



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: AN IMPETUS IN ACHIEVING ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS, A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Securing employee's engagement is a sure path to achieving organizational goals. Entrepreneurship, Employees, Land, and Capital – the four factors of production are also the four pillars of Economic organization. The employees of an organization are the active factors that make other factors come to life and in motion. An organization actualizes its vision and missions into achievements and milestones because of its employees. Production efficiency, market competitiveness, image and brand value, customer loyalty, organizational culture of an organization all hinge upon the involvement and absorption of employees into the life and work of the organization. There are various factors that induce and influence the employees' engagement in an organization. Moreover, employees need to feel that they belong; that they are recognized and valued by the organization in order to align their involvement and loyalty to the organization and thus engage themselves with the organisation. Therefore, ensuring employee's engagement is Human Resource Management.

Key Words: Employee Engagement, Organizational Goal, Impetus, Factors of Employees Engagement.

INTRODUCTION: ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS, EMPLOYEES ENGAGEMENT AND IMPETUS.

Organizational goals are the predetermined aims, ends, or outcomes that an organization seeks to achieve by its existence and operations. It is 'the overall objectives, purpose and mission, which are established by the management of an Organization and communicated to its employees. It typically focuses on its long range intentions for operating and its overall business philosophy' (BusinessDictionary.com). According to Vroom (1960) and Etzioni (1964), it describes the future results or the 'desired future state of affairs' towards which the organization manages all its present efforts and processes (Kashyap, 2016).

The goals of an organization play the following vital role between the organization and its employees: (a) Introduce the organization to its employees; (b) Direct and focus the attention and efforts of employees to specific activities and processes; (c) Legitimize the actions of the employees; (d) Standardise the performance of employees; and (e) Motivate the employees to achieve. Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005) proposed that an organization should cover the following eight areas in setting its goals and objectives – (a) Market Share and Standing; (b) Innovation; (c) Productivity; (d) Physical and Financial Resources; (e) Profitability; (f) Manager performance and development; (g) Employees Attitude and Performance; and (h) Public or Social Responsibility. Achieving of its organizational goals is of paramount importance for any organization (a) to survive, succeed and to sustain its growth as an organization (Peter Drucker, 1909-2005), and (b) to coordinate and control the functioning as well as the relationships of groups or departments and of individuals to the organization.

It is in this context of achieving its goals that an organization needs (or does not need) its employees – their time, temperaments and talents. The organization would be unable to integrate and achieve all these areas into its operations, unless all its employees – from the top to the bottom level – are involved head and heart, mind and soul with their organization and into their works and responsibilities.

Employee's engagement is one of the surest ways to make employees passionate about the organization. It acts as an impetus, in the achievement of organizational goals. The word 'impetus' is a very dynamic and lively word. It is derived from a Latin word 'impetitus' or 'impetere' which literally means an attack or assault upon; a rushing into. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2009) the word 'impetus' means 1) something that encourages a process or activity to develop more quickly; and 2) the force or energy with which something moves. Thus, the word 'impetus' means a moving force; an impulse; a stimulus; a catalyst; or something which incites or rouses to activity. 'Impetus' is 'the momentum of a moving body' (Dictionary.com).

Any impetus at any given time in the process of achieving a particular goal is sweet and appreciable. Moreover, a business organization would seek all avenues and encouragements to effectively achieve its organizational goals efficiently.

OBJECTIVES

The paper wishes to explore the described relationship between 'employee engagement' and the 'achievement of organizational goals' in an organization as established by various authors and researchers. The above objective of study could be state as follows:

1. To explore the concept and construct of the term 'Employees engagement.
2. To identify the concepts and constructs defining 'employee engagement'.
3. To enumerate the factors affecting employee engagement; and
4. To enumerate the proposed consequences and impacts of employee engagement.



REVIEW OF LITERATURE: ENVIRONMENT AND EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The term 'employee engagement' is relatively new in Human Resource literature. The other terms which are used interchangeably or synonymously for 'employee engagement' in human resource literature are 'work engagement', 'worker engagement', 'job engagement' and 'organizational engagement'. The concept of 'employee engagement' originated from employers, human resource consultancies and survey houses rather than from the academia (Scottish Executive, 2007) as a way and means to attract and to retain talented employees and to increase productivity at the same time (Crawford, 2016). It was little known prior to 2000. It gained importance as a goal of human resource management from 2000 onwards, thanks to the research of Marcus Buckingham in Gallup's *First, Break All the Rules* (1999).

