

# THE ROLE OF TENURE AS A MODERATOR TO JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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## **Abstract**

*Employees' job satisfaction and work engagement are critical aspects of an organization, and employee's working tenure and gender difference believe in influencing these aspects. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the role of tenure as a moderator to job satisfaction and work engagement. Furthermore, this study determines any gender difference between job satisfaction and job engagement among Malaysian government servants. A sample of 160 Malaysian government servants, whereas 72 men and 88 women, participated in this study. This study used the survey method by using the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) and Work and Well-Being Survey or Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The study's findings showed that satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers predicted all three dimensions of work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). Still, tenure does not lead to any moderating effect on this relationship. Lastly, the results obtained also showed no significant gender differences in job satisfaction and work engagement. This study gives the meaning as showing no working tenure moderating effect on the significant correlational relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement, and both job satisfaction and work engagement are not gendered.*

**Keywords:** job satisfaction, work engagement, working tenure, gender

## **INTRODUCTION**

Job is an essential aspect of life as most employees spent most of their time at the workplace compared to other activities. Government servants in Malaysia reached 1.71 million, the armed forces (152,957); police (128,536); civil servants of various schemes (665,068); education (523,226) and health (240,745) by the March of the year 2019 [2]. Government employees are essential as they make great contributions to Malaysia's growth in service, education, economy, health, and operation. They are important individuals that ensure continuity in our country's proper operation. Therefore, what would workers expect from their workplace? Moreover, what makes them more satisfied and engaged more in their job? According to [26], human motivation focuses on their satisfaction with their basic needs, including physiological, safety, belonging and love, social conditions, and self-actualization. Job satisfaction can explain as the degree to which people like their work [36]. Moreover, referring to Industrial Psychology Literature, the term "Job Satisfaction" refers to an individual's attitude towards the critical aspects of the overall work situation [6]. Several factors can assess or influence the degree of satisfaction. Also, it can include pay and benefits, fairness of promotion system, working conditions, leadership and social relationships, the work itself, the variety of responsibilities, job opportunities, job challenges, and the job requirements [4]. Therefore, one can say that employees would be satisfied if his or her expectations or desires have met, and his or her job satisfaction level will be high.

Job engagement defines as an employee's commitment, whether psychological or emotional bonding and the emphasis of their work on long-term goals [28]. What drives employee engagement in employees? Past researchers identified many drivers of employee engagement that affected their performance and well-being at work [10]. Few factors such as adaptability, talent development, communication, leadership are highlight as critical drivers of engagement. To date, many studies and research conducted between job satisfaction and different variables such as job performance, job burnout, family life satisfaction, job stress with other demographic factors. However, only a few researchers research on related to this topic between job satisfaction and work engagement. Studies by [27] and [5] examined the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement but the dimensions used to explore the variable differ from this study. Very few researchers did explore the relationship between the four aspects of job satisfaction and the three aspects of job engagement, such as in this study. The employees' organizational tenure might also be linked to their job satisfaction and work engagement. Managerial tenure does find to have a significant relationship with job satisfaction [19]. Long tenure employees may have a sense of loyalty to their employer and have high levels of job satisfaction and work engagement and vice versa. However, minimal research has made to see the relationship between work engagement and tenure.

Gender, as in any other network of divisions, such as class and race, occurs in mutually reinforcing contexts such as: "Resource distributions in societies, organizational systems and job habits in organizations, classification of roles in households, the pattern of contact between people and the meanings and identities of person." [15]. Therefore, men and women have multiple values and ideals deriving from their culture [1]. As the definition earlier, organizations' processes, practices, and interactions may differ for women and men. Men and women may carry out different tasks and meet different expectations and interactions due to gender differences. Men are normally more valued as compared to women in organizations. Hence, job satisfaction and work engagement in government servants might be different due to their gender constructs. Overall, there are also numerous studies with either job satisfaction variable or job engagement variable, but there are minimal studies that examine the role of tenure as a moderator to job satisfaction and work engagement. In past studies, gender also being evaluated with either job satisfaction or job engagement. However, there are still some gaps in the evaluation of both job satisfaction and work engagement. This study gives the meaning as the main purposes in this study are to examine tenure as a moderator to job satisfaction and work engagement and determine any gender difference between job satisfaction and job engagement among Malaysian government servants.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

By using an alternative hypothesis, the researcher hypothesized that:

- $H_1 =$  There is a facet of job satisfaction that can predict a facet of work engagement.
- $H_2 =$  Tenure will moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and facet of work engagement among Malaysian government servants.
- $H_3 =$  There are significant gender differences in job satisfaction.
- $H_4 =$  There are significant gender differences in work engagement.

