

How to Cite:

Rai, M., & Yadav, I. (2022). Redefining employee engagement and its significance. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S1), 12166–12176. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS1.8043>

Redefining employee engagement and its significance

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Abstract---Employees in today's firms want to work in an atmosphere where they can give their all and be there for each other when things go tough. Organizations struggle to successfully manage personnel and turn workers into engaged colleagues prepared to go the additional mile in their pursuit of organisational excellence and value maximisation. This article discusses the topic of employee job engagement as well as its relevance in today's workplace. It discusses its history, definitions, theoretical frameworks, employee categorization based on participation, then lastly the study's reason and relevance. Work engagement is a complex construct whose dynamics have been studied from numerous angles. To get a clear knowledge of the architecture from a holistic standpoint. The classic and recent research studies elucidating many characteristics on work engagement have been thoroughly studied, with the hypothesis employed acknowledged.

Keywords---Employee Engagement, life work balance, Hypothesis tests.

Introduction

According to Schaufeli (2013), "it is not clear when the term engagement was used in relation to work, however Gallup organization is credited for having coined the term somewhere in the 1990s. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) in their bestselling book titled, *First Break All The Rules*, published the results of Gallup organization's research of strong work places. Employees perception of such workplaces was assessed with a set of 12 questions which later became known as Q12, Gallup's engagement questionnaire. Around the turn of the century, many

other consulting firms followed suit with their measures and reports on employee work engagement. In fact the first scholarly article on engagement was published by Kahn in the year 1990 in *Academy of Management Journal* and it took ten years for others to pick up the topic. However, during the period 2000-2010 the number of publications on this topic grew sharply. The basic reason behind a sudden rise of interest in this topic can be understood in terms of some developments in the broader industrial scenario marked by globalization wherein employees were required to manage continuous change, work in diverse teams, craft their jobs and operate in a boundary less manner. Thus the human capital and contribution became more important in the changed scenario. The surge in interest of academicians on the subject of work engagement can also be attributed to the positive psychology movement, rekindled by Martin E. P. Seligman, President of American Psychological Association. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) positive psychology refers to the scientific study of optimal human functioning aimed at promoting factors that enhance the development of individuals, organizations and communities leading to overall happiness. Hence, under this movement research studies are aimed at studying the state of well being and its enhancement as against states like stress, burnout and the like. Work engagement clearly fits well into this novel approach. Hence, the topic blossomed in academic circles. Thus, the growing body of research on work engagement can be attributed to the increase in importance of human capital requiring psychological involvement of employees and the positive psychology movement. Kahn (1990) used the term personal engagement and defined it as the degree to which organizational members' harness themselves to their work roles expressing physically, mentally, cognitively and emotionally during the performance of their roles. According to Maslach and Leiter (1997) engagement and burnout are the two end points of a single continuum. Engagement is the positive antithesis of burnout. It implies that those who are high on engagement shall be low on burnout. Schaufeli et al. (2002) stated that engagement and burnout are two separate concepts, negatively related to each other. They defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling work related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. According to the Gallup Organization researchers, engagement refers to an individual's involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work (Harter et al., 2002). Saks (2006) defined engagement as —a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance (p. 602). The common link between this definition and that of Kahn (1990) is that both focus on role performance at work. As an innovation, Saks (2006) categorized engagement into two types namely job engagement and organization engagement. Job engagement refers to performing the work role while organizational engagement relates to performing the role as a member of the organization. Engagement being such a vast and all-inclusive concept, the most sensitive question in defining it is, what to include in it and what not to include. Macey and Schneider (2008) proposed a synthesis of all aspects of engagement. Their conceptual framework includes trait engagement, state engagement and behavioral engagement. Consultancy firms conceptualized engagement by aggregating and relabeling existing notions, such as involvement, commitment, satisfaction, motivation and extra-role performance. For example, according to the consulting firm Mercer (2007), engagement is commitment 'or motivation' indicating a psychological state where employees feel a vested interest in the

