

Unraveling the Effects of Leadership and Motivation Factors on Employee Engagement: Evidence from the U.S. Federal Agencies

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This article discusses employee engagement, a growing distinct construct in the field of human resource management and development in enhancing public sector performance and well-being of employees. While many studies have explored a set of determinants of employee engagement, few studies ascertain the relationship and the role of political and career senior executive leadership of the senior executive service (SES) and motivation factors (i.e., intrinsic motivation and empowerment). This article shows that two types of leadership in the SES are highly associated with the employee engagement; and that intrinsic motivation and empowerment are effective mediators of SES and employee engagement. Using the Merit Principles Survey 2010 as well as importing insights derived from a set of organizational theories, this study develops an antecedent-mediator-outcome model and empirically examines the direct and indirect effects of SES and motivation factors on employee engagement. The results showed that political senior executive leadership is positively related to empowerment but negatively related to intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, career senior executive leadership is highly related to intrinsic motivation and empowerment. The relationship of the SES and employee engagement is partially mediated by the employee's intrinsic motivation and empowerment.

Keywords: *employee engagement, SES, career senior executive, political senior executive, intrinsic motivation, empowerment, U.S. federal agencies*

Introduction

The New Public Management (NPM) paradigm emphasized the importance of improving performance, increasing initiatives, and service

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orientation characteristics (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000; Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, & Schohat, 2013) to maintain and uplift efficiency and effectiveness of government service. Public sector in different countries have implemented and adapted various public management reforms that focus on motivating employees to perform at a high level such as merit pay system, performance-based evaluation system, and among others. The U.S. federal agencies, for example, have recognized the importance of having motivated, engaged, and skilled employees, especially in the light of severe cuts to public spending, looming retirement, and public debates over the value of federal employees and their work (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board [US MSPB], 2012). One of the key factors that may help public organization to level up its performance is through employee engagement. In the U.S. federal government, the lack of employee engagement costs taxpayers an estimated \$ 18 billion per year in lost productivity (Ander & Swift, 2014). Thus, understanding the level of employee engagement seemingly was perceived as a sustainable approach for shaping the future of an organization (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Given the irrefutable contribution of employee engagement in developing positive work and organizational attitudes among employees, and its capacity for offering public sector organizations a competitive advantage and better understanding of employee functioning in the public service (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, & Schohat, 2013), there is a need to improve it now more than ever and explore its dimensions.

Employee engagement is an emerging concept in the field of human resource management and development, while various authors and scholars have given it diverse characterization. From its conceptual inception (Kahn, 1990), employee engagement spawned a great and burgeoning deal of interest among scholars, public, and private sector leaders because of its unique and encompassing approach in understanding organizational behavior and the relationship among people in the organization. Even before the significant scientific work on employee engagement, Katz and Kahn (1966) pointed out the importance of employees' engaging behavior in order to achieve organizational effectiveness, innovation, and competitiveness (Welch, 2011). MacLeod and Clarke (2009) posited that employee engagement can be a key factor in enhancing productivity and transforming the working lives of many people.

The consequences of employee engagement have been attracting different organizations, both the private and public organizations. Engaged employees are believed to be more productive, profitable, safer, and healthier, having low turnover intention, low absenteeism, and willing to engage in discretionary efforts (Fleming & Asplund, 2007). Employee engagement is also viewed as a dominant source of competitive advantage

that helps the organization cope with challenging problems like increasing workplace performance and productivity amid widespread economic decline (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Albornoz, 2008); and it is a medium for broader effects of individual and organizational factors on job performance (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010; Xu & Thomas, 2011). Still further, engaging employees provides significant organizational advantages such as higher levels of productivity, organizational citizenship behavior, and overall performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010; Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011; Shuck & Herd, 2012).

In the public sector, though there is a dearth of literature available on employee engagement (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, & Schohat, 2013), there is an increasing recognition of its role enhancing the performance and well-being of the public servants (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). The relentless, uncertain, and continuous changes in the external government (Dowling & Welch, 2004) and the stringent financial environment require modern public organizations to possess highly engaged employees that have a high level of energy, enthusiasm, and full immersion in their daily work (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, & Schohat, 2013). It means that, government employees have to be proactive, show initiative, responsible, and committed to high quality performance (Vigoda-Gadot, Eldor, & Schohat, 2013). Such engagement is a mechanism for government organizations to uplift its value and relevance in bringing services to the people and to effectively and efficiently deal with organizational challenges.

In this context and based on existing literatures, as well as employing systematic conceptual and empirical model, the study looks into the direct and indirect effects of political and career senior executive leadership, intrinsic motivation, and empowerment on the two types of employee engagements (i.e., transactional and emotional) in the U.S. federal agencies. Specifically, based on a set of research hypotheses, this study is conducted to, firstly, measure the level of impact of intrinsic motivation and empowerment on the two different dimensions of employee engagement. Second, determine whether political and career senior executives of the SES influence employee engagement either in the transactional or emotional level through the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment. Third, identify how public agencies can improve employee engagement, drawing from the leadership as manifested by the SES and motivation factors. Lastly, discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings of the study.

This research utilized the Merit Principle Survey of 2010 by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) to determine the underlying

factors of employee engagement and investigated the two distinctive facets of employee engagement in the public sector. In order to test the hypotheses, the study employed exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation model (SEM) to operationalize and confirm the latent constructs, as well as to examine the relationships among the variables. Lastly, implications for research and practice in the public management context are provided in the concluding section as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research.

Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement started to be in the limelight since the 1990s following the academic work on the personal engagement of William A. Kahn (1990) of Boston University (Welch, 2011). In his article, Kahn (1990) did not explicitly use the term employee engagement, however, the term personal work engagement was widely used. Kahn (1990) defined personal work engagement as, “the simultaneous employment and expression of a person’s “preferred self” in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (personal, cognitive and emotional), and active, full role of performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). In this concept, Kahn premised that “people have dimensions of themselves that, given appropriate conditions, they prefer to use and express in the course of role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). He further pointed out that in understanding the development of engagement (i.e., personal work engagement) it is important to consider the dimensions of psychological conditions such as meaningfulness, safety, and availability. This definition recognized engagement as the “the harnessing” of the self to one’s role at work, that is the self is expressed “physically cognitively, and emotionally” (Kahn, 1990; as cited in Schullery, 2013, p. 255).

Following the foundational conception of Kahn (1990), Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) defines employee engagement as, “a persistent, positive, affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure” (p. 417) and further conceptualized employee engagement as the positive antithesis of burnout. Accordingly, Kahn (1990) and Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter’s (2001) conceptualization were the early developmental theories that laid the foundation of employee engagement (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) pointed out that “employee engagement refers to the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as

well as enthusiasm for work” (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002, p. 269). This seminal work was one of the first studies that linked employee engagement to profit by exploring its relationship to satisfaction and business unit profit (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Hence, it became one of the means that disseminates the concept of employee engagement in fast pace. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) in their empirical study testing the employee engagement conceptualization by Kahn (1990), concurred and verified that “in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during the role performance” (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004, p. 12).

