

Leadership/management factors impact on employee engagement and discretionary effort

Leadership/
management
factors

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Abstract

Purpose – There is strong and growing evidence of the importance of leadership and management factors influence on employee engagement and discretionary effort. However, the problem is that there has been limited recent effort to review where research gaps exist and provide a direction to guide future research. The purpose of this paper is to provide an integrated perspective on the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and discretionary effort.

Design/methodology/approach – The review of the literature includes empirical research and case studies related to employee engagement and discretionary effort from various databases such as Business Premier, Cambridge University Press, JSTOR, Springer, Emerald, Wiley, ProQuest and ISI Web of Science. Supporting material was also accessed from reference books regarding similar concepts and theories.

Findings – The review provides a current view of the key topics, identifies three key research gaps, suggests a refined, up-to-date definition of both employee engagement and discretionary effort, and proposes a conceptual framework to inform future research. In doing so, it offers new directions for progressing studies on these critical workplace practices and behaviours particularly the inclusion of national culture as a moderating variable when investigating or implementing employee engagement and discretionary effort strategies.

Research limitations/implications – Findings are based on existing literature and require empirical testing. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed.

Originality/value – Undertaking a review of the literature is an important part of any research and this review aims to organise, describe and appraise the current literature with a view to gaining a critical perspective for the benefit of researchers.

Keywords Employee engagement, Discretionary effort, Leadership and management factors,

Non-monetary factors

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Today there is consensus that an engaged workforce that harnesses discretionary effort is the foundation for creating a competitive advantage (Rowland, 2013), thus many researchers argue that these two constructs are pivotal to business performance and success (Anitha, 2014; Harter *et al.*, 2013) thus, the practical importance of employee engagement and discretionary effort cannot be over-emphasised. Yet, there is no agreed definition of employee engagement with researchers viewing it as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural state directed towards desired organizational outcomes” (Shuck and Wollard, 2010, p. 103). Employee engagement should not be confused with work engagement, which is defined and discussed in the literature as an active, positive work-related state that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004), hence, it is specifically focussed on the work itself. The study of employee engagement goes beyond this focus to consider the employee’s relationship with the organisation, which includes how they connect with their leaders and managers. The aim of this review is to understand the influence of leader and management factors on employee engagement and discretionary effort. Discretionary effort is an outcome of employee engagement and is viewed as the intent of an employee to expend efforts on behalf of the organisation that go beyond agreed requirements (Zigarmi *et al.*, 2012).



The study of employee engagement and discretionary effort at work and their significance to organisations is not new. Research around work motivation and discretionary effort began with pioneers such as Frederick Taylor (1911), whose scientific management was designed in part to encourage employees' discretionary effort. Taylor's work began in Bethlehem Steel manufacturing plant but other researchers extended his work in other organisational contexts including Hicks (1932), Barnard (1938), Leibenstein (1966), Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1983) and Organ (1988). Similarly, the study of discretionary effort has spread into many organisational contexts. Most of these studies have focussed on western organisations with western national cultures. These cultures emphasise individuality, short-term planning and acceptance of low power distance. Whereas other national cultures may have values that are characterised by collectivism, long-term planning and high power distance. National culture is the values, beliefs and assumptions embedded in a particular culture or society (Hofstede, 1991). These values are reflected in organisational cultures (Hofstede, 1985) where culture explains those values that drive both attitudes and behaviours at the individual level. Hence, the theoretical development of these constructs may have failed to address different value systems in other cultures. In support of this argument, Timming (2010, p. 537) cautioned against assumptions that studies can come to appropriate conclusions when they "travel uninhibited across the general social fabric" of society. Therefore, it is necessary to address this challenge and look to identify how employee engagement (including discretionary effort) may change because of other cultural values. Thus, more investigation into these concepts outside western organisations is necessary.

Both employee engagement and discretionary effort are multidimensional constructs that: are freely given, under the control of the employee and affect individual outcomes (Bradley, 2011; Yankelovich and Immerwahr, 1983). Engaged employees voluntarily give more back to their workplace than required and are more likely to invest discretionary effort, not only by performing in-role duties to a higher standard but also by engaging in a variety of extra-role behaviours (Raddaa *et al.*, 2013). Individuals who are engaged at work are more productive, efficient and effective (Aguenza and Som, 2018; Buil *et al.*, 2019; Rana and Chopra, 2019), which, in turn, enhances individual job performance and job satisfaction. These outcomes induce greater discretionary effort and promote further success, and so the cycle continues. Discretionary effort also helps to reduce the need to devote extra resources to simple tasks; it can free up time and ultimately resources for more essential tasks; can improve the ability of employees to perform their jobs; and can lead to higher profits for the organisation (Kaufman, 2015; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2006). Thus, employee engagement and discretionary effort are clearly linked to positive organisational and individual outcomes including employee satisfaction, enhanced productivity and profitability (Bakker, 2017; Harter *et al.*, 2013; Kidron and Peretz, 2018; Matz *et al.*, 2013; Parrey and Bhasin, 2012; Zaitouni and Ouakouak, 2018). To achieve these benefits organisations need to have their entire workforce engaged in a way that performance aligns both personal and company goals, promoting the organisation's success and sustainability.

