

Received: 26 November 2022

Revised: 9 May 2023

Accepted: 23 May 2023

WORK MORALE AND ENCOURAGEMENT WITH THE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF PERSONNEL IN HOSPITALS: A CASE STUDY OF BANNANG SATA HOSPITAL, YALA PROVINCE, THAILAND

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(This article belongs to the Theme 2: Public Organization and Management in the Digital Age)

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Abstract

Many previous research results revealed that work morale and encouragement is a factor possibly influencing operational performance. The researcher therefore aims to study the status and relationship of both among the personnel in hospitals. The data was collected from the sample group consisting of 157 personnel of Bannang Sata Hospital, Yala Province, Thailand. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics including the frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics including simple correlation analysis and variable analysis on Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model. The research results revealed that the work morale and encouragement of personnel in Bannang Sata Hospital was entirely at the moderate level. Meanwhile, the operational performance was entirely at a high level. Work morale and encouragement were the factors influencing work performance efficiency at the moderate level and in the same direction. The results of the variable analysis on Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model showed in detail that work morale and encouragement in responsibilities is the only factor that affect operational performance. Therefore, in order to drive higher operational performance, the organizations, especially hospitals, are required to pay attention to the maintenance of morale and encouragement, especially in the areas of responsibilities of personnel on a continuous basis.

Keywords: Work Morale and Encouragement, Operational Performance, Responsibilities, Personnel, Hospital

Citation Information: Lekhawichit, N., Lekhawichit, S., Khaosung, W., Arelear, P., & Pumjan, N. (2023). Work Morale and Encouragement with the Operational Performance of Personnel in Hospitals: A Case Study of Bannang Sata Hospital, Yala Province, Thailand. *Asian Political Science Review*, 7(1), 28-40. <https://doi.org/10.14456/aprsr.2023.3>

Introduction

Apart from being considered one of the most important goals of the executives leading to the operational performance of the organizations, the maximum operational performance of personnel in the organizations (Tahsildari & Shahnaei, 2015; Mbore & Cheruiyot, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Davidescu et al., 2020; Alkaf et al., 2021) is also one of the issues that has received continual attention academically (Kosiyawat, 2012; Kavinphattharawach, 2014; Limphaibool et al., 2017; Thanajirachot et al., 2019; Zeynullagil, 2022). Many researchers around the world try to understand (Krakhmalov, 2013; Phlaipheth & Intarak, 2015) and find/prove what are the conditions or factors that result in this operational performance whether in government agencies (Ruangpon & Wuttivet, 2018; Rungruengchotisakun & Boonsanong, 2020; Setiawan et al., 2021), state enterprises (Laoketkarn & Chewasakorn, 2014; Fueangfung, 2016; Pornbida & Chairatana, 2017), local administrative organizations (Onthongtim et al., 2012; Sirisophonrat & Phinaitrup, 2018; Sriubol et al., 2022), private sector (Saringkhan et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2021; Jan-o-cha, 2022), even educational institutes such as schools (Ritisakorn & Suriyachaivatana, 2015; Penya & Yimwilai, 2019; Jaiklongklew et al., 2021) and universities (Ninaroon & Pasunon, 2015; Chomkaew et al., 2017; Kamna & Chenaksara, 2020). The approaches are also proposed for increasing the higher level in various agencies (Wattanarungson & Sutunyarak, 2016; Srisutham, 2018; Janta, 2020).

Hospital personnel is another group that has received quite a lot of attention (Sindhu et al., 2014; Sriwichai & Pinjai, 2017; Tabudom, 2021; Klomklorm & Someran, 2022) as this is the occupation to be among sicknesses, diseases, and risky to various infections (Wapattanawong et al., 2017). The personnel have to face the stress of making decisions under pressure. The wrong decision can mean the life of the patients. The personnel then face social-psychological problems (Sithisarankul, 1995). They became stressed and burnout at work (Sangtong, 2010). Especially during the outbreak of COVID-19, the personnel had to face the risk of infection from patients (Lerdlamyong, 2021; Jarudilokkul et al., 2022). The sudden increase of work burden turned into the mental health problem (Netirojjanakul, 2020; Sangsirilak & Sangsirilak, 2020; Chutchaikulsiri, 2021; Jansin, 2022) which may result in reduced operational efficiency (Payakkakom & Thapinta, 2015; Malhi et al., 2019; Pumim, 2021). The personnel may make the decision to resign (von Bormann et al., 2013).

