

Antecedents and Outcome of Work Engagement:

A Review and Agenda for Future Research

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ABSTRACT

Human Resource Management has gained significant importance in the last few decades and drawn management's attention for designing human resource practices to reasonably enhance employee engagement. Empirical evidence on the subject reveals that failures of the firms are more because of improper human resource management rather than failure of technical system. Employee engagement has become one of the significant HRM practices in today's international trade. Numerous socio economic factors induce employee engagement that in turn enhances organizational citizenship behavior of the employees. In the current paper, an effort has been made to investigate the aspects which are directly or indirectly impacting the employee engagement level and subsequently enhance the organizational citizenship behavior and positive organizational outcomes through published research works. The practical relevance of current study supports the fact that research findings will help the firms in recognizing the areas that need attention for improvement in gaining better citizenship behavior.

Key words: *Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Employee Engagement, Human Resource Management, Human Resources Practices, etc.*

1. Introduction

Human Resource Management has gained significant importance in the last few decades. The opening up of Indian economy has brought several changes in human resource practices. The extensive change in human resource management practices has created such circumstances where success or failure of the firm are more attributed to improper human resource management rather than problems related to technical systems. The management policies for employee engagement are one of the most critical HRM practices for motivating the employee and strengthening their citizenship behavior. In general, the employee engagement is a long term planned move towards increasing the level of employee engagement, ensuring overall progress of employees and encouraging the employees for bringing organizational alterations that are essential to meet the future challenges. Seeing the importance of the

subject, present study endeavors to explore the literature associated to employee engagement and organizational Citizenship behavior. The study has also attempted to explore various antecedents of employee engagement and their correlation with organizational citizenship behavior (Rosso *et al.*, 2010). A wide range of studies exploring various antecedents of employee engagement like extrinsic and intrinsic reward system, organizational justice, job characteristics, perceived supervisor support were analyzed to gain deep insight into the concept of work engagement and various factors leading to it (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006).

2. Objectives and Methodology

The main objective of this study is to explore the drivers of Employee engagement and its influence on organizational citizenship behavior as well as organizational performance. The present study has reviewed several articles both national and international and analyzed the topic through published research works and critically evaluated them for drawing conclusions and making important suggestions. The period of study includes the research work published from 1990 to 2018.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Employees Engagement

The continuous growth of business organization has enhanced the importance of employee engagement and this has become the management priority. Basically employee engagement is considered as emotional association that employee experiences at work and drives his willingness to extend his unrestricted effort at work. In other words, the employee engagement is an aspect of relationship concerning organization and its employees. It is the emotional dedication of employee towards organization and its objectives (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004). An engaged employee is the one who is completely engrossed and is passionate about his job. An engaged employee takes a positive action for enhancing organizational image and reputation (Dutton, 2003). Employee engagement reflects about the feeling of the employee, his passion and commitment as well as discretionary effort into his work. Hence, employee engagement is the practice focusing on harnessing organizational members towards their task emotionally, physically, cognitively, and throughout role performances so as to make them psychologically engaged while performing an organizational role (Kahn 1990).

Over the years, it is experienced that employee engagement is becoming a challenge before management. In a business environment where there is a continuous growth of employee turnover, management is finding hard to keep its employees engaged. Under such circumstances retention of employee and engagement of employee has become an important task before management. Several studies are being conducted by researchers and HR professional to identify the factors responsible for

influencing the engagement. Based on several research findings, an employee engagement can be summarized as opportunities to the employee for career development in the organization. It is also considered as a means of managing talent through leadership in the organization, clarifying the company's values to the employees, respectful treatment to the employees, and following ethical behaviors. Some other forms of employee engagement include employee empowerment policies, an honest organizational justice system, standard performance appraisal system, appropriate pay and benefit policies, health and safety mechanism in the organization etc. (Martin & Roodt, 2018)

3.2 Drivers of Employee Engagement

Most of the research in the field of employees works engagement shows that employee performance can be improved by increasing his commitment. The employee engagement is derived from his level of commitment. And hence finding the means of employee commitment leads his engagement towards work and give job satisfaction. The empirical research on the subject indicates that a positive work environment and effective life are powerfully associated with employees' engagement levels. Several significant key drivers of work engagement are summarized as:

Job characteristics: Job characteristics are the features related to employee job such as his knowledge and skills, employees' mental and physical demands, and his working conditions. Generally, it is the psychological meaningfulness of the job which is achieved from the task. Job characteristics like income, job security, promotions, or working hours provide employee motivation for a better engagement. (Kahn 1992). The Social Exchange Theory (SET) of job characteristics confirms that job enrichment and challenging job higher levels of engagement. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H1: Job characteristics are significantly related to Work engagement.

