

Employee Engagement - Revisited

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ABSTRACT--- *Engaging employees has always been a startling challenge for any organisation. Despite gaining great significance, there prevails certain paucity on the academic literature front on employee engagement and more so an equal measure of perplexity in implementation of the concept of employee engagement in organisations. Still we find on at regular intervals, various definitions being formulated and getting circulated and also the process of engaging employees being practised and measured in organisations in different indigenous ways.*

Engaging Employees as a concept has been gaining prominence in the recent past as many organisations believe the process of engaging employees is a vital step to attain competitive advantage in their respective industry And in furtherance to this many research bodies have found in their studies that corporate outcomes validate strong linkage between performance of organisation and employee engagement

For Instance, Research by Gallup Organization revealed that organisations that are highly committed to engaging employees are highly productive by 18% and highly profitable by 12% than other organisations in the industry.

Further, the studies also point out that employee engagement as such on its definition and implementation, there exists a wide range of vagueness. Moreover, there also exists a gap between the literature available about the employee engagement and its implementation of the same in the organisation. This apparently proves that the concept of employee engagement is still at its early stages and need further exploration.

The primary focus of this review paper is to highlight the need to enhance the existing knowledge on Employee Engagement by critically evaluating the prevailing literature on engaging employees and reporting the concerns regarding the shortfalls of what employee engagement actually needs to be effectively implemented.

To start with, this review paper is based on observations from few articles that is being reviewed by other researchers, working papers, textbooks, and other published resources relevant to the concept of engaging employees from its etymology to its existing form. It is also based on articles sourced from on-line journal databases such as Research gate, Emerald Full text and Shoudhganga etc.

This review paper also aims to identify and highlight the gaps in recognising influencers of Employee engagement. As it was observed there were ambiguity in identifying influencers and also that not much importance has been given to few influencers of employee engagement, such as organisational image, management and meaningfulness in job allocated to the employees. Also there is a need for future researches on few external factors having much indirect impact on the engagement level of the employees.

Hence considering all of the above, following set of questions are being taken up for discussion in this review paper

1. How did the concept of engaging employees come into existence?

1.a. How was the definition derived?

1.b How was it implemented in phases ?

1.c What are the influencers of employee engagement?

2. How does the factor management aid to the concept of engaging employees?

3. How does the factor organisation image aid to the concept of engaging employees?

4. How does the factor meaningfulness in job aid to the concept of engaging employees?

KEYWORDS: *Employee Engagement, Influencers of Employee Engagement, Management, Organisation image, Meaningfulness in job*

I. INTRODUCTION

Part 1A: Deriving the term Employee Engagement

The term Employee engagement has taken its place in the academic world in 1990 primarily due to William Kahn (1990). He derived it from the work of Goffman (1961) in which Goffman had observed about “people’s attachment and detachment to their role varies”. William Kahn (1990) provided a so called definition of employee engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. The findings of Kahn was acknowledged and taken forward by J.A. Lepine, B.L.Rich, and E.R. Crawford(2010) stating a definition for employee engagement like ” EE is defined as concurrent contributions of physical, cognitive and emotional energies into their work roles”. Furthermore, Stanley, T (2016) defined employee engagement in lines of William Kahn, as “the multiple emotional, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of an employee’s consistent level of effort, commitment and connection to their job”.

From the above mentioned three authors, a specific mention is done on the (i) physical aspect of the engagement level, where employees physical strength and energies are considered for their engagement level, physical strength to accomplish their tasks and feel motivated among themselves.(ii) Cognitive aspect of the engagement level, where employees by their reasoning ability find out especially the external factors influencing them to stay connected with the organisation. (iii) Finally the emotional aspect, where every human tends to bind themselves to, especially within self, whether right or wrong, positive or negative and that leading to the attachment to the work they have been assigned to.

