

IMPACT OF TIME CONGRUITY ON WORK ENGAGEMENT AND JOB PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between time congruity, job performance and work engagement. More precisely, we attempted to get a better understanding of time congruity as a concept and how time fit between an employee and the organization can influence job performance and work engagement. While work engagement and job performance are relatively well researched, we found that there is a lack of research in the area of time congruity in relation to work engagement and job performance which gave us an impulse to explore these three constructs further. Key aim of this paper was to examine employee's personal time preferences and how can a match (or mismatch) reflect on job performance and work engagement. The paper is based on empirical data collected among employees in Croatian hospitality firms.

Keywords: time congruity, polychronicity, job performance, work engagement, hotel employees

JEL code: M12, M54, J24, L83

Introduction

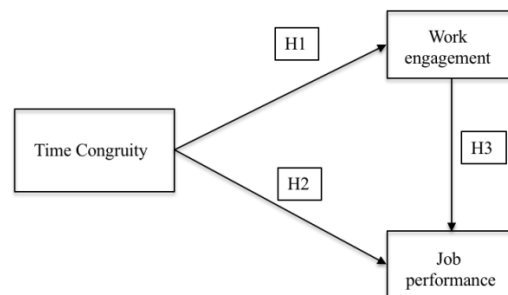
It is commonly recognized that people are the most valuable resource of an organization, critical to organizational success and where level of employee work engagement represents an essential indicator of such organizational success (Conway, 2007; Ulrich, 2004). There is another component that is closely linked to employees and their performance: *time*. In that context, individual time preferences, organizational time utilizations and congruity or fit between them is of high importance. Time congruity between an employee and the company could lead towards higher work engagement and the final outcome is most likely to be higher job performance, at least this is the assumption. This paper examines how time congruity influences work engagement and job performance. Work engagement is a specifically defined concept important for organizational well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008), while time congruity is a broader concept comprised of many elements that are crucial in achieving a match between an individual and organization (Kaufman, Lane and Lindquist, 1991). Existent literature proposes that time congruity has direct effects on productivity, role stress, absenteeism, and accident rate (Weeks and Fournier, 2009; Francis-Smythe and Robertson, 2003). Empirical research that investigated time congruity did not investigate time congruity effects on work engagement. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to try and fill that gap. Time congruity plays an important role in organizational and our individual lives, so for that reason, conducting this research and expanding the understanding of time congruity as a concept is valuable. Following hypotheses are suggested:

Hypothesis1 [H1]: Time Congruity is positively related to Work Engagement.

Hypothesis2[H2]: Time Congruity is positively related to Job Performance.

Hypothesis3[H3]: Work Engagement is positively related to Job Performance.

Figure 1: Suggested Model



Time Congruity

How individuals spend and perceive their time and how companies tailor use of work time is an important determinant which can produce congruity for the benefit of both, individual and organization, or can lead to a mismatch. The importance of ‘fit’ or ‘congruity’ especially related to time has been brought up by various authors (McGrath and Rotchford, 1983; Schriber and Gutek, 1987; Kaufman, Lane and Lindquist, 1991; Bluedorn, Kaufman and Lane, 1992; Vinton, 1992; Woodilla, 1993; Macan, 1994; Francis-Smythe and Robertson, 2003). Time congruity exists when there is a match between job time personality and individual time personality (Kaufman, Lane and Lindquist, 1991).

Ways of experiencing and using time differ across individuals and organizations. Both, individuals and organizations cultivate unique time styles, and set of different time styles form a time personality. There are various elements of time style such as activity level, temporal focus, commitment and approach to time (Kaufman, Lane and Lindquist, 1991). The combination of these styles form time personality; for example, a person can be future oriented (temporal focus element) and polychronic (activity level element) and the combination of these time styles create individual time personality. Similar to this example, organizations tailor and choose a specific set of time styles which is then called job time personality. For this research, activity level was of primary interest as a dimension of time congruity. Activity level refers to monochronicity and polychronicity. Polychronicity is related to accomplishing multiple tasks at the same time, while monochronicity is related to completing one task at a time. Neither of these is related to the speed of completing tasks, but rather provides an explanation how tasks are completed (Slocombe and Bluedorn, 1999).

