Understanding narrative effects

The impact of direct storytelling intervention on increasing employee engagement among the employees of state-owned enterprise in West Java, Indonesia

Aurik Gustomo, Hary Febriansyah, Henndy Ginting and Imelia Martinovita Santoso

School of Business and Management, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

Abstract

Purpose – Employee engagement has been directly linked to organizational outcomes, and at present, improving employee engagement has increasingly been a main focus for organizations. However, studies evaluating the impact of storytelling interventions on increasing the level of employee engagement are limited. Storytelling is one of the intervention methods that can provide cognitive stimulus to employees, which in turn could change their attitudes toward work including employee engagement. The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of storytelling as an intervention tool for increasing employee engagement in one of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in West Java, Indonesia.

Design/methodology/approach – This study uses a quantitative method. Employees from a West Java branch of large SOEs were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. The research design used a pretest and a post-test with an expressive writing method to identify the extent of employee engagement by comparing participant groups and measuring the increase of employee engagement as a result of the storytelling intervention. The experimental group participated in three storytelling sessions that had been set up by panels of experts, while the control group was not given any treatment. The expressive writing analysis was conducted using software that has been developed and tested for validity and reliability. Furthermore, statistical analysis was used to test the results of expressive writing scoring to determine the impact of storytelling interventions.

Findings – Direct storytelling is proven to be one of the most effective methods of increasing employee engagement in one of the SOEs in the West Java region. The results of this study showed that there were differences between the experiment and control groups after experiencing a direct storytelling intervention where there was a significant increase in the dimensions of employee engagement. Participants in experimental group had higher scores than participants in control group in most of the employee engagement dimensions. Additionally, expressive writing methods are also proven to be able to provide a stimulus for employees in expressing thoughts, perceptions and motivations for employee engagement in the company.

Research limitations/implications – As direct storytelling has not been frequently used, especially to improve employee engagement, more studies should be conducted in various settings,

with different measurement tools, and in a more controlled environment to confirm the effects of the intervention.

Practical implications – This paper provides insight into how companies can use direct storytelling to improve the dimensions of employee engagement. Additionally, this research can also be used as a reference by companies in Indonesia, especially SOEs, for applying the same method in an effort to improve work-related attitudes, such as employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Social implications – This study raises social implications in which employees enthusiasm increases in improving personal relationships between employees and storytellers, who are middle or upper management employees. In addition, employees also more appreciate their struggles when starting their careers, so they care more about increasing their role and involvement in the company.

Originality/value – This paper provides resources and information for companies and organizations to improve employee engagement through the implementation of direct storytelling. The focus of this paper is to gain information on the role of direct storytelling in improving employee engagement within a company or organization.

Keywords State-owned enterprises, Human resource management

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Storytelling is an art that has existed since ancient times. The story is a series of events that are delivered, whether derived from real events (non-fiction) or non-real events (fiction). Everyone has a story to share. Our lives are shaped by our own experiences or those of others. People use stories to understand the world, what happens in their lives and who they are as individuals and parts of a group. The story is a journey that will move the listener, and when the listener decides to follow the journey, they will often feel something, resulting in persuasion or even action (Aaker, 2013).

Viewed from another perspective, the story is the art of conveying a message in a particular way. In a storytelling community, a more general story is agreed to be a narrative structure with a particular style and set of characters that includes a sense of completeness. Stories are used to convey the accumulation of wisdom, beliefs and values. Through the story, how a thing happened or came to be and its role and purpose is also explained. Stories provide knowledge, improve memory and foster learning. Stories connecting us with humanity have the potential to improve relationships by teaching us to anticipate the possible consequences of our actions.

In addition to storytelling in advertisements or campaigns where a brand produces stories that develop in the community or vice versa, storytelling is now widely used in commercial organizations. In recent years, storytelling in an organization has become an important and influential tool in various communication strategies used to achieve organizational goals. Storytelling becomes a clear and memorable tool for conveying organizational history, values and visions (Kaye and Jacobson, 1999). Achieving the vision and mission of an organization or company is believed to be closely related to the level of employee engagement therein.

Employee engagement has been shown to have a positive impact on organizational outcomes, across all sectors. Research has shown a positively significant difference in the contributions of engaged employees over disengaged employees. Satisfaction and employee engagement have been shown to have a positive impact on organizational performance in all sectors. In other words, to improve organizational effectiveness, it is necessary to cultivate an environment of employee satisfaction and engagement.

There are many ways to measure and improve employee engagement. Several major HR consultants, such as Aon-Hewitt, Gallup and Deloitte, have proposed their respective models. Story telling is one of the best methods for improving employee engagement, and

expressive writing is a unique way of measuring the effect of storytelling to increase work attitude, including employee engagement. As storytelling method is able to give a memorable impression, it is expected that after listening for a thematic storytelling, the employees' expressive writing would be more representing their engagement about work and the company. Expressive writing is one method used to give participants the freedom to express their feelings about the work situation and overall company in the form of writing. In this case, we provide stimulus pictures that contain dimensions of employee engagement. Improving employee engagement through storytelling can be modified by incorporating elements that employees ought to understand (e.g. vision, mission, values and culture). This study uses the dimensions of employee engagement that have been designated by state-owned companies consisting of quality leadership (QL), job demand (JD), social support (SS), burnout (BO), job satisfaction (JS), organizational commitment (OC), work engagement (WE), extra-role performance (ERP), in-role performance (IRP), innovative work behavior (IWB), organizational memory (OM) and organizational identity (OI) (PLN, 2016). Data analysis on expressive writing using software has been developed based on the study of Ginting *et al*. (2018a). Based on the study of Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010), which examines the analysis of computer text that calculates program words in psychological categories, the results show the ability to detect meaning in various types of experimental settings.

Storytelling has been widely applied in various organizations and has also been introduced in business organizations as a method to improve employee engagement (Kaye, 1995; Post, 2004; Denning, 2005; Sinclair, 2005; Shuck and Wollard, 2009; Brown *et al.*, 2009). However, the method of intervention with storytelling and measurement with expressive writing has not been widely applied in Indonesia. Certainly, expressive writing method can reduce the bias tendency found in other measurements (e.g. questionnaires) because of social desirability in a collective culture like in Indonesia. Therefore, efforts to develop and test methods of measuring employee engagement using expressive writing and intervention in the form of storytelling need to be exerted.

2. Literature reviews

2.1 A glance of the storytelling implementation in Asian and Western countries

Storytelling has long been known as one of the foundational traditions across many arts and cultures. Many studies have confirmed that cultural differences play an important role in interpersonal communications, including storytelling. Hall (1976) suggests three cultural dimensions (i.e. time, space, and context) that impact interpersonal relationships and communication. This section provides brief overview of storytelling in the context of geography where this method has been widely implemented in various countries, both Asian and Western.

