

Employee Engagement: A Vital Component for Enhancing Job Satisfaction in Modern Work Environment

Smitha B Research
Scholar

Shobharani H
Associate professor
Kuvempu University Kadur
smithab037@gmail.com

Abstract

The concept of employee engagement is gaining increasing importance among academics and professionals in India. While literature on employee engagement has expanded significantly over the past two decades, there remains a notable lack of research focused specifically on the Indian context. This study aims to examine the factors influencing employee engagement that contribute to job satisfaction. Organizations must recognize that engaged employees are vital for achieving sustainable success and gaining a competitive edge. Engaged employees experience a positive emotional state at work, reflecting high levels of job satisfaction, where disengaged employees feel disconnected – both rationally and emotionally. This disengagement often leads to job dissatisfaction, higher turnover rates, and increased absenteeism. Thus, this study posits that there is a positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction. It highlights the essential role of employee engagement in fostering job satisfaction, offering valuable insights for both academic and managerial perspectives. By understanding this relationship, organizations can implement strategies to enhance employee engagement, ultimately improving job satisfaction. The findings of this study specifically address the dynamics of this relationship within the Indian context.

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction*

Introduction

Employee engagement has emerged as a significant focus area in human resource management, increasingly highlighted in contemporary research. Engaged employees are vital to an organization's sustainable success, as organizations recognize that this state of engagement contributes to overall performance. The concept was first introduced by Khan (1990), who described engagement as the “harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work roles,” emphasizing the physical, Cognitive and emotional involvement of employees in their tasks. Frank and Taylor (2004) further defined employee engagement as the level of discretionary effort employees invest in their work. Organizations should prioritize fostering employee engagement over mere job satisfaction, as engaged individuals form deeper emotional and intellectual connections to the organization,

demonstrating greater passion for its goals and commitment to its values. This article will also discuss job satisfaction, which reflects an employee’s overall contentment with their work. Job satisfaction is influenced by the perceived balance between rewards received and those expected and affected by various factors. Including opportunities for growth, recognition, work environment, and supervisory support. The aim of this article is to review literature on employee engagement as a crucial driver of job satisfaction in today’s evolving workplaces.

Theoretical Background on Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) suggested that employees can be engaged in one dimension while being less engaged in another. However, greater engagement in both dimensions leads to higher overall employee engagement. Maslach and Leiter (1997) initially framed engagement as the antithesis of burnout, positing that individuals who are not experiencing job burnout are actively engaged in their roles. Building on Kahn’s framework, Luthans and Peterson (2002) provided a convergent theory for Gallup’s empirically derived concept of employee engagement. They emphasized that emotional engagement involves forming meaningful connections with others and feeling empathy toward them, while cognitive engagement pertains to a strong awareness of one’s mission and role in the workplace.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) defined engagement as a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. Vigor involves high energy levels and mental resilience at work, along with a willingness to invest effort and persist through challenges. Dedication is marked by feelings of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration. Pride and a sense of challenge. Absorption refers to being fully focused and happily immersed in one’s tasks, to the extent that time seems to fly by and it becomes difficult to disengage from work. Employee engagement serves as a valuable tool for organizations seeking a competitive edge. Baumruk (2005) noted that employees represent a unique asset that cannot be easily duplicated or imitated by competitors, making effective management and engagement essential. Additionally, Gallup (2003) identified three types of employees within organizations; engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged. Engaged employees’ work passionately and feel a deep connection to their company, driving innovation and propelling the organization forward. Not engaged employees go through the motions contributing time without energy or enthusiasm. In contrast, actively disengaged employees can be detrimental, as they not only underperform but also demotivate others within the organization.

