



الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة  
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF MADINAH

# مجلة الجامعة الإسلامية للعلوم التربوية والاجتماعية

مجلة علمية دورية محكمة

تصدر أربع مرات في العام خلال الأشهر:

(مارس، يونيو، سبتمبر، ديسمبر)

العدد 23 - المجلد 44

ربيع الأول 1447 هـ - سبتمبر 2025 م

## معلومات الإيداع في مكتبة الملك فهد الوطنية

### النسخة الورقية :

رقم الإيداع: 1441/7131

تاريخ الإيداع: 1441/06/18

رقم ردمد : 1658-8509

### النسخة الإلكترونية :

رقم الإيداع: 1441/7129

تاريخ الإيداع: 1441/06/18

رقم ردمد : 1658-8495

### الموقع الإلكتروني للمجلة :

<https://journals.iu.edu.sa/ESS>



### البريد الإلكتروني للمجلة :

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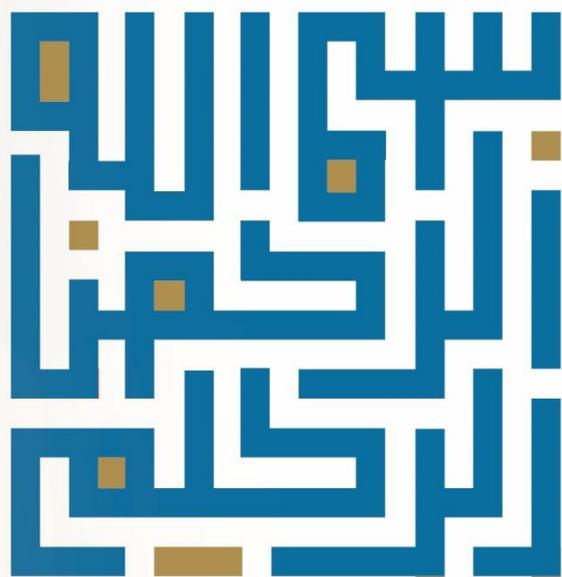




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البحوث المنشورة في المجلة  
تعبر عن آراء الباحثين ولا تعبر  
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\* ترتيب الأبحاث حسب تاريخ ورودها للمجلة مع مراعاة تنوع التخصصات



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**Employee engagement at the Islamic  
University of Madinah - A Social Exchange  
Empirical Evidence and Analysis of the  
Annual Engagement Survey by the Ministry  
of Human Resources and Social Development**

**الارتباط الوظيفي في الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة  
المنورة - دليل تجريبي لنظرية التبادل  
الاجتماعي وتحليل استبيان الارتباط الوظيفي  
السنوي لوزارة الموارد البشرية والتنمية  
الاجتماعية**

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**DOI:10.36046/2162-000-023-017**

تاريخ القبول: ٢٠٢٤/١٢/٢٦ م

تاريخ التقديم: ٢٠٢٤/١١/٢١ م

### Abstract

The objective of this study is to document the impact of job satisfaction and work environment on employee engagement at the Islamic University of Madinah. The study adopts the quantitative paradigm and tests predictive statements pertaining to social exchange theory. In this fashion, the study estimates a partial least squares specification where the latent variables of job satisfaction and work environment are replicated in employee engagement via the mediating influences of social exchange variables. The study employs the 2023 annual employee engagement survey developed by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (AEES). Toward this end, the study complements AEES descriptive statistics with empirical evidence and contributes to the extant literature by documenting the impact of job satisfaction and work environment on employee engagement both directly and indirectly through social exchange effects. In particular, the study shows that whereas mutual expectations and reciprocity tend to mediate the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement, the social exchange effects of organizational trust and quality of work relationships tend to mediate the impact of work environment on employee engagement. Moreover, the empirical evidence reported in this study falls short of establishing full mediation and suggests that employee perception of organizational fairness fails to mediate the impact of work environment on employee engagement as such perception might suffer from biases and subjectivity. In this fashion, the study has policy implications for decision makers at the Islamic university of Madinah on issues involving inclusion, employee performance management, and employee work-life balance .

**Keywords:** employee engagement; social exchange theory; job satisfaction; work environment

## المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة إلى قياس أثر الرضا الوظيفي وبيئة العمل على الارتباط الوظيفي في الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة. وتعتمد الدراسة النموذج الكمي واختبار البيانات التنبؤية المتعلقة بنظرية التبادل الاجتماعي. واستخدمت الدراسة نموذج المربعات الصغرى حيث يتم قياس واختبار تأثير المتغيرات الكامنة للرضا الوظيفي وبيئة العمل على ارتباط الموظفين وذلك من خلال التأثيرات الوسيطة لمتغيرات التبادل الاجتماعي، واعتمدت الدراسة على تحليل بيانات الاستبيان السنوي لمشاركة الموظفين لعام ٢٠٢٣ والذي أعدته وزارة الموارد البشرية والتنمية الاجتماعية في المملكة.