Among the efforts to present various approaches to improve the performance of this group of people (Dwibedi et al., 2012; Lo et al., 2014; ThoemKhuntod et al., 2017), the work morale and encouragement is one of the aforementioned keywords (Jaruwanchai & Jarinto, 2016; Intachua, 2020; Inchaiya & Phakthongsuk, 2021; Suttisan & Srisorn, 2022). Especially during the past pandemic, it is an important and necessary factor in order to make medical personnel confident in their work, encouraged, determined and willing to perform their duties to the fullest of their abilities (Uthaisang, 2021; Khuntaweedach et al., 2022). This research is then created to test such hypothesis that the work morale and encouragement is related to the operational performance of personnel in the hospitals or not and how. This can be used as the guideline for enhancing their operational performance in the future.

Literature Review

Operational Performance

The academicians since the part such as Petersen & Plowman (1953) stated about the “efficiency” in business administration. It means reducing production costs in a broad sense. This includes the quality of effectiveness and the ability to conduct business. The optimum efficiency is the ability to produce a product or service in the required quantity and quality at the right time and has the least cost of production or uses the least production resources. Simon (1960) suggested that “operational performance” can be measured by the relationship between input and output from a process. It can be concluded that efficiency equals productivity minus

inputs. If it is a government agency, it will be added with the satisfaction of the service users as well. It can be written as a formula of “ $E = (O-I) + S$ ” where E = Efficiency which is the efficiency of the work, O = Output which is the production or finished work, I = Input which is the factor input or administrative resources used, and S = Satisfaction which is the satisfaction with the output.

With this conceptual framework, the current academician’s understanding of operational performance is defined as the ability to produce results, such as the difference between input and output. That “operational performance” can be viewed in terms of costs or production costs such as the use of resources. This includes people, money, materials, equipment, technology that are economical, worthwhile, causing minimal loss, or aspects of the management process, such as working correctly, standardized, fast and use more convenient technology or aspects of results such as quality work, profitability, timely production. The operators have a good working consciousness and the service is satisfactory to customers (Sinsang & Foosiri, 2013). The operational performance consists of four components; 1) the quality of the completed work which can be measured with complete accuracy including the achievement of goals and objectives of that task, 2) the amount of work which is measured by the number of tasks completed within a specified time, 3) the working time which can be measured by the duration and time limit for that work to achieve the goal, 4) the use of resources to work which can be measured in the utilization for maximum benefits (Piwat, 2017; Taranut, 2018).

Work Morale and Encouragement

Tohntae (2007) stated that “morale and encouragement” is a state of mind, feelings, thoughts, and the emotional state of the person affecting the work environment. It is expressed as intention, encouragement, unity of an individual or a group of people that aims to work with effort and responsibility in order for that work to achieve its objectives. The “morale” alone is a formless abstraction and is closely related to the “motivation” to satisfy human needs. If there is low motivation, it will cause low morale or being demoralized. If there is high motivation, it will lead to good morale or encouraged as well (Pasunon & Wattanavong, 2014). Kanjanakaroon (2008) concluded that “work morale and encouragement” is a measure or things used to classify people, levels of thought, or concepts to the organization and is something that can motivate members of the organization. Morale is therefore a measure of overall motivation in the minds of the members of the organization. From this reason, the morale and encouragement may be equivalent to motivation causing a large amount of relevant researches tried to connect this with the Motivation theories such as Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs Theory, Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory, Alderfer’s Existence Relatedness Growth Theory, and McClelland’s Achievement Motivation Theory to be applied as the research framework (Piansabuy et al., 2013; Muangkot & Chunnapiya, 2014; Payungpholchaiyasarn & Khumpo, 2015; Yawongsri et al., 2016).

Previous literature has suggested work morale and encouragement that consists of 2 elements (Churemart & Srisa-ard, 2010), 3 elements (Payungpholchaiyasarn & Khumpo, 2015), 4 elements (Sornsuwan et al., 2013), 5 elements (Baotham & Wu, 2015), 7 elements (Sai-ubol & Boonwises, 2022). The synthesis of these literatures can be summarized as the work morale and encouragement elements for this research consisting of 6 components, namely 1) working conditions, 2) acceptance of responsibility for the performed work, 3) job security, 4) career advancement opportunities, 5) feeling of being part of the organization, and 6) relationship in the workplace.