company's success and perform above the stated requirements of the job. On the engagement continuum, they move from being satisfied, motivated, committed to becoming advocates of organizational ethos (www.rapidbi.com). Towers Watson research (2014) defined engagement in terms of three measurable elements namely employees 'willingness to expend discretionary effort on their job, availability of performance enabling factors like resources and supervisory support and work environment that gives energy for physical, emotional and interpersonal well-being. Another firm, Aon Hewitt (2015), in its survey on Global Employee Engagement Trends - 2015 defined engagement as the psychological state and behavioral outcomes that lead to better performance. They state that engaged employees constantly exhibit three general behaviors namely say, stay and strive. They speak positively about the organization, have a strong desire to be members of the organization despite having opportunities to work elsewhere and put in extra effort, time and initiative in their work. Collectively, these definitions of engagement by various consulting firms suggest that in business, engagement is defined as a mix of three existing concepts namely organizational commitment, job satisfaction and extra-role behavior i.e. initiative to go beyond the job description. To sum up, Shuck (2011) gave four approaches under which the various definitions of engagement in the academic circle were classified namely The Needs - Satisfying Approach, The Burnout antithesis approach, The Satisfaction-Engagement Approach, The Multi-dimensional approach. In conclusion, it can be said that the various definitions deal with the engagement as a means of satisfying certain needs, its antecedents or its various dimensions ranging from cognitive to behavioral". Nevertheless, the characterization of engagement as proposed in Schaufeli et al. (2002) is precise besides focuses on appointment as an experience, clearly distinguished afterward the factors leading in the direction of it or its outcomes.

Theoretical Frame Works

A number of theoretical frameworks of appointment have been proposed out of which four frameworks which remain widely quoted have been deliberated here.

The Needs-Satisfying Approach

As discussed in the definitions of "work engagement, Kahn (1990) gave this approach stating that engagement depends upon the fulfillment of three psychological conditions or needs. They are psychological meaningfulness, safety and availability. How meaningful one finds one 'swork depends on the job characteristics and the person – job fit. Psychological safety is determined by the social environment, management style and group dynamics. A non-threatening environment is best suited for engagement. Availability is governed by one's personal resources such as physical energy, mental resilience and emotional intelligence. As per this approach the strategies for enhancing employee work engagement include job enrichment, role fit coupled with an environment of mutual respect and trust generated through good interpersonal relations at work.

Job Demands and Resources Model (JD-RModel)

This model proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2008) assumes that work engagement is a function of job resources and personal resources. Job resources such as performance feedback and job control play a key role in accomplishing work goals and personal growth. Personal resources such as mental resilience are aspects of the self which help in controlling the work environment. According to this model, resources energize employees to make focused efforts. While at work one also faces certain job demands such as work over load, time pressure, red tapism which required physical and mental efforts on the parts of the employee. The impact of job demands on work engagement depends on the nature of demand. Hindering job demands such as role conflict reduce engagement while challenging job demands such as high responsibility enhances work engagement. When job demands are high, job resources and personal resources are instrumental in achieving the work goals.

The Affective Shift Model

Individual level of work engagement might vary throughout the day as one shifts from one task to the other facing various types of events at work (Sonnentag et al., 2010). This dynamic nature of work engagement is explained by the affective shift model (Bledlow et al., 2011). The model proposes that high work engagement results from the transition from negative to positive affect. Negative affect indicates that things are not going on well and motivates the person to take corrective action. It is this effort that creates a shift from negative to positive affect. Work engagement is most likely to occur when the down regulation of negative affect is accompanied by up regulation of positive effect, simultaneously.

Social Exchange Theory

This theory states that over a period of time, relationships evolve into trusting and loyal mutual commitments if both parties adhere to certain rules of exchange. For example when employees receive appropriate resources like decent salary and appreciation from the employer, they feel obliged to repay the organizations. According to Saks (2006) one form of repayment by employees is their higher level of job and organization engagement. This is also supported by Kahn (1990) who proposed that employees feel obliged to repay the organization by investing themselves fully into their work role performances. On the other hand, when the organization does not provide the required resources, employees psychologically withdraw themselves from work, thus disengaging themselves (Schaufeli, 2006).

Classification of Employees According to Engagement

Gallup (2006) proposed that on the basis of engagement level, employees could be categorized into three types namely, the engaged, not engaged and the actively disengaged". A brief description of the adverbs of every one alliance is arranged in Table1.

Table1
Levels of Engagement

Types of Employees according to Engagement Level
1.The Engaged: These personnel operate tremendous zeal as well as a strong feeling of belonging to their company.
2. Not – Engaged: Employees like them putting in the time but not the enthusiasm or love for their jobs. They are 'checked out' or'sleep walking' during their work day.