Certain people are organized in a way that they have to complete one task and then go to another, while some people can do multiple tasks at the same time; start one, then stop, go to another one and then switch back to the first one. It is important to differentiate polychronicity from multitasking since these terms are often understood as synonyms, which is not the case. Polychronicity is a broader concept and is consisted of multitasking or simultaneous tasking and task switching. Multitasking is defined as doing two or more tasks at the same time, while the second component of polychronicity, task switching, is explained as finishing more tasks in given

period of time without assigned task order, but just deadline (Weeks and Fournier, 2009). Monochronic oriented people prefer doing task by task, meaning once the first task is finished, it is time to move to the second one, but not leaving behind any unfinished work (Kaufman, Lane, and Lindquist, 1991). Different tasks require different approaches and not a single job position or company is exclusively monochronic or polychronic. Every person can accomplish monochronic and polychronic tasks depending on the situation, but people do have tendencies towards one type. Accordingly, for a monochronic oriented person, a monochronic oriented job is the best fit with just occasional polychronic tasks. If an employee has a polychromic style and has to work mainly in the monochronic environment, it may lead to frustration and work disengagement.

Work Engagement

Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagement as a “Positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption”. Vigor is described as vital physical and mental energy invested into work. Dedication refers to being fully committed to a particular cause, in this case, being wholly devoted to work and getting a sense of importance and enthusiasm from it. Absorption is defined as being completely concentrated and deeply involved in own work and for that reason forgetting how quickly time passes and finding it hard to disengage from work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Many authors have researched how to influence work engagement since achieving work engagement brings different benefits for the organizations and individuals. Research conducted in 2004 claimed that the bigger share of employee's mindset is immersed into the company, the higher the work engagement will be (Ulrich, 2004). Mindshare refers to the degree of employee's engagement which produces positive outcomes. In order to gain the employee's mindshare, it is important to engage them in the meaningful work with the sense of control and autonomy over that work (Bolman and Deal, 2003). In that context, having a sense of autonomy is very much related to being able to use own time personality which is described in *Time Congruity* section of this paper.

One of the studies published in this field defines the sense of autonomy as the flexibility to create own work and to bring decisions related to work; author claims those elements increase personal meaning in the work (Thompson, 2009). Another research also states that engagement can be reached only from being involved in the meaningful work and that by observing how people spend their time can be concluded what is meaningful to them (Wheatley, 2006). Wheatley continues that influence over co-creation and design of work are two most important drivers in reaching work engagement. Therefore, designing own work according to own time preferences to reach work engagement is valid research point.

Job Performance

Job performance is characterized by high levels of productivity on an individual basis, related to various job roles and outcomes (Babin and Boles, 1998). Past studies proved that work engagement can be a driver of job performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Thompson, 2009; Weeks and Fournier, 2009). Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) conducted research on fast food employees in Greece and showed that employees who were more engaged on daily basis had higher daily financial returns, and that this is an objective job performance indicator. There are different reasons why engaged employees outperform disengaged employees such as feelings of enthusiasm and happiness towards work, autonomy, the creation of own personal and job resources, and other (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Job performance is often defined as the aggregate input to a business through set of behaviors that an employee contributes, being directly or indirectly, to overall organizational goals (Borman and Motowidlo, 1993; Campbell, 1990). Some authors preferred behavioral conceptualization of job performance approach in defining job performance because work engagement is a concept that reflects human agency, and consequently it is suitable to focus on consequences that are largely under an employee's control (Rich, Lepine and Crawford, 2010).

Methodology

Data collection instrument

As noted, the aim of this study was to examine the relationship between time congruity, work engagement and job performance. Research instrument constructed for this purpose consisted of 21 items, adapted from four different questionnaires (Table 1), and a set of 4 items for socio-demographic data.

