Employee Engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia in the Post-COVID-19 Era: Some Empirical Evidence

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Abstract: *The aim of the paper is to research employee engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia. To achieve this goal, the instrument for measuring organizational and job engagement developed by Saks (2006) has been used on a sample of 104 respondents. The results from the regression analysis indicate that perceived organizational support and job characteristics, as well as gender, are statistically significant predictors of organizational engagement, while job engagement can be predicted only with job characteristics. Furthermore, the results indicate that organizational engagement is statistically significantly and positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior, while job satisfaction is positively and statistically significantly related to organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Intentions to quit can be predicted only with organizational engagement, and as expected, this relationship is negative.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The popularity of employee engagement among academics has increased in the past few decades since several research papers published at the beginning of this century provided evidence of its relationship with significant work outcomes, such as job performance, productivity, and organizational commitment (Saks, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Sorenson, 2013). Additionally, the popularity of employee engagement was also impacted by the attention that has been given to this concept by some of the most pronounced consultant companies, such as Gallup. Gallup has developed one of the first scales for measuring employee engagement, although, from an academic perspective, this scale is more useful as a management tool (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the research on this concept additionally increased since organizations faced different types of adversity and challenges that could not be overcome without employees' willingness to dedicate their time to learning and development and incorporating new ways of work. The COVID-19 crisis, on an organizational level, one more time highlights the importance of human resource management for implementing strategy and ensuring organizational competitiveness in the long run. Namely, each organization's aim should be to enhance employees' abilities and skills and, through that, ensure that the organizations can generate the desired strategic outcomes or the desired performance level in any circumstances. Therefore, while some of the papers investigating employee engagement during the COVID-19 period focus on its predictors (Amano et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2020; Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Awan et al., 2020; Stanzl et al., 2021) and the strategies for its enhancement (Kundu & Nag, 2021; Tao et al., 2022), others find it suitable to focus more on a remote work engagement (Toscano & Zappala, 2021; Pass & Ridgway, 2022; Adisa et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2020).

The research on employee engagement in the period after COVID-19 is marked by the publication of conceptual papers that give a comprehensive overview of the evolution of thought on this topic (Boccoli et al., 2023) and on identifying the future trends in human resource management (Slavic et al., 2021; Saks, 2022).

Therefore, it can be concluded that employee engagement is crucial for creating organizational competitiveness, ensuring organizational survival during the crisis, and achieving sustainable organizational performance in the long run. Besides its undeniable importance for overall organizational functioning, employee engagement has not been thoroughly researched in the Republic of North Macedonia. In our country, only one study investigates employee engagement and focuses only on employees in public secondary education institutions (Bilalli Abduraim et al., 2023). Considering this gap in the literature, we decided that it is suitable to conduct a study that focuses on employees from both the private and public sectors, and it is done by using the instrument developed by Saks (2006).

The purpose of the study is to investigate employee engagement in the context of North Macedonia. Namely, this paper analyzes the antecedents, as well as the consequences of employee engagement in the case of the Republic of North Macedonia. Our main goal is to analyze whether the same constructs that predict employee engagement in other countries can be used in the case of employees from the private and public sectors in North Macedonia. The study's design includes the following sections: literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part of the paper, we shortly analyze the literature related to employee engagement in order to identify the main theories on which this concept has been developed, which are the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement and how the understanding of the concept has evolved during and post COVID-19 pandemic.

The concept was popularized at the beginning of this century due to the activities of some consultant companies for human research management, such as Gallup. The measures for employee engagement developed by Gallup, although aimed as a management tool that gives companies the opportunity to improve their HR practices, also give a comprehensive overview of its elements. However, from academic perspective, most of the authors rely on the three main approaches or theories (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The first one is Khans' theory of engagement and disengagement, conceptualized in an article published in the Academy of Management Journal in 1990, in which he describes the three main psychological components of engagement – *meaningfulness, safety, and availability* and the factors that impact them. Khan (1990) also suggests that each of the three main psychological components is influenced by the characteristics of the job or by some formal or informal processes within the organization. The second approach is related to the burnout literature, and according to the basic assumption in this model, engagement is the opposite psychological state of burnout (Maslach & Later, 1997).