Importance of Employee Engagement

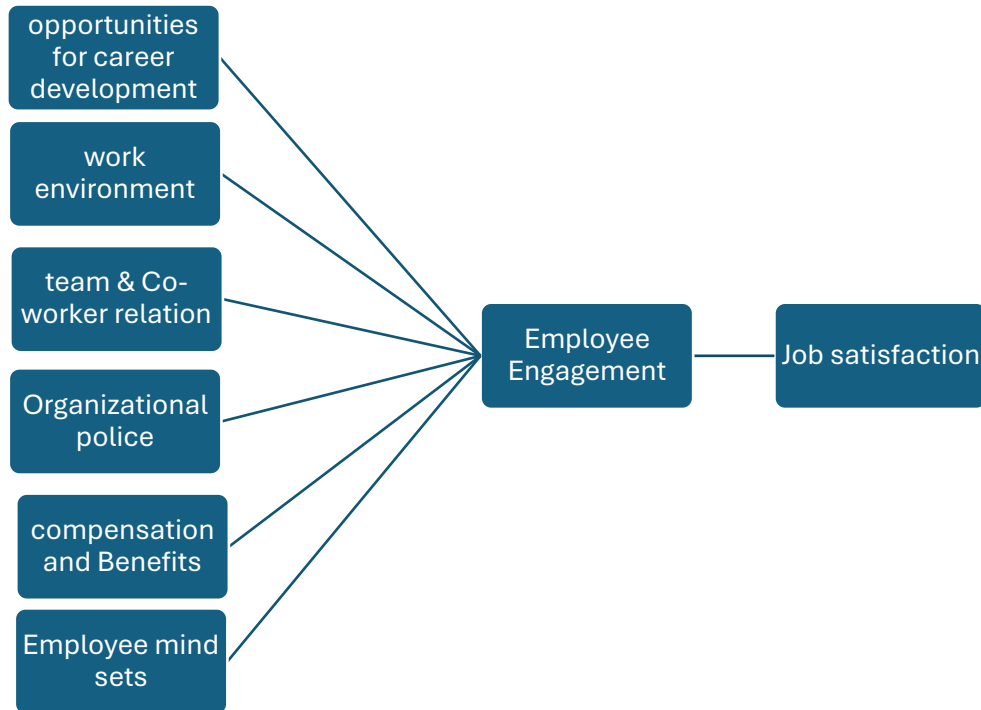
A highly engaged employee consistently exceeds expectations, benefiting both the organization and individual. Employee engagement significantly influences performance (Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees tend to work harder, demonstrate greater loyalty, and more inclined to go the extra mile for their organization (Lockwood, 2007, p.3). Research also indicates that employee engagement can be crucial for successfully implementing organizational change (Graen, 2008). An organization’s ability to foster employee engagement is closely linked to achieving high performance and superior business outcomes. The advantages of having engaged employees are numerous.

Organizations are increasingly recognizing that employee satisfaction does not always equate to loyalty and productivity. Instead of merely satisfied employees. Organizations should aim for engaged employees- those who are emotionally and intellectually connected to the organization, deeply passionate about its goals, and committed to its values. Engaged employees are willing to go the extra mile to achieve organizational objectives, providing the energy and drive that propel the business forward. Thus, fostering employee engagement is crucial in today’s competitive business landscape. It

is equally important for organizations to create a supportive atmosphere conducive to the success of engaged employees, as engagement thrives in a healthy work environment. Various factors influence employee engagement, making it essential to identify what contributes to overall satisfaction. Understanding these factors will offer valuable insights into employee preferences and highlight key areas for organizations to address as they develop and refine their initiatives for improvement.

Job satisfaction

In an early study, Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state arising from an evaluation of one's job or job experience. It has also been referred to as extrinsic satisfaction, social satisfaction, and intrinsic satisfaction (Schnake, 1983). As an attitudinal variable, job satisfaction encompasses both cognitive and affective responses related to individuals' workplace needs and requirements (Biswas & Varma, 2007) and can be viewed as a positive or negative evaluative judgment about one's job or job situation (Weiss, 2002). Judge, Heller and Mount (2002) explored the dispositional aspects of job satisfaction, finding significant correlations between job satisfaction and factors such as neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness within the five-factor model of personality (Szymanski, Marsland & Ulmer, 1999). Job satisfaction can be defined as the contentment an individual feels toward their job. Most researchers agree that organizations benefit when employees experience high levels of job satisfaction, as it is linked to increased productivity, creativity and commitment to the employer. Thus, fostering job satisfaction is a key goal for many organizations. This concept is closely associated with performance, organizational productivity, commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Employees may fluctuate between satisfaction and dissatisfaction in their roles. Satisfied employees are typically enthusiastic, willing to put in effort, focused on their work and committed to the organization. Conversely, dissatisfied employees are more likely to exhibit absenteeism and contribute to high turnover rates. This situation is detrimental to any organization, yet many fail to prioritize job satisfaction. In this context, studies have been conducted to explore the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction. This paper also examines how employee engagement serves as a crucial factor in fostering job satisfaction within the workplace.



