Organizational Socialisation and Employee Engagement

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Abstract: *This study examines the relationship between organisational socialisation and employee engagement. The specific objectives aim to examine; (1) the relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. (2) The relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement. (3) The relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement. The study deployed the Spearman rank correlation coefficient to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between organisational socialisation and employee engagement and also utilized the simple linear regression analysis to examine the predictive influence of organizational socialisation on employee engagement. The finding reveals that; (1) there is a high positive significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. (2) There is a positive significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement. (3) There is a positive significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement. Hence, the study empirically proved that organisational socialisation has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement. Organisations that are committed to a viable sustainable posterity must utilise strategic insights from this study and optimise their socialisation strategies to attain a more engaged workforce.*

Key Words: *employee engagement, organisational socialisation, organizational support theory*

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational human resources play a critical role in advancing the attainment of organizational sustainability, posterity, and interest; and central to this attainment is the effective integration of employees in the organizational socialization dynamics and its potential influence on employee engagement.

Organizational socialization is anchored on the content and process of learning dynamics through which adjustment to specific roles in an organization is attained by individuals (Chao et al. 1994). Organizational socialisation also connotes the process via which new employees are ingrained in the culture, history, relevance, knowledge, competence, and attitudes essential to becoming a progressive and effective organizational citizen (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), and it has been established to foster organizational citizenship adaptation and retention (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Bauer et al. 2019; Cheng, 2022; Cooper-Thomas et al. 2004; Crant, 2000; Nelson & Quick, 1991; Nifadkar, 2020; Zhao et al. 2022). However, topical discourse on aligning organizational socialization to broader criterion organizational outcome variables is gaining traction, and the paucity of studies specifically as it relates to the latent concept of "employee engagement" has necessitated this study and more so its undertaking within the geographical scope of this study, which seeks to further strategic relevant discourse in advancing empirical knowledge on the subject matter.

Employee engagement denotes the physical, emotional, and cognitive dedication employees demonstrate to their work (Kahn, 1990; Chukwuma & Agbaeze, 2019), and it is further characterized by commitment, vigor, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006). Employee engagement goes further to connote an enshrined commitment to positive workplace culture (i.e. goals, values) practices that significantly influence organizational interest, innovation, work performance, and retention (Alateeg & Alhammadi, 2024; Kahn 1990; Chukwuma & Agbaeze, 2019). The redefined and evolving work environment, which operates in a rapidly changing, dynamic, and technological-driven environment, is reshaping the nature of organizational socialisation and its possible effect on employee engagement.

This study is aimed at broadly examining the relationship between organizational socialisation and employee engagement; specifically, the study aims to examine; (1) the relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. (2) The relationship between organizational socialization and employee emotional engagement. (3) The relationship between organizational socialization and employee cognitive engagement. By examining existing literature, theoretical review (i.e. the Organizational Support Theory) and deploying empirical analysis, this study filled the gap in the paucity of studies on organizational socialisation with specific emphasis on the latent concept of employee engagement, and the possible implication of their empirical interactions within the geographical scope of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organizational Socialisation

Organizational socialisation is a means to achieve employee adaptation and retention; hence, a process of advancing new organizational members' effectiveness by their integration into the organization's culture, skill, knowledge, and behaviour. Organizational socialisation is critical to optimal employee and organizational functioning; foundational discourse on organizational socialisation like the study of Feldman, (1981) identified phases of socialisation (i.e. anticipatory socialization, encounter, and change and acquisition), that enable the understanding of the dynamics of socialisations and its relevance in different organizational contexts. Hence, Anticipatory Socialization is anchored on entry or initiation into the organization and features expectations based on interactions, and prior experience; hence, in anticipatory socialization, new employee expectations of the organization are anchored on external sources (i.e. word-of-mouth, recruitment materials, etc.). The Encounter phase is focused on possible comprehension of organizational norms, rules, and people, and it usually has some perceived gaps or shocks based on new employee's expectations and the new role's reality. The Change and Acquisition phase is anchored on the new employee's ability to integrate with norms, rules, skills, knowledge, and behaviours essential for effectiveness in the organization; hence, the new employees can contribute significantly to the organizational interest. These socialisation phases are still topical in modern discourse, hence, the need to comprehend new employees' experience in adapting to a new organizational context. Subsequently, more studies advance this phase/framework by discussing factors that may influence socialisation (i.e. personality traits, socialisation agents, organizational culture, technological influence, informal networks, changing work context, job roles, leadership, socialization tactics, reciprocal character of socialization, etc.) that can influence new employee experience (Ashforth et al. 2007; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Balali et al. 2018; Bakker et al. 2021; Bauer et al. 2007, 2019; Britto et al. 2018; Gupta et al. 2022; Harris et al. 2022; Makarius et al. 2020; Mazzei et al. 2022; Petrilli et al. 2022). Van Maanen & Schein's (1979) conceptualisation of organizational socialisation tactics observed six dimensions which decode the organisational socialisation structural angle; collective or individual, formal or informal, sequential or random steps, fixed or variable

sequencing, serial or disjunctive, and investiture or divestiture. Chao et al. (1994) further conceptualised and developed six dimensions of organizational socialization to include performance proficiency, politics, language, people, organisational goals and values, and history.

