



The Intervening Effect of Organizational Engagement on the Relationship Between Supportive Work Environment and Employee Retention

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the effects of organizational engagement on the relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention. The participants of the study were employees from business process outsourcing (BPO) companies within the National Capital Region, Philippines. The paper implemented a predictive causal research approach to measure the relationships of organizational engagement, supportive work environment, and employee retention. To estimate the parameters of the proposed structural model, a partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using WarpPLS 7.0 was used. The findings revealed that a supportive work environment positively and significantly influences employee retention and organizational engagement. Moreover, organizational engagement also significantly and positively influenced employee retention. Furthermore, the mediation analysis showed that organizational engagement has an indirect effect on the relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention.

Keywords: *Organizational engagement, supportive work environment, employee retention, BPO companies.*

1. Introduction

Employees have been an important resource to any organization. According to Barney (2001), employees are the most strategic asset for a firm and are valuable, harder to imitate and non-substitutable. While advancement in technology has caused most organizations to be more technology-driven, this does not reduce the value of employees in an organization. For an organization to remain competitive, it not only needs to attract the best talent but also to retain them on the job for a long term (Kossivi, et. al., 2016). Managing these employees, keeping them on the job as long as possible and maintaining their focus and dedication to the organization are now becoming major challenges in today's globalized era, especially in highly competitive industries (Aguenza & Som, 2018). Human resource management has emerged as an integral factor in keeping these employees by developing strategies to maintain an effective and engaged workforce and at the same time meet operational requirements (Mita, 2014). These strategies may include job empowerment and enrichment, monetary and non-monetary rewards, training and development prospects, and improving job climate and employees' work-life balance (Aguenza & Som, 2018; Ghosh, et al., 2013).

Employees would like to work in a healthy and supportive work environment (Guchait & Cho, 2010). Therefore, it is vital to create a supportive work environment to retain the employees (Ghosh and Sahney, 2011; Richman, et al., 2008). Moreover, having a supportive work environment is seen as a critical component to sustain employees' viable growth and

performance (Schermerhorn, et al., 1990; Luthans, et al., 2008). DeLong (2015) proposed several factors of a supportive work environment such as the participation of employees in the decision-making process; managerial control; a culture of teamwork; supervisory support; task orientation and work clarity; autonomy, creativity and innovation at work; and comfortable working environment. These factors of a supportive work environment can be categorized further as perceived working climate, supervisory relationships, peer group interaction and perceived organizational support. These were found to improve engagement and retention level among workers (Kundu & Lata, 2017; Yang, 2013; Ganz & Toren, 2014; Zhang, et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Tnay, et al., 2013; Lambrou, et al., 2014), and employees feeling supported and encouraged (Prieto and Perez-Santana, 2014). Previous researches revealed that the higher the level of organizational engagement and support is, the higher the level of employee retention rate will be (Islam, et al., 2018; Gevrek, et al., 2017; Ramalho, et al., 2018; Adikiah, 2018).

Due to huge competition, level of expertise, and shortage of labor force, particularly in the subject industry of this research (the BPO industry), organizational engagement has emerged as one of the hottest topics over the globe (Juhdi, et al., 2013). Organizational engagement is the degree of absorption into one's role and performance in an organization and is one of the indicators of employee turnover (Saks, 2006). It connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and energy to their work roles (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

This present study investigates the intervening effect of organizational engagement on the relationship between having a supportive work environment and employee retention. Our study focuses on the Philippine BPO industry which plays a vital role in the emerging economy of the Philippines and has made significant growth in the past 20 years. It is considered as one of the main contributors of the economy since its emergence in the late 1990s (Angoluan & Caballero, 2019). In 2016, the Philippine Statistics Authority recorded that there were over half-a-million manpower employed in 851 registered BPO establishments, with the majority of employees ranging from 18-30 years old. With a relatively growing industry that has a pool of young generational talents, employee retention has become this industry's biggest challenge. This study aims to contribute to the deliberation on the challenging issues of employee retention in a growing, competitive, and technology-driven and labor intensified Philippine BPO industry where most employees work in their prime age and have the capacity to dictate marketable and high value terms of compensation and benefits. Very few studies exist where organizational engagement is taken as a mediator to address the employees' outcomes (Saks, 2006; Juhdi, et al., 2013; Malinen, et al., 2013). Moreover, there is no published research yet on the organizational engagement taken as a mediator to employee retention in Philippine BPO industry setting. In this study, we address the importance of organizational engagement on the relationship between having a supportive work environment as a factor for BPO employees' decision to stay with their companies.