Independent-variable

Dependent - variable

Source: (Author created)

Opportunities for career development: organizations must offer career development opportunities; otherwise, employees may feel stagnant and seek employment elsewhere (Ngoben & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Organizations with highly engaged employees actively provide ample chances for skill enhancement, ability development, knowledge acquisition, and goal attainment. Furthermore, these opportunities help retain talented individuals and foster personal growth within the organization Chandani et al., (2016).

Work Environment: The work environment is a crucial factor influencing employee engagement. According to Holbeche and Springett (2003) , Rich et al., (2010) and Miles (2001), employee engagement arises from various workplace characteristics. Deci and Ryan (1987) noted that supportive workplace management demonstrates a genuine concern for employees’ needs and emotions, offers positive feedback and encourages open communication about concerns, skill development and problem-solving. Consequently, a meaningful work environment that enables employees to concentrate on their tasks while fostering intergroup harmony is considered a vital component of employee engagement.

Team and co-worker Relationships: The relationships between team members and co-workers are significant factors influencing employee engagement. A supportive team contributes to the reinforcement of employee engagement within an organization. When employees feel supported in their workplace, they are more likely to feel relaxed and dedicated to their roles and responsibilities (Kahn, 1990). Therefore, co-worker relationships have a substantial impact on engagement levels.

Locke and Taylor (1990) emphasize that interpersonal interactions with co-workers hold meaningful value in the workplace.

Organizational policies: Organizational policies significantly influence the level of employee engagement within an organization. According to Schneider et al., (2009) and Armstrong (2012) policies related to selection and recruitment play a crucial role in shaping employee engagement. Fair and equitable practices foster a strong working environment, contributing to improved organizational performance. However, the principles of fairness and equity can be compromised when recruitment favors family members and personal contacts, leading to negative consequences such as gaps in knowledge, skills and abilities. This, in turn, can result in lower productivity and increased employee disengagement.

Compensation & Benefits: compensation and benefits are essential drivers of employee engagement. This encompasses both financial rewards and non-financial benefits, such as recognition and perks like on-site daycare, employee assistance programs, subsidized cafeterias, travel discounts and additional holidays Dajani (2015). According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), when employees receive rewards and recognition from their organization, they feel compelled to reciprocate with higher levels of engagement Saks, (2006).

Employee Mindsets: Employee mindsets are personal resources that can significantly influence engagement through enthusiasm for development, effort perception, focus, responses to setbacks, and interpersonal interactions (Keating & Heslin, 2015). These mindsets are crucial for employees to cultivate resilience and leverage their personal resources in work performance. They affect engagement by shaping psychological presence, fostering a desire for growth and influencing how setbacks are interpreted (Heslin, 2010). Ultimately, employee mindsets are vital for achieving success in innovative task performance and enhancing overall organizational performance.

Connecting Employee Engagement to job satisfaction

Schmidt and Hayes (2002) demonstrated a positive correlation between job satisfaction and various factors, including productivity, profitability, safety and employee turnover. It can be viewed as a general feeling about the job or as a collection of attitudes related to various job facets. There is a clear relationship between employee satisfaction and engagement, which has been widely acknowledged by theorists. Maylett and Riboldi (2008) argues that job satisfaction is a key component of employee engagement, while Garg and Kumar (2012) emphasize the significance of work satisfaction as a crucial driver of engagement. Their research focused on aspects such as pay and benefits, customer service values, opportunities for advancement and satisfactory working environments- including relationship between workers and supervisors, effective internal communication and manageable workloads. Their findings led to the conclusion that job satisfaction is a vital driver of employee engagement within an organization.

Engaged employees experience a positive emotional state at work, reflecting high levels of job satisfaction, whereas disengaged employees feel disconnected rationally, emotionally and motivationally. Disengagement often results in job dissatisfaction, turnover and absenteeism. An engaged employee is one who is deeply involved and invested in their work. Notably, the factors that drive employee engagement are like those that influence job satisfaction. These engagement factors include growth opportunities, relationships with superiors, compensation, recognition and connection. Ultimately, employee satisfaction serves as the foundation for fostering and sustaining employee engagement. Therefore, based on the existing literature, it can be concluded that employee engagement is positively related to job satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of connecting employee engagement and job satisfaction. It also emphasizes that employee engagement is essential for fostering job satisfaction in the workplace. Consequently, this research encourages a deeper understanding of how employee engagement enhances job satisfaction. A satisfied employee is more likely to become an engaged employee, and engagement is widely recognized as a key driver of productivity. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to ensure that the roles assigned to employees align with their career goals, enabling them to find joy in their work and ultimately achieve job satisfaction.

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