وبالتالي قد تسهم الدراسة في إثراء الأدبيات المعاصرة من خلال توثيق تأثير الرضا الوظيفي وبيئة العمل على ارتباط الموظفين بشكل مباشر وغير مباشر من خلال تأثيرات التبادل الاجتماعي، كما أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أنه كلما كانت التوقعات المتبادلة والمعاملة بالمثل تميل إلى التوسط في تأثير الرضا الوظيفي على ارتباط الموظفين، فإن آثار التبادل الاجتماعي للثقة التنظيمية وجود علاقات العمل تميل إلى التوسط في تأثير بيئة العمل على ارتباط الموظفين. كما تشير نتائج الدراسة أيضا إلى أن تصور الموظف للعدالة التنظيمية قد لا يتوسط تأثير بيئة العمل على ارتباط الموظف لاسيما أن هذا التصور قد يعاني من التحيز والذاتية. وختاما قد تضيف هذه الدراسة لآلية صنع القرار في الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة بشأن القضايا المتعلقة بإدماج الموظفين وإدارة أداؤهم على الوجه الذي يتيح تحقيق غاية تطابق الأهداف بين الموظفين والمنظومة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مشاركة الموظفين - نظرية التبادل الاجتماعي - الرضا الوظيفي - بيئة

العمل.

### **Introductory paragraph.**

Employee engagement (hereafter, EE) in higher education is documented to impact organizational performance, employee satisfaction, student outcomes, and overall institutional success (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). Employee engagement refers to the level of emotional commitment, motivation, and dedication that employees have towards their work, organization, and its objectives (Bailey et al., 2017). In the context of higher education, where faculty, staff, and administrators play key roles in formulating the learning environment and student experience, higher levels of employee engagement turn out to be essential for achieving academic excellence, innovation, and student success (Croucher & Lacy, 2020). For instance, engaged faculty and staff members are more likely to be focused on providing quality education, supporting student learning, and creating a positive campus culture (Dopson et al., 2019). Research on the subject continues to evolve to indicate that there is a strong correlation between employee engagement and student outcomes such as retention rates, graduation rates, academic achievement, and overall satisfaction with the learning experience (Han et al., 2020). Engaged employees are thus often more motivated to collaborate with colleagues, share ideas, and contribute to institutional goals (Bailey et al., 2017). In higher education, a culture of employee engagement is therefore predicted to inspire innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous improvement in teaching, research, and administrative processes (Joseph & Rao, 2022). In the particular context of Saudi higher education, employee engagement reiterates the extent to which faculty and staff are emotionally invested, motivated, and committed to their work, the institution, and its goals (Sabri et al., 2011). For instance, the Islamic university of Madinah represents a typical Saudi higher education institution where there is increasing focus on innovation, quality, and competitiveness. It follows that, in conjunction with effective educational leadership and institutional investments in professional development, maintaining a healthy work-life balance predicted to be essential for the well-being and engagement of faculty and staff at the Islamic University (Nazneen et al., 2018). Moreover, open and transparent communication channels may also turn out to be crucial for engaging employees in decision-making processes and stimulating a culture of collaboration, feedback, recognition, and reward at the Islamic University (Nazarene et al., 2018).

In view of the preceding, this study quantitatively documents the impact of employee job satisfaction and employee perceptions of the work environment on the level of employee engagement. The study tests predictive generalizations instructed by social exchange theory. According

to social exchange theory, the individual impacts of employee job satisfaction and employee perception of work environment on employee engagement are driven by distinct social exchange effects (Bailey et al., 2011). In particular, whereas the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement is driven by the social exchange effects of mutual expectations and reciprocity, the impact of work environment on employee engagement is channeled through the social influences of organizational trust, perceived fairness, and quality of work relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In this fashion, the study reports both direct and indirect effects of explanatory variables by estimating a partial least squares model that allows the social exchange influences of: [1] mutual expectations and reciprocity to mediate the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement; and [2] organizational trust, perceived fairness, and quality of work relationships to mediate the impact of employee perception of work environment on employee engagement (Hurtienne, 2021). Toward this end, the study advances the following research questions grouped into direct effects and indirect effects.

#### **Direct effects.**

RQ1: what is the impact of employee job satisfaction on employee engagement at the Islamic university of Madinah?

RQ2: what is the impact of employee job satisfaction on employee engagement at the Islamic university of Madinah?

#### Indirect effects (job satisfaction)

RQ3: what is the extent to which the social exchange effect of mutual expectations mediates the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement?