On the other hand, contemporary definition of employee engagement may be traced from the seminal academic works of Saks (2006), Czarnowsky (2008), Macey and Schneider (2008), and Shuck & Wollard (2010). Sak’s (2006) article conceptualized and measured the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement through a multidimensional approach. He defined employee engagement as, “a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance” (Saks, 2006, p. 602). This is an inclusive definition because it encompasses the early theories and conceptualization of engagement that includes development from a cognitive point of view, emotional and behavioral constructs (see, for example, Kahn, 1990; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

Subsequent to Sak’s (2006) conceptualization of employee engagement, Czarnowsky (2008) conducted a study sanctioned by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) in collaboration with the Dale Carnegie Training (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). In this research, Czarnowsky (2008) defines employee engagement as, “employees who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer’s success” (Czarnowsky, 2008, p. 6). Drawing from this conceptualization, Czarnowsky (2008) threaded the idea posited by Kahn (1990) that developing a highly engaged employee can be achieved by generating a meaningful work experience, learning opportunities, focusing on employees’ experiences. Nonetheless, Macey and Schneider (2008) provided a different and progressive approach in conceptualizing employee engagement. They developed and expanded the earlier conception made by Saks (2006) that employee engagement is a unique and distinct construct that has three dimensions – cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) posited that employee employment develops from trait engagement, state engagement, and behavioral engagement. In their perspective, they defined trait engagement as the “inclination or orientation to experience the world from a particular vantage point,” state engagement “as an

antecedent to behavioral engagement,” while behavioral engagement “defined in terms of discretionary effort” (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p 5-6).

Among the early and contemporary definition provided for employee engagement, Shuck and Wollard’s (2010) seminal work holds a pervasive authority. Their scientific and detailed investigation of the diverse and in some ways disjointed, inconsistent, and conflicting conception of employee engagement leads to an encompassing definition. Shuck and Wollard’s (2010) proposed this emergent definition of employee engagement as, “as an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes” (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103). This definition was able to suggest a convincing conception that was able to cover the historical milieu and conceptual underpinnings of employee engagement. Thus, provides a clear and unambiguous conception that is seemingly comprehensible to HRM and HRD practitioners, managers, supervisors, leaders, either in public or private organizations. The conceptual perspective laid in the seminal work of Kahn (1990) that outlines three requisite conditions for the development of behavioral engagement (e.g., meaningfulness, safety, and availability) offers a closer relation within an HRD context (Shuck and Herd, 2012). Macey and Schneider (2008) conceive the three broad conceptualization of engagement (i.e., state, trait, and behavioral engagement). This characterization is traceable from the works done by Kahn (1990). Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker (2002) argued that employee engagement composed of three distinctive dimensions – namely, vigor, dedication, and absorption.

However, in the encompassing conception derived from Shuck and Wollard’s (2010) decisive work, they put forward on the idiosyncrasies and the dimensional factor of employee engagement: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. This construct is in concurrence with the persuasive argument posited by Rich, Le Pine, & Crawford (2010). They proposed that employee engagement is the active full performance of a person’s cognitive, emotional, and physical energies (Shuck & Herd, 2012). The multidimensional framework developed by Rich, Le Pine, & Crawford (2010) emphasized the significance of the fundamental conditions of an individual employee’s experience of work as an essential dimension of growing construct of employee engagement (Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, and Nimon, 2013).

In the current study, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development’s (CIPD) conceptualization was employed which described two forms of employee engagement: transactional (rational) and emotional (relational) engagement. As pointed out by CIPD (2012), transactional engagement illustrates employees that are “happy to exhibit the behavior

of engagement, do what is required or expected as long as promised rewards such as promotion or training are forthcoming, but not committed to the job or the organization and is willing to leave if a better offer appears elsewhere” (p. 3). Transactional engagement in the gamut of employee engagement simply means a two-way relationship like that of the employee-employer relationship wherein the issue is the degree of employees participation – maximum or minimum participation in the organization. Conversely, emotional engagement was derived from the conceptualization of William Kahn (1990) that argues ‘personal engagement’ has three dimensions – cognitive, affective (or emotional), and physical. Kahn gave emphasis on the emotional engagement as the ‘deepest’ level which can stand as one engagement dimension. Fleming, Coffman, and Harter (2005) also argue that emotional engagement is an important dimension on its own, thus must be separated from the physical and cognitive dimensions. The arguments presented by Kahn (1990) and Fleming and colleagues (2005) have similarities with how CIPD resembles emotional engagement. According to CIPD (2012), employees are deemed to be emotionally engaged when they are “really identified with their job and want to do a good job; employees are emotionally invested with the job or employer, or with the employer’s aims or values” (p. 7).

Senior Executives Service (SES)

Political and Career Senior Executive

The U.S. civil service reforms commenced by the Carter administration in 1978 resulted in the dissolution of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and the subsequent creation of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) (Colby & Ingraham, 1981). The main feature of this personnel reform effort was the conception of the SES that was designed as the elite corps of civil servants (Dolan, 2000) and was “intended to function as a mobile cadre of top government managers, drawn from both career and non-career sources, who were to be rewarded (or punished) according to performance” (Campbell, 1978; as cited in Colby & Ingraham, 1981, p. 76). Generally, members of the SES are the management leaders that are just below the top Presidential appointees and served as the major link between the political appointees and the rest of the career federal work force (U.S. Office Personnel Management [US OPM], 2008). In the federal government, career executives constitute 90% of SES as compared to political executives, or a total number of 7,198 in 2012—representing 0.4 percent of the federal workforce (Partnership for Public Service and McKinsey & Company, 2013).

In the public sector, leadership is unique because politics and governing body meet and both political and career senior executives have to supervise the affairs of government (Rainey, 2003; Van Wart, 2005). Political leaders are perceived to represent a political agenda, values, and interest, while administrative leaders are considered professional managers, the main machinery of the government that implements programs and activities, policy executor, have high technical and administrative expertise, and are not acting from biased, personal or partisan orientation (Wilson, 1999). Generally, political leaders are political designees that focus on executing the president's agenda of governance. The terms of the position held by political leaders are not permanent, but rather co-terminus with the appointing authority. Career executive leaders are professional line managers and nonpolitical head of the organization (Van Wart, 2003). By definition, career senior executives "have specialized in the management of federal operations," while political executives "have a political agenda as opposed to agenda designed to provide services and programs for that which is in the [general] public interest" (Wilson, 1999, p. 121). The political executives are also utilized in various liaison activities because presumably, Presidents prefer to have an appointed ally rather than an unknown career executive in contacting other political elements such as those in the Congress (Dolan, 2000).

