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# EXPLORING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: ANTECEDENTS, CONSEQUENCES AND STRATEGIES

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**Abstract.** In the contemporary public sector, administrators seek innovative approaches to boost productivity, elevate service quality, and optimize resource allocation. Employee engagement (EE) stands out as a pivotal catalyst driving these transformative endeavors. Engaged employees approach their responsibilities with greater dedication and motivation, invest more energy and effort, demonstrate a higher level of performance and contribute to the achievement of exceptional organizational outcomes. Therefore, to establish an effective framework for public administration, administrators must not only comprehend the factors influencing EE in the public sector and its outcomes but also proactively develop strategies to foster engagement among their workforce. This study aims to identify the fundamental antecedents and consequences of EE in the public sector while evaluating this concept from a strategic perspective. To achieve this aim, an extensive literature review is conducted, involving the systematic examination of existing studies published in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases on EE within the public sector. The original aspect of the study is to introduce a conceptual model that integrates the antecedents influencing EE, its resulting outcomes and potential strategies for cultivating EE. It is expected that the research findings will both stimulate academic interest and provide insights for practitioners in the realm of public administration.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, human resource, public sector, strategy.

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## Introduction

Public administrations, which play a significant role in the governance of a country's economic, social, and political activities, confront various challenges in today's complex world. Globalization, rapid technological advancements, societal changes, and the diversification of values are some of the factors compelling public administrations to adapt to the evolving needs of society. These challenges are further intensified when coupled with measures such as post-economic crisis austerity policies and downsizing within the public sector. In light of these circumstances, public administrators should meet the expectations of their stakeholders, continuously improve quality, enhance efficiency, and generate innovative solutions.

In a service-oriented management approach, human resources are a key determinant of success. The success of a company is closely related to the presence of highly motivated and engaged employees. Engaged employees are essential for effectively managing change, enhancing service delivery effectiveness, and ensuring customer satisfaction in public sector institutions. Therefore, public administrators should develop competitive strategies to attract engaged talents and retain them in the long term (OECD, 2015). When public institutions proactively implement strategies to improve EE, it results in the establishment of an engaged workforce within the organizational framework, consequently fostering a positive work environment (Shuck and Wollard, 2010).

To achieve the aim of understanding the key determinants and outcomes of EE in public institutions and to strategically evaluate this concept, the study explores the following research questions:

- What are the antecedents that influence EE in the public sector?
- What are the consequences associated with EE in the public sector?
- What are the potential strategies to enhance EE in the public sector?

To address the research questions, the remainder of the study is structured as follows: firstly, it examines the concept of EE and the role of EE in the public sector. Next, the methodology employed in the study is introduced. This is followed by the antecedents and consequences of EE in the public sector, along with strategies for promoting and sustaining EE. Thereafter, the study develops a new conceptual model proposal based on the findings. Finally, this study concludes by discussing implications for public administration research, addressing limitations, and proposing research topics for future investigations.

## Literature review

### **The Concept of EE**

In the highly competitive business landscape, organizations recognize that the engagement and performance of employees are crucial for success. Therefore, by integrating human resource strategies with overall business goals, they aim to foster high levels of EE, resulting in strong interpersonal relationships, innovation, and excellent customer service, which are essential for achieving success in this challenging market.

In the literature, the concept of EE is defined in various ways. According to Kahn (1990), EE involves individuals' alignment with their work roles in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects. Likewise, Shuck and Wollard (2010) define EE as comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements, all motivated by the employee's aspiration to attain desired organizational results. Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004) describe EE as a positive attitude displayed by employees towards the organization and its principles. Engaged employees collaborate with their colleagues to enhance job performance for the organization's benefit. Furthermore, engagement can be characterized as a mental state linked to vigor, dedication, and absorption in the workplace (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

EE is not only seen as a way for employees to find personal fulfillment but also as a method for organizations to enhance their profitability (Tioumagneng and Njifen, 2020). EE leads to favorable results, such as job satisfaction, heightened organizational commitment, and long-term retention. Engaged employees are typically devoted and proud of their affiliation with the organization. These individuals make a direct impact on the organization's financial performance, and their commitment is evident in the service they provide. Engaged employees actively contribute to the organization's achievement of objectives by drawing in additional customers and cultivating customer loyalty. The degree of EE is shaped by the individual attributes of employees and their workplace environment (Chiwawa, 2022).

### **The Role of EE in the Public Sector**

The public sector plays a significant role as an integral component of any government structure. It serves as a platform through which a government can contribute to the progress and welfare of its citizens, thereby the development of the country as a whole. Therefore, public organizations should prioritize investments in human resources to improve delivery of public services and ensure sustainable growth of the sector (George, Okon and Akaighe, 2023).