However, some studies indicate that engagement levels are declining at a time when the need to reap the discretionary effort of engaged employees is at its greatest (Bersin *et al.*, 2015; Mann and Harter, 2016). For example, the Gallup survey has indicated that low levels of engagement are currently a worldwide problem, and that there is an employee engagement crisis (Gallup *Business Journal*, 2016; Mann and Harter, 2016; Schneider and Blankenship, 2017). Countless research attempts to provide theoretical solutions to increase the levels of engagement and encourage employee discretionary effort have been made (Bakker, 2017; Harrell-Cook *et al.*, 2017; Schmitt *et al.*, 2016; Schneider and Blankenship, 2017; Shuck *et al.*, 2017). A lack of effective practical solutions from this approach raises the question: is the current thinking and theory development sufficient to address employee engagement problems? For example, prior research on leadership and management

practices and behaviours has often focussed on employee performance, and treated employee engagement as a secondary outcome variable related to performance, rather than as an important outcome in and of itself. Given that there are significant benefits for organisations that can successfully engage employees (Bakker, 2017; Harter *et al.*, 2013; Kidron and Peretz, 2018; Matz *et al.*, 2013; Parrey and Bhasin, 2012; Shuck, 2011; Popli and Rizvi, 2015; Zaitouni and Ouakouak, 2018), it is important that research does not just look at theoretical perspectives but addresses this challenge by reviewing individual mechanisms that influence employee engagement and discretionary effort (e.g. leadership and management factors) to seek practical solutions.

Managers have two broad mechanisms that they can use to improve employee engagement: monetary or non-monetary strategies. Whether employees are best motivated by monetary or non-monetary rewards has been argued consistently in the literature with financial incentives often seen as having negative connotations and non-monetary factors having more positive, higher level of outcomes. Recently, Shaw and Gupta (2015) reviewed evidence in the literature on monetary vs non-monetary incentives and explained that while “financial incentives are effective [...] we are motivated by challenge, engagement, autonomy, mastery and other factors [...] if we accept that financial incentives work, we can move more easily to questions such as the best combination of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards” (p. 290). It is also acknowledged in the literature that while pay and benefits are important in attracting and retaining workers, they are less important in engaging employees (Kular *et al.*, 2008). In addition, it is largely accepted that leaders and managers need to pay more attention to non-monetary incentives whilst minimising or removing hygiene factors (Besieux *et al.*, 2015; Brunetto *et al.*, 2017). Responding to the challenges of today’s restricted economic conditions, work that focusses on non-monetary factors to cultivate positive results in followers, engage their workforce and achieve competitive advantage may be more useful to organisations.

Research has suggested that non-monetary work factors fall into three fundamental areas: organisational: leadership and management; work design and job characteristics; and employee work-life factors (Kular *et al.*, 2008; Nandedkar and Brown, 2018; Raddaa *et al.*, 2013). It is beyond the scope of a single study to explore all four factors. Therefore the focus of this review is leadership and management factors (i.e. practices and behaviours) that influence employee engagement and discretionary effort given the strong and growing evidence of its impact (Chaurasia and Shukla, 2013; Kidron and Peretz, 2018; Bakker, 2017; Zaitouni and Ouakouak, 2018). For example, recent studies show that leadership and management practices and behaviours (e.g. setting performance and development goals; providing ongoing feedback and recognition; and creating a climate of trust and empowerment) fuel employee engagement, innovation and career satisfaction (Maurya and Agarwal, 2018; Smith *et al.*, 2016; Wipulanusat *et al.*, 2018; Zaitouni and Ouakouak, 2018).

A problem that still restricts the understanding of employee engagement and discretionary effort is that there has been limited recent effort to translate the many findings into a review that can show where research gaps exist and provide direction for future research. In response to this problem, the paper reviews the literature to see if research findings have resulted in refinement of the definition of employee engagement and discretionary effort. This resulted in further development of the existing global definition of employee engagement and discretionary effort that could ensure commonality among academics from different disciplines. Furthermore, the review examines the influence of non-monetary mechanisms to encourage engagement and discretionary effort and addresses the influence of national culture across countries on these two constructs. This is achieved by synthesising the current state of knowledge of the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and discretionary effort. This integrated perspective also utilises evidence from the literature to present five propositions and develop a conceptual framework as a useful direction for future research.

