
Factors Affecting Employee Engagement: a Brief Review of literature

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Abstract- *Employee engagement has remained a highlighting term in the field of HRM. Started its journey in early 1990 it attracted a large attention in last ten years. As the scenario of human relations is continuously changing, the view of considering employee engagement also get changed from merely caring of employees to effective caring. The purpose of this study is to highlight the factors (personal & organizational) responsible for employee engagement. This study is primarily based on secondary data. Research articles were collected from ebscohost using keywords: employee engagement, factors affecting employee engagement and employee engagement and human resource development. This paper highlights the individual and organizational factors affecting employee engagement.*

Keywords- *Employee engagement, factors affecting employee engagement, human resource development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has remained a major concept in human resource development studies whether it is related to OCBs, Task performance and Organizational climate. Several researches proved that engaged employees tend to be very effective than the employees who are not. Researchers said that if we want to solve the problem then we have to identify the cause. It is often called as cause and effect relationship. Employee engagement is also not different from this. There are some factors which are responsible for its quality. It is easier in small organizations to work on individual employee engagement level but in large organizations with different departments it is quite a challenging task. However nowadays organizations are seeking to maintain a good engagement level. As the organizations work to make their employees engaged, individual factors also found to be responsible for their own engagement. In 2014 Chaudhary et. al. studied personal factors like psychological climate, occupational self-efficacy and organizational factors like HRD climate quality and Strength in order to predict their relative impact on work engagement in Indian context. Wollard and Shuck (2011) studied 42 individual and organizational antecedents of employee engagement. They suggested that individual constructs, strategies and conditions applied directly to or by the individual employees are of primary concern. Adding to this we try to highlight more factors responsible to affect the engagement level of employees which are already studied.

II. METHOD

As the main emphasize of this study is to highlight the factors responsible/affecting the employee engagement, keywords to search full text articles were like factors affecting employee engagement, employee engagement factors, employee engagement and personal factors, employee engagement and organizational factors.

III. BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kahn (1990) explained three psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety & availability) of engagement and disengagement. The first condition, psychological meaningfulness of work consisted of task characteristics, role characteristics and work interactions. The second condition, psychological safety consisted of interpersonal relationships, group & intergroup dynamics, management style & processes and organizational norms. And the third condition, psychological availability consisted of physical energy, emotional energy, insecurity and outside life. From 1990 to 2016, especially in last ten years there has been a lot of researches done on these factors both empirically and conceptually. Here we try to highlight those factors under individual/personal and organizational subheadings.

A. Individual/Personal Factors

Kahn in 1990 stated that employee engagement is the strap up of an employee's complete self in terms of physical, cognitive, and emotional energies to work role performances (Rich et. al., 2010). Schaufeli et. al. (2010) considered it as a positive psych towards the work which is characterized by Vigor, Dedication and Absorption.

As stated earlier individual factors responsible for employee engagement primarily accessed by individuals themselves. Several factors have been found to be studied for this. Core Self Evaluation as examined by Lee & Ok (2015) was found to be positively correlated with employee engagement. Karatepe & Aga (2012) did study on frontline employees and stated that personality does matter for the engagement of employees. Conscientiousness and extraversion (Handa & Gulati, 2014), Industriousness and assertiveness (Woods & Sofat, 2013) are positively related with employee engagement and neuroticism was found to be negatively correlated when extraversion and conscientiousness traits have been controlled (ibid). Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Openness to experience is positively and Neuroticism was found to be negatively correlated as examined by Zaidi et. al. (2013) & Ongore (2014). Ongore (2014) suggested that big five personality traits are very important to predict the level of employee engagement. However Inceoglu & Warr (2012) studied that only emotional stability and conscientiousness are the two traits responsible for engagement. Vriga et. al. (2015) proposed that high level of work life imbalance lower the work engagement. They further examined that two personal resources i.e. self efficacy and trait extraversion affect the level of engagement. Person who are extroverted and having high organizational based self esteem possess higher level of engagement even when they face high level work life imbalance. Employees who have greater self efficacy are more engaged when they have low work life imbalance i.e. when the job demand is low and the employees who have low self efficacy are less engaged even when the work life imbalance is low.

Psychological Capital was also found to be positively correlated and the most important factor in this line (Paek et. al., 2015; Chaurasia & Shukla, 2014). Leroy et. al. (2013) followed self-determination theory and examined that meditation practice does not impact on work engagement during or after the training. However mindfulness strengthened the work engagement personal resources (ibid). Person Job Fit (Chen et. al. 2014) is also positively correlated with employee engagement with the mediating effect on individual and collaborative job crafting. Individual job crafting was found to be more preferable. High task proficiency is not significantly correlated with work engagement however when there is low task proficiency the high commitment human resource management does have an impact (Boon & Kalshoven, 2014).

Activeness is a trait of conscientiousness. If a person is conscientious then his engagement is fully assured. High conscientiousness result into effective engagement (Bakker et. al., 2012). The person having high self esteem, moderately high task efficacy tend to have “*I can do*” attitude and it will result into high level of engagement in comparison to the people having low level of core self evaluation. This finding also support that person having higher self efficacy, optimism and high self esteem have higher degree of engagement and are far better in utilizing their work related resources. Employees can assign meaning to their tasks and can make it more interesting. This term is known as job crafting as described by Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001). As discussed by Baker (2011) job crafting increases the person-job fit.