The senior executive service is mostly comprised of managerial, supervisory, and policy positions in the executive department of the federal government (OPM). As posited by Wilson (1999), SES members are highly experienced executives that are not compliant to autocracy or suppressive leadership because they believed that it can "kill morale, initiative, and creativity" of subordinates. An "empowering and democratic leader is capable of enhancing motivation and commitment of employees" (Wilson, 1999, p. 132). This assumption is in congruence with the contention of Yukl (1981) wherein he pointed out that, "a leader with extensive reward and coercive power is tempted to rely on them excessively, instead of using referent and expert power; this path leads to resentment and rebellion (Yukl, 1981, p. 232). Thus, along this line, we can assume that SES displays an empowering leadership that may affect intrinsic motivation and empowerment. For example, empowering leadership tends to improve the meaningfulness of work by allowing the employees to discern the significance of his work contribution for the organization; enhance employees' self-efficacy by recognizing competence and prospects for high performance (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp., 2005); fosters employee's work autonomy and/or self-determination in the workplace (Pearce et al., 2003; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Sims & Manz, 1996); and encourages employee's participation in the decision-making process (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Manz & Sims, 1987).

Hence, it is logical to argue that the empowering leadership virtue of senior executive service (SES) influences the federal employees' perception of empowerment and intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, we propose:

Hypothesis 1. *Senior Executive Service—[a] political senior executive and [b]career senior executive—is positively associated with employee empowerment.*

Hypothesis 2. *Senior Executive Service—[a] political senior executive and [b]career senior executive—is positively associated with employee intrinsic motivation.*

Intrinsic Motivation, Empowerment, and Employee Engagement

In considering the role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment in the employee engagement, we took notice of existing evidence that shows their logical links. According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), empowerment refers to “a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal and organizational practices and informal techniques by providing efficacy information” (p. 474). On the other hand, intrinsic motivation refers to the degree in which an individual is “inner-directed, is interested or fascinated with a task, and engages in it for the sake of the task itself” (Utman, 1997, p. 170). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) associate empowerment with intrinsic motivation because such feelings of empowerment are rewarding in its own sense and at the same time argued that empowerment is believed to be a proximal cause of intrinsic motivation and satisfaction (Thomas & Tymon, 1994; Gagne, Senegal, & Koestner, 1997). Deci and Ryan (1991) pointed also in their self-determination theory that in order to experience intrinsic motivation the feelings of competence and autonomy must be fulfilled first (Gagne, Senegal, & Koestner, 1997). In this research, the model proposes empowerment as an antecedent factor of intrinsic motivation to influence employee engagement.

Spreitzer (1995) developed a multidimensional concept of empowerment. Drawing from the works of Hackman and Oldham (1975) on autonomy, Jones (1986) on competence, Tymon (1988) on meaningfulness, and Ashforth (1989) on impact, Spreitzer (1995) defines empowerment as intrinsic motivation that is reflected through four cognitions: meaningfulness, competence, self-determination, and impact. First of all, he described meaningfulness as “the value of work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own id” (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 1443) which

results to employees feeling that job tasks are valuable. A number of studies also proved that empowered employees obtained more sense of meaning from their jobs, thereupon perceived to be a mechanism to foster motivation and attachment to work and definitely to employee engagement (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004; Stander & Rothman, 2010; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007). Second, in his conceptualization of competence, Spreitzer (1995) defined it as the “belief in one’s ability to perform a job successfully” (p. 1443). The relationship of competence, intrinsic motivation, and employee engagement can be traced from the arguments of Ryan and Deci (2001) which opined that feeling competent and confident with respect to valued goals is related to ‘intrinsic motivation and well-being’ (p. 156); engaged employees see themselves as capable of addressing the demands of their jobs (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2007; Stander and Rothman, 2010). Third, self-determination signifies the perceptions of freedom how to initiate tasks, or making choices on how to do ones work (Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Gagne, Senegal, & Koestner, 1997). Ryan and Deci (2001) discussed the role of self-endorsed goals and heteronomous goals wherein the former positively enhance employee engagement while the latter does not. Lastly, impact was defined as, “the belief that one is producing intended effects and has no control over desired outcomes through one’s task behavior” (Spreitzer, 1992; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; as cited in Gagne, Senegal & Koestner, 1997, p. 1223). Spreitzer, Kizilos, and Nason (1997) argued that impact is “different from self-determination; self-determination refers to individuals’ sense of control over their own work, while impact refers to individuals’ sense of control over organizational outcomes” (p. 681). The logical consequence of impact to individuals gives them the feeling of development and advancement favoring individual goals and beliefs, and that their actions are important and are making a difference for the organization (Stander & Rothman, 2010).

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the above-mentioned discussion:

Hypothesis 3. *Empowerment is directly and positively associated with intrinsic motivation.*

Hypothesis 4. *Intrinsic motivation is directly and positively associated with (a) transactional engagement and (b) emotional engagement. That is, employees with a higher intrinsic motivation will have a high emotional engagement and transactional engagement.*

Hypothesis 5. *Empowerment is directly and positively associated with (a) transactional and (b) emotional engagement. That is, employees with a higher empowerment will have a high emotional engagement and transactional engagement.*

Hypothesis 6. *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship of empowerment and employee engagement.*

Hypothesis 7. *Intrinsic motivation mediates the relationship of Senior Executive Service leadership (i.e., political senior executive and career senior executive) and employee engagement.*

Hypothesis 8. *Empowerment mediates the relationship of Senior Executive Service leadership (i.e., political senior executive and career senior executive) and employee engagement.*

Research Design

Research Model

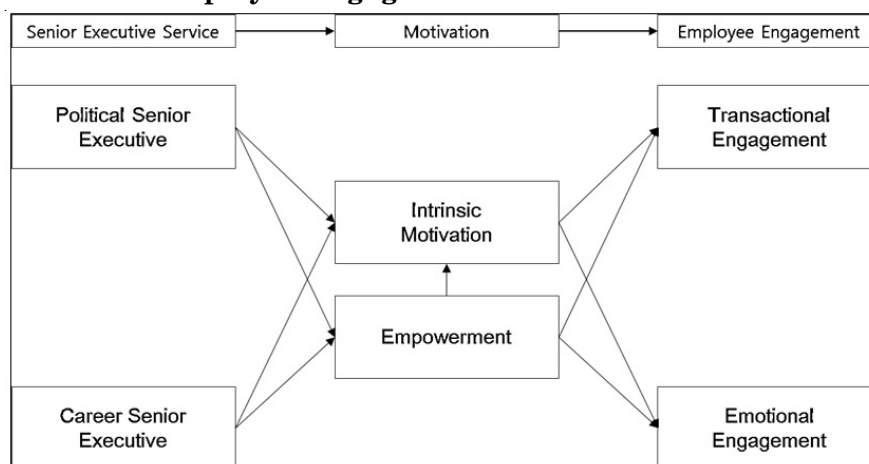
Drawing from previous research models and findings, this study developed a research model (see Figure 1) that will demonstrate the relationships of the identified antecedents, mediators, and consequences in the federal agencies of the United States. The study will dwell on the political senior executives and career senior executives of the Senior Executive Service (SES) as the antecedent variables; the intrinsic motivation and empowerment as mediators; and employee engagement as the outcome variable focusing on the two distinct dimensions – transactional and emotional engagement.

