

Employee Engagement Mediates Justice and Performance

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Abstract

In today's highly dynamic and ever-evolving business environment, a variety of factors significantly influence organizational performance, with the human element standing out as one of the most critical components. The attitudes, emotions, and behaviours exhibited by employees are essential not only for the survival but also for the long-term success of organizations. Among the many factors affecting organizational outcomes, organizational justice and employee engagement hold particular importance, especially in enabling employees to contribute effectively to overall organizational performance. This is especially true in the construction sector, where engagement and fairness can directly impact project success. This study investigated the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational performance. To this end, 476 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to engineers working within Jordanian construction companies. The gathered data were rigorously analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) techniques, implemented through IBM-SPSS-AMOS version 24.0 software. The findings revealed that both organizational justice and employee engagement exert positive and statistically significant effects on organizational performance. Furthermore, organizational justice was demonstrated to have a beneficial impact on employee engagement. Most notably, employee engagement was found to partially mediate the relationship between organizational justice and organizational performance. Based on these results, promoting and fostering employee engagement is deemed crucial for enhancing organizational performance, particularly in scenarios where employees perceive the presence of fairness and equity within their workplace environment.

Keywords: Construction Companies, Employee Engagement, Jordan, Organizational Justice, Organizational Performance.

Introduction

With the advancement of network-based economies, global competition is intensifying rapidly, resulting in an increasingly challenging environment for organizations (1). High performance expectations, rapidly evolving technologies, and rising client demands present significant challenges to achieving strong organizational performance in the construction sector. These pressures highlight the importance of effective performance management to ensure long-term organizational sustainability and maintain a competitive advantage. As a vital industry for national economic development, the construction sector and its engineering professionals play a central role in project outcomes. Construction firms can strengthen their competitiveness by implementing standardized productivity practices (2), aiming to achieve higher profitability while minimizing costs (3). Despite growing awareness and research interest in productivity-related challenges (4), the

Jordanian construction industry has drawn criticism from scholars and governmental institutions due to its underperformance (3, 5, 6). Jordan was ranked 116th out of 123 countries in labour productivity between 2010 and 2018, reflecting a 0.783% decline in construction performance (7). Human capital remains a critical driver of performance and competitive advantage in construction organizations (5, 8). Employees play a pivotal role, especially considering that labour costs represent 30% to 50% of total project expenditures in many countries (5, 9). However, there is substantial evidence indicating widespread instances of unfair treatment toward construction workers globally (10). In contrast, organizational justice is widely acknowledged as a key factor in promoting organizational sustainability (11). Organizational justice is considered a key element influencing both performance and productivity in construction engineering firms (12–16). At the same time,

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employee engagement contributes to organizational efficiency and long-term viability by enabling firms to respond to industry changes, achieve strategic objectives, and enhance overall success (17). It has been reported that many companies actively invest in employee engagement strategies to promote autonomy and maintain competitiveness (17). In addition, it has been emphasized that strong employee engagement can enhance both individual and organizational efficiency (18). Positive employee attitudes and behaviours are essential for improving task performance and, consequently, strengthening the firm's competitive position. Today's workforce increasingly values workplaces that demonstrate fairness, ethics, respect, and inclusivity. It is therefore essential to manage human resources effectively across key domains such as organizational justice (12–16) and employee engagement (14, 19). Based on the literature, the relatively low levels of organizational performance in Jordan's construction sector could be improved by strengthening both organizational justice and employee engagement.

Considering the significance of social values and justice-oriented principles in both society and the workplace, fairness should be upheld even in situations where accuracy may be lacking (15). Organizational justice serves as a strong predictor of critical organizational outcomes, including performance (20) and employee engagement (14, 21). In all human resource practices, it is essential to prioritize fairness from the employees' viewpoint, especially in developing countries where research on the "soft" aspects of professional organizations remains limited (15).

In conclusion, this research makes an early contribution by exploring the mediating effect of employee engagement in the link between organizational justice and organizational performance within Jordan's construction sector. Examining how organizational justice and employee engagement influence performance outcomes are particularly relevant to Jordanian construction companies, where this subject has received minimal scholarly focus. To address this gap, the study applies Social Exchange Theory (SET) as its theoretical foundation to analyze the interrelationships among these variables and to

provide a deeper understanding of their underlying mechanisms.