2. Research Framework and Hypothesis

The present study underpinned the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). The theory explains social exchange as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties in which both sides bear responsibility for one another and are heavily reliant on one another. Furthermore,

relationships between parties are frequently viewed as mutually dependent and contingent on the actions of others (Blau, 1964). Simply stated, it is a give-and-take relationship between the organization and the employees. According to Almaaitah, et. al (2017), an employee can create distinct social exchange relationships with his or her immediate supervisor, coworkers, organizations, consumers, and suppliers, and these relationships can have an impact on their conduct. Employees are more inclined to continue their relationship with the organization when they believe the relationship is worthwhile for them, and to terminate the relationship when the costs outweigh the benefits. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2007) revealed that in a typical work situation, the social exchange connection impacts whether a contract is kept or terminated by either party. This theory is applied to and translates the belief that employees will be committed to an organization and stay to reciprocate the supporting treatment by the organization. This study responds to the call of the previous research (Kundu & Lata, 2017) by fortifying the broader view of a supportive work environment where organizational engagement plays the role as mediator to resolve the issue of employee retention.

2.1 Organizational Engagement

Organizational engagement is the degree of absorption into one's role and performance in an organization (Saks, 2006). It is viewed as the association, involvement, and willingness of employees to be members of their organization (Juhdi, et al., 2013). Employees are more likely to repay the organization if they are highly engaged and are more likely to be empowered in organizational processes if they are engaged. Organizational engagement is a type of employee engagement that includes employees' involvement of their complete selves with the organization, and it is influenced by factors such as organizational goals, values, and beliefs (Saks & Gruman, 2014). It is a psychological state which has embraced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, job commitment and job engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

2.2 Supportive Work Environment

Supportive work environment enhances the employees' interest in their jobs, thereby increasing their performance (Ma Prieto & Pilar Pérez-Santana, 2014) According to Boswell, et al. (2017), a supportive work environment refers to the climatic component that includes supervisory/peer support, obstacle, and prospect to apply learned behavior in the workplace. Previous studies have revealed that a supportive work environment results in higher organizational commitment (Rhoades, et al., 2001) and improved employee retention (Eisenberger, et al., 2002). In our study, supportive work environment is measured with respect to perceived climate (Kennedy & Daim, 2010), supervisory relationship (Rhoades, et al., 2001; Umamaheswari & Krishnan, 2016), peer-group interaction (Ghosh & Sahney, 2011), and perceived organizational support (Ghosh & Sahney, 2011; Rhoades, et al., 2001).

2.3 Employee Retention

Employee retention is a process in which organizations create an environment which encourages employees to stay for a longer period of time (Singh & Dixit, 2011). It is also defined as the organization's initiatives and efforts to sustain current employees and to maintain a good working environment (Wickramasinghe, 2010). According to George (2015), employee retention is measuring the level of intention to stay and it was seen to be the opposite of turnover intention. Further, failures to retain professional talents lead to higher recruitment,

selection, replacement costs of new employees (George, 2015), and disruptions of organizational communities, lower productivity, and reduction of employees' morale to stay. Employees' retention is considered as a vital source of achieving competitive edge in the marketplace (Walker, 2001).

Employee retention plays a significant role in evaluating the strength of the culture of any organization (Kennedy & Daim, 2010). Individuals are more inclined to stay in those organizations where they are highly involved as engaged employees have more learning attitudes (Bhatnagar, 2007). Nowadays, most of the organizations are facing the problem of employees' retention. Employing competent staff for the job is important for an organization but retaining them in their jobs is more essential (Ghansah, 2011) as replacing a new employee with a new one increases operational costs in the form of new employees' training and filling vacancies.

3. Hypothesis Development

Supportive organizational practices have considerable consequences on employee turnover (AbuAlRub, et al., 2016). Working environment, compensation, supervisory styles, career improvement exercises, training and development, physical working environment, and work–life balance are directly related to employee retention (Hytter, 2007). Heathfield (2008) justified the need for continued support in employee training and demonstrated its effects on employee development which are considered vital for employee retention. Cooperation and affirmation from higher management provide workers the discernment that the organization is supportive (Kirkland, et al., 2017; Kurtessis, et al., 2017). Thus, a perceived supportive work environment motivates and energizes the employees to stay (Ramlall, 2003).

