

Understanding and Assessing Board Member Engagement:
Implications for Performance

William A. Brown

Texas A&M University

College Station, TX, USA

wbrown@tamu.edu

Prepared for

Annual Meeting of International Society of Third Sector Researcher (ISTR)

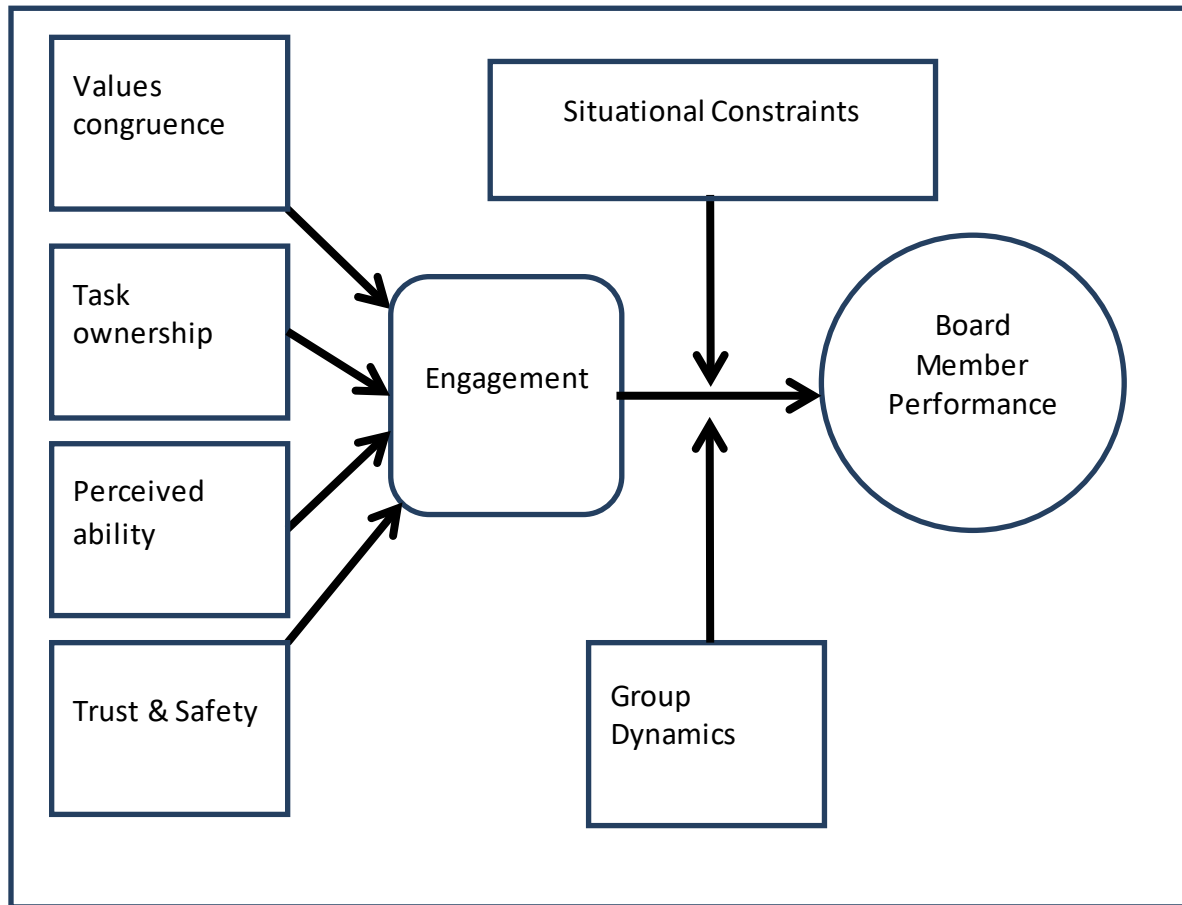
July, 2022

Montreal Canada

A model is proposed and tested that explores the antecedents and consequences of board member engagement. This study uses a survey of board members to understand individual board member engagement and how engagement is associated to performance. The survey is distributed through key executive contacts in approximately 20 different organizations resulting in 134 board member responses. Analysis suggests that engagement is a significant predictor of ones reported preparation and attendance at board meetings as well as the amount of time spent on board service. Furthermore, group dynamics was a significant predictor of board members active participation in oversight functions along with reported participation in board meetings and perceived ability. Additional research is ongoing to further refine instrument characteristics and substantiate initial findings.

Key words: board member engagement, board member performance, governance functions

Fostering active participation of board members is important because limited engagement by board members can result in poor oversight and inferior strategic choices, which are related to weak and ineffective organizations (Smallman, McDonald, & Mueller, 2010). Nonprofit executives identified “board member vitality” or “active participation” as among the top five things board members should do (W. Brown, A. & Guo, 2010) and many expressed frustration that board members need to be more engaged in their role. A review of empirical research provides modest specification of optimal behaviors for individual board members and limited identification of antecedents. There is a growing number of studies that systematically examine what board members actually do but there remains a substantive need for additional clarity and definition (Francoeur, Aubé, Sponem, & Farzaneh, 2018; Heemskerk, Heemskerk, & Wats, 2015; Van Ees, Gabrielsson, & Huse, 2009). The paper tests a modified version of a model developed by Brown (2014) that positions board member engagement as a significant predictor of board member task performance. In addition, the model identifies antecedents to engagement and moderators to board member performance including group processes and dynamics. The paper starts with a summary of model (see figure 1) developed by Brown (2014), then a measurement strategy to assess model components is discussed. The paper concludes with analysis of survey data that tests the proposed relationships. Results indicate initial support for a measurement strategy and model relationships.

