

Psychological Meaningfulness and Contextual Performance: Mediation Role of Employee Engagement

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Received Date : 27.08.2024

Revised Date : 10.10.2024

Accepted Date : 21.10.2024

ABSTRACT

Research has increasingly focused on psychological factors that enhance employee engagement and improve outcomes. While prior studies have shown a positive link between psychological meaningfulness and contextual performance, the mediating role of employee engagement in this relationship remains underexplored. This study investigated the connections between psychological meaningfulness, employee engagement, and contextual performance. Specifically, it examined how psychological meaningfulness influences contextual performance, the impact of psychological meaningfulness on employee engagement, and the effect of employee engagement on contextual performance. Data from 380 nurses in Ghana were analyzed using PLS-SEM 3. The results revealed that psychological meaningfulness significantly enhances both employee engagement and contextual performance. Moreover, employee engagement was positively linked to contextual performance and served as a significant mediator in the relationship between psychological meaningfulness and contextual performance. These findings suggest that organizations should prioritize psychological meaningfulness to foster employee dedication and enthusiasm, which, in turn, boosts job performance and participation in activities benefiting both individuals and the organization

Keywords : **Contextual Performance; Employee Engagement; Employee Engagement Theory; Nurses; Psychological Meaningfulness**

ABSTRAK

Penelitian semakin berfokus pada faktor psikologis yang meningkatkan keterlibatan karyawan dan memperbaiki hasil. Sementara studi sebelumnya telah menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif antara makna psikologis dan kinerja kontekstual, peran mediasi keterlibatan karyawan dalam hubungan ini masih belum banyak dieksplorasi. Studi ini menyelidiki hubungan antara makna psikologis, keterlibatan karyawan, dan kinerja kontekstual. Secara khusus, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana makna psikologis mempengaruhi kinerja kontekstual, dampak makna psikologis terhadap keterlibatan karyawan, dan pengaruh keterlibatan karyawan terhadap kinerja kontekstual. Data dari 380 perawat di Ghana dianalisis menggunakan PLS-SEM 3. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa makna psikologis secara signifikan meningkatkan baik keterlibatan karyawan

maupun kinerja kontekstual. Selain itu, keterlibatan karyawan secara positif terkait dengan kinerja kontekstual dan berperan sebagai mediator signifikan dalam hubungan antara makna psikologis dan kinerja kontekstual. Temuan ini menyarankan agar organisasi memprioritaskan makna psikologis untuk mendorong dedikasi dan antusiasme karyawan, yang pada gilirannya meningkatkan kinerja kerja dan partisipasi dalam kegiatan yang menguntungkan baik individu maupun organisasi.

Kata Kunci : Kinerja Kontekstual; Keterlibatan Karyawan; Teori Keterlibatan Karyawan; Perawat; Makna psikologis

INTRODUCTION

The operations of modern organizations have become increasingly complex, with numerous factors influencing employee behavior and performance. Psychological factors are particularly important in shaping these behaviors and outcomes. Consequently, organizations are encouraged to move away from traditional methods of enhancing employee performance and instead focus on identifying psychological work experiences that sustain internal motivation, leading to beneficial results for both individuals and the organization. This approach aligns with the growing interest in incorporating positive psychological concepts into performance management to improve outcomes (Kubiak, 2022).

While it is acknowledged that psychological factors play a critical role in shaping employee behavior and performance, psychological meaningfulness (PM), [Panda et al., 2022] and employee engagement (EE) are particularly significant in influencing job performance (Carter et al., 2018), including contextual performance (CP). PM are employees' feelings that their jobs are valuable, worthwhile and useful, which trigger employee engagement. Employee engagement involves a state of mind which is characterized by employees becoming dedicated, passionate and enthusiastic in performing their jobs (Baker & Albrecht, 2018; Saks, & Gruman, 2020; Schaufeli et al., 2002). PM can affect employees' motivation and behavior by enhancing their desire to perform (Han et al., 2021).