## METHODOLOGY

### *a) Research Design*

This study is conducting in the form of quantitative design. The data collect through the random distribution of self-report online questionnaires (google form) among Malaysian government servants. Simple random sampling is used in this study because it increases the chance and is equally selecting like anyone else [22]. The advantages of this sampling are that the results can be generalized to a larger population and perform statistical analysis [22]. Also, this method will be the fastest and easiest way to collect the data from the respondents.

### *b) Location*

The location of this study is the Federation Malaysia that comprises of 13 states and three federal territories. The 13 states are Selangor, Kedah, Perak, Perlis, Pulau Pinang (Penang), Negeri Sembilan, Kelantan, Pahang, Terengganu, Melaka, Johor, Sabah, and Sarawak. The three federal territories include Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Labuan.

### *c) Instruments*

The questionnaire used in this study consists of four parts that are Part A (Demographic Information), Part B (Working Tenure), Part C (Job Satisfaction Scale), and Part D (Work and Well-Being /Utrecht Work Engagement Scale). The questionnaires are all bilingual, which are in Bahasa English and Bahasa Malaysia translation.

### *d) Research Procedure*

First, the research procedure starts with determining a title for the study and translation of the instrument from the English language to Malay language to have a bilingual version instrument for respondents to have a better understanding of the questions asked. In the questionnaire, the Inform Consent includes ensuring all respondents are participating voluntarily in this study. Then, the researcher conducted the study by distributing the self-report questionnaire (Google Form) through WhatsApp to respondents. The instructions for each part of the questionnaire are briefly explaining in each section of the questionnaire. Lastly, the following processes will be data screening, analyzing and, interpreting.

### *e) Data Analysis*

The data were analyzed by using IBM Statistic SPSS Version 25.0. Both descriptive and inference statistics do use to test the hypothesis of this study. In this study, the researcher tested  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  using hierarchical moderated regression and used an independent T-test for  $H_3$  and  $H_4$ .

## RESULTS

### *a) Socio-Demographic*

Among 160 respondents who participated in this study, 72 (45%) are male, and 88 are female (55%). In the age range, the respondents' maximum age is 60 years old, and the minimum age of the respondents is 21 years old. Besides that, respondents were dividing into four types of age groups. There are 36 respondents with age 21-30 years old (22.5%), 59 respondents with age 31-40 years old (36.9%), 46 respondents with the age 41-50 years old (28.8%), and 19 respondents with age 51-60 years old (11.9%). For the religion, majorities of the respondents are Muslim (N=107), followed by Christian (N=36), Buddhist (N=11), and Hindu (N=6). For the ethnicity aspect, 90 respondents (56.3%) are Malay, followed by 28 respondents (17.5%) who are Sabah Native, 25 respondents (15.6%) who are Chinese, ten respondents (6.3%) who are Sarawak Native, five respondents (3.1%) who are Indian, one Bugis respondent (0.65%) and one Myanmar respondent (0.65%).

This study found that 120 respondents (63.7%) are married. Then, 55 respondents (34.4%) are single, two respondents (1.3%) are divorced, and one respondent (0.6%) is widowed. As for the respondent's education level, majorities of the respondents achieved bachelor's degree (N= 83), followed by master's degree (N=33), Diploma (N= 24), Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) (N= 8), Doctorate (N=7), Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM) (N=4) and Matriculation (N=1). There are many types of occupations that engaged by our respondents, and the top three occupations of our respondents are officer (N=46), assistant/staff (N=31), and teacher (N=30). Majorities of our respondents were working in Sarawak (N= 44), Sabah (N=41), and Penang (N=21).

***b) The Relationship between Four Facets of Job Satisfaction and Three Facets of Work Engagement and the Moderating Effect of Working Tenure on Variables***

To answer H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>, hierarchical moderated regression analyses conduct in which four facets of job satisfaction were regressing in separate analyses with every three facets of work engagement. In each analysis, working tenure was entered in step one to control for variance explained by these variables. In step two, satisfaction with job security, satisfaction with compensation, satisfaction with co-workers, and satisfaction with the supervision was regressing simultaneously to see if any facet of job satisfaction makes any significant unique contribution and produces a statistically significant increase in variance for facets of work engagement. In the final step, the correlation between working tenure and each facet of job satisfaction was regressing to see if the moderating effect of working tenure is present. Below, Table 1 shows the hierarchical regression analyses.