Maslach and Later (1997) argue that engagement with work incorporates three elements: *energy, involvement, and effectiveness*. The components of employee engagement are defined in the following way: 1. *Energy* refers to the level of emotional, creative, and physical energy; 2. *Involvement* refers to the degree of concern or cynicism about the work; 3. *Effectiveness* refers to the impact of work on personal accomplishments (Maslach & Later, 1997, p.161).

According to this author, management processes and structures have the largest impact on the six areas of organizational life (which include workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values) that lead to the state of engagement. The authors also have developed an instrument for measuring burnout (and consequently engagement) that includes measures on the three dimensions crucial for an individual's experience with work: exhaustion-energy, depersonalization-involvement, and efficiency-accomplishment. The other widely used approach is the so-called Job Demand-Resources approach, developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2008), which uses Schauffelis' definition of employee engagement with three dimensions: *vigor, dedication, and absorption*. This definition is similar to the definition proposed in the approach developed by Maslach and Later (1997), but in this approach, besides the factors related to the organization and management (or the so-called job demands and resources),

Bakker and Demerouti (2008) also include personal resources (or individuals' characteristics) as factors affecting work engagement. According to this model, the relationship between the job and personal resources and work engagement is moderated by the job demands (which include work pressure and emotional, mental, and physical demands). Furthermore, the authors argue that work engagement is related to performance at individual and organizational levels (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 218).

Considering the short overview of the three fundamental conceptual frameworks in the area of employee engagement research, we can conclude that it is defined as a psychological state that includes the willingness to be involved in the work processes and in the job and organizational

roles that the individual has, as well as to use the available resources for achieving the desired outcomes, or the desired level of performance. Furthermore, these theories imply that individuals' engagement is moderated by the characteristics of the job and the organization, as well as by the employees' personal characteristics.

Building on the assumptions of these three models/theories numerous studies have tried to empirically investigate the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement (Saks, 2006; Robinson, 2007; Kang & Sung, 2017; Pandita & Ray, 2018; Saks, 2019; Zheng et al., 2020; Govender & Busin, 2020; Awan et al., 2020; Metha, 2021; Khan 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Ojo et al., 2021; Reinwalt et al., 2021; Amano et al., 2021; Toscano & Zappala, 2021; Stanzl et al., 2021; Kundu & Nag, 2021; Chaudhary et al., 2022; Kulkarni et al., 2022; Oberlander & Bipp, 2022; Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022; Pass & Ridgway, 2022; Ulfa et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Wiger & Barrett, 2023; Adisa et al., 2023), to structure the existing knowledge on employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Kumar Sundaray & Vihar, 2011; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Albrecht et al., 2015; Boccoli et al., 2023) and to propose strategies or practices for enhancing employee engagement (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Slavic et al., 2021; Davies, 2021; Stein et al., 2021; Saks, 2022; Tao et al., 2022; Gibbon & Lorenz, 2023; Ratten, 2023; Almeida & Flumar, 2023). In the following sections, we shortly describe the findings and suggestions of these studies, which we have classified into three main groups in accordance with their research focus (whether they research employee engagement during or in the post-COVID-19) and time of publication: studies on employee engagement in the pre-COVID-19 period, studies on employee engagement during COVID-19 period, and studies on employee engagement after COVID-19 period.

2.1. Employee Engagement Research Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

Most of the studies included in this part of the literature review were published before 2020 and did not focus on investigating the main elements, factors, and consequences of employee engagement in light of the circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the pre-pandemic period, a significant number of studies focused on developed approaches (or models or theories) that explain the essence of the concept of employee engagement and how the insights related to employee engagement can be used for modifying management practices in a way that is going to lead to improved organizational effectiveness and performance (Khan, 1990; Maslach & Later, 1997; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). As was mentioned in the previous part, much of the literature related to employee engagement incorporates elements of organizational psychology, and it is related to the research on burnout (Khan, 1990; Maslach & Later, 1997).

The most important empirical study investigating the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in this period was published by Saks in 2006. Namely, Saks (2006) has developed a new instrument for measuring employee engagement and argues the need for distinguishing job engagement from organizational engagement and test the hypothesis related to the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. The findings indicate that job characteristics and perceived organizational support are the most significant predictors of job engagement, while perceived organizational support and procedural justice are the most significant predictors of organizational engagement (Saks, 2006). On the other hand, regarding the consequences, Saks (2006) findings imply that job engagement predicts job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to quit, and organizational citizenship behavior directed towards the organization, while organizational engagement represents a predictor of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit and both types of organizational citizenship behavior (directed towards individual and directed towards organization).