PM contributes to job involvement and performance (Kim, 2023). Chen, Wang, and Lee (2018) argue that perceiving a job as meaningful positively influences employee motivation, which benefits the organization. In line with this, Panda et al. (2022) assert that experiencing job meaningfulness motivates employees to fully engage their physical, emotional, and cognitive capacities (EE), leading to improved job performance. Despite the recognized benefits of PM, there remains a shortage of research specifically exploring the relationship between PM and CP (Chou et al., 2022) and how this relationship is associated with EE. Addressing this gap is important, as PM can help employees navigate complex work situations and respond to changing circumstances (Chou et al., 2022), which may require them to perform beyond their prescribed roles. Insights into these relationships are crucial for human resource practitioners in developing strategies to improve CP.

Building on this discussion, the current study seeks to fill the gap by examining the relationships between PM, EE, and CP. It is posited that PM, as a psychological work experience, enables employees to exceed their prescribed roles through the intrinsic

motivation it fosters (Kahn, 1990), which may, in turn, enhance CP. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the association between PM and CP, investigate the effects of PM on EE, determine the impact of EE on CP, and explore the mediating role of EE in the relationship between PM and CP.

PM is a positive work experience in which employees perceive their jobs as important and meaningful (Hasan & Kashif, 2020). PM also encompasses feelings of pride, accomplishment, and individual achievement (Xu et al., 2021). Indicators of PM include employees feeling valued, being useful, not being taken for granted, and having a sense of working towards a clear purpose and social good (May et al., 2004). Employees who experience PM are more likely to engage fully in their work, leading to adaptive performance (Abdul, 2022) and job performance (Panda et al., 2022). PM is also linked to extra-role performance, or CP (Sofiah et al., 2023), and employee engagement (EE).

CP refers to intentional, discretionary employee behaviors that are not typically rewarded or formally required (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Also known as extra-role performance or organizational citizenship behavior, CP includes actions such as encouraging others, resolving conflicts, assisting colleagues, offering suggestions, participating in teamwork, tolerating difficulties, and adhering to rules and procedures (Coleman & Borman, 2000; Podsakoff & Mackenzie, 1994). CP is crucial for achieving organizational goals in competitive business environments (Kappagoda, 2018) and is particularly relevant for high-quality service provision in nursing (Malik, 2018). CP promotes organizational efficiency and effectiveness and creates a conducive work environment for assigned roles (Aryani & Widodo, 2020).

PM can motivate CP by providing intrinsic motivation, which drives employee dedication and commitment (Kahn, 1990). The role of PM in explaining CP can be understood through employee engagement theory (Kahn, 1990), which suggests that PM fosters self-efficacy, confidence, status, and self-awareness. When these factors are stable, they lead to higher engagement levels, ultimately enhancing CP. Research has shown that high levels of PM facilitate CP. For instance, Sharma (2019) found a positive association between PM and CP in Indian organizations. However, the reliance on nonprobability sampling in this quantitative study introduced subjectivity, undermining the findings' validity. Contrarily, Sofiah et al. (2023) found a negative relationship between meaningfulness and CP among lecturers. These contradictory results may arise from the operationalization of PM as either a unidimensional or multidimensional construct in different studies (Ji, 2019). Additionally, the perception of meaningfulness is influenced by cultural and social contexts (Bailey et al., 2019). Generalizing research findings across different countries, or even within the same industry, can be challenging because context significantly impacts behavior. This underscores the difficulty in drawing definitive conclusions about the effect of PM on CP across various work and cultural settings.

Additionally, recent empirical studies examining the PM-CP relationship are scarce, supporting Chou et al.'s (2022) assertion that research linking PM and CP remains limited. This study aims to address this gap with reference to the Ghanaian context.

According to EE theory (Kahn, 1990), employees who perceive their jobs as valuable, worthwhile, and appreciated (PM) are more likely to be internally motivated to exceed their assigned roles. Based on this, we propose that PM positively affects CP (H1).

The concept of EE has attracted significant research attention since the 1990s. EE involves the engagement of an employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional resources

when performing tasks (Kahn, 1990). Schaufeli et al. (2002) describe EE as a state of mind in which engaged employees are full of energy and resilience, even in challenging times, enabling them to complete complex tasks. Engaged employees are passionate, dedicated, enthusiastic, and proud, often finding it difficult to detach from their work (González-Romá et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). These positive, job-related psychological states provide employees with personal resources that increase motivation, enabling them to overcome workplace challenges, promote voluntary behaviors beyond their prescribed roles (Meyers et al., 2019), and improve performance (Abdelwahed & Doghan, 2023).