Figure 1: Antecedents to Board Member Performance

Model Overview

The model proposes a relationship between individual engagement and performance in board tasks. *Engagement* is conceptualized as a composite psychological construct to reflect an individual's readiness to participate and is defined as the extent to which individuals bring themselves fully (cognitively, emotionally, and physically) to the task at hand (Kahn, 1990; Rich, Lepine, & Crawford, 2010). Engagement serves as a mediating element, which works through situational constraints (meeting management practices) and supportive group dynamics to predict participation. Engagement is developed through four antecedents, which are related to individual perceptions of values alignment, task ownership, ability, and a sense of trust and safety (see Figure 1).

Board Member performance involves the fulfillment of board responsibilities. There remains some ambiguity over how to classify what boards are supposed to do (Nicholson & Cameron, 2010), but in a broad sense, there are two fundamental functions of governance: oversight/control and service. Using this classic frame of control and service details many of the tasks board members are expected to fulfill (Hillman & Dalziel, 2003; Huse, 2007; Kreutzer & Jacobs, 2011). Control includes financial oversight, reviewing executive's performance, and monitoring program performance. Service activities include providing advice and counsel to the executive, promoting the organization and raising resources for the organization (Åberg, Bankewitz, & Knockaert, 2019).

Engagement and its Antecedents

The term "engaged board member" is used colloquially to describe a desired state, where board members pay more attention, prepare before a meeting and take responsibility for active participation. Kahn (1990) defines engagement as entailing cognitive, affective and psychological energy directed into one's role. Increasingly scholars have refined the concept and recognize that engagement is a robust antecedent to maintenance and task performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010; Saks & Gruman, 2011). One of the rationales for the robust nature of engagement is that it is an amalgamation of psychological perceptions to reflect the whole self. As a more complete construct there is some concern that engagement overlaps with other concepts (i.e., intentions, commitment). While some overlap might exist, research suggests that engagement is a distinctive concept (Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010). Engagement reflects the tendency of individuals to more fully assume responsibility for their role. This is exactly the crux of concern for board members. Using engagement as a culminating psychological state of individual readiness makes it possible to consider the factors both antecedents that support engagement and moderators that mitigate performance.

Proposition 1:

Engagement signifies a board member's readiness to participate and is a precursor to performance.

Values congruence

Kahn (1990) proposes four psychological antecedents to engagement. The first is "meaningfulness", which is defined as the belief that one's work is important. This is influenced by task elements and interactions with others that support the perception of value. In the nonprofit context, meaning and importance are often drawn from the mission and social purpose of the organization. Values alignment is found to explain task (W. A. Brown, Hillman, & Okun, 2011; Preston & Brown, 2004) and maintenance behaviors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Affective alignment to the purposes of the organization is critical and serves multiple purposes such as encouraging persistence and sustaining energy (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). Given the importance of purpose in the nonprofits, the first antecedent reflects the alignment of values between the organization and the individual board member. This *values congruence* (Rich et al., 2010) is likely to serve as a strong motivator and a significant source of energy and purpose.

Proposition 2:

Board members that express congruence with the values of the organization are more likely to engage.

Task ownership

The second antecedent to engagement is *task ownership*. Agreement with mission purposes is not sufficient to account for engagement in governance functions. This requires the board member to interpret and understand their responsibilities as a board member. Further refinement must consider attitudes toward these behaviors because if board members do not understand the relationship between actions and priorities they may disengage (Yanay & Yanay, 2008). The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001) proposes that attitudes toward specific activities can serve as a strong predictor of behavior because it

translates priorities into actions. Individuals engage in behaviors that are aligned with their priorities. Board members need to recognize their responsibilities even if it is uncomfortable. Translating motivations into a felt obligation to engage in specific activities improves explanatory power (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). In one study of nonprofit board members role ambiguity and ambiguity about one's responsibilities were the strongest predictors of poor performance (Doherty & Hoye, 2011).

Proposition 3:

Individuals that recognize their responsibilities as a board member are more likely to engage.

Perceived ability

The third element relates to individual capabilities and how board members perceive their *ability to perform*. One's perceived ability to perform (Judge & Bono, 2001) is a significant predictor of intentions and engagement. To be effective, board members must have the appropriate skills, knowledge and abilities to engage in task related conversations, to process information and to manage interpersonal relationships with peers and significant stakeholders (Miller & Lee, 2001). Examples of team based (tacit) skills include an ability to communicate concerns and collaborate on problem solving (Stevens & Campion, 1994). Individuals ask themselves three questions to evaluate their abilities. What is the task at hand; do I have skills in this area, and is it my responsibility to act?

Proposition 4:

Positive perceptions of one's abilities are likely to predict engagement.

Trust and safety

The final element was defined by Kahn (1990) as safety and reflects an individual's perception that the risk of failure is mitigated. This perception draws from judgments about the potential for success as well as the sense that participation is safe. Board members must believe that the social cost of voicing ideas or concerns are acceptable. This judgment is based on past experiences and linked to interpersonal relationships. The proposed element reflects a sense of *trust and safety* among board members because of the interactive and dynamic nature of

discussion. Honest participation is facilitated by creating a safe space. A significant source of safety is a sense of interpersonal trust among board members. Team research suggests if individuals feel a sense of trust toward others they are more inclined to engage and participate (Huse, 2009; Reinholt, Pedersen, & Foss, 2011). Trust refers to positive expectations and reduction of uncertainty of others actions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Trust is based on shared experiences and positive interpersonal interactions. These perceptions are supported by group norms and structures that reinforce positive actions (DeJong & Elfring, 2010). Trust is an important precursor to engagement and participation because vocalizing opinions and modifying attitudes is inherently a risky process (Kaplan & Miller, 1987). Individuals need to be willing to suspend concerns about their own self-image to effectively participate and share and trust of others is fundamental to that sense of safety.