Robinson (2007) argues that human resource management practices are key drivers of employee engagement and that the sense of feeling valued and involved (which is mostly determined by employee-manager relations) is crucial for enhancing engagement. Another significant research on the consequences of employee engagement has been published by Sorenson (2013) as part of Gallups' research activities, in which the findings imply that employee engagement is related to nine (9) performance outcomes (customer rating, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, shrinkage, absenteeism, patient safety incidents, and quality) and therefore it represents a main driver of organizational growth.

Kang and Sung (2017) findings indicate that employee internal communication management is linked to employee engagement and that employee engagement stimulates supportive communication behavior and reduces turnover intentions.

In the revision of the paper Antecedents and consequence of employee engagement published in 2006, Saks (2019) deepens its research and, according to the statistical results, concludes that *skill variety* can and should be used as a variable that replaces the construct named job characteristics since only this job characteristic has statistically significant relation with job and organizational engagement. Furthermore, Saks (2019) empirically demonstrates that the results generated with the use of his scale and the results generated with the other scales for measuring employee engagement (such as UWES measures of work engagement) on the same data set are similar. Therefore, Saks (2019) argues that the generalizations made on the basis of the findings presented in the study in 2006 are justified.

In this period, several authors have published conceptual papers in which the main goal is to deepen the understanding of employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks & Gruman, 2014), its relationship with organizational effectiveness and performance (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Kumar Sundaray & Vihar, 2011), and with human resource management (Albrecht et al., 2015; Pandita & Ray, 2018). Macey and Schneider (2008) argue that there are three types of engagement: trait engagement, state engagement, and behavioral engagement. They also argue that work attributes have an impact on trait and state engagement, while the type of leadership influences state engagement and behavioral engagement. Additionally, Macey and Schneider (2008) suggest that trust has a crucial role in achieving a higher level of behavioral engagement (or extra-role behaviors).

Saks and Gruman (2014) synthesize the existing literature on employee engagement and propose an integrative framework (or theory) that incorporates Khans' study (1990) and the Job Demands-Resources Model. Their main proposition is that transformation and empowering leadership leads to increased use of job resources and improved coping with job demands, which in turn enable attaining the desired psychological conditions (meaningfulness *in* work, meaningfulness *at* work, and safety) and proper use of the personal resources, which are the precondition for achieving employee engagement (task and work, or organizational engagement) (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Regarding the relation of employee engagement with performance management, Gruman and Saks (2011) argue that employee engagement is a more controllable and proximal outcome that proceeds performance and that the supervisor-employee relationship is crucial for effective performance management. Gruman and Saks (2011) suggest that the performance management system should be designed to enhance employee engagement and that an organization that thrives in achieving a higher level of performance and competitiveness should implement the engagement management model proposed by these authors. Namely, one of the propositions is that the

traditional performance management system should be replaced with the engagement management model, which assumes that between the employees and the organization, there should be an agreement on the desired levels of performance, which is going to enables achieving employee engagement and through proper feedback led to improved individual and organizational performance (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Kumar Sundaray and Vihar (2011) argue that organizations should adopt proper engagement strategies in order to achieve higher organizational effectiveness (in terms of productivity, profits, quality, customer satisfaction, employee retention, and increased adaptability). The strategies for stimulating employee engagement, according to Kumar Sundaray and Vihar (2011), should be related to recruitment practices, job design, career development and opportunities, training and development practices, compensation and rewards, and performance management to the practices that empower employees and increase their job satisfaction, as well as to the lines of communication within the organization. Therefore, it can be concluded that human resource practices should be properly designed and used as a tool for enhancing employee engagement through organizational effectiveness.

Investigating the relationship between human resource management and employee engagement, Albrecht et al. (2015) suggest that human resource practices are crucial for enhancing employee engagement and that HRM should include an engagement strategy for creating an organizational climate that enables the attainment of the psychological dimensions of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, involvement, focus, striving). The attainment of this psychological state is going to lead to improved individual performance and behaviors, as well as improved team, unit, and organizational outcomes (Albrecht et al., 2015).

Pandita and Ray (2018) on the other hand, focus on the relation between talent management and employee engagement and argue that talent management should be used as a tool for increasing employee engagement. Employee engagement is the primal outcome of effective talent management, including strategies for attracting and retaining talent (related to performance and potential assessment, career path management, feedback mechanisms, learning initiatives, coaching, mentoring, and competency mapping). The implementation of these strategies enables the creation of an engaged workforce that is more effective in retaining talent.