Data Collection and Research Methods

This study utilized the MSPB's 2010 Merit Principles Survey (MPS), a government –wide survey that asked federal employees' opinions and experiences related to their careers and agency human resources practices and leadership. Specifically, they were asked about their perception towards merit system principles, employee engagement, work motivation, fairness, leadership, competency requirements, and whistleblowing. It was administered to 71,790 federal employees from 18 departments and 6 independent federal agencies. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the randomly drawn respondent-samples completed the survey or resulted to 42,020 valid surveys. Moreover, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) – varimax rotation technique was initiated to obtain factor extraction (using the

eigenvalues greater than 1.0) and composite factor scores of each identified constructs. To test the consistency and to ensure reliability of each instrument, the Cronbach's α^1 reliability test was initiated. Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model was initiated for the two exogenous variables and a structural equation modeling was initiated in the whole framework to measure the direct and indirect effects of the exogenous variables to the outcome variables.

Figure 1. Leadership, Work Motivation Factors, and Employee Engagement in the Public Sector



Statistical Tools and Empirical Modeling

For the purpose of empirical exploration in the study, the following methodological tools were employed: 1) exploratory factor analysis (EFA), 2) confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), 3) structural equation modeling (SEM), and 4) bootstrapping analysis. These statistical tools attempt to find any empirical evidence that Senior Executive Service (SES) leadership is associated with employee engagement through the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment.

- 1) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).** Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is a statistical method used to determine the correlation and underlying structure among variables in a given dataset (Gaskin, 2014; Norris & Lecavalier, 2009). This type of analysis allows researchers to identify observe variables or sets of latent constructs based on strong correlations (Gaskin, 2014). In this study, factor analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21.

- 2) **Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).** The CFA model is typically to examine and determine the factor structure of a dataset (Park, 2007; Gaskin, 2014). Comparing EFA and CFA, the major difference is that, in CFA more aspects of the model can be specified *a priori* such as, 1) which variables load on which factors, 2) which (if any) factors are correlated, 3) which measurement (if any) errors are correlated, and 4) how many factors there are (Park, 2007, p. 7). While in EFA, there is *no priori* theory is applied to determine which item(s) belong to a construct (Gaskin, 2014). Confirmatory factor analysis can be performed through IBM SPSS Amos.
- 3) **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).** The structural equation modeling (SEM) is a statistical technique applicable to both experimental and non-experimental data (Kline 2005). SEM is designed to test “non-recursive paths and simultaneous test of the relationship of the variables and can be used to test the fit of the correlation matrix against two or more causal models” (Park, 2007, p. 7). Compared to multivariate regression, SEM has the ability to take into account more than one dependent variable in one model.
- 4) **Bootstrapping Analysis.** In statistics, bootstrapping is one of the methods to explore the mediating (i.e., partial, full, or no mediation)² role of a variable. Basically, bootstrapping relies on random sampling with replacement—resampling the sample (Varian, 2005; Efron & Tibshirani, 1993).

Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

Independent Variables

Senior Executive Service (SES) Leadership. The Senior Executive Service is characterized by two dimensions which are used as independent variables for this study. The items measuring quality of SES leadership is closely associated with the items used by Perry and Miller (1991) on measuring quality of leadership (i.e., political leadership). For the political senior executives (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.672$) it was measured through a four-item scale that asked the respondents on the political leader's management skills, the commitment of the leaders to achieve the mission of the agency, communication skills, respect, and his/her working relationship with career senior executives. The quality of career senior executives (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.755$) was also measured through a four-item

scale that asked the respondents on the career senior leader's 'management skills', 'communication skills', 'respect' and 'mission'.

Mediating Variables

Intrinsic Motivation. Intrinsic motivation has been operationally defined in a way that denotes the use of an individual's "self-reports of interest and enjoyment of activity per se" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 57). Intrinsic motivation was measured on seven-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.684$) which asked the employees about their motivation that comes from within and not because of external or outside rewards. For example, "I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of the agency", "making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements", "meaningful public service is important to me", and among others. All survey questions used to measure intrinsic motivation were on Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Empowerment. Although there have been numerous attempts to establish a standard definition of employee empowerment, scholars have not agreed on a definite and authoritative conceptualization (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Peccei & Rosenthal, 2001; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Employee empowerment has been denoted as the "extent to which employees feel empowered with respect to work processes and how satisfied they are with their involvement in decisions that affect their work" (Best Places to Work [BPTW], 2013). It has also been conceptualized to involve the act of extending resources and increasing employees' sense of worth (Neilsen, 1986). In this study, empowerment was measured through a six-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.734$) that asked the employees perception towards meaningfulness, self-efficacy, autonomy, and impact on the organization. The survey items used in this study were answered on a Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Dependent Variables

Employee engagement was measured based on two different constructs (i.e., transactional engagement and emotional engagement). This operationalization was based on the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's (CIPD) conceptualization of employee engagement: transactional and emotional engagement (CIPD, 2012). *Transactional engagement* was measured based on six-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.863$) which focuses on the employee engagement that is premised on some considerations such as rewards. On the other hand, *emotional engagement*

was measured by a four-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.731$) that asked the employees perception on their job embeddedness or commitment to their work.

Table 1. Representative Survey Items (MPS 2010)

Variable		Item
Senior Executive System (SES) Leadership	Political Senior Executive Leader	1. Political senior executives in my organization: Have good management skills. 2. Political senior executives in my organization: Work hard to fulfill the mission of the agency. 3. Political senior executives in my organization: Communicate well. 4. Political senior executives in my organization: Respect the career staff.
	Career Senior Executive Leader	1. Career senior executives in my organization: Have good management skills. 2. Career senior executives in my organization: Work hard to fulfill the mission of the agency. 3. Career senior executives in my organization: Communicate well. 4. Career senior executives in my organization: Respect the career staff.
Mediator	Intrinsic Motivation	1. I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of the agency. 2. Meaningful public service is important to me. 3. Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements. 4. Being able to serve the public. 5. The better I perform on the job, the greater my job security. 6. The better I perform the job, the more I feel I am serving the public. 7. The better I perform the job, the greater my job satisfaction I experience.
	Empowerment	1. My job allows me to complete a single piece of work from beginning to end. 2. My job gives me the freedom to make decisions regarding how I accomplish my work. 3. I know what is expected of me on the job. 4. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities. 5. I have the opportunity to perform well at challenging work. 6. My job has a significant positive impact on others, either within the organization or the public in general.
Employee Engagement	Transactional Engagement	1. The better I perform on the job, the more I feel I am serving the public. 2. The better I perform on the job, the greater my opportunity for advancement. 3. The better I perform on the job, the higher my awards and bonuses. 4. The better I perform on the job, the greater my job security. 5. The better I perform on the job, the more I am granted informal perks. 6. The better I perform on the job, the better my training and development opportunities.
	Emotional Engagement	1. At my job, I am inspired to do my best work. 2. I would recommend my agency as a place to work. 3. I have the resources to do my job well. 4. The work I do is meaningful.