Proposition 5:

Individuals that report trusting interpersonal relationships with fellow board members are more likely to engage.

Situational Constraints

Situational constraints are those factors that influence fulfillment of role responsibilities. For instance, basic structural features like group size and meeting management practices can encourage or mute participation. Structural research considers questions of how to ensure the appropriate information and resources are available at the right time and provided to the right decision-making group (Cronin, Weingart, & Todorova, 2011). Typical “structural” features considered are aspects of board size, meeting frequency, composition, and committee arrangements. There are also a number of considerations related to meeting management practices, which include agenda setting practices, formats for encouraging discussion and committee reporting practices. Situational constrains can result in disengagement and frustration.

Proposition 6:

Supportive situational factors are likely to result in more participation from engaged board members.

Group Dynamics

Group level effects are co-created through dominant norms and patterns of behavior exhibited by group members. This creates the social and emotional context that influences participation. Forbes and Milliken (1999) found that group effort norms were related to performance accomplishments. They also investigated cohesion and found a curvilinear relationship suggesting that there are appropriate levels of group cohesion but too much or too little can be detrimental for productivity. Too much cohesion can reduce decision quality and lead to group think patterns of engagement. This is particularly true when other factors are present such as directive leaders and strong interpersonal attraction (Mullen, Anthony, Salas, & Driskell, 1994). Norms regarding critical thought improved decision quality when compared to norms of consensus (Postmes, Spears, & Cihangir, 2001). It is norms and patterns of participation that inform perceptions and ultimately engagement. These situational conditions create a context that is conducive or prohibitive of individual participation. Fundamentally, however, it is the individual members, their attitudes and abilities that create the decision-making process (Miller & Lee, 2001). The next section considers how engaged individuals drive the decision-making process.

Proposition 7:

Group norms that support performance and build appropriate cohesion are likely to encourage engagement and participation.

Model Summary

Seven concepts are discussed in the model (see Table 1). Engagement is proposed as a compilation of individual attitudes and perceptions that create a readiness to fulfill responsibilities. Engagement operates within the context of group dynamics and through situational constraints to predict performance. Table 1 summarizes the most salient features for each concept.

Table 1: Model Components and key features

Component	Key Features
Values Congruence	Priorities of the individual align with purposes of the organization
Task Ownership	Perceive link between role responsibilities, priorities, and identity.
Perceived Ability	Task clarity Skills and experience
Trust and Safety	Interpersonal trust of other members creates a safe place to contribute.
Engagement	Cognitive, affective and physical readiness to participate
Group Dynamics	Norms of critical decision-making Appropriate cohesion Minimize sub-group effects
Situational Constraints	Information availability Meeting practices to allow for discussion Effective facilitation to manage the conversation

Seven propositions regarding the model are proposed:

- 1) Engagement signifies a board member's readiness to participate and is a precursor to performance.
- 2) Board members that express congruence with the values of the organization are more likely to engage.
- 3) Individuals that recognize their responsibilities as a board member are more likely to engage.
- 4) Positive perceptions of one's abilities are likely to predict engagement.
- 5) Individuals that report trusting interpersonal relationships with fellow board members are more likely to engage.

- 6) Supportive situational factors are likely to result in more participation from engaged board members.
- 7) Group norms that support performance and build appropriate cohesion are likely to encourage participation.

The framework and propositions provide guidance to test a number of constructs and relationships. The model is a simplified representation of complex inter-related elements. The antecedents do interact, which complicates the model, but theoretically these factors have robust predictive power. The model is reflective of the key elements that are likely to predict engagement and participation of nonprofit board members.

Research Measures and Methods

A survey was developed based on the concepts described in the model. Drawing questions from existing measures when available, and modifying as necessary or developing questions to reflect the features of the concepts defined by Brown (2014). The survey was administered using a convenience sample of nonprofit organizations. The process entailed inviting executives to participate. Once executives confirmed interest, researchers worked with them to distribute the survey to their board members. Executives would either distribute the survey link themselves or would provide a list of board members with emails. Initially, 25 executive expressed interest, but only 17 followed through to engage board members. This resulted in 134 board member responses, with an average of 8 board members per organization. Average age of respondents was 53; majority of respondents were white (77%) and female (52%). In regards to scale development, confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach alpha were used to assess scale validity.

Measures

Engagement scale items were drawn from Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and modified to fit the context. A confirmatory factor analysis suggested two dimensions

with some items loading on both dimensions. In an effort to refine measurement, inter-item correlations were investigated as well as predictive validity of items using a stepwise regression. A select number of items provided substantive predictive validity. Furthermore, discriminate validity was tested using an exploratory factor analysis by including items from the process performance measure. Through this analysis seven items were identified as having strong predictive validity and discriminate validity from performance based items. A confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated a single factor and Cronbach alpha of .912 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Engagement Scale

I exert my full effort to my role
I strive as hard as I can to complete my role
I exert a lot of energy on my role
I feel energetic at my role
I feel positive about my role
I am interested in my role
I devote a lot of attention to my role
Alpha .95

Antecedent scale items were drawn from various sources to reflect the characteristics of the construct. Values congruence scale items (3) were drawn from mission attachment (W. Brown, A. & Yoshioka, 2003). A confirmatory factor analysis identified just one factor with a scale reliability of .788. For the Trust and Safety antecedent, four items were drawn from Brown, Hillman & Okun (2012). Confirmatory factor analysis resulted in two factors with one item on the second dimension. Dropping that item from the scale resulted in a three-item trust scale with a Cronbach Alpha of .70 (See Table 3).

