Drivers of Employee Engagement: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Purpose – The conceptual research paper is to study concept of employee engagement with respect to HR practice and policies. It also identifies the drivers of employee engagement and how it is affecting to employee engagement with respect to HR practice and policies.

Objective – Main objectives of this study is to the study shows concept of employee engagement with respect to HR practice and policies. Secondary is to study the drivers of employee engagement and its impact on employee engagement.

Methodology – The present study is descriptive in nature. The research has elementary based conduct with the help of secondary data. Relevant literatures have been collected from various academic journals, websites, articles, books etc.

Findings –In this globalized and dynamic organizational world, the concept of employee engagement is major concern. Employees are most valuable asset of organization and happy employee contributes more in the organization. Engaged employees are very enthusiastic and dedicated towards their work, they go extra mile. To engaged and retain engaged employees is very crucial task for the organization. The concept of employee engagement has now gained more significance, since many drivers have been identified. Proper attention and implementation of engagement strategies and programs will increase the organizational effectiveness in terms of higher productivity, profits, performance, and customer satisfaction and employee retention. We try to explore the drivers of engagement through published literature. The existing literature review indicated drivers/factors of employee engagement and its impact on employee engagement with respect to HR practice and policies.

Research limitation implication – The absence of more published work on Employee Engagement and drivers of employee engagement

Practical implication – Special focus and effort is required specifically to engage employees in organization. Organizations shall focus on presenting a great environment for employees to work and promote programs that would enhance engagement. Employees would enjoy considerable attention in terms of the determinants and drivers of employee engagement being addressed.

Originality / Value – The study explores the concept of employee engagement and also throws light on key drivers of employee engagement through published review of literature.

Keywords: Employee engagement, Key drivers of employee engagement, Literature Review, Organization Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

"In a fast-changing world, overcrowded by ideas and opportunities, one of the biggest challenges for companies is not to generate ideas but to engage people toward innovation (Verganti, 2017). Organizations operate and compete in a complex and turbulent environment because of major forces such as digital transformations and cross-industry global trends like big data and social media (Matzler et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2012). All these factors provide an incredible amount of possibilities for innovation in terms of new products, the value chain and the business models (Smedley, 2017). In understanding how to deal with this environment, a lot has been said about the process of innovation and the strategies to improve the quantity and the quality of innovation initiatives (Brenton and Levin, 2012)." "Innovation scholars focused mainly on the process to foster innovation, considered as a defined sequence of decision points (Cooper, 1990; Krishnan and Ulrich, 2001). Therefore, much attention has been put on how to execute such processes in a fast and iterative way to navigate the complexity of a highly dynamic market environment. However, these approaches define innovation development as a deliberate business process which involves scores of generic decisions (Krishnan and Ulrich, 2001) and metrics to assess performances (Slater et al., 2014). They neglect entirely the role of people as members of a social system (Rogers, 1962), who can bring in the process not only their capabilities and skills (Shane and Ulrich, 2004) but also their ideas, values and perspectives (Brenton and Levin, 2012)."

"Nevertheless, innovation is not just generating ideas and pooling technical skills within a cross-functional team. It also requires moments of playfulness (Mainemelis and Ronson, 2006), time, immersion and reflection (Brenton and Levin, 2012). Simultaneously, innovation is also about volunteerism, energy and motivation (O'Connor and McDermott, 2004). Hence, in the current environment, a deeper understanding of how people engage, make sense and collaborate in innovation appears fundamental (e.g. Alblooshi et al., 2020; Bellis and Verganti, 2020). In particular, people's engagement appears as crucial to spur an individual's motivation and action in making innovation happen." "In a way, engagement seems to reflect a positive psychological state of motivation with behavioral manifestation, cognitive and emotional, resulting in the active involvement of a person (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Still, what is the current state of research at the intersection between engagement and innovation? The present study aims to explore such a research question." "The interest in "engagement" as a research topic is dated back at the end of the last century (Kahn, 1990). Nevertheless, today as never before, the understanding of what moves an employee to provide their contribution to business processes has become relevant and it is even more appropriate for what concerns innovation. The purpose of the present study is to provide a systemic overview of what has been said in the field and provide a critical analysis that may help innovation scholars and innovation managers in highlighting relevant spots for future research." "More precisely, the paper explores how the literature sheds light on the relationship between engagement and innovation through a systematic literature review. While in academic literature, the engagement–innovation relationship appears still fragmented and does not provide a single study comprehensively analyzing the topic (Janssen, 2003; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Thus, the paper aims to understand how scholars conceptualized and studied engagement in innovation activities."

