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A double edged sword: Exploring the temporal effects on employee entitlement

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Masters in Social and Organizational Psychology

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CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Department of Psychology

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Resumo

O presente estudo examina como a presunção do trabalhador, a antiguidade na organização e o tempo de relação com a chefia interagem para influenciar o envolvimento no trabalho, propondo uma componente temporal baseada no modelo *Job Demands–Resources* e na teoria da Troca Líder-Membro. A presunção do trabalhador, definida como a expectativa de tratamento preferencial ou recompensa desmedida, é hipotetizada como mediadora das relações entre o tempo na organização, o tempo com o mesmo supervisor e o envolvimento no trabalho (vigor, dedicação e absorção no trabalho). Com base em 141 respostas a um inquérito online os resultados mostraram, contrariamente ao esperado, que a presunção exerce um efeito positivo no envolvimento no trabalho, e que a antiguidade na organização exerce um efeito indireto positivo no envolvimento no trabalho através da presunção, efeito este replicado com tempo de relação com a chefia, mas com valência negativa. Isto sugere que a presunção pode ser infundada (sendo a chefia um factor regulador) mas também ser legítima (baseada na antiguidade). Estes resultados desafiam a visão uniformemente negativa da presunção dos colaboradores, destacando o seu carácter dual, legítimo ou ilegítimo, revelando implicações práticas para a gestão de expectativas através da antiguidade e da estabilidade na relação com a chefia.

Palavras-chave: Presunção do trabalhador; Antiguidade organizacional; Tempo de relação com a chefia; Envolvimento no trabalho

Códigos de classificação APA: 3600 Organizational Psychology & Human Resources; 3660 Organizational Behavior

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Abstract

This study examines how employee entitlement, organization tenure, and dyadic tenure with the supervisor, interact to influence work engagement, proposing a temporal component based on the Job Demands–Resources model and Leader-Member Exchange theory. Employee entitlement, defined as the expectation of preferential treatment or excessive rewards, is hypothesized to mediate the relationships between organization tenure, dyadic tenure, and work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). Based on 141 responses to an online survey, the results showed, contrary to expectations, that entitlement has a positive effect on work engagement, and that organizational tenure has an indirect positive effect on work engagement through entitlement; an effect that is replicated with dyadic tenure but with a negative valence. This suggests that entitlement can be unrealistic (with the supervisor operating as a regulating factor) but also legitimate (based on organizational tenure). These results challenge the uniformly negative view of employee entitlement, highlighting its dual nature, legitimate or illegitimate, revealing practical implications for managing expectations through tenure and stability in the relationship with supervisors.

Keywords: Employee Entitlement; Organizational Tenure; Dyadic Tenure; Work Engagement

APA´s classification codes: 3600 Organizational Psychology & Human Resources; 3660 Organizational Behavior

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Introduction

In today´s dynamic organizational environments, understanding the psychological mechanisms that influence employees is growing in popularity. Given the increase in competitiveness of the job market, forcing organizations to increase recruitment and training costs the field of organizational science has highlighted novel variables requiring further study, such as employee entitlement.

Employee entitlement is described as the development of unrealistic expectations by the employee in relation to the job and psychological contract upon hiring (Westerlaken et al., 2016). This disconnect with reality manifests as entitlement in the sense that individuals feel like they deserve more and better conditions than the ones being presented by the employer, even without corresponding input or performance.

The concept of the psychological contract has long been present in organizational research and is defined by Rousseau (1989) as the individual's belief regarding the mutual obligations between themselves and the organization, such as the expectations of compensation, recognition, and benefits in return for their contribution and effort at work. Given that such beliefs appear to be formed early in the establishment of the relationship between the employee and the organization, it is interesting to understand how they can change over time, considering both the tenure of employees within the organization and particularly the length of their relationship with their immediate supervisor, commonly referred to as organizational tenure and dyadic tenure**,** respectively.

Employee entitlement is a central psychological construct as it is related to important consequences. Due to the “unrealistic expectations” one can infer that a frustration state is inevitable as the satisfaction of such expectations is unmet (Harvey & Harris, 2010). As a result, there is evidence that entitled employees tend to engage in both unethical pro-organizational behavior as well as in counter-productive work behaviors such as intentionally arriving late for work or gossiping about the supervisor (Naseer et al., 2020). The primary concern of an entitled employee is him or herself, demonstrating a self-serving attribution style, which leads to higher dissatisfaction and a higher level of conflict with supervisors (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). This conflictual experience in entitled employees was also reported generally towards others with a high level of hostility (Moeller et al., 2009). Entitled employees were also theorized to relate to burnout and its counterpart, work engagement that is a positive motivational state of vigor,

dedication, and absorption toward work (Baker et al., 2014). Additionally, employee entitlement is also positively associated with higher turnover intention (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). The dominant view in employee entitlement research is that it leads to negative outcomes, reflecting the construct own inherently negative nature.

However, entitlement has recently been linked to positive outcomes. In a field study complemented by an experiment, Yang et al. (2024) found convergent results that suggested entitled employees show greater proactive behavior. This was explained based on the need for uniqueness that individual have, leading them into endeavor to show their positive unique merit that differentiates them from others (Imhoff & Erb, 2009). In a similar manner, Joplin et al. (2021) departed from the idea that entitled employees would experience lower work engagement but found that such is true only when their leadership exhibits low ethicality. Despite these novel suggestions that there may be a positive side to employee entitlement, the baseline understanding is that employee entitlement is a problem for employers, but researchers should strive for a more balance approach that acknowledges both negative and positive outcomes (Schwarz et al., 2023).

In line with this call, this dissertation contends that employee entitled literature has been overlooking the importance of time as a fundament to build and test expectations at work. This approach suggests a temporal stance e.g. with a longitudinal study design. However, time is also expressed as tenure. One important notion that is transversal to time is that it is a source of legitimacy, namely the legitimacy of claims, expectations and uniqueness (Imhoff & Erb, 2009). Likewise, time in a given relationship, e.g. dyadic tenure that expresses for how long a given employee is working with a given supervisor, should also be considered when thinking about entitlement. As relationship mature with time, it is reasonable to infer that both parties will have a better understanding of the other and that compromises will be more likely made to foster a harmonious relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Therefore, time should be considered when researching employee entitlement. This is the research gap that motivates this study.