Other studies claimed that working environment components such as support, motivation, and work pressure, interpersonal relationships and well-developed environment are related to employee retention (Kyndt, et al., 2009; Bamel, et al., 2013; Ghosh & Sahney, 2011). According to Van Dierendonck, et al., (2002), supervisory support at the workplace may lessen the stress and encourage an increased level of job satisfaction, employee's intention to stay and influence subordinate's absenteeism. Moreover, peer support is also viewed as a strong predictor of employee retention.

Underpinning social exchange theory, organizations that give greater support to its employees are more likely to sense the obligation from the employees to reciprocate by intending to stay for a longer period (Eisenberger, et al., 2002; Presbitero, et al., 2016). Therefore, based on the above studies, the following hypothesis can be anticipated,

H1. Supportive work environment is significantly and positively related to employee retention.

Saks (2006) considered the work role separate from the role as a member of the organization and conducted research to study work engagement and organizational engagement independently. According to Saks (2006), organizational engagement is explained through social exchange theory, wherein relationships are built within the reciprocity of exchange (Kittrede, 2010). It is expected that compatibility of individuals is seen by employees as a

beneficial act directed towards employees, hence motivating them towards their role performance, showing high level of energy at work, and emotional attachment with their respective organizations and staying longer (Saks, 2006).

Perceived organizational support is the workers' general belief that the organization recognizes their service and is concerned for their wellbeing (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). According to Harter, et al., (2004), employees who had a sense of supportive relationships with their coworkers and supervisors showed a stronger sense of psychological safety and supportive actions by the supervisor motivate employee self-determination (Deci, et al., 1989).

Employees consider their relationship with their supervisors as a company's support; therefore, positive relationships with one's supervisor also promote employee engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Peer relationship, supervisory relationship, organizational policies and procedures, supportive work climate, and workplace environment are considered part of a positive work climate that promotes employee engagement (Shuck, et al., 2010). Perceived organizational support (Saks, 2006) and support from colleagues (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) predict organizational engagement among employees (Kundu & Lata, 2017) and perceived organizational justice, good employee-job fit, and perceived organizational support increase organizational engagement (Richman et al., 2008). Thus,

H2. Supportive work environment is significantly and positively related to organizational engagement.

Engaged employees who have more learning attitudes are more inclined to stay in an organization as engaged employees are more passionate towards learning (Bhatnagar, 2007). Organizational engagement is viewed as an attachment and involvement of employees within the organization (Juhdi, et al., 2013). According to Lockwood (2007), engagement is directly related to business success and employee retention in an organization. Strong organizational outputs, such as productivity, safety, profitability, and turnover intention, were backed by employee engagement (Harter, et al., 2002), while organizational engagement enhances the employees as well as organizational performance (Richman, et al., 2008). Employees are more likely to stay with the organization if they are engaged (Bhatnagar, 2007). According to Harter, et al. (2002) stronger commitment to the organization, greater job satisfaction, and improved work environment come from employee engagement. Juhdi, et al. (2013) have found that human resources management (HRM) practices affect organizational engagement.

Past research has revealed that engagement is negatively related to turnover intention (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and high levels of engagement are less likely to voluntarily leave the organization (Vance, 2006). Thus,

H3. Organizational engagement is significantly and positively related to employee retention.

There are studies that identified the mediating variable between supportive work environment and employee retention. The study of Naz, et al. (2020) shows that a supportive work environment is positively significant to employee retention through mediation of organizational commitment. Moreover, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) concluded that engagement mediates the relationship of turnover intention that works as a motivational tool

that leads to higher engagement and reduced employee turnover. Also, Malinen, et al. (2013) also examined the mediating effects of organizational engagement between trust, procedural justice, and withdrawal attitudes and found that more engaged employees have high chances to stay in the organization.

On the other hand, Kundu, et al. (2017) conducted a research supporting the mediation of organizational engagement between the relationship of supportive work environment and employee retention and revealed that organizational engagement partially mediates between a supportive work environment and employee engagement.

Studies suggest that organizational engagement intervenes the relationship between antecedents (job characteristics, rewards and recognition, perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, procedural justice, and distributive justice) and outcomes (job satisfaction, intention to quit, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior) of the organization (Saks, 2006) and further suggest that HR practices can also be mediated by organizational engagement (Juhdi, et al., 2013). Therefore,

H4. Organizational engagement mediates the significant and positive relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention.