In some Asian countries, the storytelling method has long been implemented in arts and culture such as music and drama. One well-known artist tradition is *Dastan* which uses storytelling methods to tell important history from Turkish literature (Paksoy, 1987). Additionally, Arabia and the Middle East also introduce *Hakawati* as an artistic tradition of ancient Arabic storytelling (Chaudhary, 2013). A storytelling culture has also been practiced in China for more than 1,000 years. Professional storytellers have become well-established figures in the Chinese art market where they have a big impact on the daily lives of Chinese citizens in these places where culture and knowledge are communicated in a simple, entertaining way. India also makes storytelling a mode of cultural heritage in the delivery of folk tales, especially those related to religious rituals, some of which are *Kootu* (*Chakyar Koottu*), a community of performing artists in Kerala that tells stories using elaborate dance

and *abhinaya*, an art expression that lead and reach out the audience (Timsheppard, 2019a). Japan uses the storytelling method for *kamishibai* art ("paper drama") using a large set of printed or painted cards to depict the story (Kamishibai for Kids, 2019). A similar tradition is practiced in Korea where it is known as *P'Ansori* art, though the focus is on singing the folk narration (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014). Meanwhile, storytelling in Western countries is still an integral aspect of people's way of life. For example, stories are used to educate, explain the history of the homelands and humans and provide practical knowledge about the nature by Australian Aboriginal people (McLeod, 1998). In the tradition of South American storytelling, it is said that humans have an ability to listen that is beyond ordinary. This particular form is seen as the way of the soul to pay attention and learn (Timsheppard, 2019b).

Based on the previous literatures described earlier, this study concludes that cultural differences in storytelling intervention is more than just the cultural meaning of the story content but also involves the storyteller, context (e.g. time, place, and condition) and the structure of the story. These factors would influence the interactions between individuals and groups within an organization. According to Hall (1976), people in Asian cultures, as opposed to people in Western cultures, prefer to do many tasks at once and have a fluid view of space and a relative approach to communication. These cultural preferences could guide storytellers in Asia to be more grounded in simultaneous actions and events in their story, as well as to be more focused on implicit and relative meanings of place, subject and person.

At present, storytelling not only is implemented in arts and cultures but also has been widely applied in various organizations including educational institutions both in Asian and Western environments. Digital storytelling was implemented in Chinese and Australian schools in 2013-2014, requiring the students to produce and share digital stories about their daily life and local culture, with students invited to provide feedback about language and content from stories produced by their colleagues abroad. This storytelling was to be complied with five main categories: motivation, educational culture, organization, technology and pedagogy (Pegrum, 2014). Digital storytelling provides an opportunity to combine the art of traditional storytelling with interactive technology and create cultural narratives that immerse the audience in new cultural experiences. The study of Nguyen *et al.* (2016) confirms that there are significantly different perceptions of storytelling in Eastern and Western cultures. Western teacher candidates have more storytelling experience than Eastern teacher candidates. The study also found that the method of storytelling in classrooms in China is still seen as something separate from and undervalued as academic content, despite its many benefits. The study conducted by Nguyen *et al.* (2016) investigated how cultural differences affect perceptions of storytelling, resilience and values in prospective American, German, Chinese and Vietnamese teachers and showed that individual differences contribute more to discrepancies than do cultural differences.

How cultural differences affect storytelling in difference places, such as Asian and Western countries, could also be discussed by combining the research of Hofstede (1980), Triandis (1995) and Markus and Kitayama (1991). The results of Hofstede's research on intercultural communication at IBM (Hofstede, 1980) suggested five cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and masculinity. Individualist culture emerged as the dominant factor in much of the northern and western regions of Europe and in North America (Hofstede, 1991). The USA being a prime example. Collectivistic culture tends to mark East Asia, including Taiwan, China, Japan and Korea (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Based on the cultural differences, it could be expected that Asian storytellers tend to consider the hierarchy of the actors in the story, including their place in society, and provide less ambiguity, a short-term orientation and a

focus on gender differences. Triandis (1995) confirmed that collectivism is a significant issue in Asian cultural communication, which is further integrated with power distance in Hofstede's framework, which lead to a story in Asian cultures that adopts interdependence and sharing, as well as themes of service and social mores. Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that interdependency in Asian culture involves people that see themselves as part of social interactions and view their behaviors as being determined by the thoughts, feelings and actions of others in social relationships. This explanatory framework refers to the idea that collective and individualistic cultural values form interdependent and independent self-concepts, and these self-concepts in turn determine the cognitive style of people, which ultimately has implications for storytelling (Chang, 2012).

Chang (2012) examined the application of storytelling as a brand attraction and found that the use of advertising in Asian culture (i.e. Taiwan) was more likely to use narrative appeal than advertising in the USA. However, Chang (2012) also found the structure of the story in Taiwanese advertisements tended to be less well developed. Narrative advertising in the two cultures also differs in three dimensions of content: problems to be solved, psychological benefits of problem solving and emotions experienced in the process. Those differences could be explained in two ways. First, Asian holistic thinking systems that are experience-oriented rather than abstract-knowledge-oriented encourage people in Asia to be involved in storytelling because this form of communication depends on experience processing systems (Epstein, 1994). Second, Asians' orientation to the context and their preference for implicit information makes them tell less structured stories than Americans do.

Based on the description above, storytelling methods can be used by various organizations, including in business organizations, to influence their listeners and should consider cultural differences. Thus, based on the literature, this study focuses on the impact of the storytelling intervention on increasing employee engagement among employees in Indonesia as one of the Asian countries belonging to the culture of collectivism.

2.2 Employee engagement

Employee engagement has been broadly defined in previous research because it has been proven to play an important role in the success of a business. Kahn (1990) defines engagement as the ability to use employees' personal enthusiasm for their work roles. Employee engagement is also defined as a manifestation of the involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm of individual employees for their opportunities and responsibilities in the workplace (Harter *et al.*, 2002). Wellins and Concelman (2005) stated that some researchers use the term "employee engagement," which is seen as a strength that can motivate employees to improve performance to a higher level than before. A benefit of employee engagement is commitment, for both the company and work, and also a sense of ownership of one's work, a feeling of pride, more business than usual and enthusiasm for completing work. Meanwhile, Quirke (2008) defines employee engagement as having a strong emotional bond with superiors, recommending the company to others, and taking time and putting forth effort to help with the success of the organization. This is corroborated by Hewitt Associates (2004), which defines employee engagement as a measure of employees' emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization and its success.