Table 1:  
Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Job Satisfaction and Works Engagement and Working Tenure Acts as Moderator

	Vigor		Dedication		Absorption	
	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup> Change	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup> Change	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup> Change
Step 1 Tenure	.23**	.05**	.18*	.03*	.13	.02
Step 2 Satisfaction with job security	.08	.40**	.02	.31**	.05	.23**
Satisfaction with compensation	.22**		.27**		.23**	
Satisfaction with co-workers	.32**		.30**		.38**	
Satisfaction with the supervision	.21		.12		-.02	
Step 3 Tenure*Satisfaction with job security	-.13	.01	-.11	.01	.03	.03
Tenure*Satisfaction with compensation	.07		.38		.97*	
Tenure*Satisfaction with co-workers	1.15		.79		-.08	
Tenure*Satisfaction with supervision	-1.03*		-.40		-.54	

Note. \*\*Significant at the .01 level, \* Significant at the .05 level

The first regression has done on the vigor of work engagement. In step one, the beta weight was significant for working tenure ( $\beta=.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with the score of R<sup>2</sup> change of .05,  $p < .01$ . In step two, only satisfaction with compensation ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and satisfaction with co-workers ( $\beta=.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ) had the significant beta, and step two contributed a significant score of R<sup>2</sup> change of .40,  $p < .01$ . The answers for the first hypothesis of satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers have significantly predicted the vigor of work engagement. In the final step, only the interaction of tenure with supervision shows a significant negative beta ( $\beta= -1.03$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but the other facets show no significant beta. However, the score of R<sup>2</sup> change of step three is not significant. Hence, it indicates that tenure with satisfaction with supervision might act as the suppressor, but overall, working tenure has no moderating effect on vigor.

The second regression has done on the dedication of work engagement. In step one, the beta weight was significant for working tenure ( $\beta=.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) with the score of  $R^2$  change of .03,  $p < .05$ . In step two, only satisfaction with compensation ( $\beta=.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and satisfaction with co-workers ( $\beta=.30$ ,  $p < .01$ ) had the significant beta and significant score of  $R^2$  change of .31,  $p < .01$ . In the final step, none of the interactions showed a significant beta or  $R^2$  change. This regression part answers both hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 as only satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers significantly predict dedication of work engagement, and working tenure is not a moderator.

The last regression has done on the absorption of work engagement. In step one, tenure ( $\beta=.13$ ) was not a significant predictor of absorption. In step two, satisfaction with compensation ( $\beta=.23$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and satisfaction with co-workers ( $\beta=.38$ ,  $p < .01$ ) again showed having a significant beta and with the score of  $R^2$  change of .23,  $p < .01$ . The answers for the first hypothesis of satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers have significantly predicted the absorption of work engagement. In the final step, only the interaction of tenure with satisfaction with compensation shows significant beta ( $\beta= .97$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but the other facets do not show significant beta. However, the score of  $R^2$  change of step three is not significant. Hence, it indicates that tenure with compensation might significantly contribute to the absorption of work engagement, but overall, working tenure has no moderating effect on absorption.

Overall, working tenure accounted for significant variance in vigor and dedication but did not account for variance in absorption. Next, the three regression analyses found that the dimensions of job satisfaction account for variance in the dimensions of work engagement. Only two facets of job satisfaction that satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers, have made a unique contribution to work engagement. However, the overall interaction of working tenure with job satisfaction did not account for a variance for work engagement. Hence, working tenure does not appear to moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement.

#### c) *Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction*

An independent-samples t-test was conducting to compare the job satisfaction scores for males and females of respondents. As shown in Table 2, there was no significant difference in scores for males ( $M= 36.39$ ,  $SD= 4.71$ ) and females ( $M=34.98$ ,  $SD=5.89$ ;  $t(158) = 1.65$ ,  $p > .50$ ). Therefore,  $H_3$  is rejected.

Table 2:  
Gender Differences in Job Satisfaction

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Job Satisfaction	Male	72	36.39	4.71	1.65	158	.10
	Female	88	34.98	5.89			

#### d) *Gender Differences in Work Engagement*

An independent-samples t-test was conducting to compare the work engagement scores for males and females of respondents. As shown in Table 3, there was also no significant difference in scores for males ( $M= 76.51$ ,  $SD= 14.92$ ) and females ( $M=75.06$ ,  $SD=14.60$ ;  $t(158) = .62$ ,  $p > .50$ ). Therefore,  $H_4$  is rejected.

