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Does employees' trust in the management predict employees' work engagement?

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to measure the effect of employees' trust in management on the work engagement of employees. Deepening the concepts of the study, the literature was reviewed and appropriate research methodology was applied. The study used assessment and correlational research design. The population of the study was employees of the institution (DWCL) and the data was gathered through research questionnaires. The finding of the study demonstrates that employees have a high trust in management competency, integrity and the working relationship and employees also have a high work engagement. However, the result of the ANOVA indicates that employees' trust in management is not associated with the work engagement of the employees. Thus, the hypothesis of the study is rejected. The high work engagement of employees can be influenced by other factors not considered in the study.

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Introduction

Managing an organization effectively involves attention to both tangible and intangible elements. While visible factors like facilities and salaries are often prioritized, neglecting intangibles such as organizational climate, motivation, and trust can lead to detrimental outcomes. For instance, Kanten and Er Ulker (2013) found that organizational climate impacts counterproductive behavior, with positive climates reducing such behaviors. Similarly, motivated employees, as noted by Permarupan et al. (2013), demonstrate increased

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productivity and engagement. Trust, as highlighted by Varshney and Varshney (2017), fosters teamwork and enhances productivity. The issue of trust has long been a concern in management, evident in theories like X, Y, and Z by McGregor (1960) cited by Bennis and Stephens (2000) and Ouchi (1981), which reflect varying attitudes towards employee work ethic. Recent surveys, such as one by Harvard Business Review (Harrington, 2017), reveal declining trust in organizations due to ethical issues. Heartbeat's (2020) global employee engagement survey indicates that only 41% of employees are engaged worldwide, with lower rates in industries like education and non-profit. While Gallup's (2022) survey report indicated that only 21% of employees are engaged at work. Addressing this gap, this study explored the extent of trust between employees and administrators in educational institutions and its impact on work engagement. The study is structured into introduction, literature review, research methodology, data presentation and analysis, and result discussions to contribute to understanding the effect of trust on work engagement and productivity.

Literature review

The literature review presents existing literature and studies related to the current study to deepen the understanding of the study and to establish the theories to be investigated.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

The concept of interpersonal trust collective trust

Understanding trust is essential for comprehending the current topic. Merriam-Webster defines trust as "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." Similarly, the Dictionary defines it as "a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something." In this study, trust refers to reliance on someone due to their competence. McLeod (2020) describes trust as an attitude towards people one hopes will be trustworthy. This indicates that trust and trustworthiness are distinct, with trust being an attitude and trustworthiness being a quality possessed by someone we trust.

Mishra (1996) defines trust as "one party's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is competent, open, concerned, and reliable." Cambridge Dictionary states trust involves not only hoping someone is competent but also honest and reliable, reflecting trustworthiness. Trust evolves from cognitive to affective dimensions based on rationality and emotion (McAllister, 1995; Erdem & Ozen, 2003).

In workplace settings, trust among team members fosters cooperation and coordination. It creates an environment where individuals feel safe, enabling openness and acceptance of mistakes (Edmondson, 1999). Effective teamwork requires both cognitive and affective trust (Jones & George, 1998; Erdem & Ozen, 2003).

Management faces the challenge of developing collective trust, which is a shared perception of trustworthiness among groups (Rousseau et al., 1998; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Collective trust emerges from interpersonal trust and significantly influences organizational effectiveness (Gray, 2016). Building a culture of trust involves providing credible evidence to support decision-making (Bucero, 2012). Trust in

various groups strongly impacts collective trustworthiness and organizational effectiveness (Holm & Nystedt, 2010; Tarter & Hoy, 2004; Hoy et al., 1992).

The importance of interpersonal and collective trust on the organizational outcomes

Interpersonal and collective trust significantly impact organizational outcomes. Trust involves believing that someone or a group will not behave in a harmful manner (Gambetta, 1988). Interpersonal trust, characterized by vulnerability to others, can evolve into collective trust when shared perceptions align (Forsyth et al., 2015). Originally psychological, trust becomes a social and organizational property when shared within a group (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

Management should prioritize fostering both interpersonal and collective trust to enhance performance (Yuan et al., 2021). Research demonstrates the positive impact of interpersonal trust on group performance and organizational outcomes (Dirks, 1999; Bakiev, 2013; Ugwu & Maduagwu, 2018). Interpersonal trust correlates with job satisfaction, decision-making participation, and employee empowerment (Guinot et al., 2014; Ul Hassan et al., 2012), suggesting the need for trust-building practices (Six, 2007; Bulinska-Stangrecka & Bagienska, 2019).

