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# The Role of Perceived Supervisory Support and Occupational Self-Efficacy in Predicting Employee Engagement

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**THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED SUPERVISORY SUPPORT  
AND OCCUPATIONAL SELF-EFFICACY IN  
PREDICTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education: Educational Leadership

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LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

**March 21, 2019**

Date of dissertation defense

We hereby recommend that the dissertation prepared by

**Alex Vega**

entitled **The Role of Perceived Supervisory Support and Occupational**

**Self-Efficacy in Predicting Employee Engagement**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Education, Education Leadership Concentration**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research study is to examine the relationship between perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy on employee engagement. Employee engagement is a critical priority for many organizations. Companies invest a significant amount of capital in training programs for both employees and supervisors. This study examines data associated with vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs. To address key research questions within this quantitative study, the researcher analyzed three key variables: perceived supervisory support, occupational self-efficacy, and work engagement. Notably, the study results included statistical significance relationships between occupational self-efficacy and work engagement, which suggested that among vocational rehabilitation counselors, employee engagement is not correlated positively with perceived supervisory support. The implications for future research include an employee engagement system and a framework for occupational self-efficacy models.

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, family, and in the memory of my grandparents, “Gracias por ayudarme a convertirme en el hombre que soy y sere!”

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Since the industrial age, companies have sought advantage from talented employees. More recently, computerization and science have streamlined activities in companies across the world, disconcerting jobs and forcing organizations to rethink how they value and employ talented employees. Employee engagement has become a focal interest of many organizations in transforming organizational growth and competitive advantage (Rubel & Kee, 2013). As a result, organizations have begun to explore factors aimed at enhancing employee engagement and performance on the job (Rubel & Kee, 2013). Supervisory support is one of the main factors affecting employee attitudes and behaviors (Dabke & Patole, 2014). The other factor affecting employee engagement is self-efficacy; more specifically, occupational self-efficacy (Pati & Kumar, 2010). According to Albert Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is contributory in setting in motion further social cognitive variables, that in turn, kindle work engagement (Pati & Kumar, 2010). While the extant literature addresses employee engagement, there are questions regarding the relationship between employee engagement and perceived supervisory support that result in a gap in the scholarly body of knowledge. In efforts to address the gap in scholarly knowledge, the researcher designed a study that evaluated employee engagement by measuring two variables: perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy.

Current politics often present the characterization of Veterans as an underserved population. The research within this study is predicated on the perspective that Veterans are appropriately characterized as an underserved population (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). Indeed, veterans have exclusive requests that the United States government provides care and sustenance to mollify (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). To ensure veterans regain any challenge to their independence and ability to earn an income, the focus on vocational rehabilitation is critical to veteran support initiatives. The enrollment size of veterans utilizing vocational rehabilitation, approximately 21,750, the role of vocational rehabilitation counselors within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administrations (VBA), Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment divisions remain understudied; thus, the cost of failed employee engagement remains unmeasured and unmitigated. To this end, this research study intended to apply the perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy phenomena on employee engagement, with a strong focus on vocational rehabilitation counselors. The outcome ultimately supports the notion that when employees feel mastery of their job duties, they are more apt to being engaged in their performance.

The role of vocational rehabilitation counselors is to make employability determinations for veterans who have both psychiatric and physical disabilities (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). Employability determinations translate into determining the appropriate person-to-job-fit in employment decisions. This determination is made utilizing an array of assessments and vocational testing that includes: personality, interests, aptitude, and skills. These assessments are utilized to

ensure that our veterans work in career fields that will not aggravate their physical and/or psychiatric disabilities.

### **Background**

The main purpose of this quantitative study, conducted with vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, examined work engagement by gauging two variables, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable. The study was conducted using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

The research design and data improved the understanding of the relationships between perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy in predicting employee engagement. This quantitative study utilized three scales in developing an understanding of the factors influencing employee engagement, these scales include: (a) Perceived Supervisory Support Scale, (b) Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale, and (c) the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale.

Although the extant literature review suggests a positive link between antecedents perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy in impacting employee engagement, it is necessary to understand how these two variables impact vocational rehabilitation and its many moving variables. To understand the complexity of vocational rehabilitation and the unique differences these medical employees address when treating the physically and psychologically disabled, it is critical to consider the scholarly relevance of the process.

The main aim of vocational rehabilitation is to return individuals to work and to consider evidence-based practices when building treatment plans (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). In vocational rehabilitation and employment, this tedious process consists of (a) personalized professional counseling, (b) educational and employment counseling to support and guide career paths, (c) occupational assessments aimed to assist in determining skills, interests, and aptitude, (d) payment of tuition, books, and related supplies, and (e) numerous face-to-face counseling sessions encouraging and providing support to obtain vocational goals (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). Accordingly, these services help to improve an increased level of education, self-advocacy, and self-confidence that prepares an individual for competitive employment (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014).

Citing previous literature and the positive links between considered variables and their impact on employee engagement, vocational rehabilitation remains an understudied field, and thus, the expectations cannot be concluded. This intricacy of work variables, in particular, the aforementioned services, plus knowledge of numerous medical, psychological, and labor market theories, was the motivation for this study. In sum, many studies have emphasized the link between perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy in improving employee engagement; however, the current body of research does not explicitly differentiate these three variables between highly complex disciplines; this study aims to fill this underserved gap in the research.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Scholars have detected that engaged employees deliver a path for the organization to gain competitive advantage (Rubel & Kee, 2013). Moreover, the pathway to



competitive advantage offers compounding worth when the organization can retain the talent manufacturing the value (Rubel & Kee, 2013). Alternatively, without employee engagement, the company is like a vessel taking on water, it will never navigate appropriately until the holes are plugged (Rubel & Kee, 2013). The test is one of moving the supervisors into a part in which employee engagement is enabled and continued (Dabke & Patole, 2014). The breach between a rationalized state of employee engagement and the wish to do so is an expensive place for organizations (Rubel & Kee, 2013). To address the gap, this quantitative research study examined work engagement by studying two variables: perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy. Study of these variables helps to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable, using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. This study is distinct because, between these antecedents, vocational rehabilitation encompasses a rather large, yet understudied section of the medical sciences. Insights from this study will aid leadership in understanding what barriers exist, thus ensuring the vocational rehabilitation staff is engaged and delivering the best services to its patients. Given the instrumental role vocational rehabilitation counselors play in treating our veterans, increased engagement will result in a win-win for both the VA organization that employs them and the patients they serve. With engagement getting more attention from healthcare executives, it becomes imperious in determining what splits an engaged employee from a disengaged employee (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013). Thus, this research was designed to

observe the association of two variables: (a) perceived supervisory support and (b) occupational self-efficacy.

### **Significance of the Research Problem**

Anecdotally, all professional leaders understand that the holy grail of competitive benefit obtained from company philosophy must come from their internal employee base. The wisdom and full potential of each employee will continue idle until the employee is engaged (Cherian, Jacob & Jacob, Jolly, 2013). Understanding the right levers to pull to rationalize employee engagement remains a gap in the body of scholarly knowledge, as well in the practice of well-intended company leaders. The voyage to decode the path to engagement is a pricy one with gloomy results, indeed, worldwide less than one in three employees score within acceptable level of engagement (Chaudhary, Rangekar, & Burua, 2013) On a global level, work engagement parameters trend toward a fifteen-year low in employee engagement (Chaudhary, Rangekar, & Burua, 2013). As company leaders study to remedy the issue of employee engagement, existing research tells a depressing story of compounding strain and poor results; the very act of questioning management into the causes of lower engagement may cause business leaders to be impervious or defensive (Loehr, 2005). According to Loehr, it is the proportion of engaged to disengaged employees that moves both employee and organizational development (2005). To that end, the focus of this research examined work engagement by gauging two variables, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable, using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

Accordingly, it was important for this research study to experiment with vocational rehabilitation counselors, resulting in the capture of dynamics between perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy in predicting employee engagement in rehabilitation counseling. Awareness and teaching into both supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy may be effective in battling lower vigor, dedication, and absorption; all characteristics of William Schaufelie's (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010) definition of employee engagement. The findings of Schaufelie's research study can be useful in examining supervisory support, employee training, and vocational rehabilitation service-delivery practices, thus, incorporating mechanisms, which can mediate effective rehabilitation counseling practices.

Although this research was not commissioned to resolve any national or VA rehabilitation counselor concerns, at least three reasons support the rationale behind this research study. Three goals of the study that addressed the study implication included the enlargement of scholarly research and literature of the field, enhancement of practice, and a path to upgraded policy. The prime purpose of this quantitative study examined work engagement by gauging two variables, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable, using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. Intrinsic in the explanation of what practice impaired service delivery, is the information leaders require to identify practices that would not worsen service delivery, and work toward upholding practices that support goal-oriented rehabilitation service delivery.

## **Presentation of Methods and Hypothesis**

The prime purpose of this quantitative study examined work engagement by gauging two variables, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable, using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. To that end, the research in this quantitative study examined rehabilitation counselors' effectiveness in handling work environment factors. Three hypotheses guide this study as follows:

1. Hypothesis One (H1): Perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counseling support will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement.
2. Hypothesis Two (H2): Occupational self-efficacy will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement.
3. Hypothesis Three (H3): Both perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support and occupational self-efficacy will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement.

Specifically, this study explored the relationship between two variables and their relationship to employee engagement. The two variables include perceived supervisory support, and occupational self-efficacy. The study was quantitative and utilized three scales: (a) Perceived Supervisory Support scale, (b) Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale, and (c) the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale.

## **Role of Rehabilitation Counselors**

Rehabilitation counselors are often clinicians who are the recipient of a master's degree or higher (Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, 2012).

Rehabilitation counselors make employability determinations for individuals who have both physical and psychiatric disabilities; moreover, their role is to help these individuals achieve their career and independent living goals (Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, 2012). Techniques and modalities utilized by rehabilitation counselors include, but are not limited to:

- assessment and appraisal,
- diagnosis and treatment planning,
- career counseling,
- individual and group counseling,
- case management,
- program evaluation and research,
- soft-skills training,
- consultation among stakeholders,
- job analysis, job development, and job coaching,
- the practice of rehabilitation technology (Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, 2012)

Although rehabilitation counselors are employed at both the Veterans Healthcare Administration and VBA, the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment acquires its vocational rehabilitation counselors by standards outlined under VBA. These same position description specifications, skills, and abilities are summarized and stem

from the Office of Personnel Management. Additional detail in Appendix A identifies and lists these specifications.

### **Definitions of Key Concepts**

The following list of terms provides definitions relevant to this research study. Although other definitions exist, they may not represent the proposed intent of this research study.