Using the survey items provided in the Merit Principles Survey 2010, this study utilized a total of 31 questions (see Table 1) to test the relationship of the senior executive system, motivation, and employee engagement.

Empirical Analysis

The main characteristics of the samples utilized in the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey Respondents

Contents	Dimension	Frequency	Rate	Contents	Dimension	Frequency	Rate
Years of Service	Under 1 year	466	1.1%	Pay System	Non-Supervisory	33205	79%
	1-3 years	4908	11.7%		General Schedule	3620	8.6%
	4-7 years	5639	13.4%		Wage Grade	260	0.6%
	8-11 years	5611	13.4%		Executive	4793	11.4%
	12-15 years	3597	8.6%		Other	7	0
	16-19 years	3860	9.2%	Department	Air Force	1199	2.9%
	20-23 years	5619	13.4%		Agriculture	3054	7.3%
	24-27 years	4468	10.6%		Army	1132	
	28-31 years	3300	7.9%		Commerce	1950	4.6%
	32-35 years	2428	5.8%		Defense	1260	3.0%
	More than 35 years	2087	5.0%		Justice	3468	8.3%
Race	American Indian or Alaska Native	1977	4.7%		Labor	3236	7.7%
	Asian	2044	4.9%		Energy	525	1.2%
	Black or African American	7048	16.8%		Education	689	1.6%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	410	1.0%		EPA	668	1.6%
	White	30715	73.1%		FDIC	919	2.2%
Education Level	Less than a High School Diploma	135	0.1%		GSA	736	1.8%
	High School, Equivalent Diploma	2655	6.3%		HHS	2682	6.4%
	Some college credits but no degree	8310	19.8%		DHS	3896	9.3%
	Associate's College Degree	3230	7.7%		HUD	604	1.4%
	Bachelor's College Degree	15148	36%		Interior	2940	7.0%
	Master's Degree	8318	19.8%		NASA	734	1.7%
	Professional Degree	2256	5.4%		Navy	1133	2.7%
	Academic or Scientific Doctorate	1598	3.8%		OPM	644	1.5%
Supervisory Status	Non-Supervisory	21829	51.9%		SD	727	1.7%
	Team Leader	5847	13.9%		SSA	1760	4.2%
	Supervisor	8931	21.3%		Transportation	2504	6.0%
	Manager	4782	11.4%		Treasury	3084	7.3%
	Executive	407	1.0%		VA	2476	5.9%
Total				42,020		100%	

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics that provided the perception towards the political senior executives (PSE) and career senior executives (CSE) reveals a mean value near 3.5. It appears also that the perception of empowerment has greater mean value than intrinsic motivation. Finally, descriptive statistics for the outcome variable, employee engagement, affirms a relatively close mean value for both the transactional and emotional engagement.

Verification of Hypotheses

Model Fit and Hypothesis Verification

In this research, a structural equation model analysis was performed to verify the fitness of the study model. The maximum-likelihood estimation (MLE) was enforced to estimate and determine the parameters of the model (see Table 4). The results of the model fit index show that all the indices except for the TLI adhered to the suggested cutoff values; hence the model fit was confirmed.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Item	Mean	Std.D
Political Senior Executive	1. Political senior executives in my organization: Have good management skills.	3.94	0.982
	2. Political senior executives in my organization: Work hard to fulfill the mission of the agency	3.73	0.954
	3. Political senior executives in my organization: Communicate well	3.33	1.053
	4. Political senior executives in my organization: Respect the career staff.	3.78	1.344
Career Senior Executives	1. Career senior executives in my organization: Have good management skills.	3.65	1.171
	2. Career senior executives in my organization: Work hard to fulfill the mission of the agency.	3.69	1.364
	3. Career senior executives in my organization: Communicate well.	3.61	1.368
	4. Career senior executives in my organization: Respect the career staff.	3.41	1.363
Intrinsic Motivation	1. I am prepared to make enormous sacrifices for the good of the agency.	4.06	0.847
	2. Meaningful public service is important to me.	3.26	1.065
	3. Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements.	3.76	0.904
	4. Being able to serve the public	4.12	0.894
	5. The better I perform the job, the more I feel I am serving the public	3.09	1.075
	6. The better I perform the job, the greater my job satisfaction I experience.	3.49	1.063
Empowerment	4. My training and development opportunities.	3.75	0.997
	Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.	3.03	1.250
	1. My job allows me to perform a variety of tasks that require a wide range of knowledge, skills, and abilities.		
	2. My job allows me to complete a single piece of work (rather than bits and pieces) from beginning to end.	4.01	0.949
Transactional Engagement	3. My job gives me the freedom to make decisions regarding how I accomplish my work.	4.09	0.854
	1. The better I perform on the job, the more I feel I am serving the public.	3.09	1.075
	2. The better I perform on the job, the greater my opportunity for advancement.	3.03	1.158
	3. The better I perform on the job, the higher my awards and bonuses.	3.26	1.035
	4. The better I perform on the job, the greater my job security.	3.30	1.099
	5. The better I perform on the job, the more I am granted informal perks.	2.97	1.167
Emotional Engagement	6. The better I perform on the job, the better my training and development opportunities.	3.05	1.012
	1. At my job, I am inspired to do my best work.	3.73	1.112
	2. I would recommend my agency as a place to work.	3.86	1.083
	3. I have the resources to do my job well.	3.71	1.026
	4. The work I do is meaningful.	4.03	0.881

Results of Structural Equation Model (SEM)

The path coefficients show (see Table 5) that political senior executive (PSE) negatively affects intrinsic motivation by -0.016 (C.R.= -2.416, significantly different from zero at the $p < 0.05$ level) while positively affects empowerment by 0.291 (C.R.=11.744, significantly different from zero at the $p < 0.001$ level). This result also shows that PSE is more significantly associated with empowerment than intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, path coefficients indicated that career senior executive (CSE) significantly and positively affects intrinsic motivation and empowerment by 0.051 (C.R.=5.371) and 0.032 (C.R.=0.976, significantly not different from zero at the $p < 0.05$ level), respectively. The results also

validated that CSE is more significantly associated with intrinsic motivation than empowerment. Moreover, the path coefficient of intrinsic motivation and its relationships to transactional engagement by 5.387 (C.R.=16.064, statistically significant at the $p<0.001$ level) and emotional engagement by -0.109 (C.R.=-8.634, statistically significant at the $p<0.001$ level) shows positive and negative effects, respectively. This result further confirmed that intrinsic motivation is significantly associated with transactional engagement than emotional engagement. Lastly, the path coefficients of empowerment and its relationships with intrinsic motivation, transactional engagement, and emotional engagement were determined to be at 0.565 (C.R.=54.164, statistically significant at the $p<0.001$ level), -1.652 (C.R.=-8.634, statistically significant at the $p<0.001$ level), and 1.935 (C.R.=54.572, statistically significant at the $p<0.001$ level), respectively. This proved that empowerment is significantly associated with emotional engagement than transactional engagement.