Similarly, collective trust predicts individual and organizational performance (Deutsch-Salamon & Robinson, 2011; Morrisette & Kisamore, 2019). It fosters high-responsibility norms, accountability, and improved customer service (Deutsch-Salamon & Robinson, 2008). Studies affirm that enhancing trust climates within organizations positively impacts outcomes (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Gray, 2016; Sagholi et al., 2010; Buenaventura-Vera & Gudziol-Vidal, 2020).

Employees' trust in management

Employees' trust in management, also known as organizational trust, refers to the collective faith employees have in their management, characterized by perceptions of reliability, honesty, and fairness (Wang et al., 2018; Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975, cited in Baird & St-Amand, 1995; Mayer et al., 1995). Trust is cultivated over time through consistent behavior that demonstrates concern for employees' well-being (Taylor, 1989, cited in Baird & St-Amand, 1995). Clear communication and fair decision-making by employers contribute to building trust (Whitener, 1997).

The impact of collective trust on organizational performance has been explored by various studies (Deutsch-Salamon & Robinson, 2008, 2011; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Amoah-Binfoh et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2021). While direct correlations may not always be found, collective trust influences the development of high-responsibility norms and accountability, ultimately affecting organizational outcomes such as sales and customer service quality.

Factors influencing employees' trust in managers include competency, integrity, and the worker-leader relationship (Seok et al., 2014, 2015; Hill & Lineback, 2019). Competency entails the manager's ability to handle tasks effectively and make sound decisions, while integrity involves demonstrating sincerity, honesty, and ethical values. Building trust also requires understanding and involving employees in

problem-solving, as well as possessing technical, operational, and political knowledge (Hill & Lineback, 2019; Covey, 2009).

Work engagement

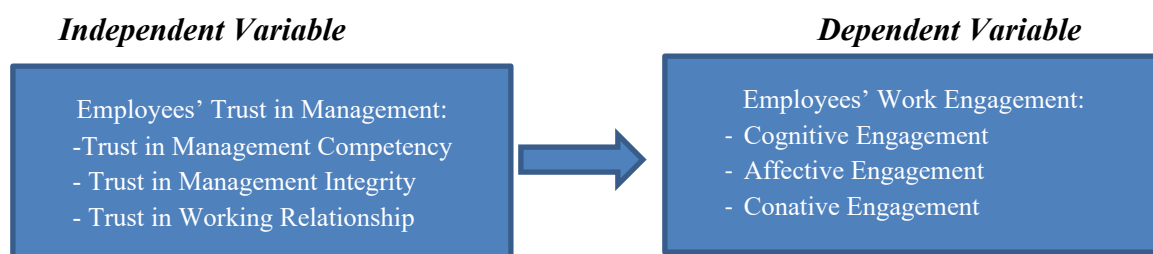
Organizations strive for sustainability and competitiveness, necessitating attention to various dimensions including the work environment, economic factors, and human aspects (Hart & Milstein, 2003; Spreitzer et al., 2012; Florea et al., 2013). However, human dimensions, particularly work engagement, often receive inadequate consideration despite their crucial role in supporting sustainability (Spreitzer et al., 2012; Florea et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2016).

Concerningly, global statistics indicate low levels of work engagement, with only 21% of employees reported as engaged at work (Gallup, 2022). Heartbeat Consulting Group (2020) further highlights declining work engagement trends, particularly in educational institutions and non-profit organizations, with only 39% of employees engaged in both sectors. Work engagement, defined as a positive emotional state characterized by high energy, dedication, and focus on work, is essential for fostering creativity, task performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Schleupner & Kuhnel, 2021).

Studies identify various dimensions and elements of work engagement, including positive emotional states, energy, and positive work-oriented behaviors (Green et al., 2017; Kuok & Taormina, 2017). Fulfillment of needs emerges as a primary driver of work engagement, alongside factors such as support from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, autonomy, and learning opportunities (Green et al., 2017; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007).

Work engagement significantly influences individual and organizational performance, as evidenced by numerous studies (Kim et al., 2012; Yao et al., 2022; Bakker & Bal, 2010; Wang & Cheng, 2020; Bakker et al., 2012). These findings underscore the importance of prioritizing work engagement within organizational management strategies.

Conceptual framework



Source: Seok, et al. (2015)

Kuok and Taormina (2017).