Research approach

A systematic review (Hossain, 2015; Menz, 2012; Pittaway *et al.*, 2004; Short *et al.*, 2010; Ucbasaran *et al.*, 2013) was conducted by searching for peer-reviewed studies that investigated the influence of leadership and management factors on either employee engagement or discretionary effort. Academic publications were selected using the Google Scholar Web search engine, accessing quality publications from some of the most important scholarly publishers including Business Premier, Cambridge University Press, JSTOR, Springer, Emerald, Wiley, ProQuest and ISI Web of Science. To avoid publication bias, the researchers also included conference papers, masters and PhD theses and book chapters. An initial literature search was conducted between December 2017 and September 2018, and this was followed by a second search in January 2019 to March, capture newly published work.

In all searches, a set of screening criteria was used for deciding which publications to include and reject (see Short *et al.*, 2010; Ucbasaran *et al.*, 2013). Publications were arranged into four major categories: employee engagement; discretionary effort; leadership/management factors as positive influences of employee engagement and/or discretionary effort; and leadership/management factors as negative influences of employee engagement and/or discretionary effort.

Figure 1 presents the process of literature search, with the number of articles included or excluded in each stage marked on the figure.

The initial search resulted in 1,416 identified articles. After removing duplicate entries, the authors downloaded 1,145 articles and book chapters. After further stages of screening using the inclusive and exclusion selection criteria 183 publications were selected to be included in an initial review from which 57 were found to offer no new or different findings. This left 126 articles to be included in the final literature review as saturation point had been reached (i.e. no new material was forthcoming) (Richards, 2005). Table I lists the inclusion and exclusion selection criteria and provides an example of the research methodology used in this review.

Overview of the literature

This review of the extant literature starts by examining the meaning of employee engagement and discretionary effort and how these two important constructs relate to