Based on this, the present study seeks to answer the following research question: to what extent does organizational tenure and dyadic tenure diverging pressures on employee entitlement influence work engagement?

Specifically, based on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, this study tests a mediation model where entitlement acts as the psychological mechanism linking tenure variables to work engagement (Bakker et al., 2014; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The dissertation begins by reviewing literature on work engagement and its known predictors, followed by a detailed examination of psychological entitlement as a relevant individual difference variable in the organizational context. The concepts of organizational and dyadic tenure are then introduced as key antecedents shaping entitlement beliefs. Based on the JD-R model and LMX theory, the proposed conceptual model is presented and empirically tested. The dissertation proceeds with an explanation of the methodology, followed by presentation and discussion of the results considering the existing literature. It concludes by outlining key contributions, practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

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1 Literature Review

The literature review begins by examining work engagement, a central construct in organizational psychology, along with its established antecedents and implications. Following this, the concept of employee entitlement is introduced as a relevant attitudinal factor that may hinder or promote work engagement, depending on contextual and relational factors.

In exploring what shapes entitlement beliefs, particular attention is given to organizational tenure and dyadic tenure with the leader, both of which are theorized to impact employees sense of entitlement in a opposite manner.

As the theoretical framework unfolds, hypotheses are presented along the literature review to reflect the proposed conceptual model, which is depicted into a diagram integrating all hypotheses.

1.1 Work engagement, antecedents and implications

The concept of work engagement was introduced by Kahn (1990), conceptualized as the alignment of employees' personal selves with their work roles, wherein individuals invest and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in the execution of their tasks. Work engagement was initially regarded as a bidirectional dialectical relationship between the individuals and their work, where the individual personal energies alignment with their work role is judged as regards how much it allows self-expression.

This abstract concept was first operationalized as the opposite of burnout by Maslach and Leiter (1997) arguing that engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, exactly the opposites of the three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy, as measured with the Maslach-Burnout Inventory (MBI – Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Over time an alternative view emerged, from the necessity of studying both concepts together and their interaction, which was impossible given that so far it was the pole opposite of the same scale. Based on theoretical analysis, an independent conceptualization of work engagement proposed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) started with two underlying dimensions: activation (ranging from exhaustion to vigor), and identification (ranging from cynicism to dedication). Vigor reflects high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, a willingness to invest effort, and persistence in the face of challenges. Dedication captures a

strong sense of involvement in one's work, accompanied by feelings of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge.

Further research extended the comprehension of the construct to include a third factor besides vigor and dedication, namely absorption, thus becoming a construct composed of three core dimensions (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Absorption refers to being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in work, such that time seems to pass quickly and detaching from work becomes difficult. Currently, work engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p.74). In this approach, work engagement is not conceptualized simply as a situational response, but rather, a sustained and pervasive affective-cognitive state, that is enduring but may fluctuate over time (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Work engagement has gained momentum in literature due to its significant consequences, namely higher job performance and task efficiency, described as an increase in effectiveness regarding any behavior related to the task required by the job (Christian et al., 2011) as well as increased job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions (Halbesleben, 2010). It has also been reported as leading to higher resilience among nurses (Poku et al., 2025) and higher organizational citizenship behavior (Gupta et al., 2017).

As regards its antecedents, based on Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) model, situational and individual factors were found to predict work engagement, the most important being job and personal resources (Xanthopoulou, et al., 2009). Job Demands are different characteristics of a job that require prolonged physical or mental effort, while Job Resources include participation in decision making, task variety and support from colleagues (Demerouti et al., 2001). This model of occupational well-being was built from the understanding of existing patterns, where job demands have been recognized as primary contributors to burnout, which subsequently results in adverse health outcomes and negative organizational consequences. Conversely, job resources serve as facilitators of work engagement, promoting well-being and favorable organizational outcomes (Bakker et al., 2014).

A recent meta-analysis conducted by Mazzetti et al. (2023) comprehending 113 independent samples, showed that personal resources are more strongly related to work engagement than job and social resources. Such findings reinforce the importance of continual studying of psychological constructs in uncovering the antecedents of work engagement. One

potential psychological correlate that has not yet been duly researched in relation to employee engagement is employee entitlement.

1.2 Employee Entitlement and work engagement

Defined as "an excessive self-regard and a belief in the automatic right to privileged treatment at work" (Westerlaken et al., 2016, p. 3), employee entitlement may take many forms and stretch across many different fields of study, impacting both personal daily tasks and societal structure.

Narrowing the focus to the individual, psychological entitlement originates from research into personal values, social justice, self-esteem and narcissism, as identified by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory as one of seven components (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Such early approach through narcissism led to the development of psychological entitlement not only as a subscale but as a stable and independent trait, representing a sense of deserving more than others, regardless of situational factors (Campbell et al., 2004).

This research focus confers to sense of entitlement a negative connotation, positing it emerges from an individual unrealistic expectation about their social contract, leading them to believe that their needs should be accommodated as privileges, regardless of participation or contribution in civic duties (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). The psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989) is here a central construct as it refers to the individual's beliefs regarding mutual obligations between them and other parties. This directly highlights the fundamentals of entitlement as its core issues are the expectations and sense of reciprocity.

Drawing on psychological entitlement, and psychological contract literatures, Westerlaken et al. (2016) develop the first scale aiming at measuring a sense of entitlement in the workplace. It comprises three dimensions:

1) Rewards-as-a-right, representing the expectation that compensation or rewards are automatic rights, irrespective of the broader circumstances or performance dynamics within the workplace,
2) Self-Focus, reflecting a focus on self-interest that disregards others, coupled with a desire for preferential or unique treatment, and
3) Excessive self-regard, showing an elevated perception of the great value individuals offer to their employers.

In explaining why entitlement occurs, beyond personality traits approach, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) can offer a complementary view. SDT proposes three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to this theory, when satisfied, these motivational needs foster intrinsic motivation. In this context, intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's drive stemming from personal satisfaction with their activities and the fulfillment of these needs.