2.2. Employee Engagement Research During COVID-19 Pandemic

The papers analyzed in this part of the literature review were published in the period between 2020 and 2022 and can be classified as follows: 1. studies that focus on the factors affecting employee engagement during COVID-19 pandemic and practices for improvement (Kamaruzaman et al., 2022; Jung et al., 2021; Khan, 2021; Ojo et al., 2021; Oberlander & Bipp, 2022; Reinwald et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2020; Tao et al., 2022; Sirisena & Iddagoda, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Pass & Ridgway, 2022; Kundu & Nag, 2021; Ulfa et al., 2022; Stanzl et al., 2021; Stein et al., 2021) 2. studies that propose the need for separate analysis of the remote workers engagement (Metha, 2021; Amano et al., 2021; Toscano & Zappala, 2021; Chaudhary et al., 2022), and 3. studies that investigated the implications for human resource management of the changes in the workplace imposed by COVID-19 pandemic (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Davies, 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, job insecurity and misinformation were the most significant factors that negatively affected employee engagement, and the ability to quickly upgrade the employees' digital competencies became crucial for organizational survival. Therefore, Jung et al. (2021) have investigated the impact of job insecurity created by the COVID-19 pandemic on job

engagement. Their findings suggest that there is a statistically significant and negative relation between perceived job insecurity and job engagement, but a direct relation between perceived job insecurity and intention to quit was not identified. Khan (2021), on the other hand, has found that misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic led to anxiety and social media fatigue and consequently decreased work engagement. Khan (2021) also argues that resilience should be used as a coping mechanism for reducing the negative effects of anxiety on work engagement. In this tone, Ojo et al. (2021) research the predictors of resilience and work engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic and conclude that self-efficacy, facilitating conditions, and family and friends' support significantly impacted employees' resilience. Furthermore, Ojo et al. (2021) provide evidence that employee resilience is related to job engagement. Regarding the importance of digital competencies for employee engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, Oberlander and Bipp (2022) have concluded that digital competencies and collaboration, together with job social support, impacted work engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic and that digital competencies were crucial since they were needed for better communication and cooperation. Oberlander and Bipp (2022) also highlight that social support is the most powerful virtual work characteristic.

Regarding the papers focusing on the factors affecting remote work engagement, Metha (2021) concluded that autonomy, convenience, and psychosocial safety gained through remote work led to increased work engagement. Amano et al. (2021) findings indicate that close communication with supervisors and refraining from working long hours are predictors of remote workers' engagement. Toscano and Zappala (2021), on the other hand, suggest that remote work engagement and remote work productivity are tightly connected and that when faced with new situations, employees tend to maintain the same level of performance (as a result of the effects of previous performance and remote work engagement). Chaudhary et al. (2022) findings indicate that female employees are more engaged than male employees when working from home and that the number of children negatively impacts employee engagement. Furthermore, Chaudhary et al. (2022) conclude that the availability of virtual tools, virtual training, and contact with organizations' top management positively impact the engagement of employees working from home.

Regarding the implications for human resource management from the COVID-19 pandemic, Carnevale and Hatak (2020) argue that the erosion of fit is the most important challenge. Furthermore, Carnevale and Hatak (2020) suggest that enhancing relation-orientated HR systems and job design to improve employee resilience, engagement, and productivity is necessary. Davies (2021), on the other hand, suggests that the changes in the workplace are imposing the need for reassessing and redesigning the training practices and managers' understanding of the need for capacity building.

2.3. Employee Engagement Research After the COVID-19 Pandemic

The studies included in this part of the literature review were published in the period 2022-2023. Some of the studies are empirical (Slavic et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021; Li et al., 2022; Kulkarni et al., 2022; Cemberci et al., 2022; Gibbon & Lorenz, 2023; Wiger & Barrett, 2023), while others are conceptual and give direction of the future development of human resource management (Surma et al., 2021; Saks, 2022; Boccoli et al., 2023; Ratten, 2023; Harter, 2023).