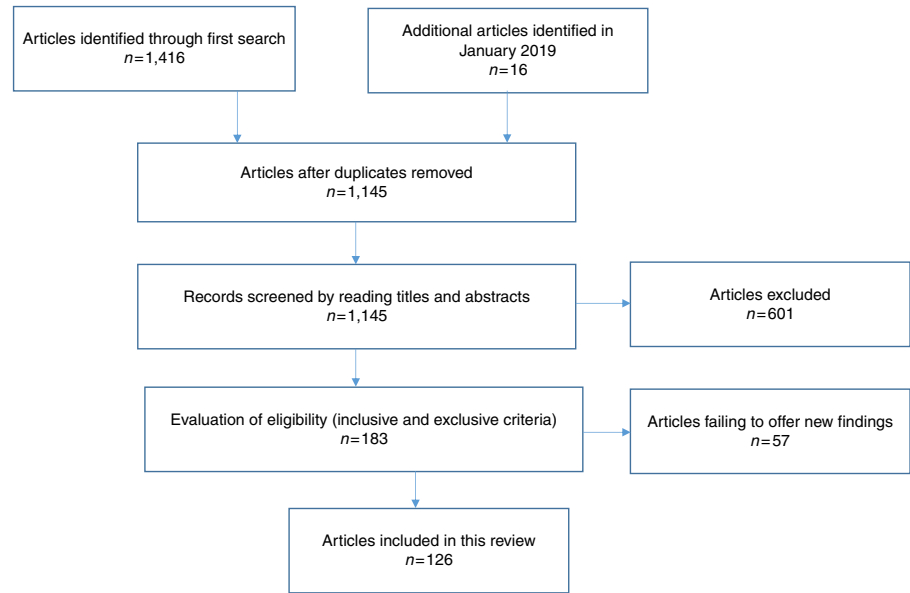


Figure 1.
Flow diagram for
literature search

Search string	Article	Empirical approach applied	Core findings	Rejection screening criteria	Acceptance screening criteria	Inclusion/exclusion	Point of reference to this research
“employee engagement” AND “discretionary effort”	Christensen Hughes, J. and Rog, E. (2008), “Talent management: a strategy for improving employee recruitment, retention and engagement within hospitality organizations”, <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i> , Vol. 20 No. 7, pp. 743-757.	Data strongly supports arguments. The research design, sampling and data gathering are robust	Talent management is an espoused and enacted commitment to implementing an integrated, strategic and technology enabled approach to human resource management (HRM). This commitment stems in part from the widely shared belief that human resources are the organization's primary source of competitive advantage; an essential asset that is becoming increasingly short supply. The benefits of an effectively implemented talent management strategy include improved employee recruitment and retention rates, and enhanced employee engagement. These	(a) the keywords were mentioned only in passing and were not discussed in sufficient detail to contribute to the focus of this review or the keywords were used in a way that was inappropriate for the purposes of this review (e.g. leadership style was examined in relation to personality and not as an influencing factor on employee engagement or discretionary effort); (b) the focus was on organisational factors rather than leadership/management; (c) the main focus was on employee motivation without relating to employee behaviour; and (d) the discussion of leadership/management factors were not identified as barriers or drivers of employee	(a) offer some discussion on the definition of motivation, employee engagement and/or discretionary effort; (b) offer some insight into the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and/or discretionary effort; (c) offer some insight into the effects of leadership/management factors as drivers or barriers of employee engagement and/or discretionary effort	Excluded – this paper meets the rejection screening criteria (d) set in column five of this table and does not meet criteria (b) and (c) of the acceptance screening criteria's set in column six of this table	Does not make a contribution to this study. Talent management is not covered within this literature review. Hence this paper is beyond the scope and aim of this literature review

(continued)

Table I.
Research methodology
examples

Search string	Article	Empirical approach applied	Core findings	Rejection screening criteria	Acceptance screening criteria	Inclusion/exclusion	Point of reference to this research
			outcomes, in turn, have been associated with improved operational and financial performance. The external and internal drivers and restraints for talent management are many. Of particular importance is senior management understanding and commitment	engagement and/or discretionary effort (e.g. the focus was on how leadership affected organisational culture)			
"discretionary effort" OR "work motivation" OR "Employee engagement"	Shuck, B. and Herd, A.M. (2012), "Employee engagement and leadership: exploring the convergence of two frameworks and implications for leadership development in HRD", <i>Human Resource Development Review</i> , Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 156-181.	Data strongly supports arguments. The research design, sampling and data gathering are robust	This article explores the connection between traditional and emerging leadership theories and the motivational-state variable of employee engagement, building towards a conceptual framework proposed for further refinement, discussion and ultimately testing.	(a) the keywords were mentioned only in passing and were not discussed in sufficient detail to contribute to the focus of this review or the keywords were used in a way that was inappropriate for the purposes of this review (e.g. leadership style was examined in relation to personality and not as an influencing factor on	(a) offer some discussion on the definition of employee engagement and/or discretionary effort; (b) offer some insight into the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and/or discretionary	Included – this article does not meet any of the rejection screening criteria in column four of this table, and meets acceptance screening criteria (a) and (b) in column five of this table	Does make a contribution to this study as it connects traditional and emerging leadership theories to employee engagement and discretionary efforts

(continued)

Search string	Article	Empirical approach applied	Core findings	Rejection screening criteria	Acceptance screening criteria	Inclusion/exclusion	Point of reference to this research
			A conceptual link between meeting and understanding employee needs, the use of emotional intelligence as a leadership competency and transformational leadership is examined	employee engagement or discretionary effort); (b) the focus was on organisational factors rather than leadership/management; (c) the main focus was on employee motivation without relating to employee behaviour; and (d) the discussion of leadership/management factors were not identified as barriers or drivers of employee engagement and/or discretionary effort (e.g. the focus was on how leadership affected organisational culture)	effort; (c) offer some insight into the effects of leadership/management factors as drivers or barriers of employee engagement and/or discretionary effort		

Table I.

each other. The influence of leadership and management factors is examined. Finally, this review forms the basis for developing a conceptual model that brings together the key elements of the discussion on leadership and management factors that positively or negatively influence employee engagement and discretionary effort, to provide a broad framework for future research. Figure 2 represents the schema for this review.

Furthermore, Table II organises some of the selected literature on employee engagement and discretionary effort to provide a timeline of key findings and approaches in order to provide a view of each construct and inform this study.

Three key research gaps were identified based on the literature. First, the need for a refined and up-to-date definition of employee engagement and discretionary effort that can find commonality among academics from different disciplines. Second, the extant theory and research on leadership practices and behaviour has predominantly focussed on the influence of positive leadership and management practices and behaviour on employee engagement and discretionary effort, with limited empirical research on the effects of negative leader behaviours. Hence, more research on negative leader behaviour is necessary to inform leaders of the detrimental effect these practices and behaviours can have on their employees. Finally, few studies on these two constructs have investigated beyond western perspectives and in doing so have not fully considered the influence of other national cultures. In this review, the authors aim to address these gaps and develop a research framework for future studies.

Propositions

Defining employee engagement

The meaning of employee engagement has attracted considerable debate (Saks and Gruman, 2014). In the past, some researchers have questioned if it is a unique construct or simply a repackaged “buzz word” for other existing constructs like organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, job involvement and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of “flow”. Today there is still some conjecture about whether employee engagement is a discrete construct (Kular *et al.*, 2008), however, recent research is showing that this is likely to be the case (Bailey *et al.*, 2017; Nimon *et al.*, 2016; Shuck *et al.*, 2017).