RQ4: what is the extent to which the social exchange effect of reciprocity mediates the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement?

#### Indirect effects (work environment)

RQ5: what is the extent to which the social exchange effect of organizational trust mediates the impact of work environment on employee engagement?

RQ6: what is the extent to which the social exchange effect of perceived fairness mediates the impact of work environment on employee engagement?

RQ7: what is the extent to which the social exchange effect of quality of work relationships mediates the impact of work environment on employee engagement?

#### Data and design

To answer the research questions above, the study employs the 2023 annual employee engagement survey (hereafter, AEES) developed by the Saudi department of civil service. The study adheres to the quantitative paradigm and estimates EE specifications instructed by social exchange theory. In particular, the study measures and tests [1] the impact of job satisfaction on EE as mediated by mutual expectations and reciprocity, and [2] the impact of work environment on EE as mediated by organizational trust, perceived fairness, and quality of work relationships. In this respect, in 2023, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development launched its annual survey to measure the level of employee engagement of government sector employees. This survey aims to identify the perceptions of government sector employees regarding work aspects while determining the extent to which employees are satisfied with the level of services provided by the department to government agencies. The survey is further formulated in line with the initiatives of the National Transformation Program and the strategic objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030. The survey also manifests as a confirmation of the department's orientation to achieve its assigned goals and through projects aimed at Saudi civil service employees and related to measuring the extent of their engagement with their workplaces in terms of intellectual, behavioral and emotional aspects. As employee engagement is considered the core of the relationship between the employer and its employees, the survey reiterates the rather close relationship between periodic measurement of employee engagement and the objectives of the National Transformation Program 2020, which aims to improve the productivity of government employees, raise the quality of services provided to citizens, and improve the performance of government agencies (Algarni & Alemeri, 2023). Ultimately, the survey underscores the opportunity for government sector employees to contribute to decision-making and adopt corrective strategies that will directly serve the public interest of the government sector in Saudi Arabia .

#### **Literature review and hypothesis development.**

Employee engagement in higher education is predicted to lead to a positive work environment, improved student outcomes, enhanced institutional reputation, and better overall performance (Littleton & Stanford, 2021). By investing in strategies to boost employee engagement, higher education institutions can create a culture of excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement that benefits employees, students, and the broader community (McCarthy & Dragouni, 2021). In this respect, social exchange theory is a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of the relationships involved in the workplace, including the relationship between employees and their organizations (Mehrzi & Singh, 2016). Employee

engagement may thus be analyzed through the lens of social exchange theory, which posits that individuals engage in social interactions based on the principle of reciprocity, where people expect mutual benefits and rewards from their interactions with others (Shuck et al., 2014). Indeed, applying social exchange theory to the study of employee engagement, researchers can gain insights into the relational dynamics and psychological mechanisms that influence employees' attitudes, behaviors, and performance in the workplace (Saks & Rotman, 2006). In this respect, how social exchanges tend to impact the employee-organization relationship can help organizations design strategies to build and maintain a culture of engagement, trust, reciprocity, and mutual benefit, ultimately leading to higher levels of employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity (Swanson & Holton, 2009).

### **Job satisfaction, mutual expectations, and reciprocity.**

In the context of employee engagement, social exchange theory can help explain how employees form attachments to their organizations, contribute to their work, and derive satisfaction and fulfillment from their jobs (Hurtienne et al., 2017). For instance, social exchange theory links employee engagement back to job satisfaction via the mediating influences of mutual expectations and reciprocity (Bailey et al., 2011). In particular, social exchange theory suggests that individuals have expectations of what they will receive in return for their contributions to a relationship. In the workplace, employees expect fair treatment, recognition, opportunities for growth, and a supportive work environment in exchange for their efforts and dedication (Hurtienne, 2021). When these expectations are met, employees are more likely to be engaged and committed to their roles (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). By the same token, social exchange theory emphasizes that individuals reciprocate positive actions and behaviors (Shuck et al., 2014). In the context of employee engagement, organizations that invest in their employees by providing training, support, and resources are likely to receive increased commitment, motivation, satisfaction and performance in return (McGaughey et al., 2022). In turn, employees who feel valued and appreciated are more likely to engage with their work and contribute positively to the organization (Park & Park, 2023).

Ha (3): the social exchange effect of mutual expectations positively mediates the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement.

Ha (4): the social exchange effect of reciprocity positively mediates the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement.