Figure 1: The conceptual framework reflects the study's purpose of determining the effect of employees' trust in management on the work engagement of employees.

Statement of the problems

The study examined the effect of employees' trust in management on the work engagement of employees. It specifically answered the following questions:

- 1. What is employees' trust in management in terms of:**
 - a. Trust in management competency**
 - b. Trust in management integrity**
 - c. Trust in the working relationship**
- 2. What is employees' work engagement in terms of:**
 - a. cognitive engagement**
 - b. affective engagement**
 - c. conative engagement**
- 3. Is there a relationship between trust in management and work engagement?**

Assumptions

The study assumes that employees' trust in management influences the work engagement of employees and both can be measured.

Hypothesis

The study by Islam, et al. (2020) found that there is a correlation between trust in leadership and organizational transformation. Based on such findings, the current study hypothesizes that trust in management affects the work engagement of employees.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The scope of the study is the Divine Word College of Laoag and its employees and it delimits its discussion on the employees' trust along with several dimensions such as trust in competency, trust in integrity and working relationships and work engagement in terms of cognitive, affective and conative dimensions.

Research methodology

In accordance with scientific standards, rigorous procedures and techniques are employed to conduct research systematically. The methodology employed plays a crucial role in determining the quality and reliability of the study (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). Consequently, this study adhered to appropriate

research methodologies encompassing research design, data collection instruments, population selection, study locale, data collection procedures, and statistical data analysis techniques.

Research design

The quantitative nature of the study led to the utilization of descriptive assessment and correlational research design to gauge the leadership competency of administrators and its impact on employee work engagement. Descriptive research was employed to elucidate findings from questionnaire data, employing statistical methods to tabulate results and describe various aspects of the data, such as profiles and frequency distributions (Ariola, 2006, cited by Abun, 2019). In alignment with the study's objectives, both descriptive assessment and correlational methods were applied to ascertain the level of employees' trust in management and its influence on work engagement.

The locale of the study

The locale of the study was Divine Word Colleges of Laoag, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte.

Population

The population of the study was composed of all employees of Divine Word College of Laoag, Ilocos Norte. The total enumeration sampling was used and 276 employees were taken as respondents to the study.

Data gathering instruments

The study adopted validated questionnaires by Seok, et al. (2015) on employees 'trust and Kuok and Taormina (2017) on work engagement.

Data gathering procedures

During the data collection phase, the researcher sought permission from the College president to distribute questionnaires on campus. They personally engaged with both the president and employees, requesting their participation. Subsequently, questionnaires were collected through collaboration with employee representatives and faculty members.

Statistical treatment of data

Aligned with the descriptive assessment and correlational research design, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. The weighted mean determined the levels of employees' trust in management and work engagement, while ANOVA analyzed the correlation between these variables.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation will be used:

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>
4.21-5.00	strongly agree/Very high
3.41-4.20	Agree/High
2.61-3.40	Somewhat agree/Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree/Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree/Very Low

Data presentation and analysis

The data are presented in the following tables based on the statement of the problems.

Problem 1: What is employees' trust in management in terms of:

- a. Trust in management competency
- b. Trust in management integrity
- c. Trust in the working relationship

Table 1: Trust in management competency

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretations</i>
My head of department shows confidence in task performance and administration	4.04	A/H
The ability of my head of department is undeniable	4.01	A/H
My head of department brings development to the department	4.00	A/H
I have confidence in the ability of my head of department	4.02	A/H
My head of department is my source of reference	3.94	A/H
My head of department can make quick decisions	3.99	A/H
My head of department is good at administration	3.98	A/H
My head of department has a convincing appearance.	3.98	A/H
My head of department has great experience in performing his/her tasks.	4.02	A/H
My head of the department is capable of delegating tasks to his/her employees.	4.02	A/H
Composite Mean	4.00	A/H

Source: Seok, et al., (2015).

Legend:

<i>Statistical Range</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretation</i>
4.21-5.00	strongly agree/Very high
3.41-4.20	Agree/High
2.61-3.40	Somewhat agree/Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree/Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree/Very Low

The data reveals an overall trust in management competency with a composite mean rating of 4.00, indicating an "agree/high" level. This suggests that employees' trust in management competency falls within a high range, neither very low nor moderate. Individually, all indicators also obtain the same high mean rating. This indicates that employees trust management/administrators' capability in tasks, administration, and leadership. According to Katz (1997), cited by Tyranska (2016), competencies are essential for organizational success, derived from knowledge, skills, and experience. Hence, a lack of these competencies may hinder organizational development. Abun et al. (2023) suggest a significant correlation between managerial competencies and employees' trust, with trust increasing when administrators are perceived as competent.