In her thesis, *Employee Engagement: Restoring Viability to a Corporate Cliché* (2016), Madeline G. Crawford traces the roots of the concept 'employee engagement' in the theoretical beginning of ethical and human relation approach of management in the works of Charles S. Myers (1920) and B. S. Rowntree (1921). Crawford (2016) cites the important contributions of Elton Mayo (1945), Abraham Maslow (1943), Douglas McGregor (1960), David McClelland (1961, 1975), David Winter (1973), Kanter (1977, 1983), Bandura (1977, 1986), Conger and Kanugo (1988), Thomas and Velthouse (1990) in the evolution and development of concepts related to and the foundations of employees engagement.

MEANING OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Two of the important characteristics of employee engagement are **a)** it is a two-way process or mutual interaction and feeling of support between organization and its employees (Robinson *et al*, 2004; Scottish Executive, 2007); and **b)** the employees are so connected to the overall vision, mission and strategy of the organization, that they want to achieve, as well as they are able to achieve them. The employees are affectively committed (Yalabik *et al*, 2013: 2803) – have emotional attachment to as well as identification and involvement with the organization – to the organization as a whole.

Definitions of employee engagement describe the 'characteristics of engaged employee' and the 'behaviours or good practices of employers'. On the one hand, it focuses on employees' motivation, satisfaction, and commitment; their (employees) finding meaning at work, going the extra mile and providing discretionary effort; their taking pride in their organization and being aligned to its objectives and advocating of the organization. On the other hand, it illustrates the organizational practices which translate the abilities of its employees into capabilities for their engagement in the organization (Scottish Executive, 2007).

DEFINITIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The first accepted definition of employee engagement was given by William H Kahn (1990, p 694) in his study "*Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work*". He defined employee engagement as, 'The harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance'. The definition given by Kahn (1990) focused on the engagement or disengagement of individual employee to their work roles by emphasizing on (harnessing) physical, cognitive and emotional presence (selves) of the employee during role performance (Crawford, 2015).

Madeline G. Crawford (2015) notes that 'there have been three fundamental additions to the definition of employee engagement given by Kahn (1990): the organization itself, relationships and organizational goals and values.' She points out that Corporate Leadership Council (2004) was first to include organization and relationships in the definition of employees engagement stating: '[employee engagement is] the extent to which employee commit to something or someone in the organization.' However, Crawford (2015) observes, it was Gibbons (2006) who defined with who the relationships are with – 'Employee Engagement is a heightened emotional and intellectual connection ... an employee has for his/her job, organization, manager, or co-workers.'

The goals and values of the Organization were added to the definition of employee's engagement towards the end of last decade. Stressing the importance of employee's all efforts being directed toward the organization's goals, Macey *et al*, (2009) defined employee engagements as 'an individual's purpose and focused energy, evident to others in the display of personal initiative, adaptability, efforts and persistence directed towards organizational goals.' Crawford (2015) credits Towers Watson (2010), for adding values and visions of organization to the definition and highlighting the switched from being 'individual-centred' to 'organization-centred'; from solely focusing on 'self', or singular 'individual employee' to focusing on all 'employees' in general, always in respect to the organization. 'Employees engagement is 'the extent to which employees share their company's values, feel pride in working for their company, are committed to working for their company and have favourable perceptions of their work environment' (Watson, 2010).

Today, there is no single agreed upon definition of employee engagement. Modern definitions of employee's engagement are numerous and more far reaching. They try to include and emphasise as many as possible facets and factors that constitute and



affect employees' engagement. Therefore, 'the definition of employee's engagement has become so broad that not one single aspect is meaningful anymore' (Crawford, 2015).

FOUNDATIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The literature on employee engagement builds on the discussions and researches on the concept of employee motivation, employee commitment, job satisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB). Employee's engagement could be seen as a concept made up of all these constituent elements. Moreover, the term 'employee engagement' means much more than the terms and concepts that describe its different facets (Scottish Executive, 2007).

EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

The element of motivation is intrinsic to engagement. When the work itself is meaningful, it yields positive feelings of engagement. The engaged employees 'feel their jobs are an important part of what they are' (Macey *et al* 2009, p 127). It is possible to be motivated in one's job without necessarily feeling an attachment to the organization. In engagement there must be a mutual feeling of support between the employee and the organization.

EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Employee engagement contains many elements of commitment (Robinson *et al*, 2004) but engagement is more than just employee commitment. Employee commitment falls short on two aspects of engagement – its two-way process and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have positive attitudes about their job and organization. However, literature pertaining to discussions on commitment and its impact on work force functions as a background for the evolution and understanding the concept of employee engagement (Scottish Executive, 2007; Crawford, 2015).