Work environment, organizational trust, perceived fairness, and quality of work relationships

In addition to addressing the relationship between employee job satisfaction and employee engagement, social exchange theory relates the study variable of employee engagement to the exogenous variable of work environment via the mediating influences of organizational trust, perceived fairness, and quality of work relationships (Bailey et al., 2011). In this vein, such theory reiterates the importance of organizational trust and commitment in nurturing strong and sustainable relationships among employees within organizations (Shuck et al., 2014). In the workplace, trust between employees and employers is essential for building a positive work environment and promoting employee engagement (Tims & Bakker, 2010). When employees trust that their organization will uphold its commitments, support their development, and recognize their contributions, they are more likely to be engaged, loyal, and motivated to perform at their best (Arachie et al., 2021). Likewise, employee perception of organizational fairness is a key component of social exchange theory, as individuals assess the balance of give-and-take in their relationships (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Employees evaluate the fairness of their exchanges with their organization based on factors such as compensation, recognition, opportunities for advancement, and decision-making processes (Bakker et al., 2014). When employees perceive that they are treated fairly and equitably, they are more likely to be engaged, satisfied, and committed to their work. Social exchange theory also emphasizes the quality of social relationships and interactions as determinants of individual behavior and attitudes (Bakker et al., 2023). In the workplace, positive relationships between employees and their colleagues, supervisors, and the organization as a whole can strengthen employee engagement (Day et al., 2016). Supportive relationships, effective communication, and a sense of belonging and camaraderie can enhance employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall engagement (Fletcher et al., 2020).

Ha (5): the social exchange effect of organizational trust positively mediates the impact of work environment on employee engagement.

Ha (6): the social exchange effect of perceived fairness positively mediates the impact of work environment on employee engagement.

Ha (7): the social exchange effect of quality of work relationships positively mediates the impact of job work environment on employee engagement.

### **Job satisfaction and employee engagement.**

Job satisfaction and employee engagement are closely intertwined, with job satisfaction serving as a key driver of overall employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2023). Job satisfaction refers to an employee's level of contentment and fulfillment with their job, while employee engagement

encompasses the emotional commitment, motivation, and dedication that employees have towards their work and organization (Frazier et al., 2017). Job satisfaction largely contributes toward augmenting an employee's level of motivation and commitment to their job and organization (Kahn, 1990). This is so since employees satisfied with their work are more likely to feel engaged, dedicated, and invested in achieving organizational goals (Kumar & Sia, 2013). Job satisfaction is thus considered a key determinant of employee engagement, influencing motivation, performance, retention, well-being, and overall organizational success (Bakker et al., 2023). Via enhancing levels of employee job satisfaction, organizations can create a more engaging and fulfilling work environment that promotes employee commitment, productivity, and long-term loyalty (Kwon et al., 2024). In fact, employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more productive, efficient, and effective in their roles where a higher level of job satisfaction is further typically associated with improved performance, higher quality work, and increased engagement with tasks and responsibilities (Lee & Lee, 2018). Moreover, job satisfaction is closely linked to employee retention and loyalty. When employees are satisfied with their jobs, they are less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere and more likely to remain committed to their current organization contributing to higher retention rates and lower turnover, which in turn can strengthen overall employee engagement (Lee et al., 2020). Here, Job satisfaction is often influenced by how well an employee's values, goals, and expectations align with those of the organization where organizations that place value on communication, transparency, and alignment of individual and organizational values can help increase job satisfaction and promote higher levels of employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Furthermore, job satisfaction contributes to reinforcing the creation of a positive work environment where employees feel valued, supported, and respected within a workplace culture that prioritizes job satisfaction can foster trust, collaboration, and strong relationships among colleagues, ultimately leading to increased employee engagement (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). On this subject, job satisfaction is repeatedly predicted to drive up the levels of employee well-being and morale. Employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to experience lower levels of stress, higher levels of job-related happiness, and greater overall well-being (Lee et al., 2020). This, in turn, can contribute to higher levels of employee engagement and a more positive organizational culture (Fletcher, 2020). Along these lines, the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement tends to be sensitive to the extent to which employees receive opportunities for feedback, recognition of achievements, and professional growth (Bailey et al., 2017). In fact, when employees feel valued, appreciated, and supported in their roles, they are more likely to be

satisfied with their jobs and remain engaged in their work (Lee et al., 2020). Bringing these arguments into the context of higher education, faculty and staff who feel valued, supported, and empowered in their roles, are more likely to experience job satisfaction, lower levels of stress, and greater overall well-being (Croucher & Lacy, 2020). This, in turn, can contribute to higher retention rates, reduced turnover, and a positively perceived work environment among faculty and staff (Dopson et al., 2019). Given the fact that employee engagement tends to be well pronounced for higher levels of alignment between individual values, goals, and the mission of the institution, higher education institutions that clearly communicate their vision, values, and expectations to employees can help foster a sense of purpose, belonging, and commitment among faculty and staff (Joseph & Rao, 2022; Han et al., 2020). This reiterates the value of providing academic and non-academic staff with avenues for feedback, professional development, and recognition of their contributions to the institution's success (McCarthy & Dragouni, 2021). This further accentuates the role of educational leadership and communication as key drivers of employee engagement in higher education (Mudrak et al., 2017). In this vein, educational leadership that prioritizes open communication, transparency, recognition of contributions, and opportunities for professional development goes a long way to creating a culture where employees feel connected to the mission of the institution and are motivated to perform at their best (Pignata, 2020) .