Macey and Schneider (2008) further define involvement as one's focus on goals and energy, which is evidence of individual initiative, adjustment, effort and resilience to organizational change. Engagement has psychological and behavioral energy content. Psychological energy content is what bios or natural employees call a sense of enthusiasm, focus and energy. Behavioral energy content is proactive, persistence and adaptable, including role expansion. According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), employee engagement

focuses on building synergistic relationships between employers and employees to facilitate higher productivity and increased profits as a result of healthier, safer, more stable and more invested discretionary endeavors. Therefore, employee engagement produces effective results on the individual level (i.e. satisfaction, understanding, commitment and loyalty) and on the organizational level (i.e. achieving results) (Schneider *et al.*, 2005; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). A Gallup Management study (Robison, 2012) found that employees who were engaged "were very committed to their employers, leading to major improvements in business results, including a reduction in absenteeism, turnover, depreciation, safety incidents, and product defects". Based on the previous literature, employee engagement allows employees to make a greater contribution including high performance, positive talk about organization, loyalty and more effective work.

2.3 Dimensions of employee engagement
Currently, employees are a strength that influences the sustainability of the company (Ginting *et al.*, 2018b). One of the individual actions is the employee's engagement in business processes, where their contribution can be an asset beneficial to the success of the business. Various models have been developed to explain the contribution of employee engagement, including the models of Aon Hewitt, Deloitte, Tower Watson and Gallup. Aon Hewitt's model emphasizes employee engagement consisting of brand, leadership, performance, the work, the basics and company practices (Hewitt, 2012a, 2012b, 2015). Furthermore, the Deloitte model is that of a private UK company that provides consulting, tax and financial advisory services to public and private clients covering a variety of industries. Deloitte found five main elements as aspects of employee engagement including meaningful work, hands-on management, positive work environment, growth opportunity, and trust in leadership (Bersin, 2015). Another model is Tower Watson's, a leading global advisory pioneer and solution company that helps clients around the world turn risk into a growth path. The model shows that there are three measurable elements that are important for sustainable engagement namely, engaged, enabled and energized (Wilis Towers Watson, 2005). Meanwhile, the Gallup model consisting of twelve dimensions of employee engagement including the feeling of support and care, understanding, opportunity and development, respect, as well as commitment and purpose. Based on these models, the study of Ginting *et al.* (2018b) concluded that there are three main components of employee engagement, which include identity, emotional engagement, and behavior.

This study was conducted in one of the large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Indonesia. In 2011, this SOE took the initiative to create a model of employee engagement by combining various models and employee surveys. There are 12 dimensions of employee engagement identified, and currently the model is used to measure employee engagement in the company (PLN, 2016). The twelve dimensions are explained as follows:

(1) QL refers to the particular attention given by leaders to ensure employee satisfaction related to their careers and self-development (Ginting *et al.*, 2018b). This dimension is expected to increase employee motivation to perform better (Ghafoor *et al.*, 2011; Shuck and Herd, 2012; Truss *et al.*, 2013). There should also be an increase in trust between company members resulting from more open and honest communication (Andiyasari *et al.*, 2010; Welch, 2011).

(2) JD refers to how demanding the work is as perceived by employees, including the physical and psychological aspects of the work itself (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Petrou *et al.*, 2012).

(3) SS refers to the support felt by individuals, where others will help in the case of difficulties. SS includes available social resources as a result of reciprocity (Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008) so that an interdependent relationship exists between community members or in this case, the company and all people within it. There are several types of support in work life: instrumental support such as financial assistance if needed, emotional support such as sympathy when stressed, and finally supportive information and advice (Kossek *et al.*, 2011).

(4) BO is something that is often found in work life and is characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion because of long-term stress that causes low energy and neglect of one's and others' responsibilities (Ginting *et al.*, 2018b). In other words, BO is a state of emotional exhaustion that results in the depersonalization of one's achievement (Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; Schaufeli and Taris, 2005; Leiter *et al.*, 2014). Identifying this dimension is critical to overcoming the negative impacts that arise on employees, which ultimately affects the performance of the company.

(5) JS is the overall attitude based on individual perceptions of certain aspects of their work, (i.e. working hours, variations in tasks and workload) (Saks, 2006; Kompaso and Sridevi, 2010; Abraham, 2012). In general, the more satisfaction a person feels related to his or her job, the more he or she wants to give the best to the company.

(6) Organization commitment which refers to how many employees are loyal to the best interests of the company (Yousef, 2000; Lok and Crawford, 2001). In this dimension, employees must feel that the company has given them many things so that they need recompense the company.

(7) WE refers to the feelings of individuals who are passionate about the work being done (Nguni *et al.*, 2006; Cartwright and Holmes, 2006; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006; Bakker *et al.*, 2008). This dimension is often associated with one's dedication to work.

(8) ERP refers to the willingness of employees to do more for the company without getting rewarded for the extra work they provide (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Salanova *et al.*, 2011; Albrecht, 2012).

(9) IRP refers to one's own ability to manage one's own work, resulting in the level of performance expected (Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008).

(10) IWB is a dimension that affects individual performance at work. Employees are expected to be creative and have the opportunity to explore and apply new ways to improve efficiency (Zhang and Bartol, 2010).

(11) OM refers to employee memories related to the norms of public companies. These norms are the result of all interactions in the company that influence the way decisions are made in the company (Rowlinson *et al.*, 2010; Xu and Cooper Thomas, 2011).

(12) OI refers to employee perceptions of what distinguishes this company from other companies (Scott and Lane, 2000; Anteby and Molnar, 2012). This dimension is important because the stability of the company's identity will significantly affect the individual's attachment to the company (Hogg and Terry, 2000).

This study uses this model to identify employee engagement in knowing the impact of storytelling intervention on one of the SOEs in the West Java region because it is believed

that this model can accurately measure the level of employee engagement in the company.

2.4 Storytelling intervention

Woodside *et al*. (2008) say that when one speaks of a story, generally the most captivating is a story with an entertainment function; furthermore, they also state that the whole of human life is an unfinished narrative delivered argumentatively or paradigmatically. Submission of narrative stories allows others to connect with more personal details of the story.

Bhirud *et al*. (2005) states that storytelling is a form of communication. Moreover, Parkin (2006) states that storytelling is a basic form of communication that is simple, easy to understand and effective. Morgan and Dennehy (1997) state that storytelling can bring an audience into the story and allow them to feel what the character feels in the story because of the listener unconsciously remembering an experience similar to the story or a known story that has personal meaning for the listener. More people can remember something that happened to them than something that happened to other people.

Storytelling in an organization is a process of developing a message that creates a new perspective or reinforces an opinion or behavior using narratives about people in the organization, the organization as a whole, the organization's past, its vision for the future, the social ties within the company and the everyday work (Wilkins, 1978; Witherspoon, 1997; Kaye, 1995). The organization relies on effective communication, especially in internal communication, to facilitate the ultimate stakeholder in achieving success (Madlock, 2008; Marques, 2010). Storytelling has long played an important role in the world of organizations, businesses and contemporary politics (Brown, 2004).