The increasing global discourse regarding the function of public administrations in economic systems has sparked remarkable interest among practitioners and researchers in EE (De Simone et al., 2016), which is considered a relatively new concept in the public administration literature (Jin and McDonald, 2017). Public organizations require employees who feel dedicated and energized towards the work, both physically and mentally (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor and Schohat, 2013). However, motivating employees in public sector institutions can be more challenging compared to the private sector. This can be associated with such factors as frequent and sudden changes in leadership and the inability to provide performance incentives (Jin and McDonald, 2017; Chiwawa, 2022).

Moreover, modern public institutions expect their employees to demonstrate proactivity, entrepreneurial mindset, accountability, and a commitment to upholding high-performance criteria (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor and Schohat, 2013). Engaged public service employees exhibit higher levels of commitment and job satisfaction in their organizations (Gargantini et al., 2022). The engagement of public service employees is shaped by their emotional connection to public service employment and their commitment to public organizations. Closer alignment between employ-

ees’ values and the organizational mission can serve as a catalyst for a more efficient public sector (Chiwawa, 2022). In this regard, EE is seen as a potential contributor to an efficient and citizen-centric public service system, consequently bolstering citizens’ trust in government entities (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor and Schohat, 2013).

## Methodology

The methodology for this study involved conducting a systematic literature review to explore antecedents, consequences, and strategies related to EE in the public sector. A comprehensive analysis covered studies published in the WoS and Scopus databases up to September 20, 2023. The selected timeframe ensured the inclusion of relevant and up-to-date scholarly publications, allowing for a thorough examination of the topic. Table 1 provides the search queries employed in the WoS and Scopus databases.

Table 1

### The Search Queries

Databases	Search Queries
WoS	TITLE “employee engagement” or “work engagement” or “organizational engagement” or “job engagement” and TITLE “public sector” or “public service” or “public employees” or “public organizations” and ALL FIELDS “antecedents” or “consequences” or “outcomes” or “strategy” or “strategies”
Scopus	TITLE “employee engagement” or “work engagement” or “organizational engagement” or “job engagement” and TITLE “public sector” or “public service” or “public employees” or “public organizations” and TITLE-ABS-KEY “antecedents” or “consequences” or “outcomes” or “strategy” or “strategies”

Sources: Created by the author.

The systematic review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, which includes the identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion phases (Moher et al., 2009). In the identification phase of the process, a systematic literature search was carried out on the WoS and Scopus databases aiming to comprehensively explore relevant research materials. This search used search queries generated from the keywords listed in Table 1. As a result, 28 publications were retrieved from WoS and 20 publications from Scopus. In the screening phase, the databases were cross checked to ensure data integrity and to eliminate duplicate studies. 16 publications were excluded. The eligibility phase then began. In this phase, the titles of the studies, the abstracts and the most important content were examined to assess their adherence to the inclusion criteria. As the full texts of 2 publications were not accessible, it could not be clearly determined whether they addressed the antecedents, consequences or strategies of EE in the public sector. These publications were excluded from the analysis. In the inclusion phase, a total of 30 publications that met the specified criteria were considered. Finally, a comprehensive analysis was initiated for this dataset.

## Results and discussion

The systematic review was conducted for 30 publications on EE in the public sector. Appendix 1 presents a descriptive analysis of these studies with information on authors, countries, research methods and sample data. According to the information contained within this dataset, the United States had the most publications (4), followed by India (3), Brazil (2), and Zimbabwe (2). These studies employed various research methods, encompassing survey research, focus groups, interviews, explanatory-sequential mixed methods, meta-analytic approaches, and systematic reviews. Studies predominantly focused on diverse sample groups, including employees, civil servants, supervisors, managers, and inspectors.

The research findings are organized into several sections, covering the factors influencing EE within the public sector, the consequences of EE, potential approaches to improve EE, and the development of a novel conceptual model for EE in the public sector.

### **Antecedents of EE in the Public Sector**

The literature emphasizes various factors that have been identified as antecedents for EE. These factors can be divided into two main categories: individual factors and organizational factors. By addressing both the individual and organizational aspects, public administrators can create an environment that is conducive to EE and empower their employees to achieve their maximum potential.