Ha (1): the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement at the Islamic university of Madinah is positive.

### **The work environment and employee engagement.**

The work environment occupies a pivot role in influencing employee engagement, satisfaction, and overall well-being (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). In fact, positive work environment can significantly impact employee engagement in various aspects (Luthra et al., 2024). To begin with, work environments clearly set the tone for organizational cultures and values, which can influence how employees feel about their work and their connection to the organization (Arachie et al., 2021). A supportive, inclusive, and positive work culture can foster a sense of belonging, purpose, and alignment with organizational values, leading to higher levels of employee engagement (Day et al., 2017). In addition, a collaborative and communicative work environment encourages open dialogue, idea sharing, and teamwork among employees. Clear communication channels, opportunities for feedback, and a culture of transparency can enhance employee engagement by promoting trust, collaboration, and involvement in decision-making processes (Bailey et al., 2014). Furthermore, work

environments that promote work-life balance and wellness initiatives can contribute to higher levels of employee engagement (Han et al., 2020). For instance, flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and support for managing personal responsibilities can help employees feel valued, cared for, and motivated to perform at their best (Kumar & Sia, 2012). By the same token, the physical layout and design of the workspace can also impact employee engagement where a comfortable, well-equipped, and aesthetically pleasing work environment can enhance employee satisfaction, creativity, and productivity (Kumar & Sia, 2012). Providing a conducive space for collaboration, focus, and relaxation can contribute to a positive work environment that supports employee engagement (Kwon et al., 2024). Moreover, the typical work environment variable of effective leadership and management practices is also instrumental in creating a positive work environment that fosters employee engagement where leaders who provide guidance, support, and mentorship may inspire and motivate employees, leading to higher levels of engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2020). Indeed, work environments have a significant impact on employee engagement by influencing organizational culture, communication practices, leadership effectiveness, work-life balance, recognition programs, workspace design, and opportunities for growth and development (Kumar & Sia, 2012). By creating a positive, supportive, and empowering work environment, organizations can enhance employee engagement, retention, and overall organizational performance (Park & Park, 2023). In this respect, recognizing and rewarding employees for their contributions and achievements is essential for maintaining high levels of engagement where work environments that value and celebrate employee accomplishments through performance recognition programs, incentives, and opportunities for career growth can boost morale, motivation, and engagement (Wray & Kinman, 2022). Along the same page, investments in employee training, development, and continuous learning opportunities tend to critically contribute to a more engaging work environment as employees who have access to professional growth opportunities, skills development programs, and career advancement pathways are more likely to feel engaged, motivated, and committed to their roles (Lee et al., 2020) .

Ha (2): the impact of work environment on employee engagement at the Islamic university of Madinah is positive.

### Empirical study.

This empirical study adopts a typical protocol via which social exchange theory predictions with mediating mechanisms are measured and tested at traditional levels of statistical significance. Such protocol commences by measuring and testing direct effects, which is followed by analyzing mediating effects and testing for full mediation (Spencer et al., 2005) .

To measure and test direct effects, the study estimates the following linear specifications:

$$EE = a + b1*JS(i) + b2*WE(i) + e(i)$$

Where EE is measured in accordance with AEES, JS is satisfaction measured as AEES' employee job satisfaction, WE is work environment measured as AEES' employee endorsement of the work environment, b1 and b2 are parameter estimates, e is Gauss-Markov error term, and all variables are measured on an ascending Likert-type scale .

Table (1): Direct effects,  $EE = f(JS, WE)$

Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.167384							
R Square	0.028017							
Adjusted R Square	0.027069							
Standard Error	1.048581							
Observations	2053							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	2	64.97218	32.48609	29.546	2.2382E-13			
Residual	2050	2254.019	1.099521					
Total	2052	2318.991						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.251624	0.108474	20.75733	5E-87	2.03889422	2.464354	2.038894	2.4643544
JS	0.121179	0.021293	5.69092	1E-08	0.07941983	0.162937	0.07942	0.1629375
WE	0.10839	0.020509	5.28496	1E-07	0.06816893	0.148611	0.068169	0.1486106

As shown in table (1) above, the respective impacts of JS and WE are both positive and well-pronounced as per theoretical predictions and at the 5% types one error .