Consequently, this motivational state is not dependent on external regulation, making it relatively independent of extrinsic rewards. However, entitlement, by definition, is a feeling that something is owed to the individual, and its manifestation requires external recognition, whether intangible (e.g., status) or tangible (e.g., bonuses, salary, benefits). Thus, entitlement fundamentally operates based on extrinsic motivation, which stands in opposition to intrinsic motivation.

Given the JD-R model, approach to predict work engagement by both job resources (e.g. collogue support) and personal resources (e.g. optimism), motivation is a key element in driving work engagement (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Therefore, the conflicting bases for intrinsic motivation necessary for work engagement and extrinsic motivation required for employee entitlement, can be defined as a negative personal resource present in some employees.

This view is in line with Joplin et al. (2019) reporting a negative relationship between entitlement and work engagement, suggesting that entitlement's self-focused nature undermines the vigor and dedication central to engagement. Considering this we hypothesize that:

H1: Entitlement will be negatively associated with work engagement

Because these processes do not occur instantaneously, it is reasonable to infer that time plays a role, not per se, but because of relationships that are modulated and consolidated across time. These relationships can relate to the organization overall as well as to leadership. Therefore, a temporal perspective may require a finer look into the role of organizational tenure as well as that of dyadic tenure within the psychological processes entailed in the building up of both entitlement and engagement.

1.3 Organizational and dyadic tenure and employee entitlement

The importance of time in organizational contexts cannot be overstated, as it underpins the development of seniority, the accumulation of experience, and the construction of relational patterns that shape employee attitudes and behaviors. Organizational tenure, defined as the length of time an employee has been with the organization, often fosters a sense of loyalty, embeddedness, and entitlement to rewards based on accumulated contributions, which can positively influence commitment and performance (Ng & Feldman, 2010a).

Given the SDT connection between satisfied needs and intrinsic motivation, as individuals stay longer in a given organization, it is expectable that they will feel prouder in their work and contributions, which helps turning the external motivation from entitlement into internal motivation.

The continued acknowledgement that a given employee has been contributing positively to the organizational objectives, has been theorized in HRM literature advocating that tenure should be a criterion to calculate compensation (Meyer-Sahling et al., 2021) in line with the Weberian view of organizational bureaucracies. The rationale for this lies in recognizing tenure as an expression of loyalty to the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2010b).

Loyalty manifested as the decision not to leave, assuming the contribution has achieved acceptance levels, offers managers a sense of stability that saves costs to organizations (if the performance does not degrade with time). This means that entitlement may be legitimate if one goes beyond the mere deserved-rewards based on present outputs and includes into the equation the past-contributions under its proxy, tenure. We therefore hypothesize that:

H2a: Organizational Tenure will be positively associated with entitlement

Organizational tenure per se does not exhaust the plausible origins of entitlement, as any recently recruited employee does have a period of induction in which the norms and unwritten expectations are shared so to fully integrate the individual into existing teams and dynamics (Bauer, 2010). This implies a regulatory process where the individual will either learn by observing others (as indicated by the Social Learning Theory, Bandura, 1977) or experience reactions to specific behaviors that help defining the boundaries of what is desired. This can occur via peer interaction but taking into consideration the capacity to set rules and distribute

rewards, the hierarchical interactions, mostly with the direct supervisor, should be more effective. Therefore, dyadic tenure, as an expression of who long has a given individual been working with the same supervisor, becomes a variable of interest in this study.

One of the responsibilities ascribed to leaders or supervisors, is to guide their units or teams' behaviors so to guarantee the optimal capacity to achieve organizational objectives. This guidance is reinforced by formal sanctioning power attributed to leading positions, which ultimately determine rewards and punishments for those who fail to comply with acceptable levels of performance, but also behaviors (Mintzberg, 1989; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Leader-member exchange theory (LMX, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) explicitly states that high quality leader-subordinate relationship implies a mutual perception that one part, especially the leader, understands the subordinate problems and needs, recognized their potential, and will actively help to solve work-related issues. These behaviors will help employees to calibrate their expectations if the communication from the leader is clear about the desired level of performance, if the achievements are duly recognized, and feedback is effective into regulating downwards or upwards any given input that may originate from the subordinate.

However, it is tacitly accepted in LMX that relationships are established across time, which means a temporal approach is called for. In this case, the regulatory process will not occur instantly, but it will rather develop across time, which means that dyadic tenure should be associated with more tacit understanding of mutual expectations about how to proceed at work, what to expect as regards acknowledgement or any other organizational consequence, overall, the rules of engagement within the work setting (Kipfelsberger et al., 2022).

We therefore hypothesize that:

H2b: Dyadic tenure will be negatively associated with entitlement

Considering the above state hypotheses, entitlement can operate as an intervening variable within the relationship between both types of tenure and work engagement. Within this reasoning, we hypothesize that:

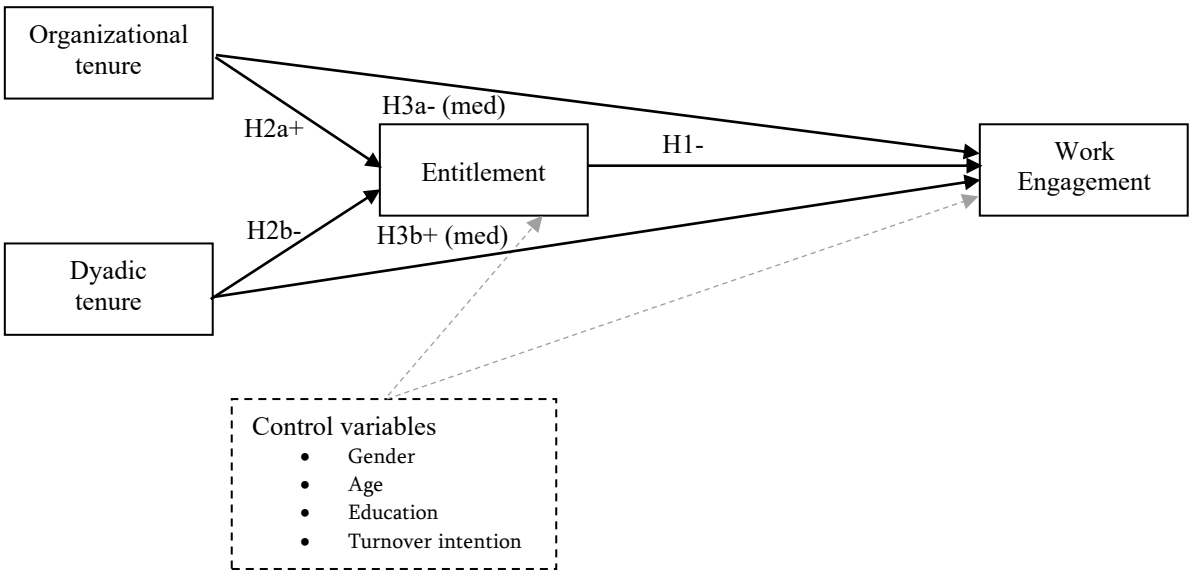
H3a: Organizational tenure will have an indirect negative effect on work engagement via entitlement;

H3b: Dyadic tenure will have an indirect positive effect on work engagement via entitlement.