#### ***Individual Factors***

Positive psychological state: EE is influenced by factors that trigger an employee's psychological presence. When employees experience psychological presence, they become fully engaged and attentive to their tasks, demonstrating a heightened level of awareness and involvement (Chiwawa, 2022). Several attributes such as psychological capital, relational identification, psychological ownership, work meaningfulness, and work ethic have all shown a positive correlation with work engagement in the public sector (Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). Moreover, workplace spirituality promotes positive emotions, a sense of belonging, and higher work engagement by nurturing employees' inner values and a sense of purpose (Alqhaiwi and Luu, 2023). Psychological capital, which reflects an individual's positive psychological development, plays a crucial role in fostering employees' positive engagement with their work. When employees maintain a positive attitude toward their work, they are more likely to be deeply engaged and dedicated to their tasks. Additionally, psychological capital is closely linked to the promotion of positive emotions among employees. Those who possess an optimistic mindset, resilience and self-efficacy tend to have a greater ability to understand and effectively regulate their own emotions and demonstrate empathy for the emotional state of others (George, Okon and Akaighe, 2023).

On the other hand, relational identification plays a mediated role in activating positive emotions and fostering EE (Malik and Khan, 2019). This psychological connection and a sense of belonging that individuals develop with their group, organization, or team significantly impact their levels of engagement. Similarly,

psychological ownership, which involves the subjective sense of possession and attachment towards work or the organization, is a significant construct that enhances employee satisfaction, commitment, extra-role performance, and overall engagement (Buriro et al., 2008). Furthermore, Ding and Wang (2023) highlight pleasure, value, and meaning derived from work, as key influencers of work engagement, especially for civil servants. This emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in driving engagement. Additionally, empirical evidence provided by Khusanova, Kang and Choi (2021) support the positive correlation between the meaningfulness of work and engagement, further emphasizing the significance of finding meaning in work. Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) ensure a comprehensive examination of EE predictors by incorporating work ethic as an assessment of individual characteristics, alongside demographic variables such as age, work experience, educational qualification, and gender.

Public service motivation (PSM): PSM is widely recognized as an individual resource that inspires employees to selflessly contribute to the betterment of society (Cooke, Brant and Woods, 2019). When individuals driven by a commitment to public service are provided with chances have the opportunity to contribute beyond their job duties, it results in a heightened sense of identification with the organization (Hammon, Gillis and Icenogle, 2022). PSM motivates individuals in the public service sector to develop a stronger sense of purpose, responsibility, and willingness to sacrifice, while enhancing their feelings of recognition and self-esteem for their contributions. Individuals who possess a stronger sense of PSM also generally show a higher level of engagement in their work. The connection between PSM and engagement at work becomes more pronounced when individuals perceive organizational support. This perception creates a reciprocal dynamic in which employees tend to exhibit higher levels of performance and demonstrate a greater willingness to contribute to the organization (Ding and Wang, 2023). Public servants who possess strong PSM perceive their work as meaningful. They are more inclined to dedicate their resources to public service and exhibit strong job performance (Alamri, 2023).

### ***Organizational Factors***

*Human resource management (HRM) practices:* The happiness and satisfaction of employees within an organization are crucial for accomplishing organizational objectives. Therefore, in the volatile and ever-changing business climate, public administrators must prioritize the satisfaction of individuals who contribute significantly to achieving the organization's goals. They must pay greater attention to identifying the factors that contribute to employee job satisfaction and enhance their productivity. Research indicates that EE plays a mediating role in the link between HRM practices and job satisfaction. Specifically, HRM practices that focus on EE are expected to increase employees' energy levels, resulting in higher morale, motivation, and overall satisfaction (Pradhan, Dash and Jena, 2019). Furthermore, HRM practices encompass various components, which include practices that enhance abilities (such as recruitment, selection, training, and development), practices that boost motivation (such as performance appraisal, compensation, and rewards), and practices that create opportunities (such as autonomy and employee participa-

tion). These practices strongly influence EE (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010). When HRM practices are properly implemented, employees develop a positive perception of their organization, resulting in increased job engagement and a more positive outlook towards the overall organization (Tensay and Singh, 2020).

*Leadership quality:* Leadership quality, which shapes the levels of PSM in individuals (Ugaddan and Park, 2017), is one of the key factors influencing EE within the public sector (Wushe and Shenje, 2019). In addition, effective leadership is known as a multifaceted force that cultivates awareness, promotes open communication and information handling, encourages social inclusivity, and upholds ethical values (Chiwawa, 2022). These qualities contribute significantly to enhancing EE in the public sector. Cultivating trust is an essential step in developing an effective EE strategy as it helps to eliminate any doubts or suspicions regarding the intentions of leaders within the organization (Ohemeng, Obuobisa Darko and Amoako-Asiedu, 2020). Trusted leaders have a positive impact on multiple facets of organizational dynamics and individual outcomes. They contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction, improved performance at both the individual and organizational levels, enhanced organizational commitment, and the development of employees' discretionary skills (Ugaddan and Park, 2017). Notably, ethical leaders are widely recognized for their fairness and tend to garner a high degree of trust among their employees. This trust, along with the perception of fairness, contributes to an enhanced sense of meaning in employees' work, ultimately resulting in higher levels of engagement at work (Mostafa and Abed El-Motalib, 2020). Moreover, transformational leaders have a significant impact on EE by directing their cognitive, behavioral, and emotional efforts toward advancing the organization. By leveraging their promotion focus, these leaders can foster engagement behaviors among employees, particularly by encouraging them to prioritize public service tasks (Alamri, 2023).