Based on the above literature review and hypotheses presented, the research framework shows the three variables and their hypothesized relationships. Figure 1 illustrates the direct effect of a supportive work environment on employee retention and the intervening effect of organizational engagement on the relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention.

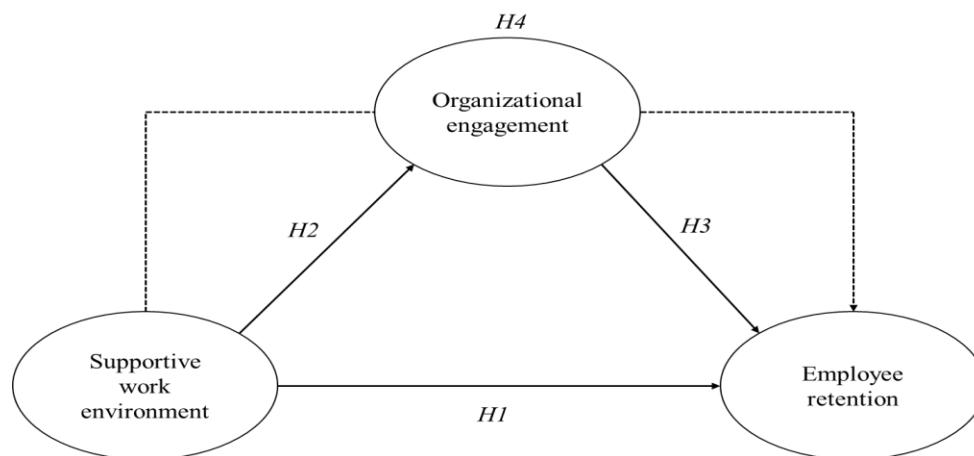


Figure 1. Proposed Research Framework

4. Methods

4.1 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were the BPO employees in the National Capital Region in the Philippines. The BPO destination of the Philippines has been heavily promoted in Western

English-speaking countries because of its perceived good language skills and its cultural affinity with all things American; it also boasts to being the 3rd largest English-speaking country in the world (Lockwood, 2010). BPO employees are the appropriate respondents because of the relevance of the research constructs to the situation in the BPO industry.

All participants were identified using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where participants that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate, are included for the purpose of the study (Etikan, et al., 2016). The distribution of the survey questionnaires was done online using Google forms and the link was shared using online messaging platforms. Out of 219 survey questionnaires gathered, 203 were answered completely and correctly by the participant indicating a 92.7% response rate. The online survey ran from the second week until the last week of May 2021.

To compute the sample size, a priori estimation using the G-Power program was utilized. G-Power was designed to serve as an efficient, broadly applicable, and easy-to-use research tool (Erdfelder, et.al., 1996). Using an effect size of 0.15, alpha of 0.05, and power of 0.80, the recommended minimum sample size of the program is 68. The present study has 203 sample sizes, which is more than the required sample computed by the G-Power program. As shown in Figure 2, the 203 valid responses used are sufficient in supporting the results of PLS-SEM.