1.4 Conceptual model

The previously stated hypotheses build a mediation model where two parallel paths link organizational and dyadic tenure to work engagement via job entitlement. These are depicted in figure 1.1 as the conceptual model that guides this study.

Figure 1.1 - Conceptual model



Therefore, the set of hypotheses to be tested are:

H1: Entitlement will be negatively associated with Work Engagement

H2a: Organizational Tenure will be positively associated with Entitlement

H2b: Dyadic Tenure will be negatively associated with Entitlement

H3a: Organizational Tenure will have an indirect negative effect on Work Engagement via Entitlement

H3b: Dyadic Tenure will have an indirect positive effect on Work Engagement via Entitlement

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2 Method

This section will detail the procedure followed to contact and collect data, describe the sample, the data analysis strategy and measures used in the empirical study, both those concerning variables in the conceptual model as well as variables used for control purposes.

2.1 Procedure

The data gathering process was conducted through an online survey distributed openly and sent to individuals of at least 18 years old, employed and asking to share their perception about work. The questionnaire included items from three scales measuring the main constructs: Employer Entitlement, Work Engagement and Turnover Intention, as well as demographic variables namely gender, age, education, organizational tenue and leader dyadic tenure.

The survey began with a brief introductory explanation shortly followed by a mandatory informed consent question, making sure every participant agreed before proceeding. The information disclosed in this section followed APA´s ethical principles and code of conduct (American Psychologist Association, 2017) providing participants with clear understanding regarding the purpose of the study, assurances of voluntary and anonymous participation, and an explicit statement affirming their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Additionally, the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire was indicated, and contact information was provided for any further inquiries or feedback. All data was stored in a encrypted and password protected database within Qualtrics platform.

2.2 Sample

Sampling followed a non-probabilistic convenience process through a personal network of contacts with the request to snowballing and via an anonymous link made available on a career driven social media platform. While this may limit the generalizability of the findings, it may not compromise the quality of the research, as the only eligibility criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old and currently engaged in paid employment, either under a formal contract or as freelancers.

186 entries were detected in Qualtrics database among which 14 declined to participate and the remaining 31 did not provide enough data to be validly included. The workable sample comprises a total of 141 participants, mostly female (78%) and falling in the Generation X and Millennials (78.8%), with the most frequent age interval being 28 to 59 years old. The sample

is moderately to highly educated with the largest segment holding a Bachelor degree (36.9%), followed by a high school diploma (27.7%). On average the participants work in the same organization for about 7 years (SD=7,18) indicating strong variations within the sample with a skewed distribution towards more recent employees.

2.3 Data analysis strategy

Data analysis started by curating the database with the exclusion of entries that had too many missing values or those that indicated that they did not fill the participation criteria.

The first responsibility in analyzing quantitative data is to evaluate its psychometric properties, namely validity and reliability. As regards validity, it concerns the extent to which a given set of items is measuring what it is supposed to. This can be tested with construct validity (the factor structure matches the one that theoretically is expected), convergent validity (the items that load in the same latent construct should be accounted by this for at least 50%, which is indicated by the Average Extracted Variance of 0.500) and divergent validity in the case a given construct entails more than one latent construct (e.g. two factors within the same construct) and such a construct is considered valid if the correlation between the latent constructs falls below the average correlation between each of the latent constructs and their respective observed items). This can be tested with the HeteroTrait-MonoTrait indicator (Henseler et al., 2015) which should not fall above the .85 or .90 value (strict criterion).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used when the structure of a given construct is known due to theory or previous empirical findings in literature. The fit of the model is indicated by several fit indices. Hair et al. (2019) recommended using the chi-square and normed chi-square, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardize Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR). According to Hair et al. (2019) the cutoffs for these fit indices are as follows: Non-significant Chi-Square, a normed chi-square below 3, CFI and TLI above .95, RMSEA below .08, and SRMR below .08 also.

A measure must also be reliable, i.e. it must be consistent in its measurement within the scale (if items are measuring the same construct) or across time. The scale consistency is the most commonly reported indicator of reliability for which the Cronbach alpha is used with an expected value not below .700 to be considered reliable.

To test hypotheses, path analysis was conducted with Jamovi that allows the design of more models that are not pre-designed in PROCESS and also computes bootstrapped

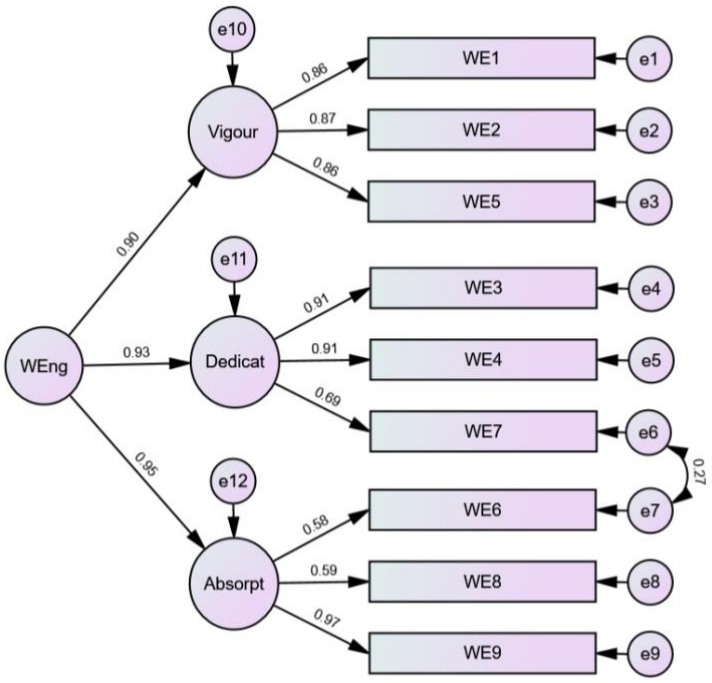
confidence intervals (in this case for 95% confidence and with 5000 repetitions). Data analysis was thus conducted with AMOS (for confirmatory factor analysis), SPSS (for descriptives and bivariate) and Jamovi (to test the conceptual model).