Table 1. Scale Data

Scale	Source	Scale Data (source)	Adapted Scale Data (author's research)
Polychronic Attitude Index Scale	Kaufman, Lane, & Lindquist, 1991; Kaufman, &	4 items with a five point Likert scale; $\alpha = .68$ (1991)	4 items with a five point Likert scale; $\alpha = .71$

	Lindquist, 1999	4 items with a five point Likert scale; $\alpha = .79$ (1999)	
Polychronicity Supplies Scale	Hecht and Allen, 2005	10 items with a seven point Likert scale; $\alpha = .81$	4 items with a five point Likert scale; $\alpha = .69$
Utrecht Work Engagement Scale	Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006	9 items with a seven point frequency rating scale, $\alpha = .80$ VI (3 items), $\alpha = .77$ DE (3 items), $\alpha = .85$ AB (3 items), $\alpha = .78$	9 items with a five point frequency rating scale, $\alpha = .89$ VI (3 items), $\alpha = .75$ DE (3 items), $\alpha = .75$ AB (3 items), $\alpha = .75$
In-Job Role Performance	Janssen and Yperen, 2004	5 items with a seven point Likert scale; $\alpha = .85$	4 items with a five point Likert scale; $\alpha = .88$

To explore Work Time Congruity, i.e. the degree of correspondence between individual time preferences and the job demands as experienced by individuals in an organizational setting, this research examined activity level dimension of individual and organizational time personality. Specifically, as a measure of polychronic tendencies of individuals, this research utilized the modified four-item Polychronic Attitude Index [PAI] scale (Kaufman, Lane, & Lindquist, 1991b, p. 400); and, to make sure that commensurate job-related measures are utilized, four corresponding job demands related items were used from the Polychronicity Supplies Scale [PSS] (Hecht and Allen, 2005, p. 176). Work Time Congruity is represented by the simple arithmetic difference between the two summative scales, PAI and PSS (cf. Kaufman, Lane, & Lindquist, 1991a, p. 96).

Work Engagement was measured with a Utrecht Work Engagement Scale [UWES] which explores three aspects of work engagement: vigor [VI], dedication [DE], and absorption [AB] (cf. Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, p. 295). Specifically, a short 9-item version of UWES Scale was utilized (cf. Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova, 2006, p. 714), with a five point frequency scale extending from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

As a measure of job performance [JP], a commonly used five items scale in which a supervisor evaluates an employee's in-role job performance (cf. Janssen and Yperen, 2004, p.376) was adjusted and utilized. Namely, questions commonly given to supervisors were adjusted for self-assessment and given to employees directly. Specifically, four items were adjusted and used, which examined quality and quantity of the employee's in role activities on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of each scale set in the instrument (Table 1). For PSS scale, given the reduced number of items utilized in this study, the less stringent approach with the absolute value .6 was taken as the criterion of acceptability (cf. Loewenthal, 2001, p.12). For all other scales Cronbach's alpha was higher than .7 value.

Sample and Procedures

Participants in this study were Dubrovnik hotel employees. Specifically, survey was distributed in pen and paper format, in person, with data collected in ten different 4 and 5-star hotels with a minimum of 50 permanent (regular) employees. Out of 112 questionnaires which were handed out, four were excluded from analysis (invalid or incomplete). In a sample of 108 completed questionnaires, majority of the respondents were female (53,7%), and, in terms of age, most of the participants were 25 to 35 years old (53,7%). All hotel departments were represented in the sample, with most of the respondents holding job positions in Front Office (34,3%) and Food and Beverage departments (22,2%). In terms of years spent within the organization, most of the respondents (47,2%) were employed for less than 5 years in their respective hotels, followed by the group of respondents who were with the same hotel for more than 5 and up to 10 years (31,5%). Full socio-demographic information is available in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent's socio-demographic and professional characteristics

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
GENDER		
Male	50	46,3%
Female	58	53,7%
AGE		
Less than 24	17	15,7%
25 – 35	58	53,7%

36 – 45	21	19,4%
46 – 55	7	6,5%
More than 56	5	4,6%
JOB TENURE		
Less than 5	51	47,2%
5 – 10	34	31,5%
11 – 15	9	8,3%
More than 15	14	13%
HOTEL DEPARTMENT		
Front Office	37	34,4%
Food and Beverage	24	22,2%
Housekeeping	12	11,1%
Sales and Marketing	8	7,4%
Management	6	5,6%
Accounting	5	4,6%
Human Resources	5	4,6%
Maintenance	5	4,6%
Operations	3	2,8%