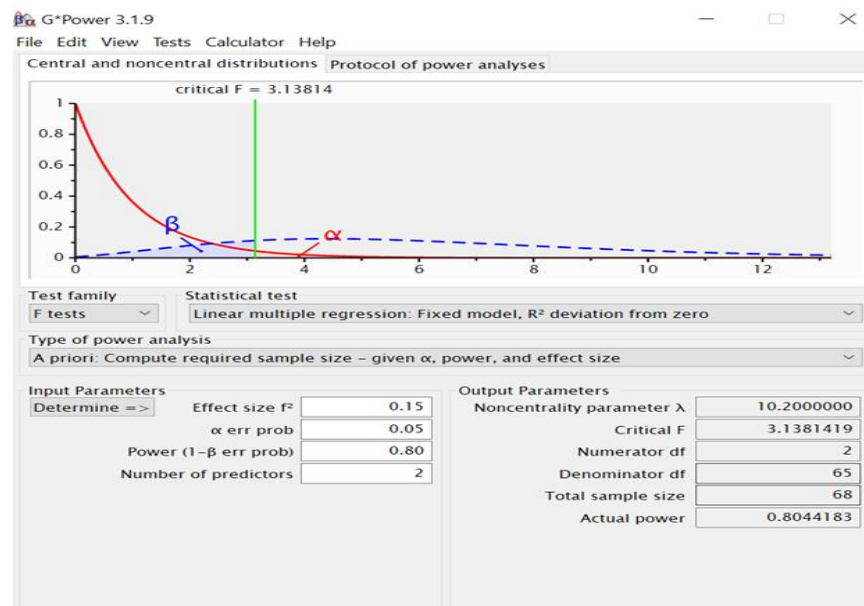


Figure 2. Sample Size Estimation

Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of the participants. The majority are females (65.5%) and are single (67.5%). Moreover, 45.8% of the participants are within the age group of 19-25 years old, followed by 27.1% from the age group of 26-30 years old, then 10.8% from the age group of 31-35 years old, and finally 16.3% from the age group of over 36 years old. More than half of the participants' employment level is under intermediate or experienced level at 51.2%. In terms of their length of service, 55.2% of the participants have been with their

company for 1-5 years, 31.5% responded having stayed for less than a year, 9.4% responded having stayed within 6-10 years, and 3.9% responded having stayed with their BPO companies for more than ten years.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	70	34.5
Female	133	65.5
Age		
19-25	93	45.8
26-30	55	27.1
31-35	22	10.8
36 and above	33	16.3
Civil status		
Single	137	67.5
Married	64	31.5
Separated/Annulled	2	1.0
Widowed/Widower	0	0.0
Employment level		
Entry-level	56	27.6
Intermediate or Experienced Level	104	51.2
Mid-level	34	16.7
Senior, Executive or Top-level Management and Chiefs	9	4.4
Years of service		
Less than 1 year	64	31.5
1-5 years	112	55.2
6-10 years	19	9.4
More than 10 years	8	3.0

5. Research Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a self-administered online survey questionnaire generated through Google forms which is composed of two parts. The first part is the demographic characteristics of the participants such as gender, age, civil status, employment level and years of employment in their present organization. The second part focused on the variables of the study. Supportive work environment was measured by adopting four multiple item scales, i.e., perceived climate (Kennedy and Daim, 2010), supervisory relationship (Eisenberger, et al., Rhoades, et al., 2001), peer group interaction (Ghosh & Sahney, 2011) and perceived organizational support. Organizational engagement was measured using three statements adopted from the study of Palmer and Gignac (2012). Furthermore, the employee retention scale describes the intention to stay among employees. All items in the three constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

6. Data Analysis

A quantitative research design was used in the present study. Moreover, a predictive causal research approach was utilized to measure the interrelationships of the three constructs – organizational engagement, supportive work environment, and employee retention. The partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using WarpPLS 7.0 software was used to estimate the parameters of the proposed structural model. A PLS-SEM is a statistical test that follows three stages: specification of the model, evaluation of the outer model, and assessment of the inner model. Hence, PLS-SEM is chosen for the study to identify mediation analysis to gauge how mediators absorb the effect of the exogenous variable on an endogenous construct in PLS-SEM (Hair, et al., 2018).

7. Results

7.1 Scrutiny of the Measurement Model

The reliability and validity of each variable were examined to evaluate the acceptability of the measurement model. The reliability of the variables was assessed using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA). Convergent and discriminant validity tests were performed to confirm the validity of the constructs. Convergent validity was assessed with the use of item loading and average variance extracted while discriminant validity used Fornell-Larcker criterion.

Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha's (CA) values must be equal or greater than 0.7 to express good reliability (Nunnally, 1978; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As seen in Table 2, all variables under supportive work environment which are perceived climate (CA=0.857; CR=0.913), supervisory relationship (CA=0.906; CR=0.941), peer group interaction (CA=0.829; CR=0.898), perceived organizational support (CA=0.764; CR=0.864) are all above the recommended criteria. Moreover, results for organizational engagement (CA=0.884; CR=0.929) and employee retention (CA=0.856; CR=0.933) are also above the recommended criteria which shows that all latent constructs are reliable.