SET

Scholars have applied SET to explore how employee relationships influence organizational performance (22, 23). The SET denotes the transactions or connections between two or multiple parties, such as staff-company relationships that entail indefinite obligations with resource exchanges. These exchanges are based on reciprocity, where future returns or repayments are expected (24, 25). For example, an organizational actor (company, supervisor, or colleague) with positive initiatives (fair and organizational justice) would enable targets (individual workers) to positively reciprocate such acts with an optimal social exchange relationship (24). Workers' viewpoints of fairness entail a positive sense of self-dignity and identity to boost engagement (26) as individuals who are indebted to their organization would make contributions based on the experienced fairness (27) and positively respond to the workplace with high engagement (24, 28) and organizational performance (29).

Organizational Justice: which implies employees' perspectives of organizational fairness and determines whether workers are fairly rewarded in exchange for their contributions with procedural and interpersonal treatment (30), has garnered much attention from organizational behaviour scholars in the past four decades.

Employee Engagement: is defined as "a positive work-related psychological state characterized by a genuine willingness to contribute to organizational success" (31).

Organizational Performance: Evaluating and measuring performance is essential for guiding an organization toward its strategic and operational objectives. Various approaches have been developed to assess organizational performance (32). Despite its importance for all types of organizations, whether profit-oriented or not, the process of evaluating organizational performance remains complex (33). Organizational performance may be achieved at multiple levels, including individuals, teams, companies, or processes (34). Across disciplines, organizational performance is widely recognized as a critical outcome measure and is frequently used as a key

dependent variable in studies of firm productivity (35).

Hypotheses Development

The organizational justice-employee engagement link has been segmented by most past studies (14, 21, 36, 37). Organizational justice-oriented viewpoints could be regarded as resources that potentially elevate staff engagement following their functional role in goal achievement (36). Fairness and justice are among the six professional elements inducing job engagement in burnout literature. A low fairness level could instigate burnout while a positive fairness perspective could enhance engagement (38). Workers who prioritize organizational justice are inclined to be fair in their roles, which are depicted using high engagement levels (39). The following hypothesis was developed based on the aforementioned justifications:

H1: Organizational Justice has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement.

Engaged employees are essential for organizations aiming to achieve their strategic objectives (40–42). Individuals with strong engagement levels are often emotionally committed and highly devoted to their organizations (43). Numerous studies have consistently shown a positive association between employee engagement and organizational performance (40, 44–46). This emotional and professional bond often contributes to greater organizational success. Employees who foster a positive relationship and emotional connection with their work, colleagues, and organization generally perform at higher levels and contribute more effectively to organizational outcomes (47). Employee engagement is also associated with several favourable outcomes, including higher productivity, better performance, enhanced satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions (48). Engaged employees actively create their own resources and consistently deliver high-quality performance (49). Research confirms that employee engagement significantly enhances both individual and organizational performance (50). Based on this foundation, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Employee engagement has a significant and positive effect on organizational performance.

Another key factor influencing organizational performance is organizational justice. For many employees, fairness within organizational systems

is more important than other operational aspects. Perceptions of justice within the organization shape employees' attitudes (whether positive or negative) toward their work and directly impact the level of organizational performance (51). When fairness is perceived in organizational practices, employees tend to feel supported and motivated to align themselves with the organization's objectives (52).

Fair treatment in the workplace fosters positive employee attitudes and behaviours (1, 51). Organizational justice is instrumental in fostering employees' willingness to contribute meaningfully and to work with sincerity. Consequently, they are more inclined to perform effectively and support initiatives that generate value for the organization. These constructive attitudinal, emotional, and behavioural responses contribute to improved organizational performance (51). Moreover, when employees believe their contributions are fairly rewarded, they often increase their efforts and strive harder to achieve organizational objectives, thereby enhancing performance levels (53). In line with prior studies, organizational justice has consistently been shown to affect organizational performance (1, 51, 54). Based on this evidence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Organizational justice has a significant and positive effect on organizational performance.

Recent research highlights the mediating influence of employee engagement in the connection between organizational justice and various outcomes, including employee well-being (21). Likewise, employee engagement has been identified as a mediator that contributes to improved organizational performance (44–46). Additionally, studies have reported a positive association between organizational justice and organizational performance (1, 51, 54). Drawing from these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Employee engagement mediates the effect of organizational justice on organizational performance.