2.4 Measures

Work engagement was measured with Schaufeli et al. (2006) UWES-9 scale comprising nine items equally distributed by three dimensions: Vigor (3 items, e.g. "At my work, I feel bursting with energy"), Dedication (3 items, e.g. "I am enthusiastic about my job"), and absorption (3 items, e.g. "I get carried away when I am working."). Participants signaled their answer using a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always/everyday).

Because the measure is extensively used and its structure is both theoretically and empirically well supported, we deployed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for a three-factor structure. This analysis showed acceptable fit indices, but the inter-factor correlations were too high to accept a first-order factor structure, and it suggested a second-order factor. The CFA for this second-order factor structure shows acceptable fit indices ($X^2(23)=41.425$, $p=.011$; Normed $X^2=1.801$; CFI=.98; TLI=.97; RMSEA=.076 90% CI [.036; .112] PClose = .124; SRMR=.036).

Figure 2.1 – Factor structure for Work Engagement



This solution has good convergent validity for both the 2nd order factor ($AVE_{Weng}=.859$) as wel as for all the first-order factors ($AVE_{Vig}=.741$; $AVE_{Ded}=.708$; $AVE_{Abs}=.540$). This

solution is also reliable as shown by Cronbach alpha (alpha WEng=.924; Vig=.887; Ded=.871; Abs=.742). Therefore, this measure is both valid and reliable and can be used in further analyses. The factor structure is shown above in figure 2.1.

Employee entitlement was measured with Westerlaken et al. (2016) 18-item scale covering three dimensions: 1) Rewards-as-a-right (9 items, e.g. "I expect regular pay increases regardless of how the organization performs.", "Employees should be rewarded for average performance."), 2) Self-Focus (5 items, e.g "Employers should accommodate my personal circumstances.", "I only want to work in positions that are critical to the success of the organization."), and 3) Excessive-self-regard (4 items, e.g. "Any organization should be grateful to have me as an employee.", "I deserve to be paid more than others."). Participants signaled their answers in a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree; 6=Strongly agree).

A CFA for this structure indicated poor fit ($X^2(132)=280.964$, $p<.001$; Normed $X^2=2.129$; CFI=.82; TLI=.79; RMSEA=.090 90% CI [.075; .104] PClose = .000; SRMR=.088). A principal component analysis extracted five components showing good validity (KMO=.802, Bartlet's $X^2(153)=962.014$, $p<.001$) but comprising several items with insufficient commonality. After removing these items, the validity indicators remained good but one item was singled out in the last component (i.e. "I expect to be able to delegate tasks that I don't want to do.". Because this item pertains to a possible decision that is enabled only by those in a managerial position we opted to remove it from the analysis. A re-run showed a four-component solution that is valid (KMO=.760, Bartlet's $X^2(91)=753.961$, $p<.001$) accounting for 64.9% variance after rotation (Varimax). The components overlap with those theoretically expected but have an additional one. The first component pertains to "reward-as-a-right" (4 items, i.e. "I expect a bonus every year.", "I expect regular promotions.", "I should get a pay rise if I perform my job to a satisfactory level.", "I expect regular pay increases regardless of how the organization performs."); the second "excessive self-regard" (4 items, i.e. "I only want to work in positions that are critical to the success of the organization.", "I want to only work in roles that significantly influence the rest of the organization.", "I believe I have exceptional skills and abilities.", "Any organization should be grateful to have me as an employee."), the third "Self-focus" (3 items, i.e. "I should be able to take leave whenever it suits me.", "I expect to be able to take breaks whenever I want.", "Employers should accommodate my personal circumstances.") and the fourth component mixed one item from rewards with two from self-focus expressing the idea that mediocre performance should not determine punishment (3 items, "It is the organization's fault if I don't perform my job requirements.", "Employees should be rewarded for average performance.", "I deserve preferential treatment at work.").

The first components have good convergent validity (AVE_{RaR}=.626; AVE_{ESR}=.614; AVE_{SF}=.554) but the last one failed to achieve the threshold (AVE_{NP}=.478). Moreover, the first couple have good reliability (Cronbach's alpha=.835, .824), the third has liminal acceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha=.685), and the last one has unacceptable reliability (Cronbach's alpha=.575). This enables the further use of the components to the exception of the last one that does not meet minimum criteria. Table 2.1 shows the factor loadings.

Table 2.1 – Component matrix Entitlement (Rotated)

	Reward as-a-right	Excessive self-regard	Self-focus	No-Punishment
5 Yearly salary bonus guaranteed	**.842**	.085	.042	.182
6 Regular promotions guaranteed	**.828**	.162	.185	.054
1 Salary increase for satisfactory performance	**.753**	.109	.084	.035
2 Regular pay increase regardless of performance	**.739**	.044	.148	.187
16 Only work in critical positions for success	.027	**.867**	.081	.075
18 Only work in influential roles	.100	**.834**	.030	.194
15 I believe I have exceptional skills and abilities	.070	**.732**	.278	-.043
17 Organizations should be grateful to have me	.244	**.689**	.081	.272
11 Be able to take a leave whenever I want	.052	-.015	**.781**	.184
10 Be able to take breaks whenever I want	.134	.239	**.732**	.054
12 Accommodate my personal circumstances	.207	.164	**.719**	.154
13 It is the organization fault if I don't perform	.057	.148	.180	**.750**
8 Reward for average performance	.409	-.036	.029	**.667**
14 I deserve preferential treatment at work	.077	.283	.198	**.654**

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

2.5 Control variables

Literature suggests some sociodemographic variables may play a role in relation with both work engagement and employee entitlement. Madan and Srivastava (2015) reports differences in gender as regards to employee entitlement, age and education are also commonly controlled variables as they are often related to attitudes and other behavioral variables, but mostly, because age has the same temporal nature as dyadic or organizational tenure.