Kulkarni et al. (2022) conducted research on a sample of bank employees, and their findings indicate that the pandemic has had a significant impact on employee perceptions and that the challenges in the workplace have increased. Furthermore, Kulkarni et al. (2022) imply that COVID-19 has influenced the work hazards on the job. Gibbon and Lorenz (2023), investigating teachers' engagement

in the post-COVID-19 period, have suggested several recommendations for improving engagement, such as frequently measuring employee engagement and providing freedom for expressing individuals' authenticity. Wiger and Barrett (2023), investigating managerial engagement, have found that managers are more likely to disengage at work, burnout, and be actively looking for a new job. Their recommendations for increasing managers' engagement include improvement of leadership communication, providing more opportunities for training and development, and coaching support.

Li et al. (2022), considering the assumption of the Job Demands-Resources approach, have tested the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee care on one side and work engagement on the other side on a sample of healthcare employees in the post-COVID-19 period. Their findings indicate that perceived organizational support and employee care have a significant and positive impact on work engagement and that work engagement is significantly related to turnover intentions. Additionally, Li et al. (2022) have found that the indirect impact of perceived organizational support on turnover intention (through work engagement) is significant. In their model, Li et al. (2022) also include the respondents' demographic and work characteristics (such as gender, educational background, and unit title). Furthermore, Li et al. (2022) argue that age (based on the assumptions of the socioemotional selection theory) moderates the relationship between work engagement and turnover intentions.

Cemberci et al. (2022) have investigated whether marital status, job experience and having children are associated with the three dimensions of employee engagement: dedication, absorption, and vigor. Their findings imply that marital status influences absorption and that married people are more concerned about their jobs. Furthermore, Cemberci et al. (2022) note that older and more experienced employees show more vigor and that having children or not is not related to work engagement.

Surma et al. (2021) suggest that the traditional metrics of employee engagement are not applicable in the post-COVID-19 hybrid workplace. Moreover, Surma et al. (2021) suggest that in the post-COVID-19 period, the workplace should be analyzed more holistically as a network of places. Their main argument is that in the post-COVID-19 period, employee engagement is not determined only by the factors related to organizational and environmental psychology and that the patterns of remote work, which are tightly connected to workplace autonomy, should be considered.

The literature review conducted by Boccoli et al. (2023) gives an overview of the evolution of thought on employee engagement and its relationship with individual performance and well-being. Boccoli et al. (2023) elaborate on the need for adopting a dynamic approach in the research on employee engagement and highlights that in today's environment, employee engagement should be studied together with the impact of new technologies. Furthermore, Boccoli et al. (2023) argue that employee engagement should be fundamental in shifting towards a human-centered approach in human resource management and performance management. On the other hand, Saks (2022), relying on the literature on the relation between employee engagement and well-being, *proposes the concept of caring human resource management*. The model of caring human resource management and employee engagement implies that human resource management practices should be designed to fulfill employees' basic psychological needs and contribute to their well-being, which leads to creating an organizational climate of care and increases the employees' care for the organization. Through these mechanisms, employee engagement also increases.

We can conclude that in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, implementing the model of caring human resource management will be crucial for enhancing employee engagement.

3.   METHODOLOGY

3.1.   Sample

In order to investigate employee engagement in North Macedonia, a questionnaire developed by Saks (2006) has been used. The questionnaire has been translated into Macedonian, and all the constructs were created by measuring respondents' level of agreement with the items included. To adapt the instrument to the circumstances in our country, some of its elements have been modified (the open-ended questions were replaced with statements measured on a five-point Likert scale). The research has been conducted on a sample of 104 respondents. The sample size in the paper published by Saks (2006) was 102, and therefore, we conclude that this sample size is appropriate for researching employee engagement antecedents and effects in North Macedonia. The questionnaire was distributed electronically from the end of May 2023 and during June 2023.

Most of the respondents were between 31 and 50 years old (n=65) and were female (n=69). The working experience of the biggest part of the respondents ranges between 10 and 30 years (n=56). Eighty-one of the employees included in the study are currently employed in private companies.

Regarding the data analysis method, we found it most suitable to use multiple regression. Saks (2006, 2019) used the same method.

