

Abstract

Session: Work in contemporary society: tendencies, practices, and management

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Comparing Work Life in Finland and Russia –work engagement and management on focus

Introduction

This study analyses worklife, and especially work engagement and its preconditions in two countries – Finland and Russia. The study is part of the Finnish-Russian cooperation project , by the University of Tampere, Finland, and the Higher School of Economics, Moscow, where our partners are Evgeniya Balabanova and Azer Efendiev.

The aim of the project is to compare the preconditions of commitment and work engagement in these countries. This study has a rare comparative setting of Finland and Russia, which are neighbors with long-standing economic and trade partnership, but have significantly different business cultures and working cultures.

The main focus of this study, work engagement, is defined as a persistent, positive, affective-emotional state of fulfilment with one's job. It is one of the most important dimensions of employee well- being, as it has positive outcomes for both employees and organizations and it thus plays an increasingly important role in global competition. The topic of work engagement has been widely discussed and studied internationally. However, this topic has been studied in Finland only in the past year. In the Russian context, work engagement has not yet been empirically studied, with few exceptions . That is why it is important to include Russia in this field of research and discussion. Furthermore, work engagement remains under-investigated also in comparative studies and there are none studies comparing exclusively Finland and Russia.

In the analysis, we utilize Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R model), which is based on the idea that job demands are related to the exhaustion component of burnout and that lack of resources is related to disengagement. The model has been used in several work engagement studies, but in none comparing Finland and Russia. In addition to work engagement and job demands and resources as its predictors, we are interested on management and its different aspects, and also management as a precondition for work engagement.

Data and methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with cross-sectional research design. The data includes a sample of the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey (N= 2,641) and the Russian Quality of Work Life Survey (N=780). The Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey, created and administered by Statistics Finland, provides a representative sample of Finnish employees aged 15 to 64. The data used in this study came from the latest survey, conducted in 2013. The second data source is the Russian Quality of Work Life Survey, which follows the general research design of the Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey but only administers only selected parts of the survey. The Russian data were collected in Moscow, Omsk and Nizhny Novgorod in 2014. The data collection was conducted by a professional polling firm. This was the very first time when this data following the structure of Finnish Quality of Work Life Survey were collected in Russia.

The Russian survey included only private sector employees working full-time and on permanent contracts. However, while the Russian survey was focused only on private sector workers working full-time, the Finnish survey covered all wage-earners. For a workable comparison, only the full-time, private sector workers with permanent contracts were selected for this study from the Finnish data.

The data was analysed using descriptive methods and stepwise logistic regression and logistic regression analysis.

Findings

In both countries, the overall level of work engagement is quite high, but the overall level is higher in Finland. The result is statistically significant. In Finland, almost one-third of the respondents were highly engaged in their work, while in Russia, the share was almost one-quarter of the respondents. The share of low engagement is remarkably low: 1% in Finland and 6% in Russia.

In stepwise logistic regression analysis, we found out that the possibility of learning new things at work was the strongest predictor of work engagement in both countries. The most significant difference is that, once job demands and resources were taken into account, a managerial position has a strong effect on work engagement in Russia, while in Finland it had no significance. Also satisfaction with management was an important predictor of engagement in both countries.

Furthermore, we analysed, what component of management the employees are the most satisfied with and which of them affects work engagement most effectively. In this analysis, we had six scales, measuring how highly employees are satisfied with their superiors' abilities to 1) give support & reward for good work

performances, 2) to inspire & encourage for development in work, 3) to treat equally ageing employees as well as women and men, 4) to organize & give feedback, referring to how well superior knows the tasks of the employees, gives sufficient feedback about how well they have succeeded in their work and delegate responsibility sensibly to the subordinates, 5) trust & information, referring to how much the superior trusts and discusses with her/his subordinates and speaks openly about everything concerning the workplace and 6) having (low level of) conflicts with the superior.

In the descriptive analysis, we found out that Finnish employees are more satisfied, compared with Russians, with all the components of management, with the exception of "organization of work & giving feedback". In all other components, the share of those who were totally satisfied with their superiors' actions, was bigger in Finland.

In the logistic regression model which included the components of management as predictors for work engagement, only "organization of work & giving feedback" and "trust & information" had significant effects in the Russian subsample. As for Finnish employees, the same components of management as for Russians, were significant, in addition to "inspiration & encouragement" and having low level of conflict with superiors.