Convergent validity is assessed by the item loadings. Item loading should be equal to or higher than 0.5 and must possess a p-value of lower than or equal to 0.05 to be acceptable (Hair, et al., 1987; Hair, et al., 2009; Kock, 2017). Moreover, average variance extracted (AVE) was used to determine the variance value of each construct. The AVE of the latent constructs must be equal to or greater than 0.5 to confirm the construct validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, et al., 2009; Kock, 2014; Kock & Lynn, 2012). Based on the results shown in Table 2, all variables satisfy the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 2. Reliability Measures and Convergent Validity

Constructs / Item	Factor loading
Supportive work environment	
Perceived climate: <i>AVE=0.779; CA=0.857; CR=0.913</i>	
PC1. The work environment at my organization is good.	0.847
PC2. My superiors make me feel like an important team member.	0.902
PC3. I am treated with respect.	0.897
Supervisory relationship: <i>AVE=0.842; CA=0.906; CR=0.941</i>	
SR1. My work supervisor really cares about my well-being.	0.918
SR2. My supervisor cares about my opinion.	0.925
SR3. My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values.	0.910
Peer group interaction: <i>AVE=0.745; CA=0.829; CR=0.898</i>	
PG1. Employees can collectively influence many important issues in the department.	0.848
PG2. Employees of the work group closely together and during the same time frame.	0.880
PG3. One can share and discuss job-related issues with peers in the department.	0.862
Perceived organizational support: <i>AVE=0.680; CA=0.764; CR=0.864</i>	
PO1. Workstations in the department are comfortable.	0.793
PO2. The amount of work one is expected to do on the job is reasonable.	0.864
PO3. Senior executives/managers are willing to extend cooperation in order to help employees perform their jobs to the best of their ability.	0.815
Organizational engagement: <i>AVE=0.813; CA=0.884; CR=0.929</i>	
OE1. I tell others how proud I am to work for this organization whenever I have the chance.	0.853
OE2. The way this organization conducts its day-today business inspires me to do everything I can to ensure it is successful.	0.917
OE3. I identify with this organization's vision in such a way that my commitment remains unwavering, even when conditions become difficult.	0.932
Employee retention: <i>AVE=0.874; CA=0.856; CR=0.933</i>	
ER1. I am likely to stay in this organization for the next five years.	0.935
ER2. For me, this organization is the best of all possible organization to work for.	0.935

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to assess discriminant validity. The square root of the AVEs for each variable should be greater than all of the associations surrounding that variable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, the values in the diagonal (bold values) must be higher than those of the off-diagonal coefficients. Based on the result in Table 3, the findings reveal that all the variables possess discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Using Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	PC	SR	PG	PO	OE	ER
PC	0.882					
SR	0.711	0.918				
PG	0.606	0.547	0.863			
PO	0.787	0.673	0.650	0.825		
OE	0.724	0.694	0.597	0.730	0.901	
ER	0.625	0.536	0.430	0.548	0.754	0.935

PC=perceived climate; SR=supervisory relationship; PG=peer group interaction; PO = perceived organizational support; OE = organizational engagement; ER = employee retention. Diagonal elements are the square root of AVE of constructs while the off-diagonal elements are the correlation between constructs.

8. Formative Measurement Assessment

Table 4 shows the measurement model of high-order formative construct of a supportive work environment with four dimensions: perceived climate, supervisory relationship, peer group interaction, and peer organizational support. Since the present study has higher-order construct (supportive work environment), measurement model assessment using variance inflation factor (VIF), outer weight and the corresponding p-value, and full collinearity was measured.

Table 4 manifests the variance inflation factors (VIFs), outer weight, and significance of the formative indicators of each construct used in this study. Collinearity was measured using VIFs. According to Kock (2015) and Kock and Lynn (2012), full collinearity value must be equal to or lesser than 3.3. It can be noted from Table 4 that all formative indicators of all constructs passed this criterion. In terms of outer weight of each item, the requirement is that each indicator must have a corresponding p-value of equal to or less than 0.05 (Ramayah, et al., 2018). Based on the results, the measurement model assessment for the second order construct (supportive work environment) passed the required threshold.

Table 4. Measurement Model for Higher-Order Formative Construct

Supportive Work Environment (HOC – Formative construct)	Factor weight	p-value	VIF	Full collinearity VIF
PC	0.302	<0.001	3.178	
SR	0.283	<0.001	2.207	
PG	0.268	<0.001	1.836	
PO	0.302	<0.001	3.130	2.726

8.1 Scrutiny of the Structural Model

Included in the analysis are coefficient determinations (R^2) to further scrutinize the structural model. When the value of R^2 is less than 0.02, it is recommended that the model be revised because the overall effects of the predictors in latent construct blocks are very weak (Cohen, 1988; Kock, 2014). Figure 3 below presents that all constructs achieved the requirements for R^2 .