Meyers et al. (2019) found a positive correlation between EE and CP in a study of Dutch employees. Similarly, Shen and Jiang (2019) and Giancaspro et al. (2022) also identified positive associations between EE and CP. Despite ample evidence that EE is related to CP, studies in the healthcare sector remain limited. To extend this line of research to the health sector, we propose that EE has a positive effect on CP (H2).

Previous research has also established a link between meaningfulness and EE. Han, Sung, and Suh (2020) found that PM was a positive predictor of EE among employees of information technology firms in South Korea. Similarly, Kaur and Mittal (2020), Albrecht et al. (2021), and Panda et al. (2022) identified positive connections between PM and EE in India, Australia, and Saudi Arabia, respectively. These studies draw on various theoretical perspectives. For instance, Han et al. (2021), using the broaden-and-build theory, argue that experiencing meaningfulness expands employees' desire to seek out information and experiences necessary for their performance, thereby enhancing EE. Similarly, Albrecht et al. (2021) suggest, through the Job-Demand Resource model, that job resources like feedback and autonomy foster meaningfulness, which positively affects EE. However, limited empirical investigations have focused on comprehending the EE theory framework, and it has yet to be extensively tested (Chaudhary, 2019). This study aligns with calls for further empirical research to explore the association between PM and EE within the EE theory framework (Albrecht et al., 2021) and deepen its application in real-world contexts (Kwon & Park, 2019). For this study, we propose that PM, as a vital psychological condition within the EE theory framework, can partially explain the relationship between PM and EE. Since EE theory assumes that feelings of meaningfulness are embedded in internal motivation and can enhance EE (Kahn, 1990), we propose that PM positively predicts EE (H3).

EE theory suggests that positive psychological work experiences, such as PM, form the basis for EE, leading to positive outcomes (Kahn, 1990). When employees feel that their jobs are valuable, worthwhile, and purposeful (PM), their internal motivation increases, resulting in enthusiasm, passion, and dedication to their work (EE) (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006). This increased engagement enables them to apply their physical, emotional, and cognitive resources to perform at higher levels, including exceeding prescribed roles (CP). Based on this reasoning and the earlier arguments about the direct relationships between PM and EE, and between EE and CP, we propose that EE positively mediates the relationship between PM and CP. This proposed relationship is supported by Sofiah et al.'s (2023) finding that EE significantly mediates the relationship between PM and organizational citizenship behavior (CP). Therefore, we hypothesize that EE positively mediates the effect of PM on CP (H4).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted across 14 randomly selected district hospitals in Ghana. These hospitals, which provide primary and secondary healthcare, are situated below regional hospitals in the healthcare hierarchy. A correlational quantitative research approach, which relies on numerical analysis to establish relationships among studied phenomena (Ahmad, et al., 2019), was employed to investigate the relationships between psychological meaningfulness (PM), employee engagement (EE), and contextual performance (CP). The study was cross-sectional in design. Nurses were selected as the unit of analysis due to the demanding nature of their roles, which requires attention to psychological factors that are critical for contextual performance (Uraon & Gupta, 2021).

The target population comprised 37,190 registered and enrolled public nurses (MOH, 2018). Registered nurses hold three-year diploma or degree qualifications, while enrolled nurses possess two-year certificates in nursing. A sample of 380 nurses was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table. A multistage sampling method was used to select participants. The study's data was collected from primary sources through the use of questionnaires based on established scales.