Table 4. Results of Model Fit Index

Independent and Dependent Variable		Direction	Estimate	S.E	C.R.	p
PSE	→ Intrinsic Motivation	-	-0.016	0.007	-2.4162	0.016
	→ Empowerment	+	0.291	0.025	11.744	***
	→ Empowerment > Intrinsic Motivation	-	0.291***>-0.016*			
CSE	→ Intrinsic Motivation	+	0.051	0.010	5.371	***
	→ Empowerment	+	0.032	0.033	0.976	0.329
	→ Intrinsic Motivation > Empowerment	+	0.051***>0.032			
Intrinsic Motivation	→ Transactional Engagement	+	5.387	0.335	16.064	***
	→ Emotional Engagement	-	-0.109	0.038	-2.892	***
	→ Transactional > Emotional	-	5.387***>-0.109***			
Empowerment	→ Transactional Engagement	-	-1.652	0.191	-8.634	***
	→ Emotional Engagement	+	1.935	0.035	54.572	***
	→ Intrinsic Motivation	+	0.565	0.010	54.164	***
	→ Emotional > Transactional	-	1.935***>-1.652***			

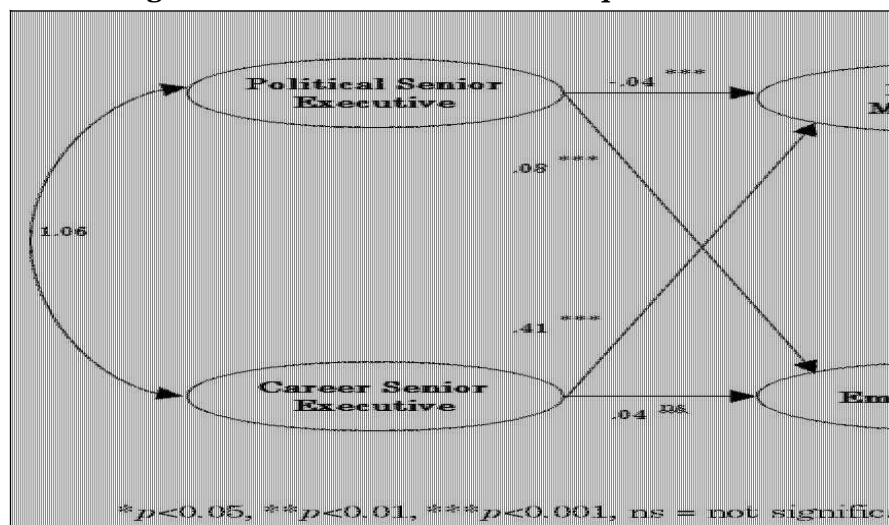
Table 5. Results of SEM

Index	GFI	AGFI	RMR	TLI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Suggested Cut-off Values	>0.90	>0.85	<0.08	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08
Model	0.927	0.901	0.051	0.899	0.919	0.921	0.034

The result of the parameter estimation from the structural equation model reveals all path coefficients of the structure model suggested standardized path coefficients (see Figure 2). The results of the SEM indicate that political senior executive (PSE) negatively affects intrinsic motivation (-0.04) while positively related with empowerment (0.08). Career senior executives (CSE) significantly and positively affect intrinsic motivation (0.41) and empowerment (0.04). This result shows that career executives both influence the empowerment and intrinsic motivation, though it gave more impact on the latter. On the relationship between empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and employee engagement, the path coefficient score tells us that empowerment significantly and positively

affect intrinsic motivation (0.86), significantly and negatively affect transactional engagement (-0.04), and significantly and positively affect emotional engagement (1.07). The finding confirms the argument that empowerment is positively related with intrinsic motivation. Lastly, intrinsic motivation significantly and positively affects transactional engagement (1.79), while significantly and negatively affects emotional engagement.

Figure 2. Results of Structural Equation Model



Total and Direct Effects

The results of the total effects of political senior executive (PSE), a career senior executive (CSE), intrinsic motivation, and empowerment with the determined outcome variable in the structure model are revealed in Table 6 and 7. First, PSE has a significant and positive effect on empowerment ($\beta = 0.414$) while negatively affects intrinsic motivation ($\beta = -0.036$, significantly different from zero at the $p < 0.05$ level). Second, CSE reports that it has a significant and positive impact intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.085$) and no significant effect to empowerment ($\beta = 0.035$, significantly not different from zero at the $p < 0.05$ level). Third, intrinsic motivation has a positive influence on transactional engagement ($\beta = 1.789$) but a significant and negative effect on emotional engagement ($\beta = -0.040$). Lastly, empowerment shows a significant and positive effect to intrinsic motivation ($\beta = 0.856$) and emotional engagement ($\beta = 1.070$) while significantly and negatively related to transactional engagement ($\beta = -0.830$).

Table 6. Unstandardized and Standardized Total Effects

Variables			Un-standardized Estimate	Standardized Estimate (β)	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
PSE	»	Intrinsic	-0.016	-0.036	0.007	-2.431	0.015
PSE	»	Empowerment	0.291	0.414	0.024	12.328	***
CSE	»	Intrinsic	0.051	0.085	0.010	5.361	***
CSE	»	Empowerment	0.032	0.035	0.031	1.022	0.307
Intrinsic	»	Transactional	5.387	1.789	0.293	18.359	***
Intrinsic	»	Emotional	-0.109	-0.040	0.033	-3.323	***
Empowerment	»	Intrinsic	0.565	0.856	0.010	5.361	***
Empowerment	»	Transactional	-1.652	-0.830	0.167	-9.872	***
Empowerment	»	Emotional	1.935	1.070	0.031	62.168	***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