Theories and Background

"The engagement concept dates back to the 1990s when it started to attract academic interest. During its development, the idea of engagement has been attached to several different definitions ranging from "personal engagement" to "job engagement" till "employee engagement" when it refers explicitly to organizational contexts (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Robinson, 2004; Alfes et al., 2010)." "The seminal definition is attributable to Kahn (1990), who defines the concept as "people exhibit engagement when they become physically involved in tasks, whether alone or with others; they are cognitively vigilant focused, and attentive; they are emotionally connected to their work and others in the service of their work." Referring to Welch's (2011) engagement review, the evolution of engagement can be contextualized into three different periods or "waves." The first wave has been mainly characterized by Kahn mentioned above (1990)."

"The third wave is defined by Welch (2011) that linked engagement with other disciplines' contributions coming from human resources, workplace behavior and psychology (Welch, 2011). The first wave has been mainly characterized by Kahn (1990), imprinting with a shared focus on engagement as physical–vigor, emotional–dedication and cognitive–absorption (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). While "vigor" implies "high energy levels and mental resilience when working," "dedication" refers to "being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm and challenge"; finally, "absorption" means "to be fully concentrated and engrossed in one's work" (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). This first wave represents the seminal work on engagement, highly oriented to the organizational context, and the relationship between people and their job."

"Multiple academic conceptualizations are underlining its multifaceted nature due to the presence of constructs intersecting social and psychological sciences (Robinson, 2004; Alfes et al., 2010), highlighting this difficulty in finding a reliable and well-comprehensive definition and a subsequent valid measurement system. The concept of engagement is an integration of behavioral, emotional and cognitive components, encompassing ideas such as energy, rational and emotive attachment, deep connection, positive attitude and psychological presence (Rich et al., 2010)." "Recently, organizations began to adopt a more open approach to engagement by considering it as a substantial psychological adaptation and involvement from the part of employees to the organization (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). This shift can be attributed to how the engagement notion has quickly evolved within the practitioner community, hampering the understanding of work engagement for practical purposes (Anitha, 2014). The concept of engagement, given the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Klaus, 2016), has passed from the definition of mere physical exploitation of the employees to a desirable active espousal of the entire "person" to the work sphere in modern organizations." "Thus, nowadays, engagement can be considered an essential condition for employees and the organization they work for (Saks, 2006). Indeed, researchers interpret engagement as a property of organizations, that is, employees throughout the organization may share perceptions that members of the organization collectively invest their full selves into their work roles (Dviret al., 2002). For example, motivational states such as engagement are highly transferrable to other members of the organization (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Given the fact that organizational engagement involves psychological processes occurring within individuals as they attribute meaning to the environment in which they work and transform it. At the same

time, they disseminate it; for this paper, we consider engagement at the individual level (Seibert et al., 2004)."

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

HR practices and psychological states

"According to Saks and Gruman (2014), psychological meaningfulness "involves the extent to which people derive meaning from their work and feel that they are receiving a return on investments of self in the performance of their role" (p. 160). It refers to individuals' experiences at work that are meaningful, valuable and worthwhile (Fletcher and Schofield, 2019; Kahn, 1990). In general, individuals judge themselves by their job and their efforts (Edmondson, 1999; Steger et al., 2013). Work becomes meaningful once it facilitates individuals to achieve one or more elements of meaning, which matches the purpose of the individual such as personal growth, self-realisation, challenge, autonomy or competence (Edmondson and Lei, 2014; Fletcher and Schofield, 2019; Kahn, 1990).""The HR practices considered in this study are related to psychological meaningfulness. For example, training helps employees to develop necessary skills to further their career development (den Hartog et al., 2013). Other aspects, including employee participation in decision-making, are related to self-value; job security ensures career stability; and recruitment is related to self-realisation (den Hartog et al., 2013; Karadas and Karatepe, 2019). Appraisal, reward and recognition are related to increased social and socio-economic status, which could be psychologically meaningful (Elrehail et al., 2020)."