Methodology

The construct of organizational justice was measured through four sub-constructs, namely procedural, interpersonal, distributive, and informational justice, using 20 items adapted from a previous study (13). Employee engagement was

assessed through three sub-constructs, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption, using 18 items adapted from a prior study (55). Organizational performance was measured using 11 items adapted from a previous study (56). The appendix presents the questionnaire items used in this study. Each construct was measured using a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Pretest and Pilot Test

To ensure face, content, and criterion validity, the research instruments were reviewed by a panel of academic and industry experts. Following this, a pilot study was conducted by distributing 103 self-administered questionnaires to a randomly selected sample (57, 58). The results from the pilot study were used to assess the reliability and clarity of the items, ensuring the instruments were appropriate for the main study.

Sampling Method and Data Collection

The study employed simple random sampling to select 476 engineers working in Jordanian construction organizations. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed digitally. Participants were allowed to complete the survey at their convenience, with follow-up reminders made via phone calls where necessary. Ultimately, 312 valid responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 65.55%.

Among the respondents, 78% were male. Regarding professional experience, 70% had fewer than four years of experience, 24% had four to eight years, and 6% had more than eight years. The average respondent age was 28 years. In terms of job roles, 82% were junior engineers, 17% were senior engineers, and 1% held project manager positions. Discipline-wise, 40% specialized in civil engineering, followed by architecture (22%), mechanical engineering (20%), and electrical engineering (18%). In terms of education, 99% held a Bachelor's degree, while only 1% had obtained a Master's degree.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The results from the CFA indicated that all model fit indices met the acceptable thresholds (CFI > 0.90, ChiSq/df < 3.0, and RMSEA < 0.08). As such, the measurement model demonstrated adequate construct validity. All item factor loadings exceeded 0.60, supporting the assumption of unidimensionality. Additionally, the model showed evidence of convergent validity and Composite Reliability (CR), with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and CR values surpassing the minimum required levels of 0.5 and 0.6, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1: CFA Results

	Number of Items	Factor Loading	AVE	CR
Organizational Justice ($\alpha = 0.843$)	20		.56	.84
Procedural justice (refers to the fairness of the processes used to determine employees' outcomes)	7	.89		
Interpersonal justice (concerns the manner in which authority figures treat employees during the implementation of procedures)	4	.68		
Distributive justice (focuses on the fairness of the outcomes or results employees receive)	4	.68		
Informational justice (relates to the adequacy and transparency of explanations provided by those in authority when carrying out procedures)	5	.71		
Employee Engagement ($\alpha = 0.880$)	18		.65	.85
Vigor	7	.86		
Dedication	6	.90		
Absorption	5	.63		
Organizational Performance (OP) ($\alpha = 0.943$)	11		.56	.93
The client base has expanded (OP1)		.64		
Client satisfaction levels have enhanced (OP2)		.71		

Satisfaction among internal stakeholders (partners, employees) has grown (OP3)	.69
Work processes are being completed more swiftly (OP4)	.65
The frequency of client complaints or claims has decreased (OP5)	.79
Work procedures have become more standardized, and manuals improved (OP6)	.79
The rate of accidents and defects has been lowered (OP7)	.74
Our share in the market has grown (OP8)	.80
Revenue growth has accelerated (OP9)	.79
Operating profits have improved (OP10)	.82
Financial stability has strengthened, shown by lower debt-to-equity ratio and capital costs (OP11)	.77

Table 2: Discriminant Validity Index Summary

	Organizational Justice	Employee Engagement	Organizational Performance
Organizational Justice	.75		
Employee Engagement	.44	.80	
Organizational Performance	.22	.63	.75

The reliability analysis confirmed strong internal consistency for the study constructs, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha (α) values ranging from 0.843 to 0.943. Furthermore, as indicated in Table 2, the inter-construct correlations were all lower than the square root of the corresponding AVEs, thereby affirming discriminant validity.

The skewness and kurtosis values were found to range from -0.866 to 0.132 and -0.219 to 0.920, respectively, indicating that the data followed a normal distribution and met the assumptions necessary for applying parametric statistical techniques (59).

