

## Chapter 2

# A Study on the Relationship Between Fun at Work and Work Engagement

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**Abstract** This study was designed to address two questions. First, what are the scores for fun at work that affect work engagement? Second, what is the relationship between fun at work and work engagement? In order to address these questions, analyses were conducted from a sample of 66 respondents. The result of these analyses found that socializing with coworkers had the highest mean score compared to other fun at work scale. Overall, there are various results from the relationship between fun at work scale (socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work) and work engagement. Specifically, there was a positive significant relationship between fun at work and work engagement. Thus, as fun at work increases, the work engagement will also increase.

**Keywords** Fun at work • Work engagement

## 2.1 Introduction

According to Fluegge [7], fun at work can be described as the involvement of any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure. In addition, Bryant [4] stated that fun and humor can help employees feel good and relieve stress and improve health condition. Ford et al. [8] describe that it is critical for employees to have fun at work which managers of hospitality and service organization long believed. It is because the managers are aware of the important relationship between employees having fun and customers having a pleasant experience. Fun, creativity, and humor can have a positive effect which can reduce

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absenteeism, retain high-quality people, and reduce employee turnover [20]. Thus, when there is lack of fun in the workplace, the level of work engagement will be low and this scenario affected the organization goals. This is agreed by McFadzean and McFadzean [15] who explained that employees with high level of morale can facilitate to achieve organization's goals, increased productivity and sales. Therefore, this study will determine whether fun at the workplace is one of the factors which can boost work engagement.

Many studies stated that promoting fun at work gives great benefit to both the individual and the organization. In the scope of organization management, many managers nowadays see that having fun in the workplace creates a positive environment to energize their employees (Ford et al. [8]). On the other hand, in Malaysia, there is still lack of effort to examine or study how fun can relate to work engagement. Therefore, this study will be conducted to examine the relationship between fun at work and work engagement.

There are few important terms that had been used in this study:

#### *Fun at work*

McDowell [14] stated that fun at work is defined as “engaging in activities not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing, or playful.”

#### *Work Engagement*

According to [21], engagement is a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” It also “refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior.”

## **2.2 Research Objectives and Research Questions**

### **2.2.1 Research Objectives**

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between conflicts at the workplace and employee's job outcomes. Specifically, this research has achieved the following objectives:

1. To identify fun at work that occurs at the workplace
2. To examine the relationship between fun at work and work engagement

### **2.2.2 Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are the following:

1. What are the scores for fun at work that affect work engagement?
2. What is the relationship between fun at work and work engagement?

## 2.3 Literature

There are lots of previous researches that have been done and being discussed on the topic. Fluegge [7] study found that fun at work is positively related to work engagement. Based on another survey conducted by Ford et al. [8] to 572 respondents of human resource managers, they strongly favor promoting a fun work environment. It is because they believe those environments offer great benefits both to the individual and the organization.

### 2.3.1 *Fun at Work*

There are three different types of fun at work, namely, the managed variety, natural or organic fun, and task related [3]. Humor and fun are said to offer a temporary escape from the tension of work. Ford et al. [9] stated that an organization will improve its ability to attract new employees and have better customer's satisfaction, stronger employee's commitment, and lowered employee's turnover and absenteeism by creating and maintaining a fun work environment.

A research study by McDowell [14] came out with the scales of fun at work which included socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work. It also supports claims that fun and humor in the workplace reduce stress and may lead to a healthier workplace.

### 2.3.2 *Socializing at Work*

According to Taormina [24], organizational socialization “refers to the way employees interact with and adjust to an organization's culture.” It is logical to expect that the critical roles somewhere between the ends of the employee needs-organizational culture dichotomy are referring to socialization in the organization.

In other study conducted by Cooper-Thomas and Anderson [5], the opportunities for informal socializing such as after-work subsidized drinks will further the social cohesion can be furthered through in organizations. Moreover, the benefits of friendship and resource networks will expand by providing newcomers with opportunities to work and socialize with colleagues in the organization.

### 2.3.3 *Celebrating at Work*

Ford et al. [9] describes that most commonly reported fun activities are celebration of notable personal events which include recognition of birthdays, the adoption or

birth of a child, and anniversaries of employment. Based on Meyer [16], individual departments encourage activities by serving employees cookies, candies, and refreshments outside of work where it gets them together. In different organization, managers introduce reward and recognition schemes such as presenting staff with certificates along with simple gifts like flowers or chocolate [25].

### **2.3.4 *Personal Freedoms***

Alstott [2] stated that extra freedom can produce positive social effects of its own by promoting job mobility. According to Maravelias [13], freedom refers to the potential, wherein the subject becomes entangled with the environment and therefore intimate interaction with the environment is celebrated. It also explains that freedom has been the individuals' capacity to build up a profound self-understanding on the basis of which self-awareness and reflection become possible.

