

Managing People

(LCBB5004)

Assignment 2

Employee Engagement

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Introduction

Scholars have identified the fact that the business environment has undergone wholesome changes from the latter half of the 20th century. The managers in the business environment have been looking to develop newer concepts to improve the operations and functioning of the business organizations with the help of newer concepts like Kaizen, Just-in-time (JIT) etc. This has also underlined the requirement to make the employees align with the changes in a better way so that the organizations can perform at a better level. This has been the reason why the managements of the business organizations all over the world have given prime importance to increase the employee engagement. This has also been a measure to be competitive in the employee market to get access to talented and skilled employees. As a result, the relationship between the organizations and the employees become stronger and they tend to work in a better synergy to cater to the needs and demands of the market (Eldor and Vigoda-Gadot, 2017).

This has been the reason why more and more strategies have been developed in this field by the companies in the global business environment. However, the recent occurrence of the global Pandemic has changed the business organizations operate drastically and there are needs for the organizations to modify their strategies to get the best out of the employees. The study will look into the aspects of employee engagement from the perspective of an organization that has considered the concept to be a major driver to improve performance and employee well-being. The study will thus, look into the various aspects of employee

engagement, their drivers and the strategies that can be developed in the wake of the Pandemic.

Employee engagement (EE) – the concept and the drivers

The concept of EE has assumed great importance in the context of the modern-day business environment and the subject has been researched by a number of scholars. According to Perrin's Global Workforce Study in 2003, EE is the "employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis." (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). The study underlined that there are various emotional and rational factors that can increase the EE in the companies. According to Robinson et al. (2004), EE is "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee." (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). The definitions have clearly identified that the concept of EE is a two-way process whereby the employees can be made in sync to the aims and objectives of the companies. This in turn, can increase the level of commitment among the employees and they tend to perform to the best of their abilities to develop the organisations (Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

There have been studies that have been underlined the concept of EE as bigger and more comprehensive than the concept of job satisfaction. According to the studies, job satisfaction is related to the level of satisfaction a person can achieve in his/her job and is usually linked to the amount of monetary and non-monetary rewards. However, the concept of EE is more linked to the commitment and passion one has for the job. The concept of job satisfaction has been a well-known paradigm of human resource management for many years and there have been efforts to develop the same. The concept of job satisfaction is

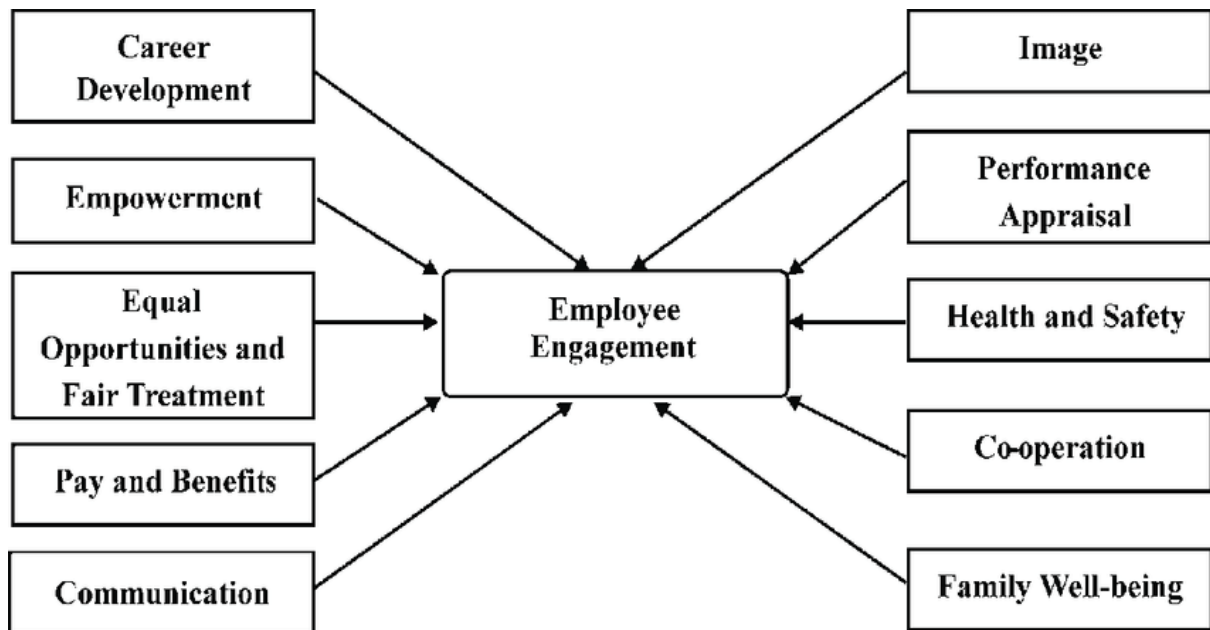
transactional and superficial in nature unlike that of EE (Vorina, Simonič and Vlasova, 2017). However, there have been studies that have stated that both the concepts have been overlapping in nature and are interconnected with each other. Therefore, giving importance to any of the concept can result in the development of the other (Nimon, Shuck and Zigarmi, 2016). However, a study in the context of the Indian information technology sector has specifically underlined that the concept of job satisfaction is more transactional in nature. The employees tend to look into the benefits that are provided in the jobs and this in turn can fuel their satisfaction. However, the concept of EE is not so simple and, in many cases, depend on the compatibility of the employees and the organizations. For this, the organizations have to look into the rewards as well as the mental satisfaction when they are in the work environment. This in turn can boost the commitment and passion of the employees to work for the companies. The study has also found that the increase of EE has a positive influence on the job satisfaction of the employees. One of the most conclusive aspects from the study has been that the concept of EE has a long-term view and caters to the development of the workforce to work for the well-being of the organizations in the long-run (Kamalanabhan, Sai and Mayuri, 2009).