*Perceived organizational support:* Perceived organizational support significantly contributes to the cultivation of EE (Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). In this context, top management support is identified as one of the foremost crucial job resources (Ludviga and Kalvina, 2023). Specifically, the level of work engagement is positively linked to how employees perceive the support of their supervisors (Ghosh, Rai and Sinha, 2014). The support received from supervisors directly or indirectly impacts EE. When employees have strong and positive perceptions of supervisor support, they are more likely to cultivate enhanced perceptions of organizational support, which ultimately results in heightened work engagement (Jin and McDonald, 2017). Additionally, practices that promote work-life balance are closely linked to the concept of perceived organizational support. When organizations prioritize work-life balance, employees perceive stronger support from the organization, resulting in increased engagement. Work-life balance practices have positive impacts on EE, leading to higher levels of commitment and satisfaction (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010). Furthermore, these practices serve as a catalyst for fostering individual and organizational effectiveness (Shankar and Bhatnagar, 2010).

*Perceived organizational justice:* The way employees perceive organizational justice influences their level of engagement. In evaluating work and organizational engagement, distributive justice emerges as the most crucial factor, closely followed by procedural and interactional justice. Employees who perceive organizational jus-

tice positively and believe that they are treated fairly tend to respond by elevating their level of engagement (Ghosh, Rai and Sinha, 2014). This phenomenon finds its most robust theoretical underpinning in Social Exchange Theory (SET). According to SET, EE is influenced by reciprocal exchanges rooted in the concept of justice. Essentially, individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs within their organizational relationships. When they perceive fair rewards and support, their engagement tends to soar (Ohemeng, Obuobisa Darko and Amoako-Asiedu, 2020; Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). Therefore, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to creating a supportive work environment by implementing HRM strategies that address the organizational political climate. These strategies may include transparent communication, fair decision-making processes, and equitable treatment of employees. Such practices reinforce employees' beliefs that the organization genuinely values their well-being (Kidron and Vinarski, 2018).

*Perceived organizational agility:* Various factors contribute to the organizational agility of public sector entities, including organizational learning, leadership, and clarity of goals. When employees perceive their organization as agile, capable of promptly sensing and adapting to environmental shifts, a sense of security and engagement in their work is nurtured. As a result, perceived organizational agility significantly influences EE (Ludviga and Kalvina, 2023). In organizations that exhibit agility, employees experience greater autonomy, responsibility, and opportunities. Empowering employees by involving them in decision-making processes, encouraging their input, and providing feedback on organizational operations is an effective approach to cultivating EE. This sense of responsibility and ownership empowers employees, resulting in increased levels of engagement (Tensay and Singh, 2020).

### **Consequences of EE in the Public Sector**

The studies within the sample have examined the consequences of EE in the public sector, revealing a range of potential effects. These consequences include increased employee well-being and job satisfaction, strengthened organizational citizenship behavior, fostering innovation and creativity, better organizational performance, and improved public service delivery.

*Increased employee well-being and job satisfaction:* EE, which plays a central role in shaping individuals' behavior within the organization, significantly benefits both employee well-being and job satisfaction (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010). Positive emotions and experiences, such as EE, are indeed believed to lay the foundation for favorable job outcomes, encompassing employee well-being and job satisfaction. When employees exhibit higher levels of engagement, they often find more fulfillment and contentment in their roles. This sense of enthusiasm, dedication, and connection to their work, fostered through engagement, contributes to a more rewarding work experience (Pradhan, Dash and Jena, 2019). It is worth emphasizing that engagement can be seen as the initial stage that sets the groundwork for job satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2018). In simpler terms, when individuals are deeply engaged in their tasks and responsibilities, they create a solid foundation for them to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction. This heightened satisfaction can lead to improved morale and overall well-being. Furthermore, individu-



als who experience greater job satisfaction tend to be more actively involved and engaged in their job tasks (De Simone et al., 2016). This dynamic creates a positive feedback loop, where job satisfaction fosters increased dedication and enthusiasm towards their work responsibilities.