Hypothesis Development

Tanutchutanon & Semheng (2013) stated that the morale and encouragement of personnel is very important as the key to efficient work. This is because people with good morale and encouragement will increase the operational performance. This is in correspondent with the results of much other research such as Srimongkhon et al. (2018), Phansa et al. (2020)

Wongsawan & Sanont (2020) and Suradinkura (2022) which pointed out in the same direction that morale and encouragement are one of the factors that contribute to the operational performance. It can be summarized as a hypothesis as follows.

H1: Work morale and encouragement are related to operational performance.

Research Methodology

This is quantitative research. The research population is personnel who work in a hospital in the southern border provinces of Thailand, namely Bannang Sata Hospital, Yala Province, consisting of government officials, permanent employees, mission employees and general employees for a total of 260 people. The appropriate sample size for this research was calculated by Yamane's formula, with a reliability of 95% and a tolerance of 5%. The sample size was equal to 157 randomly stratified samples. The samples of representatives from all 13 workgroups were chosen according to the proportion of the population of each workgroup. The survey found that most of the samples were women (73%), aged between 30-39 years old (50%), holding a bachelor's degree or equivalent (55.3%), having worked at this hospital for less than 5 years (34.9%) and having a status as permanent/temporary/contract employees (44.7%).

The research tools were questionnaires created from the literature review and validated for accuracy and correctness of the content. The Item-Objective Congruence Index (IOC) = 1 and the reliability test was performed with Cronbach's alpha value. The reliability was greater than > 0.80 in all questions. The collected data were analyzed with the frequency distribution to determine the percentage, mean, standard deviation. The analysis was done with the correlation coefficient and analysis on the partial least squares structural equation model.

Research Results

Work morale and encouragement and operational performance of personnel in the hospitals Bannang Sata Hospital's personnel overall have work morale and encouragement at the moderate level. When considering each aspect, it was found that they had the highest level of morale and encouragement in the areas of responsibilities, followed by the feeling of being part of the organization and relations in the agencies, respectively, which was the side with the least mean.

Table 1 Morale and encouragement in Bannang Sata Hospital's personnel

Work morale and encouragement	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1) Operating conditions	3.35	1.06	Moderate
2) Responsibilities	4.07	0.80	High
3) Career stability	3.20	1.15	Moderate
4) Career advancement opportunities	2.81	1.20	Moderate
5) Feeling part of the organization	3.73	0.98	High
6) Relationships in the organization	3.72	0.97	High
Total	3.38	1.14	Moderate

Overall, Bannang Sata Hospital's personnel had the operational performance at a high level. It was found that they had the highest performance in work time, followed by resource utilization, and the quantity of work, respectively. The operational performance in work quality is the area with the least mean.

Table 2 Operational performance in Bannang Sata Hospital’s personnel

Operational performance	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1) Quality of work	3.89	0.73	High
2) Amount of work	3.98	0.70	High
3) Working time	4.03	0.67	High
4) Utilization of resources at work	4.01	0.81	High
Total	3.89	0.83	High

Correlation between Work Morale and Encouragement and Operational Performance of Personnel in the Hospitals

The test results for the correlation between work morale and encouragement and operational performance of personnel in hospitals: the case study of Bannang Sata Hospital, revealed that both variables were correlated at the significance level .01 in the same direction at the moderate level ($r = .465$). The higher their work morale and encouragement is, the better will be in the operational performance. On the contrary, the lower work morale and encouragement is, the lower operational performance will be.

Table 3 Correlation between work morale and encouragement and operational performance of Bannang Sata Hospital’s personnel

	Work morale and encouragement	Operational performance
Work morale and encouragement Pearson Correlation	1	.465**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When analyzing the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM), the results of the measurement model analysis were performed. When considering the intrinsic consistency, Dijkstra-Henseler’s rho (ρ_A) and Jöreskog’s rho (ρ_c) values of all constructive variables were higher than 0.70 indicating intrinsic consistency. The confidence of the index was higher than 0.5, considering the loading of each index. In addition, latent variables had discriminant validity. This was determined by an AVE greater than 0.5 (Henseler et al., 2016), as shown in Table 4.

According to Table 5, the discriminant validity derived from the mean extracted variance (AVE) was found to be higher than the correlation value with other latent variables which can be observed from the numbers on the diagonals (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

From Table 6, it was found that the coefficient of work morale and encouragement in responsibilities was equal to 0.602. The t-value statistic was 6.352 which was higher than the critical value of 1.96 with p-value equal to 0.000. This indicated that the work morale and encouragement in the responsibilities of work influenced the operational performance of personnel in Bannang Sata Hospital with statistical significance at the .01 level.