*Perceived supervisory support.* When employees formulate views regarding the degree their supervisors value their contribution and care about their overall well-being (Dabke & Patole, 2014).

*Occupational self-efficacy.* Occupational self-efficacy reflects an individual's belief that he/she can execute work-related tasks (Yakin, M. & Erdil, O., 2012).

*Work engagement.* A positive, fulfilling, highly-engaged, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, passion, loyalty, and absorption. This definition is suitable for this research study as the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale measures for key study components (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010).

*Rehabilitation counseling.* The knowledge, know-how, process, and skills required for the provision of effective rehabilitation counseling services to persons with physical, mental, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities as embodied in the standards of the profession's credentialing and support organizations (Commission on Rehabilitation, p. 2018).

*Vocational rehabilitation & employment program.* A program dedicated to the vocational rehabilitation and employment of Veterans, defined by two main program goals. The first is to assist the service-connected veteran with obtaining, maintaining,

and preparing for suitable competitive employment. The second, for those veterans who are severely disabled and suitable employment, is not realistic; they provide independent living goals that will maximize his or her quality of life (Commission on Rehabilitation, p. 2018).

*Vocational rehabilitation & employment counselor.* Vocational rehabilitation counselors perform these job duties:

- counseling services to severely disabled veterans,
- case management to include coordination of all rehabilitation services, such as employment services, documentation of advancement and adjustment, and upkeep of case records established by VA regulations,
- initial assessments,
- eligibility determinations,
- conducts rehabilitation planning and problem solving,
- employs counseling modalities,
- administers and interprets vocational testing,
- acts as Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) to acquire assessment, case management, employment, and other services related to service delivery,
- recommendations and referrals to other sources when necessary (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2018).

Appendix A includes comprehensive detail for a full position announcement by the United States Office of Personnel Management.

## **Summary**

The goal of this quantitative research study examined work engagement by gauging two variables, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable, using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. More specifically, this research study examined the phenomenon through the perspective of vocational rehabilitation counselors within the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment division. This research design provided the advantage of conducting the study by collecting data from over 150 currently employed VA vocational rehabilitation and employment counselors working across several national districts.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Employee engagement is a salient concept evaluated in this study through two antecedents. These two antecedents perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, and the extent of their contributions will be examined to determine impact. Employee engagement comprised actions or procedures resolute to be helpful, or unhelpful, to the organization. In this segment, we inspect the association of each antecedent to employee engagement. We provided an in-depth research analysis of employee engagement followed by supporting scales. We also include the theoretical framework by which this study examines each antecedent.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Loehr (2005), engagement sparks talent and ability and disengagement brings it down (Dabke, D. & Patole, S., 2014). Loehr stated that not even the cleverness and full potential of the organization's liveliest employees can surface until he/she is engaged (Dabke, D. & Patole, S., 2014). Accordingly, it is the ratio of engaged to disengaged employees that motivate monetary outcomes (Dabke, D. & Patole, S., 2014). Here, Loehr highlighted the salience of any organizational undertaking. In addition to organizations gauging engaged/disengaged employees, they also assess supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy (Pati & Kumer, 2010). The proposed

variables, employee engagement, perceived supervisory support, and occupational self-efficacy, examined through the lens of two theoretical frameworks: social exchange and social cognitive theories gave the study a solid theoretical perspective (Pati & Kumer, 2010).

Given that many sorts of human relationships and behaviors are engrained through give-and-take, social exchange theory is proposed to evaluate variables: perceived supervisory support and employee engagement (Pati & Kumer, 2010). Social exchange theory approves the proposition that relations, over a stretch of time, grow into credulous, faithful, and reciprocated initiates, all with the unspoken presumption that both the individuals will exercise agreed upon rules (Cropanzo and Mitchell, 2005). This same concept occurs in the workplace. Thus, through a sequence of connections between parties, the worker contemplates his level of engagement (Abu Khliefeh & Som, 2013). Administrative success is substantially linked to work engagement (Dabke & Patole, 2014). The salience of work engagement is key to the issue of workers' dearth of obligation and eagerness (Ram, P. & Prabhakar, G., 2011). In fact, engaged workers are more effectual, creative, and offer more to the bottom line (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012). Additionally, engaged employees are more committed to the company (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012). Researchers William Schaufeli et al (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010) defined engagement in standings of an optimistic, satisfying, and work-related state of mind. This same motivational state is characterized by three traits: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012). Vigor refers to the employees' increased level of energy while performing essential job functions (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012). Dedication signifies being intensely involved

in one's work; here workers experience a sagacity of drive, passion, inspiration, and challenge (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012). And lastly, there is absorption, described as being fully engrossed in one's work, thus losing all notion of the work period (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2012). Researchers advocate that employees have two seemingly important work relationships: the supervisory one and the organizational one (Dabke & Patole, 2014). More specifically, this research study determines the relationship between immediate supervisors and how this affected employee engagement. In measuring this, scholars defined supervisory support as the grade to which superiors: (a) care about their well-being, (b) value their contributions, and (c) are generally empathetic (Eisenberger et al. 2002). Observing supporting literature, I hypothesize there to be a positive relationship between perceived supervisory support and employee engagement.

From the belvedere of social cognitive theory, psychologist Bandura (1977) proclaims that human behaviors perpetuate both cognitive and projected significance (Iroegbu, M., 2015). Self-efficacy is one of Bandura's (Iroegbu, M.,2015) main concepts elucidating this estimated significance (1977). Self-efficacy signifies that it is the individual's confidence about their capability in relation to their own level of operative that affects behavior (Bandura, 1997). Occupational self-efficacy is a more specific domain. It refers to the internalized belief that one places on his ability to perform duty specific actions (Pethe, Chaudhari, & Dhar, 1999). Given the salience of occupational self-efficacy, existing research often provides a research connection to consider the relationship between occupational self-efficacy and work engagement.

These two models, social exchange theory and social cognitive theory, clarify the two selected antecedents in relation to impacting employee engagement. Social exchange theory evidently defines human relationships and exchanges in the work dwelling while the social cognitive theory explained gaps in performances and how they affect our level of engagement. Together, these two models will determine how each affects the other, both individually and, when predicting employee engagement (Ghosh, P., Rai, A., Singh, A., & Ragini, 2016).

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

In the present study, the research design included an investigation into the factors that contribute to employee engagement. According to social cognitive theory, the utmost prevalent instrument of human behavior is perceived self-efficacy, which denotes the perception individuals hold over themselves and the environment (Switzer, Kelly C., Nagy, Mark S., & Mullins, Morell E., 2005). Self-efficacy (Switzer, Kelly C., Nagy, Mark S., & Mullins, Morell E., 2005), defined by leading scholars as the individuals' beliefs in relation to their own capabilities. According to Stajkovich and Luthans (1998), since self-efficacious individuals trust in their ability to follow and achieve goals, they are also predicted to be more stern when confronted under stressful situations (Lunenburg, Fred C., 2011).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

One of the most rudimentary tenets of social exchange theory (Cropanzo & Mitchell, 2005) stated that for relationships to evolve into faithful, believing, and mutual commitments, there must be a followed set of agreed upon rules. It is through these rules

and guidelines that social exchanges grow and flourish. According to Cropanzo and Mitchell (2005), examples of these rules included reciprocity rules and negotiated rules. For purposes of this research study, Cropanzo and Mitchell's model of social exchange theory will be applied to study perceived supervisory support.

The reciprocity rule, which is the most popular in existing literature, exhibits several exchanges. Cropanzo and Mitchell (2005) cite at least three different types exchanges, including (a) reciprocity as interdependent exchanges, (b) reciprocity as a folk belief, and (c) reciprocity as a moral norm. The first, reciprocity as interdependent exchanges, denotes to conclusions dependent on one or more parties' efforts (Cropanzo & Mitchell, 2005). In this kind of exchange, consideration is given to the word 'interdependence' where collaboration is encouraged and joint and corresponding arrangements are considered. The second, reciprocity as a folk belief, refers to expectations specific to cultural norms. In this type, participants accept some combination of the idea that "things will work out in the end" and believe: (a) all things reach fairness over a period of time, (b) those who are not living by the rules will eventually be disciplined, and (c) those who play fair will be rewarded (Cropanzo & Mitchell, 2005). And finally, there is reciprocity as a standard and individual orientation. The most salient difference between this type of exchange and the previous one is that in this one, norms refer to a type of automatic injunction like 'should' or 'ought.' That is, this exchange is oriented around the belief that actions are determined per, "This is how I and he *should* behave" (Cropanzo & Mitchell, 2005).

In parties of discussion, some exchanges are done in expectation of advantageous arrangement (Kalidass, A. & Bahron, A., 2015). These kinds of arrangements are

sometimes mentioned as 'quid pro quo' rather than mutual exchanges and are found more commonly in financial transactions; for example, discussing one's salary. Because of the nature of negotiations, Molm et al (1999) understood that negotiated exchanges provoke a type of 'power' over one of the entangled parties and thus diverges any perceived balance (Kalidass, A. & Bahron, A., 2015).

### **Employee Engagement**

The main importance behind evaluating employee engagement is that it has constructive significances for both employees and organizations. Employee engagement (Ghosh, P., Rai, A., Singh, A., & Ragini, 2016) is about passion and commitment to one's craft. Engagement concerns itself with the individual willingness to capitalize in one's self to assist the employer (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013).

In regard to this study's interest in researching counselor effectiveness, it becomes imperative to distinguish between an engaged and disengaged employee. Shaufelie distinguishes employee engagement by identifying three characteristics, and they are: (a) vigor, (b) dedication, and (c) absorption. Vigor denotes energy and mental resilience (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010). Dedication denotes commitment (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010). And absorption denotes engrossment (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010). Each characteristic will be measured using the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale.

### **Review of the Research Literature**

This study will research three variables on service delivery among rehabilitation counselors. Those three variables are perceived supervisory support, occupational self-efficacy, and employee engagement. Occupational self-efficacy signifies a person's

belief that he or she is capable of successfully executing the duties outlined in their position description. A person's perceived level of supervisory support will also be examined. Perceived supervisory support translates into the views the employees formulate concerning the degree their supervisors prize their contributions and care about their general well-being (Dabke & Patole, 2014). And finally, there is employee engagement. According to William Schaufeli (2010), engagement is measured in terms of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Ram, P. & Prabhakar, G., 2011). These three components will be examined when measuring employee engagement against occupational self-efficacy and perceived supervisory support.

The primary purpose of this quantitative research study examined work engagement by gauging two variables, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable, using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. More specifically, the study examines how each variable impacts employee engagement amongst rehabilitation counselors working within the Department of Veterans Affairs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment division. To this end, a literature review was conducted to evaluate both antecedents, perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy, and the importance they each play, both individually and together, in impacting employee engagement.