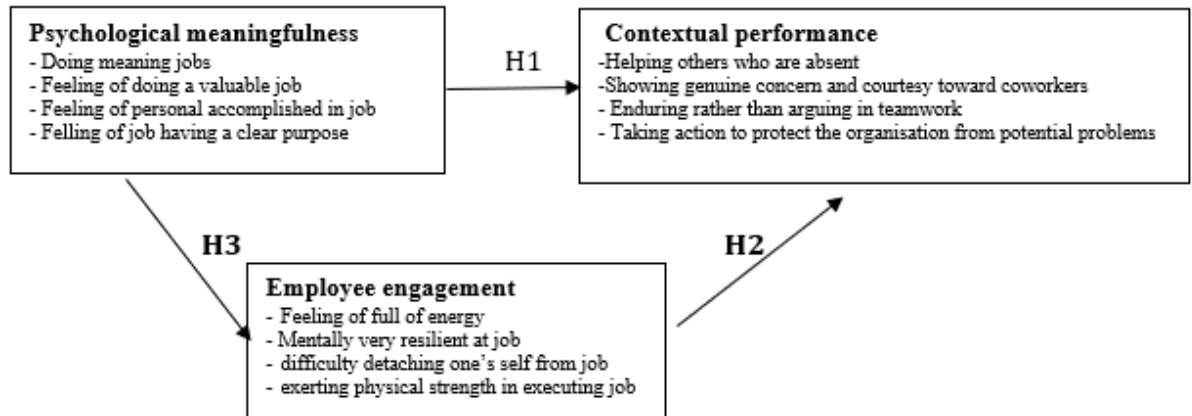
The scale for contextual performance (CP) was adapted from Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1994) and Coleman and Borman (2000). It consists of 23 items, rated on a scale from 1 ('never') to 5 ('always'). Examples of indicators include resolving conflicts, helping colleagues, and providing suggestions.

Psychological meaningfulness was assessed using May et al.'s (2004) PM scale, rooted in Employee Engagement Theory. This 7-point scale ranges from 1 (very weak agreement) to 7 (very strong agreement), with sample items including "engaging in personally meaningful job activities," "performing a valuable job," and "feeling personally accomplished in my work."

Employee engagement was measured using the 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale by Schaufeli et al. (2002). This scale ranges from 0 ('never') to 6 ('always'), with sample items such as "feeling full of energy at work" and "finding inspiration in the job."

Data analysis was carried out using PLS-SEM 3, assessing both the measurement and structural models. The measurement model evaluated construct reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and common method bias. Internal consistency was assessed using Chin's (1998) composite reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated through the average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and common method bias was examined using the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Kock, 2015). Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). The structural model was used to test the hypothesis relationships, with the coefficients of determination (R^2) being classified as substantial, moderate, or weak at approximately 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19, respectively (Chin, 1998). The bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence interval was based on 5,000 samples, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$ and $t > 1.96$.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model derived from the literature review, which forms the basis for the study's hypotheses. The figure indicates that psychological meaningfulness is linked to both contextual performance (H1) and employee engagement (H3), and that employee engagement is linked to CP (H2).



Source: Constructed by Authors

Figure 1. Conceptual Model Showing Associations between Psychological Safety, Employee Engagement, and Contextual Performance

Figure 1 also shows that employee engagement is connected to contextual performance (H2). Additionally, the model proposes that psychological meaningfulness leads to employee engagement, which in turn enhances contextual performance (H4), consistent with the positive outcomes associated with employee engagement as suggested by the Employee Engagement Theory (Kahn, 1990).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Construct Validity and Reliability

Table 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

| | Cronbach's Alpha | Rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average (AVE) | Variance | Extracted |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| CP | 0.938 | 0.940 | 0.945 | 0.584 | | |
| EE | 0.922 | 0.925 | 0.933 | 0.520 | | |
| Meaningfulness | 0.930 | 0.939 | 0.940 | 0.551 | | |

Source: Data Collected by Authors

From Table 1, the Rho A scores demonstrate that all constructs are reliable, given the primary data collected with the sub-scales for the various constructs under investigation (Rho_A > 0.7). The measurement met the criteria for composite reliability (CR > 0.7). Convergent validity for the respective constructs was adequately measured (AVE > 0.5) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant validity was also assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) (Henseler et al., 2015). Table 2 represents the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) results for discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

| | CP | EE | PM |
|----|-------|-------|----|
| CP | | | |
| EE | 0.754 | | |
| PM | 0.793 | 0.861 | |

Source: Data Collected by Authors

According to Henseler et al. (2015), the recommended threshold for discriminant validity is 0.85 or 0.9, and the HTMT value should not be equal to 1 in inferential statistics. The results in Table 2 confirm that this criterion was met, as none of the HTMT values equaled 1 (HTMTs \neq 1).

Table 3. Common Method Bias

| | CP | EE | CP |
|----|-------|-------|----|
| CP | | | |
| EE | 2.855 | | |
| PM | 2.855 | 1.000 | |

Source: Data Collected by Authors

The results in Table 3 showed the absence of common method bias (VIF < 5) (Kock, 2001).

Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Constructs, and Inter-Scale Correlations

Among the 380 nurses who participated in this study, 125 (32.89%) were male, while 255 (67.11%) were female. The descriptive statistics for the constructs are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Constructs and Inter-Scale Correlations

| Construct | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-----------|-------|------|--------|--------|---|
| 1 PM | 5.593 | .949 | 1 | | |
| 2 EE | 4.719 | .786 | .799** | 1 | |
| 3 CP | 4.121 | .606 | .718** | .681** | 1 |

** Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Data Collected by Authors

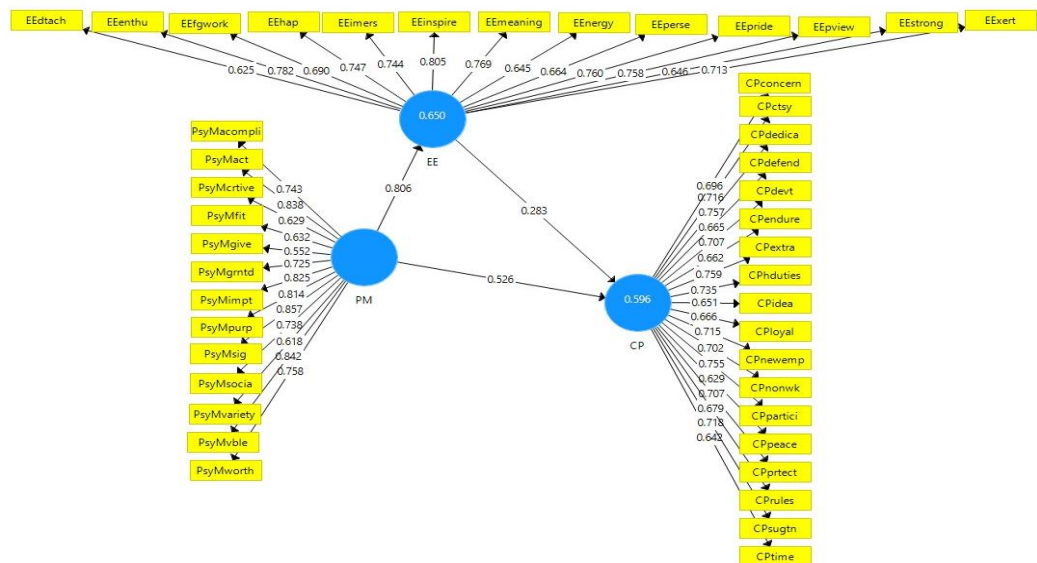
From Table 4, the mean value of 4.719 indicates that respondents were generally engaged in their work roles. Additionally, Table 4 also shows that the psychological meaningfulness (PM) score was relatively high, with a mean of 5.593. The contextual performance (CP) score was also substantial, with a mean of 4.121, reflecting a high level of CP activities among nurses in Ghana's healthcare sector.

Table 5. Path Coefficient of Roles of EE in the Relationship between PM and CP

| Path | Coefficient (B) | f ² | t-statistics | p-value |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|---------|
| EE -> CP | 0.283 | 0.069 | 4.750 | 0.000 |
| PM -> CP (c') | 0.526 | 0.240 | 9.389 | 0.000 |
| PM -> EE | 0.806 | 1.855 | 36.526 | 0.000 |
| PM-> CP (c) | 0.754 | | 31.549 | 0.000 |
| PM->EE->CP | 0.228 | | 4.795 | 0.000 |

Source: Data Collected by Authors

The analysis results in Table 5 shows that employee engagement (EE) has a positive and significant effect on contextual performance (CP) (B = 0.283; t = 4.750, p = 0.000). Psychological meaningfulness (PM) also positively and significantly predicts CP (B = 0.526; t = 9.389, p = 0.000). Moreover, PM significantly influences EE in a positive direction (B = 0.806; t = 36.526, p = 0.000). Table 5 further reveals that EE positively mediates the relationship between PM and CP (B = 0.228; t = 4.795, p = 0.000). Since both the direct effect (c') (B = 0.526; t = 9.389, p = 0.000) and the total effect (c) are positive and significant, this indicated that EE partially mediates the relationship between PM and CP.