The essence of organizational socialisation has been documented in extant literature to benefit both employees and the organisation; literature has postulated that it enhances role satisfaction, clarity, and commitment, increases productivity, demonstrates organizational citizenship behaviours, reduces turnover and increases employee retention, enhances organizational performance, and employee retention (Batistič & Kaše, 2015, 2022; Bauer et al., 2007, 2019; Chao et al. 1994; Kim & Moon, 2021). This synergistic benefit (i.e. for employees and organizations) is necessary for organizational stability, sustainability, and posterity.

While organizational socialisation benefits are virtuous, it faces critical challenges under certain contexts; when there is socialisation misalignment (i.e. a situation in which there is incongruence between new employee's values, expectations, and behaviour is not synchronised with organisational culture), it could result in employee turnover, dissatisfaction, and decreased performance (Didion et al. 2024; Grosskopf et al. 2022; Liao et al. 2022; Petrilli et al. 2022;). Also, personality characteristics differences (e.g., prior work experience, personality, organizational context) can potentially challenge an effective socialisation process (Grosskopf et al. 2022; Kim, et al. 2005). Diversity, which is a topical discourse, can also challenge the socialization process effectiveness (Grosskopf et al. 2022; Sun et al. 2016).

2.2   Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has become a topical theme in workplace discourse and has been established as a revolutionary driver for employee well-being, organizational performance and dynamics (Kahn, 1990). Its essence in workplace relevance has been attributed to increased productivity, enhanced job satisfaction, reduced turnover, increased organizational citizenship behaviour, and optimised organizational commitment (Kahn, 1990; Chukwuma & Agbaeze, 2019; Schaufeli et al. 2004; Qayyum et al. 2022). Employee engagement connotation reflects recurrent themes of vigor, commitment, dedication, positive and fulfilled workplace state of mind, absorption, etc. (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006). Kahn (1990) in his pioneer paper postulated engagement to mean the physical, emotional, and cognitive disposition of employees in the workplace, which is critical to influencing the organizational interest.
Kahn (1990); and Rich et al. (2010) posit that *Physical Engagement* is anchored on employee exertion of effort, stamina, and energy into their roles. Hence, when employees are physically present, they perform beyond the minimal standard of the job demand. *Emotional Engagement* is anchored on employees' emotional connection to their role and the organization; it involves feelings of excitement, pride, a sense of attachment, and enthusiasm being congruent with the values, mission, and vision of the organisation, which drives employees' loyalty to the organization. Finally, *Cognitive Engagement* is focused on employee intellectual and mental commitment to their work. It narrates the employee's capacity to deploy cognitive abilities (i.e. critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, etc.) in the workplace, hence accomplishing organisational interest.

Extant literature has revealed that key drivers of employee engagement are anchored on leadership style, workplace culture and organizational environment; leadership style (i.e. transformational leadership) is critical in driving the narrative towards optimised employee engagement (Majrashi, 2022; Othman et al. 2017). Leadership proactiveness, authenticity and empowerment enhance employee commitment and trust, which enables engagement (Cai et al. 2018; Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020; Kahn, 1990). On the other hand, workplace culture and organizational environment that fosters the virtue of inclusivity, autonomy, fairness, work-life balance, flexibility, effective job design, career development opportunities and recognition enhance engagement via a supportive climate (Ashley & Parumasur, 2024; Hasan, 2023).

Emerging areas of contention in employee engagement literature include the dynamics of employee engagement in light of the post-COVID-19 pandemic area which amongst other things has redefined the reality of the workplace via remote and hybrid work arrangements (Anand & Acharya, 2021; Wontorczyk, & Roˑznowski, 2022). These arrangements have led to possible new workplace changes and question the validity of advancing employee engagement in such a work environment, hence requiring further empirical quest.

H1.   There is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement.
H2.   There is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement.
H3.   There is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement.