*Strengthened organizational citizenship behavior:* EE offers substantial benefits to organizations, and one of these advantages is the improvement of organizational citizenship behavior (Ugaddan and Park, 2017). Research consistently establishes a positive correlation between work engagement and the manifestation of organizational citizenship behavior (Khusanova, Kang and Choi, 2021). Importantly, public sector employees who display high levels of engagement are more inclined to participate in service-oriented organizational citizenship behavior, which goes beyond their formal job duties, including heightened attentiveness to citizens' concerns and taking the initiative to resolve them (Alqhaiwi and Luu, 2023). They willingly contribute to enhancing the overall effectiveness of the organization and the quality of public service delivery (Alamri, 2023). Essentially, engaged public sector employees demonstrate a stronger sense of commitment and civic responsibility, driving them to go the extra mile in serving the community and contributing to the success of their organization.

*Fostered creativity and innovation:* Cultivating creativity and fostering the creation of innovative services hinges on EE (De Simone et al., 2016). Notably, in the public sector, a highly engaged workforce is pivotal for driving innovation (Wushe, 2019). Public sector organizations, having highly engaged employees, must prioritize the establishment of a culture of continuous learning at all levels (Ludviga and Kalvina, 2023). Furthermore, transformational leaders play a significant role in enhancing employee work engagement. They achieve this by championing novel ideas, offering individualized attention to each employee, and assisting employees in coping with the challenges posed by negative life events (Alamri, 2023; Weibmüller et al., 2023). These actions lead to improved learning outcomes and an increased capacity for innovation in service delivery and the workplace (Knox and Marin-Cadavid, 2022). Consequently, by promoting a culture of learning and embracing transformational leadership, public sector organizations empower their workforce to unleash its full potential, ultimately driving improved creativity and innovation outcomes.

*Better organizational performance:* Engaged employees typically experience heightened levels of satisfaction, commitment, and immersion in their roles (Tensay and Singh, 2020). They actively seek opportunities to improve organizational performance (Hammon, Gillis and Icenogle, 2022). This pursuit results in a positive boost in their individual productivity, ultimately leading to improved organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Reis de Souza Camoes and Oliveira Gomes, 2021; Gargantini et al., 2022). In essence, EE, as a key driver of business success, exhibits a noteworthy correlation with performance-related outcomes (Khusanova, Kang and Choi, 2021; Ohemeng, Obuobisa Darko and Amoako-Asiedu, 2020). A motivated workforce, characterized by strong engagement, has the potential to greatly enhance organizational performance (Tensay and Singh, 2020). Therefore, prioritizing the development of engaged employees offers substantial advantages to organizations, including enhanced performance, productivity, ef-

iciency, and effectiveness, as well as the optimization of organizational resources and a competitive edge (Chiwawa, 2022).

*Improved public service delivery:* EE is crucial factor for improving service delivery and overall public services (Reis de Souza Camoes and Oliveira Gomes, 2021; Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). It significantly influences productivity, loyalty, and stakeholder value, as noted by Wushe and Shenje (2019). Public servants who demonstrate a strong and enduring commitment to public service not only perceive their work as essential and purposeful but also have a strong inclination to allocate their resources to public service efforts. Consequently, they are actively engaged in their work (Alamri, 2023). Full engagement of employees in their work often leads to effective collaboration within work teams. Therefore, engaged employees are widely acknowledged as the driving force behind the delivery of high-quality and dedicated service (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010). Their sense of responsibility and commitment can lead to improved service quality and a more responsive approach to citizens' needs. In contrast, disengaged employees within the public administration place a significant financial burden for the public sector, while also obstructing the efficient delivery of essential services (Mostafa and Abed El-Motalib, 2020). Their negative impact manifests itself in more frequent absences, increased turnover, lower productivity, and ongoing training expenses (Wushe and Shenje, 2019).

### **Potential Strategies for Enhancing EE in the Public Sector**

Based on research findings, specific strategies have been identified to enhance EE in the public sector.

*Cultivating PSM:* Public organizations could adopt innovative approaches to attract, select, and retain employees with high levels of PSM. By prioritizing the attraction, selection, and retention of individuals with strong PSM, these organizations can enhance their workforce and further their mission to serve the public interest (Alamri, 2023). Recruiting civil servants with a strong PSM is essential for public organizations, as these individuals exhibit higher levels of dedication, potentially resulting in increased performance and administrative efficiency in the public sector (Ding and Wang, 2023). To potentially enhance employee performance and engagement at work, government organizations should conduct training aimed at improving public sector employees' emotional intelligence. This training encompasses components such as empathy, interpersonal skills, self-awareness, and self-regulation (George, Okon and Akaiqhe, 2023). Moreover, transformational leaders can enhance PSM by motivating employees and fostering greater commitment to public service. They can help employees better understand the significance of their work to society. They can promote more transformational behaviors in the workplace by effectively communicating a compelling vision, creating an environment that encourages new ideas, and offering individualized attention to each employee (Alamri, 2023).