Table 3 Trust and Safety Factor Analysis

	1	2
I regularly interact with the executive director outside of board meetings	0.828	
I feel as if I belong on this board	0.776	0.361
The executive and other members care about me as a person	0.771	
Other board members are committed to doing quality work		0.932
Cronbach Alpha.70		

Two items were used to assess perceived ability and a factor analysis confirmed just one factor with a Cronbach Alpha of .82. Similarly, three items were used to assess Task Ownership, resulting in just one factor with Cronbach alpha of .87.

Performance Measures

Several different performance measures were developed. Process oriented measures were drawn from Preston and Brown and tended to reflect basic performance expectations such as meeting attendance and participation in discussions (Preston & Brown, 2004). Initially six items were used and a confirmatory factor analysis suggested 2 factors with one item loading heavily on two factors. Dropping that item left two distinct factors (see Table 4). The discussion oriented scale had acceptable reliability at .72. The third factor, assessing meeting attendance, had marginally acceptable reliability at .64.

Table 4 Process Performance Measures

	Component	
	1	2
Before voting, I ask questions and have a necessary information and understanding to cast a meaningful vote	0.827	
I participate in discussions when I have something to contribute	0.816	

I challenge issues and assumptions	0.787	
I follow up on assignments and requests in a timely manner	REMOVED	
I attend all board meetings		0.861
I prepare for board meetings by reading and understanding advance materials		0.829
Alpha	.724	.636

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Board Task Performance

Task Performance Measures were taken from Brown, Hillman & Okun (2012) and reflect basic board roles and functions including monitoring performance and financials. Twelve items were factor analyzed resulting in two distinct factors. One item loaded onto both dimensions, which was removed. This resulted in two distinct factors, one with seven items reflecting oversight functions and one with four items reflecting service oriented activities (see Table 5). Both exhibited strong reliability (.88 for oversight and .72 for service tasks).

Table 5 Task Performance Factor Analysis

	Component	
	1	2
Monitoring organizational performance and taking action when required	0.825	
Ensuring the organization fulfills its legal obligations	0.815	
Overseeing the financial management systems and procedures of the organization	0.766	

Reviewing board performance and ensuring it works well	0.710	
Selecting and monitoring the organization's chief executive	0.707	
Setting the organization's mission, values and strategic direction	0.678	
Spending Time on Strategic Issues	0.641	0.346
Representing the interests of stakeholders to the organization	REMOVED	
Representing the organization externally		0.854
Acting as a link with important groups/organizations the nonprofit deals with		0.785
Helping raise funds or other resources for the organization		0.784
Recruiting new board members		0.390
Alpha .882	.880	.720

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Other Performance Measures

In addition to the four scales discussed, we used two additional measures of performance. The first was a self-reported number of hours spent on board service over the last year.

Respondents indicated an average of 38.14 hours in board service. In addition, we asked executives to assign a letter grade (A, B, C, D or F) to each board member. Fifty grades were received from X executives. Letter grades were recoded to numeric 1-5 (F=1; A=5). Mean score was 4.36.

Mediators

A scale to assess situational constraints was developed and reflected meeting structures and procedures. Eight items were entered into a confirmatory factor analysis resulting in two factors with one item loading on the second factor. Dropping that item results in one factor with seven items (alpha .79) to assess board Procedures and Structures (see Table 6).

Table 6 Board Procedures and Structures

Component

	1	2
Does the board use committees effectively?	0.733	0.391
Are committees evaluated on their performance?	0.732	
Does the board use short-term, ad hoc committees, and/or task forces?	0.701	
Does the board review its committee structure annually?	0.699	
Board committees have written charters or job descriptions?	0.697	
Are the responsibilities of the board as a whole stated in writing?	0.563	0.366
Is time at board meetings well spent?	0.529	
Does the board use a consent agenda at board meetings?	REMOVED	0.732

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Values < .33 removed

Six questions explored how members interact and function as a group. A confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated one factor with Cronbach Alpha of .77.

Measurement Summary

Scales were calculated by taking the mean across all items responses. Table 7 summarizes variables used in subsequent analysis. All scales, except oversight and service tasks, were scored on a five point scale. Hours spent in service to the board is a continuous variable.