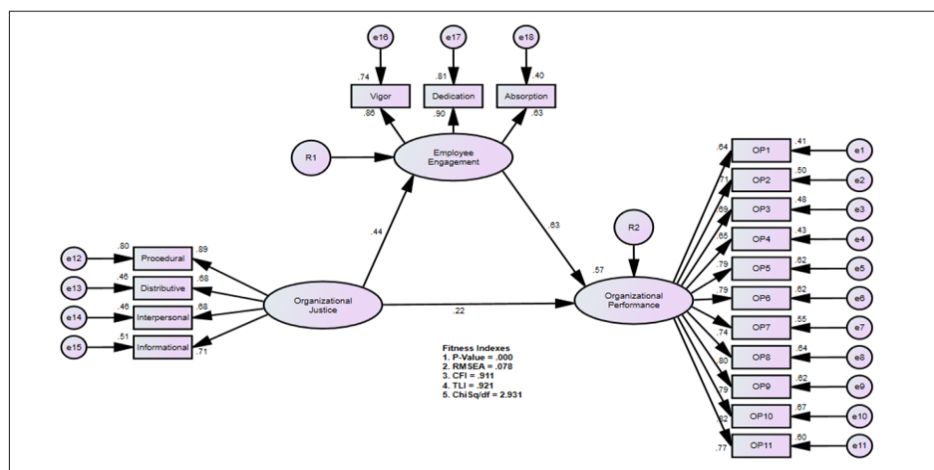
To assess the potential impact of common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted by loading all items into a single factor without

rotation. The analysis revealed that the first factor accounted for 41.53% of the total variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50%. This suggests that common method bias is unlikely to significantly affect the results of this study.

SEM

To evaluate the hypothesized relationships among the study variables, SEM was performed using AMOS 24.0. A graphical illustration of the SEM output is provided in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, 57% of the variance in organizational performance can be explained by the model's constructs, specifically organizational justice and employee engagement.

**Figure 1:** The Standardized Regression Path Coefficient in the Model

The regression path coefficients derived from the SEM analysis are provided in Table 3. The results support Hypothesis 1 (H1), indicating that organizational justice has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement. Hypothesis 2 (H2) is also supported, with employee engagement

demonstrating a significant and positive influence on organizational performance. Furthermore, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is supported, as organizational justice was found to have a significant and positive relationship with organizational performance.

Table 3: The Regression Path Coefficient and Its Significance

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Employee Engagement	←	Organizational Justice	.635	.107	6.039	.001	significant
Organizational Performance	←	Employee Engagement	.417	.045	9.299	.001	significant
Organizational Performance	←	Organizational Justice	.215	.057	3.783	.001	significant

As both indirect effects were found to be significant, the analysis confirms the presence of a mediation effect within the model. Since the direct effect also remains significant, this indicates the presence of partial mediation. In addition,

employee engagement was shown to mediate the relationship between organizational justice and organizational performance. Thus, Hypothesis 4 (H4) was supported, as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Testing the Mediator

H	Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Results on Mediation
H4	Organizational Justice → Employee Engagement → Organizational Performance	.215	.28	Significant

The mediation effect was assessed using a bootstrapping approach with 5,000 resamples, and the results are presented in Table 5. The findings confirmed support for Hypothesis 4 (H4),

indicating that employee engagement served as a mediator in the relationship between organizational justice and organizational performance.

Table 5: Bootstrap Estimates of the Mediating Effects of Employee Engagement

H		Bootstrapping Value		Probability Value		Results on Mediation	Type of Mediation
		Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect		
H4	Organizational Justice→Employee Engagement→Organizational Performance	.215	.28	.001	.001	Significant	Partial

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature by empirically examining a conceptual framework that connects organizational justice, employee engagement, and organizational performance. The results highlight four main relationships within the model. First, organizational justice exerts a significant direct influence on employee engagement. Second, employee engagement has a positive effect on organizational performance.

Third, organizational justice directly and significantly impacts organizational performance. Lastly, the findings reveal that organizational justice improves organizational performance indirectly through the mediating role of employee engagement.