"Teamwork also could enhance meaningfulness because of the collegiality among the team members and all are having similar purpose. In sum, combined HR practices might make employees to feel dignity and respect for their work which would likely generate meaningfulness."

"Kahn (1990) defined psychological safety is "as feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (p. 708). It refers to a supportive, open and trustworthy work environment where employees feel safe to take risks and make trivial errors without fear of severe punishment (Rabiul et al., 2021; Lyu, 2016). This also means that employees who express their views openly to their superiors will not feel threatened with adverse consequences (Agarwal and Farndale, 2017; Dollard and Bakker, 2010; Edmondson, 1999). A psychologically safe environment will not affect employees' careers, self-image or status in harmful ways (Lyu, 2016)."

PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANINGFULNESS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

"Meaningfulness is associated with a variety of personal and organisational consequences that are related to an employees' success at work (Mostafa and Abed El-Motalib, 2018; Steger et al., 2013). Low meaningfulness results in apathy and detachment (Fletcher and Schofield, 2019; May et al., 2004). In contrast, high meaningfulness results in high commitment and involvement towards the work (Chen et al., 2011). Psychologically meaningful work generates personal growth and satisfaction, which leads employees to be more committed to engage fully at work (Elrehail et al., 2020; Kunie et al., 2017; Steger et al., 2013)."

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

"In a psychologically safe work environment, individuals have a sense of confidence that they "will not be embarrassed, rejected, and punished by someone for speaking up" (Edmondson, 1999, p. 355). Without psychological safety, working environments are ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004). Hence, employees may feel anxiety and fear in a situation in which they need to ask for help, feedback or propose ideas (Agarwal and Farndale, 2017; Dollard and Bakker, 2010; Edmondson, 1999; Kahn, 1990)."

"In contrast, Edmondson (1999) states that in psychologically safe environments, employees have "a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up" (p. 354). As such, perceived psychological safety enhances interpersonal relationships among employees through a supportive, open, trustworthy, flexible and non-threatening environment (Rabiul et al., 2021; Lyu, 2016). In such an environment, employees have the opportunity to share their personal opinions to their superiors and build trust with senior management, which may lead to engagement at work (Harter et al., 2020; Kirk-Brown and Van Dijk, 2015; Robinson et al., 2004)."

PSYCHOLOGICAL AVAILABILITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

"Availability denotes an individual's belief of having physical, emotional and mental resources to perform the assigned tasks in a particular moment (Kahn, 1990). More specifically, it refers to the emotional, physical and psychological assets which an individual possesses that are required to do the job at any moment without interruption (Binyamin and Carmeli, 2010;

May et al., 2004). Individuals' own evaluation of their personal resources (physical, emotional and mental) to perform the given tasks while considering various social distractions is also vital (Fletcher and Schofield, 2019; Kahn, 1990). Although physical availability varies, individuals' strength, stamina and flexibility could influence their work related engagement (Frazier et al., 2017; Edmondson, 1999). Moreover, individuals need to be both emotionally and mentally prepared for work".

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Culture has also been found to affect sustainability (Eccles et al. 2012). Epstein et al. (2010) studied four companies that have woven sustainability with the every practice of the business focusing on leadership and organizational culture (OC) to encourage and engage employees to attain sustainability. They could achieve this by adopting appropriate practices like

reducing waste and emissions that reduced both company cost and social cost. Recent studies suggest that it is but sensible for organizations to promote a healthy culture and also to make certain that employees remain engaged at the workplace. A good number of studies have attempted to explore the impact of OC on EE. Organizational culture is a holistic term that itself is made up of various dimensions, risk taking, innovativeness, rewards, performance orientation, etc., each of which has some impact on EE.

