A Literature Review on Employee Engagement and other Construct

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement has become a trending word in recent years. In spite of this, there remains a dearth of critical academic literature on the subject, and relatively little is known about how employee engagement can be influenced by management. Although there is a great deal of interest in engagement, there is also a good deal of confusion. At present, there is no consistency in definition, with engagement having been operationalized and measured in many disparate ways. And there is no evidence of an anonymous view on what are key driving factors of employee engagement. The review aims to add value to the current state of knowledge by critically evaluating the existing literature on employee engagement and providing a reflective stance on existing debates and findings. As a result, it addresses concerns about the lack of agreement on what engagement is and how issues surrounding it can be addressed. The relationship of employee engagement with some other construct has been studied in this literature. And some of the drivers of employee engagement have been identified in this literature.

Keywords— Employee engagement, Organizational Commitment, Job satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Success stories of flourishing business organisations have been scripted on contributions made by engaged employees. Engaged employees profoundly express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during their role performances in the organisation. They act as drivers of financial and market success. They give stellar performances by trying to stretch themselves and continuously striving to outperform and set new standards of excellence. Owing to this, enhancing employee engagement has gained momentum in business organisations across the globe. Employees are engaged when organisations have healthy work culture and communication practices, where they can get platforms to express their concerns and opportunities to grow and develop their potential. Today competitors can emulate the performance of the service provider but they cannot replicate the vigour, dedication and absorption of their employees at the place of work. This thesis outlines how employee engagement can be increased through organisational culture and communication. This study provides a methodology for measuring the impact of these antecedents on facilitating employee engagement.

Employee engagement is the degree to which an employee is cognitively and emotionally attached to his work and organisation. It reflects the level of identification and commitment an employee has towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context and works as a team member to improve the performance of the job for the benefit of the organisation. Engaged employees are concerned about the future of the organisation and are willing to invest discretionary efforts for the organisation. Hewitt Associates (2006) defines employee engagement as those who say speak – positively about the organisation, stay – desire to be an effective member and strive - continue to perform beyond minimal requirements for the organisation. Engaged employees are more profitable, productive, focused, have fun and less likely to leave the company because they are engaged (Gallup Organization, USA, 1999).

Employee engagement is closely linked to employee turnover, customer satisfaction, loyalty, productivity, safety and profitability criteria (Harter, Schmidt and Hayes 2002). Studies on Employee engagement (Tower Perrin, 2003) linked the same to customer impact and financial results. They suggested that there exists a close relationship between high levels of employee engagement and lower staff turnover rates, higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. The need to create development and career growth opportunities, appropriate leadership styles and work – life balance were deemed important to attract, retain and engage employees. Engaged employees are not just committed but passionate about their work. According to Watson Wyatt (2002) consulting companies, as organisations globalise and become more dependent on technology in a virtual working environment, there is greater need to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organisational identity. They have a line-of-sight of their future and on the organisation’s
mission and goals. They are enthused and in gear, using their talents and discretionary effort to make a difference in their employer’s quest for sustainable business success.

II. RATIONALE OF THE STUD

The purpose of this article is to study the various definition of employee engagement from the existing literature available. It also studies the association of employee engagement with another construct. Through literature review, it has been tried to find out the key drivers of employee engagement.

III. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS WORK

3.1. Employee

An employer can hire any person on varied terms and conditions for getting his services. These different terms and conditions constitute different types of employment categories. Most common of these categories are regular, contractual and daily wage (The Industrial & Commercial Employment (Standing Order) Ordinance Sec 2g).

Employees on daily wages are those employees who get their compensation according to the amount of time they worked in the company. These employees usually do not have a long term commitment towards the company and are being hired for a very short time period i.e. in days. Contractual employees are those who were being hired by the company for are latively longer period of time i.e. one to 5 years. Contractual employees, due to the reasonable time period that they expect to stay with the company, have developed a commitment and organisational loyalty. Regular employees are those who are hired for the indefinite time period with an expectation that these employees will not only contribute and add value to the organisational processes but also take the organisation to the next level of performance and excellence. Regular and contractual employees are the one who makes the organisations compete, succeed and excel in the marketplace.