More directly, the story can be used within the organization as a means of motivating people and creating messages that employees can later implement (Prusak, 2001; Kaye, 1995). Approached in this wider context, organizations are using stories today to communicate corporate values and ideals, to adapt to change, define and clarify the organizational culture, communicate the essence of a complex message, explore and develop leadership styles, develop communication and presentation skills and develop employee loyalty to a product or the organization as a whole (Collison and Mackenzie, 1999).

The power of storytelling as a means of corporate communication is demonstrated by the Storytelling Model of Organizational Communication (Barker and Gower, 2010). This model recognizes that humans act as storytellers with the ability to send and receive messages that can form the basis of the participants' ability to create better social relationships. Story was used as part of a change process to enable participants to imagine new directions and career opportunities. Through creating images of their ideal future, story proved a pragmatic way to help people move through a crisis situation and on to imagining possible next steps (Collison and Mackenzie, 1999).

Stories are always laden with meaning and consist of moral judgments and strong emotional reactions that arise from storytellers. Stories, concurrently, can be used as a tool for remembering, a way to forget something, a diagnostic tool, a diversion, a way for social control, an expression of freedom, an appeal to hegemony and a means of subversive. When the narrator emphasizes plot, character and various attributional relationships, listeners tend to recall the details of the story, cutting, and disconnecting the story (Brown *et al.*, 2009).

Boje (1991) conducted research on the use of stories in organizations using participatory observation methods in a large supply company. He examines how people use stories to interpret events, introduce change and gain political support during a conversation. Based on the results of his research, the story does not have to be exactly the same as the context, nor does it need to be told from beginning to end, as found in early research. However,

stories are more dynamic, diverse in context and sometimes short, and listeners engage in the storyline, context and implications of the story. Parkin (2006) states that the stories conveyed contain moral messages but do not necessarily focus on the moral message because the goal most emphasized in the story is delivering a message related to change. After reading the story, the participants were asked for questions or comments. This was done to prompt reflection and to inspire ideas about the change in the participants. Effective stories are short, about a few paragraphs, but are written to be as good as possible to convey the power of the change messages.

The use of storytelling by a leader in an organization can help the organization's communication. In an article written by Barker and Gower (2010), storytelling was demonstrated to bring about timely communication within an organization. This timely communication can foster a symbiotic understanding among all participants from a cognitive and affective standpoint, leading to behavioral actions that benefit the organization. These benefits include improved understanding of and participation in the organizational culture, increased cohesiveness among team members and higher quality relationships among both internal and external members. Raising the overall quality and timeliness of information exchange in the organization can help lead to more effective and long-standing business relationships both within and between organizations as a significant pathway to garnering strategic competitive advantages in a global working environment (Caminotti and Gray, 2012).

Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) see organizations as "nets of collective actions" where meanings are constructed through exchanges between people. It is within these nets that actions are taken based on the meanings constructed. Learning occurs by becoming a member of a net, that is by adopting a set of shared meanings and practices that will provide members with a sense of shared reality but will also set limits on what is deemed as appropriate within the net. Brown and Duguid (1991) argue that learning within such communities is highly situational and highly improvisational. Where faced with a problem or difficulty, stories will be used to construct new possibilities for action.

2.5 Storytelling and employee engagement
Scholes (1997) considers internal communication to be a professional management interaction between all people who have an interest in the organization. The success of employee engagement depends on effective internal communication, i.e. shared meaning between employer and employee and between employees (Waters, 2010; Mohan *et al.*, 2008). Cheney and Christensen (2001) define internal communication at three levels: daily employee relationship management, strategic planning to carry out the organization's mission and project management. Welch and Jackson (2007) emphasize the role of internal communication in clearly, sustainably and consistently building employee engagement.

Previous research has found that some organizational communication practices improve communication effectiveness and employee engagement. Saks (2006) also emphasizes the need to communicate with employees clearly and consistently to achieve employee engagement. Employers who practice clear and consistent communication would have more positive relationship with their employees which could bring to a higher level of employee engagement. Managers play a very important role in sharing reliable and open communication with their employees to promote ownership and commitment and help employees better understand organizational goals. A study conducted by Wilis Towers Watson (2005) found that strategies for involving employees included managerial communication, leadership communication and focus on internal communication. Previous research has shown that internal communication is

the key to a variety of positive results, including employee commitment, employee engagement and trust between employees and managers.

Corporate storytelling is one method of communication; this strategy is one of the various theories of communication used to provide opportunities to convey an idea to a diverse audience (Mohan *et al.*, 2008). Much of the previous literature focused on the relationship between using strategies of storytelling internally and increasing employee engagement (Gill, 2011). Storytelling can be used to strategically uphold and increase employee engagement through its ability to personalize the meaning of the recipient (Gill, 2011). Storytelling is an effective way to communicate with employees as internal communication to increase employee engagement (Kaye, 1995; Post, 2004; Denning, 2005; Sinclair, 2005; Shuck and Wollard, 2009; Brown *et al.*, 2009).

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants in this research were employees from one of the SOEs in the West Java Region which covers four office units. There were 886 employees in the West Java Region. The sampling technique used in this research was probability sampling with a random sampling approach. The number of samples was determined based on the Table of Isaac and Michael with an error rate of 5 per cent, so the number of samples determined would be at least 251. However, in this study, the number of samples used was 337 respondents spread throughout the West Java regional office units, so this study has met the minimum sample size. This study uses an experimental method that divided respondents into two groups consisting of 150 respondents for the treatment group and 187 respondents for the control group. According to Roscoe (1975), in simple experimental research with a rigorous experimental control, successful research is possible with small sample sizes between 10 and 20 respondents. Additionally, Hidayat (2012) added that the comparison between the number of case samples and controls can be adjusted with the aim of getting better results. Thus, the number of samples in this study can be further processed to get more accurate and representative results.

3.2 Research design

This study uses a quantitative method with an experimental approach. According to Nasir (2011), experimental research is research conducted by creating variations of the research object and safeguarding the existence of controls. The general objective of experimental research is to examine the effect of a particular treatment on the symptoms of a group as compared to other groups that use different treatments. This study adopted the dimensions of employee engagement based on the measurement of State Electricity Company (PLN, 2016) consisting of QL, JD, SS, BO, JS, OC, WE, ERP, IRP, IWB, OM and OI. The dimensions of employee engagement have also been tested by Ginting *et al.* (2018b).

The next step is experimental testing using the design of an untreated control group as compared to the group that was treated (Shadish *et al.*, 2002). Table I shows the experimental design of this study.

The pretest procedure was conducted online by emailing 886 employees a hyperlink to the research website which contains all assignments about the research. However, only 337 samples responded completely the assignments and eligible for further analyses. In the Pretest stage, respondents were presented with one set of black and white illustrations consisting of five random images that could be arranged into a story. The illustrations were then used as a form of stimulus for respondents to create expressive writing consisting of at

least 500 words. Based on the results of the pilot test, the twelve dimensions of employee engagement can be expressed in the writing texts with a minimum of 500 words.