Table 2: Trust in management integrity

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretations</i>
My head of the department is very sincere in performing tasks and in making decisions for the department.	4.00	A/H

My head of department is a disciplined person in task performance and administration	4.02	A/H
I like the ethical values of my head of Department	4.09	A/H
My head of department has high integrity.	4.07	A/H
My head of department always shows a good example to his/her employees	3.98	A/H
My head of department is a person with high principles	4.05	A/H
The management of my head of department is honest and truthful.	4.01	A/H
My head of department respects his/her employees.	3.98	A/H
Composite Mean	4.02	A/H

Source: Seok, et al., (2015).

The results indicate a high level of employees' trust in management integrity, with a composite mean rating of 4.02, interpreted as "agree/high". This suggests a solid level of trust, neither very low nor moderate. Each individual item also reflects this high level of trust. Employees perceive management/administrators as possessing integrity, demonstrated through sincerity, honesty, ethical behavior, and setting a good example. Shahid and Azhar (2013) emphasize the crucial role of integrity in building and maintaining employee trust. Yohana and Akbar (2020) further suggest that when all levels of management exhibit integrity and moral values, employees are motivated to perform better in their roles.

Table 3: Trust in the working relationship

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretations</i>
My head of department has good knowledge of my background	3.96	A/H
My head of department spends time with his/her/her employees	4.04	A/H
My head of department understands me well	3.96	A/H
My head of the department always discusses work-related issues with his/her employees.	4.00	A/H
Composite Mean	3.99	A/H

Source: Seok, et al., (2015)

This reveals that employees' trust in working relationships garners a composite mean rating of 3.99, signifying an "agree/high" level. This indicates a solid level of trust, not excessively high but certainly not low. Each individual indicator also reflects this high level of trust. Employees trust management in fostering working relationships, as evidenced by efforts to understand employees' backgrounds and engage in discussions about work-related issues. According to Zak (2017), employees in trusting organizations tend to perform better, be more productive, and experience less stress compared to those in distrustful environments. Dirks (2022) emphasizes the crucial role of trust in initiating, maintaining, repairing, and enhancing social relationships in the workplace.

Problem 2: What is employees' work engagement in terms of:

- a. cognitive engagement*
- b. affective engagement*
- c. conative engagement*

Table 4: Cognitive engagement

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretations</i>
My mind is often full of ideas about my work	4.06	A/H
Wherever I am, things happen that often remind me of my work	3.85	A/H
My mind is fully engaged with my work	4.11	A/H
My thoughts are fully focused when thinking about my work	4.12	A/H
I give a lot of mental attention to my work.	4.21	A/H
I rarely think about a time when I am working	3.85	A/H
Composite Mean	4.04	A/H

Source: Kuok and Taormina (2017)

The data show that the overall work engagement of employees, particularly in terms of cognitive engagement, achieved a composite mean rating of 4.04, denoting an "agree/high" level. This suggests a robust level of engagement, not excessively high but certainly not low. Each individual indicator also reflects this high level of engagement. Employees not only possess knowledge about their work but also consistently think about and fully immerse themselves in their tasks. This indicates a focused approach to work, without distractions that may hinder productivity. According to Tenney (2023), cognitively engaged employees align with the institution's vision, mission, and strategies, actively contributing to organizational goals. Similarly, Joo et al. (2016) highlight that cognitively engaged employees exhibit a strong connection to both their job and the organization.

Table 5: Affective engagement/emotional engagement

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretations</i>
I feel very delighted about what I am doing whenever I am working.	4.01	A/H
I am very eager to do my work	4.32	A/H
I feel very happy when I am carrying out my responsibilities at work	4.12	A/H
I feel very good about the work that I do.	4.28	A/H
I feel strong enthusiasm for my work.	4.35	A/H
I feel a sense of gratification from my work performance	4.06	A/H
Composite Mean	4.19	A/H

Source: Kuok and Taormina (2017)

As indicated by the findings presented, the overall affective or emotional work engagement of employees is rated high, with a composite mean rating of 4.19, denoting an "agree/high" level. This suggests a strong level of emotional involvement among employees, characterized by feelings of delight, happiness, and eagerness in their work. Research supports that emotionally engaged employees tend to exhibit higher work performance and engagement levels (Chan, 2009; Bledow et al., 2011) and are more willing to invest effort in their tasks (Zhao & Zhao, 2017).