2.3 Organizational Support Theory Perspective on Organizational Socialization and Employee Engagement

The Organizational Support Theory (OST) introduced by Eisenberger et al. (1986) offers a strategic theoretical perspective to exploring the connection between organizational socialisation and employee engagement. OST is of the position that organizational actions/activities influence employee's perception of organizational support which invariably influences their behaviour, attitudes, and engagement. OST is focused on employee organizational

support perceptions being anchored on their interpretation of how their contributions are valued by the organization and the relative prioritisation of their well-being by the organisation (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Kurtessis et al. 2017). The perceived organisational support (POS) reveals the relationship between the organization and the employee, where the employee believes the organisation offer assistance and resources that are essential for the accomplishment of their role, which invariably achieves organisational interest. Hence, the POS creates a sense of obligation and reciprocity; where employees reciprocate organisational support by enhancing commitment, effort, and engagement; organizational support is a critical influence on POS, as it offers the requisite criteria (i.e. information, tools, and experience) for employee adjustment and retention in the work environment (Chukwuma et al. 2021; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Hence, organization deployment of effective onboarding training, communication, coaching, mentoring, leadership, and a supportive environment influence employees' POS and can influence their engagement (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020; Othman et al. 2017; Kahn, 1990). So, POS catalyzes enhancing job satisfaction, vigor, commitment, and dedication (i.e. components of employee engagement) (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006).
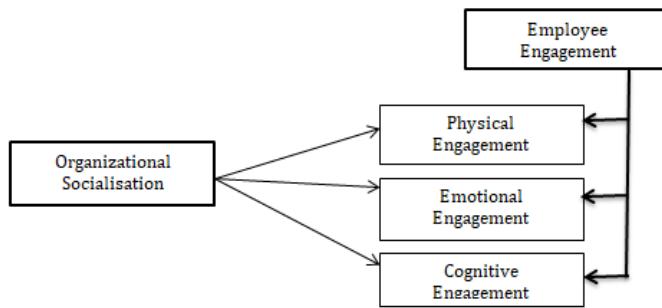
3. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quantitative descriptive research to examine the relationship between organizational socialization and employee engagement and deployed the cross-sectional survey approach to facilitate the collection of data. Also, the study engaged a non-probability sampling; convenience sampling approach in the dissemination of the questionnaire, hence, shared and retrieved questionnaire from 51 respondents which comprised employees that have been engaged in the organization within the last three (3) years, the domain industry for these employees was the fast food restaurant firms within Choba-Ozuoba community of Rivers State, Nigeria, and 11 fast food restaurant firms were conveniently sampled. The study was done in 2025.

Organizational socialization was measured using the scale developed by Chao et al. (1994). This scale reveals and deconstructs organizational socialisation into six dimensions namely; performance proficiency, politics,

language, people, organisational goals and values, and history. The scale totalled 34 items.

Employee engagement, which was deconstructed into cognitive, emotional, and physical engagement was measured via the adoption of the Rich et al. (2010) scale which aligned the measures to reflect Kahn's (1990) employee engagement conceptualisation. The scale is totalled at 18 items.

Each variable was measured on a Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The validity utilised was the face and content validity, the scale was also validated in a previous study (Chao et al. 1994). The study adopted the Cronbach's alpha test to establish the reliability of the instrument. The data analysis was executed via the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient and the simple linear regression. Since the data retrieved were ordinal, the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was adopted to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between organisational socialisation and employee engagement. The simple linear regression was deployed to assess the predictive influence of organisational socialisation on employee engagement (physical, emotional, and cognitive). These were done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. The decision rule is that if the p-value is less than 0.05, reject the null hypothesis, accept the alternative hypothesis, and vice versa.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

High reliability was revealed across all constructs as shown in the Cronbach's Alpha values in Table 1. Organisational Socialisation reliability score (α = .940) demonstrated consistency for the 34-item scale measuring the variable. The three dimensions of employee engagement; physical (α = .723), emotional (α = .720), and cognitive (α = .713) likewise revealed acceptability score.

The results of the Spearman's correlation shown in Tables 2,3, and 4 revealed a strong positive between organisational socialisation and the three dimensions of employee engagement (physical, emotional, and cognitive). The Spearman's correlation result reveals that organisational socialisation is critical to the antecedent of employee engagement; hence strengthens the position of the broad objective of this study.

Table 2 reveals the Spearman's correlation results for organisational socialisation and physical engagement, and shows that organisational socialisation has a strong positive correlation with employee physical engagement (r = .838, p = .000); therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. This implies that employees who are effectively socialised within the organisational climate are

most likely to exert higher physical involvement and energy in the execution of their roles.