The study confirmed that organizational justice positively influences both organizational performance and employee engagement. These results align with previous research that identified

a positive association between organizational justice and organizational performance (1, 51, 54). Similarly, the relationship between organizational justice and employee engagement has been supported in prior studies (14, 21, 36, 37). In addition, consistent findings have shown that employee engagement positively influences organizational performance (40, 44–46). Employee engagement demonstrated a strong and significant impact on organizational performance, while organizational justice was found to influence both organizational performance and employee engagement (see Figure 1). Among the predictors, employee engagement had the most substantial effect on organizational performance, which is consistent with previous findings identifying it as a key determinant of positive organizational outcomes (60). This underscores the reciprocal relationship between employers and employees. Individuals who are highly engaged and enthusiastic about their roles often form a deep emotional connection with the organization and willingly exceed their formal duties to contribute to its success. Similar observations have highlighted that highly engaged employees contribute to profitability through improved productivity, focus, and enjoyment in their work (61).

The research gap addressed in this study concerns the mediating role of employee engagement in the link between organizational justice and organizational performance. Results from the SEM analysis revealed that organizational justice affects organizational performance both directly and indirectly via employee engagement. Achieving high organizational performance through justice depends largely on how fairly employees perceive their workplace experiences, including fair compensation, promotion opportunities, and relationships with supervisors and peers (15), as well as the consistency of equal treatment within the organization (62). The central importance of organizational justice in enhancing organizational performance was a key consideration. By fostering a fair and transparent work environment, organizational justice can enhance employee engagement, thereby contributing to improved organizational performance. This relationship is particularly relevant in contexts with a high proportion of young employees who may lack extensive work experience and therefore rely

heavily on perceptions of fairness to feel engaged and motivated in their roles. When employees believe their organization operates justly, they are more likely to dedicate to their responsibilities, ultimately supporting higher performance levels. As organizational justice serves as a precursor to employee engagement, increased engagement levels naturally lead to enhanced organizational performance. Engaged employees are not only committed to their duties but often demonstrate enthusiasm and passion for their work (63). Employee engagement plays a significant role in driving organizational performance (40, 44–46), as positive workplace attitudes contribute to higher productivity and improved company outcomes (42). The present study confirmed that employee engagement mediates the connection between organizational justice and organizational performance.

In addition, the findings demonstrated that organizational justice directly improves organizational performance, while employee engagement also exerts a strong, direct influence on performance outcomes. This suggests that when employees perceive fairness within the organization, their engagement can be enhanced, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance. As supported by SET, organizational justice fosters a positive reciprocal relationship that encourages higher levels of employee engagement, thereby creating an environment conducive to enhanced organizational performance (24, 25, 64). Employees who perceive their workplace as fair are more likely to increase their engagement and contribute meaningfully to organizational goals.

Therefore, the study's findings offer a theoretical contribution by clarifying the role of employee engagement as a mediator in the justice–performance relationship. Rather than viewing justice as having a purely direct effect on performance, this study, guided by SET, demonstrates that engagement is a key channel through which justice perceptions are converted into performance outcomes. This highlights the importance of fostering engagement as a mechanism that links fairness perceptions to organizational success.

In summary, employee engagement serves as a crucial mediator that strengthens the link between organizational justice and organizational

performance. While organizational justice and engagement are pivotal, organizations may also benefit from cultivating additional supportive interactions that promote employee performance and drive organizational success.

Implications for Managers

To maintain employee engagement and enhance organizational performance, managers should actively cultivate a culture of fairness within the workplace. This can be achieved by ensuring transparent and equitable processes in decision-making, resource allocation, and the recognition of employee contributions. Managers should communicate openly and consistently, providing employees with clear explanations and encouraging feedback. Additionally, applying fair treatment in interpersonal interactions and addressing employee concerns promptly can reinforce employees' perceptions of organizational justice. By embedding these practices, managers create an environment where employees feel valued and respected, which in turn sustains their engagement to contribute meaningfully toward organizational goals. Implementing such fairness-driven strategies is particularly vital in high-stakes sectors like construction, where project success heavily depends on collaborative effort and sustained engagement.

Conclusion

This research adds to the body of literature by combining essential variables to develop strategies for achieving optimal organizational performance. The results highlight that organizational justice positively influences employee engagement, which subsequently improves organizational performance. Consequently, organizational justice stands out as a crucial factor for organizations aiming to enhance their outcomes. Beyond this, organizations can strengthen performance by incorporating additional organizational and individual-level factors such as employee engagement, alongside the essential role of organizational justice.