Table 3:  
Gender Differences in Work Engagement

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	Sig.
Work Engagement	Male	72	76.51	14.92	.62	158	.54
	Female	88	75.06	14.60			

## DISCUSSION

### *a) Facet of Job Satisfaction that can Predict Facet of Work Engagement*

The first objective of this study was to determine whether any four facets of job satisfaction predicted any of the three dimensions of work engagement. The results show two facets of job satisfaction that are satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers, do predict a significant portion of the variance in all facets of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Since satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers were both predictors and had predictive value, the findings align with hypothesis one: there is a facet of job satisfaction that can predict a facet of work engagement.

Our study will argue that satisfaction with compensation (in terms of pay and benefits gain) and satisfaction with co-workers are essential for employees to be engaged, which is more vigor, dedication, and absorbed in their job. This study suggests that for Malaysian government servants to be engaged in their work, they need to be satisfied with the compensation and co-workers. Historically, pay or salary in one's work has been considered the most significant element of employee satisfaction [14]. Next, [18] show that financial rewards are positively related to work engagement. As compared to a similar study conducted by [40], the first part of their findings suggests that when employees are satisfied with work, they are more likely to be engaged. Similarly, several other studies also showed that job satisfaction is a predecessor of work engagement [31, 33, 35, 39]. This study's findings can also be supported and explained by satiation-activation differentiation and social exchange theory, as the theories support that job satisfaction is more likely to be the antecedent of work engagement.

Satisfaction with co-workers, which is having a friendly or supportive relationship with colleagues, plays a vital role in forming work engagement. For example, Chalofsky's study [11] suggested that social aspects of the work environment have a significant impact on employee job perceptions. Moreover, according to the social exchange theory again, we can explain that employees who reciprocate "support" will increase their positive attitudes such as engagement [40]. In that sense, we can explain that employees who are satisfied with their interactions with their co-workers will be more engaged with their work. Thus, the current findings of the study contribute an understanding of sources of satisfaction that is compensation and co-workers are essential for Malaysian government servants to expect them to be engaged in work.

### *b) Working Tenure as a Moderator to Job Satisfaction and Work Engagement*

The study's second objective is to examine if tenure will moderate the relationship between the facet of job satisfaction and the facet of work engagement among government servants. The findings of this study are inconsistent with the second hypothesis because this study does not support the proposition that tenures will moderate the relationship between the facet of job satisfaction and the facet of work engagement.

As mentioned in the previous part, two facets of job satisfaction that are satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers, predict a significant portion of the variance in all

three facets of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. However, tenure does not show any moderating effect. It means that the amount of variance that satisfaction with compensation and satisfaction with co-workers accounted for vigor, dedication, and absorption of work engagement are consistent regardless of employee tenure. As the working tenure of government servants increases, government servants' job satisfaction levels remain the same. Tenure does not moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement.

Some prior studies found job satisfaction increases with tenure of service, but some studies did not find tenure a significant factor in job satisfaction. A similar study conducted by [29] that examines the organization tenure as a moderator of the job satisfaction and job performance relationship also shows insignificant moderating effects of organization tenure of the relationship between co-worker and pay with the performance.

Nevertheless, previous studies did examine the moderating effects of tenure on different job aspect variables. However, the moderating effect of tenure on the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement is still conflicting as there is still scarce research directed at discovering the tenure moderating effect on the same variables of this study. To some degree, the results of this study provide new insight that tenure does not show any moderating effect on the relationship between job satisfaction (compensation and co-workers) and work engagement. For the Malaysian government employees, working tenure does not come into play to be satisfied with their jobs and engaged in work.

### *c) Gender Difference in Job Satisfaction*

One of the objectives of this study is to examine the gender differences in job satisfaction. The results indicate no significant gender differences in job satisfaction among Malaysian government servants,  $t(158) = 1.65, p > .50$ . Hence, hypothesis three that suggested there is a significant gender difference in job satisfaction, is rejected. In many previous kinds of literature, some findings showed that there is gender influence on job satisfaction, but some studies showed gender was found not to predict job satisfaction. Results obtained in the present study is contrasting with findings that claimed significant gender difference in job satisfaction. For example, several studies have shown that female employees are delighted with their work [5, 13, 20, 30, 32], and other studies showed that males experience higher levels of satisfaction than females [7, 12].