The actively disconnected grouping is of utmost concern to the employer product because “these staff members have a tendency of sharing their discontent with their coworkers and the wider world. According to a survey titled ‘The employee engagement equation in India’ conducted in partnership by two consulting firms Blessing White and HR Anexi (2008) employees can be categorized into five segments according to their work engagement levels which was considered to be a function of employee contribution and satisfaction. Table 1.3 gives a description of the characteristics of each segment along with the strategy proposed to enhance the level of employee work engagement.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The higher education system in India has grown remarkably, particularly in the post-independence era. At the time of independence in 1947, there were 19 universities and several hundred affiliated colleges (CABE, 2005). According to the Ministry of HRD website, in the year 2014 India had 48,828 higher education institutions consisting of 712 Universities, 36671 colleges and 11445 stand alone institutions. There are 12,09,211 teachers employed in universities and colleges. Such statistics make it one of the largest system of its kind in the world with huge potential for further development. It is targeted that by 2022, India will have 500 million skilled workers. There is an important requirement to train fresh graduates in new skills for ensuring their employability. In the period April 2000 to January 2015, the total amount of foreign direct investments (FDI) inflow into the education sector in India was US\$1,071.5 million, according to data released by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). The corporate sector has made major investments in the education and training sector. There are plans to set up 2500 multi-skilling institutions in public private partnership mode. By 2022, India will have to develop the skills of 120 million people in non-farm sectors. The highest requirement of skilled labour is expected to come from the construction sector (31 million), followed by retail (17 million) and logistics (12 million). The Government of India is opening of IITs and IIMs in new locations. With greater popularity of online mode of education adopted by several higher education institutions, this sector is all set for some major changes and developments in the coming years. Appropriate and timely steps in this direction will enable India to take true advantage of its demographic dividend.

According to a report titled, *Understanding India - The Future of Higher Education and Opportunities for International Cooperation* published by the British Council in 2014, despite of significant progress over the last ten years, the system is facing certain challenges:

The demand-supply gap: The rate of enrolment in higher education in India at 21.1% is lower than the global average of 26% and is again low as compared to China at 26% and Brazil at 36%. Thus there is a huge demand for higher education which is unmet at the moment. By 2030, The Government of India aims at increasing the gross enrolment to 30% which means that India requires a huge increase in the number of Higher Education Institutions.

Low quality of teaching and learning: Many of the educational institutions are suffering from a serious shortage of faculty, outdated curriculum, rigid pedagogy, poor quality teaching, separation of teaching and research, lack of quality assurance and poor accountability.

Research capacity constraints: India does not have enough high quality researchers, Ph.D enrolment is very low, opportunities for interdisciplinary research are limited and not properly utilized due to low industry engagement in higher education and on the whole a weak ecosystem for innovation.

Uneven growth and access to opportunity: The access to education is not equitable across the social strata and geographic divisions. Hence the human resource development is quite uneven.

Studies on Factors Affecting Work Engagement

Kahn (1990) did a pioneering qualitative study on personal engagement. He interviewed summer camp counselors and members of an architecture firm in order to enquire about their moments of engagement and disengagement at work. He found that these experiences are associated with three psychological conditions namely meaningfulness, safety and availability. Psychological meaningfulness is determined by characteristics of the task, role and interactions at work. People consider work to be meaningful when they feel that their tasks are worthwhile and making a difference in the lives of others. Work that is challenging, clearly outlined, varied, creative and somewhat autonomous is perceived to be meaningful. Meaningfulness is also determined by people's liking or disliking for the role identities that they are required to assume. There is more liking for roles which made people feel important about their status in the organization and their influence on the external world. Psychological meaningfulness is experienced when there are gratifying interpersonal interactions with co-workers and clients during task performance. Such interactions boost self-respect, self-appreciation and a sense of being valuable. According to Kahn (1990), the second determinant of personal engagement namely, psychological safety is linked with non threatening and predictable social situations. It is experienced when people could engage themselves in work freely, without fear of negative results to selfimage, career or status. Psychological safety was indicated by interpersonal relationships depict in openness, flexibility, trust, support and lack of threat. The third determinant of personal engagement, namely, psychological availability is associated with the sense of possession of the physical, psychological and emotional resources necessary for role performance. Thus, Kahn (1990) delved deep into the factors affecting personal engagement and