The literature review provides an overview of antecedents that may influence proposed research study. Figure 1 demonstrates the sequence of events related to the study hypothesis, that perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support

and vocational rehabilitation counselor occupational self-efficacy will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement. Figure 1 illustrates the sequence of study events.

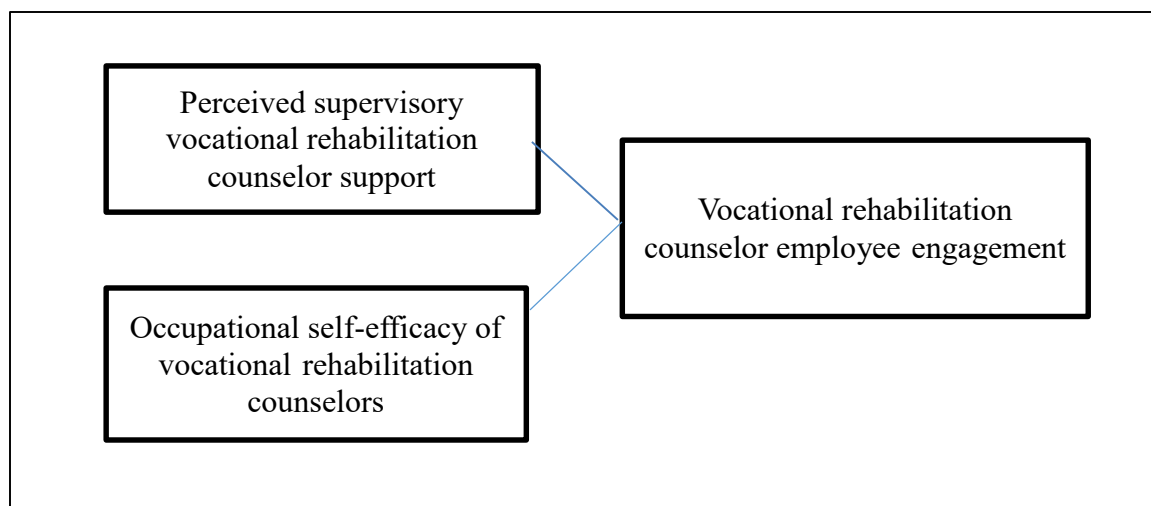


Figure 1. *Sequence of Study Events*

### **Perceived Supervisory Support**

The concept of perceived supervisory support has received increasing attention in the organizational behavior sciences and has thus been found to significantly affect organizational results (Kalidass, A. & Bahron, A., 2015). Staying in line with researcher's Dabke and Patole's (2014) definition, perceived supervisory support consists of the views employees formulate regarding the degree their supervisors value their contribution and care about their overall well-being (Dabke & Patole, 2014). Consistent with this description, supervisors play a salient role in promoting positive organizational results. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support will likely be positively related to vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement (Dabke & Patole, 2014).



Perceived supervisory support is positively related to employee engagement (Rubel & Kee, 2013). According to researchers Cropanzo & Mitchell (2005), perceived supervisory support from your supervisor enlarges the felt responsibility of workers to accomplish both the supervisor's, as well as organization's purposes. This is also maintained by researchers Rubel, MRB & Kee, DMH (2013), who divulge that when supervisors provide higher, or more supportive work-related kind behaviors, workers in turn respond with improved engagement, and better labor attitudes (Rubel, MRB., & Kee, DMH, 2013). According to Tharanganie (2013), she lists examples of supervisory support to include, but not limited to:

- enhancing employee confidence,
- providing encouragement for transfer or growth,
- offering free space to permit creativity,
- giving on-going feedback,
- offering guidance,
- job enrichment,
- positive reinforcement,
- explaining how the employee fits into the strategic mission (Liaw, J. & Nai-Wen, C., 2010).

Tharanganie (2013) goes on to explain how these various forms of supervisory support enhance employee confidence and encouragement while assisting training and positively changing the environment.

Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor (2000) state that employees have two important work-related relationships (Khan, S., Mahmood, A., Kanwal, S., & Latif, Y.,

2015). Researchers lists these two important work-related relationships as: (a) the relationship we have with our immediate supervisor and (b) the relationship we have with the organization. Between the two (Khan, S., Mahmood, A., Kanwal, S., & Latif, Y., 2015) relationships, our relationship with our immediate supervisor and relationship with the organization, our relationship with our immediate supervisor is the most important. Furthermore, the Aon Hewitt report (2013) on Global Trends in Employee Engagement accentuates the position of the leader, or immediate supervisor, as the most crucial in ensuring higher employee engagement.

Employees' immediate supervisors serve as the closest organizational agent to the worker (Pati & Kumar, 2010). Accordingly, these supervisors could interconnect with the organizational mission and have a direct influence over the worker. In many cases the supervisor serves as an extension of the organization (Khan, S., Mahmood, A., Kanwal, S., & Latif, Y., 2015). In following this manner of discussion, perceived supervisory support can thus be formulated to coincide with employee engagement. The Human Resources Development (HRD) model illustrates the importance of how supervisory support influences employee engagement. In today's fast paced technology-oriented world (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013), information is the salient source of advantageous benefit, and same is embodied in the organization's employees. Within this context, HRD and occupational self-efficacy play a central role in promoting and supporting knowledge development (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013). The HRD climate survey helps us gauge this type of development. Developed by researchers T.V. Rao and E. Abraham, this instrument theorized three dimensions, and they are: (a) general climate, (b) openness, confrontation, trust, autonomy, proactivity, authenticity,

and collaboration (OCTAPAC), and (c) implementation of HRD mechanisms (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013). The general climate section refers to the importance of HRD given by management and other classified members (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013). OCTAPAC deals with the extent to which each of the acronym references are promoted (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013). And lastly, there is implementation (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013), and this refers to the mechanisms that gauge each. Some examples of mechanisms include: performance appraisals, career and planning tools, and performance awards, just to name a few (Chaudhary, Rangnekar, & Barua, 2013).

Immediate supervisors (Switzer, Kelly C., Nagy, Mark S., & Mullins, Morell E., 2005) play an influential role in carrying out employee opinions. Employees expect their leaders to provide accurate feedback and conduct fair evaluations of their work performance (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). Highly supportive leaders are viewed as team players and foster development in worker productivity while less supportive leaders are considered a barrier and produce the conflicting (Anderson, 2006). Similarly, (Switzer, Kelly C., Nagy, Mark S., & Mullins, Morell E., 2005), workers with lower perceived levels of supervisor support retain a greater possibility of performing withdrawal kind actions. These withdrawal kind behaviors can negatively affect the welfare of the subdivision, other employees, and the customers they intend to serve (Switzer, Kelly C., Nagy, Mark S., & Mullins, Morell E., 2005). To this point, social exchange theory signifies that the greater the support from supervisors the workers perceive, the more obliged they become and the more likely they are to respond with positive work behaviors.

Conversely, (Cropanzo, R. & Mitchell, M., 2005) when lesser support from leaders is perceived, maximum exertion is conceded and worker engagement lessens. Previous studies from Cropanzo and Mitchell's social exchange theory divulge that perceived support positively effects organizational performance and undesirably effects turnover. Turnover is designated as one of the negative misplaced behaviors of lessened worker engagement (Cropanzo, R. & Mitchell, M., 2005). Managerial support is important for training. As a matter of fact, (Switzer, Nagy, & Mullins, 2005), the U.S. alone spends upwards of sixty billion dollars for training per year. On average, American workers receive about thirty hours of yearly training (Switzer, Nagy, & Mullins, 2005). And undeniably, prior research has indicated social support, specifically supervisor support, peer support, and subordinate support, to be prominent allies in transfer of training (Kuvaas, B. & Dysvik, A., 2010). Of the aforementioned four, only supervisor support was found to be linked with a positive connection to pre-training motivation. This comprised of leaders who perceived a greater degree of support from their reporting supervisors; thus, imposing the importance of leader support on organizational training and engagement (Kuvaas, B. & Dysvik, A., 2010).

Supervisors are in a great position to be influential. This is the case because leaders influence several constructive work-related factors to include employee attitudes and behaviors; same is also true because of the proximity between supervisors and their employees (Kalidass, A. & Bahron, A., 2015). Empirical research studies (Kalidass, A. & Bahron, A., 2015) have supported the positive association between perceived supervisory support and worker engagement. Perceived supervisory support has been and remains a salient predictor of worker engagement as absence of that support from

leaders leads to employee exhaustion and/or burnout (Wang, Zhongmin, 2014). Scholars like Bates (2004) and Frank et al. (2004) have contended that immediate leaders are understood to be particularly important for building engagement or being the source of worker disengagement (Wang, Zhongmin, 2014).

Leaders have the duty of directing and evaluating subordinate performance (Khan, S., Mahmood, A., Kanwal, S., & Latif, Y., 2015). Since this responsibility is true of many in supervisory positions, leaders take on a more critical role in motivating and providing timely and productive feedback (Khan, S., Mahmood, A., Kanwal, S., & Latif, Y., 2015). One salient aspect of worker engagement, specifically psychological safety (Kahn et al, 2015) may arise from care and support from first-line leaders (Khan, S., Mahmood, A., Kanwal, S., & Latif, Y., 2015). Hence, this researcher believes supervisory support to be positively related to employee engagement.

Relational trust is demonstrated through leadership support (Demerouti, E. & Bakker, A.B., 2011) when workers feel that their voices are heard, so it follows the assumption that the same is engendered in the level of respect, or reciprocated level of trust, that workers feel towards their leaders. Moreover, when workers deliver on their promises, this strengthens the level of trust that employees feel towards their leaders (Demerouti, E. & Bakker, A.B., 2011). ‘Relational trust’ (Demerouti, E. & Bakker, A.B., 2011), nurtures reciprocity, and reinforces the emotional bond. The higher the sense of trust towards supervisors increases the pledge that worker obligations will be fulfilled (Demerouti, E. & Bakker, A.B., 2011), which affects the likelihood of workers remaining engaged in their performance.

### **Perceived Supervisory Support Scale**

The perceived supervisory support scale is a self-administered exam. The scale was established and validated using the five dimensions of supervisory support (Dabke, D. & Patole, S., 2014). The five dimensions include:

- emotional,
- appraisal,
- career,
- resource,
- and outside-of-work support

The coefficient alpha for same instrument was 0.98. The instrument uses a 5-point Likert scale, and subjects are asked to designate their level of agreement ranging from (one) strongly disagree to (five) strongly agree. Appendix B includes a copy of the perceived supervisory support instrument.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy (Cherian, Jacob & Jacob, Jolly 2013) is defined in terms of an individual's belief that he/she can perform a task. It's like a level of self-confidence that one holds in relation to accomplishing and/or performing a specific task (Cherian, Jacob & Jacob, Jolly 2013). Brocker (1988) recounts it to a version of self-esteem (Cherian, Jacob & Jacob, Jolly 2013). Self-efficacy (Cherian, Jacob & Jacob, Jolly 2013) is described as having have three dimensions: (a) magnitude, (b) strength, and (c) generality. Magnitude denotes the perceived level of difficulty the task is understood to have. Strength refers to the conviction the subject holds in relation to accomplishing the

task. And finally, there is generality. Generality refers to the degree of expectancy across situations.