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations for all of the summative scales are available in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix for the variables

Scale	Min	Max	M	SD	PAI	PSS	UWES	VI	DE	AB	JP
PAI (4)	5	20	11.63	3.50	1	.028	.147	.096	.185	.110	-.056
PSS (4)	8	20	16.60	2.32		1	.121	-.011	.122	.217*	.485**
UWES (9)	18	45	34.78	5.79			1	.885**	.912**	.876**	.278**
VI (3)	6	15	10.84	2.18				1	.724**	.636**	.168
DE (3)	4	15	11.79	2.21					1	.706**	.253**
AB (3)	4	15	12.15	2.11						1	.325**
JP (4)	6	20	17.53	2.63							1

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

In terms of work engagement, results indicate that hospitality workers in Dubrovnik report being highly engaged ($M = 34.78$, $SD = 5.79$). Interestingly, for different aspects of work engagement the highest scores are recorded on the absorption scale ($M = 12.15$, $SD = 2.11$), and the lowest scores were reported for vigor ($M = 10.84$, $SD = 2.18$), suggesting that hospitality employees report being fully concentrated, and happily preoccupied with their work, yet lacking in high levels of energy, and willingness to put in the required effort. As for in-role job performance, employees reported relatively high scores ($M = 17.53$, $SD = 2.63$), suggesting that, for most part, they manage to fulfill all of the job-related requirements, regardless of the lesser vigor scores. In terms of time congruity, results indicated that hospitality job positions in Dubrovnik are highly polychronic ($M = 16.6$, $SD = 2.32$), while employees personally do not prefer polychronicity ($M = 11.63$, $SD = 3.50$). As noted, time congruity, i.e. match between personal preferences and job demands, is represented as the simple arithmetic difference between the summative scores. Inter-correlations among the measures of work engagement, job performance and time congruity are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation matrix for work time congruity, work engagement measures and job performance

Scale	TC-POLY	UWES	VI	DE	AB	JP
TC POLY	1	.056	.087	.088	-.028	-.318**
UWES (9)		1	.885**	.912**	.876**	.278**
VI (3)			1	.724**	.636**	.168
DE (3)				1	.706**	.253**
AB (3)					1	.325**
JP (4)						1

** $p < .01$

The assumed positive relation between time congruity and work engagement [H1] was not detected for summative UWES score and three dimensions of work engagement (Table 4). The assumed positive relationship between time congruity and in-role job performance [H2] was detected, in terms of polychronicity fit construct. Namely, negative correlation recorded between the time congruity construct and job performance measures ($r = -.318, p < .01$), suggests that a larger discrepancy between job requirements and individual's preferences is related with a decrease in job performance scores. A simple linear regression analysis revealed that 10.1 % of variability in job performance can be accounted for by polychronicity-related time fit ($\beta = -.32, p = .001$), $F(1,106) = 11.95, p = .001$.

Correlation analysis confirmed that work engagement and job performance were positively related [H3], $r = .27, p = .004$. Interestingly, of the three aspects of work engagement, dedication ($r = .25, p < .01$) and absorption ($r = .33, p < .01$) were significantly correlated to job performance, unlike vigor ($r = .168, p = n.s$). Multiple linear regression was employed to further examine the relationship between three dimensions of work engagement and in-role job performance, i.e. the predictive value of the dimensions. In terms of the regression model, variance inflation factors range between 2.13 and 2.66, suggesting the absence of evidence of a serious multi-collinearity problem ($VIF < 4$, cf. Chatterjee & Price, 1991). The three predictors accounted for 11.2 % of variability in in-role job performance, $F(3,104) = 4.39, p = .006$. The strongest predictor was absorption ($\beta = -.32, p = .01$), with dedication and vigor not demonstrating a significant unique effect on job performance (Table 5).