The method of drawing illustrations is based on Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) developed by Christiana Morgan and Henry Murray and the well-realized fact that one interprets the ambiguous social situations one encounters and is likely to express as much about one's personality as about the phenomenon in question (Murray, 1943 p. 531). This psychological test is one of the most researched and used today. The TAT is carried out by providing stimulus images using themes related to the actual working conditions in SOE in general, and each series of images contains the twelve dimensions of employee engagement in this study. The images presented are depicted in black-and-white illustrations to create a difference in the minds of respondents who see them. Thus, a wide range of stories and words used by respondents will be achieved. The purpose of this test is to identify twelve dimensions of employee engagement through the respondent's thoughts, perceptions, and motives based on the stories they created to explain the scenes depicted in the picture. The subject was asked to tell a story that explained what was happening in the picture including events that led up to the scene, what happened in the scene, what each character thought or felt and what happened next. TAT operates upon the assumption that the story that someone conveys will equally reflect on the views and characteristics of the narrator, and such narratives may reveal personality traits or trends in general.

The next procedure conducted to provide intervention treatment in the form of direct storytelling to 150 respondents, while the control group of 187 respondents was not given any intervention. The intervention conducted in this research involved giving treatment in the form of a storytelling activity. This storytelling was expected to increase the employee engagement level. Storytellers were selected from those four offices within the middle- and upper-management levels that had higher scores in their performance appraisal. Additionally, the storytellers had to meet the requirements to be able to provide briefings and insights in the form of stories such as goals, benefits, and roles in a company so that storytelling can be more effective.

Direct storytelling was carried out in two different periods by the four selected employees. The stories told by storytellers had previously been validated by experts. The implementation of the storytelling intervention was not communicated to the respondents explicitly but was blended with the Code of Conduct (CoC) event, which is a weekly event that has been set by the Head Office since 2016. These weekly briefings are the place for open communication between all levels in the company. CoC events from the head office are conducted in a standing position for approximately 10-15 min and include a brief explanation about the progress of the company's performance and reminders about achieving company targets in accordance with the established timeframe; however, with the implementation of direct storytelling, respondents listened to stories in a sitting position. In the CoC program that was implemented, the delivery of direct storytelling always starts and

Group	Pretest	Intervention	Post-test
EG	Y1	X	Y2
CG	Y1	−X	Y2

Notes: Description: EG = Experimental group (treated group); CG = control group (untreated group); Y1 = initial measurement; Y2 = final measurement; X = storytelling intervention; −X = without intervention

Table I.
Experimental testing design

ends with the company's yells, that have been develop by the company, in a standing position as a form of teambuilding and sense of pride or energy.

The execution of the research began with giving a short piece of CoC material to the selected storyteller in the particular office. This was then followed by the delivery of the story, which had been through the stages of validation by experts who were familiar with the twelve dimensions of employee engagement contained in the content of the story.

Story themes were composed by focusing on a particular theme in narrative form. The story had the following criteria, it should:

- relate to matters pertinent to the enterprise;
- contain the twelve dimensions of employee engagement adopted by the enterprise; and
- be able to arouse or motivate respondents.

The compiled story was then validated by the experts to assess whether the story meets all three requirements listed above. Approved narratives will be used as stories to be told by the storyteller at the time of the direct storytelling intervention. During the briefing, storytellers chose to propose the ability to submit their own narrative stories that are adapted to the conditions in each unit's field by selecting two of the predetermined story themes related to History, Vision, Mission, Strategies of SOEs, Values and other things about the organization, especially those considered to increase the employee engagement at these SOEs. The narrative made by the storyteller was then reviewed by experts to ensure that the three story requirements were met.

In the direct storytelling intervention method, the narrator conveys a narrative story that has been prepared together with the researcher directly to the respondent through a prescribed face-to-face condition. It should be noted that the narrator has been trained to perform the storytelling based on certain criteria, but said storytelling can also be done by employees who are considered to be "Legend," i.e. those who have proven devotion to the organization, have an impressive track record in terms of work performance, are personally judged to be interesting and charismatic by other colleagues, and have significant experience related to employee engagement within the company.

The final procedure is the post-test stage. At this stage, the experimental group of respondents who have received the direct storytelling intervention and the control group who did not receive any intervention treatment will again create a piece of expressive writing. The implementation of direct storytelling interventions in the first period was carried out among 150 respondents who were biased through the presentation of non-respondent personnel who were responsible for maintaining the objectivity of the intervention in the unit concerned. After the application of direct storytelling, the second period was complete, and the respondent would immediate receive an email notification to write a second story. Slightly different from the pretest stage, at the post-test stage, respondents created expressive writing without being given a stimulus in the form of illustration drawings. This was done to see the difference in scores between the groups that had received the intervention and the control group.

3.3 Data collection
The data source of this study uses expressive writing methods. Expressive writing is writing about a very emotional matter without being concerned about grammar or diction (Watson and Pennebaker, 1989). Expressive writing is a cathartic process because in the process of writing, the individual is asked to write his/her deepest feelings and involve his/

her emotions in making the story. Expressive writing is a therapeutic process using expressive methods to relate emotional experiences and reduce the stress felt by the individual, which can help improve physical health, clear the mind, improve behavior and stabilize emotions. Emotional expressiveness is a natural expression of true emotion.

In using expressive writing measurements as data, words/keywords representing the 12 dimensions of employee engagement were collected. The words/keywords were derived based on the operational definition of each employee engagement dimension. Sources used to generate these keywords included pilot test data, literature, Indonesian Big Dictionary, print media and online media. The next step was for all the words/keywords that had been derived based on the definition of the twelve operational dimensions and had been given the weight of the value were checked and validated by the experts. Words/keywords that had passed the stage of expert judgment were then used to assess the expressive writing in measuring the employee engagement level of selected respondents.

In its implementation, respondents were divided into two groups consisting of 150 respondents for the experimental group and 187 respondents for the control group control. The experimental group received a direct storytelling intervention one week after the pretest, while the control group did not receive any intervention/treatment. A pretest of website-based expressive writing aimed to measure the level of employee engagement of respondents before receiving a direct storytelling intervention. The expressive writing exercise was conducted by providing a stimulus to the respondents in the form of a series of randomized images that could be made into a story with a target of 500 words or more. Respondents were asked to create a story related to 12 dimensions of employee engagement that is shared fairly evenly for each dimension from the series of images without having to follow the sequence of drawings. These items were derived from the indicators in the operational definition of each employee engagement dimension.

One month after participating in the expressive writing exercise, respondents were given an invitation to listen to the first storytelling delivered by storyteller at the location and time set by the person in charge at the company. Then in the next week, the respondent will receive an invitation to listen to the second storytelling at the location and the time also determined by the company. To encourage respondents who are employees in the SOE to come to meet the invitation and follow the series of research, the company includes an official letter from the head office addressed to all employees of respondents.