was successful in identifying the same. Kahn's (1990) model was empirically tested by May et al. (2004) who substantiated the findings that psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability are significantly related to engagement. They found that job enrichment and role fit are positive predictors of psychological meaningfulness. Gratifying co-worker relations coupled with supportive supervisor relations positively predict psychological safety. Adherence to co-worker norms and self-consciousness negatively predict psychological safety. Availability of resources positively predicts psychological availability. Participation in outside activities negatively predict psychological availability. As per the school of thought propounded by Maslach et al. (2001) job engagement was described as the positive antithesis of burnout. According to them, engagement is determined by six aspects of work-life namely, rewards and recognition, workload, community and social support, degree of control, perceived fairness and values. Job engagement is positively associated with work that is both meaningful as well as valued, workload that is sustainable, sense of choice and control overwork, suitable recognition and rewards, a helpful work community and a sense of fairness". According to Saks (2006), Kahn's (1990) and Maslach et al.(2001) .'s models describe the factors that lead toward involvement, but they don't completely explain why people respond to such situations in different ways. In the Social Exchange Theory (SET) established in Cropanzano and Mitchell, he discovered a stronger underlying premise for understanding employee job engagement (2005). "According to this theory when there is an interaction between two or more mutually dependent parties, mutual obligations are generated. Over a period of time, mutual commitments are developed, if they abide by certain rules of exchange. For example, when organization gives economic and socio-emotional resources like pay and recognition to the individuals, employees feel obliged to payback to the organization through their level of engagement (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In consonance with Social Exchange Theory, Robinson et al. (2004) also described engagement as a two-way relationship between the employer and employee. Various studies have shown that interaction between job demands, job resources and personal resources plays a critical role in determining work engagement. From the point of view of framing human resource management policies, it could be meaningful to conduct engagement studies on individuals from various professions in order to address specific needs of a profession As reported by several authors, employees try to shape their jobs, making physical or cognitive changes in order to establish a better person-job fit and this process is termed as job crafting (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Grant and Ashford, 2008; Parker & Ohly, 2008; Tims & Bakker, 2010; Tims et al., 2012). Although a few studies (e.g. Chan, 2013) investigated the relationship between work engagement and job crafting, further studies in this area may answer the question whether engaged employees really create virtuous cycles. It is more likely that work engagement will be sustainable when employee well being is also high (Robertson and Cooper, 2010). Further research exploring the links between work engagement and well being is required. Work-life balance is a significant indicator of employee well being. Since, work engagement is known to cross over from work to family setting (Montgomery et al., 2003; Bakker et al., 2003; Bakker et al., 2014), it is vital to examine the relationship between work engagement and work life balance. Although work engagement is a virtuous concept, over indulgence in work might lead to some negative consequences for the engaged employees (Geurts and Demerouti, 2003 and Bakker et al., 2004). They may also fall in the over

engagement trap' (Pines et al., 1981) and eventually face situations of stress or even burnout. Hence, research studies are required to examine the relationship between work engagement and work stress. In the corporate world managers continually look for ways to enhance employee performance and retention. In this context, employee commitment to organizations and its relationship with work engagement has become the subject of research interest. Extant research proved that work engagement plays a mediating role in the relationship between job resources and organizational commitment (Hakanen et. al, 2006). Further research to investigate the relationship between employee work engagement and organizational commitment could be instrumental in development of HR policies on a sound theoretical base. Paying attention to the geographical spread of work engagement studies, it is note worthy that very few studies have been conducted in India. There is a requirement to conduct such studies in India in order to map the perception of Indian population in the light of its culture and value system. The review of literature revealed the need to conduct a comprehensive study of work engagement of faculty members in the higher education sector, as very few such studies existed. One of the less researched areas was an exploration of the factors affecting work engagement of faculty members particularly in the Indian higher education sector, having its unique size and challenges. Very few studies explored the relationship of work engagement with phenomena like job crafting, work life balance, organizational commitment and work stress. Hence, it was found to be a subject of research gap and interest. Based on these, measures for enhancement of work engagement were sought to be identified. Hence, according to these research gaps, the study objectives and hypotheses were framed.