3.2. Employee Engagement

The word engagement is being used in many senses in different books and dictionaries. The major concepts that clarify the engagement are given below.

Engagement usually means (Farlex online dictionary)

(a) To pledge and promise, especially to marry.(b) To attract and hold the attention of engrossing.(c) To win over and involve or(d) To interlock or cause to interlock.

It means to keep someone involved and attracted towards something. It signifies the fact that engagement usually creates a bond between parties and then interlock them into an emotional relationship.

Engagement brings in the emotional attachment between the parties for which both tries to do something extra for each other. But there have been numerous amount of definition stated by different authors of employee engagement which leads to ambiguity. Different definitions of employee engagement were explained by different decorum. In addition, unless employee engagement can be universally defined and measured, it cannot be managed, nor can it be known if efforts to improve it are working (Ferguson 2007). This highlights the problems of comparability caused by differences in definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Definition of employee engagement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kahn (1990:694)</td>
<td>Defines employee engagement as “the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.</td>
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<td>(Baumruk 2004, Richman 2006 and Shaw 2005).</td>
<td>Employee engagement has been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002)</td>
<td>Define employee engagement as “the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work” (p. 269).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wellins and Concelman (2004)</td>
<td>“The elusive force that motivates employees to higher levels of performance” (p.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson ,Perryman, and Hayday (2004)</td>
<td>“A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucey, Bateman and Hines (2005)</td>
<td>“How each individual employee connects with your company and how each individual employee connects with your customers” (p.12). They call the opposite of this emotionally unemployed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDI (2005)</td>
<td>&quot;The extent to which people value, enjoy and believe in what they do&quot; (p1). DDI also states that its measure is similar to employee satisfaction and loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleming, Coffman and Harter (2005) (Gallup Organization researchers)</td>
<td>Committed employees as a synonym for engaged employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallup's Human Sigma website (2005)</td>
<td>Likens employee engagement to the concept of customer engagement, which has the dimensions of confidence, integrity, pride, and passion.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Truss et al (2006)**

Define employee engagement simply as a passion for work*, a psychological state which is seen to encompass the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990) and captures the common theme running through all these definitions.

**Little and Little (2006)**

They have addressed several key issues like:
- Attitude or behaviour
- Individual or group phenomenon
- Relationship with constructs
- Measurement issues of the construct.

### IV. ASSOCIATION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CONSTRUCT

#### 4.1. Employee engagement and organisational commitment

It refers to the degree to which an individual identifies with an organisation and is committed to its goals. It is directly related to voluntary turnover. Researchers like Wellins and Concelman, (2004) suggests that engagement is an amalgam of commitment, loyalty, productivity and ownership. They suggested that “to be engaged is to be actively committed, as to a cause." Saks (2006) argues that organizational commitment also differs from engagement in that it refers to a person’s attitude and attachment towards their organization, at the same time as it could be argued that engagement is not merely an attitude; it is the degree to which an individual is attentive to their work and absorbed in the performance of their role. In addition, while organisational behaviour involves voluntary and informal behaviours that can help co-workers and the organisation, the focus of engagement is one’s formal role performance rather than purely extra-role and voluntary behaviour. Organizational commitment is an important facet of the state of W.H. Macey and B. Schneider (2008) engagement when it is conceptualized as positive attachment to the larger organizational entity and measured as a willingness to exert energy in support of the organization, to feel pride as an organizational member, and to have personal attachment to organization. Joo and Shim (2010) have identified the antecedents of organisational commitment as personal characteristics and job characteristics, as well as organisational characteristics.

#### 4.2. Job Satisfaction and Employee Engagement

Job - satisfaction is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or experience (Lock, 1976). It is positively related to organisational commitment, job involvement, organisational citizenship behaviour and mental health. It is negatively related to turnover, perceived stress and pro-union voting (Kreitner and Kimicki, 2004) but the relationship of the job - satisfaction with performance is weak (Ostroff, 1992).


Engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer - characteristics that most companies have measured for many years. Engagement, in contrast, is about passion and commitment—the willingness to invest oneself and expand one’s discretionary effort to help the employer succeed. According to Swaminathan and Rajasekaran (2010), employee engagement occurs when Satisfaction, Motivation, and Effectiveness intersect.