After receiving direct storytelling three times, the two groups of respondents were asked to create another expressive writing post-test story on the website. However, in the implementation of the expressive writing post-test, respondents did not receive the stimulus in the form of a series of drawings randomly arranged. This was done to see the impact of a direct storytelling intervention on the employee engagement of the respondents through the expressive writing post-test.

The expressive writing post-test score obtained was compared with the expressive writing pretest score to see if an increase or decrease in employee engagement occurred after the direct storytelling intervention. The end result is a score and feedback related to aspects in employee engagement so that it can be used as a basis for coaching, mentoring and counseling.

3.4 Data analysis
An analysis of the expressive writing data collected in this study used software that has been developed and tested for validity and reliability by Ginting *et al*. (2018a). Expressive writing was used as a medium to measure employee engagement using words, sentences and stories that were then interpreted into scores and descriptive analysis. Therefore, the

keyword database is an important component in using this measurement tool of expressive writing.

Based on Figure 1, regarding the stages of data analysis using software, the first stage is analyzing the keywords identified in the expressive writing datum where the keyword is the operational definition of each dimension of employee engagement. The second stage is the scoring process for keywords that have been identified.

Table II shows the rules of scoring keywords which consists of four categories. "Very positive" indicates that keywords describe the dimensions very well based on operational definitions; "Positive" indicates that the keywords describe dimensions based on operational definitions; "Negative" indicates the keyword is contrary to the description of dimensions based on operational definitions; and "Very negative" indicates that the keyword is the complete opposite of the dimension description based on the operational definition. Positive scores are weighted more than the negative scores, so that the final score calculations will not allow for negative scores. At this stage, around 13,000 keywords were collected.
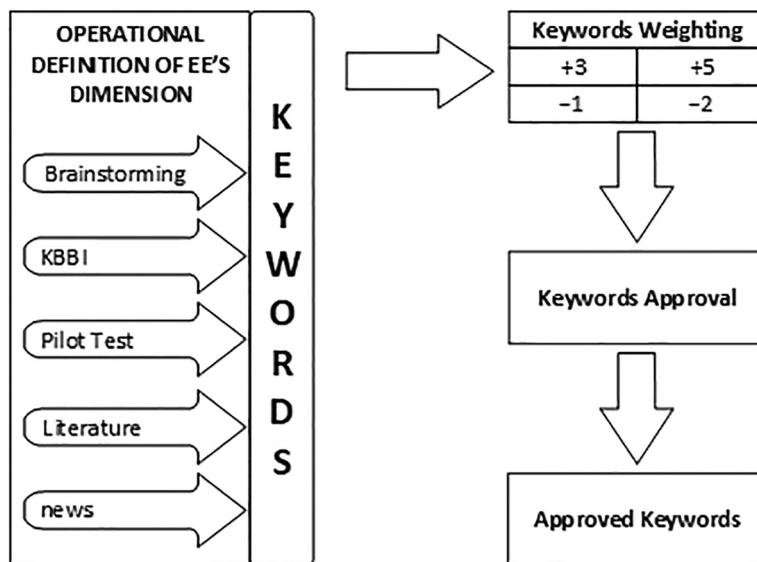
Source: Ginting *et al.* (2018a)

Figure 1.
Measurement tools design

Score	Remark
+5	Very Positive
+3	Positive
−1	Negative
−2	Very Negative

Source: Ginting *et al.* (2018a)

Table II.
Scoring rules for keywords

The next stage is the keywords that have been collected together with the scores that have been submitted by the researcher were validated by expert judges for face validity through approval software applications. The expert judges were six people with a background in behavioral sciences, linguistics and management. Each expert has the same guidelines for assessing keywords to determine content validity. The keyword is valid if two expert judges agree on the keyword and assessment submitted by the researcher. In addition to word assessments, researchers make rules for sentence judgments. The sentence will be given a score based on two main rules (Table III), the existence of the subject and the number of keywords about the same dimension.

Based on the score of the sentence in Table III, there is no negative score. Negative scores were not given in this study because participants wrote stories in accordance with expressive writing criteria. Regarding the assessment of employee engagement, sentences were assessed by referring to keywords (words or phrases) that were related to the dimensions of forming employee engagement. The more keywords in the same dimension that were written in one sentence, the better the sentence explains that dimension (Ginting *et al.*, 2018a). David Wilkins (1972) was a linguist who conveys the importance of using grammar and the number of vocabulary words used in sentences so that messages can be delivered correctly.

After obtaining the expressive writing score for each dimension of employee engagement, a statistical test was conducted, specifically a data statistical analysis using parametric statistical techniques by testing an independent sample *t*-test and a paired sample *t*-test. An independent sample *t*-test aimed to compare the average of the two groups that were not paired or not interrelated for two different sample subjects. Meanwhile, paired sample *t*-test was used as a comparative test or difference for the two sample groups. This analysis is intended to determine the effectiveness of direct storytelling interventions for increasing employee engagement by identifying the dimensions of employee engagement in the experimental group who received storytelling interventions in comparison with the control group that did not receive intervention at the pretest measurement before intervention and the post-test measurements after intervention. As an addition or supporting assessment, a comparative analysis of the results of the expressive writing was carried out in the pretest and post-test for the two groups of respondents so as to show the significance of the intervention applied to increase employee engagement in SOE. The data in this study were processed using SPSS as a tool.

Dimension	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig (two-tailed)
QL	−1.862	12.94	−1.047	52	0.3
JD	3826.000	14.131	−1.971	52	0.054
SS	−1.041	9.956	−0.761	52	0.450
BO	−2.469	12.470	−1.442	52	0.155
JS	−0.009	11.587	−0.006	52	0.995
OC	−1.764	14.107	−0.911	52	0.367
WE	−2.283	12.488	−1.331	52	0.189
ER	−2.559	13.838	−1.347	52	0.184
IR	−7.227	14.011	−3.755	52	0.000
IWB	−2.861	12.891	−1.615	52	0.112
OM	−5.509	14.019	−2.861	52	0.006
OI	2.179	12.728	1.246	52	0.218

Table III.
Paired t-test expressive writing (EW) of experimental group and control group

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Results

The measurement of the paired sample T-test (Table IV) was conducted to see the differences in the results of employee engagement between the experimental group and the control group. In the group that received the direct storytelling intervention, there were significant differences in the results of the pretest and post-test when measured using expressive writing in the two groups. Based on the results of the pretest, it was shown that two dimensions of employee engagement from the two groups were identified, namely, IRP and OM, with a significance of $x < 0.05$. Meanwhile, the other ten dimensions proved to have no significant effect as $x > 0.05$.