There are three ways self-efficacy explains the way we learn and perform. First, self-efficacy influences the goals workers select. Research (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Mukesh, K.B., 2012) indicates that people not only learn but also perform at stages consistent with their level of self-efficacy. For example, workers with low levels of self-efficacy are more likely to set low goals while workers with high self-efficacy tend to set high goals (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Mukesh, K.B., 2012). Second, self-efficacy affects the level of effort exerted in accomplishing a task. For example, workers with higher ratings of self-efficacy generally work harder to complete their tasks while workers with lower self-efficacy, because their belief is less, exert less effort in accomplishing same (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Mukesh, K.B., 2012). The third explanation has to do with persistence. This is explained through accomplishing new tasks. Because individuals who hold high self-efficacy are more confident, they are more willing to learn and perform new tasks. Contrarywise, employees with low self-efficacy will avoid or are more likely to give up when matters surface.

Because self-efficacy can have commanding effects on organizations, it becomes salient to identify and understand its pedigrees. Bandura (1977) identified four sources of pedigree related to self-efficacy, and they are:

- past performance,
- vicarious experience,
- verbal persuasion,
- emotional cues.

According to Bandura, past performance is the most salient of the four and refers to degrees of success. For example, workers who have previously succeeded in certain work-related tasks, tend to hold more confidence about performing alike tasks in the future. Bandura lists several ways to boost self-efficacy:

- careful hiring,
- providing opportunities for challenging assignments,
- job enrichment and coaching,
- goal setting,
- constructive feedback,
- rewards for improvement

The second pedigree of self-efficacy is vicarious experience. Vicarious experience refers to modeling. For example, witnessing a coworker succeed at performing a job could improve the watcher's self-efficacy, or self-confidence. This involvement becomes more convincing when the watcher witnessed has successes by utilizing characters possessed by the on-looker. The third pedigree explaining self-efficacy is verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion is like self-fulfilling prophecy. If you convince yourself that something can be done, you are more likely to believe that it can be done. And lastly, there are emotional cues. Here Bandura (Lunenber, 2011) argues the symptoms that dictate self-efficacy. For example, if a worker believes he will fail at a task, he might feel certain psychological symptoms, and they are: elevated heart rate, feeling flushed, sweaty hands, headaches, and so on. If the appropriated task seems higher than the capabilities of the individual, then anxiety ensues.



Edwin Locke's goal setting theory is a motivational theory sometimes compared to self-efficacy. Consider a worker a supervisor has assigned a more difficult task than usual. This action may lead the worker to feel that the supervisor has more confidence in him and may lead him to feel more self-efficacious. Research (Consiglio, C., Borgogni, L., Di Tecco, C., & Schaufeli, W., 2016) has revealed that setting difficult goals for workers translates into more employee assurance. This felt emotional cue by the worker sets in motion a psychological process in which the worker feels more confidence, and then in turn, increases performance and worker engagement.

Belief in one's self is the central idea behind Albert Bandura's self-efficacy concept (Pati & Kumar, 2010). From the perspective of Bandura's social cognitive theory, it is believed that human behavior is predicated by two sets of cognitive factors: the estimated value of the outcome, and self-efficacy. These factors stimulate the choices we make in relation to the actions we decide to assume, apply efforts towards, and exert perseverance (Pati & Kumar, 2010). Bandura's (1977) concept of self-efficacy has been addressed in three different ways: global concepts casing several spheres, specific fields, and as task-specific actions where certain phobias are addressed. Indeed, this study examined the specific domain of occupational self-efficacy and how it influences employee engagement.

Self-efficacy does not concern itself with the skills one possesses, but rather the estimation of what the individual believes they can accomplish to what they already possess (Bandura, 1986). In predicting employee performance in a discipline, the level of self-efficacy should be related to domain rather than task-specific behaviors. Thus, the

present study uses the occupational self-efficacy scale as a measurement for evaluating work-related performance.

The individual's level of occupational self-efficacy (Lunenburg, Fred C., (2011) is consistent with the level of belief we hold when executing job-related behaviors. Workers with high levels of occupational self-efficacy (Lunenburg, Fred C., 2011) demonstrate high resolve and willpower, and are more confident about performing future or similar job-related behaviors. This is supported by empirical research where links between higher occupational self-efficacy and other related work factors are considered. Examples of these other job-related factors include: (a) higher work attitudes, and (b) behaviors and positive work consequences. Examples cited in extant literature include:

- commitment
- work fulfillment
- work performance
- performance growth
- work-related training success
- learning intelligence
- career satisfaction

Given these well-founded links between occupational self-efficacy and other job-related factors, it can be predicted that self-efficacy is a salient personal resource with considerable implications. Subsequently, higher occupational self-efficacy is contributory to both employee well-being (Iroegbu, M., 2015) and worker engagement.

Self-efficacy remains relevant in the organizational context as it relates to performance. Explanation for the assembly to performance reinforces the circumstance

of individuals with a higher sense of occupational self-efficacy and the thought process that these individual's performance continues longer in the face of difficulties and challenge themselves to setting higher more stimulating goals (Iroegbu, M., 2015). To this end, self-efficacy has often been used as a predictor for job-related variables. Researchers Cherian & Jacob (2013) report that self-efficacy demonstrates a salient role in impacting both the individual's emotional reactions as well as his/her thought patterns. Researchers Graham and Weiner (1996) go onto state the salience of self-efficacy by referencing prediction patterns and measurements (Iroegbu, M., 2015). They state, when compared to other motivational concepts, that self-efficacy remains at the forefront in measuring behavioral outcomes. Denise Rousseau (2008) concurs and recently supported in one of his books, how recent advances in the field of positive psychology translate into benefits for both companies and employees (Lunenburg, Fred C., 2011).

Developing and strengthening self-efficacy increases individual behavior.

Researchers Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1995) note the salience of using experiences to build self-efficacy. They argue that it is through our experiences, both the stimulating and basic, that we build 'light' and receive self-confirmation in changing and refining our actions. Many scholars (Lunenburg, Fred C., 2011) have proven self-efficacy to be interconnected with self-control, resilience, and impacting problem solving. Essentially, it is amicable among individuals who hold high self-efficacy to exceed less efficacious persons in relation to job-related features such as: promotions, career success, and/or even pay (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). Success in a domain (Bandura, 1997) is closely related to self-efficacy in same domain. Higher self-efficacy (Lunenburg, Fred C., 2011) in a domain is linked to good outcomes. For example, increased job satisfaction and

performance, improved both physical/mental health issues (Bandura, 1997), and better academic performance (Bandura, 1997; Robbins et al., 2004).

### **Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale**

Occupational self-efficacy is a salient resource for both individuals and organizations. Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment sometimes observes the discrepancy between occupational performance and the degree to which their vocational counselors implement their skills. To better understand this difference and how it affects employee engagement, an understanding of self-efficacy will need to be integrated into professional practice. This section presents the development, reliability, and validity of occupational self-efficacy, particularly using the same scale amongst Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, vocational rehabilitation counselors.

The occupational self-efficacy scale is a self-administered exam. The scale was developed by researchers Sanjyot Pethe, Upinder Dhar, and Sushma Chaudhari to measure self-efficacy beliefs among professionals (Dogra, 2015). The coefficient alpha for same instrument was 0.98. Using a five-point Likert scale, subjects are asked to indicate their level of agreement ranging from (one) strongly disagree to (five) strongly agree. The scale is six-dimensional and measures: (a) confidence, (b) command, (c) adaptability, (d) personal effectiveness, (e) positive attitude, and (f) individuality. Confidence refers to the dependence one has on his/her abilities (Dogra, 2015). Command refers to the sense of control one has over his situation (Dogra, 2015). The third dimension, or adaptability, refers to the adjustment that one believes he or she will have to make depending on the environment (Dogra, 2015). The fourth, or personal effectiveness, refers to the inclination towards continuous development (Dogra, 2015).

The fifth-dimension measures positive attitude and denotes the optimistic evaluation one provides himself during the performance (Dogra, 2015). And finally, the last dimension gauges individuality. Individuality refers to the independence one believes the individual has in relation to the state, or setting (Dogra, 2015). Appendix C includes examples for the occupational self-efficacy exam.

### **Employee Engagement**

Given the salience of worker engagement (Prakash, S. & Kumar, P., 2010) and the advertised lessening of the same reported by many employers, a clearer understanding of the worker engagement model is warranted to advance employee and organizational outcomes. There is some alteration in the discourse of work engagement amongst practitioners and scholars and both are conveyed herein for resolution of importance and qualification. According to Maslach et al. (2001), engagement is branded in terms of energy, involvement, and efficacy. Engagement (Maslach et al., 2001) is also defined as the exact opposite of the three burnout scopes, which are exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Researchers Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) define employee engagement as the individual's participation and satisfaction with as well as the eagerness the worker displays towards his work.

In the practitioners' literature, employee engagement is examined in terms of what the individual brings to the workplace (Bakker, A. & Demerouti, E., 2008). As suggested by Ferguson (2007), extraneous variables such as human differences, have notable effects that cannot be overlooked. Some practitioners argue that human differences play a crucial role in swaying a worker's expected level of engagement (Robinson, 2006). Kahn (1990) suggests that psychological differences play a serious

role in the individual's ability to engage or disengage. The same (Kahn, 1990) is understood in the case of shaping the individual's competence and willingness to be involved or dedicated while performing the job.

Employee engagement (Bakker, A. & Demerouti, E., 2008) is explained by the level of emotive and intellectual pledge one holds towards the organization. Researcher Truss et al. (2006) postures the explanation of work engagement with less developed or critical scholarship and defines work engagement simply as, 'passion for work.' Still other angles for defining employee engagement exist. Avery, McKay, & Wilson (2007) explain work engagement as the degree to which workers feel capable of being their chosen selves while at the same time being intricate in their work role. Hence, although many explanations for work engagement exist, each contribute to the understanding of human behavior in organizational settings.