**Table 7. Results of Path Analyses:
Indirect Effects, Direct Effects, and Total Effects**

Variables	Effect	PSE	CSE	Intrinsic Motivation	Empowerment
Intrinsic Motivation	Direct	-0.036	0.085	-	
	Indirect	0.354	0.030	-	
	Total	0.319	0.115	-	
Empowerment	Direct	0.414	0.035	0.856	-
	Indirect	-		-	-
	Total	0.414	0.220	0.856	-
Transactional Engagement	Direct	-	-	1.789	-0.830
	Indirect	0.227	0.176	-	1.530
	Total	0.227	0.176	1.789	0.701
Emotional Engagement	Direct	-	-	-0.040	1.070
	Indirect	0.430	0.033	-	-0.034
	Total	0.430	0.033	-0.040	1.036

Results of Bootstrapping Mediation Analysis

In order to assess whether intrinsic motivation and empowerment mediated the effects of political senior executives and career senior executives on the employee engagement (i.e., transactional and emotional engagement), multiple regression analysis was conducted to estimate each component of the proposed mediation model. In this analysis, the bootstrapping method with bias corrected confidence estimates (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) was employed, based on 5000 bootstrap samples based, and applied 95 percent level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Verification of Mediating Effects
(Bootstrapping Analysis)**

Path			Total Effect	β	BootLLCI- BootULCI	p-value
X	Mediator	Y				
PSE	Intrinsic	Transactional	7.48	4.02	3.87 to 4.19	0.00
PSE	Intrinsic	Emotional	2.05	0.83	0.79 to 0.86	0.00
PSE	Empowerment	Transactional	7.48	3.75	3.59 to 3.90	0.00
PSE	Empowerment	Emotional	2.05	1.31	1.27 to 1.36	0.00
CSE	Intrinsic	Transactional	2.30	1.23	1.18 to 1.28	0.00
CSE	Intrinsic	Emotional	0.66	0.25	0.24 to 0.26	0.00
CSE	Empowerment	Transactional	2.30	1.12	1.08 to 1.17	0.00
CSE	Empowerment	Emotional	0.66	0.39	0.38 to 0.41	0.00
Empowerment	Intrinsic	Transactional	0.43	0.21	0.30 to 0.22	0.00
Empowerment	Intrinsic	Emotional	0.14	0.02	0.02 to 0.03	0.00

The results of the mediation analyses confirmed the mediating role of intrinsic motivation in the relation between political senior executives and employee engagement: transactional engagement ($\beta=4.02$, CI=3.87 to 4.19) and emotional engagement ($\beta=0.83$, CI=0.79 to 0.86). The analysis also confirmed the mediating role of empowerment in the relationship of PSE and employee engagement: transactional engagement ($\beta=3.75$, CI=3.59 to 3.90) and emotional engagement ($\beta=0.25$, CI=0.24 to 0.26). In addition, results further reveal the significant mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment in the relation of career senior executive (CSE) and employee engagement.

For transactional engagement, the mediating role of intrinsic motivation reveals $\beta=1.23$ and CI=1.18 to 1.28 while empowerment with $\beta=1.12$ and CI=1.08 to 1.17. On the otherhand, results for the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment on CSE and emotional engagement provides $\beta= 0.25$ and CI=0.24 to 0.26 and $\beta= 0.39$ and CI=0.38 to 0.41, respectively. Finally, the analysis confirms the mediating function of intrinsic motivation on the relations of empowerment as a predictor of transactional engagement ($\beta=0.21$, CI=0.30 to 0.22) and emotional engagement ($\beta=0.02$, CI=0.02 to 0.03). Drawing from the results of path and bootstrapping analysis the research hypotheses were tested whether these were supported or not. Table 9 summarized the results of the analysis based on the research questions, formulated hypotheses, and the statistical tools employed.

Table 9. Summary of Analysis

Research Questions	Hypotheses	Statistical Tool	Results
What is the impact of political and career senior executive leadership on empowerment and intrinsic motivation?	H _{1a} = Confirmed	SEM	PSE leadership ($\beta=.40^{***}$) is positively and significantly related with empowerment. While the data did not provide any support on the relationship between CSE empowerment ($\beta=.03^{ns}$).
	H _{1b} = Not Confirmed		
	H _{2a} = Confirmed	SEM	PSE leadership is negatively and significantly related with intrinsic motivation ($\beta=-.04^{***}$). While CSE is positively and significantly related with intrinsic motivation ($\beta=.05^{***}$).
	H _{2b} = Confirmed		
What is the relationship between empowerment and intrinsic motivation?	H ₃ = Confirmed	SEM	Empowerment positively and significantly related with intrinsic motivation ($\beta=.56^{***}$).
How are empowerment and intrinsic motivation associated with employee engagement?	H _{4a} = Confirmed	SEM	Intrinsic motivation is positively and significantly related with transactional engagement ($\beta=1.8^{***}$) while negatively related with emotional engagement ($\beta=-.04^{***}$).
	H _{4b} = Confirmed		
	H _{5a} = Confirmed	SEM	Empowerment is negatively and significantly associated with transactional engagement ($\beta=-.83^{***}$) while positively related with emotional engagement ($\beta=1.07^{***}$).
	H _{5b} = Confirmed		
Do empowerment and intrinsic motivation mediate the relationship of SES leadership and employee engagement?	H ₆ = Confirmed	Bootstrapping Analysis	Intrinsic motivation partially mediates the relationship between empowerment and the outcome variables.
	H ₇ = Confirmed		Intrinsic motivation partially mediates the relationship between SES leadership and the outcome variables.
	H ₈ = Confirmed		Empowerment partially mediates the relationship between SES leadership and the outcome variables.

Note: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM); Political Senior Executive (PSE); Career Senior Executive (CSE); * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Discussion

The growing challenges of human resource management in the public sector, particularly in the U.S., manifest that government has to seriously examine management practices to effectively satisfy its mandate of serving the people. In the midst of burgeoning austere fiscal conditions and impending waves of retirement of baby boomers, government is at the same time challenged to deliver quality service for its people and stand still to prove the value of its employees and their work. Also, the government is not insulated from the pressures of its employees who are demanding not only for a decent and earning job but also a meaningful work that satisfies personal needs. These are inevitable challenges that demand public managers to revisit many of the old managerial practices that are no longer effective, efficient, nor applicable in the present organizational and individual working circumstances. For example, the traditional as well conventional drivers of boosting the morale, increasing productivity, and retaining high caliber employees requires an

intensification of innovative strategies to maximize human resource capacities and discretionary efforts. The emerging concept of employee engagement has been recognized as an ingenious approach that can help boost the organizational performance and productivity. While many studies have explored a set of determinants of employee engagement, few studies ascertain the relationship and the role of political and career senior executive leadership of the SES and motivation factors.

We analyzed the relationship of leadership that emanates from the SES (i.e., political and career senior leadership), motivation factors (i.e., intrinsic motivation and empowerment) on employee engagement (i.e., transactional and emotional engagement). Also, we investigated the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment in the relationship between the antecedent variables and outcome variable—employee engagement. The research model and structural relations were tested employing the MPS 2010 of the U.S. MSPB. The results of the EFA, reliability analysis, and CFA confirmed that the proposed structural model is a good fit for the data.