Table 5 and Figure 3 reveal the parameter estimates of the mediation model. The data analysis showed that supportive work environment positively and significantly influences employee retention ($\beta=0.127, \rho<0.032$) and has small or weak effect ($f^2=0.082$), which implies that supportive work environment has direct effect to employee retention; hence H_1 is supported.

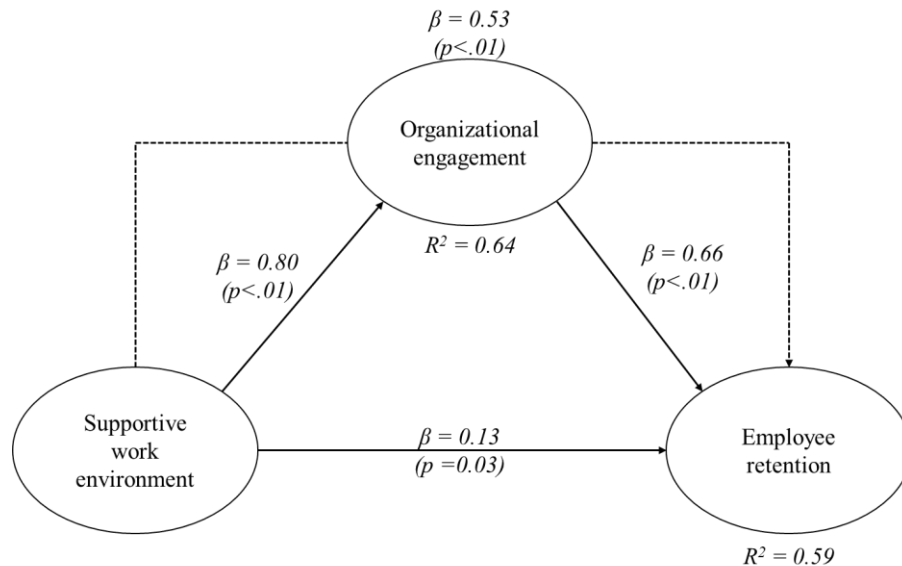


Figure 3. The Mediation Model with Parameter Estimates

The findings also show that supportive work environment and organizational engagement are significantly and positively related ($\beta = 0.798, \rho < 0.001$) with a large effect size ($f^2=0.636$). It implies that a supportive work environment positively influences organizational engagement. Therefore, H_2 is supported.

Analysis of data also reveals that organizational engagement significantly and positively influences employee retention ($\beta=0.663, \rho<0.001$) with a large effect size ($f^2=0.505$). It implies that organizational engagement in a company influences employee retention. Thus, H_3 is supported.

Furthermore, the mediation analysis showed that supportive work environment has an indirect effect on the relationship between organizational engagement and employee retention ($\beta=0.528, \rho<0.001$). This suggests that organizational engagement mediates the relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention with a medium extent of mediation effect ($f^2=0.341$). Therefore, H_4 is supported.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	B	p	SE	f ²	Decision
Direct effects					
H1. SWE→ER	0.127	0.032	0.069	0.082	Supported
H2. SWE→OE	0.798	<0.001	0.060	0.636	Supported
H3. OE→ER	0.663	<0.001	0.062	0.505	Supported
Indirect effect					
H4. SWE→OE→ER	0.528	<0.001	0.045	0.341	Supported

SWE-supportive work environment; ER-employee retention; OE-organizational engagement β-path coefficient; p for p-value; SE-standard error; f²=effect size. The effect sizes follow Cohen's (1988) criterion: 0.02=small, 0.15=medium, 0.35=large.

9. Discussion

The current study revealed that a supportive work environment (perceived climate, supervisory relationship, peer group interaction, and perceived organizational support) significantly and positively contributes to employee retention. The result suggests that having a supportive work environment is one of the factors to increase the chance of employee retention. The positive association between supportive work environment and employee retention infers that a supportive work environment keeps employees safe from stress and brings positive attitude and behavior due to felt obligation of work support from supervisors and coworkers. The results are consistent with the study of Cromwell and Kolb (2004), which discloses that a high level of supportive work environment leads to greater transfer of knowledge and skills among employees. Further, Lingard and Francis (2006) stated that a supportive work environment prevents burnout in employees. Healthy work environment influences the intention to remain with a particular organization (Ramlall, 2003).