To document the impact of social exchange effects involved in the relationship between JS and EE, the study examines the roles of mutual expectations (ME) and reciprocity (REC) by estimating the following four specifications.

$$EE = a + b1*ME(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (2));}$$

$$EE = a + b1*REC(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (3));}$$

$$ME = a + b1*JS(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (4)); and}$$

$$REC = a + b1*JS(i) + e(i). \text{ (table (5)).}$$

Where ME is measured as AEES' mutual expectations or appreciation, and REC is measured as AEES' cooperation .

Table (2): Indirect effects,  $EE = f(ME)$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.086084
R Square	0.007411
Adjusted R Square	0.006927
Standard Error	1.059379
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	17.18491	17.18491	15.31244	9.41E-05
Residual	2051	2301.806	1.122285		
Total	2052	2318.991			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.772845	0.078539	35.30518	9.7E-214	2.61882	2.926871	2.61882	2.926871
ME	0.082615	0.021112	3.913111	9.41E-05	0.041211	0.124019	0.041211	0.124019

Table (3): Indirect effects,  $ME = f(JS)$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.06218
R Square	0.003866
Adjusted R Square	0.003381
Standard Error	1.105832
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	9.734871	9.734871	7.960715	0.00482639
Residual	2051	2508.094	1.222864		
Total	2052	2517.829			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.324235	0.084127	39.51455	2.1E-254	3.15925161	3.489217	3.159252	3.489217
JS	0.063345	0.022451	2.821474	0.004826	0.01931583	0.107374	0.019316	0.107374

Table (4): Indirect effects,  $EE = f(REC)$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.091392
R Square	0.008352
Adjusted R Square	0.007869
Standard Error	1.058877
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	19.36923	19.36923	17.27514	3.3668E-05
Residual	2051	2299.622	1.12122		
Total	2052	2318.991			

-	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.753609	0.078766	34.95951	1.9E-210	2.5991401	2.908078	2.59914	2.908078
REC	0.088664	0.021332	4.156338	3.37E-05	0.04682902	0.130499	0.046829	0.130499

Table (5): Indirect effects,  $REC = f(JS)$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.05659807
R Square	0.00320334
Adjusted R Square	0.00271734
Standard Error	1.09340714
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	7.87999785	7.879998	6.59117	0.010318915
Residual	2051	2452.050835	1.195539		
Total	2052	2459.930833			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.34653085	0.083181629	40.23161	2E-261	3.183401588	3.50966	3.183402	3.5096601
JS	0.0569916	0.022198811	2.567327	0.01032	0.01345704	0.100526	0.013457	0.1005262

It can be shared from tables (2, 3, 4, and 5) above that both ME and REC have a significant impact on EE and meanwhile are significantly driven by JS. Moreover, to test full mediation, the study estimates the following specification.

$$EE = a + b1*ME(i) + b2*REC(i) + b3*JS(i) + e(i). \text{ (table (6)).}$$

Table (6): Full mediation,  $EE = f(JS, ME, REC)$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.1638226
R Square	0.02683785

Regression Statistics	
Adjusted R Square	0.02541301
Standard Error	1.04947267
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	3	62.2367143	20.74557	18.83576	4.73671E-12
Residual	2049	2256.754031	1.101393		
Total	2052	2318.990745			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.14297982	0.126908873	16.88597	5.38E-60	1.894095984	2.391864	1.894096	2.391864
JS	0.10986949	0.021381137	5.138617	3.03E-07	0.067938458	0.151801	0.067938	0.151801
ME	0.07450662	0.020958101	3.555027	0.000387	0.03340522	0.115608	0.033405	0.115608
REC	0.0745371	0.021196252	3.516523	0.000447	0.032968659	0.116106	0.032969	0.116106

As shown in table (6) above, full mediation is not established as the impact of JS on EE remains significant after explicitly including ME and REC in the regression. This suggests that there is more to the relationship between JS and EE than what just can be explained by ME and REC .

By the same token, to document the impact of social exchange effects involved in the relationship between WE and EE, the study examines the roles of organizational trust (trust), employee perception of organizational fairness (fairness), and quality of work relationships (quality) by estimating the following six specifications.

$$EE = a + b1*trust(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (7));}$$

$$EE = a + b1*fairness(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (8));}$$

$$EE = a + b1*quality(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (9));}$$

$$Trust = a + b1*WE(i) + e(i) \text{ (table (10));}$$

$$Fairness = a + b1*WE(i) + e(i). \text{ (table (11)); and}$$

$$Quality = a + b1*WE(i) + e(i). \text{ (table (12)).}$$

Where trust is measured as AEES' leadership, fairness is measured as AEES' purpose, and quality is measured as AEES' retention.