Table 7 Summary Table

	Items	Alpha	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. D
Values Congruence	3	.79	130	1	5	4.76	0.64

	Items	Alpha	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. D
Task Ownership	3	.87	129	1	5	4.54	0.70
Trust and Safety	3	.70	129	2	5	4.30	0.74
Perceived Ability	2	.82	129	2	5	4.25	0.77
Engagement	7	.95	68	2.14	5	4.37	0.59
Board Procedures	7	.79	149	1.71	5	3.53	0.74
Group Dynamics	6	.77	149	2.33	5	4.07	0.59
Performance Measures							
Process Discussion	3	.72	128	1	5	4.15	0.86
Process Prepare	2	.64	129	2	5	4.20	0.61
Oversight tasks	7	.88	127	1	4	2.62	0.82
Service tasks	4	.72	127	1	4	2.85	0.68
Hours Spent	1	n/a	113	0	600	38.14	61.76
Grade	1	n/a	50	2	5	4.36	0.77

Analysis and Results

Correlations for all variables are presented in Table 8. There is modest inter-correlations among antecedent variables. Notably perceived ability is highly correlated (.74) to trust and task (.62) ownership. This is a somewhat expected as the antecedent concepts are typically strongly correlated. There may be value in further refining and, if possible, simplifying the antecedent measures. Otherwise, all over variables demonstrate modest and predictable correlations. Subsequent analysis will explore the predicted relationships through linear regression.

Table 8 Correlations for All Variables

	Values	Task	Trust	Ability	Engage	Meet	Group	Discuss	Prepare	Over-sight	Service	Hours	Grade
Values	1	.620**	.492**	.528**	0.235	.182*	.313**	0.093	0.137	.187*	0.024	-0.113	0.176
Task	.620**	1	.525**	.621**	0.209	.350**	.487**	-0.007	0.09	0.16	0.024	-0.096	0.181
Trust	.492**	.525**	1	.738**	.649**	0.168	.425**	.399**	.229**	.238**	.249**	-0.096	.647**
Ability	.528**	.621**	.738**	1	.561**	0.155	.464**	.378**	.275**	.384**	.263**	0.094	.325*
Engage	0.235	0.209	.649**	.561**	1	-0.09	0.208	.440**	.549**	.249*	.279*	.310*	.472*
Meet	.182*	.350**	0.168	0.155	-0.09	1	.529**	-0.079	0.169	.198*	.205*	-0.008	0.229
Group	.313**	.487**	.425**	.464**	0.208	.529**	1	0.155	0.08	.273**	.189*	0.014	0.183
Discuss	0.093	-0.007	.399**	.378**	.440**	-0.079	0.155	1	.412**	.366**	.237**	.198*	.500**
Prepare	0.137	0.09	.229**	.275**	.549**	0.169	0.08	.412**	1	.477**	.300**	.224*	.582**
Oversight	.187*	0.16	.238**	.384**	.249*	.198*	.273**	.366**	.477**	1	.581**	.267**	.453**
Service	0.024	0.024	.249**	.263**	.279*	.205*	.189*	.237**	.300**	.581**	1	0.185	.364*
Hours	-0.113	-0.096	-0.096	0.094	.310*	-0.008	0.014	.198*	.224*	.267**	0.185	1	0.027
Grade	0.176	0.181	.647**	.325*	.472*	0.229	0.183	.500**	.582**	.453**	.364*	0.027	1
N	127	126	126	126	67	124	124	126	127	127	127	109	48

Testing Model Relationships

Propositions 2-5 suggest a positive relationship between antecedents and engagement. Table 9 presents results of regression analysis that suggests that perceived ability, task ownership, and trust are significant predictors of board member engagement (R-Sq=.488). In regards to control variables (Model 2) only ethnicity demonstrated significant predictability, which suggest white board members reported slightly high levels of engagement, although given the low number of non-white board members additional data collection is necessary (see Table 9).

Table 9 Regression of Antecedents to Engagement

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	2.605***	0.437	1.9***	0.478
Ability	0.256*	0.114	0.278**	0.109
Task	-0.219*	0.11	-0.24**	0.109
Trust	0.45***	0.11	0.438***	0.105
Values	-0.055	0.112	-0.026	0.108
Gender			-0.078	0.107
Ethnicity			0.423**	0.145
Age			0.005	0.004
Yrs. onbrd			0.002	0.013
R-Sq	.488			.574
Adj R Sq	.454			.515

Dependent variable: Engagement; N=65; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Proposition 1 suggests that engagement is a significant predictor of board member performance. Several calculations were used to assess the extent to which engagement explains variance of different performance measures. Table 10 shows regression results on two performance measures: the extent to which board members reported their involvement in discussions and the extent to which board members reported that they attended and prepared

for board meetings. In regards to discussion, just task ownership accounts for variance in both models with and without controls. R-Sq for model 1 and 2 is just over 30%. In regards to preparing for meetings, engagement and age are the strongest predictors accounting for about 40% of the variance.

Table 10 Regression on Discussion and Preparation

	Participate in Discussion				Prepare and attend meetings				
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	
(Constant)	2.408*	0.94	2.156*	1.005	1.493*	0.652	1.344*	0.656	
Ability	0.386	0.203	0.412	0.214	0.052	0.141	0.03	0.139	
Task	0.453*	0.194	0.509*	0.21	0.019	0.135	-0.079	0.137	
Trust	0.264	0.212	0.31	0.222	-0.269	0.147	-0.23	0.145	
Values	-0.02	0.192	0.005	0.2	0.082	0.133	0.145	0.131	
Engagement	0.259	0.219	0.159	0.246	0.726***	0.152	0.737***	0.161	
Gender			-0.013	0.2			-0.216	0.13	
Ethnicity			0.231	0.29			-0.227	0.189	
Age			0.006	0.008			0.01*	0.005	
Yrs on Brd			-0.002	0.024			-0.021	0.016	
R-Sq	0.302		0.316		0.341		0.428		
Adj R-Sq	0.244		0.207		0.286		0.337		

Dependent variable: Process Performance Measures; N=65; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 11 shows results for analysis to predict participation in governance tasks. Scale development identified two dimensions of governance tasks (internal oversight and external service tasks). In regards to participation in oversight functions, age and perceived ability are the only variables that provide any predictive validity. Further analysis reveals that older board members report high levels of participation in oversight functions. None of the variables in models three or four account for significant variance in fulfillment of externally oriented governance functions.