Strong OC increases the Organizational chances of achieving objectives by employees and together and increases organizational performance (**Deal and Kennedy 1982; Marcoulides and Heck 1993**; **Atkinson and Kandula 1990**). Organization's internal environment is built upon the assumptions and beliefs of the managers and employees (**Aycan et al. 1999**). Thus, culture shapes employees' behaviour and influences organizational performance. A vast body of literature has attempted to identify dimensions of OC. The fact that these dimensions differ in different studies implies that that organizational culture is a construct that is multidimensional (**Hurley and Hult 1998; O'Reilly et al. 1991; Detert et al. 2000**).

Rewards, recognition, and leadership were supported as leading to EE (**Jiony et al. 2015; Fowler 2009**) that further leads to good financial performance of companies (**Hewitt 2011**). The importance of rewards for EE has been established by a number of studies (**Jaghargh et al. 2012; Carnegie 2012**). In addition, the importance of a culture of learning in an organization can also make a positive contribution towards engaging employees (**Kim et al. 2014**). According to **Jiony et al. (2015)**, EE results in organizational effectiveness and better performance which is the outcome of effective systems, supportive leadership, personality—job fit, realistic targets, and security—which are various dimensions of OC. A study by **Bedarkar and Pandita (2014)** highlights the key drivers of EE, which include organizational communication, work–life balance, and leadership, which are also the predictor of OC. Internal communication of an organization is essential for achieving EE (**Welch 2011; Hartnell et al. 2011**). Studies have also found a positive link between EE and organizational processes of power sharing, communication, team orientation, mentoring behaviours, leader behaviours, and support for organizational goal attainment (**May et al. 2004; Saks 2006; Papalexandris and Galanki 2009**), and a study by **Parent and Lovelace (2015)** has further supported these findings.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Organizations want to comprehend the drivers of employee motivation and performance with the objective of improving the work engagement level of their staff (Gallup 2005). In this regard, leadership has appeared as one of the important driving factors that help in engaging employees. Leadership behaviour facilitates in increasing EE at the workplace (Bhatnagar 2007). Leaders set the tone for engagement in the workplace as they have quality and capability to fulfil the psychological and task-related needs of their employees. Leaders need to demonstrate a clear genuineness in their actions towards employees. Cartwright and Holmes (2006) opined that leaders who attach importance to developing and building relationships and trust at work are successful in increasing the engagement level. Leaders who exhibit higher task behaviour and show support for subordinates have also been found to be effective at promoting EE (Salanova and Schaufeli 2008). According to Sadeli (2012), leadership behaviour significantly leverages OC and EE, as employees tend to give more time and spend energy in their jobs to show gratitude to their leaders (Dienesch and Liden 1986).

Psychological states (meaningfulness, safety and availability) as the mediators between HR practices and employee engagement

"Training and development are among the facilities provided by various organisations to further grow employees' skills and abilities (Agarwal and Farndale, 2017). Employees with EJMBE sufficient skills and knowledge will experience less anxiety and emotional exhaustion than their less-competent counterparts. This increases feelings of meaningfulness, safety and

availability, which lead to stronger work and organisational engagement (Dollard and Bakker, 2010; Gurlek, 2020). Once employees experience these psychological states, they are more likely to engage at work (May et al., 2004)."

"This is because employees who perceive their work as meaningful will have positive attitudes towards their future professional development; thus, they will work harder (Fletcher and Schofield, 2019). Employee involvement in decision-making processes is another critical indicator of engagement as they feel valued by the organisations (Robinson et al., 2004). Moreover, employee involvement in decision-making creates opportunities to share ideas with superiors, which is positively associated with work engagement (Aon Hewitt, 2018; Robinson et al., 2004). Once an organisation offers a clear advancement process, employees' engagement and motivation at work become more meaningful (e.g. Aktar and Pangil, 2018; Ashton, 2017; Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Huang et al., 2017)."