Employee engagement has been variably defined as an attitudinal, behavioural or psychological construct (Robertson-Smith and Markwick, 2009). Practitioner definitions have focussed on engagement outcomes such as discretionary effort, loyalty, dedication and using talents to the fullest. Whereas academic definitions have emphasised a mixture of engagement outcomes, psychological states and the presence of a mutually beneficial two-way employer-employee relationship (Morris, 2014) where “individuals seek to minimise the difference between the benefits they provide and the benefits they receive from others” (Ballinger and Rockmann, 2010, p. 373).

Kahn (1990, p. 694) first conceptualised employee engagement defining it as “the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work [...] [where] people employ and express

Figure 2.
Schema for a review
of literature on
leadership and
management factors
affecting employee
engagement and
discretionary effort

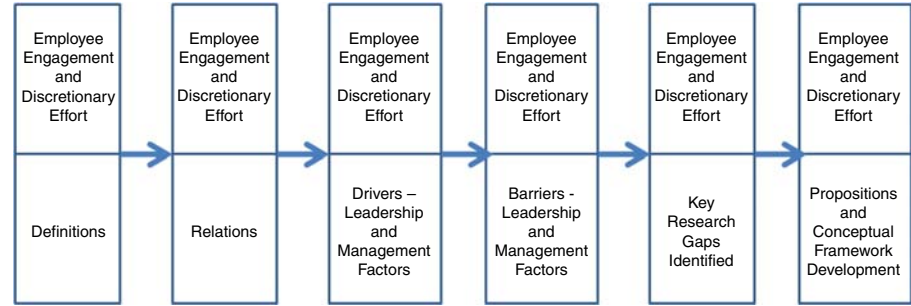


Table II.
Evolution of key
research on employee
engagement and
discretionary effort

Year	Contribution to employee engagement	Contribution to discretionary effort
1980s–1990s	Kahn (1990) identifies the theoretical framework of personal engagement and disengagement and is first to define engagement as a separate construct and uses a needs-satisfying approach to employee engagement	Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1983) capture the notion that some elements of work are discretionary
2000s	Maslach <i>et al.</i> (2001) view employee engagement as positive antithesis to burnout (the burnout – antithesis approach) Harter (2002) uses a satisfaction engagement approach to employee engagement Saks (2006) tests the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement using a multidimensional approach and connects employee engagement drivers to employee engagement consequences	Macey and Schneider (2008) separate trait, state and behavioural engagement and place discretionary effort within behavioural engagement Morris (2009) considers discretionary effort from an economic perspective which emphasises the time dimension and an organisational behaviour perspective which emphasises intensity and direction of behaviour
2010s	More studies emerged in other and cross-cultural settings after 2010s but the majority focus on drivers of employee engagement (e.g. Al Shehri <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Farndale and Murrer, 2015; Gagné and Bhave, 2011). Shuck and Wollard (2010) suggest cognitive engagement assessment could be directed towards measuring how employees think about their job, their company, their culture and their intellectual commitment to the organisation Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) suggest that over-engaged workers may risk burnout resulting in counter-productive performance Truss <i>et al.</i> (2013) view engagement as management practice distinct from as a psychological state Agarwal (2014) examines drivers of employee engagement Carasco-Saul <i>et al.</i> (2015) provide a significant review of the relationship between leadership and engagement Shaw and Gupta (2015) review evidence in regard to monetary vs non-monetary incentives and argued that it is time to accept that financial incentives work and we move on to questions such as the best combinations of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards Gupta and Sharma (2016) explore employee engagement from a non-western perspective Bailey <i>et al.</i> (2017) suggest that engagement has a more direct effect on motivation and performance rather than health and well-being	The focus of the research is still primary on western cultural settings and employee engagement. Shuck (2010) suggests that employee engagement is significantly related to discretionary effort Gonzalez (2016) suggests discretionary effort may be mostly performed as unconscious behaviour Hesketh <i>et al.</i> (2016) study looks at the relationship between well-being, employee engagement and discretionary effort in UK Ruck <i>et al.</i> (2017) consider the notion of voice as discretionary employee communication

themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally”. Since then this definition has been refined. Rothbard (2001), for example, proposed that attention and absorption in one’s work are key elements of engagement, while Tasker (2004, p. 8) described it as “[...] where employees and employers ‘go the extra mile’ for one another”.