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR (OCB)

OCBs are identified, defined and classified into seven themes by Podsakoff *et al* (2000) (Robinson *et al*, 2004) – helping behaviours; sportsmanship; civic virtue; organizational loyalty; organizational compliance; individual initiative; and self development. OCBs are outcome that flows from the attitude of job satisfaction and commitment of employees to the organization (Little and Little, 2006). OCBs is strongly likened and linked to employee engagement because of its focus in securing employee commitment and involvement (Scottish Executive, 2007). However, Little and Little (2006) noted, that these desirable behaviour has been shown to be related more to work situation that to individual disposition.

JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is employees' personal emotional or attitudinal evaluation of their own work role. It is 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or from job experiences' (Lock, 1976: p1304). Job satisfaction is linked to commitment, job involvement, OCBs and mental health of the employees and considered as an antecedent of employee engagement (Yalabik *et al*, 2013).

DRIVERS / FACTORS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The modern definitions of Employees engagement try to 'encapsulate as many facets and factors as possible' (Crawford, 2015). Welbourne and Schlanchter (2014) informed that 'there are limitless factors and about 700 identified key drivers that affect engagement'. In order to effectively influence the employee's engagement, it is essential to understand the drivers and factors that affect and have impact on employee's engagement, in a particular organization. Factors of Employee engagement could be divided in three broad categories for better understanding: Individual factors, Organizational factors and Contextual factors.

INDIVIDUAL / EMPLOYEE FACTORS – PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

According to Ferguson, (2007) Individual factor could have great impact on the employee's engagement. Individual's age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, experience etc. may shape an employee's ability, and willingness to be involved and committed at work. People get engaged differently at work place depending upon their experience or perception of psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability in specific situation (IES Report, 2016; Garg, 2014; Yeoman, 2014; Luisis-Lynd and Myers, 2011; Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009). CEB Global (2013-2016) has identified 'four facets / aspects that together describe employees' engagement – absorption, alignment, identification and energy' (p 3).

ORGANIZATIONAL / EMPLOYER FACTORS – ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND HR PRACTICES

Organizational characteristics or factors are known as the independent variable in employee's engagement research studies. They play a decisive role in promoting employees engagement or disengagement. Understanding of organizational factors is 'essential to make employees engaged' and to take 'action to increase employees engagement' (CEB, 2013-2016).



Organizational factors could be divided into two broad areas – Job design and Organizational characteristics. Meaningfulness of Job is of prime importance for engagement (Macey *et al*, 2009, p69). Meaningful work generates interest in employees, provides opportunity for achievement and self fulfilment, and work itself can induce engagement. Task identity and clarity, task significance, skill variety, resources, autonomy and flexibility in work schedule and feedback are some important aspects of job design (Garg, 2014).

Organizational characteristics refer to the work-place environment in which the employees spend their time and talents at work. Employees engagement is produced by aspects in the workplace (McCashland, 1999; Miles, 2001; and Harter *et al*, 2002). Macey *et al* (2009: p11) noted that ‘Engagement requires a work environment that does not just demand more but recognize and respect good performance, promotes information sharing, provides learning opportunities and fosters a work-life balance in employees’ lives, thereby creating the bases for sustained energy and personal initiative.’ Open and supportive environments allow employees to experiment and to try new things and even fail without fear of consequences (Kahn, 1990; Anitha, 2014)).

Divya Sharma, (2016) reports that some of the important elements of work environment are - effective leadership, Communication, organization and superior support, learning and development, Just and fair recognition and rewards, organizational policies, procedures, structures and systems, Workplace relationship and wellbeing.

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS – ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING

Scottish Executive, (2007) suggests that the difference in the dynamics of engagement seems to come from the organizational characteristics. The characteristics of the organization are affected by its empirical context: geographical and socio-cultural setting; its ownership and composition; and its occupation. Apart from these contexts, brand-value and reputation of an organization has great impact in attracting talented employees and influencing their engagement in the organization (Garg, 2014).

CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEES ENGAGEMENT

The benefits or consequences of employees engagement is numerous and multifaceted. They can be summarized under the following heads: employees, organization and the Society.

Employees’ engagement enhances the wellbeing of the employees through passion and commitment for work and satisfaction in the work. Employees feel satisfied with their work as being productive, as well as being able to contribute something to the organization and to the society. They are happy, perform better and have stability (Soni, 2013). They get a more positive perception about their work experience and organization (Sanneh and Taj 2015). Engagement adds meaning, self-worth and pride to their individual life and relationships.