*Creating supportive work environments:* Fostering supportive work environment is crucial to enhance EE in the public sector. This entails establishing an environment where employees feel confident and actively participate in their tasks (Khusanova, Kang, and Choi, 2021). In such an environment, employees can freely share their ideas, concerns, and feedback without fearing adverse repercussions,

ultimately leading to a more supportive and productive workplace (Brennan et al., 2023). Public organizations should also encourage the cultivation of a friendly atmosphere that promotes mutual support among their employees (Wushe and Shenje, 2019). To achieve this, administrators in the public sector should prioritize the cultivation of strong leader-worker relationships. This can be accomplished through methods such as employee satisfaction surveys, focus groups, and personalized meetings (Jin and McDonald, 2017). Additionally, public sector organizations can mitigate the adverse impacts of workplace changes by reducing job demands and enhancing job resources. These strategies not only minimize cynicism towards change but also contribute to improved work engagement (Nguyen et al., 2018). In summary, enhancing work engagement in the public sector requires a multifaceted approach that prioritizes building positive relationships, cultivating trust, and effectively managing organizational change.

*Fostering a culture of continuous learning and development:* Public administrators should undergo specialized training focused on fostering a strategic orientation toward employee development, emphasizing ideals and aspirations over mere duties and responsibilities (Alamri, 2023). Moreover, to foster a culture of learning and development while enhancing EE in public organizations, they should implement a multifaceted strategy. This strategy should encompass the enhancement of training and development programs, the provision of mentoring opportunities, and the organization of social events (Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). In alignment with these endeavors, Nissinen et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of prioritizing job crafting intervention programs and involving employees actively in systematic training initiatives in the public sector. These initiatives are crucial for allowing public sector employees to customize their job roles, ultimately resulting in increased job satisfaction and improved performance outcomes.

Furthermore, fostering a culture of continuous learning within the organization, and providing training opportunities that go beyond core tasks, is seen as a key driver for increased work engagement (Jin and McDonald, 2017). Additionally, it is essential to establish feedback mechanisms that foster employee learning (Gargantini et al., 2022) and reinforce successes (Alamri, 2023). By investing in the development, training, and well-being of their employees, public institutions can enhance the skills, competencies, and motivation of their staff. This, in turn, leads to improvements in service quality, increased productivity, and ultimately, more favorable overall outcomes for the constituents they serve. Such investments also contribute to fostering a positive workplace atmosphere, elevating employee morale, and enhancing employee retention, all of which are fundamental factors that contribute to the success of organizations (George, Okon and Akaighe, 2023).

*Investing in leadership development:* It is essential for public administrators to prioritize effective leadership approaches, such as ethical and transformational leadership, when filling senior roles within organizations to boost EE (Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). For example, ethical leadership is important to improve organizational engagement by aligning leaders' efforts with ethical principles (Svensson, Wood, and Callaghan, 2009). To achieve this, actively recruiting ethical leaders known for their integrity and strong ethical values is vital. Additionally, implementing ethics training programs to enhance their ethical decision-making skills

and promote ethical behavior throughout the organization carries significant importance (Mostafa and Abed El-Motalib, 2020). By emphasizing the cultivation of ethical leadership, public sector organizations can create a culture that embodies integrity, fosters trust, and encourages accountability.

In today’s dynamic business environment, leaders should adopt a resilient and adaptable approach to their roles, particularly in times of crisis. When employees are supported by leaders who can recognize changes, make timely decisions, and adapt flexibly, this leads to increased work engagement, and has a positive impact on employee well-being and overall corporate performance (Ludviga and Kalvina, 2023). Furthermore, public administrators can implement training and development programs on leadership to improve transformational leadership qualities. By investing in these programs, organizations can cultivate a culture that prioritizes effective leadership and facilitates the advancement of their leaders (Alamri, 2023). Organizations can also enhance EE by creating training programs that focus on developing skills related to inclusive leadership and promoting a supportive workplace culture (Ly, 2023).