To build on these findings, future research could replicate and extend the current study to enhance the understanding and generalizability of the results. Investigating the relationships among the constructs in different cultural or industrial contexts would provide deeper insights. Specifically, future studies could examine similar

models across other countries or regions to assess cross-cultural applicability. The current study was conducted within Jordanian construction firms, and cultural norms and workplace behaviours specific to this context may influence how constructs such as justice and engagement are perceived. This may limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Additionally, as the study relied on self-reported data collected through a self-administered questionnaire, there is a possibility of response biases. While anonymity and confidentiality were assured to minimize these effects, this remains a potential limitation. Moreover, adopting a longitudinal or experimental design in future research, rather than the cross-sectional approach used in this study, could help establish more robust causal relationships between organizational justice, employee engagement, and organizational performance. Finally, future research could explore potential moderating variables, such as organizational culture, leadership style, or trust, to better understand under what conditions these relationships are strengthened or weakened.

Abbreviations

AVE: Average Variance Extracted, CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis, CR: Composite Reliability, SEM: Structural Equation Modelling SET: Social Exchange Theory.

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Author Contributions

The work was solely carried out by the author.

Conflict of Interest

The author confirms there is no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The author declares that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

Ethics Approval

Not applicable.

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APPENDIX

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Organizational justice
Procedural
Were you given the chance to challenge or appeal the outcome determined by those procedures?
Were you able to voice your opinions and emotions throughout the process?
Did the procedures follow accepted moral and ethical principles?
Were the decisions made using correct and reliable information?
Were the procedures implemented uniformly in all cases?
Did you feel you influenced the final decision reached through the procedures?
Were the procedures conducted in an impartial and unbiased manner?
Interpersonal
Have you been treated with dignity by him/her?
Has he/she avoided making inappropriate comments or remarks?
Has your interaction with him/her been friendly and courteous?
Were you shown respect in your dealings with him/her?
Distributive
Does the outcome you received correspond to your contributions to the organization?
Is the result consistent with the effort you invested in your tasks?
Is the result fair based on how you performed?
Does the result fairly reflect the work you have completed?
Informational
Were the explanations about the procedures clear and sensible?
Has he/she communicated with you openly and honestly?
Has he/she adapted the communication to meet individual needs?
Were the steps and procedures fully explained to you?
Was the information shared with you in a timely fashion?
Job Satisfaction
Intrinsic
I take personal ownership of evaluating my own work.
Work provides meaningful daily tasks to keep me engaged.
I am able to perform tasks that match my skills and abilities.
I am able to oversee the tasks that require attention.
I get chances to engage in a variety of activities occasionally.

I experience satisfaction when I perform my duties effectively.
I am allowed to complete my work on my own.
I feel free to show different sides of myself at work.
I can experiment with various approaches in completing my tasks.
I have chances to contribute to others through my work.
I perform my duties in line with my personal values.
I am at ease when working in a predictable and clear environment.
Extrinsic
My pay fairly corresponds to the work I have completed.
The management is capable of making sound decisions.
I can access resources that help me improve my performance.
I get recognition when I perform well.
I am able to apply workplace policies correctly.
Management shows genuine care and attention to employees.
Employee Engagement
Vigour
I perform my tasks with energy and without exhaustion.
I persistently work through my assignments.
I stay confident and effective despite challenges in my work.
I put forth my best effort in completing tasks.
I am patient when dealing with ongoing work challenges.
I am determined to overcome difficulties in my assignments.
I stay committed to finishing my work fully.
Dedication
My tasks inspire and motivate me.
My work is meaningful and contributes to the success of my department.
I take pride in the tasks I complete.
I aim to enhance productivity and efficiency in my role.
I am ready and eager to fulfill my work responsibilities.
My tasks push me to use and develop my skills.
Absorption
Time passes quickly when I am engaged in my work.
I maintain strong concentration on my tasks.
I enjoy my job and have no desire to leave it.
I consistently focus on my responsibilities during work.
I am pleased with the duties I am assigned.
Organizational Performance
The client base has expanded
Client satisfaction levels have enhanced
Satisfaction among internal stakeholders (partners, employees) has grown
Work processes are being completed more swiftly
The frequency of client complaints or claims has decreased
Work procedures have become more standardized, and manuals improved
The rate of accidents and defects has been lowered
Our share in the market has grown
Revenue growth has accelerated
Operating profits have improved
Financial stability has strengthened, shown by lower debt-to-equity ratio and capital costs