Table V shows a comparison of the results of the post-test after direct storytelling intervention between the experimental group and the control group. Based on the results of the post-test, it was shown that seven dimensions of employee engagement from the experimental group were identified, namely, QL, JD, BO, OC, IRP, IWB and OI, with a significance of $x < 0.05$. Meanwhile, in the control group that did not receive direct storytelling intervention, there was no significant dimension because $x > 0.05$. This shows that the direct storytelling intervention has a significant impact on the twelve dimensions of employee engagement (Table V).

4.2 Discussion

Based on the results of the implementation observation for two periods, this study had some findings related to direct storytelling intervention in one of the big SOEs in Indonesia. The first finding is the confirmation of the effect of storytelling to increase employee engagement. This was indicated by changes in the participants' expressive writing after the storytelling intervention. Their writing themes indicate more employee engagement after the intervention. This finding could first be explained closely related to the existence of a selected storyteller. Storytellers from top management are more appealing to audiences. The credibility aspect of the storyteller proved to attract respondents when listening to the storytelling. High performance records, managerial positions that are being held by storyteller, as well as the storyteller's appearance when telling stories are able to attract and keep the interest of respondents during the implementation of a storytelling intervention. The daily interaction of storyteller in the work environment was able to provide

Subject	No. keywords positive	No. keywords negative	Score
Yes	2		+3
Yes	3		+5
Yes	4		+7
Yes	1	1	0
Yes	2	1	+2
Yes	1	2	0
Yes	3	1	+4
Yes	2	2	+1
Yes	1	3	0
Yes		2	0
Yes		3	0
Yes		4	0

Source: Ginting *et al.* (2018a)

Table IV.
Sentence scoring
rules

Group	Dimension	Mean	Sig	t	df
EG	QL	5.537	0.020	−0.764	124
CG		−0.476	0.962	−0.048	72
EG	JD	8.102	0.005	−0.336	124
CG		1.654	0.161	1.417	72
EG	SS	0.088	0.767	−0.568	124
CG		−0.248	0.795	−0.260	72
EG	BO	5.645	0.019	−1.976	124
CG		0.904	0.438	0.780	72
EG	JS	0.295	0.588	−0.186	124
CG		−1.547	0.300	−1.043	72
EG	OC	5.783	0.018	−0.344	124
CG		−2.153	0.077	−1.796	72
EG	WE	2.320	0.130	−1.939	124
CG		0.858	0.357	0.926	72
EG	ER	2.346	0.128	−2.430	124
CG		0.119	0.914	0.108	72
EG	IR	28.538	0.000	−3.924	124
CG		0.931	0.361	0.919	72
EG	IWB	8.596	0.004	−3.058	124
CG		0.413	0.735	0.339	72
EG	OM	0.560	0.456	−2.734	124
CG		−1.307	0.289	−1.068	72
EG	OI	3.876	0.049	−1.280	124
CG		2.227	0.079	1.783	72

Table V.
Independent sample
t-test of experimental
group and control
group (after
storytelling
intervention)

personalized closeness to the respondents who received the storytelling intervention. Storytellers from the same background (same work unit) as respondents were also able to attract respondents to listen to the stories delivered. The storyteller being a part of the internal unit but derived from different work areas results in a poor impact on the interest of respondents in listening to the story. The difference in the work area between storyteller and the respondents caused the existence of storyteller to be less well known among the respondents; thus reducing the interest of the respondents in listening to the story. On the other hand, a storyteller who was part of the internal work unit and had served in the unit where the implementation of direct storytelling in a certain period of time had a positive impact on the post-tests of the respondents who attended because of the personal proximity and background similarity between storyteller and respondents. The storyteller plays a big role in the successful implementation of a direct storytelling intervention. The ability of storyteller as a communicator in recognizing the background of respondents as part of the communicant has enormous benefits for achieving the goal of the implementation of storytelling.

When implementing storytelling, it is important to involve the storytellers in the planning process and every stage up through the execution of storytelling while observing the practices of confidentiality and ethics prevailing in corporate culture. Storytelling allows program stakeholders to become active participants in clarifying activities and program outcomes and improving program performance. The collection and reading of narrative stories required mutual trust and mutual respect between storyteller and the respondents. Keene *et al.* (2016) explained that there are two important aspects that will influence the success of direct storytelling intervention. The first aspect is about storytellers' involvement. The degree of storyteller involvement in this study is evident from how the

theme of the story was developed and modified by storyteller to fit the real aspects of the job they experience themselves while containing the twelve dimensions of employee engagement measurements to be achieved by the company. A storyteller must take the time to be able to incorporate company goals into a narrative that can inspire cognition, affection, and connotation in the respondents who listen. The second aspect is the secrecy and ethics of storytellers. Different levels of confidentiality may be required depending on cultural norms, the context in which the story is shared and will be reported, and/or the method used. The degree of secrecy ranges from reporting the story and revealing its source; reporting the story without revealing its source; reporting the general concept of the story, but not the details; and not reporting stories, concepts or sources at all (Krueger, 2010). Visual- and performance-based storytelling methods require additional consideration. Sometimes, regardless of the method used, participants want to be credited by name for their contribution. A storyteller who actively interacts with respondents during storytelling activities can generate the involvement of respondents in listening to the story. Not only that, the relaxed and intimate atmosphere between the storyteller and the respondents was intertwined so that the process of delivering messages within the story is more easily achieved.

A storyteller is also required to be able to recognize the general backgrounds of the respondents who are present. This is to avoid the messages contained in narrative stories that can be ineffective because of the incompatibility of story material with the backgrounds of the respondents. A storyteller must be able to choose the words and write a story to be read out during the implementation of direct storytelling intervention. A storyteller must understand that not all stories are worth sharing. For example, some prepared information may be sensitive, embarrassing, identify people who should be protected (such as children and family members), or relate to the inappropriate or illegal behavior of a company unit. At first, a storyteller did not fully understand the need for secrecy until after he recognized the respondents who became his audiences, so storytellers must be able to think quickly to redeem the information to be conveyed in relation to the background of the respondents present.

The credibility of a storyteller as the source of the message plays an important role in achieving the objectives of this study. Ohanian (1990) states that Source Credibility consists of three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness. Source attractiveness is seen as three interrelated aspects of familiarity, similarity and liking (McGuire, 1969 as quoted Biswas *et al.*, 2006). Familiarity is defined as the knowledge of a particular storyteller because he or she often interacts with the respondent's employees. The similarity is a common perception among message senders, namely between storyteller and message recipients, i.e. respondent employees. Likability is taking a liking to a storyteller because of his or her physical attraction, behavior or on the basis of his or her beliefs. Credibility theory (Hovland and Weiss, 1955 as quoted by Mittelstaedt *et al.*, 2000) states that the sender of the message is "credible" if he or she is an expert or a trustworthy person.