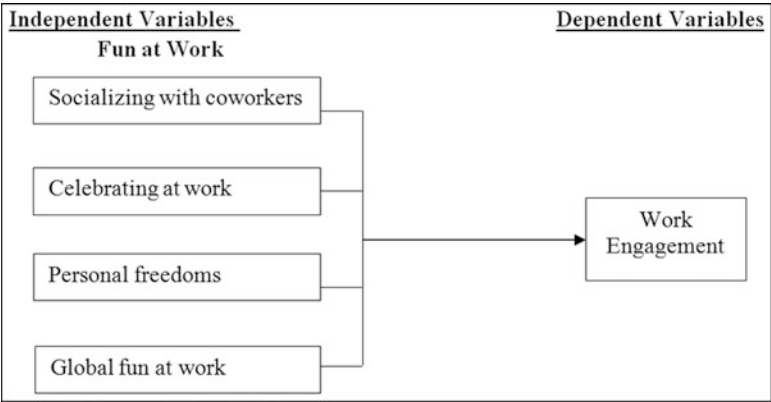
### **2.3.5 *Global Fun at Work***

Nakkula and Harris [17] come out with fun focus subscale which it is most purely relational, such as hanging out and goofing around. The finding from analyses suggests that having fun or simply hanging out together is critically important to build strong mentoring relationship. Based on McDowell [14] fun at work scale, global fun at work consists of the statements whether the supervisor encourages or has to value fun at work and organizational climate or people in the organization are having fun at work.

### **2.3.6 *Work Engagement***

Work engagement is positively related to job characteristics that might be labeled as resources, motivators, or energizers, for instance, social support from coworkers and one's superior, performance, task variety, feedback, job autonomy, coaching, and training facilities [21]. Work engagement concerns the degree to which individuals make full use of their cognitive, emotional, and physical resources to perform role-related work [10].

Moreover, Pater and Lewis [19] explained that many leaders focus on promoting worker engagement to help engender a workforce that is stimulated, involved, inspired, and receptive to change and goes well beyond just being present. Research in the UK reported that in the UK workforce, one in five employees is "engaged," three in five are "not engaged," and one is "actively disengaged," which indicated that this group consciously undermined their organization performance [6].



**Fig. 2.1** The relationship between fun at work and work engagement

A study conducted by Airila et al. [1] found that work engagement was significantly associated with work ability even after adjusting for various factors, indicating its importance in promoting work ability. Thus, employees who are engaged in their work have an energetic, enjoyable, and effective connection with their work [12].

**2.3.7 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework is based on Fig. 2.1.

- H01: There is no relationship between fun at work and work engagement.
- HA1: There is a positive and significant relationship between fun at work and work engagement.

**2.4 Methodology**

**2.4.1 Survey Instrument**

This research used a survey questionnaire for data collection. The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire that was developed by the researchers was divided into three sections. All sections in the questionnaires were prepared in closed-ended questions.

Section A focused on fun at work scale which consists of socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work. This section used the five-point Likert scale with the values 1–5.

In Section B, the respondents were asked about their work engagement. In this section, the researchers used the same five-point Likert scale with the values 1–5.

Lastly, Section C covered the demographic information such as gender, age, highest education level, grading scheme, and length of service in the organization.

### ***2.4.2 Sampling Frame, Sampling Technique, and Population***

The sampling frame for this study was obtained from the chairman of Staff Club, Recreation and Welfare, Center of Applied Management Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus. The sampling technique applied in this study is convenient sampling. This technique requires selecting a population of members from Staff Club, Recreation and Welfare, Center of Applied Management Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus. In this study, the total estimated populations were 120. Krejcie and Morgan [11] greatly simplified size decision by providing a table that ensures a good decision model in sample size. The table provides generalized scientific guidelines for sample size decisions. Based on Krejcie and Morgan [17] table, the recommended sample size for a population of 120 is 92.

### ***2.4.3 Data Collection and Analysis***

The data from this study was collected by using questionnaire which was distributed to the members of Staff Club, Recreation and Welfare, Center of Applied Management Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam Campus. A cover letter was attached to each questionnaire in order to explain the objective of the study. Respondents were asked to answer the entire questionnaire and given 2 weeks to respond. After 1 week, the questionnaires were collected from the respondents.

The data were keyed in into the statistical software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. They were analyzed using descriptive statistics that include mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages. Other than that, they were also analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.

## ***2.5 Finding, Analysis, and Discussions***

### ***2.5.1 Factor Analysis and Reliability***

The researchers used factor analysis to analyze the instrument, and 24 items were divided into four subtests of independent variables (socializing with coworkers,

celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work) that were tested in factor analysis. In factor analysis, principal axis factoring with varimax rotation was performed. Next, the 24 items were tested on coefficient with value  $<0.35$  that was absolutely suppressed.