For this research study, work engagement is characterized by William Schaufelie's definition of employee engagement. Schaufelie defines employee engagement in terms of motivation, and states that three tenants construct employee engagement. Schaufelie states that work engagement is a motivational state and describes same as a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by three variables. These three variables are vigor, dedication, and absorption (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010). Definitions for the three tenants are provided and described. Vigor refers to the level of energy that is applied while working (Prakash, S. & Kumar, 2010). Dedication is representative of how strongly one feels and is experienced through levels of enthusiasm, stimulation, pride and contest (Yakin, M. & Erdil, O., 2012). And lastly,

there is absorption. Absorption refers to full engrossment, whereby one loses concept of time (Yakin, M. & Erdil, O., 2012).

When engaged (AbuKhalifeh, A.N. & Som, A.P.M., 2013), employees feel destined, and apply their utmost best towards attaining inspiring goals. This level of engagement extends beyond immediate situations. In this state (AbuKhalifeh, A.N. & Som, A.P.M., 2013), employees accept and make a personal commitment towards achieving their goals. In addition, (Leiter & Bakker, 2010), employee engagement stirs passionate immersion on the job as these workers experience less distraction and pay closer attention to details. According to psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, this immersion is sometimes referred to as 'flow' (Ram, P. & Prabhakar, G., 2011). Flow is explained as the state of process in which a subject is completely enveloped in an activity. Management contributes greatly to this kind of engagement difference. Employers profit from engaged employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008), and at least four reasons support that perspective. Researchers Bakker and Demerouti (2008) identify that engaged workers: (a) experience more positive emotions such as happiness and confidence, (b) account for better health practices such as reporting less headaches and stomach pains, (c) generate their own work and personal resources such as resilience and optimism, and (d) infect other employees with their positive attitudes with translates into a positive contagion. Each of these reasons fits and is consistent with Schaufelie et al's description of employee engagement (Ram, P. & Prabhakar, G., 2011). Thus, work engagement has implications for both the employee and organizational performance.

Worker engagement (Singh, 2012) is about creating the right opportunities for workers to connect. It is likewise about making an environment where workers

internalize the desire to do a good job and do so with pride (Singh, 2012). According to scholar Robinson (2004), work engagement is seen in activities and attitude. Robinson (2004) describes this in terms of consciousness and how engaged workers upgrade their performance for the benefit of the organization. Singh (2012) emphasizes how salient it is for the company and leader to develop and cultivate engagement, which requires the developmental interface between worker and employer. Singh (2012) goes on to state that engaged workers also tend to display stronger attention towards personal self-care, which results in more participation, commitment, and industrial capacity at work.

The following case studies indicate the statistical difference between engaged and disengaged employees and how this affects organizational outcomes. A worldwide study of over 50,000 workers discovered that between engaged and disengaged workers, engaged workers perform twenty percent higher and are eighty-seven percent less likely to abandon the job. Conveyed by a study of 6,064,000 workers at over fifty worldwide companies, Towers Perrin-ISR associated the financial performance of organizations with fluctuating levels of worker engagement over a one-year period. The same study found three financial outcomes related to engagement. These outcomes included: (a) operating revenue, (b) net revenue, and (c) earnings per share; each outcome was found to have risen when engagement reports were high and found to have weakened when engagement scores were low. Employee engagement is related to service delivery (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Barua K.M., 2013). According to a study conducted by Right Management (2006), engaged workers display a better shrewdness of meeting customers' needs seventy percent contrasted with seventeen percent of the non-engaged workers.



Employee engagement is essential for organizations given the various challenges they face. Macey et al. (2009) argues that organizations can profit from an engaged workforce. Numerous scholars (AbuKhalifeh, A.N. & Som, A.P.M., 2013) have orchestrated the praises of behaviors positively related to worker engagement, to include: personal attitudes, job-place activities, and performance as well as company performance, output, retention, financial performance, and even stakeholder returns. Studies conducted by researchers Macey et al. (2009) have established that among a sample of sixty-five firms in numerous industries, the top twenty-five percent reported increases in assets, profitability, and more than double the stockholder worth as compared to the bottom twenty-five percent.

Job resources such as leader support can improve employee engagement. Job resources (AbuKhalifeh, A.N. & Som, A.P.M., 2013) can either play an intrinsic motivational role, particularly because they sustain employee growth, learning and development, or they can play an extrinsic motivational role because they foster activities instrumental to achieving work goals. In the former scenario, work resources aids in fulfilling basic human needs (Macey, William H. & Schneider, Benjamin, 2008). Such needs include the need for independence, kinship and capability (Macey, William H. & Schneider, Benjamin, 2008). For example, constructive feedback nurtures learning, thus increasing job competence, or occupational self-efficacy (Macey, William H. & Schneider, Benjamin, 2008). In either case, be it from satisfaction of basic needs or satisfaction of work goals, the outcome is positive and engagement experiences improve.

### **Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale**

The Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale (UWES) is a self-administered exam. The exam was intended to measure three of Wilmar B. Schaufeli's three dedicated work-engagement characteristics, which are vigor, dedication, and absorption. The exam has satisfactory psychometric properties and has a reliability score of 0.98. The exam can be utilized to measure employee engagement on both the individual and collective level. The exam includes a 7-response Likert scale whereby 0=never and 6=always. Examples of questions associated with vigor include: "At my work I feel like I am bursting with energy" and "I can continue to work for long periods of time." Dedication type questions include: "My job inspires me" and "I find the work that I do meaningful and purposeful." Two examples of the last characteristic, or absorption, are asked in the following ways: "It is difficult to detach myself from my job" and "When I work, I forget everything else around me." (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Barua K.M. (2013).

The UWES utilizes three scopes to determine the level of work engagement. These three dimensions are: (a) vigor, (b) dedication, and (c) absorption. Vigor denotes to the high level of liveliness and psychological resilience while working. Dedication refers to meaning in one's work. Subjects are asked queries that refer to their sagacity of enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride. And lastly, there is absorption. Absorption denotes to being fully focused and captivated in one's work. Same occurs whereby one loses concept of time and is totally involved in their work. See Exhibit D in the appendix for the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale.

## Summary

The literature review provided a comprehensive quantitative research design for focusing on employee engagement; more specifically, how supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy impact that engagement. The study was presented utilizing one single phase. This single-phase approach employed the over 150 vocational rehabilitation counselors laboring amongst the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. The research study utilized three scales: (a) Perceived Supervisory Support Scale, (b) Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale, and (c) the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale. The Perceived Supervisory Support Scale gauged perceived supervisory support while the Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale was utilized to gauge work self-efficacy. Employee engagement was gauged using the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale. This single-phase quantitative research design allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth look at how each element impacts employee engagement, namely among vocational rehabilitation counselors, and look at how each then impacts employee engagement, namely among these clinicians.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

In accordance with the literature review, conceptual framework, and instruments, a research hypothesis was established. First, that supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support is positively related to employee engagement. Second, that occupational self-efficacy is positively related to vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement. And lastly, that both supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support and occupational self-efficacy are positively related to employee engagement.

There were over 150 counselors involved and each completed the perceived supervisory support scale, occupational self-efficacy scale, and Utrecht work-engagement scale. All VBA counselors participated and stemmed from all regions of the United States and include two colonies: The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and Guam. This section includes and concludes with: (a) research design, (b) procedures, (c) data analysis, (d) role of the researcher, (e) ethical considerations, and (f) summary.

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy in predicting employee engagement. Three scales were utilized: (a) the 9-item Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale developed by Wilmar B.

Schaufeli used to assess employee engagement, (b) the Perceived Supervisor Support, a 14-item scale developed by Hamer et al. (2009) used to assess perceived supervisory support, (c) and the Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale, a 19-item scale developed by Pethe, Chaudhari, and Dhar used to assess occupational self-efficacy. Additionally, a brief self-report instrument developed by the researcher was used to collect demographic information and additional characteristics. All collected information was held as confidential and was only viewed by the researcher and his committee.

### **Participants**

The research study was conducted via one single phase. Same phase was quantitative in nature and utilized three instruments: (a) Perceived Supervisory Support scale, (b) Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale, and (c) the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale. The department of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment currently employs over 150 vocational rehabilitation counselors and each operates in all 50 states and two American colonies, namely The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and Guam. Each state and colony were chosen for this study and each station was presented with the three instruments.

Each vocational rehabilitation counselor fits the standards outlined under the VBA hiring standards. Each counselor has at least one master's degree and same is completed in six major fields: (a) rehabilitation counseling, (b) counseling psychology, (c) counseling, (d) social work, (e) health administration, and (f) marriage and family therapy. In addition, many of the counselors are licensed to treat and diagnose mental health diseases and many hold licenses in either professional counseling, clinical social work, counseling psychology, or marriage and family counseling.

The number of instruments presented to each station was based on the number of counselors employed by each station, represented in each state or colony. Each participant received the instruments via email attachment and was expected to return the instruments with 100% completion. The instruments were later recorded and analyzed, and each counselor remains anonymous. In addition to receipt of the instrument, the participants were provided with informed consent forms and instructions.

### **Perceived Supervisory Support Scale**

Perceived supervisor support was analyzed using the 14-item questionnaire developed by Hammer et al. (2009). The coefficient alpha for same instrument was 0.94. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. A sample item gauging emotional support was, “My supervisor and I can talk effectively to solve conflicts between work and non-work issues.” A sample item gauging instrumental support was, “I can rely on my supervisor to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated non-work demands.” A sample item gauging role modeling was, “My supervisor demonstrates how a person can jointly be successful on and off the job.” An example of an item gauging instrumental support was, “I can depend on my supervisor to help me with scheduling conflicts if I need it.” Finally, a sample item gauging creative work-life management was, “My supervisor is able to manage the department as a whole team to enable everyone’s needs to be met.” (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Barua K.M., 2013) Please see Appendix B for a copy of the Perceived Supervisor Support instrument.

### **Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale**

Occupational self-efficacy was analyzed using the 19-item questionnaire developed by Pethe, Chaudharim and Dhar (1999). The coefficient alpha for same instrument was 0.98. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Sample items gauging occupational self-efficacy include: “No matter what comes my way in my work, I am able to handle it” and “I am aware of my strengths and I continuously develop them to suit the task at hand.” (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Barua K.M.,2013). Please see Appendix C for a copy of the Perceived Supervisory Support scale.

### **Utrecht Work Engagement Scale**

The Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale was utilized to measure employee engagement. This 9-item scale developed by Wilmar Schaufeli is described as the antidote of burnout and has three characteristics. These three characteristics are: (a) vigor, (b) dedication, and (c)absorption. Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. A sample item gauging vigor was, “At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.” A sample item gauging dedication was, “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.” An example of an item gauging absorption was, “When I am working, I forget everything else around me.” (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Barua K.M., 2013)

Those who score high on vigor, dedication, and absorption report higher levels of engagement. Scoring high on vigor is representative of usually having more energy and

stamina when working. Scoring high on dedication denotes that you identify your work experience as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging; you are enthusiastic about feeling this way and are proud of your work. For those who score high on absorption, scoring same translates into feeling happily engrossed in your work. You feel immersed in your work and report having difficulties detaching from it (Chaudhary, R., Rangnekar, S. & Barua K.M., 2013). See Exhibit D in the appendix for a copy of the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale).