Table 3 reveals the Spearman's correlation results for organisational socialisation and emotional engagement, and shows that organisational socialisation has a strong positive correlation with employee emotional engagement (r = .821, p = .000); therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement. This implies that employees who are effectively socialised within the organisational climate possess a high emotional connection to the organisation, and feel proud and enthusiastic in executing their roles; this also fosters employee retention as such employees possess stronger attachment and loyalty to the organisational interest.

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Table 4 reveals the Spearman's correlation results for organisational socialisation and cognitive engagement, and shows that organisational socialisation has a strong positive correlation with employee cognitive engagement (r = .751, p = .000); therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement. This implies that employees who are effectively socialised within the organisational climate are cognitively congruent with the organisational values and interests, enabling more mental and deeper focus in their work roles.

The results of the simple linear regression analysis as shown in Tables 5,6, and 7 reveal the predictive strength of organisational socialisation, and also reveal a strong significant relationship between organisational socialisation and the three dimensions of employee engagement (physical, emotional, and cognitive).

Table 5 reveals the simple linear regression analysis results for organisational socialisation and physical engagement, and shows that 81.4% of the variance in employee physical engagement can be explained by organisational socialisation (R^2 = .814); therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis, that there is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. The high explanatory power, reinforced by the strong beta value (β = .988, p = .000), shows that the activities of organisational socialisation have a significant and direct influence on employees' physical role engagement.

Table 6 reveals the simple linear regression analysis results for organisational socialisation and emotional engagement, and shows that 79.2% of the variance in employee emotional engagement can be explained by organisational socialisation (R^2 = .792); therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis, that there is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement. The strong beta value (β = .993, p = .000) implies that an optimised organisational socialisation experience can facilitate deep employee emotional bond with the organisation and advance their emotional engagement.

Table 7 reveals the simple linear regression analysis results for organisational socialisation and cognitive engagement, and shows that 69.6% of the variance in employee cognitive engagement can be explained by organisational socialisation (R^2 = .696); therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis, that there is a significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement. The strong beta value (β = .923, p = .000) implies that an optimised organisational socialisation experience can facilitate cognitive alignment of organisation interest and advance their engagement, especially in roles demanding mental focus.

There is a need for organisations to consolidate their commitment to organizational socialisation, and invest in holistic and structured organisational socialisation activities (i.e. onboarding, team building, mentorship, coaching, constructive feedback, strategic communication, training, etc.) that can reinforce high employee physical, emotion, and cognitive engagement level. While the regression results revealed a high variance influence by organisational socialisation on physical and emotional engagement, its influence on cognitive engagement (R^2 = .696) seems relatively moderate and may imply that cognitive engagement could require more focus and investment on a long-term basis to optimise its benefit, nonetheless, and these could further be explored by future research for substantive empirical explanation. The study further enhances relevant literature on organisational member's behaviour by empirically examining the influence of organisational socialisation on employee engagement; the study reveals that organisational socialisation influences employee engagement via its dimensions (physical, emotional, and cognitive), reinforcing its significance to effective strategies for organisational management.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Organisational Socialisation	.940	34
Physical Engagement	.723	6
Emotional Engagement	.720	6
Cognitive Engagement	.713	6

Table 1: Reliability results for organisational socialisation and physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement

Construct	Category	Organisational Socialisation	Physical Engagement
Organisational Socialisation	Spearman's rho	1.000	.838**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	51	51
Physical Engagement	Spearman's rho	.838**	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	51	51

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

Table 2: Spearman's correlation results for organisational socialisation and physical engagement

Construct	Category	Organisational Socialisation	Emotional Engagement
Organisational Socialisation	Spearman's rho	1.000	.821**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	51	51
Emotional Engagement	Spearman's rho	.821**	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	51	51

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

Table 3: Spearman's correlation results for organisational socialisation and emotional engagement

Construct	Category	Organisational Socialisation	Cognitive Engagement
Organisational Socialisation	Spearman's rho	1.000	.751**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	51	51
Cognitive Engagement	Spearman's rho	.751**	1.000
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	51	51

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

Table 4: Spearman's correlation results for organisational socialisation and cognitive engagement

Variable	Organisational Socialisation					
	R	*R²*	*F*	*β*	*T*	*P*
Physical Engagement	.902a	.814	214.375	.988	14.642	.000

R, R-value; R², R-squared value; F, F-value; *β*, beta-value; *P*, significance.

Table 5: Linear regression analysis results, where organisational socialisation is the independent variable, and physical engagement is the dependent variable

Variable	Organisational Socialisation					
	R	*R²*	*F*	*β*	*T*	*P*
Emotional Engagement	.890a	.792	186.911	.993	13.672	.000

R, R-value; R², R-squared value; F, F-value; *β*, beta-value; *P*, significance.

