and determine its significance. All analysis is done at alpha=.05. The relationships between work engagement and independent variables (Employee empowerment and Emotional Labor) is statistically significant (p-value<.000) and this finding is supported by Liu, X. (2010) & Bakker (2008).

Table 1: Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>emp.eng</th>
<th>Empw</th>
<th>em.lab</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empw</td>
<td>.727</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.134</td>
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<tr>
<td>em.lab</td>
<td>-.149</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The table1 shows correlations among the studied variables. Correlation coefficients (CC) measure the nature and strength of relationships and its values ranges from -1 to 1. Larger the value of r (correlation coefficient), stronger relationship exist in variables. The r (CC) (-.149) value indicates negative weaker relationship between overall Emotional Labor and overall work Engagement. The emotional labor in the model is insignificant which contradict and negate the hypothesis 2 (there is a significant relation b/w emotional labor and overall employee work engagement but when the emotional labor is tested with work engagement using t-test, the result is significant (p-value<.05). The absolute r (CC) (.727) value signifies a positive stronger relationship between teachers empowerment and their work Engagement that supports the hypothesis1 (higher the empowerment higher the
employee work engagement) as discussed by (Akram et. al., 2013).

Table 2: Model Coefficient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>.008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Labor</td>
<td>-.155</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Regression Model
Overall Work Engagement= .435+ .739(Empowerment) - .155(Emotional Labor)

The R² of our model is .531, which shows that approximately 53% of variance in dependent variable (Teachers work engagement) is explained by the linear combination of independent variables (Empowerment & Emotional Labor).

4.2 Regression Model with Moderating Variable (Experience)
The model remains significant by adding moderating variable of job experience

Table 3: Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>-.139</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>.651</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Labor</td>
<td>-.149</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work Engagement= .782+ .651(Empowerment) - .149(Emotional Labor)-.057(job Experience).

The beta value (-.057) of the job experience indicates negative weaker relationship. It means the job experience do not affect the overall work engagement and employee empowerment & emotional labor which negate the hypothesis 3. This result is supported by the results suggested that apart from the experience in the profession; empowerment has a strong impact on work engagement (Spence & Piotrwilk, 2009 & Rice,J.,K., 2009). The emotion labor beta value (-.149) negatively but significantly influence the teachers work engagement as supported by Bakker et al. (2007) and Sheue (2015)

The beta value (.651) positively and significantly influence the teachers work engagement as found and mentioned by previous researchers (Schulze & Dehaloo, 2013, Bakker, 2008 and Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, Pollak, 2009). When teachers are empowered by their institution, they are highly involved with their work and result in performance excellence (Reeves, 2004).

5. Limitations and Future Directions
The study was cross-sectional and the data was collected using the convenient sampling method; that’s why the results may lack reliability and not true representation of the population. Moreover, much of data is collected from lecturers and Assistant Professors with maximum experience of 7 years. Approximately 10% of respondents are of the seniors (Associate Professors and Professors) with an experience of above 10 years and these demographics can affect our model and findings as per previous research experience has significant relation with work engagement and employee empowerment (Cassidy & Berry,2013 and Spence & Piotrwilk, 2009).Correlation co-efficient value for employee emotional labor is -.149, an indication of negative as well as weaker relationship between the work engagement and emotional labor. It means that alone emotional labor not influencing teachers work engagement. therefore higher education institutes need to discover other variables influencing the teachers work engagement in
combination with empowerment and emotional labor as determined in this study study.

5. Discussion
The results of this study also contribute significantly in the literature. The results signify a support for a link b/w higher institution teachers’ empowerment and work engagement. The teachers who have optimistic and strong feelings of empowerment (Autonomy, Decision making, Competence, Professional growth, status, Impact, etc) are more engaged in their job. The findings of the study suggests that its higher education commission responsibility to develop such environment in universities where faculty themselves are urged to act as professional and treated as professionals who are empowered to make their own decisions, which ultimately raise the teachers engagement in their profession. In turn, teachers may also experience improved quality of education and greater job satisfaction, remain in the profession longer, and be more effective in the classroom.

The relationship b/w emotional labor and work engagement in this study is significant as the literature suggested that university lecturers are performing relatively high levels of emotional labour compared even to other occupations where emotional labour is considered particularly prevalent. A high level of emotional labour practices in university lecturers is perhaps one symptom of the transformational change impacting higher education institutions (Berry & Cassidy, 2013). The findings of this study unable to determine the significant influence of experience. It means experience doesn’t matter in the studied relationship, it contradicts literature studies where experience is an important factor influencing the empowerment and engagement (Laschinger et. al., 2009). Clearly further research is necessary to determine the reasons of variation of results of this study and the literature supported results. The findings also show that the experience doesn’t matter in the studied relation.

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