Table 4 Structural validity and component weight testing

Factors	Loading	AVE	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A)	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	Cronbach's alpha(α)
Operating conditions (X1)		0.608	0.856	0.8854	0.840
- X11	0.826				
- X12	0.815				
- X13	0.799				
- X14	0.743				
- X15	0.709				
Responsibilities (X2)		0.618	0.806	0.866	0.734
- X21	0.729				
- X22	0.826				
- X23	0.758				
- X24	0.826				
Career stability (X3)		0.639	0.906	0.913	0.891
- X31	0.712				
- X32	0.805				
- X33	0.755				
- X34	0.852				
- X35	0.886				
- X36	0.773				
Career advancement opportunities (X4)		0.793	0.943	0.884	0.757
- X41	0.827				
- X42	0.950				
Feeling part of the organization (X5)		0.637	0.859	0.897	0.856
- X51	0.797				
- X52	0.719				
- X53	0.870				
- X54	0.812				
- X55	0.784				
Relationships in the organization (X6)		0.654	0.869	0.904	0.867
- X61	0.802				
- X62	0.822				
- X63	0.871				
- X64	0.774				
- X65	0.770				
Operational performance (Y)		0.753	0.909	0.924	0.891
- Quality of work (Y1)	0.876				
- Amount of work (Y2)	0.917				
- Working time (Y3)	0.874				
- Utilization of resources at work (Y4)	0.801				

Table 5 Comparison of discriminant validity based on the criteria of Fornell-Larcker

Construct	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	Y
X1	0.608						
X2	0.371	0.618					
X3	0.366	0.275	0.639				
X4	0.261	0.174	0.593	0.793			
X5	0.296	0.440	0.324	0.330	0.637		
X6	0.264	0.380	0.257	0.209	0.609	0.654	
Y	0.110	0.392	0.089	0.068	0.219	0.212	0.753

Table 6 Effect of work morale and encouragement influencing the operational performance of personnel in Bannang Sata Hospital

Effects	Beta	Total Effect	p-value	Cohen's F ²
X1 -> Y	-0.096	-0.096	0.120	0.008
X2 -> Y	0.602	0.602	0.000**	0.277
X3 -> Y	-0.074	-0.074	0.224	0.003
X4 -> Y	0.030	0.030	0.367	0.001
X5 -> Y	0.050	0.050	0.303	0.001
X6 -> Y	0.123	0.123	0.120	0.009

** with statistical significance at the .01 level.

Conclusion and Discussion

In conclusion, the results of this research suggested that even though Bannang Sata Hospital's personnel had good operational performance of their duties at a high level as same as form other previous studies in other hospitals located in the capital (Boonya, 2016) and the central region of Thailand (Theucksuban et al., 2008; Thongngok, 2017; Supaphol et al., 2021), they had only moderate work morale and encouragement while the case study in other areas of the country was at a high level (Chureemart & Srisa-ard, 2010). This is possibly because this case study is a hospital located in the southern border area of Thailand with incidents of unrest, bombs, attacks, shootings, burning government buildings, all of which destroy the morale of the practitioners in the area (Promduang & Sintao, 2021). Similarly, it may be observed from the level of morale in the work of teachers in the area which is at the same level (Tahe, 2019) In testing the correlation between work morale and encouragement and operational efficiency, this case study reiterates the relationship between these two factors. This is consistent with the previous research of Baotham & Wu (2015); Srimongkhon et al. (2018); Phansa et al. (2020); Wongsawan & Sanont (2020) and Suradinkura (2022). Therefore, in driving higher level of operational performance, the organizations, especially hospitals, are necessary to pay attention to the maintenance of work morale and encouragement of personnel, particularly in terms of responsibilities. The results of this research indicated in detail that work morale and encouragement is the important element that influences the operational performance of personnel. In addition, according to the results of the study of Chankaew et al. (2021), a special suggestion was given that boosting the work morale and encouragement of the personnel in this area is essential for executives to recognize the importance of empowering their people to have self-improvement to carry the burden of change leadership and support the development and advancement of personnel so that they devote themselves to work with their full potential resulting in operational efficiency which will lead to good results for the people who receive the service in the future.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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