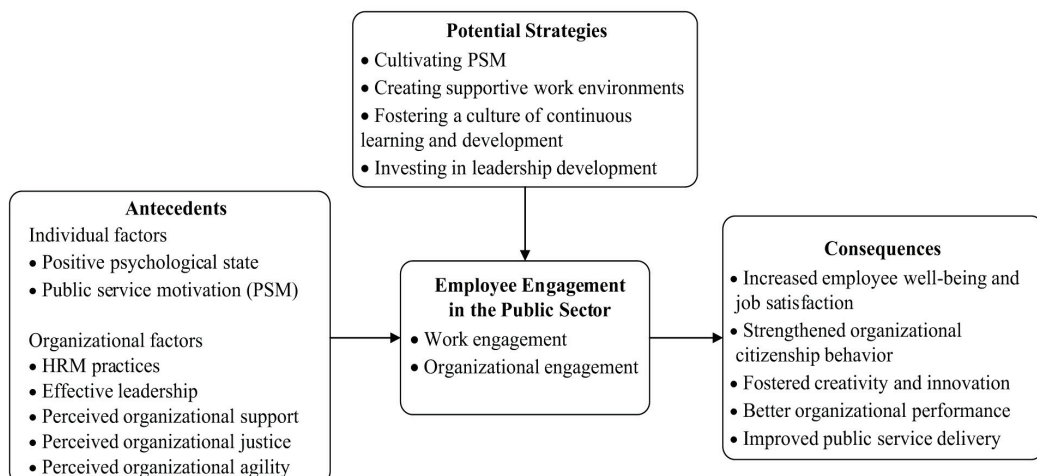
Public sector organizations can foster an environment that boosts EE, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness by implementing these strategies. Public sector leaders and administrators must give priority to these approaches and customize them to their organizational settings to optimize EE and achieve the desired results.

### A New Conceptual Model for EE in the Public Sector

This study introduces a new conceptual model that takes into account various antecedents, consequences, and potential strategies of EE in the public sector. The aim of this model is to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding and promoting EE in public organizations. The components of the model are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

### A Model for EE in Public Sector



Source: Constructed by the author.

Within this model, the significance of both individual and organizational factors in influencing EE is acknowledged. At an individual level, the importance of positive psychological states is emphasized, with positive emotions and mental well-being linked to higher levels of active engagement at work. Positive psychological states, such as work motivation, a sense of meaningfulness, and strong work ethic, contribute significantly to improving the performance of public sector employees (Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022). Additionally, PSM plays a critical role, as employees driven by a sense of duty to serve the public interest often exhibit higher levels of engagement (Ding and Wang, 2023). At the organizational level, the role of HRM practices in aligning individual skills and aspirations with organizational objectives is highlighted. Effective leadership is identified as another crucial element, as employees are inspired and guided by leaders. Perceived organizational support and perceived organizational justice are recognized as critical factors in fostering trust and commitment. Additionally, perceived organizational agility is deemed vital in today's dynamic environment, as it encourages active employee engagement in adapting to change.

Enhanced EE is expected to yield several positive outcomes. Engaged employees often experience increased well-being and job satisfaction, contributing to their overall happiness and performance (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010). Furthermore, they tend to exhibit strengthened organizational citizenship behavior, going beyond their job descriptions to support their colleagues and the organization as a whole (Alqhaiwi and Luu, 2023). Engagement also fosters creativity and innovation, and enhance an organization's ability to adapt and improve. This, in turn, leads to better organizational performance in various dimensions, ultimately resulting in improved public service delivery that aligns with citizens' needs and expectations.

Organizations can employ several key strategies to enhance EE. First and foremost, they should cultivate PSM by fostering employee engagement in public service. Creating supportive work environments is essential for employees to feel valued and empowered. Organizations should also focus on cultivating a culture that prioritizes continuous learning and development through training programs designed to enhance skills and knowledge. Lastly, investing in leadership development is crucial for identifying and nurturing effective leaders within the organization.

In summary, this comprehensive model provides a holistic perspective of EE in the public sector, highlighting the importance of individual and organizational factors in achieving positive outcomes. Implementing the suggested strategies can empower public service organizations to promote increased EE, ultimately resulting in improved service delivery and organizational performance.

## Conclusion

Technological advancements, the increasing complexities in business operations, and the shortage of essential skills pose global challenges when it comes to acquiring, retaining, and effectively utilizing talent within organizations. In today's rapidly evolving business environment, there is a growing acknowledgment that empowering the workforce as creators of valuable assets can provide organizations with a sustainable competitive advantage. This acknowledgment underscores

the vital importance of EE for effective HRM. Engaged employees play a central role in delivering exceptional service quality and building high-performing teams that consistently achieving outstanding results (Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010).

EE has become a potent driver of business success, gaining prominence in service delivery, especially in the public sector (Wushe and Shenje, 2019). In an ever-evolving global business landscape shaped by technological advancements and changing customer demands, employees are increasingly responsible for service delivery. In this complex context, EE, characterized by employee commitment to their tasks and their demonstration of extra-role performance that aligns with the organization's goals, is crucial. This underscores the significance of engagement within organizations.