#### 4.3. Job Involvement and Employee Engagement

Lodahl&Kejner (1965) define job involvement as “the degree to which a person’s work performance affects his self-esteem”. They also argue that employees who are highly concerned with their jobs also reveal high involvement in their organisations. Kanungo (1982) identified different explanation of job involvement while studying the relationship of job involvement to numerous variables, including job characteristics, performance, turnover, and absenteeism. Lawler& Hall (1970) defined job involvement as the level of importance of one's job to one's personality, which is consistent with Lodahl and Kejner (1965). On the other hand, Bass (1965) considered job involvement as the level to which an individual is vigorously participating in his or her job. However, Etzioni (1975) projected three types of involvement: moral, calculative and alternative. He is the view that individuals are morally involved if they own the organisational goals. Blau&Boal (1987) stated that job involvement is the measure of the extent to which a person recognises psychologically with his or her job and mull over his or her job.

According to May et, al (2004) engagement is most closely associated with the constructs of job involvement and ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Job involvement is defined as ‘acognitive or belief state of psychological identification’ (Kanungo 1982:342). This differs from engagement in that it is concerned more with how the individual employs him/herself during the performance of his/her job. Furthermore, at the same time as the focus of job involvement is on cognitions, engagement, according to most definitions, also encompasses emotions and behaviours. According to W.H. Macey and B. Schneider (2008) Job involvement (including task engagement and job commitment) as traditionally conceptualised and assessed is an important facet of the psychological state of engagement.
V. WHAT DRIVES AN EMPLOYEE TO BE ENGAGED WITH AN ORGANIZATION?

With the help of literature based on employee engagement key drives, these are some of the factors that encourage employees to bond with an organisation.

- Conviction & integrity – managers should communicate well and go by their words.
- Challenging job – employees should find their job challenging enough to motivate themselves.
- Clarity of thoughts between employee performance and company performance – employee should have a clear understanding as to how they contribute to the company’s performance.
- Career progression opportunities – employees should have clear career path and growth.
- Proud of the company – employees should feel esteemed by being associated with the organisation.
- Group Support – relationship with colleagues significantly increase employee engagement level.
- Employee growth – the organisation should take necessary steps for developing the knowledge, skills and attitude of the employees.
- Rapport with manager – the employee should be comfortable with his manager and value the relationship.

There are few more drivers which contribute to increasing employee engagement such as:

- A culture of respect where a good job is appreciated.
- Feedback, counselling and mentoring.
- Fair reward, recognition and incentive scheme.
- Effective leadership.
- Clear job expectations.
- Adequate tools to perform work responsibilities.
- Motivation.

VI. CONCLUSION

This literature review has revealed that employee engagement has been conceptualised in many different ways. There is no single agreed definition and research has shown that however, engagement is defined; it is a multi-faceted construct (Kahn, 1990). The existence of various conceptualizations makes the state of knowledge around employee engagement difficult to determine, as each piece of research is undertaken under a different protocol, using different measures of engagement under different circumstances. Despite this potential problem, a similar pattern was found by all regardless of the country or context where the research was undertaken. This finding is disappointing, although perhaps not very surprising, and clearly many people do not enjoy going to work and gain little meaning from what they do for a living. A literature review has shown that there is a strong link between employee engagement and another similar construct. Some of the key drivers of employee engagement have been identified include communication, opportunities for employees to feed their views upwards and thinking that their managers are committed to the organisation. Whilst key drivers of engagement have been identified it is also clear that ‘one size does not fit all’. Review of the literature reveals that an employee who is committed to the organisation may not always display attributes of an engaged employee. It also reflects that an employee may experience job-satisfaction on account of reasons and drivers which are not linked to engagement. The literature finding indicates that job involvement is an integral part of employee engagement but not it's complete synonymous, as an employee may be engaged due to reasons beyond one’s job and not merely because of it. But a clear and concise definition of employee engagement can give human resource development practitioners and managers powerful tools to develop workplace strategies that can greatly improve employee satisfaction, fulfilment, and loyalty. Hence, the scope of continued research on Employee Engagement is immense.

REFERENCES

[32] The Industrial & Commercial Employment (Standing Order) Ordinance Sec 2(g).