

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

WHERE DO PHARMACISTS STAND?

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Background

Employee engagement refers to a positive satisfying attitude at the place of work characterised by three components namely vigor, dedication and absorption within the job¹.

Objectives

To determine the overall level of employee engagement at Malta's acute public hospital, with special attention to pharmacists.

Study Design

Data was collected through a self-administered validated online questionnaire consisting of two sections. Engagement levels were measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17). The impact of organisational factors on employee engagement was assessed in the second section of the questionnaire. Data was coded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel[®] and the Data Analysis ToolPak[®]. Engagement scores obtained were compared to the standard UWES-17 international scores since no local reference was available. The higher the score obtained the better the engagement.

Results

A total of 247 complete questionnaires were collected over 8 weeks. The majority of respondents (55%) were healthcare professionals out of which 20% were pharmacists. A final engagement score of 4.16 (range 0 to 6) was obtained for the total population, whereas that for the pharmacists was found to be a score of 4, as show in *Figure 1*.

Pharmacist's obtained lower scores for all three dimensions, when compared to the total population, with a score of 3.75 for vigor, 3.93 for absorption and a score of 4.33 for dedication. A comparison of the different engagement dimensions between different occupations is shown in *Figure 2*.

The degree of agreement between the work environment (represented in the study by the factors: workload, control, reward, community, fairness and values), and employees was explored through individual analysis of each organisational factor.

The main drivers for staff engagement within hospital were,

- 1) the quality of the organisation's social environment
- 2) recognition and appreciation received by staff.

The main barriers identified were,

- 1) large workload
- 2) the perceived sense of unfairness.

Figure 1. Total Engagement Scores

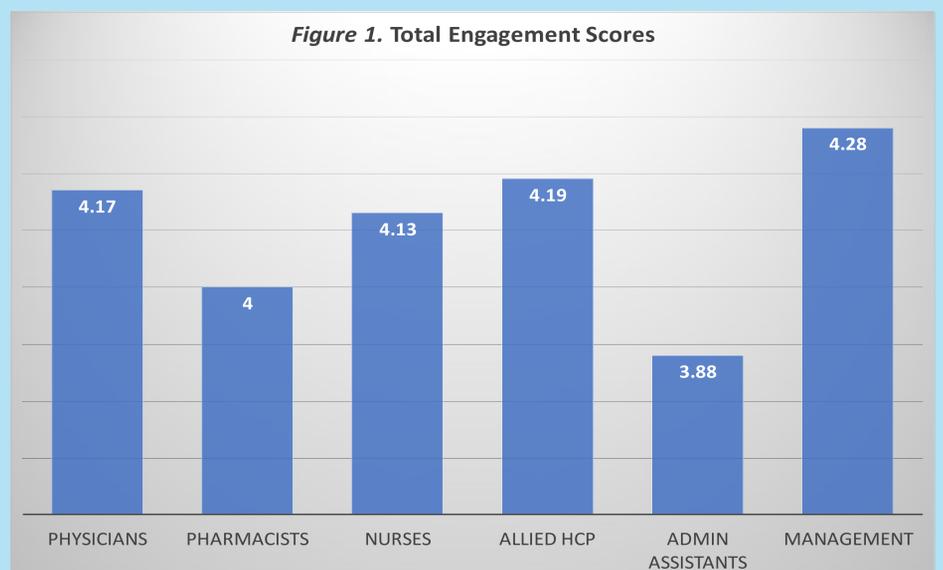
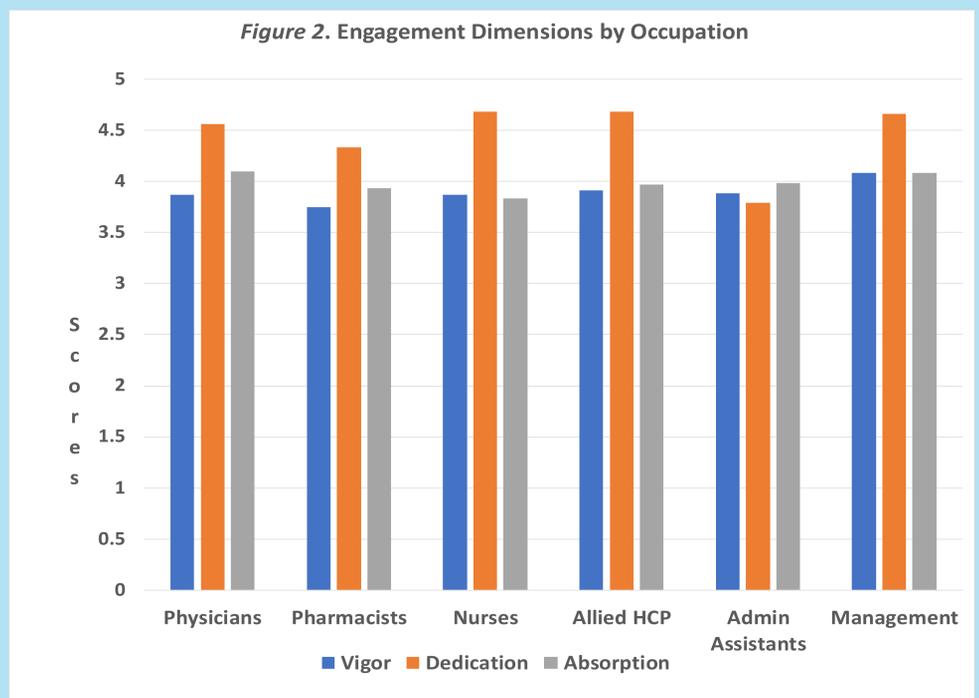


Figure 2. Engagement Dimensions by Occupation



Discussion

In our sample the mean score for employee engagement was 4.16, which is defined by the norm scores provided by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) as average engagement. Ideally a high engagement score is achieved so as to maximise advantages from the positive outcomes associated with engagement. It was therefore deemed important to look at the three different engagement dimensions which made up this score in order to be able to improve on strengths and turn weaknesses to opportunities.

Conclusion

For an environment to foster employee engagement in healthcare, management has to ensure that the workload is sustainable for the current staff compliment, promote a good social environment at work, implement transparent procedures for all, and due recognition is given to employees for their work and efforts.

References

Schaufeli, W., and Bakker, A. (2004) 'Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 25, pp. 293-315.