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The presence of numerous meanings, description and definitions varies the knowledge of employee engagement, as it has been considered under diverse situations and industries. As rightly said by Ferguson (2007), except that we have a proper structure in defining the term employee engagement, it will be very difficult in managing and implementing the same and thereby finding areas for improvement. This highlights the hitches of relevancy caused by numerous definitions for the term engaging employees. As an outcome, as the old saying goes, "old wine in a new bottle" the concept engaging employees has the advent of being considered a new trend at present.

Part 1B: Phases in implementation of the term Employee Engagement

The implementation of the idea of engaging employees rolled on when Ulrich (1997) detailed that "the contribution of employees are more critical as with less employee input, more output is produced by the business. Hence there is no choice for the business except to engage the employees, especially, mind and soul of the employees." Baumruk (2004) mentioned the employee engagement as the most powerful and dominant tool to quantify the organisational performance. As per Fleming and Asplund (2007) from Gallup, the concept of engaging employees functions as "the ability to capture the heads, hearts, and souls of your employees to instil an intrinsic desire and passion for excellence". Macey W. H, Schneider B, Barbera K. M & S. A Young (2009) has outlined a process design for Engagement that starts from "the procedure of inducting an employee in an organisation and then following with relevant learning and development prospects to do the work task as well as receiving a support design from the leadership hierarchy". Furthermore, a different perspective was given to the term employee engagement by Shuck B (2011) that "Employee Engagement can also be viewed as antonym of the concept burnout, as an additional concept of work satisfaction; or in a multi-dimensional framework in terms of the locus of engagement" Robertson, I. and Cooper, C. (2011) derives the need to interpret what exactly drives the concept of engaging employees gaining attention to many organisations as they target to achieve an edge over other organisations on their competitive advantage. Hence as stated by Rothmann, S., Mongena Lodge, Pretoria(2011), the area engaging employees has become more significant and relevant among the researchers and practitioners. Albrecht S.L, Bakker A.B, Gruman J.A, Macey W.H and Saks A.M(2015) had found a new scenario where HRM practitioners are supposed to break the monotonous and routine administration of surveys on engagement levels and should equip themselves to embed the concept of engagement in policies and practices of HRM which includes recruitment, socialization, performance appraisal and learning and development. According to the report by Bersin from Deloitte(2016) business leaders are having in their minds how to effectively engage employees and thereby deriving a new model of management. Finally, to avoid a cliché confusion between engagement and satisfaction, Dr Richa N Agarwal(2017) clarified that "Engaging employees is not the same as satisfying employees; it can never be achieved by a mechanical

approach by trying to pull out discretionary effort by employing employees' commitment and emotions"

Part 1C: Influencers of Employee Engagement

According to Robinson D, Perryman S, S Hayday (2004), crucial conducts associated with employee engagement are having trust in the organisation, wish to perform the job and provide a clarity of what and how the business expects, being supportive towards team, readiness to do little more contribution by going an extra mile in updating with the recent developments. Emphasizing on the above mentioned influencers, Shuck B, Rocco T.S and Albornoz C.A(2011) stated that employees who are functioning in a collective and encouraging working environment will tend to have an increase in employee engagement. Swati, Archana (2019) shared that "Engaging employees is a motivational process, which ensures the real investment of employee's energies which influences an employee's work role performance.". Further, stated that "Employee engagement is one of the means to encourage better performance in various roles of employees in the organization". This paper tosses illumination on the few influencers of employee engagement such as organisational image, management and meaningfulness in job allocated to the employees.

II. MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & RESULTS

In this section, we try to focus on understanding to what extent the factor - management may be connected to engagement level by examining literature from the past. Following are the indication in the literature to substantiate the notion that management plays a noteworthy role in achieving the high levels of engagement among the employees. Moreover, Macey WH, Schneider B (2008) has claimed that "the environment of an organization's governance and board can have an indirect effect on engagement activities demonstrated by employees". There lies a constructive correlation among the organisation brand and engagement level of employees. It is considered that the certain and positive way the employees ponder about the organisation, the belongingness feel towards the organisation and willingness to attain the goals assigned for clients, peer group and other stakeholders will enhance the engagement level of the employees. Cook (2012). As per Deloitte report (2013), "Approximately 6 in 10 employees (62 percent) who plan to remain with their present employees reported high-level of trust on their corporate leadership, whilst 27% of employees who plan to quit express that same trust. In supplement, 26% of those who plan to quit their jobs in the following year quoted paucity of trust in leadership as crucial factor." Karanika-Murray et al., (2015), shared that as soon as the employees recognise and observe a connection in the organization, they feel appreciative to capitalise their full energies in their work roles and thereby sense more engaged leading to high level of job satisfaction.