3.2.   Hypothesis and Research Model

We have developed six hypotheses to investigate the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement on a sample in the Republic of North Macedonia. As presented in Figure 1, we suppose that employees' individual characteristics, job characteristics, and perceived organizational support determine the level of job and organizational engagement. Furthermore, we hypothesize that job and organizational engagement can be analyzed as predictors of organizational commitment, intentions to quit, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior.
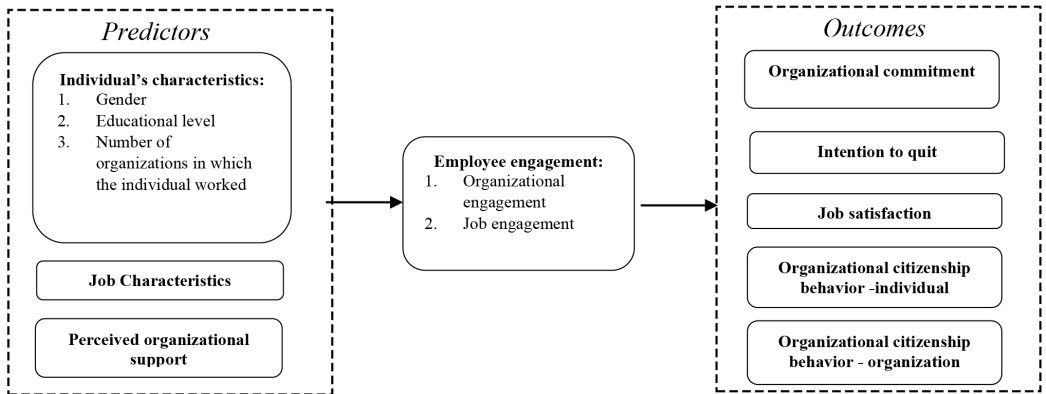

Figure 1. Research model
Source: Own construction

The hypotheses are defined as follows:
H1:   Individuals' characteristics (such as gender, educational level, and number of organizations in which the individual has worked), job characteristics, and perceived organizational support predict organizational engagement.

H2: Individuals' characteristics (such as gender, educational level, and number of organizations in which the individual has worked), job characteristics, and perceived organizational support predict job engagement.

H3: Organizational and job engagement are related to organizational commitment.

H4: Organizational and job engagement are related to individuals' intentions to quit.

H5: Organizational and job engagement are related to job satisfaction.

H6: Organizational and job engagement are related to organizational citizenship behavior directed toward the individual and towards the organization.

4. RESULTS

In this section, we are going to present the results regarding the reliability of the constructs used, and afterward we are going to present the results from the regression analysis. Although we used the instrument developed by Saks (2006), the reliability of each of the constructs was tested using the data from our sample. Therefore, some of the constructs have a smaller number of items included than the constructs included in the Sacks' (2006) study. This step was necessary in order to provide the required level of internal consistency and validity of the constructs. However, none of the constructs is created using a single item, as recommended in the literature (Gliem and Gliem, 2003). In Table 1, we present the values for Cronbach's alpha for each construct and the number of items included in the construct.

As presented in Table 1, the internal consistency and reliability of all the constructs included in the questionnaire have satisfied the requirements for reliability since Cronbach's alpha for each construct is above 0.70. According to the discussions in the literature, when the value of Cronbach's alpha is above 0.70, we can conclude that the measure (or the construct) has an acceptable level of reliability and can be included in further analysis (Taber, 2017).

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha for each construct

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Job engagement	4	0.772
Organizational engagement	6	0.825
Job characteristics	7	0.730
Rewards and recognition	9	0.892
Perceived organizational support	8	0.910
Perceived supervisor support	4	0.810
Job satisfaction	3	0.885
Organizational Commitment	6	0.908
Intention to quit	2	0.866
Organizational citizenship behavior-individual	4	0.780
Organizational citizenship behavior-organizational	4	0.843
Distributive justice	4	0.940
Procedural justice	6	0.882

Source: Own analysis

After testing the reliability of the constructs, we conducted a multiple regression analysis to identify the antecedents of organizational and job engagement. In Saks (2006), the following constructs were included in the analysis of the antecedents of both organizational and job engagement: job characteristics, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition, procedural justice, and distributive justice. In our models, from the above constructs, we have included only the job characteristics and perceived organizational support

due to the issues related to multicollinearity. Therefore, to identify the antecedents of organizational and job engagement, we constructed the following research model, presented in Figure 1. The results of both models are presented in Table 2.

As presented in Figure 1, the model includes three variables related to individuals' personal characteristics: gender, educational level, and number of organizations in which the individual has worked. The variable gender was codded in the following manner: 1-male and 2-female. The variable on individuals' education distinguishes five levels: 1-secondary education, 2-higher education (2-years), 3-higher education (4-years, university degree Bachelor of Science), 4-Master of science and 5-PhD. The number of organizations in which the individual has worked is a continuous variable in our sample ranges between 1 and 11.