Our results indicate, as hypothesized (H_{1a}), political senior executive (PSE) leadership is positively associated with employee empowerment. While career senior executive (CSE) leadership (H_{1b}), however, does not provide any evidence showing a relationship. This is consistent with the argument that senior executives are capable of providing the mechanisms such as displaying leadership behaviors and establishing organizational policies and practices that may foster employee empowerment. This finding finds support on the idea that senior and manager leaders are capable of exhibiting a variety of behaviors, including aversive, directive, transformation, transactional and empowering leadership behaviors (see Manz & Sims, 2001; Bass, 1985; Adams, 1963; Vroom, 1964; French & Raven, 1959). Also, the capability of organizational leaders to influence employees' access to information, rewards, locus of control, and self-esteem are important predictors of employee empowerment (Bowen & Lawler, 1995). However, in terms of influencing intrinsic motivation (H_2), the findings shows that political senior executives (H_{2a}), are negatively associated with intrinsic motivation while career senior executives (H_{2b}), provide a positive impact. Many advocates argue that the employees' perception towards their political and career executives are associated with how deeply they are engaged in their job. As revealed in the results, career senior executives seem to influence intrinsic work motivation and empowerment than the political senior executives. These findings may find support from the previous studies that raised issues about the competence, individual, and organizational effect of political or non-career executives in the civil service. One of the important drivers or conditions of intrinsic motivation is managerial trustworthiness – ability,

benevolence, and integrity (Cho & Perry, 2012). Various issues have plagued the political appointee's system in the civil service. For example, the demand for managerial competence of political appointees (Ban, 1987) that are criticized to have not undergone a public management or experience in governance (Gilmour & Lewis, 2006), the issue of bureaucratic institutional politicization in the form of political appointees decreases agency performance (Almendares, 2011), among others may be claimed to influence the individual motivation and employee engagement.

Results on testing H_7 and H_8 , however, provide that the political and career senior executives can effectively influence employee engagement through the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment. This claims that, the mere leadership influence on engaging employees would not suffice to expend discretionary energy or passion of the employees for their work. Public sector leaders have to explore different and innovative means to empower and enhance employees' intrinsic motivation in order to fully engage them in the organization. Likewise, the study found that the impact of empowerment on employee engagement can be enhanced through intrinsic motivation (H_6). Meaning, though empowerment can strongly bring out emotional engagement and negatively on transactional engagement, the presence of intrinsic motivation can holistically enrich employees' engagement.

As hypothesized, empowerment is positively associated with intrinsic motivation (H_3). This is consistent with the findings of Park and Rainey (2012) that intrinsic motivation can be enhanced by delivering various motivational factors that can boost the inner drives of an individual, such as employee empowerment. This implies that federal employees appreciating activities geared towards increasing empowerment will consequently boost their intrinsic motivation. Also, when employees' self-efficacy or empowerment is high, it is possible that they are more intrinsically and internally motivated (as self-determination theorists suggest). It is reasonable to expect that relatively high empowerment leads to increased motivation, which in turn also increases voluntary and autonomous work behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Finally, the results on H_4 demonstrate a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and transactional engagement but negative association with emotional engagement. Also, the result on H_5 shows that empowerment is positively related with emotional engagement while negatively associated with transactional engagement. This seems to be in line with the fact that when intrinsic motivation overcrowds emotional drives—understood to be inner drives—it may undermine the consequential results such as emotional engagement. Also, when extrinsic motivation—some types of empowerment—overcrowds, it may as well

undermine transactional engagement (see also, Park & Rainey, 2012). Meaning, the overcrowding of initiatives that may foster intrinsic motivation and empowerment may negatively influence positive individual results such as employee engagement.

Conclusion

In the effort to improve government effectiveness and efficiency, the US federal government has seen the importance of engaging its workforce. Studies have demonstrated that the government failed to engage employees who have acquired higher education (Ander & Swift, 2014). Low engagement has been causing the loss of billions of public money in terms of productivity. Thus, the federal government has allotted less than \$30 million to understand the plight of employees and direct efforts to enhance employee engagement (Ander & Swift, 2014). However, despite the importance of understanding and determining the critical factors that may affect employee engagement, the role of the political and career executives of the Senior Executive Service (SES) and motivation factors are not well explored. Hence, this study offers one of the first empirical studies that measured the influence of SES, intrinsic motivation, and empowerment on engaging public sector employees. In the hypothesized model, we argue that SES leadership may influence employee engagement through the mediating role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment. The assumed relationships, except for the association between CSE and empowerment, are confirmed by the empirical data. Interestingly, the study confirmed that, the relationship of the SES and employee engagement is partially mediated by the employee's intrinsic motivation and empowerment.

The findings of the study offer important theoretical and practical implications. The results suggest that the role of intrinsic motivation and empowerment are crucial in engaging employees in the public sector. Meaning, public managers—those who are in the SES (i.e., political and career senior executives)—should understand, assess, design, and implement organizational policies that may foster individual intrinsic motivation and empowerment. For example, offering employees discretion and/or autonomy over their work or the adoption of mechanisms that offer employee autonomy that gives employees some control over their job responsibilities. Also, public managers may encourage employees' participation in the decision-making processes in the organization and also boost the employee's opportunities for professional development through HRD. Lastly, managers should be mindful of the possibility of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation overcrowd because they may give an undesirable effect on employee engagement. Thus, managers should have a clear grasp and understanding of individual behaviors, needs, and motivation and the

necessary or applicable degree of intrinsic motivation and empowerment. This can be observed through the employees' holistic performance behavior in the organization.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This research is not without limitations. Relying solely on the MSPB survey data may have negatively affected the reliability of the findings. Thus, additional research has to be conducted, for example including qualitative empirical data and other useful secondary data (e.g., performance rating records, attrition, grievances, labor cases, among others) to support the findings and further explore the distinct relationship of SES leadership with employee engagement. We may as well consider adding more predictors that would give precise findings on the relationship of public sector leadership and engaging employees in the public arena.

Endnotes

¹ Testing on the reliability of the constructs, the Cronbach's α value to assess the internal consistency amongst items that loaded on the extracted factors. Determining the Cronbach's α of a group of items provides an estimate of average correlations of the items that describe a certain construct (Nunnally, 1978). According to George and Mallery (2003), Cronbach's α "0.9 is excellent, $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ is good, $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ is acceptable, $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$ is questionable, $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ is poor, and $0.5 > \alpha$ is unacceptable.

² Partial mediation denotes that the direct and indirect effects are statistically significant, whereas, full mediation denotes that only indirect effects are significant. No mediation results when the confidence interval includes zero in the range.

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