These various definitions of employee engagement share some commonality. All conceive it as a “desirable condition” (Macey and Schneider, 2008) that is characterised

as a sense of attachment, identification, commitment, absorption and efficacy whereby employees display focussed energy, vigour, dedication and passion for their work (*Gallup Business Journal*, 2013; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Importantly, it is also a general, persistent and pervasive state and not a momentary state associated with any specific object, person, behaviour or event (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). The different perspectives of employee engagement show that it is clearly a multidimensional construct. Drawing together the key elements of these views, the following refined definition is proposed for researchers to consider adopting:

- P1. Employee engagement is a multidimensional concept that encompasses the extent to which employees feel connected to, involved in and enthusiastic and passionate about their work thereby creating a desire to invest emotional, cognitive, physical and/or behavioural energy to their work-related roles for the purpose of contributing to their own goals and the organisation in a positive way.

Defining discretionary effort

Discretionary effort is a similarly complex concept (Parrey and Bhasin, 2012) that has long been associated with performance (Palmer *et al.*, 1993). Its roots lie in both economics and organisational behaviour literature (Morris, 2009) but the term was first coined by Yankelovich and Immerwahr (1983) to capture the notion that some element of work effort is discretionary. Today, there is consensus in the literature that an engaged workforce induces discretionary effort and is key to creating a competitive advantage for organisations (Harter *et al.*, 2013; Rana and Chopra, 2019; Rowland, 2013; Rowland and Hall, 2013).

Discretionary effort is described both broadly and narrowly. For example, it has been broadly defined as a willingness and ability of employees to “go the extra mile” and as the level of effort employees voluntarily give beyond the minimum required (Mwandoe *et al.*, 2015), as well as in emotive terms as simply “a passion for work” (Truss *et al.*, 2006). It has also been narrowly defined as extra-role behaviours which cannot be contractually enforced (Frenkel *et al.*, 2012) but involve positive behaviours directed towards achieving organisational goals and increasing organisational effectiveness, thereby signifying an employee’s commitment to the organisation (Organ *et al.*, 2006; Bhasin, 2012). Even though discretionary effort includes organisational citizenship or extra-role behaviours (Borman and Motowidlo, 1997; Jain *et al.*, 2011), researchers have argued that both in-role and extra-role behaviours that exceed formal responsibilities can be discretionary (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Morris, 2014). Consistent with this view, Macey and Schneider (2008) defined discretionary effort as “a form of in-role or extra-role effort or behaviour” (p. 6) which incorporates innovative behaviours that “focus on initiating or fostering change” (p. 24).

Importantly, Yankelovich and Immerwahr’s (1983) description of discretionary effort implies that it is a multidimensional concept with the same fundamental dimensions as work effort, namely, time, intensity and direction. Hence, employees may invest discretionary effort by voluntarily: working extra hours; working harder or faster than required or reasonably expected; and directing effort into work tasks or engaging in work-related behaviours not formally required by their core job role but they positively contribute to organisational outcomes and effectiveness (Morris, 2009). Thus, the following refined definition of discretionary effort is proposed for researchers to consider adopting:

- P2. Discretionary effort is a multi-faceted construct that involves the voluntary contribution of time, intensity and positive work behaviours directed towards prescribed and non-prescribed work activities that are beyond formal contractual obligations and benefit or are intended to benefit the organisation.

Employee engagement and discretionary effort. Employee engagement and discretionary effort are distinct but closely inter-related concepts. As a motivational phenomenon there is

a consensus in the literature that employee engagement is more akin to intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation (Chadwick, 2015; Meyer, 2013; Meyer *et al.*, 2010). Intrinsic motivation is defined as “the forces within a person that arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action” (Samson and Daft, 2009, p. 588). Reviewed literature (Herzberg, 1968; Chadwick, 2015; Robinson *et al.*, 2004) clearly indicates that intrinsic motivation and non-monetary work environment factors are linked to the level of employee engagement and discretionary effort that occurs. Furthermore, Sharoff and Sridhar (2011) asserted that to motivate employees and influence employee behaviour and performance managers need to pay more attention to non-monetary incentives. For example, the study by Mušura *et al.* (2013) shows non-monetary factors such as work-life company policies influence job satisfaction and productivity in the workplace.

An organisation’s leadership and the quality of manager–employee relationships have been identified as key non-monetary influences on employee engagement and discretionary effort (Brunetto *et al.*, 2017; Chaurasia and Shukla, 2013; Cooper, 2015; Meyer, 2013; Organ *et al.*, 2006; Raddaa *et al.*, 2013). Leader and manager practices and behaviours can directly and indirectly affect employee perceptions and behaviours as they also shape the internal work environment that fosters or inhibits employee engagement and discretionary effort (Brunetto *et al.*, 2017; Chaurasia and Shukla, 2013; Ghadi, 2012; Heffernan, 2012; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2006). The following sections elaborate on how leader and manager practices and behaviours can drive or inhibit employee engagement and discretionary effort.