Research Study with Gaps

The present study attempts to address some of the research gaps through its objectives:

- a) To measure the level of work engagement amongst the employees (faculty members) working in organizations under the study.
- b) To study the relationship (if any) between the level of work engagement and personal variables.
- c) To identify factors affecting the level of work engagement amongst employees (faculty members).
- d) To identify the measures required for enhancement of work engagement amongst the employees (faculty members).
- e) To study the relationship (if any) between the level of work engagement amongst employees (faculty members) and
 - ❖ Job crafting initiatives
 - ❖ work-life balance
 - ❖ level of work stress
 - ❖ level of organization commitment

Hypotheses Used for Evaluation

Hypothesis is an unproven statement or proposition about a factor or phenomenon (Malhotra and Dash, 2011)". In the context of the study objectives, the following null hypotheses were framed:

H₀₍₁₎: Cultutre of Work does notdiffer across the type of institution.

- H₀₍₂₎:** Culture of Work does not differ across faculty work areas.
- H₀₍₃₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with posting.
- H₀₍₄₎:** Culture of Work does not differ across districts.
- H₀₍₅₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with designation.
- H₀₍₆₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with total experience.
- H₀₍₇₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with experience in current organization.
- H₀₍₈₎:** Culture of Work does not differ across age groups.
- H₀₍₉₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with gender.
- H₀₍₁₀₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with educational background.
- H₀₍₁₁₎:** Culture of Work does not vary with salary.
- H₀₍₁₂₎ :** There is no important connection among job crafting and work engagement.
- H₀₍₁₃₎:** There is no important connection among work life balance and work engagement.
- H₀₍₁₄₎:** There is no important connection among work stress and work engagement.
- H₀₍₁₅₎:** There is no important connection among organizational commitment and work engagement.

Conclusion

The notion of employee job engagement and its importance in today's workplace. Boundary-less firms must leverage just on power of work-engaged workers in the context of globalisation. Work engagement was shown to have a substantial link between staff retention, customer happiness, productivity, and profitability, although established categories like job satisfaction did not have comparable associations. The present study's reasoning was stated in light of the issues that the Indian higher education sector faces. Given the issues of below expected quality of teaching and learning, a lack of quality assurance, and insufficient accountability of teaching staff in higher education institutions, it was judged important research research the state of job engagement among faculty members, explore the elements that influence it, & suggest strategies to improve it. The papers were separated into five categories: study on work engagement as just a distinct concept, studies involving work engagement measurement, studies on variables impacting work engagement, and studies on factors affecting work engagement; studies on the relationship between work engagement and job crafting, organisational commitment, work-life balance, and work stress; as well as studies on the relationship between engagement and performance. Engagement is a creative and distinctive notion that has been acknowledged in both management and academic literature and is unlikely to also be dismissed as a fad, according to the review. Job satisfaction, commitment, job participation, work holism, and work-related flow were all differentiated from engagement. The measures for assessing employee job satisfaction were investigated. Gallup Workplace Audit or Q12, Maslach Burnout Inventory, Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale were determined to be the most often mentioned instruments. Several research on the elements that influence job engagement were examined. Work engagement is predicted by variables such as job qualities, personal resources, interpersonal relationships, and organisational support, according to a comparative study. The investigations went into great depth about the qualitative features of each of these variables. Work involvement, as a multifaceted notion, has been linked to numerous behavioural phenomena. Several studies have shown a link between job crafting

and work engagement, implying that people who take proactive steps to improve their person-job fit are more engaged at work. A few research looked at the link between work-life balance and job satisfaction. Employees who transfer good thoughts from work to home life and vice versa have greater levels of engagement, according to the study. A few research looked into the link between job satisfaction and organisational commitment. They discovered a strong link between the two. The association between job engagement and work stress has been shown to be inversely associated in studies. According to studies on the relationship between employee engagement and performance, engaged people outperform others in both in-role and extra-role performance. They are problem solvers with a creative flair, and they have the capacity to motivate and train their coworkers. The examination of literature highlighted the need for a thorough research of faculty members' job involvement in higher education, since there were few such studies inside the Indian setting. The variables impacting faculty members' job engagement were discovered to be a less investigated issue, especially in the Indian higher education system, which has its own set of problems. Work engagement and associated phenomena like as job crafting, work-life balance, organisational commitment, and work stress were discovered to become a study gap and area of interest. Measures to improve work engagement were identified based on these findings.

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