Table 5. Standard multiple regression analysis for work engagement dimensions predicting job performance

Variable	B	SEB	β
UWES DEDICATION	.13	.17	.11
UWES ABSORPTION	.40	.17	.32*
UWES VIGOR	-.14	.17	-.12
R^2	.112		
F	4.39**		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Conclusion

The intention of this research was to examine the relationship between time congruity activity level construct (polychronicity), job performance and work engagement. The importance of looking into these relations is in the possible effects the findings can have in a work environment. Namely, research along these lines allows companies to better understand the factors that influence work engagement and accordingly, to create job positions which will, by characteristics alone, increase work engagement. Additionally, by understanding better the personal characteristics of perspective employees, companies could adapt job demands to ensure better fit, and by doing so, increase both the levels of in-role job performance and work engagement.

Tripartite questionnaire was administered in ten different 4- and 5-stars hotels to a sample of hospitality employees. First part of the questionnaire examined the time congruity construct in terms of polychronicity fit through employment of Polychronic Attitude Index [PAI] scale and commensurate items in the Polychronicity Supplies Scale [PAI]. Second part examined self-assessed in-role job performance, and the third part consisted of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale [UWES] which explores three aspects of work engagement, vigor, dedication and absorption.

First hypothesis was framed assuming the positive relationship between time congruity and work engagement. Namely the assumption was that the fit between individual time preferences and job demands would result in more dedication, vigor and absorption in the work role. Such a positive relationship was not detected for polychronicity related time congruity construct. Even though a substantial mismatch was detected between personal polychronic preferences and polychronic job demands, this apparently does not impact their work engagement. The mismatch was recorded as Dubrovnik hotel employees reported that they are mostly monochronic, which means that they don't prefer multitasking or task switching, but that their job positions require of them to engage in polychronic behavior. Still, as noted, the negative impact of such a discrepancy on work engagement was not recorded in this study. It was expected that hospitality positions will demand multitasking and task switching as it is service oriented industry, but since employees don't like such activity level, it could be the negative outcomes can be recorded on some other aspect such as employee's well-being, job satisfaction or customer service. While the results in this study suggest that the discrepancy between work time preferences of individuals is not related to the work engagement scores, further research needs to be conducted before conclusive verdict is given.

Second hypothesis framed assumed the positive relationship between time congruity and job performance. Results indicated that polychronicity fit between employee and job position was correlated to job performance which means that if a job requires multitasking and employee prefer multitasking, then job performance will rise accordingly, while a mismatch results in a recorded decrease in job performance. Specifically, 10.1 % of variability in job performance can be accounted for by polichronicity related time-fit. Although this might not seem as an effect substantial enough to inspire adaptation of job demands or selective hiring processes, the findings do suggest that time congruity and in-role job performance are significantly related. Similar results were produced in another study where people who experienced a match between personal and work time orientation responded to tasks more readily (Li, 2008). Further research along these lines is therefore called for, in order to examine overall impact of time personality discrepancy in the hospitality sector work environment, especially given the extant confirmations of the influence of the time associated fit (cf. Slocombe&Bluedorn, 1999).

The third tested hypothesis assumed the positive relationship between work engagement and job performance. Results confirmed the assumption that work engagement and job performance were positively related ($r=.27$, $p=.004$), with 11.2 % of variability in job performance accounted for by the dimensions of work engagement, i.e. dedication, absorption and vigor, and the strongest effect detected specifically for absorption. It is perhaps not a surprising result to detect the effect of individuals' preoccupation with a job role on the in-job role performance, but it is interesting to note that the effect of dedication and vigor do not appear significant within the hospitality industry.

One of the limitations of this study was the decision to focus on activity level dimension of time congruity alone. Further studies in this area should look into the potential relation and effect of other time congruity related constructs such as organizational and individual temporal focus on work engagement. If these studies yield results that further disprove the assumed hypotheses, it can be concluded that one's work related energy level, involvement and enthusiasm and absorption in one's work is not affected by a discrepancy between individual's and organization's time personality. Also, we have to note that sample used has limited this research in at least two ways. First, it was conducted within a single destination, Dubrovnik. Hence, we recommend to include more destinations or have a national or regional scope. Second, the sample could include an additional number of hotels and employees. Given the limited, random sampling procedure employed in this study, it would be interesting to examine these effects further through a study of a larger scale.

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