Source: Data Collected by Authors

Figure 2. Structural Model of the Mediation of EE in the Effect of PM on CP

The effect of psychological meaningfulness (PM) on contextual performance (CP) in Figure 2 suggests that when nurses perceive their jobs as valuable, worthwhile, and purposeful, they become internally motivated, leading to increased engagement in extra-role activities. This aligns with the conceptual framework (hypothesis 1) and Kahn's (1990) Employee Engagement (EE) theory. When nurses feel their jobs are meaningful, they are more likely to help others and participate in voluntary activities that benefit the organization. This finding is consistent with Sargolzaei and Keshtegar's (2015) study,

which also found a strong association between PM and organizational citizenship behavior.

Furthermore, EE positively predicted CP, indicating that when nurses apply the emotional, physical, and cognitive aspects of themselves at work, they gain the resources needed to perform beyond their prescribed roles. This finding supports the predicted association in the conceptual framework (hypothesis 2) and aligns with previous studies, such as Mathumbu and Dodd (2013), which demonstrated a positive relationship between EE and CP.

Additionally, the effect of PM on EE was positive and significant, consistent with hypothesis 3 and previous research (e.g., Franks, 2017). Feelings of job meaningfulness stimulate employees' internal motivation, leading them to become more engaged in their work, in line with the Employee Engagement Theory (EET). Lastly, EE positively mediated the relationship between PM and CP, suggesting that perceiving one's job as valuable and worthwhile increases enthusiasm, dedication, and passion at work, which in turn enhances extra-role activities. This finding supports hypothesis 4 and is consistent with related research by Sofiah et al. (2023).

CONCLUSION

Our study demonstrates that psychological meaningfulness (PM) significantly enhances EE of nurses in Ghana. When the nurses perceive their work as valuable and meaningful, and feel adequately rewarded for their contributions (PM), they tend to display greater dedication, enthusiasm, and passion towards their work. This is particularly evident among nurses, whose positive perception of performing meaningful tasks was linked to improved contextual performance (CP). To foster discretionary behaviors such as conflict resolution, assisting colleagues, offering suggestions, active participation in teamwork, and adherence to organizational rules and procedures (CP), it is essential that employees find their jobs meaningful (PM).

The study also found that EE positively influences CP. Nurses who are dedicated, passionate, and enthusiastic about their roles (EE) are more inclined to engage in voluntary behaviors that contribute to both individual success and organizational effectiveness (CP). Furthermore, when nurses perceive their jobs as meaningful, this perception boosts their engagement, which in turn leads to enhanced contextual performance.

In summary, providing the nurses with meaningful roles, recognize their contributions, and ensuring that their work has a clear purpose can inspire passion and commitment (EE), ultimately encouraging voluntary actions that benefit both the individual and the organization (CP).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study highlight important considerations for promoting contextual performance (CP) through the experience of psychological meaningfulness (PM) and employee engagement (EE) among nurses in Ghana. Given the positive impact of PM on raising employee engagement and, subsequently, contextual performance, organizations should prioritize fostering psychological meaningfulness. By doing so, they

can enhance employee dedication, enthusiasm, and participation in activities that benefit both individuals and the organization. To achieve this, managers should focus on creating and maintaining a supportive work environment where nurses can experience these meaningful psychological conditions. Promoting PM, which encourages employees to feel that their work is meaningful and valuable, is crucial. This intrinsic motivation drives employees to perform beyond their prescribed duties, leading to improved job performance and voluntary contributions. Human resource (HR) policies and practices should, therefore, emphasize the importance of PM. HR managers, line managers, and employees alike must recognize the key role that EE plays in facilitating discretionary behaviors that benefit both the individual and the organization. The study also has some limitations.

Generalizing the findings across all contexts is challenging due to the variations in cultural and social settings among different countries. The cross-sectional design makes it difficult to establish causal relationships. Additionally, treating EE as a composite variable limit the ability to determine how each dimension—vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002)—relates to PM and CP. Further studies in different context might through more light on the findings of this paper. Longitudinal studies are recommended to provide deeper insights into the trends and causal effects in the relationships between PM, EE, and CP. Future research should also examine how PM and CP are connected to the specific dimensions of EE, such as vigor, dedication, and absorption.

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