Lastly, a variable that may be central both in relation to employee entitlement and work engagement is turnover intention. Turnover intention is important because it signals the disinvestment in the organization, and eventually lower work engagement (Malik & Khalid, 2016). In this study it was measured with Bothma and Roodt (2013) 6 item questionnaire (e.g. "How often have you considered leaving your job? answered in a 7-point frequency scale (0=never, 6=always / 0=Very unlikely, 6=very likely / 0=Totally dissatisfactory, 6=Totally satisfactory).

The CFA showed a very poor loading concerning a reversed item and unacceptable RMSEA. A principal components analysis showed a valid solution (KMO=.840, Bartlet's $X^2(15)=335.443$, $p<.001$) but with that same item ("How often do you look forward to another day at work?") and another one "How likely are you to accept another job at the same compensation level should it be offered to you?") failing to achieve minimum commonality. After removing these items, the solution remained valid (KMO=.792, Bartlet's $X^2(6)=281.753$, $p<.001$) accounting for 70.6% of total variance and with all items with commonalities above .500. This solution has convergent validity (AVE=.705) as well as good reliability (Cronbach alpha=.860). Table 2.2 shows the factor loadings.

Table 2.2 – Component matrix Turnover Intention

Item	Turnover Intention
TI3 - How often do you dream about getting another job that will better suit your personal needs?	.912
TI1 - How often have you considered leaving your job?	.887
TI2 - How often are you frustrated when not given the opportunity at work to achieve your personal work-related goals?	.806
TI6 - How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs? (rev)	.745

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 1 components extracted.

3 Results

This section will start with the descriptives (means and standard deviations) to capture the overall situation and patterns of association between the variables. It will then show results concerning the hypotheses testing.

3.1 Descriptives and bivariate statistics

Participants report an average level of work engagement above the scale midpoint where the highest dimension is found in "dedication" (M=4.40, SD=1.07; t(140)=3.437, p<.001 CI 95 [.7258; 1.0827]), followed by "absorption" (M=4.21, SD=.93; t(140)=10.017, p<.001 CI 95 [.5600; .8703]) and lastly, "vigor" (M=3.80, SD=1.04; t(140)=9.112, p<.001 CI 95 [.1290; .4785]).

The levels of entitlement varied considerably with reward-as-a-right being the highest reported (M=4.06, SD=1.27) but "self-focus" being as small as M=2.57 (SD=1.10). Excessive-self-regard stands between the previous (M=3.06, SD=1.08). Participants report a moderate level of turnover intention (M=3.84, SD=1.39) which would match an occasional experience or intending to leave.

As regards bivariate estimates, among the sociodemographic variables, age stands out as being positively associated with work engagement (all three dimensions show a significant correlation between .210 and .294 for a 95% confidence interval). Age is also negatively associated with turnover intention (r=-.196, p<.05). Dyadic tenure has several significant negative correlations with some of the variables namely with entitlement self-focus (r=-.297, p<.01), entitlement excessive self-regard (r=-.190, p<.05) and turnover intention (r=-.185, p<.05) and one positive with work engagement vigor (r=.195, p<.05). Work engagement is negatively associated with turnover intention varying between r=-.541 (p<.01) and r=-.607 (p<.01). Entitlement is only correlated with work engagement in its excessive-self-regard dimension (with vigor, r=.217, p<.05; and dedication, r=.270, p<.01) and one case between reward-as-a-right and dedication (r=.194, p<.05).

Table 3.1 – Descriptives and bivariate statistics

	Scale	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	1-4	78%F	-	1												
2. Age	-	2.25	0.78	.147	1											
3. Education	1-7	4.70	1.13	-.189*	-.396**	1										
4. Turn. Intent.	0-6	3.84	1.39	-.004	-.196*	.127	1									
5. OrgTen	-	7.43	7.18	.086	.402**	-.249**	-.017	1								
6. DyadTen	-	4.90	5.20	.104	.307**	-.288**	-.185*	.647**	1							
7. WE_vig	1-6	3.80	1.04	-.056	.294**	.007	-.607**	.116	.195*	1						
8. WE_ded	1-6	4.40	1.07	-.088	.225**	-.094	-.541**	.150	.110	.736**	1					
9. WE_abs	1-6	4.21	0.93	.080	.210*	-.104	-.556**	.087	.114	.727**	.745**	1				
10. WEng	1-6	4.14	0.92	-.020	.282**	-.086	-.626**	.134	.157	.908**	.916**	.899**	1			
11. Ent_RAR	1-6	4.06	1.27	.112	.076	-.130	.100	.125	-.054	.122	.194*	.126	.164	1		
12. Ent_SF	1-6	2.57	1.10	-.097	-.090	.135	.089	-.101	-.297**	.023	.125	.006	.059	.326**	1	
13. Ent_ESR	1-6	3.06	1.08	-.234**	.003	.150	-.016	-.001	-.190*	.217*	.270**	.168	.243**	.290**	.342**	1
14. Entitlement	1-6	3.23	0.85	-.076	-.005	.062	.082	.019	-.238*	.163	.266*	.137	.210*	.764**	.739**	.710**

Note: Turn.Intent.=Turnover Intentition; OrgTen=Organizational tenure; DyadTen=Dyadic tenure; WE_vig=Work engagement vigor; WE_ded=Work engagement dedication; WE_abs=Work engagement absorption; WEng=Work Engagement; Ent_RAR=Entitlement reward as a right; Ent_SF=Entitlement self-focus; Ent_ESR=Entitlement excessive self-regard.

*p<.05; **p<.01

3.2 Hypotheses testing

The first hypotheses posited a negative association between employee entitlement and work engagement. The direct effect estimate (B=0.264) is statistically significant (p<0.001) and the 95% confidence interval also indicates a meaningful association [0.152; 0.424]. Although significant, the valence of the association is positive and thus it contradicts the hypothesized negative relationship. Therefore, this does not support Hypothesis 1.