III. ORGANISATIONAL IMAGE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Ashforth B.E and Mael F.A (1989), has identified a new component named organisation image and found its link towards engagement of employees. He states like the organisational image fundamentally provides to their innate prerequisite of associating themselves to a part of significant things, pride and the glory attached to the organisation. It is demonstrated by Dutton J.E, Dukerich J.M and Harquail C.V (1994) that “the organizational image has been an important attribute for any organization to facilitate the employee’s identification with the values, beliefs and assumption of the organization, which in turn leads to better organizational performance” Trepte, Sabine (2006) said that if the employees feel the togetherness and sense of pride and belongingness with their present organisation, thereby resulting in high levels of engagement and responsibility towards their task. According to the reports of Tower Watson (2012) “being employed in a firm having a good name and renowned repute is indicative of stability and security to the employees. Especially in the present times, this reinstates the feeling of personal pride, which directly leads to the development of the emotional connect, which is also an integral segment of traditional engagement”. It also quotes that engagement level of the employees can be sustained by the ranking of the organisation’s image. Dmitry Kucherov, Elena Zavyalova, (2012) has taken into account of an empirical study that was conducted for 113 companies among various industries and found out that organisations with well known for their brand names had employees who were vigorously engaged in performing the tasks, in taking decisions and the management process. However, Zhu, J., Tatachari, S. and Chattopadhyay, P. (2017) concluded that by understanding the pattern of how the employees perceive about the image of the organisation and their contribution in enhancing the holistic image of the organisation. Swati Dhir, Archana Shukla, (2019) notifies that organizations require rigorous effort on their image or brand name in order to attract, engage and retain the right talent for an extended time.

IV. MEANINGFULNESS IN JOB AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Nancy R. Lockwood (2007) the link amid an employee’s job and organizational strategy, including understanding how significant the work is to the organisation’s success, is the most central driver of employee engagement. Crawford ER, LePine JA, Rich BL (2010) when engagement level has been linked at job and task of an individual, there is an apparent indication that it leads to positive outcomes like job performance and thereby achieving the organisation performance. Adding to the finding of above mentioned authors, Chaurasia, S. and Shukla, A (2014) detailed that engagement has a strong stimulus on employees effectiveness in their job description allocated to them, having a solid reflection on their performance in the respective tasks. Jena, L. K., & Pradhan, S. (2017) discussed that experts worldwide have to look into the importance of engagement as it has resulted in established belief that meaningfulness in each individual’s job attaches employees

to their organisation by nurturing a sense of ownership and loyalty. Megan Edwards IES (2018) concludes that “there is robust evidence of the positive contribution a well- designed and enriched job has on engagement”.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This Paper thus emphasises the need for further systematic study in the realm of employee engagement and should be effectively implemented in the enterprises’ context which will lead to sustained workforce in an enterprise. For better prospects, Employee engagement should be promoted at all three levels of management.

Based on the above discussion the following recommendations can be arrived at :

Firstly, there is an impending need to engage employees as there is growing disengaged employees in the recent past.

Secondly, though a lot of commendable work has been done in the theoretical and conceptual area it is imperative to illuminate the enterprises on the practical dynamics of implementing employee engagement. Viz.,

- Practical approach and benefits in implementing employee engagement
- Identifying and measuring Factors / drivers of employee engagement
- Lastly, to arrive upon a workable model that blends the theoretical as well as the practical implications of employee engagement.

Thus, it is suggested that there is the need to amplify and analyse the concept of employee engagement and consequently strive towards promoting it for the welfare of the employee, enterprise and for the economy at large but in a more practical way perhaps.

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