Table (7): Indirect effects,  $EE = f(\text{trust})$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.089642755
R Square	0.008035824
Adjusted R Square	0.007552175
Standard Error	1.059045628
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	18.63500045	18.635	16.61499	4.7534E-05
Residual	2051	2300.355745	1.121578		
Total	2052	2318.990745			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.772728197	0.075706664	36.62463	2.2E-226	2.62425825	2.921198	2.624258	2.921198
Trust	0.08485974	0.020818607	4.076149	4.75E-05	0.04403193	0.125688	0.044032	0.125688

Table (8): Indirect effects,  $\text{Trust} = f(\text{WE})$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.06676145
R Square	0.00445709
Adjusted R Square	0.0039717
Standard Error	1.11790169
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	11.47530861	11.47531	9.18242	0.00247404
Residual	2051	2563.143298	1.249704		
Total	2052	2574.618607			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.2319164	0.080527212	40.13446	1.9E-260	3.07399277	3.38984	3.073993	3.38984
WE	0.06624193	0.021860212	3.030251	0.002474	0.0233714	0.109112	0.023371	0.109112

Table (9): Indirect effects,  $EE = f(\text{Fairness})$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.05296767
R Square	0.00280557
Adjusted R Square	0.00231937
Standard Error	1.06183393
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	6.506099993	6.5061	5.770421	0.01638654
Residual	2051	2312.484645	1.127491		
Total	2052	2318.990745			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.88821554	0.07772863	37.15768	1.6E-231	2.73578027	3.040651	2.73578	3.040651
Fairness	0.05119673	0.021312701	2.40217	0.016387	0.00939994	0.092994	0.0094	0.092994

Table (10): Indirect effects,  $\text{Fairness} = f(\text{WE})$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.025649
R Square	0.0006579
Adjusted R Square	0.0001706
Standard Error	1.0977563
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	1.627066202	1.627066	1.350185	0.24538096
Residual	2051	2471.596509	1.205069		
Total	2052	2473.223575			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.3810713	0.079113617	42.73691	6E-286	3.22591985	3.536223	3.22592	3.5362265
WE	0.0249529	0.021474546	1.161975	0.245381	-0.01716131	0.067067	-0.01716	0.06706707

Table (11): Indirect effects,  $EE = f(\text{Quality})$

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.04993589
R Square	0.00249359
Adjusted R Square	0.00200724
Standard Error	1.06200002
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	5.782620496	5.78262	5.127146	0.02365844
Residual	2051	2313.208125	1.127844		
Total	2052	2318.990745			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.90028736	0.076948818	37.69112	1.1E-236	2.7493814	3.051193	2.749381	3.051193
Quality	0.04765175	0.021044619	2.26432	0.023658	0.0063807	0.088923	0.006381	0.088923

Table (12): Indirect effects, Quality = f (WE)

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.06484293
R Square	0.0042046
Adjusted R Square	0.00371909
Standard Error	1.10858625
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	1	10.64289349	10.64289	8.660057	0.00328912
Residual	2051	2520.604062	1.228963		
Total	2052	2531.246956			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.27496611	0.079894112	40.99133	7.9E-269	3.11828407	3.431648	3.118284	3.431648
WE	0.06381869	0.021686403	2.942797	0.003289	0.02128902	0.106348	0.021289	0.106348

As shown in tables (7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12) above that whereas trust, fairness, and quality all have a significant impact on EE, only trust and quality are significantly driven by WE. This suggests that fairness fails to mediate the impact of WE on EE. In this vein, to test full mediation, the study estimates the following specification.

$$EE = a + b1*trust(i) + b2*quality(i) + b3*WE(i) + e(i). \text{ (table (13))}$$

Table (13): Full mediation, EE = f (Trust, Quality, WE)

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.1478121
R Square	0.0218484
Adjusted R Square	0.0204163
Standard Error	1.0521596
Observations	2053

ANOVA					
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F
Regression	3	50.66627884	16.88876	15.25578	8.0887E-10
Residual	2049	2268.324466	1.10704		
Total	2052	2318.990745			

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	2.2869011	0.123228189	18.55826	3.45E-71	2.04523555	2.528567	2.045236	2.528567
Trust	0.079819	0.020780619	3.841032	0.000126	0.0390657	0.120572	0.039066	0.120572
Quality	0.0449222	0.020960702	2.143162	0.032218	0.00381568	0.086029	0.003816	0.086029
WE	0.0985615	0.020668143	4.768765	1.98E-06	0.05802877	0.139094	0.058029	0.139094

As shown in table (13) above, full mediation is not established as the impact of WE on EE remains significant after explicitly including trust and quality in the regression. This suggests that there is more to the relationship between WE and EE than what just can be explained by organizational trust and quality of work relationships.