### **Data Collection**

The research proposal was submitted to the Louisiana Tech University Institution Review Board (IRB), the university the researcher attends, to gain approval for this study's single-phase quantitative research study. The researcher also submitted the same proposal to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, where the researcher is employed. The IRB applications were approved and all requirements in the IRB application were compiled and included in the research portion of this study.

### **Quantitative Research Study**

This research study was considered a quantitative research study because the data collected can be both quantified and verified. Same collected data is also amenable to statistical manipulation. Alpha reliability for each instrument is described: (a) perceived supervisory support scale 0.94, (b) occupational self-efficacy scale 0.98, and (c) Utrecht work-engagement scale 0.98. Each of these instruments is appropriate for this study and have been utilized in many research trials.



Information along with sample questions for each of the instruments is provided. The perceived supervisory support scale measures supervisory support and has fourteen questions. Sample questions include: “My supervisor works effectively with workers to creatively solve conflicts between work and non-work” and “My supervisor thinks about how the work in my department can be organized to jointly benefit employees and the company.” The occupational self-efficacy scale is designed to measure work self-efficacy and has nineteen questions. Sample questions for this scale include: “I am able to perform well even in the absence of encouragement from my superiors and support from my colleagues,” and “When confronted with a difficult task, I am willing to spend whatever it takes to accomplish it.” Finally, there is the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale and the same scale is designed to measure employee engagement. This scale utilizes nine questions; the sample questions include: “I am immersed in my work” and “When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.” Each was administered to measure this research study’s hypothesis, which is: (a) that perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support is positively related to employee engagement, (b) that occupational self-efficacy is positively related to vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement, and (c) that both perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support and occupational self-efficacy is positively related to employee engagement.

### **Role of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations**

The researcher is a clinician who works for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. The researcher responsible for designing and researching this project is in Shreveport, Louisiana. The Shreveport VA location included in the research study as same location employs three of the over 150 counselors found nationwide. The researcher collected, analyzed, and reported the data ethically. Each of the counselors' names were protected and each will remain anonymous. In fact, there is no need to request names or identification for any of the participating counselors; each just needs to be employed as a vocational rehabilitation counselor working for the same division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

The results were locked in the researcher's office, and the quantitative data received from the counselors was protected and was only seen by this researcher, the researcher's committee, and the Department of Veterans Affairs' continental division vocational rehabilitation and employment officer.

Using the G\*Power 3.1 calculator, sample size for this research study was determined. This research study falls under the test family of F-tests. The statistical test is linear multiple regression. The type of power analysis is: a priori compute required sample size – given  $\alpha$  power, and effect size. Since we explored for both positive and negative impact, the same research study utilized a two-tail test. The error problem is set at .05, and the power was set at 0.80. There are three predictors, namely the three independent variables which are: (a) the Perceived Supervisory Support scale, (b) the Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale, and (c) the Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale.

Considering all aforementioned and the calculations, the G\*Power 3.1 calculator sets the sample size to fifty-three responses.

### **Summary**

In accordance with the described literature, conceptual framework, and instruments, a research hypothesis was established and followed in an ethical manner approved by IRB. This section included and concluded with: (a) research design, (b) procedures, (c) data analysis, (d) role of the researcher, (e) ethical considerations, and (f) summary.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

The purpose of this research was to understand the relationship between supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy and its relationship to employee engagement. This researcher collected data through the experiences of vocational rehabilitation counselors working with the Department of Veterans Affairs. The results section includes results from the quantitative data analysis and a summary of the major findings.

#### **Restatement of the Hypotheses**

Hypotheses One through Three were embedded into the research design to guide this research study and fulfill the study purpose. The purpose of this study was to improve the understanding of employee engagement by gauging two variables: perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy. The hypotheses are stated as:

- Hypothesis One (H1). Perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement.

- Hypothesis Two (H2) Occupational self-efficacy will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement
- Hypothesis Three (H3) Both perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support and occupational self-efficacy will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement.

### **Demographics Analysis**

The researcher distributed 150 surveys and received 53 surveys. The participants were all vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and department of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. The goal of the vocational rehabilitation and employment program is to retrain veterans to suitable and competitive employment and to use evidence-based practices when accomplishing the goal. This researcher reported that vocational rehabilitation counselors make employability determinations for veterans who have both physical and psychiatric diseases. Table 1 displays the participant educational distribution.

Table 1

*Frequency Distribution of Education Level and College Discipline*

Education Variables	(fx)	(%)
Master's	51	96.2
Specialist	1	1.9
Doctorate	1	1.9
College Discipline		
Counseling	19	35.8
Social Work	17	32
Rehabilitation Counseling	5	9.4
Counseling Psychology	10	18.8
Marriage and Family Therapy	2	3.7
Age	51>	56.6
Years with Company	1-5	75.4

**Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis**

Hypothesis One stated that perceived supervisory vocational rehabilitation counselor support will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation test was utilized to evaluate the relationship between perceived supervisory support and employee engagement. Results from the Pearson correlation test indicated that there was no significant correlation between perceived supervisory support and vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement,  $r=0.04$ ,  $p=0.764$ . These results did not support Hypothesis One. There is no statistically significant relationship between perceived supervisory support and vocational rehabilitation employee engagement.

These findings can also be shown in Figure 2, which is a scatterplot representation of the correlation test. The scatterplot and regression line in Figure 2 illustrate a nearly flat line that cuts across data points. While there is a slight positive slope to the line, it is not very noticeable.

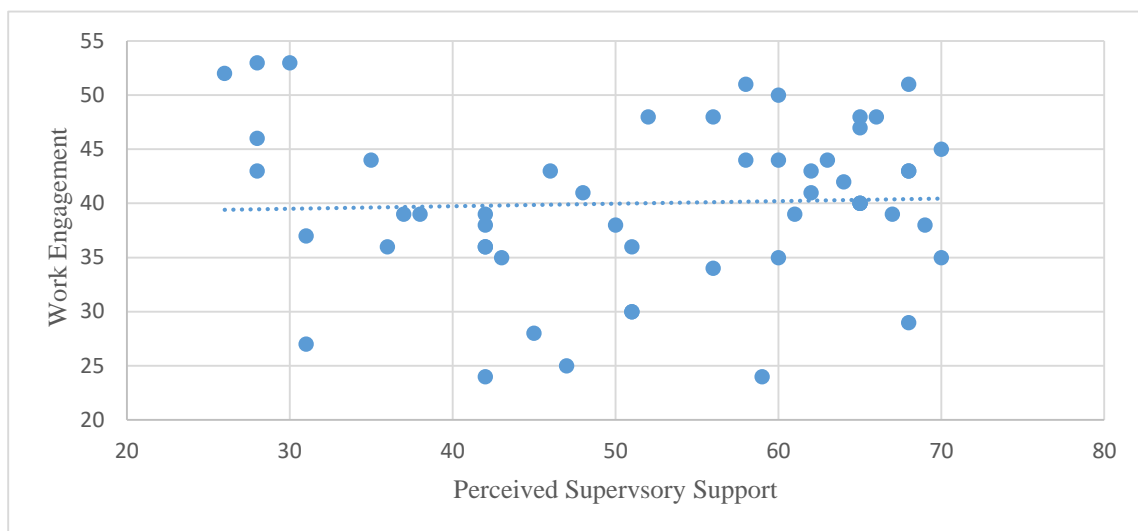


Figure 2. *Scatterplot for Perceived Supervisory Support and Work Engagement*

Hypothesis Two stated that occupational self-efficacy will correlate positively with vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement. To test this hypothesis, a Pearson correlation test was utilized to evaluate the relationship between occupational self-efficacy and employee engagement. Results of the Pearson correlation test indicated that there was a positive association between occupational self-efficacy and vocational rehabilitation counselor employee engagement ( $r=0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results supported Hypothesis Two. There is a statistically significant relationship between occupational self-efficacy and vocational rehabilitation employee engagement. Figure 3 shows a scatterplot representation of the correlation test.

A scatterplot figure was created to assess the relationship between occupational self-efficacy and work engagement. The trend line slopes to the top right which signifies that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the two variables share a positive relationship.



Figure 3. *Scatterplot for Occupational Self-Efficacy and Work Engagement*

To examine the relationship between Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS), Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale (OSES), and Employee Engagement (EE), the researcher ran a multivariate ordinary least squares regression. Results for a multivariate ordinary least square regression (demonstrated in Model 3) were run for the effect of perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy on workplace engagement. Participants' predicted work engagement is equal to  $15.04 - 0.03 (\text{PSS}) + 0.33 (\text{OSES})$ . This model explained 18.1 percent of the variance in workplace engagement. The overall fit of the model is statistically significant,  $f = 6.76$ ,  $p < 0.010$ . Results demonstrated that for every one-unit increase in the occupational self-efficacy scale, there is a 0.33 increase



in workplace engagement scale  $p < .001$  (See Table 2). The results also show there was no significant association between perceived supervisor support and employee engagement  $p = 0.663$ .

Table 2

*Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Employee Engagement*

	<u>B</u>
PSS	-0.030
OSES	0.330***
Constant	15.038
R <sup>2</sup>	0.181
F	6.759**
N	53

\*  $p \leq .05$  \*\*  $p \leq .01$  \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (two-tailed test)

A scatterplot figure was created (See Figure 4) to assess the relationship between both perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy on work engagement. The trend line slopes to the top right which signifies that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. Figure 4 is a scatterplot that displays the work engagement scale for both perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy as they were analyzed in the multivariate linear regression model. The blue dots on the scatterplot demonstrate the intersection of each case with their respective score on the OSES scale and workplace engagement scale. The slope of the line in Figure 4 demonstrates a

modest positive association - which suggests that as the OSES score increases, the workplace engagement scale also increases, on average.