Leadership –Various dimensions of leadership within the organization are considered as to be the imperative drivers of employee engagement. If organizational leaders have a better understanding of their employee and are empathetic to the challenges faced by employees in the organization and has a clear vision and mission for the future, it is sure that employees will remain confident and will be optimistic towards themselves and also towards companies' future. This will bring strong motivation among the employee to put extra effort and drive towards greater engagement for organizations' future. It is also experienced that employees are more engaged if they think that their leaders are committed. The employee engagement level depends upon the leader member exchanges linking employees and supervisors (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H2: Leadership is significantly related to Work engagement.

Reward System (Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards): Employee reward system is the key motivator in deriving job satisfaction, engagement and improving performances. Kahn (1990) is of the observation that employee engagement depends on the benefits they receive from their role in organization. It is expected that an employee will be more engaged if he identify a greater amount of recognition and rewards for his role performance. In contrast to this, Maslach et al. (2001), in their study established that absence of reward and recognition may lead to burnout, and in turn affect the level engagement. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H3: Rewards are significantly related to Work engagement.

Perceived Organizational Support: Perceived organizational support is the means of assuring the employees for getting assistance from management while working under stressful situations (George et al. 1993). In other words, an employee remains more engaged in a situation where organization is more concerned about their employee and taking care of their wellbeing. Social exchange theory explains that an employee who had higher perceived organizational support reflects more engagement to his/her job and organization (Rhoades et al. 2001). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H4: Perceived organizational support is significantly related to Work engagement.

Distributive and Procedural justice: Organizational justice as a topic of research has been a major area of interest over the past three decades. Basically, distributive and procedural justice is a form of organizational justice dealing with the content of fairness and the process of fairness. Distributive justice predicts employee satisfaction with the outcome, but procedural justice indicates the valuation of the authorities and its organization. (Biswas et al. 2013). Colquitt et al. (2001) clarify that justice perception is associated with organizational outcomes in terms of organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, withdrawal and performances (Colquitt et al. 2001). It is believed that employees who have elevated their opinion of justice in their organization are expected to feel more obligated and have greater levels of engagement as compared to other employees in the organization. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H5: Distributive and Organizational justice are significantly correlated to Work engagement.

Nature of Communication –Nature of communication among management and employees in the organization has a strong impact on employee engagement. The nature of communication influences the employees in gaining confidence and helpful in getting the job done as well as have a positive effect on the business (Steger & Dik, 2009; Steger et al., 2012). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H6: Nature of communication is significantly related to Work engagement.

Organizational Change Strategies –Change is an ongoing process. Soft changes in the organization with minimum resistance from the employee will have a great impact on their engagement. Organizational change which is properly communicated, have a deep impacts on the employees' comfort in the organization. It also promotes the optimism towards the company and it is helpful in enhancing employees' engagement toward jobs in the organization (Harpaz& Fu, 2002; Steger *et al.*, 2012).The present study proposes the following hypothesis in this context.

H7: Organizational change is significantly related to Work engagement.

Role Clarity –An employee performs multiple roles in his entire life cycle in the organization. When employee understands his role completely and knows what is expected from him, he is able to perform his job more confidently. An employee who has more confidence in his ability is expected to have elevated levels of engagement in his role (Mowday *et al.*, 1982).Therefore; the study suggests the following hypothesis in this context.

H8: Role clarity is significantly related to Work engagement.

3.2 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of employees is extremely important for the firm in gaining competitive advantage and improving organizational performance (Nemeth and Staw 1989). Organ (1989) explains organizational citizenship behavior and disagrees that OCB is the reflection of “good soldier syndrome”. This is vital for affluent and smooth functioning of the organization. Organizational Citizenship provides a positive psychological and social environment for better organizational performances. OCB is important to employees as it increases social associations that are helpful in achieving better job performance. Organizational citizenship is a concept that is deeply rooted in individual employees' view of looking themselves with company. Organizational citizenship behavior discussed in the late 1980s' by organ was the expansion of original works of Katz's about organizational behavior. Organ (1988) conceptualizes the OCB and defined it as “positive behavior of employees that goes beyond the formal requirement of the job and helpful in promoting effective functioning of the organization”. OCB is also helpful in uplifting the coworkers' productivity. Further, Podsakoff *et al.*, (2000) defined employee engagement as "those extra work-related behaviors which go above and beyond the routine duties prescribed by their job descriptions or measured in formal evaluations". Lee & Allen, (2002) defined it as "employee behaviors that, although not critical to the task or job, serve to facilitate organizational functioning". Organ (1998) explains that an employee can exhibit Citizenship behavior in five ways:

Altruism – Altruism is a behavior based on principle and moral practice that helps to the happiness of other human beings.