Drivers of employee engagement and discretionary effort

Leaders and managers that treat employees fairly, provide encouragement and support, create opportunities for participation, develop employee’s skills and show authentic concern for them as individuals while emphasising team work can drive and encourage employee engagement and discretionary effort (Agarwal, 2014; Brunetto *et al.*, 2017; Javed *et al.*, 2017; Nandedkar and Brown, 2018; Smith *et al.*, 2016). For example, when employees are able to participate and have a voice, they are more likely to share advice and collaborate (Cosley *et al.*, 2017). These practices and behaviours evoke a perception that leaders and managers are concerned with employees’ personal welfare, and thus help build trusting leader–employee relationships (Organ *et al.*, 2006). In turn, it encourages employees to reciprocate with greater investment of themselves to their job and organisation (Blau, 1964; Chaurasia and Shukla, 2013; Lawler, 2012; Nandedkar and Brown, 2018). Furthermore, organisational trust and empowerment are predictors of employee engagement and performance (Chaurasia and Shukla, 2013; Humborstad *et al.*, 2014; Maurya and Agarwal, 2018; Ugwu *et al.*, 2014). By empowering rather than micro-managing employees, leaders and managers can instil a heightened sense of meaning, control and competence in their staff to build trust and loyalty (Hesketh *et al.*, 2016; Jose and Mampilly, 2015; Meyer, 2013; Neck *et al.*, 1998; Taberner, 2018).

Additionally, positive leader behaviour that encompasses supporting work group members, valuing individual contributions, providing a good work model, giving positive and timely feedback, and openness to team member ideas, builds team play and demonstrates leader and manager support and concern for all team members (Amabile *et al.*, 2004; McKeown and Cochrane, 2017). Emphasising team play promotes feelings of fairness, cooperation, community, group identity and responsibility towards attaining group goals, mutual respect confidence and trust in the leader. This, in turn, evokes employee sense of belonging. Moreover, Smith *et al.* (2016) have suggested that in today’s environment managers that treat employees as a business partner build relationships that create loyalty and mutual success through higher levels of employee engagement and extra-role behaviours such as discretionary effort. This builds high quality leader–employee relationships (Fassina *et al.*, 2008; Organ *et al.*, 2006) which encourage employees to reciprocate by becoming more engaged and thereby invest in higher levels of discretionary effort.

Leadership is about influencing others so that individual and collective efforts accomplish shared objectives (Yukl, 2010). Researchers have identified a positive link between leadership and employee engagement (Besieux *et al.*, 2015; Lee, 2014; Popli and Rizvi, 2015; Top *et al.*, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2014). However, how different aspects of leadership influence employee engagement and discretionary effort within specific cultures and countries is largely unknown. Several dimensions of national culture have been identified (Hofstede, 1983) and studies examining the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and discretionary effort need to consider how these differences may change the current understanding of these constructs. For example, power distance which refers to the degree of acceptance of unequal distribution of power within a society (e.g. Sweden low power distance and Mexico high power distance). Similarly, individual vs collectivism where some societies encourage independence and self-interest (e.g. Australia and the USA) while others encourage collective behaviour to achieve mutual goals (e.g. Costa Rica and Bhutan). Likewise, uncertainty avoidance within a society either being high or low risk oriented (e.g. Japan high uncertainty avoidance and India low uncertainty avoidance) (Hofstede, 1983).

Several studies have confirmed leadership and management cultural differences between western and other cultures (Bakker, 2017; Hofstede, 1983; Steers *et al.*, 2012). For example, Asian studies conducted by Park *et al.* (2009), Steers *et al.* (2012) and Xiaojin and Lanfeng (2007) found evidence of culture affecting leadership styles in countries like China and South Korea. Most of these eastern cultures were found to favour traditional, vertical and autocratic leadership. This is quite different from the horizontal organisation and rationalism found in most western societies.

Studies investigating the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and discretionary effort from non-western countries are scarce but becoming more common. The research on employee engagement in non-western cultures has grown since 2010 (see e.g. Al Shehri *et al.*, 2017; Farndale and Murrer, 2015; Gagné and Bhawe, 2011), however, the majority of studies continue to be conducted on developed western countries (Hesketh *et al.*, 2016).