Table 6: Conative/physical engagement

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Weighted Mean</i>	<i>Descriptive Interpretations</i>
No matter how much I work, I have a high level of energy	3.88	A/H
I have a great deal of stamina for my work.	3.92	A/H
I always have a lot of energy for my work	4.04	A/H
I am often physically driven by my work.	3.95	A/H
I am frequently energized by my work.	4.14	A/H
I find my work to be physically invigorating.	3.98	A/H
Composite Mean	3.98	A/H

Source: Kuok and Taormina (2017)

According to the data provided, the overall physical work engagement of employees is rated high, with a composite mean rating of 3.98, signifying a robust level of engagement. This indicates that while not excessively high, it is certainly not low or moderate. Each individual indicator also reflects this high level of engagement, with employees expressing a level of energy, stamina, and physical drive in their work. Research supports that physically engaged employees tend to exhibit high engagement and performance ratings (Kuok & Taormina, 2017; Kiema-Junes et al., 2022; Nyikuli et al., 2018), resulting in increased productivity and higher organizational performance (Singh et al., 2021).

Problem 3: Is there a relationship between trust in management and work engagement?

Table 7: Employees' trust in management and their cognitive engagement

Employees' trust in management competency, integrity, and working relationship as a group do not significantly predict cognitive engagement ($F(3,136) = 0.964, p > .05, R^2 = .021$). Thus, regardless of these factors, cognitive engagement remains unchanged.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.144 ^a	.021	-.001	.49062

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust in the Working Relationship, Trust in Management Competency, Trust in Management Integrity

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.696	3	.232	.964	.412 ^b
	Residual	32.737	136	.241		
	Total	33.433	139			

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust in the Working Relationship, Trust in Management Competency, Trust in Management Integrity

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	4.075	.231			17.641	.000
Trust in management competency	-.214	.150	-.332		-1.433	.154
Trust in management integrity	.093	.166	.142		.562	.575
Trust in the working relationship	.111	.099	.185		1.119	.265

a. Dependent Variable: Cognitive Engagement

Table 8: Employees' trust in management and emotional engagement

The combination of employees' trust in management competency, integrity, and working relationship does not significantly predict emotional engagement ($F(3,136) = 0.342, p > .05, R^2 = .007$). Thus, differences in emotional engagement are not influenced by variations in these trust factors.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.087 ^a	.007	-.014	.55714

a. Predictors: (Constant), trust in the working relationship, trust in management competency, trust in management integrity

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.318	3	.106	.342	.795 ^b
	Residual	42.216	136	.310		
	Total	42.534	139			

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), trust in the working relationship, trust in management competency, trust in management integrity

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.004	.262		15.264	.000
Trust in Management Competency	.131	.170	.180	.773	.441
Trust in Management Integrity	-.084	.189	-.113	-.443	.658
Trust in the Working Relationship	.000	.113	.001	.004	.997

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Engagement

Table 9: Employees' trust in management and physical work engagement

The combined trust in management competency, integrity, and working relationship does not significantly predict physical work engagement ($F(3, 136) = 0.0302$, $p > .05$, $R^2 = .007$). Thus differences in work engagement are not influenced by variations in these trust factors.

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.081 ^a	.007	-.015	.47551

a. Predictors: (Constant), trust in the working relationship, trust in management competency, trust in management integrity

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.205	3	.068	.302	.824 ^b
Residual	30.751	136	.226		
Total	30.956	139			

a. Dependent variable: Physical work engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), trust in the working relationship, trust in management competency, trust in management integrity

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.928	.224		17.544	.000
Trust in management competency	-.085	.145	-.136	-.583	.561
Trust in management integrity	.094	.161	.149	.585	.560
Trust in the working relationship	.027	.096	.046	.280	.780

a. Dependent variable: Physical work engagement

Results and discussions

The study assessed the impact of employees' trust in management, focusing on competency, integrity, and working relationship, on cognitive, affective, and physical work engagement. Results indicate high trust in management and work engagement, but ANOVA shows trust doesn't predict work engagement. This holds true for Divine Word College of Laoag, suggesting other factors like job satisfaction, company culture, and leadership may influence work engagement (Othman et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The study finds high ratings for employees' trust in management and work engagement across cognitive, affective, and physical dimensions. However, correlation analysis reveals trust in management does not affect work engagement. Other unexplored factors may influence employees' work engagement.

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