Conscientiousness—Conscientiousness is the behavior that goes beyond the minimum level of requirement or what is expected.

Sportsmanship—Sportsmanship is a behavior that leads to accept inconvenient situations without grievances.

Courtesy—Courtesy is a behavior which leads to prevent problems in advance and follows ‘prevention is better than cure style’

Civic virtue – Civic virtue is a behavior that leads to make participation in overall organizational issues and discussing on all organizational issues.

3.3 Employee Engagement and its relationship with Organizational Citizenship Behavior

There are numeral precedent studies undertaken by researchers to investigate the association of employee engagement and organizational citizenship behavior. Basically, employee engagement is considered as individual enthusiasm and his/her attachment to the job assigned to them. Kahn (1990) explains work engagement from motivational perspectives since it deals with the distribution of human resources and focus on the optimistic facets of individual’s job. It is considered as the employees’ willingness and their ability in providing sustainable help to their organization on a continuous basis (Little & Little, 2006).

Rotunda and Sackett (2002) reveal that OCB is a behavior that adds to the objective of the organization by contributing to social and psychological environment. Lin (2008) explains that male members are generally proactive and act braver and perform positive high risk citizenship behavior than female members. It is expected that employees who are connected in their job activity should not only meet the terms the formal role requirements but carry forward additional effort to achieve other activities that spread to create volunteers resulting to more OCB’s. Rich et al. (2010) in their empirical study confirmed that there exists a strong relationship among employee engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The study suggested communication, work-life balance, and leadership are some of the factors having substantial impact on employee engagement.

H9: Employee Engagement significantly affects Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

3.4 Employee Engagement and Organization Performance

The notion of employee engagement has achieved considerable significance in the current business and economic environment. An engaged employee is sentient of commerce framework, and works with coworkers to improve performance. Employee engagement program strongly affects the performance of organization and therefore all organizations desire their employees to be engaged in their job for their financial success. Engagement comes after people are concerned with the job they

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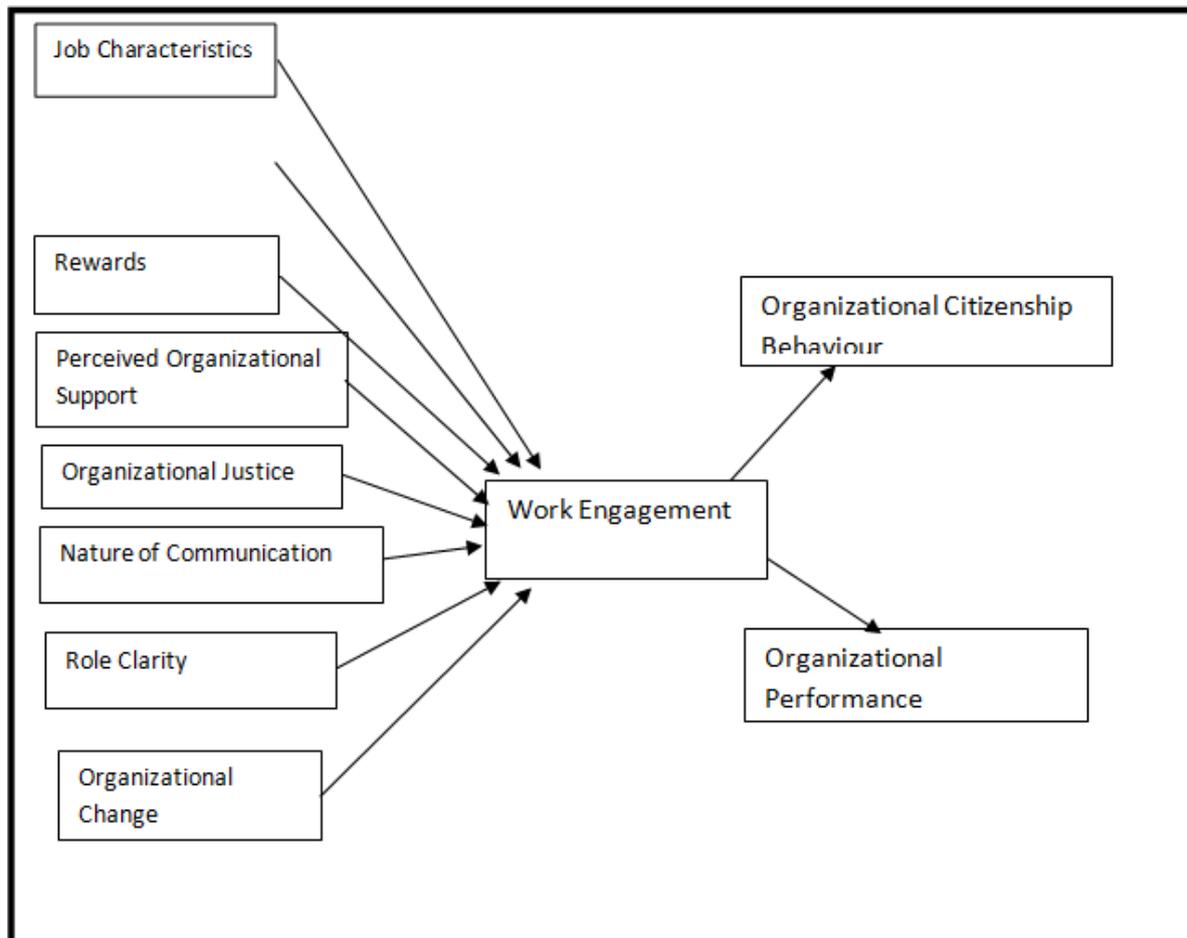
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perform and they care for the goals of organization and use possible ways to achieve the targets. This behavior and attitude comes when employees are contented from their job and believe that organization support them and work for their wellbeing .Pillai and Singh (2018) in their study indicated that decreased employee commitment and motivation is the result of poor employee engagement. The factors like poor job design, ineffective communication, management approach towards employee wellbeing, poor workers' participation, poor incentive schemes, and lack of recognition produces low level of employee engagement. Other researchers like Sridevi, 2010; Devi, 2017; Kazimoto, 2016; Alagaraja Shuck, 2015 also confirmed similar findings related to engagement on organizational performance.