In practice, the storyteller deemed "credible" by the employees of the SOE respondents received a positive response shortly after the implementation of the direct storytelling intervention ended. The response was received directly by storyteller in the form of respondents saying, "thank you" in person, as a short message on WhatsApp, and over e-mail because the story submitted by storyteller was so evocative of respondent emotion. Not only that, employees who gave positive responses to storyteller also felt that cognitively they were reminded of the vision, mission, and goals they are working towards in the company. The memory of the past may result in some remembering the difficulties endured

while struggling to join the company and the pride experienced when first received as part of the family of one of the big SOEs in Indonesia again.

Other positive responses were also received directly by the storyteller in the form of job-related consultations and general activities submitted by the respondent's employees. The post-storytelling question-and-answer session turned into an in-depth consultation session regarding the respondent's curiosity about whether the story was based on the storyteller's real-life experiences. Indirect positive responses were also seen in the field. While listening to stories delivered by storyteller, some respondents appeared to show an emotional side in the form of tears. The respondents admitted to feeling emotion because they remembered the struggle to become part of the big SOEs in Indonesia. They felt the story was a good reminder after having served for decades at the company. Respondents who showed an emotional side when listening to the story were respondents who had spent fifteen years with the company.

The second explanation for our finding relates to the theme of the story presented in the implementation of direct storytelling. The stories were modified and adapted to storyteller's personal experience by using a real example selected by the storyteller from his or her life to create a story with more real spirit to be presented to the respondent. Narrative stories associated with the general experience of respondents were prioritized to appeal to the emotions of the respondents who have experienced something similar. The positive response of respondents to the implementation of direct storytelling in this study was received by storyteller. Some respondents claimed to have a similarity to the story conveyed and felt that the story told by the storyteller was a reminder of experiences from their past. The storyteller received some form of appreciation from the respondents directly in the form of thanks for sharing a story so close to the respondents' personal experience, questions about the story submitted by the storyteller, and a consultation request about work similar to the theme of the story delivered by storyteller.

The third explanation for our finding relates to the direct storytelling implementation space. The room was large enough to impact the effectiveness of the direct storytelling implementation negatively. Because of the extra space, the storyteller's movements were too broad, making it difficult to interact personally with the respondents in the attendance. The storyteller was located on a small stage at the front of the room with of the respondents seated facing the stage, which also creates a limited space for the storyteller to convey the narrative of direct storytelling. Based on the results of field observations and interviews with the storytellers, the most ideal room for carrying out direct storytelling is a room with a size adjusted to the number of attendees present, with the respondents seated in a u-shaped formation. This positioning allows storyteller to move closer to the respondents to create a more dynamic and less boring atmosphere.

The fourth explanation relates to the use of multimedia in the form of power point presentations featuring real photos relating to the story material to attract the attention of the respondents listening to the story as well as a provide a guide for the storyteller to tell the story. The use of multimedia including images, sounds or performances from storyteller, is a concept that challenges the concept of general research on secrecy as reported by Gubrium *et al.* (2014).

The fifth explanation for our finding is related to the use of quotes from internal figures of the companies and public figures as well. In general, these were displayed in multimedia related to the story delivered and can be a good way to emphasize the message being conveyed through direct storytelling.

Respondents who have received direct storytelling shared their feelings and opinions after listening to storytellers tell stories. The majority of respondents were able to capture

more than one dimension inserted into the story, i.e. QL, JD, burn out, OC, IRP, IWB and OI. The study also found that OM was not identified in the post-test after storytelling intervention. A lack of capture of the other dimensions of employee engagement, including SS, JS, WE, ERP and OM in storytelling, occurred because the dimensions are something that is rarely done by the company. Employees only follow the demands and job descriptions that have been laid out by the employer and the company.

Our explanations about the effect of storytelling intervention to increase employee engagement might be applicable as well in many cultures. However, there should be several considerations before using this intervention in different culture, especially in Western cultures. According to Hall (1976), people in western cultures, have preference on focusing in one task in one time, formal meaning of space, and exact meaning of communication. These cultural preferences could guide storyteller in Western cultures to be more emphasized in linier actions and event in their story, as well as to be more focused on explicit and non-relative meaning of place, subject, and person. Additionally, Hofstede (1980) suggested five cultural dimensions: Power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and masculinity. In writing a story for story telling interventions, Western cultures storyteller would not consider the hierarchy of the actors in the story, belongingness to the society, high ambiguity, long-term orientation and non-gender themes. Triandis (1995) confirmed that individualism is a significant issue in Western cultures communication and it is integrated with less power distance in Hofstede's concept which lead to a story in Western cultures that should adopts independency and individual as well as achievement and rational mores themes. Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that independency in Western culture involves people that seeing themselves as independent person in social interactions, and identifying that their behaviors determined by the own thoughts, feelings and actions which would influence the effectiveness of storytelling intervention in Western cultures.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of direct storytelling provides a favorable result among respondents. The similarity between the story based in the personal experience of storytellers and the personal experiences of respondents can create the receipt of messages in stories that touch more personal aspects. The message inserted in the story contains twelve dimensions of the employee engagement level of the firm. The quantitative expressive writing measurements show a significant improvement in the IRPs dimension of the respondents after receiving direct storytelling. IRP is the employee engagement dimension related to the employee's performance (in-role job performance), that is the extent to which the employee successfully completes the job he/she is responsible for by working hard and managing time well so that he/she can achieve a good job performance. The experimental method of this study has proven that a direct storytelling intervention had an impact on increasing the dimensions of employee engagement. The results of this study indicate that seven dimensions were identified in the results of the post-test as compared to the pretest only wherein only two dimensions were identified. However, this study found that OM did not show a significant improvement after the post-test; even those dimensions were not identified.

Respondents admitted that the stories conveyed were so similar to their personal experiences within the company that they were able to recall the memory of struggles, successes and sorrows they had experienced in the past when they first joined the company. Some respondents even showed emotion through tears when listening to storytellers tell stories. The storytellers themselves feel the positive impact of the implementation of

direct storytelling, which was able to remind them and their professional associates of values adopted by the company. Acknowledgments also flowed from respondents to storytellers so as to improve the personal relationship between the employee and the storyteller, who is an employee from middle or top management. Some respondents even requested a consultation session with a storyteller related to the message delivered in a direct storytelling intervention story. The company itself feels such a positive impact of the implementation of direct storytelling that storytelling activities have become a fixed program that will be held regularly. The company hopes that in time, not only middle and top management employees will be able to tell stories but all employees can become good storytellers capable of delivering their vision, mission, program and company values. This study can be used as a reference for other SOEs to carry out the same method to increase employee engagement. Additionally, further research on the implementation of direct storytelling intervention can be carried out in private companies in Indonesia as an effort to increase employee engagement or test other aspects related to employee performance.

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Corresponding author
Aurik Gustomo can be contacted at: aurik@sbm-itb.ac.id