In view of the preceding data analysis, the results reported in this study are consistent with that of the extant literature concerned with the impact of social exchange variables on employee engagement (see, e.g., Shuck et al., 2014). In particular, the evidence reported in this study reconciles with that of several recent and influential papers addressing [1] the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement (see, e.g., Kwon et al., 2024; Bakker et al., 2023; Bailey et al., 2011), and [2] the impact of work environment on employee literature (see, e.g., Luthra et al., 2024; Park & Park, 2023; Wray & Kinman, 2022).

### Recommendations and policy implications.

The empirical results reported in this study above entail a family of policy implications for decision makers at the Islamic university of Madinah on issues involving inclusion, employee performance management, and employee work-life balance. Decision makers at the Islami University are recommended to continue formulating policies that address recognizing and rewarding employees who demonstrate high levels of engagement and commitment to their work (Bailey et al., 2017). Such policies may comprise a set of meaningful reward systems including bonuses, promotions, and public recognition with the ultimate objective of reinforcing positive behaviors and cultivating a culture of reciprocity, collaboration, and

organizational trust (Day et al., 2017). Moreover, the Islamic university is also encouraged to continue investing in employee growth that emphasize strengthening the social exchange relationship among employees and between the university and its employees (Fletcher et al., 2020). Such investments in employee growth are predicted to augment diversity and inclusion in the workplace, leading to a culture of respect, acceptance, and equality (Bakker et al., 2023). In this concern, the Islamic university may further incorporate open communication and work-life balance mechanisms so as to sustain a positive and transparent work environment based on mutual expectations and quality of work relationships (Han et al., 2020). Along these lines, the Islamic university may stress the implementation of performance management policies that set clear expectations and objectives for employees by engaging in goal-setting discussions and providing a framework for success and growth (Park & Park, 2023) .

The empirical findings of this study provide several critical policy implications for decision makers at the Islamic University of Madinah, particularly concerning inclusion, employee performance management, and work-life balance. This approach will help maintain a positive and transparent work environment based on mutual expectations and quality work relationships, leading to improved employee engagement and satisfaction. To foster a culture of engagement and commitment, it is recommended that the university develop policies to recognize and reward employees demonstrating high levels of engagement (Bailey et al., 2017). This could involve establishing meaningful reward systems, including bonuses, promotions, and public recognition, to reinforce positive behaviors and cultivate a culture of reciprocity, collaboration, and organizational trust (Day et al., 2017). The Islamic university of Madinah is thus encouraged to continue investing in employee growth, focusing on strengthening the social exchange relationship among employees and between employees and the university (Fletcher et al., 2020). Such investments are predicted to enhance diversity and inclusion, fostering a workplace culture characterized by respect, acceptance, and equality (Bakker et al., 2023). To maintain a positive and transparent work environment, the university may further incorporate mechanisms that promote open communication and work-life balance. This approach will help to build mutual expectations and improve the quality of work relationships (Han et al., 2020). By the same token, the university is also recommended to implement performance management policies that may provide a framework for success and growth, ensuring alignment between individual performance and organizational goals (Park & Park, 2023). Such policies may create a more supportive and productive work environment at the Islamic University of Madinah, and develop mechanisms to promote open communication and support work-life balance.

This will enhance diversity and inclusion, fostering a culture of respect, acceptance, and equality within the workplace .

### **Conclusion and Limitations.**

This study complemented the rather descriptive statistical analysis of AEES with empirical evidence at the Islamic University of Madinah. The study employs AEES conceptually consistent measures of all variables involved. The study documents that whereas satisfied employees are more than 10% more likely to be engaged, employees who perceive positively the work environment are more than 8% likely work behavior consistent with employee engagement. In addition, the study shows that whereas mutual expectations and reciprocity tend to mediate the impact of job satisfaction on employee engagement, the social exchange effects of organizational trust and quality of work relationships tend to mediate the impact of work environment on employee engagement. Moreover, the empirical evidence reported in this study falls short of establishing full mediation and suggests that employee perception of organizational fairness fails to mediate the impact of work environment on employee engagement as such perception might suffer from biases and subjectivity. It's critical, however, at this point to recognize that empirical evidence reported in this study is limited by the theoretical framework of social exchange theory where only JS and WE in conjunction with few mediating mechanisms are predicted to influence EE. Furthermore, though AEES is a national survey where the validity, reliability, and internal consistency of all items were established by the Saudi department of civil service, future research on the subject may consider triangulating AEES data with qualitative approaches. Such mixed research perspectives may enhance the comprehensiveness and rigor of future research via means of pilot studies to refine questionnaire items, ensuring clear instructions and question wording, incorporating diverse sources of data, and remaining attuned to emerging trends and variables in employee engagement research. Toward this end, future research on the subject is strongly recommended to revisit the impact of psychological and organizational variables on EE while adopting other theoretical frameworks and data collection methods that may accommodate for higher level structural and parsimonious explanation of EE in KSA.

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