Table 11 Regression Results on Governance Tasks

	Participation internal	Participation external
--	------------------------	------------------------

	Model 1		Model 2			Model 3		Model 4	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error		B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	0.905	0.99	0.208	1.002		2.063	0.833	2.189	0.888
Ability	0.521*	0.214	0.47*	0.213		0.242	0.18	0.228	0.189
Task	-0.143	0.204	-0.272	0.21		-0.163	0.172	0.166	0.186
Trust	-0.147	0.223	-0.075	0.222		0.1	0.188	0.07	0.196
Values	0.068	0.202	0.145	0.2		-0.103	0.17	0.101	0.177
Engagement	0.104	0.231	0.047	0.245		0.127	0.194	0.17	0.218
Gender			0.223	0.199				0.043	0.177
Ethnicity			0.091	0.289				0.183	0.256
Age			0.019*	0.008				0.001	0.007
Years serve			-0.02	0.024				0.02	0.021
R-Sq	0.165		0.266						
Adj R-Sq	0.095		0.148						

Dependent variable: Governance Tasks; N=65; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

An additional performance measure of annual number of hours spent on governance functions is presented in Table 12. Results suggest that trust and engagement account significant variance in hours reported.

Table 12 Regression Results on Hour Spent on Governance

	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	-57.27	68.888	-44.573	69.824
Ability	23.039	14.898	16.928	14.845
Task	-0.868	14.214	-4.41	14.629
Trust	-53.471**	15.528	-56.312***	15.448

Values	-7.678	14.044	-4.428	13.91
Engagement	61.246***	16.05	74.33***	17.107
Gender			-7.461	13.892
Ethnicity			-51.046	20.131
Age			0.311	0.543
Years serve			-0.292	1.683
R-Sq	0.282		0.368	
Adj R-Sq	0.221		0.264	

Dependent variable: Hours spent in board service; N=65; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Table 13 Regression Results on Grade

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	1.924	1.195	0.487	0.93	0.559	1.047
Ability	-0.289	0.258	-0.46*	0.191	-0.438	0.208
Task	-0.072	0.247	-0.005	0.18	0.036	0.203
Trust	0.9**	0.269	1.064***	0.198	1.084***	0.214
Values	-0.099	0.244	-0.157	0.17	-0.187	0.187
Engagement	0.136	0.278	-0.378	0.231	-0.425	0.272
Discussion			0.11	0.12	0.099	0.129
Prepare			0.638**	0.187	0.647**	0.216
Oversight			0.168	0.143	0.207	0.167
service			0.032	0.153	0.029	0.171
Gender					-0.106	0.194
Ethnicity					0.191	0.274
Age					-0.005	0.008
Yrs Served					-0.01	0.023

R-Sq	0.49		0.801		0.826	
Adj R-Sq	0.373		0.702		0.664	

Dependent Variable: Grade; N=27; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

The final performance measure was a “grade” assigned by the executive as an overall assessment of the board member’s performance. Results (see Table 13) suggest that trust and engagement account significant variance in grade assigned. It is necessary to note that there is a relatively low number grades (n=27) that were assigned to board members. Consequently, additional analysis is necessary.

Mediator Effect

In an effort to better understand factors that might support board members in fulfillment of governance functions, additional analysis was conducted to explore if the process performance measures, situational factors, and group dynamics would have a moderating effect on board member performance. A group mean was calculated for situational factors and group dynamics. This group average was assigned to all members of the board (group-level mean). The executive director as well as board members were included in these calculations. Fulfillment of governance task functions was used as the dependent variable. The first analysis looked at oversight functions and found that, similar to prior analysis, several independent variables were a significant predictor of performance. In addition, process performance measures (meeting attendance and hours spent on governance tasks), along with group dynamics and meeting structures were also predictive of performance. Model four has an R Sq. of over .6 (see Table 14). Additional analysis on service functions does not provide any better predict ability for that aspect of performance. To determine if there was any interaction affects with engagement and the proposed moderators (situational constraints and group dynamics), an interaction variable was calculated using standardized measures. Unfortunately, those interaction factors do not provide any additional explanation of variance.

Table 14 Regression on Oversight Functions with Mediators

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error	B	Std. Error
(Constant)	0.905	0.99	-0.127	0.945	-4.118	1.564	-6.729	1.418
Ability	0.521*	0.214	0.37	0.197	0.293	0.183	0.318*	0.152
Task	-0.143	0.204	-0.105	0.189	-0.273	0.179	-0.493**	0.16
Trust	-0.147	0.223	0.18	0.23	0.397	0.225	0.8***	0.205
Values	0.068	0.202	0.043	0.179	0.2	0.169	0.293*	0.142
Engagement	0.104	0.231	-0.602*	0.262	-0.986***	0.271	-1.744***	0.282
Discussion			0.104	0.127	-0.002	0.12	-0.181	0.105
Prepare			0.653***	0.182	0.898***	0.185	1.23***	0.174
Hours			0.003*	0.002	0.005**	0.002	0.008***	0.002
Group					1.158**	0.441	2.414***	0.412
Meeting					-0.262	0.253	-0.902***	0.22
Gender							0.43*	0.14
Ethnicity							0.937***	0.231
Age							0.009	0.005
Yrs Served							0.037*	0.018
R-Sq	0.165		0.393		0.514		0.700	
Adj R-Sq	0.094		0.307		0.424		0.616	