The second hypothesis stated that tenure would be associated with employee entitlement such that if one is considering organizational tenure, it would be positively associated with employee entitlement (Hypothesis H2a) while if one is considering dyadic tenure, it would be negatively associated (Hypothesis H2b). Findings show that organizational tenure and employee entitlement, are positively associated (B = 0.284), which is significant (p<.05) with a meaningful 95% confidence interval [0.008; 0.059], which renders support to Hypothesis 2a. As regards dyadic tenure, findings show it is associated negatively with employee entitlement (B=-0.417) in a significant (p<.001) and meaningful way as indicated by the 95% confidence interval [-0.102; -0.033] which supports hypothesis H2b. This fully supports hypothesis 2.

The third hypothesis originates from the previous hypotheses and stated that tenure exerts an indirect effect on work engagement via employee entitlement. Mirroring the previous sub-hypotheses, it splits into H3a concerning organizational tenure, and H3b concerning dyadic tenure. As regards H3a, findings show an estimate for the indirect effect of 0.075 with a significant p-value (p<.029) and 95% confidence interval ([0.001; 0.018]). Because the valence is positive, in the same vein of H1, this sub hypothesis H3a is not supported. For H3b, findings show an estimate for the indirect effect of -0.110 with a significant p-value (p<.005) and 95% confidence interval ([-0.033; -0.059]). Again, the valence of the estimate goes counter to the one hypothesized and thus H3b is not supported.

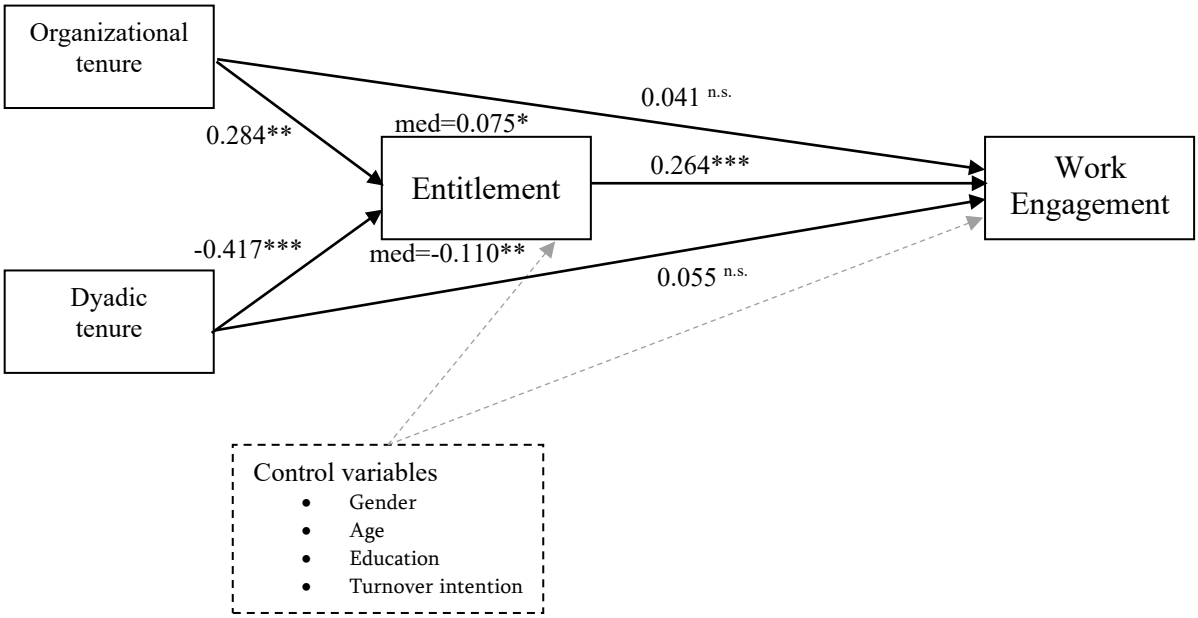
Table 3.2 – Direct and indirect effects

	Entitlement					Work engagement				
	B	z	p-value	CI 95% LB-UB		B	z	p-value	CI 95% LB-UB	
Control variables										
Gender	-0.060	-0.798	0.425	[-0.456; 0.192]		-0.026	-0.421	0.673	[-0.326; 0.210]	
Age	0.027	0.292	0.770	[-0.168; 0.227]		0.147	2.076	0.038	[0.009; 0.337]	
Education	0.002	0.028	0.978	[-0.128; 0.132]		0.074	1.108	0.267	[-0.046; 0.168]	
Turn. Intent.	0.014	0.177	0.859	[-0.090; 0.108]		-0.617	-9.783	<.001	[-0.490; -0.326]	
Direct effects										
Entitlement						0.264	4.145	<.001	[0.152; 0.424]	H1 n.sup.
OrgTen	0.284	2.575	0.010	[0.008; 0.059]	H2a sup	0.041	0.48	0.63	[-0.016; 0.026]	
DyadTen	-0.417	-3.855	<.001	[-0.102; -0.033]	H2b sup	0.055	0.64	0.52	[-0.020; 0.039]	
Indirect effects										
OrgTen -> Entitl -> WEng						0.075	2.187	0.029	[0.001; 0.018]	H3a n.s.
DyadTen -> Entitl -> WEng						-0.110	-2.823	0.005	[-0.033; -0.059]	H3b n.s.
Total effects										
OrgTen						0.11636	1.3078	0.191	[-0.007; 0.037]	
DyadTen						-0.05507	-0.6315	0.528	[-0.040; 0.020]	
R^2 adjusted	11.1%					49%				

Note: Turn.Intent.=Turnover Intentition; OrgTen=Organizational tenure; DyadTen=Dyadic tenure; WEng=Work engagement
*p<.05; **p<.01

The figure 3.1 below shows all the coefficients found for the hypothesized relationships in the conceptual model.

Figure 3.1 – Findings for the conceptual model



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4 Discussion and conclusion

The present study examines the importance of a scarcely researched phenomenon: employee entitlement, which is a construct that expresses a focus of psychological entitlement on the context of work and has been linked to negative outcomes.