Work engagement is not same as job satisfaction in sense that engagement carries greater pleasure and dedication with high activation (vigor, absorption) but job satisfaction is more passive form of employee well-being (ibid). It has been also discussed by Xanthopoulou et. al. (2009) that, it is possible for a person that his/her engagement level can vary according to how good or bad the day was spent. It is also possible that they cannot always be engaged. They need recovery for opportunities and breaks. Career anchors as described by Coetzee et. al. (2014) is the moderator of work engagement and satisfaction. If we see that engagement level can get affected by gender then it is not correct. Women are not more or less engaged than men. In fact they show higher satisfaction if their jobs are designed around them and bosses take care of their essential needs like childcare facility as David Curtis, director of recruitment for women in workplace consultancy said. Eye to Eye Contact from leader and member perspective is also accountable of work engagement (Matta et. al., 2015). Park and Gursoy (2012) explored that mental existence and importance of work may affect employees work related experiences when a group of employees share work-related values. Work values may play a guiding role to the employee to determine the perception towards varying job resources. Hence depends on employee’s psychological position that job resources and circumstances can have influence on work engagement or not. And the levels to which persons imbibe themselves into their work role vary among person to person Kahn (1990).

Other factors like generation effect (Park & Gursoy, 2012) and age (Zaniboni et. al., 2016) also have an indirect impact on engagement contrary to the findings of Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Vriga et.al. (2015) who studied age having low impact on engagement. Zaniboni et. al. (2016) found that aged people are more concerned about positive emotions gathering social experiences. And young employees are more anxious about job related knowledge. This also suggests that there is no significant difference related to age. Employee’s age does not matter for disengagement but the employee’s psychological state related factor matters more. Different age groups engaged in their work role as per their requirements i.e. what they can acquire by doing their work.

B. Organizational Factors

Organizations often make their employees aware of resources they are providing to them. Shantz & Alfes (2016) found that if an employee is not well aware of the resources the utilization can be diminishes. Neill et. al. (2015) explored that the internal communication channel which is more responsible for the sense of engagement in employees is face to face communication and e-mail (i.e. sharing information). Findings also emphasized internal communication and culture as an arbiter of employee engagement. Based on the study on Brazilian non-profit organization, Oliveira et. al. (2015) studied that high performance work systems has a positive impact on the level of employee engagement. Truss et. al. (2012) explored in their research that organizational practices are partially responsible but it is more depend on employee’s perception that he/she could be engaged or not. PR Story Telling significantly increases the engagement level (Gill, 2015). Organizational support plays a vital

role in employee engagement level. Biswas et. al. (2013) examined that perceived organizational support play as a high impacting mediator in between distributive and procedural justice and employee engagement. He et. al. (2014) identified indirect effect of procedural justice on engagement through organizational identification. They also found that moral identity centrality has a greater impact when procedural justice is lower and vice versa. Empowerment as studied by Lee & Ok (2015) also plays a significant role in employee engagement. The employees who are empowered are more engaged than who are not.

Employee engagement is not a task of Human resource manager only but for all senior and superior to engage their subordinates. Immediate senior or any senior has an important role in engagement of his/her subordinates. Lee & Ok; Oliveira et. al. (2015) also supported that leader-member exchange quality influence employee engagement. His leadership and mentoring style can change the perception of employees toward their work. The dedication and vigor as examined by Cenkci & Ozcelik (2015) are optimistically associated with benevolent leadership. Including this they also studied that subordinate perceptions of leadership style can be changed according to the culture context. It can be possible that the one leadership style which is accepted in west cannot be accepted in east. Effective leadership can show the way towards structured explicit work settings which can trim down the vagueness in tasks felt by employees. In this study it is also explained that subordinate's engagement is moderately get controlled by both leadership styles i.e. authoritarian and benevolent. Moderating influence of gender has also been marked. When female leaders show greater control then authoritarian style shows negative impact because it has been perceived that female posses soft and caring nature. These researches suggested that to be more effective lady supervisors are likely to have benevolent leadership style. It has been proved that subordinates performance reduces when their female supervisors are less benevolent (ibid).

As Clark & Mills (1979, 2012) researched about interpersonal relationships and found that, for a long term engagement, support of other employees is necessary. Their relationships play a vital role here and are highly related to the level of engagement (Karatepe et. al., 2010). It has also been found by them that core self evaluation also get stimulated by coworker's support. Various dimensions like loyalty, trust, positive regard are essential to make a worthy relationship. They are responsible for the quality of relationships. It can bend any relation in highly positive to negative one. Some relationships build on reciprocation. They are called instrumental relationships. They have lesser regard than the friendship relation which builds upon trust and loyalty. It is different when it comes to senior-subordinate's relationships. Christine L. Smith (2014) studied that employee engagement loads higher weightage on the leader follower relationship's quality rather than how much a leader supports his subordinates. It can be distinguish because the leader support is considered as an instrumental perspective which considered as lower quality relationships but leader relationship quality has intrinsic perspective. Employees should have proper balance between these relationships. As Song et. al. (2012) proposed work engagement can be enhanced by trustful relationships. This also signifies that whether an employee is engaged or not can also depend on the relationships he/she has with his/her seniors and coworkers. It has also been suggested that coworker relationships are important, not only for their support value, but more importantly because of their ability to foster employees' experiences of meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability, which are considered essential antecedents to engagement (Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2014).

C. LIMITATIONS

As the searching of articles was limited to full text only, might missed some academic articles which were not accessible.

D. SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research can be done to predict that is it individual factor or the organizational factor which matters more?

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