Therefore, the study concluded that employee engagement has a sturdy impact on organizational performance outcomes in the terms of profitability, productivity, security and customer loyalty. Devi (2017) shared similar vision and suggested that organization can progress by using employee engagement as a strategic instrument. Wellins and Bernthal (2015) in their study also suggested that a healthy work environment motivates an employee for better performance and thus improves organizational productivity. Alagaraja and Shuck (2015) confirmed that employee engagement can only be achieved by increasing the organization's ability of alignment of individual employee with the team, intergroup and with organization. In a comprehensive study by Towers Perrin in 2003, 2005, and 2007 found that 24% of employees worldwide were disengaged, 62% of employees were moderately engaged and very few (only 14%) employees were found to be highly engaged (Towers Perrin 2006). Country wise percentage of employees who are highly engaged was found as: Mexico (40%), Brazil 31%), United States (21%), Canada (17%), Europe (11%) and Asia (7%). Similarly, Gallup (2013) observed the impact of employee engagement on organizational outcomes has decreased absenteeism by 37%, turnover by 34%, reduce safety accident by 28%, defects by 41% increases customer satisfaction by 10%, increases productivity by 21% and increases profitability by 22%.

H10: Employee engagement considerably affects organizational performance.

In light of above discussion, the present study has developed a conceptual framework to examine select drivers of employee engagement, and impact of engagement on organizational citizenship behavior and organizational performance. The proposed model shall be validated in future by collecting data from top 5 companies from IT industry.



4. Discussion and Conclusion

Majority of studies conducted in the past indicated various factors driving employee engagement and confirmed wide variation in the engagement level across the countries and across the cultures. This calls complete examination of the level of employee engagement to validate the findings and gain insight into various unexplored dimensions of the concept. Exploration of this variation will give an opportunity for further research. The exploration of construct of the employees' engagement is very popular for two reasons. First, this construct has its roots in academics like job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment and job involvement. Secondly, it has applicability and acceptance by the world of practice. Taking the guidance from these two important considerations, the researcher has reviewed some research paper related to employee engagement in India as well as abroad. Present study has been taken to understand drivers that influence employee engagement. Data was collected from various review papers, working paper, and internet resources. The conceptual understanding of the topic revealed that employees have different preferences and

hope from the organization due to which, one common factor of employee engagement may not fit to all employees in an organization. The findings confirm the need for improvement in the Human resource management practices for increasing the level of employee engagement. The study successfully provides a theoretical foundation that explains about significant drivers of employee engagement and its impact on organizational citizenship behavior.(Podsakoff, N. P., Whiting, S. W., Podsakoff, P. M., & Blume, B. D. (2009).

5. Future Implications: Employee engagement is of paramount significance for organizations in today's competitive environment .For survival high performing workforce is critical. Engaged workforce can expand the profitability and increase the commitment level among employees. An association of Employee Engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behavior can be more relevant if more research studies are undertaken and implemented in the organization to achieve their goals.

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