Despite these this construct being tacitly taken as harmful, it is yet uncertain how temporal dimensions such as tenure, affect employee entitlement specifically the role of organizational tenure and dyadic tenure in explaining if entitlement is always negative or if it may have a legitimate basis, namely as a gain from organizational tenure. Therefore, this study addresses the research question: To what extent do the diverging pressures of organizational and dyadic tenure on employee entitlement lead to work engagement?

The conceptual model devised employee entitlement as a mediator between both organizational tenure and dyadic tenure, with work engagement. Based on JD-R model (Bakker et al., 2014), we reason that such engagement results from the interplay between both organizational resources and the individual internal resources, crossed with the demands of the position the employee occupies. Entitlement may lead to frustration, because the expectations may be unrealistic and therefore, strong entitlement can be taken as a stressor, which cumulates a sense of lack of accomplishment but can also extend to a sense of lack of autonomy or relatedness. Because, according to SDT such basic motivational needs are fundamental to promote intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000), we deemed that it may lead to deteriorating engagement. Highlighting the relational dimension of organizations, the model posits that as individuals linger in the organization and continuously hold high employee entitlement, their frustration may ultimately lower their work engagement. Conversely, the continuing interaction with the same supervisor, with clear communication, will calibrate expectations, as expressed in LMX theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Therefore, dyadic tenure was reasoned to operate as a protective factor.

Findings, after controlling participants' gender, age, education and turnover intention, rejected H1 not because there is no significant relationship but because the relationship has reversed valence. This is a surprising result as the development of this hypothesis suggested the opposite. Namely that employee entitlement, instead of harming work engagement, fosters it. This goes counter to research that posits entitlement as a self-focused demand that undermines vigor and dedication (Joplin et al., 2019).

Among the possible explanations, it is reasonable to posit that this finding may reflect sample characteristics, such as highly educated participants, that might view their legitimate self-advocacy in competitive sectors to be categorized as entitlement. Therefore, one must infer that employee entitlement is not intrinsically positive or negative. Apparently, its role may depend on context. Findings from Schwarz et al. (2023) support this contention because the effects they found of entitlement on organizational affective commitment has employee involvement climate as a boundary condition, where high involvement climate made employee entitlement had positive effects, while a low such climate enacted negative effects. We thus conclude that in the case of this sample, and without any testing for boundary conditions, employee entitlement can be interpreted as a legitimate, temporal-based, expectation that may not be that unrealistic and reflect resources such as gained status within the teams, or the organization.

As expected, organizational tenure associated positively with employee entitlement while dyadic tenure associated negatively as stated in H2a and H2b. This fully supports our contention that there is a regulatory function in the dyadic relationship between supervisors and employees, where unrealistic entitlement is progressively adjusted by the supervisor along their relationship with subordinates. In parallel, as tenure cumulates, employees gain a historical backlog whose collective memory ascribes them a sense of entitlement due to their past contributions to the organization. This legitimate entitlement (legitimate because it is acknowledged as deserved) confers a tenure-based status that makes entitlement not a liability but rather an asset. Therefore, the main theoretical contribution from this finding pertaining to the second hypothesis consists of an acknowledgement that entitlement comprehends both the illegitimate and legitimacy facets. This does not go counter the above-mentioned findings that the valence of the effects from entitlement may be dependent on boundary conditions such as the involvement climate. It simply underlines the dual nature of entitlement, thus going beyond the commonly assumed negative nature of it.

Based on findings related to the first couple hypotheses, it is obvious that the third and fourth would be rejected. However, both indirect effects are significant which means that ultimately organizational tenure would increase work engagement while dyadic tenure would decrease it. This last effect seems counterintuitive but in the present study there is no data concerning, e.g., the quality of such dyadic relationship. Even if the dyadic relationship is poor, the action of supervisors may equally be effective in cutting down entitlement.

The practical implications concern eventual assumptions on the goodness of betting on tenure track positions as a career option, as against fomenting employee turnover to mitigate

eventual negative temporal-based effects. Findings clearly highlight the advantages of promoting tenure, both within the organization (as it would allow the legitimate entitlement to build up) and stability as regards dyadic relationship (as with time, the regulatory function seemingly lowers unrealistic entitlement). The implication for managing people is therefore, to bet on preserving stability and providing tenure.

4.1 Limitations

The results obtained present a few limitations namely, the non-probabilistic convenience sample, skewed towards female and young participants limiting the generalizability of results.

The option for collecting data simultaneously from the same participants, alongside the subjective nature of such data, is prone to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), meaning that the observed effects may be inflated due to the respondents' need for consistency, and implicit theories about how the variables relate, failing to report true effects. Still, this is applicable for the relationship between entitlement and work engagement, because tenure has a more objective nature. The option of using turnover intention as a control variable may actually be helpful because if such common variance occurred in this dataset, then turnover intention should also include it. By being controlled, the estimations may remove such common variance from further predictors.

Another limitation originates from the small sample size, which increases error. Although the model is not truly complex (three predictors and one dependent variable, with four control variables) the ratio of parameters to data entries is quite small. Therefore, this should be acknowledged as a limitation.

4.2 Future studies

Based on limitations, researchers may collect time-lagged data as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) and endeavor to collect much larger samples. Likewise, it would be advisable to run a randomly selected stratified sample intended to equalize gender representation and cover a diverse array of ages and tenures.

Due to doubts pertaining to the quality of the dyadic relationship such as the ones that were mentioned in relation to the rejection of H3 and H4, future research may include LMX to ascertain its role in this model.

Lastly, the factorial matrix extracted for entitlement showed not three but four components where the last mixed items from rewards and self-focus highlighted a default focus on a no-punishment clause, i.e., an assumption that one should not be punished by below-standard

outcomes. These novel components can suggest a divergent factorial structure that may have a cultural background or be linked to defensive mechanisms that deserve specific focus in future studies.

4.3 Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to ascertain the possibility that employee entitlement has two natures: entitlement that is unrealistic and therefore illegitimate (which is the widely accepted view on entitlement) and the legitimate entitlement which reflects immaterial capital such as tenure-based status. We reason that findings, despite its limitations and novel unanswered questions, provide enough motivation to sustain this contention and the dual nature of employee entitlement that is yet untapped in literature.

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