Dependent Variable: Oversight Functions; N=65; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

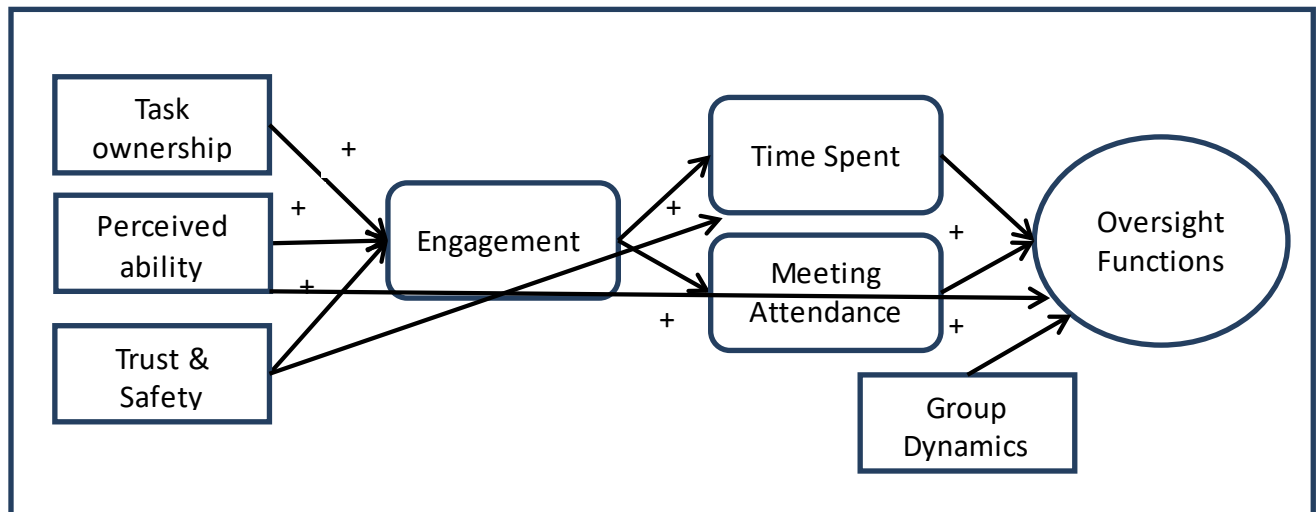
Summary of Analysis

Proposition 1 was partially supported and proposed that engagement is a precursor to performance. Based on the analysis we see that engagement is a significant predictor of ones reported preparation and attendance at board meetings as well as the amount of time spent on board service.

Proposition 2 proposed that values congruence would align with engagement was not supported. Proposition 3 (task ownership), 4 perceived ability and 5 (trust) are aligned with engagement and tend to predict higher levels of reported engagement. Furthermore, it was found that task ownership was a significant predictor of board members active participation in discussions. Perceived ability was a significant predictor of board members reported participation in oversight functions, along with age.

Proposition 6 that suggested situational factors as influential in governance task performance was not supported. Proposition 7, which was related to group dynamics a significant predictor of board members active participation in oversight functions along with reported participation in board meetings and perceived ability. This relationship is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Summary of Statistically Significant Relationships



Discussion & Conclusion

The paper and analysis propose and test a measurement tool to assess and understand antecedents and consequences of board member engagement. Scale analysis supported four distinct antecedents and a distinct construct of engagement. Two mediators were also assessed. Performance was assessed in several ways. There were two process-oriented measures (meeting attendance and participation in discussion) as well as two governance task

scales (oversight functions and service tasks). Two additional performance measures were considered: time spent on governance over the last year and a composite “grade” assigned by the executive.

Analysis was based on a convenience sample of 134 board members from 17 organizations. Results support a positive and predictive relationship between three antecedents (task ownership, perceived ability, and one’s sense of trust and safety with the group) and engagement. Furthermore, engagement was a positive and predictive factor to explain self-reported meeting attendance and preparation as well as time spent to governance. Three factors explained participation in oversight functions: meeting attendance, group dynamics, and perceived ability. Additional analysis found that trust in the group as well as meeting attendance were predictive of grade assigned by executives. Similarly, trust in the group and engagement were predictive of time spent on governance service.

The core principle of the model was supported, in that engagement had a positive and distinctive predictive relationship with procedural performance measures: reported meeting attendance and preparation as well as hours spent on governance service. Furthermore, group dynamics had a direct relationship to fulfilling governance tasks, along with perceived ability and meeting attendance.

Primary limitation was small, non-random sample of participants. While construct validity was established, additional analysis is necessary to ensure that the assessment tool is valid with various types of nonprofit board members. Some of the predicted relationships were supported, but additional analysis and refinement is necessary.