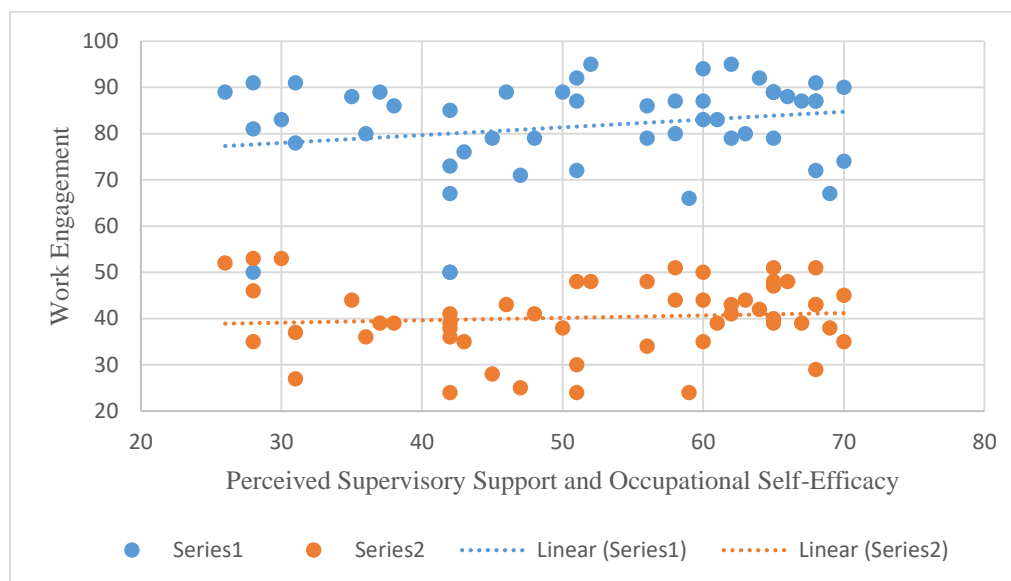


Figure 4. *Scatterplot for Perceived Supervisory Support and Engagement*

The orange dots on the scatterplot show how the scores on the PSS and the workplace engagement scale intersected. The line for the relationship between the PSS and the workplace engagement scale is almost completely flat which suggests that there is no slope or association between perceived supervisory support and workplace engagement. Additionally, this figure shows that the OSES scores, on average, intersect with higher scores on the workplace engagement scales compared to the PSS scores.

### Summary

In this chapter, the relationship between PSS and OSES and Employee Engagement were investigated to test for basic correlations. Three hypotheses guided the data analyses in this chapter. For Hypothesis One, I hypothesized that perceived

supervisory support would correlate positively with employee engagement. Ordinary Least Squares Regression for Employee Engagement test did not support Hypothesis One. Contrary to what the researcher believed to be true, support from supervisors did not affect employee engagement. One reason for this might be that vocational rehabilitation counselors are graduate-level clinicians and need little support. For Hypothesis Two, the researcher hypothesized that occupational self-efficacy would correlate positively with employee engagement.

A Pearson correlation test supported this hypothesis. One reason for this might be that self-efficacy comes from within and when employees perceive that they have a mastery of their job duties, they feel more engaged. The third and final hypothesis under examination was Hypothesis Three. The researcher hypothesized there to be a positive relationship between both perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy on employee engagement. An ordinary least squares multivariate regression was used to test the relationship of both predictor variables on employee engagement. Results from the OLS regression showed that perceived supervisory support did not show statistical significance while occupational self-efficacy did.

Anecdotally, the researcher understood that OSES has a positive impact on engagement while PSS does not. One possible explanation stated that although supervisory support is important, vocational rehabilitation counselors are well-trained clinicians who enjoy what they do, hence the reason both OSES and Employee Engagement were highly correlated.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Many veterans who return from war zones desire to come home and work. But sometimes their disabilities prevent them from accomplishing their goals, and the assistance of vocational rehabilitation counselors are needed to retrain them. Considering that these men and women have sacrificed so much, an engaged workforce of clinicians is necessary to help these veterans find suitable and rewarding work.

Scholars have long understood that the relationship between employee and supervisor is of utmost importance (Rubel & Kee, 2013). It is also well-settled that occupational self-efficacy and employee engagement are salient to the organization (Pati & Kumar, 2010).

#### **Summary of Results**

The purpose of the study was to determine employee engagement amongst two variables. The two variables were perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy. This study sought to determine relationships between the predictor and outcome variable using data from vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.

Scatter plots were used to help measure the relationships. Hypothesis One stated that perceived supervisory support would correlate positively with employee engagement. The results did not support this hypothesis. This could be because vocational rehabilitation counselors are graduate-level clinicians who need little supervision. They can handle their caseloads with few impasses. According to the scatter plot as well as regression analyses that examined perceived supervisory support and work engagement, there was no statistical significance in this focal relationship. The scatter plot measuring the relationship between occupational self-efficacy and work engagement demonstrated a positive relationship. It was hypothesized that occupational self-efficacy would correlate positively with employee engagement (Hypothesis Two). The results did yield a positive relationship between the two. The literature review supports this claim. There is a surfeit of literature supporting the notion that when employees feel mastery of their job duties, they are more apt to being engaged in their performance. When both perceived supervisory support and occupational self-efficacy were paired together (Hypothesis Three), only occupational self-efficacy displayed significance. There was no statistical significance between perceived supervisory support and work engagement in the final regression model.

### **Implications**

Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy may not apply directly to performance but may act as a contributor of other factors such as occupational advantage. Therefore, the extent to which self-efficacy (and more specifically occupational self-efficacy) plays a role in large organizations such as the VA, is an area for future research. As past research suggests, it appears that the more mastery of the duties outlined in an

individual's position description that the individual understands, the better the outcomes for his or her employee engagement. This applies to vocational rehabilitation counselors and has implications for similar career fields such as psychologists, social workers, licensed professional counselors, and marriage and family therapists.

Because work engagement denotes such a vital dimension of individual performance (Christian et al., 2011) and human well-being, several practical inferences arise from the study of its determinants. The role of self-efficacy as a predictor of employee engagement suggests that the expansion of training programs aimed at building and enhancing self-efficacy principles would be useful for organizations like the VA. Increasing employees' confidence in their abilities to master their job is likely to result in higher levels of employee engagement. Well-developed stratagems exist to encourage occupational self-efficacy through its main sources (Bandura, 1997), such as mastery experience, social persuasion, and vicarious experience; all of which have expansively demonstrated their effectiveness in organizational frameworks (Breso et al., 2011). In this context, special attention could be given to the social work domain to increase employees' confidence to be able to yield positive changes in the social work environment. At the same time, even though within these clinical disciplines, supervisory support was less salient, supervisors could be trained to support employees and encourage them, which will yield positive results for increasing employee engagement. Supervisors could set up more team-building experiences where these clinicians could share information and behavioral strategies which will increase both occupational self-efficacy and employee engagement.

The results of this research study provide support for the assumed hypothesis that occupational self-efficacy significantly predicts employee engagement. Thus, to improve engagement levels across mental health disciplines, HR departments should attempt to advance same by helping employees increase their ability to adjust and enhance confidence. These factors of occupational self-efficacy were found to have most influential impact on engagement levels, as shown by the regression analyses in the study. For example, HR departments across the VA could attempt to boost employees' self-confidence through the successful application of learned skills to challenging work situations (Xanthopolou et al., 2008) and create an environment for healthy competition among employees (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009).

Employee engagement was measured by the three determinants of (a) vigor, (b) dedication, and (c) absorption. In the present research study, dedication was found to impact employee engagement the most. Thus, the more dedicated the employee, the more engaged he or she was. Therefore, improving the dedication level of employees will likely result in enhanced engagement. Both HR professionals and supervisors should make every effort to improve dedication and energy by taking appropriate measures.

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that this research study has several limitations, including the following:

1. Since the research study included only cross-sectional information on the relationships between occupational self-efficacy, perceived supervisory support, and employee engagement, inferences of causality cannot be drawn.

2. The population target may be referenced in an inadequate or improper manner, and thus hinder results.
3. The researcher was unable to control the environment, and thus environmental factors may impact the results.
4. Future research should examine the associations among sociodemographic variables, other personal resources, and engagement dimensions across time to address causality issues.
5. The sample size should be increased in future studies to improve the generalizability of the results.

To improve the reliability of the outcomes and results, the researcher took every precaution and applied every ethical standard known to combat the known and unknown limitations of quantitative research.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study, drawing on empirical support and previous literature, contends that an empowered worker can be expected to be engaged in their work. This research study was able to highlight the importance of occupational self-efficacy as a performance advantage. Expanding the scope of the research to include core self-evaluations and self-monitoring could be assessed to see how these variables could impact work engagement. It is important for VA employees to give it their all and remain engaged. Their customers are heroes and should be treated as such. To increase engagement levels across the VA, more research on occupational self-efficacy and the determinants of same could embolden the requisite for higher performance parameters.



Having noted the recommendations, future research opportunities learned and noted throughout the research study includes the following:

1. The gap between rationalized employee engagement and strategic outcomes.

Research that identifies relationships between employee engagement and strategic outcomes might provide a path for predictable growth based on engagement.

2. The type and relationship of leadership styles that positively correlate to employee engagement. Research that provides insight on the leadership styles that are most likely to result in high levels of employee engagement could result in a talent framework strategy that underpins the relationship of employee engagement and supervisory impact.

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**APPENDIX A**

**POSITION DESCRIPTION**

## Position Description

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Veterans Benefits Administration

1 vacancy in the following location Washington DC, DC, Work Schedule is Full Time – Permanent, Opened Monday 5/15/2017(4 day(s) ago), Closes Friday 5/19/2017(0 day(s) away)

Salary Range, \$79,720.00 to \$103,639.00 / Per Year,

Series & Grade, GS-0101-12/12,

Promotion Potential, 12,

Supervisory Status, No,

Who May Apply, Agency Only- This vacancy is open only to applicants who are eligible for consideration under the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA Only) Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP),

Control Number, 469870600,

Job Announcement Number, 372-17-04-195297-CTAP

Summary

Vacancy Identification Number (VIN)1959297

OUR MISSION: To fulfill President Lincoln's promise – “To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan” – by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. How would you like to become a part of a team providing compassionate care to Veterans?

As a VA professional, your opportunities are endless. With many openings in the multiple functions of VA, you will have a wide range of opportunities and leadership



positions at your fingertips. Not only is it the largest, most technologically advanced integrated health care system in the Nation, but we also provide many other services to Veterans through the Benefits Administration and National Cemeteries. VA professionals feel good about their careers and their ability to balance work and home life. VA offers generous paid time off and a variety of predictable and flexible scheduling opportunities.

For more information on the Department of Veterans Affairs, go to <http://www.vacareers.va.gov/>

VA encourages persons with disabilities to apply!

#### Duties

The position of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor GS-0101-12 is located in the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Division.

Major Duties: The incumbent is responsible for providing counseling services to severely disabled veterans with complicated rehabilitation plans such as those calling for homebound and self-employment services. Provides individual and group counseling sessions, including an assessment of the psychological sources, and vocational evaluations and labor market information. Assists the veteran in exploring and identifying rehabilitation needs, goals, and objectives. Assists the veteran in developing and implementing an individualized plan of rehabilitation services that will result in suitable employment or facilitate independence in daily living. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) provides case management services including coordination of all rehabilitation services, employment services, documentation of progress and adjustment, and maintenance of case records according to VA regulations.