Table 6: Linear regression analysis results, where organisational socialisation is the independent variable, and emotional engagement is the dependent variable

Variable	Organisational Socialisation					
	R	*R²*	*F*	*B*	*T*	*P*
Cognitive Engagement	.834ª	.696	112.033	.923	10.585	.000

R, R-value; R²; R-squared value; F, F-value; *β,* beta-value; *P,* significance.

Table 7: Linear regression analysis results, where organisational socialisation is the independent variable, and cognitive engagement is the dependent variable

5. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on broadly examining the relationship between organizational socialisation and employee engagement; specifically, the study aims to examine; (1) the relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. (2) The relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement. (3) The relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement. The study also examined existing literature and a theoretical review of the study constructs via the organizational support theory. The study via its methodological analysis found the following; (1) there is a high positive significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee physical engagement. (2) There is a high positive significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee emotional engagement. (3) There is a positive significant relationship between organizational socialisation and employee cognitive engagement. Hence, the study empirically proved that organisational socialisation has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement. Organisations that are committed to a viable sustainable posterity must utilise strategic insights from this study and optimise their socialisation strategies to attain a more engaged workforce. To avoid limitations that may arise from the use of convenient sampling in this study, further studies with robust sampling techniques could also contribute to advancing relevant knowledge on the study constructs.

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Appendix

Organizational Socialisation Measure Items

		SD	D	U	A	SA
	Conceptual Factor 1: History					
1	I know very little about the history behind my work group/department. (R)					
2	I am not familiar with the organisation's customs, rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations. (R)					
3	I know the organisation's long-held traditions.					
4	I would be a good resource in describing the background of my group/department.					
5	I am familiar with the history of my organisation.					
	Conceptual Factor 2: Language					
6	I have not mastered the specialized terminology and vocabulary of my trade/profession. (R)					
7	I have not mastered this organisation's slang and special jargon. (R)					
8	I do not always understand what the organisation's abbreviations and acronyms mean. (R)					
9	I understand the specific meanings of words and jargon in my trade/profession.					
10	I understand what most of the acronyms and abbreviations of my trade/profession mean.					
	Conceptual Factor 3: Politics					
11	I have learned how things "really work" on the inside of this organisation.					
12	I know who the most influential people are in my organization.					
13	I do not have a good understanding of the politics in my organisation. (R)					
14	I am not always sure what needs to be done in order to get the most desirable work assignments in my area. (R)					
15	I have a good understanding of the motives behind the actions of other people in the organisation.					
16	I can identify the people in this organisation who are most important in getting the work done.					
	Conceptual Factor 4: People					
17	I do not consider any of my co-workers as my friends. (R)					
18	I am usually excluded in social get-togethers given by other people in the organisation. (R)					
19	Within my workgroup, I would be easily identified as "one of the gang".					
20	I am usually excluded in informal networks or gatherings of people within this organisation. (R)					
21	I am pretty popular in the organisation.					
22	I believe most of my co-workers like me.					
	Conceptual Factor 5: Organisational Goals and Values					
23	I would be a good representative of my organisation.					
24	The goals of my organisations are also my goals.					
25	I believe that I fit in well with my organisation.					
26	I do not always believe in the values set by my organisation. (R)					
27	I understand the goals of my organisation.					
28	I would be a good example of an employee who represents my organisation's values.					
29	I support the goals that are set by my organisation.					
	Conceptual Factor 6: Performance Proficiency					
30	I have not yet learned "the ropes" of my job. (R)					

31	I have learned how to successfully perform my job in an efficient manner.					
32	I have mastered the required tasks of my job.					
33	I have not fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job. (R)					
34	I understand what all the duties of my job entail.					

Note. R = reverse-scored item

Employee Engagement Measure Items

		SD	D	U	A	SA
	Physical Engagement					
1	I work with intensity on my job.					
2	I exert my full effort to do my job.					
3	I devote a lot of energy to do my job.					
4	I try my hardest to perform well on my job.					
5	I strive as hard as I can to complete my job.					
6	I exert a lot of energy on my job.					
	Emotional Engagement					
7	I am enthusiastic about my job.					
8	I feel energetic at my job.					
9	I am interested in my job.					
10	I am proud of my job.					
11	I feel positive about my job.					
12	I am excited about my job.					
	Cognitive Engagement					
13	At work, my mind is focused on my job.					
14	At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job.					
15	At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job.					
16	At work, I am absorbed by my job.					
17	At work, I concentrate on my job.					
18	At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job.					