References

- Åberg, C., Bankewitz, M., & Knockaert, M. (2019). Service tasks of board of directors: A literature review and research agenda in an era of new governance practices. *European Management Journal*, 37(5), 648-663. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2019.04.006>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179-211. doi:10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-t
- Armitage, C. J., & Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behaviour: A meta-analytic review. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(4), 471-499.
- Brown, W., A. (2014). Antecedents to board member engagement and participation in deliberation and decision-making. In C. Cornforth & W. A. Brown (Eds.), *Nonprofit governance: Innovative perspectives and approaches* (pp. 288): Routledge.
- Brown, W., A., & Guo, C. (2010). Exploring the key roles for nonprofit boards. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 39(3), 536-546. doi:10.1177/0899764009334588
- Brown, W., A., Hillman, A. J., & Okun, M., A. (2012). Factors that influence monitoring and resource provision among nonprofit board members. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(1), 145-156.
- Brown, W., A., & Yoshioka, C., F. (2003). Mission attachment and satisfaction as factors in employee retention. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 14(1), 5-18.
- Brown, W. A., Hillman, A. J., & Okun, M., A. (2011). Factors that influence monitoring and resource provision among nonprofit board members. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, in press.
- Christian, M. S., Garza, A. S., & Slaughter, J. E. (2011). Work engagement: A quantitative review and test of its relations with task and contextual performance. *Personnel Psychology*, 64(1), 89-136. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.103.3.411
- Cronin, M., A., Weingart, L., R., & Todorova, G. (2011). Dynamics in groups: Are we there yet? *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 571-612.
- DeJong, B. A., & Elfring, T. (2010). How does trust affect the performance of ongoing teams? The mediating role of reflexivity, monitoring, and effort. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(3), 535-546.

- Doherty, A., & Hoye, R. (2011). Role ambiguity and volunteer board member performance in nonprofit sport organizations. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 22(1), 107-128. doi:10.1002/nml.20043
- Forbes, D., P., & Milliken, F., J. . (1999). Cognition and corporate governance: Understanding boards of directors as strategic decision-making groups. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(3), 489-505.
- Francoeur, C., Aubé, C., Sponem, S., & Farzaneh, F. (2018). What do we know about what is going on inside the boardroom? *Team Performance Management: An International Journal*, 24(5/6), 250-264. doi:10.1108/TPM-07-2017-0033
- Heemskerk, K., Heemskerk, E. M., & Wats, M. (2015). Behavioral determinants of nonprofit board performance. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 25(4), 417-430. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21137>
- Hillman, A. J., & Dalziel, T. (2003). Boards of directors and firm performance: Integrating agency and resource dependence perspectives. *Academy of Management Review*, 28(3), 383-396.
- Huse, M. (2007). *Boards, governance and value creation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Huse, M. (2009). The value creating board and behavioural perspectives. In M. Huse (Ed.), *The value creating board* (pp. 3-9). New York: Routledge.
- Judge, T. A., & Bono, J. E. (2001). Relationship of core self-evaluations traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability—with job satisfaction and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(1), 80-92. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.81.3.261
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 33(4), 692-724.
- Kaplan, M. F., & Miller, C. E. (1987). Group decision making and normative versus informational influence: Effects of type of issue and assigned decision rule. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(2), 306-313. doi:10.1037/h0076849
- Kreutzer, K., & Jacobs, C. (2011). Balancing control and coaching in cso governance. A paradox perspective on board behavior. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 22(4), 613-638. doi:10.1007/s11266-011-9212-6

- Liang, J., Farh, C. I. C., & Farh, J.-L. (2012). Psychological antecedents of promotive and prohibitive voice: A two-wave examination. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(1), 71-92. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0176>
- Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709-734.
- Miller, D., & Lee, J. (2001). The people make the process: Commitment to employees, decision making, and performance. *Journal of Management*, 27(2), 163-189.
- Mitchell, T., R., & Daniels, D. (2003). Motivation. In W. C. Borman, D. R. Ilgen, R. J. Klimoski, & I. Weiner, B. (Eds.), *Handbook of psychology: Industrial organizational psychology* (Vol. 12, pp. 225-240): Wiley & Sons.
- Mullen, B., Anthony, T., Salas, E., & Driskell, J. E. (1994). Group cohesiveness and quality of decision making: An integration of tests of the groupthink hypothesis. *Small Group Research*, 25(2), 189-204.
- Nicholson, G. J., & Cameron, N. (2010). The role of the board of directors: Perceptions of managerial elites. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 16(2), 204.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 513-563.
doi:10.1177/014920630002600307
- Postmes, T., Spears, R., & Cihangir, S. (2001). Quality of decision making and group norms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(6), 918-930.
- Preston, J., Bright, & Brown, W., A. (2004). Commitment and performance of nonprofit board members. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 15(2), 221-238.
- Reinholt, M., Pedersen, T., & Foss, N., J. (2011). Why a central network position isn't enough: The role of motivation and ability for knowledge sharing in employee networks. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(6), 1277-1297.
- Rich, B. L., Lepine, J. A., & Crawford, E. R. (2010). Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(3), 617-635.
doi:10.5465/amj.2010.51468988

- Saks, A. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2011). Manage employee engagement to manage performance. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 4*(2), 204-207. doi:10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01328.x
- Schaufeli, W., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). *Utrecht work engagement scale: Preliminary manual*. Retrieved from
- Smallman, C., McDonald, G., & Mueller, J. (2010). Governing the corporation: Structure, process and behaviour. *Journal of Management & Organization, 16*, 194-198.
- Stevens, M. J., & Campion, M. A. (1994). The knowledge, skill, and ability requirements for teamwork: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Management, 20*(2), 503-530. doi:10.1016/0149-2063(94)90025-6
- Van Ees, H., Gabriellson, J., & Huse, M. (2009). Toward a behavioral theory of boards and corporate governance. *Corporate Governance: An International Review, 17*(3), 307-319.
- Yanay, G. V., & Yanay, N. (2008). The decline of motivation? From commitment to dropping out of volunteering. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership, 19*(1), 65-78.