Steps were taken to reduce the number of item loading. First, we use Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure to test the adequacy of the items tested. In the second step, the outputs from anti-image covariance were analyzed, and the values between 0.54 and 0.91 were collected, which shows high value of covariance. Third step was analyzing the extraction from communality value and item loading below 0.50 was eliminated. After cleaning the items, they were tested on rotated component matrix where the number of factors of 4 was extracted. Therefore, the researchers deleted eight items from instrument that has multiple high loading.

According to Tabachnick and Fidel [23], the reliability of a measure indicates the extent to which it is without bias – error-free – and it is to ensure consistent measurement across time and across the various items in the instrument. All items from independent variables (socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work) and dependent variables (work engagement) were tested on Cronbach's alpha coefficient for inter-item reliability.

Nunnally [18] suggests that the instrument used in basic research has a value of 0.70 or higher. According to Sekaran [22], an instrument is reliable when Cronbach's alpha is above 0.70 and closer to 1.0. It means the higher the value, the higher the internal consistency reliability. Thus, the respective alpha coefficient being used for the study was between  $\alpha = 0.773$  and  $\alpha = 0.922$  which showed the high degree of reliability (Table 2.1).

## 2.5.2 Demographic Analysis

The following is the summary of respondent's demographic analysis.

Table 2.2 shows the summary of demographic information of respondents that includes gender, age, level of education, grading scheme, and years of service. Out of 66 of the total respondents participating in the study, 54 are female (81.8 %) and the rest of respondents are male (18.2 %). In addition, most of respondents (37.9 %) are 31–40 years old and only 1.5 % of respondents are below 20 years.

The respondents' highest education levels were as follows: master's degree (74.2 % of the respondents), followed by Doctor of Philosophy degree (10.1 %) and bachelor's degree (6.1 %). The management and professional group with 83.3 % were those who are from grade 41, and the majority of the respondents were those who are from grade 54, followed by respondents that were in 17–40 grading scheme (15.2 %). Lastly, about 40.9 % respondents have 4–7 years of service while the senior staff with more than 16 years of service contributed to 16.7 % of the total respondents.

**Table 2.1** Reliability statistic

Variables	N of items	Cronbach's alpha
Socializing with coworkers	3	0.773
Celebrating at work	5	0.873
Personal freedoms	2	0.827
Global fun at work	6	0.916
Work engagement	17	0.922

**Table 2.2** Demographic analysis

	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	12	18.2
Female	54	81.8
<i>Age</i>		
<20 years old	1	1.5
21–30 years old	20	30.3
31–40 years old	25	37.9
41–50 years old	12	18.2
>51 years old	8	12.1
<i>Highest education level</i>		
SPM	3	4.5
STPM/diploma	3	4.5
Bachelor's degree	4	6.1
Master's degree	49	74.2
Doctor of Philosophy	7	10.1
<i>Grading scheme</i>		
1–16	1	1.5
17–40	10	15.2
41–54	55	83.3
<i>Year(s) of service</i>		
<3 years	16	24.2
4–7 years	27	40.9
8–11 years	6	9.1
12–15 years	6	9.1
>16 years	11	16.7

Based on the summary of fun at work in Table 2.3, it was found that the highest fun at work scale was socializing with coworkers ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ). It was supported by Fluegge [7] with the mean score of 3.73 ( $SD = 0.70$ ). The least fun at work was personal freedoms ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ); it was slightly different from Fluegge [7] study whereby celebrating at work was the least fun at work ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ).

From this study, it was found that the employees agree that fun at work is somewhat often being implemented in their organization ( $M = 3.89$ ). The same



**Table 2.3** Summary of fun at work

	Socializing with coworkers	Celebrating at work	Personal freedoms	Global fun at work	<i>N</i>
<sup>a</sup>	<i>M</i> = 3.89, <i>SD</i> = 0.66	<i>M</i> = 3.53, <i>SD</i> = 0.76	<i>M</i> = 3.30, <i>SD</i> = 0.79	<i>M</i> = 3.48, <i>SD</i> = 0.65	66
<sup>b</sup>	<i>M</i> = 3.73, <i>SD</i> = 0.70	<i>M</i> = 2.99, <i>SD</i> = 0.99	<i>M</i> = 3.18, <i>SD</i> = 0.77	<i>M</i> = 3.67, <i>SD</i> = 0.85	245

<sup>a</sup>The relationship between fun at work and work engagement  
<sup>b</sup>Who put the fun in functional? Fun at work and its effects on job performance (Fluegge [7])

goes with celebrating at work where the mean score was 3.53. However, personal freedoms have sometimes been offered in their organization (*M* = 3.30). Further, the employees are somewhat neutral but agree that global fun at work was happening in their organization (*M* = 3.48).