Table 2. Antecedents of organizational and job engagement

	Model 1	Model 2
	Organizational engagement	*Job engagement*
Gender	-0.163*	0.041
Educational level	-0.029	0.077
Num. of organizations in which the individual worked	0.091	0.001
Job characteristics	0.271***	0.387***
Perceived organizational support	0.616***	0.093
R^2	0.618	0.204
Adjusted R^2	0.599	0.164
F	31.774***	5.030***
Durbin-Watson	1.949	2.223

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; and values in the table are standardized beta coefficients

Source: Own analysis

The model constructed for identifying the determinants of organizational engagement describes 59.9% of the variances of the dependent variable, which indicates a strong explanatory power. The F-statistic of the model is significant at level p<0.001. The Durbin Watson 1.949 is an acceptable level, considering the number of observations and the number of independent variables included. Regarding the statistical significance of the relation between the independent variables and the dependent variable, we can conclude that gender statistically significantly predicts organizational engagement (-0.163, p<0.05). Considering the way in which we have coded the gender of the respondents (1 for male and 2 for female), this negative relation should indicate that males are more likely to be engaged in the organization. Furthermore, the results also indicate that in the sample of employees in the Republic of North Macedonia, job characteristics (0.271, p<0.001) and perceived organizational support (0.616, p<0.001) are the statistically strongest predictors of organizational engagement. The function of Model 2 is to access the predicting power of the same set of independent variables when the dependent variable is job engagement. The explanatory power of this model is drastically lower compared to the previous model. Namely, R^2 is 20.4%, while Adjusted R^2 is 16.4%. The Durbin-Watson statistic is on an acceptable level (2.223). From the independent variables, job characteristics represent a statistically strong predictor of job engagement (0.387, p<0.001). The measures of multicollinearity (Tolerance and VIF) in both models are in accordance with the recommendations in the literature (Mason & Perreault, 1991; Kumari, 2008; Robinson & Schumacher, 2009; Miles, 2014).

In Table 2, we present the statistical models used for analyzing whether the constructs of organizational and job engagement can be used as predictors of several job-related outcomes, such as organizational commitment, intention to quit, job satisfaction, and two forms of organizational citizenship behavior.

Model 1, presented in Table 3, estimates whether organizational commitment can be predicted with organizational and job engagement. The adjusted R^2 of the model is 63.4%, which shows that the independent variables in the model explain 63.4% of the changes in the dependent variable. Both organizational as well as job engagement have a statistically significant relation with organizational commitment. However, organizational engagement has a statistically stronger ability to predict organizational commitment (0.704, p<0.001) compared to job engagement (0.167, p<0.05). Model 2 describes 36.4% of the changes in the dependent variable intention to quit and indicates that organizational engagement is inversely and statistically significantly related to intention to quit (-0.666, p<0.001). The adjusted R^2 of Model 3 is 55.4%, which indicates relatively strong explanatory power. The coefficients in this model also indicate that organizational engagement is a statistically strong predictor of job satisfaction (0.775, p<0.001). Model 4 and Model 5 estimate whether organizational and job engagement can be analyzed as predictors of different forms of organizational citizenship behavior. The explanatory power of Model 4 and Model 5 is 30.6% and 30.2%, respectively. The coefficients in Model 4 indicate that job engagement (0.397, p<0.001), as well as organizational engagement (0.235, p<0.05) are statistically significant predictors of the organizational behavior presented to the individual. On the other hand, Model 5 suggests that both independent variables, organizational engagement and job engagement, are statistically strong predictors of organizational citizenship behavior directed towards the organization (0.285, p<0.01; 0.348, p<0.001, respectively). The F-statistics for all models are significant at level p<0.001. The values of the Durbin-Watson test for Model 1, Model 2, Model 3, Model 4, and Model 5 are as follows: 2.242; 1.718; 1.945; 2.230; 1.817. The values of the coefficients (Tolerance and VIF) that indicate the level of multicollinearity between the independent variable are within the acceptable range as explained in the literature (Mason & Perreault, 1991; Kumari, 2008; Robinson & Schumacher, 2009; Miles, 2014).