"This is consistent with selfconcept theory (Aryee et al., 2012; Rabiulet al., 2021) – that positive support from HR practices is associated with the development of positive self-concept (meaningful work), which leads to greater work and organisation engagement. Employees with perceived safety will be confident to perform works as they have sufficient skills and knowledge (Frazier et al., 2017) which can be done through training and development. Employees are committed at work, express a positive attitude and are satisfied owing to career advancement opportunities (Aktar and Pangil, 2018; Ashton, 2017; Huang et al., 2017). Job security is conceptualized as the degree to which employees expect to stay at their jobs over an extended period (Aktar and Pangil, 2018; Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005; Kirk-Brown and Van Dijk, 2015). Job security is an extrinsic factor that motivates employees to reach their full potential (Ashton, 2017; Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Karadas and Karatepe, 2019)."

"Having a secure job means employees will feel psychologically safe and engage in their work role (Aktar and Pangil, 2018; Kahn, 1990). Likewise, in line with selfconcept theory (Aryee et al., 2012; Rabiul et al., 2021) that individual employees may grow positive self-concept and confidence (psychological availability) to perform the job task having the appropriate HR practices from the organisation."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

"As anticipated by self-concept theory (Aryee et al., 2012; Shamir et al., 1993), appropriate HR practices promote positive self-concept (meaningfulness, safety and availability) among employees. Although these three psychological states are significant predictors of employee engagement, meaningfulness did not have the mediation influence that safety and availability did. Once employees received training, career development opportunities, rewards, feedback opportunities, and there was a fair recruitment process, they looked at their work as meaningful and safe (Agarwal and Farndale, 2017; Chen et al., 2016a; Kirk-Brown and Van Dijk, 2015)."

"Moreover, HR facilities also develop confidence among employees to perform their work roles (Binanmin and Carmeli, 2010). Meaningfulness, safety and availability positively influence work engagement and organisational engagement. Several studies have confirmed that employees' perception of a psychologically safe work environment, meaningful work and available personal resources promote positive employee behaviour such as greater organisational and work engagement (Chen et al., 2011; Fletcher, 2016; Fletcher and Schofield, 2019; Memon et al., 2020)."

"Concerning mediation, contradictory to earlier expectation, psychological meaningfulness did not mediate the link between HR practices and work engagement nor organisational engagement. According to Steger et al. (2013) and Rabiul et al. (2021), meaningfulness differs from one person to another owing to the differences in their expectations and lifelong planning. For example, HR practices may not always facilitate meaningfulness among employees. Moreover, meaningful work is linked to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and individuals' weaknesses and strengths (Fletcher and Schofield, 2019)."

"As Psychological safety mediates the effects of HR practices on both work engagement and organisational engagement. Similarly, psychological availability also mediated the link between HR practices and work engagement and organisational engagement. So far, only a limited number of studies have investigated the roles of psychological safety and availability as mediating mechanisms between HR practices and work and organisational engagement. According to self-concept theory (e.g. Mostafa and El-Motalib, 2018; Shamir et al., 1993), employees who received supportive HR practices experienced positive influences on their self-concept; therefore, they had increased confidence to perform their job duties (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Kahn, 1990)."

"Hoteliers need to implement an appropriate bundle of HR practices to keep employees engaged by developing meaningfulness of work, make them available to perform their work roles by utilising training and career opportunities, retain talented employees through reward and recognition and motivate them by allowing them to participate in decision-making processes (Wang and Xu, 2017;Xu et al., 2020; Ziraret al., 2020)."
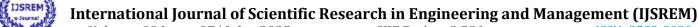
"The importance of this is even more explicit in a service-driven hospitality profession. When staff is given the authority to interact with consumers, they have the option to choose how to handle a wide range of requirements, wants, expectations and complaints (Chen et al., 2016b; Gurlek, 2020). Since psychological safety is a precondition of employee engagement, HR professionals need to ensure the work environment is safe (Carmeli and Gittell, 2009; Fletcher, 2016), which promotes job security and career advancement (Wang et al., 2019)."

"Managers' clarification of work roles, social support, fairness and justice could enhance work environment safety (Jensen et al., 2011; Lyu, 2016; Rabiul et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2019). Frontline employees frequently have interactions with customers; therefore, managers should encourage them to participate in how to provide better customer service (Mowbray et al., 2020)."
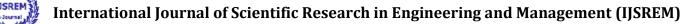
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