The VRC is required to have a knowledge of psychological, rehabilitation, and counseling theories and principles.

Work Schedule: 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

This is a bargaining unit position.

Position Description Title/PD#: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor ,GS-101-12,  
PD# 372-1300

Travel Required Not Required

Relocation Authorized No

#### Job Requirements

#### Key Requirements

- Subject to a background/suitability investigation,
- You must be a displaced VA employee in the competitive service,
- You must be found well-qualified

#### Qualifications

To qualify for this position, applicants must meet all requirements by the closing date of this announcement Friday, May 19, 2017

Time-in-grade: Applicants who are current Federal employees and have held a GS grade any time in the past 52 weeks must also meet time-in-grade requirements.

GS - 12: 52 weeks at the GS - 11 level.

AND

Specialized Experience:

This position is covered by a single agency qualification standard, VA Handbook 5005/6, part II, appendix F2, dated June 3, 2004. All applicants must meet the Basic Educational Requirements and Specialized Experience described below, to qualify.

· **BASIC EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT:** Satisfactory completion in an accredited college or university of all the requirements for a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, including an internship, or a master's degree in counseling psychology or a related field, including at least 30 semester hours of course work in such areas as foundations of rehabilitation counseling, human growth and development, counseling theories and techniques, vocational assessment, career development, job placement, case management, and medical/psycho-social aspects of disability. Total graduate study must have included or been supplemented by a supervised internship. [For master's degree programs without a supervised internship/practicum, substitution is allowed for successful professional experience following completion of the master's degree. Experience suitable for substitution must be one full year in direct delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to adults with disabilities in rehabilitation programs, other than those in correctional facilities. The experience or internship/practicum must

have been supervised by a professional in vocational rehabilitation or a closely related professional field that typically has oversight for vocational rehabilitation programs.]

· GS-12: Basic educational requirement AND Specialized Experience: In addition to meeting the Basic educational Requirements stated herein, one year of post-graduate level professional vocational rehabilitation counseling experience, equivalent to the GS-11 level is required.

· NOTE: SUBSTITUTION OF WORK EXPERIENCE ONLY APPLIES TO THE INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENT. IT DOES NOT REPLACE OR SUBSTITUTE THE BASIC EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT OF A MASTER'S DEGREE.

· NOTE: If one year of work experience is credited for determining minimum qualifications, that year can also be used for determining grade level. For example, for candidates with two years of qualifying work experience, but no internship/practicum, the first year of experience is used to meet the basic requirement and the second year of experience to qualify for GS-11.

The primary degree required under this single-agency standard is Rehabilitation Counseling. For related degree programs other than Rehabilitation Counseling the focus of the master's degree program must have been on rehabilitation counseling as evidenced by the coursework required for the degree.

A transcript must be submitted with your application if you are basing all or part of your qualifications on education.

The Career Transition Assistance Plan CTAP provides eligible displaced Federal competitive service employees with selection priority over other candidates for

competitive service vacancies. To be qualified you must submit appropriate documentation and be found well-qualified for this vacancy.

VA CAREER TRANSITION AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CTAP) AND INTERAGENCY (ICTAP) In accordance with VA Handbook 5330, a CTAP/ICTAP eligible will received special selection priority consideration if (1) applying at or below the grade level from which separated with no greater promotion potential than the position from which separated, (2) is within the commuting area, and (3) is determined to be "well qualified" for this position.

Information about CTAP eligibility is on OPM's Career Transition Resources website.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor: To be qualified you must submit appropriate documentation and be found well-qualified. This means that you possess professional vocational rehabilitation counseling experience which required working knowledge of VA regulations pertaining to veteran's benefits.

Experience refers to paid and unpaid experience, including volunteer work done through National Service programs (e.g., Peace Corps, AmeriCorps) and other organizations (e.g., professional, philanthropic, religions, spiritual, community, student, social). Volunteer work helps build critical competencies, knowledge, and skills and can provide valuable training and experience that translates directly to paid employment. You will receive credit for all qualifying experience, including volunteer experience.

Note: Only education or degrees recognized by the U.S. Department of Education from accredited colleges, universities, schools, or institutions may be used to qualify for

Federal employment. You can verify your education here: <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>. If you are using foreign education to meet qualification requirements, you must send a Certificate of Foreign Equivalency with your transcript in order to receive credit for that education.

IN DESCRIBING YOUR EXPERIENCE, PLEASE BE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC. WE WILL NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING YOUR EXPERIENCE. If your resume/application does not support your questionnaire answers, we will not allow credit for your response(s).

Physical Requirements:

This position is primarily sedentary with some walking, standing, bending, and carrying or lightweight items (e.g. folders, claims files, etc.)

This position has a position-sensitivity level of Public Trust—Low Risk.

Selections made under this announcement are conditioned upon favorable adjudication of a National Agency Check with written Inquiries (NACI) per VA Handbook 0710. An investigation will be conducted after the effective date of the selection. An individual currently holding the appropriate clearance does not require additional investigation. An individual receiving unfavorable adjudication is ineligible to remain in this position.

Security clearance- Not essential

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT SCALE**

### Perceived Supervisor Support Scale

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree).

#### *Emotional support*

1. My supervisor is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and non-work life
2. My supervisor takes the time to learn about my personal needs.
3. My supervisor makes me feel comfortable talking to him or her about my conflicts between work and non-work.
4. My supervisor and I can talk effectively to solve conflicts between work and non-work issues.

#### *Instrumental support*

5. I can depend on my supervisor to help me with scheduling conflicts if I need it.
6. I can rely on my supervisor to make sure my work responsibilities are handled when I have unanticipated non-work demands.
7. My supervisor works effectively with workers to creatively solve conflicts between work and non-work.

#### *Role model*

8. My supervisor is a good role model for work and non-work balance.
9. My supervisor demonstrates effective behaviors in how to juggle work and non-work balance.
10. My supervisor demonstrates how a person can jointly be successful on and off the job.



*Creative work-family management*

11. My supervisor thinks about how the work in my department can be organized to jointly benefit employees and the company.
12. My supervisor asks for suggestions to make it easier for employees to balance work and non-work demands.
13. My supervisor is creative in reallocating job duties to help my department work better as a team.
14. My supervisor is able to manage the department as a whole team to enable everyone's needs to be met

## **APPENDIX C**

### **THE UTRECHT WORK-ENGAGEMENT SCALE**

### The Utrecht Work-Engagement Scale

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale is a series of nine statements about how you feel at work. If you have never had this feeling, mark '0'(zero) next to the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you have felt it by writing down the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel this way. 0 = *never*, 1 = *almost never* (a few times a year or less), 2 = *rarely* (once a month or less), 3 = *sometimes* (a few times a month), 4 = *often* (once a week), 5 = *very often* (a few times a week), 6 = *always* (every day).

Answer

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy                 | _____ |
| 2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous                   | _____ |
| 3. I am enthusiastic about my job                          | _____ |
| 4. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work | _____ |
| 5. My job inspires me                                      | _____ |
| 6. I feel happy when I am working intensely                | _____ |
| 7. I am proud of the work that I do                        | _____ |
| 8. I am immersed in my work                                | _____ |
| 9. I get carried away when I am working                    | _____ |

Add the numbers you wrote for each item: the higher your score, the greater your work engagement!

## **APPENDIX D**

### **OCCUPATIONAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE**

## Occupational Self-Efficacy Scale

*Pethe, Chaudhari and Dhar (1999)*

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>

1. When confronted with a difficult task, I am willing to spend whatever it takes to accomplish it.
2. When I fail in a task I reevaluate my strategies.
3. I always set the targets higher than those set by my organization.
4. I am able to handle unforeseen situations at my workplace.
5. I adjust quickly to challenges that come in my work.
6. I am able to develop my resources to achieve my task goals.
7. I am able to resolve conflicts at my work place.
8. I am able to perform well in any situation that may come up at my work place.
9. No matter what comes my way in my work, I am able to handle it.
10. I am able to make contributions to significant decisions.
11. I am able to make an impact on others.
12. I am able to do my work independently.
13. I am able to work effectively even under the pressure of deadline.

14. I am aware of my strengths and I continuously develop them to suit the task at hand.
15. I continue to put in my best in an unsupportive environment.
16. I am able to perform well even in the absence of encouragement from my superiors and support from my colleagues.
17. I can develop skill required for task as and when needed
18. I believe in continuous improvement in my performance.
19. I take up tasks that utilize my skills.

**APPENDIX E**

**HUMAN USE APPROVAL LETTER**



LOUISIANA TECH  
UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

TO: Dr. Bryan McCoy, Dr. S. Toaddy, Dr. R. Parker and Mr. Alex Vega  
 FROM: *RSK* Dr. Richard Kordal, Director of Intellectual Properties  
rkordal@latech.edu  
 SUBJECT: HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW  
 DATE: September 19, 2017

In order to facilitate your project, an EXPEDITED REVIEW has been done for your proposed study entitled:

**“The Role of Perceived Supervisory Support and Occupational Self-efficacy in Predicting Employee Engagement”**

HUC 18-020

The proposed study's revised procedures were found to provide reasonable and adequate safeguards against possible risks involving human subjects. The information to be collected may be personal in nature or implication. Therefore, diligent care needs to be taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to assure that the data are kept confidential. Informed consent is a critical part of the research process. The subjects must be informed that their participation is voluntary. It is important that consent materials be presented in a language understandable to every participant. If you have participants in your study whose first language is not English, be sure that informed consent materials are adequately explained or translated. Since your reviewed project appears to do no damage to the participants, the Human Use Committee grants approval of the involvement of human subjects as outlined.

Projects should be renewed annually. *This approval was finalized on September 19, 2017 and this project will need to receive a continuation review by the IRB if the project, including data analysis, continues beyond September 19, 2018.* Any discrepancies in procedure or changes that have been made including approved changes should be noted in the review application. Projects involving NIH funds require annual education training to be documented. For more information regarding this, contact the Office of University Research.

You are requested to maintain written records of your procedures, data collected, and subjects involved. These records will need to be available upon request during the conduct of the study and retained by the university for three years after the conclusion of the study. If changes occur in recruiting of subjects, informed consent process or in your research protocol, or if unanticipated problems should arise it is the Researchers responsibility to notify the Office of Research or IRB in writing. The project should be discontinued until modifications can be reviewed and approved.

Please be aware that you are responsible for reporting any adverse events or unanticipated problems.

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

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