Ford et al. [9] reported that having fun at work will increase the levels of enthusiasm, satisfaction, creativity, and communication with employees and enhance the feeling of group cohesiveness. In addition, a fun workplace will contribute to the strength of an organizations’ corporate culture whereby the company’s norms, values, and beliefs are strongly shared and widely held by employees. Hence, it indicates that the employer or manager should be taking into account certain criteria that obtained lower ratings based on the mean score from this study.

Based on Table 2.4, there is a positive relationship between fun at work scale (socializing with coworkers, celebrating at work, personal freedoms, and global fun at work) and work engagement. There is a significant and medium relationship between two independent variables, celebrating at work ( $r = 0.331, p < 0.01$ ) and global fun at work ( $r = 0.457, p < 0.01$ ), with work engagement. Besides, personal freedoms have small relationship and significant influence to employee’s motivation ( $r = 0.256, p < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, socializing with coworkers has no significant influence and has low correlation with work engagement compared to the other independent variables ( $r = 0.154, p > 0.05$ ).

The researchers tested the relationship between fun at work and work engagement to answer the following hypotheses:

- H01: There is no relationship between fun at work and work engagement.  
HA1: There is a positive and significant relationship between fun at work and work engagement.

Table 2.5 explains the relationship between fun at work and work engagement. It was found that there was a positive relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. There was a significant and medium relationship between fun at work and work engagement ( $r = 0.466, p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the H01 was rejected and HA1 was accepted.

The result from this study was supported by Fluegge [7] whereby fun at work is positively related to work engagement. It shows that higher fun at work occurs; it will increase the work engagement among employees. It also supports claims that

**Table 2.4** Pearson's correlation coefficients of fun at work and work engagement

		Work engagement
Socializing with coworkers	Pearson correlation	0.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.216
Celebrating at work	Pearson correlation	0.331**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007
Personal freedoms	Pearson correlation	0.256*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.038
Global fun at work	Pearson correlation	0.457**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Table 2.5** Pearson's correlation coefficients of fun at work and work engagement

		Work engagement
Fun at work	Pearson correlation	0.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

fun and humor in the workplace reduce stress and may lead to a healthier workplace [14].

## 2.6 Conclusion and Future Work

### 2.6.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

Based on the study, it can be concluded that most of the respondents were female (81.8 %) and most of the respondents were from the age group between 31 and 40 years old (37.9 %) followed by 21–30-year-old respondents (30.3 %). Other than that, it can be concluded that most of the respondents have master's degree (74.2 %). The study also showed that most of the respondents were graded between 41 and 54 (83.3 %). Lastly, most of the respondents have 4–7 years of experience (40.9 % of total respondents).

### 2.6.2 Research Question 1: What Are the Scores for Fun at Work That Affect Work Engagement?

The results of this study indicated that the highest fun at work scale was socializing with coworkers and different score for others items. Based on this study, the highest fun at work scale was socializing with coworkers ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ) and least

fun at work was personal freedoms ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ). Therefore, it concluded that socializing with coworkers occurred most frequently than personal freedoms in organization.

### ***2.6.3 Research Question 2: What Is the Relationship Between Fun at Work and Work Engagement?***

The result of this study appears to be consistent with the literature result that there is a positive relationship between fun at work and work engagement. From this study, there is a significant and medium relationship between fun at work and work engagement ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hence, the higher fun at work occurs, it will increase the work engagement among employees.

### ***2.6.4 Recommendations***

This study was to identify the relationship between fun at work and work engagement. The result has proven that fun at work has significant relationship on work engagement. Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations and suggestions were made as follows.

The highest mean score for fun at work was socializing with coworkers and the least is personal freedoms. It is recommended that the organization especially public service organization needs to promote more personal freedoms in the organization. It is to ensure that the employees can have the elements of fun at work that will benefit the organization.

After analyzing the relationship between fun at work and work engagement, it was found that fun at work has significant positive relationship with work engagement. Statistical output and result from this study will benefit the top management where the finding of this study can be used as guideline in promoting fun at work in their organization.

### ***2.6.5 Suggestions for Future Research***

For future research, the researchers would like to suggest a few approaches for other researchers who want to do similar topic. The following recommendations are made to increase the value of future research.

Future research should not be limited to one organization only. Besides, it can be conducted from several organizations and be conducted by replicating on national sample. It would provide more respondents from various background and type of

businesses. When more respondents are taken to this kind of study, the generalization may not be limited since it represents bigger population.

Besides, the future research could use private sector or profit-oriented company to conduct similar study. The conflict at private sector might have different situation compared to the public sector. Tension to gain more profit and compete with competitor would give different approach of private sector implementing fun at work. Hence, profit-oriented company might give significant result on the future research.

Future studies should consider the use of other estimation techniques and instruments for more robust results.

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