Nevertheless, there is a lengthy, prolonged debate over whether there are gender differences in work satisfaction. Similarly, several studies ended without finding any important gender disparities in job satisfaction, which has the same result as this study. Findings from [3] studied the impact of gender inequalities on job satisfaction in Kuwait and concluded that gender-based differences are not important. [17] have found no gender dissimilarities in overall satisfaction when analyzing the job satisfaction of top management directors. The study of [23] and [16] also show no gender inequality in job satisfaction. In this study, the result shows gender does not have a substantial influence on male and female government servants towards their job satisfaction, meaning that both male and female government servants are having equal levels of perceived satisfaction in job security, compensation, co-workers, and supervision they received at the workplace. As for this study, the respondents involved are government servants that work in Malaysia, so there might be explanations underlying why there are no gender disparities in job satisfaction.

Malaysia has undergone a remarkable economic transformation and structural change in the 50 years since independence, moving from a low wage, agricultural-based rural economy to a middle-income, manufacturing, and service-based urban economy and now to an upper-middle-income, knowledge-based service economy [24]. Industrial growth in these fields has seen an increase in demand for female workers, and the gender equality debate in Malaysia continues to

fuel concern in both the public and private sectors. Also, Malaysia acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on 5 July 1995. The CEDAW establishes the basis for achieving gender equality by ensuring fair access between women and men through ensuring women's equal access and equal opportunities in political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or another field, including the right to vote and to stand for election, as well as education, health, and employment [37].

Besides, the government has developed and enforced policies to tackle gender-based discrimination and abuse in the workforce, including the freedom to reproduce, maternity and paternity leave, equal pay for equal work, equal retirement age, and same benefits for both men and women [25]. Various policies and legislations provide an equal opportunity for both male and female workers at work. In this study, the results show Malaysian government achieves gender parity and ensures the employees achieve satisfaction at the same level. Under steps implemented by the government of Malaysia, the government successfully eliminates gender discrimination and ensures every worker gets equal rights and benefits in the workplace. Therefore, there are no significant gender differences in job satisfaction among our Malaysian government servants.

#### *d) Gender Difference in Work Engagement*

The last objective of this study is to examine the gender differences in work engagement. The results demonstrate no significant gender differences in work engagement among government servants,  $t(158) = .62, p > .50$ , hypothesis four is not supporting. Previous studies showed that work engagement tends to be either gender-neutral or gender disparity. For example, [34] reviewed the overall rate of employee engagement found that women display significantly higher engagement than men. However, the research sample group was relatively small (90 respondents). Similarly, the result from [38] that tested the engagement of academic staff in India showed a similar result with this current research. The results of the survey did not prove any relationship exists between engagement and gender. However, the current study's data contributes a clearer understanding of the notion of work engagement, which is gender-neutral. This gender neutrality indicates that both male and female workers can equally demonstrate work engagement. The Malaysian government did a great job providing the same opportunity for both male and female government servants to be engaged in the workplace.

The finding of gender-neutral work engagement contradicts the claims of Kahn's engagement theory [21] and gendered organizations theory [9] which argued that work engagement is gendered. It might result in both male and female government employees feeling valued and valuable in the civil sector. Men and women who serve in the government sector can focus and engage in their everyday work regardless of their daily roles and type of occupation. Due to the job satisfaction at their organizations, both men and women respondents display the same level of job satisfaction. In summary, the results have shown there are no significant gender differences in work engagement among Malaysian government servants. Hence, the findings might suggest that the Malaysian organization or government nowadays appears to be gender-neutral, and both male and female employees can demonstrate the same level of work engagement.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, satisfaction with compensation and co-workers can predict vigor, dedication, and absorption of work engagement. Therefore, organizations and governments should build an environment that can encourage job satisfaction and work engagement. Besides, we can know that working tenure does not show any moderating effect on job satisfaction and work engagement relationships. Job satisfaction and work engagement also tend to be equal among Malaysian



government servants as results shown there is no significant gender difference in job satisfaction and work engagement. Thus, future research can focus on other contexts or factors that can moderate or influence the relationship. All in all, government servants are the essential backbone of our nation, Malaysia. Therefore, organizations or industries should focus on employees' satisfaction levels to be fully engaged in their contribution to their task or work. It must take seriously to maintain gender equality in every occupation so that everyone can put up their efforts full-heartedly in establishing every work and enhancing our nation's development.

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