As the study up to now, has been able to identify that the EE is engaged in the development of commitment and passion among the employees, it will be interesting to note the drivers that can help in these aspects. One of the most important theories that have emerged in the concept has been the personal engagement model of Kahn. According to Kahn, personal engagement is “the harnessing of organization members ’selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.” (Okolo, 2018). Personal engagement has been synonymous with the relationship development between the employees and the management and this can be influenced by the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of the employees

at work. The physical engagement relates to the ability of the employees to work up to their full potential in the work environment so that they can utilize their talents and skills. The cognitive aspects relate to the vision of the employers in the long-term perspectives and the activities that are developed in lieu of the same. The emotional attachment relates to the relationship between the employees and the management and how comfortable they are working with each other. These aspects have important implications for the human resource management as they have a huge role to play in the EE (Shuck, Rocco and Albornoz, 2011).

The study by Okolo (2018) has shown that stress in the job performance may not reduce the EE and may showcase that the employees are fully engaged to the well-being of the companies. However, a moderate level of stress is always better in increasing the engagement of the employees. On the other hand, extreme stress can be a detrimental factor in the EE in the workplace. Therefore, the job design has to be developed in a way that the stress factors in the job environment can be controlled (Okolo, 2018). Lemon and Palenchar (2018) provided a new perspective to the term EE in their study which can be referred to in this regard as well. According to them, though EE is a psychological aspect, in a real-life scenario, the human resources can identify a positive EE when the employees perform more than their required duties. However, when the employees are seen to perform activities that are defined in their job profiles, they are not totally engaged. The study also found that EE is increased when there is a comprehensive outlook of the management to take care of the mental and health aspects of the employees as well as their long-term well-being (Lemon and Palenchar, 2018). A study by Ali and Farooqi (2014) has also underlined that increase in workload can have a detrimental effect on the EE in the workplace. It emphasized on the development of a proper work environment that looks into the well-being of the employees.

Therefore, the drivers of the EE process can be stated with the help of the following diagram which will look into the various perspectives of the requirements of the employees:



Source: Sahoo and Mishra, 2012

According to the prescribed model, there are various perspectives that have to be looked into by the management and the human resource management (HRM) of the company to drive EE. The condition of the workplace environment is a major driver in inducing EE and it has been seen that workplace violence, unfair treatment, absence of proper opportunities, irrelevant and improper communication can have detrimental effects on EE (Saleem, Shenbei and Hanif, 2020). The HRM also has a huge role to play by the development of proper policies like taking care of the health and well-being of the employees, proper performance management system, proper rewards and facilities to induce EE.

EE in the aftermath of Covid

The organization in question has undertaken different measures to develop EE in the aftermath of Covid. The HRM has looked to develop flexible working time, work from home (WFH), safety of the employees and redeveloping of the job structures to drive more EE. It has to be noted here that the business environment has been affected to a large extent by the recent Pandemic and this has in turn, changed the dynamics of the work process. It has been

seen that the aged employees have showcased lower work engagement levels during the times of Covid as there are higher chances of them getting infected (Reinwald, Zimmermann and Kunze, 2021). For the organizations, it has been a critical issue as the aged employees often comprises of the most experienced workforce in the organization. Their inputs have been missed in critical times and thus, it is important to develop strategies to engage them in the work process at the earliest.

A study by Adhitama and Riyanto (2020) has shown that majority of the age groups of the employees have suffered anxiety, burnout and frustration due to this critical situation. The study has underlined that the employees are to be attended at all levels by the HRM and if the need arises there should be face-to-face interviews to ease the mental pressures on them. Another study by De-la-Calle-Durán and Rodríguez-Sánchez (2021) has proposed a 5Cs model that in turn can enhance the EE process in this crucial juncture. This can be stated with the help of the following chart:

Category	Factors	Indicators
1. Conciliation	Remote working Professional-private life Family diversity	Physical and relational separation Productivity Sustainability
2. Cultivation	Professional career New technology Development opportunities	Geographical and communication barriers Furlough (ERTE in Spain) vs. redundancy Coaching
3. Confidence	Health Safety Leadership	Health measures at work Psychological support Employee privacy
4. Compensation	Remuneration Endeavor Non-Monetary benefits	Risk and remote working allowances Services and help for parents Performance incentives
5. Communication	Networking Job and career feedback Involvement	IT resources Two-way dialogue Performance reviews

Source: De-la-Calle-Durán and Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021

It can be seen that the basic aspect of the 5Cs model has been to give the employees confidence about their job and providing them proper measures of health safety. This is the reason why remote working has been proposed. There is a need of proper counselling and communication with the employees as well. The employees should be encouraged to hone

new skills and to spend time with their families. In addition to this, there should be proper measures to provide them medical assurance and health safety. The onus is to make them aware that they form an integral part of the organization and the management considers them as important stakeholders.

Conclusion and recommendations

The study has consulted various studies in relation to EE and it has been found that this is an important concept in increasing the productivity of the organizations in the long-run. It also prepares the employees to be in sync with the objectives of the companies which is important in the context of the ever-changing environment today. EE can be developed with the help of the development of proper relationship between the management and the employees, proper designing of the job profiles, development of the proper work environment, catering to the well-being of the employees and understanding their health and family needs.

The business environment has changed drastically in the times of the Pandemic and this has increased the importance of the concept as it has been found that the employees have been affected negatively because of the critical times. The organization in question has already developed various strategies in this context which are appreciable. However, EE can be developed to a greater extent in the organization by the development of one-to-one counselling, encouraging the employees to be involved in other skill-development works, providing them health safety, medical assurance and constantly getting them involved with proper communication.

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