While studies on EE in the public sector have proliferated in recent years (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor and Schohat, 2013; Jin and McDonald, 2017; Hameduddin, 2021), to the best of our knowledge, there is no available study that comprehensively examines this topic in the context of antecedents, consequences, and strategies. This study intends to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive understanding of EE in the public sector, considering the interplay of various antecedents, consequences, and strategies. Antecedents encompass individual factors such as positive psychological states and PSM, as well as organizational factors like HRM practices, effective leadership, perceived organizational support, justice, and agility. When effectively leveraged, these antecedents result in notable consequences, including increased employee well-being, heightened job satisfaction, strengthened organizational citizenship behavior, stimulated creativity and innovation, enhanced overall organizational performance, and ultimately, improved public service delivery. Strategically implementing approaches such as cultivating PSM, creating supportive work environments, fostering a culture of continuous learning and development, and investing in leadership development are paramount to achieving the desired outcomes and fostering EE.

This study has important implications for both researchers and practitioners. Firstly, it contributes to the theoretical understanding of EE in the public sector by introducing a new conceptual model. Secondly, it offers insights for administrators who aim to gain an understanding of the factors influencing EE within the public sector. Lastly, the study provides practical recommendations for administrators, offering strategies to enhance EE in their organizations. This study is expected to provide guidance to decision-makers to promote EE and facilitate the delivery of high-quality public services in the public sector.

It is crucial to discuss these findings while acknowledging their limitations, which can provide insights for future studies. Firstly, the dataset is limited to studies retrieved from the WoS and Scopus databases. Future research could include studies from other databases to conduct more comprehensive investigations. Secondly, this study developed a new model focused on the antecedents, consequences, and strategies of EE in the public sector. Further research should extend this model and explore additional factors on EE. Thirdly, the cultural and sectoral dimensions were not thoroughly evaluated in this study. In future studies on EE in the public sector, it is essential to place greater emphasis on these dimensions, as variations might exist among diverse cultures and sub-sectors.

## Studies on EE in Public Sector

Authors	Countries	Methods	Samples
Alamri, 2023	Saudi Arabia	Survey research	316 employees
Alqhaiwi and Luu, 2023	Jordan	Survey research	426 employees and their managers
Brennan et al., 2023	Ireland	Survey research	279 employees, 46 supervisors, and 156 teaching staff
Chiwawa, 2022	Zimbabwe	Survey research	248 civil servants
Cooke, Brant and Woods, 2019	United States	Survey research	388 supervisors and managers
De Simone et al., 2016	Italy	Survey research and focus group	137 inspectors and 61 inspectors
Ding and Wang, 2023	10 countries	Meta-analytic approach	31 studies
Gargantini et al., 2022	Brazil	Survey research	7,682 employees
George, Okon and Akaighe, 2023	Nigeria	Survey research	557 employees
Ghosh, Rai and Sinha, 2014	India	Survey research	210 employees
Hammon, Gillis and Icenogle, 2022	United States	Survey research	268 employees
Jin and McDonald, 2017	United States	Survey research	1,251 employees
Kidron and Vinarski, 2018	Israel	Explanatory-sequential mixed methods	217 managers and employees
Khusanova, Kang and Choi, 2021	Uzbekistan	Survey research	183 employees and 47 supervisors
Knox and Marin-Cadavid, 2022	Scotland	Semi-structured interview	36 informants
Ludviga and Kalvina, 2023	Latvia	Survey research	5,469 employees
Ly, 2023	Cambodia	Survey research	282 employees
Mohapatra and Sharma, 2010	India	Survey research	84 managerial employees
Mostafa and Abed El-Motalib, 2020	Egypt	Survey research	197 nurses
Nguyen et al., 2018	Australia	Survey research	220 nurses
Nissinen et al., 2022	Finland	Survey research	213 civil servants
Ohemeng, Obuobisa Darko and Amoako-Asiedu, 2020	Ghana	Interview and survey research	10 senior officials and 308 officials from HRM
Pradhan, Dash and Jena, 2019	India	Survey research	393 employees

Authors	Countries	Methods	Samples
Reis de Souza Camoes and Oliveira Gomes, 2021	Brazil	Systematic review	27 studies
Svensson, Wood and Callaghan, 2009	Sweden	Survey research	27 public sector entities
Ugaddan and Park, 2017	United States	Survey research	13,051 employees
Tensay and Singh, 2020	Ethiopia	Survey research	340 employees
Weibmüller et al., 2023	Switzerland	Survey research	496 civil servants
Wushe and Shenje, 2019	Zimbabwe	Survey research	260 employees and managers
Zahari and Kaliannan, 2022	26 countries	Systematic review	48 articles

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