This study also showed that a supportive work environment significantly and positively influences organizational engagement. The finding indicates that a supportive work environment has a direct effect on organizational engagement. Supportive work environment practices, for instance, involvement in decision-making, career development prospects, and equality of rewards, act as driving forces for organizational engagement. Employees feel committed to their job if they are communicated and listened to by supervisors and peers (Reed, et al., 2016). Supportive HR measures in the light of rewards and autonomy provide better retention of employees (Gberevbie, 2010) and lead to a higher level of organizational engagement (Saks, 2006). Further, organizational practices in the context of employee communication, rewards and recognition, and employee development foster the higher degree of engagement in the organization (Choo, et al., 2013).

We also looked at the impact of organizational engagement on employee retention. The result revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between organizational engagement and employee retention. De Lange, et al. (2008) stipulated that high organizational engagement retains and motivates the personnel whereas absence of it results in higher turnover from the organization. Previous studies also found that employee retention strategies, such as staff participation in decision making, enhanced and regular salary packages, good relations with employees (Gberevbie, 2010), and development and empowerment

(Kundu & Gahlawat, 2016) helped in enhancing the organizational performance. Researchers suggest that HR managers should be aware about designing and implementing strategic HRM practices on organizational engagement, such as remuneration, training and development, career opportunities, and work-life balance, in addressing employee retention (Presbitero, et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the mediation model revealed that organizational engagement mediates the positive relationship between a supportive work environment and employee retention, and the effect size is medium. According to Kundu and Lata (2017), a supportive work environment is positively related to organizational engagement, which, in turn, affects employee retention positively. Therefore, organizational engagement helps the presence of employee retention in the organization by increasing the tendency of a supportive work environment. Indeed, the supervisor's feedback, fair appraisal, information sharing, participation in problem-solving, forgiving, and a favorable attitude, caring and friendly environment make employees feel indebted and committed. The feelings of indebtedness and belongingness force them to remain with the organization to reciprocate a supportive work environment.

10. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

The present study on the intervening effect of organizational engagement on the relationship between supportive work environment and employee retention establishes that the presence of a supportive work environment increases employee retention. The present study implies the important role of the relationship between a supportive work environment and employee retention. It also highlights the importance of organizational engagement in strengthening the relationship between a supportive work environment and employee retention. In the BPO industry where there is a fierce competition, it is very significant that engagement among employees be evident, and anchored with a supportive work environment in order for them to increase retention of top talent employees who can keep working alongside with the growth of the company.

The current study conveys practical contributions to address employee retention in the BPO industry. It is timely to recognize the importance of determining the extent of the influence of having a supportive work environment and strong organizational engagement in strengthening employee retention of their talented employees. Human resource managers must align organizational practices with the employees' needs so that employees, as well as organizational engagement, are enhanced (Nutov & Hazzan, 2014). Through such proactive efforts, the organization can reduce the likelihood of losing key employees. According to Ocampo, et al. (2018), having a high level of organizational engagement among the BPO employees can potentially help the company to have more dedicated and engaged employees. BPO companies will undoubtedly benefit from these engaged employees because they will be more productive and more dedicated to their work. Human resource managers should work towards retaining the competent employees by developing a supportive work environment. When employees are provided with a well-perceived climate, adequate supervisory support, positive peer group interaction, and organizational engagement, they will stay longer and will not intend to leave the organization. Therefore, it is advisable for BPO companies to develop a positive work

environment for retaining valuable employees. Similarly, Kundu and Vora (2004) also suggest that retaining motivated and efficient employees is essential to ensure good service.

This study also contributes theoretically through establishing a contextualized perspective of a supportive work environment in the form of perceived climate, supervisory relationship, peer group interaction and peer organizational support. It tries to examine the combined effects of a supportive work environment on employee retention through organizational engagement as a mediating factor. This undertaking additionally confirmed and delivered practical evidence to models of social exchange theory and identifies the role of a supportive work environment in influencing employee retention.

The present study has several limitations. Firstly, the respondents were only those who worked in the BPO companies located within the National Capital Region. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized to other regions and future researchers may conduct similar studies in other key cities in the Philippines. Secondly, given the various industries in the Philippines, researchers may conduct related studies in other sectors, i.e., health sector, hospitality sector, etc. Finally, other researchers may find interest in the inclusion of other variables or mediators such as person-organization fit, organizational commitment, etc., that may affect the hypothesized relationships. Organizational commitment may also act as an alternative mediator explaining employee retention as organizational commitment also plays an important role in predicting turnover intention (Mathieu, et al., 2016).

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