Table 3. Consequences of organizational and job engagement

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Organizational commitment	*Intention to quit*	*Job satisfaction*	*Organizational citizenship behavior-individual*	*Organizational citizenship behavior-organization*
Organizational engagement	0.704***	-0.666***	0.775***	0.235*	0.285**
Job engagement	0.167*	0.123	-0.053	0.397***	0.348***
R^2	0.642	0.376	0.563	0.306	0.302
Adjusted R^2	0.634	0.364	0.554	0.293	0.288
F	90.394***	30.456***	64.954***	22.299***	21.837***
Durbin-Watson	2.242	1.718	1.945	2.230	1.817

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; and values in the table are standardized beta coefficients

Source: Own analysis

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Employee engagement is a concept that has been widely researched in the past three decades. However, there is a lack of literature investigating employee engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia. Therefore, we have conducted empirical research on the predictors and consequences of employee engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia on a sample of 104 employee in private and public institutions, with the use of the instrument developed by Saks (2006). The main goal of the study was to investigate whether the factors identified as predictors of organizational and job engagement by Saks (2006) can be analyzed as determinants of employee engagement in the Republic of North Macedonia. Furthermore, we analyzed whether organizational and job

engagement in the sample from our country are related to several outcomes: organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and individuals' intentions to quit. Besides the constructs on job characteristics and perceived organizational support developed by Saks (2006), in the models constructed for identifying the antecedents of organizational and job engagement, we have added the individuals' characteristics (gender, educational level, number of organizations in which the individual has worked).

The results presented in this paper indicate that in the case of the Republic of North Macedonia, job characteristics, perceived organizational support, and gender are statistically significant predictors of organizational engagement, while job engagement can be predicted only with job characteristics. Compared to Saks' (2006) finding, we can conclude that the results are in line with those obtained from his sample of Canadian employees. Saks (2006) has reported that job engagement can be predicted by job characteristics and perceived organizational support, while organizational engagement can be predicted by job characteristics and procedural justice. The confirmation of the relation between organizational and job engagement with job characteristics was expected since job characteristics have the largest impact on employee perception of their job and organization and strongly influence their attitudes. The results indicating that perceived organizational support has a statistically significant relationship with organizational engagement, although not confirmed in the Saks (2006) study, we believe, are expected.

Namely, the direction and support of the supervisor are related to the job demands and, therefore, influence employees' attitudes towards their job and job engagement, while the support provided by all organizational members is expected to shape the individuals' attitudes towards organization and organizational engagement. Also, we should mention that we did not include the constructs on procedural and distributive justice in our model in order to avoid problems related to multicollinearity. Therefore, we could not examine to what extent justice is related to the levels of engagement of Macedonian employees. Regarding the relations between individuals' personal characteristics and organizational and job engagement, the results indicate that only gender is statistically significantly related to organizational engagement. These findings are similar to those of Chaudhary et al. (2022), which suggest that females are found to be more engaged than male employees. However, the results of our study indicate that males are more likely to have a higher level of organizational engagement. These results can be interpreted differently, but when researching employee engagement and gender, we must take into consideration the fact that the ability to demonstrate engagement is tightly related to the psychological preconditions in the workplace and the context in which respondents work (Banihani & Syed, 2017). Additionally, Rozman et al. (2022) also have identified significant gender differences in work engagement and work efficacy of Slovenian remote employees.

Regarding the consequences of employee engagement, our results indicate that organizational engagement is statistically significantly related to organizational commitment, intentions to quit, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior directed toward the organization and towards the individual. On the other hand, job engagement is a statistically significant predictor of organizational commitment (although this relation is statistically weaker) and organizational citizenship behavior. Saks' (2006) results indicate that organizational engagement is statistically significantly related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, the results from that study indicate that job engagement is related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and organizational citizenship behavior directed towards the organization. The results that show no statistically significant relation between job engagement and intention to quit indicate that the intention of quitting is impacted largely by employees' sense of belonging in the organization.

In conclusion, it can be noted that this study reveals some significant insight regarding employee engagement in the context of the Republic of North Macedonia and that besides theoretical contribution, the paper also has practical implications. The insights from the findings in this paper can be used by managers who are interested in improving employee engagement and wish to create an organizational climate that supports achieving a higher level of performance (individual as well as organizational). Furthermore, the results can be used for designing human resource practices that are going to impact employees' intentions to quit and their organizational commitment.

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