TO THE EMPLOYER

It is from the point of view of organization, that employee’s engagement has got its importance and momentum. Some of the outcome of employee’s engagement as follows:

1. More value addition by the employees by working harder; going the extra-mile; being creative; serving customers better and with more enthusiasm; straying with the organization for longer; (CEB, 2016)
2. Leads to valuation of employees / human resource as dynamic assets
3. Minimise the cost of recruitment, training and process disruptions (CEB, 2016)
4. Increase in productivity, efficiency and operating margin (CEB, 2016)
5. Improvement in overall Organizational performance
6. Promotes retention of talent (Garg, 2014)
7. Fosters customer loyalty (Garg, 2014)
8. Builds up and maintains organizational culture
9. Increase stakeholders’ value (Garg, 2014)
10. Build up of brand-value and advocacy of the organization.

TO THE SOCIETY

The benefit of employee’s engagement is organization outflows from individual employees and organization to the larger society. Employee’s engagement provides Quality product and services; it enhances the quality of life of its citizens – at least of those who are the employees of the organization; it contributes to development of happy and contented society. It contributes to better and greater use of its human and natural resources. The larger society would have one more member as its citizen in the organization, who contributes to well-being of its citizen through quality product or services and innovation, and engaging them creatively and constructively.



HYPOTHESIS

Employee's engagement is significant in achieving the goals and objectives of an organization. Employee's engagement is good not only for the good of the organization but it has very constructive impacts on the employees, and the society at large.

METHODOLOGY

Employee's engagement or disengagement is a qualitative statement about an organization. It describes the relationship between the employees and their organization. The degree of employee engagement cannot be quantified and measured in numbers, though it gets reflected in the statistics of the organization. It is inferred through behaviours of employees and correlated with the statistics of the organisation. Therefore, the methodology applied for the paper is mixed method.

For the study, the data used and referred to here, are of secondary sources. Since there is no direct access to these data used by scholars and researcher, the conclusion drawn from these data are take to substantiate the premises and thereby reach to the conclusion of the study.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Several studies have confirmed that there is direct relationship between employees engagement and organizational performance (Kamau and Muathe, 2016).

1. Employees engagement and productivity and profitability – Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002)
2. Employees engagement and customer impact and financial results – Tower, Perin, USA (2003, 2007)
3. Employee engagement and excitement, enthusiasm and productivity – Kroth and Bovirie (2013).

However, Kamau and Muathe, (2016) note the lamentable level of employees engagement. In Thailand only 12% of the employees engaged while 82% were actively disengaged and 6% disengaged (Gallup, 2004). In Australia, 18%; in China, 12%; in Japan, 9%; in New Zealand, 7%; and in Singapore, 9% employees were found to be engaged [Gallup, 2004 (as cited in Kularet *al*, 2007)]. Similarly, Sanneh and Taj, (2015) note that in the United States 52% purportedly disengaged and 18% actively disengaged; and 68% of Chinese workers are reported to be disengaged. Only 13% employees around the globe are engaged in their job and that disengaged workers continue to outnumber the engaged employees at a rate approximately 2 to 1 (Gallup, 2013).

Statistical (correlation and regression) analysis is widely used to describe the relationships among antecedents, factors, consequence of employee engagement, employee engagement and organizational performance. Therefore, one cannot establish or attribute employee's engagement to be the cause of improvement in organizational performance. Improved performance could also lead to employee's engagement, though organization would need to its employees engagement to sustain and improve further on its performance. More empirical research is to discover and establish causal relationship between employee's engagement and organizational performance.

Moreover, given the measured level of global employees engagement around only 13%, one cannot ignore the potential and significance as an impetus in not only achieving organizational goals, but also in improving the quality of life of employees as individuals and of society at large. The quantifiable and measurable benefits of employee engagement are numerous yet only the tip of iceberg still to be uncovered and realised in terms of human realisation and fulfilment as individual employee, as a body or individuals – organization and as a human family – the society.

Therefore, it would be commendable to research the relationship between employees' engagement and industrial relations; employees' engagement and financial and physical resource management; employees' engagement and corporate social responsibility. It would be desirable for organizations, its directors, managers and those in leadership roles to empower the employees and subordinates for engagement in the best interest of all stakeholders. In research, personal engagement of researcher in the research process is indispensable for quality research. It would be praiseworthy to initiate engagement as education – a method and a process of learning and teaching.

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