Researchers such as Hesketh *et al.* (2016), Meyer (2013) and Taberner (2018) suggest that managers who delegate tasks and empower employees help to build manager-employee trust, engage employees and encourage them to reciprocate by investing in discretionary effort. While these leadership and management behaviours can act as drivers of employee engagement and discretionary effort, they may not be as effective across all cultures. In some countries like China, employees feel comfortable following established methods and procedures rather than being provided with autonomy (Shore, 2013; Xiaojin and Lanfeng, 2007). Similarly, Chaï's (2012) research showed that Korean employees prefer certainty to uncertainty and this can be endorsed by organisations providing clearly defined guidelines for the tasks employees are asked to perform. This preference for certainty also extends to distinctly defined roles and responsibilities, clear instructions and directives in the interest of reducing confusion and enhancing work efficiency (Chaï, 2012). Hence, it seems that bureaucratic leaders are better suited in these cultures, as they base their orders solely on organisational policies, procedures and guidelines, and tell employees what to do and how to perform tasks (Kellerman, 2003).

Transformational leadership appears to suit both female and male managers in the Malaysian context, more than in the western environment (Jogulu and Ferkins, 2012; Lo *et al.*, 2010). Other studies like Zaitouni and Ouakouak (2018) have examined the influence of leadership and co-worker support on individual creativity in collectivist cultures. Their study suggests that in Middle Eastern cultures like Kuwait, employees' decision to help each other is not influenced by their level of engagement, and employees supported one another regardless of personal or contextual factors. Therefore, it seems

feasible that while certain leader and manager factors are potential drivers of employee engagement and discretionary effort in one culture they may have less influence or even inhibit these behaviours in other cultures. Thus, both the practices (e.g. defining roles and responsibilities, developing methods, procedures, policies and directives) and behaviours of leaders and managers (e.g. leadership style, task delegation, employee empowerment, motivating employees and trust building) are important influences on employee engagement and discretionary effort but may be mitigated by national culture. Hence, it is reasonable to propose that:

- P3. National culture such as power distance, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance will moderate the extent to which perceived positive and supportive leadership and management factors function as drivers of employee engagement and discretionary effort.

Barriers to employee engagement and discretionary effort

While drivers of employee engagement and discretionary effort are still the main focus in the literature, there has been a growing interest in identifying factors that hinder an organisation's ability to engage its workforce. This is not surprising given the global downward trend in engagement rates reported in the *Gallup Business Journal* survey (2016).

Autocratic and abusive styles of leadership and management that involve negative leader behaviours are likely to adversely affect employees' psychological and emotional states and make it difficult for people to perform their jobs effectively. These behaviours breach the leader-employee psychological contract undermining employee trust (Decoster *et al.*, 2014; Taberner, 2018). This is exacerbated when a leader publicly humiliates an employee as this can lower the employee's self-esteem and sense of psychological safety. Social exchange theory not only suggests that such unsupportive leader behaviours are perceived as unfair, they create feelings of mistrust and dislike for the leader (Molloy and Barney, 2015; Organ *et al.*, 2006). Research on perceived leadership support has also shown that it influences reciprocating behaviour such as organisational citizenship behaviour (Pohl *et al.*, 2013). Negative leader behaviours may bring employee responses that reduce engagement, increase active disengagement and lower organisational citizenship behaviour and discretionary effort (Decoster *et al.*, 2014; Papalexandris and Galanaki, 2009). In addition, perceived organisational and leader support adds to social exchange mechanisms (Pohl *et al.*, 2013). Smith *et al.* (2016) propose that every layer of management needs to be able to facilitate and understand the nature of each employee's psychological contract and suggest that without this organisations will continue to struggle to get the response from employees they desire, that is, higher levels of engagement and extra-role behaviours (i.e. discretionary effort).

Empirical research has established that positive leader and manager practices and behaviours increase employee engagement and discretionary effort, while negative practices and behaviours have the opposite effect. However, research on negative leader behaviours is more limited. Amabile *et al.* (2004) suggested that these negative behaviours may be more potent than positive leader behaviours but as yet research has not sought to measure their potency. Therefore, it is proposed that:

- P4. Negative leadership and management behaviours have a more potent impact on employee engagement and discretionary effort than positive leader behaviours.

Furthermore, given the differences in leadership styles adopted and preferred in different cultures, it seems reasonable to question if negative leader behaviours as perceived in western cultures could have a substantively different effect in other cultures. For example, while many studies associate leaders' intimidation behaviours with negative employee commitment, a study by Asawo and George (2018) in Nigeria suggests a weak but positive relationship between the use of intimidation and subordinates' affective commitment.

Consequently, more studies are needed to understand better, how negative leader behaviours function as barriers to employee engagement and discretionary effort in different cultural contexts. Hence, it is proposed that:

- P5. National culture such as power distance, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance will moderate the extent to which perceived negative leadership and management factors function as barriers to employee engagement and discretionary effort.

Discussion

This literature review explores the influence of leadership and management practices and behaviours on employee engagement and discretionary effort. Although there are many potential variables that can contribute to an individual’s desire to engage or “go beyond” at work, this review highlights the relevance of leadership and management factors. Overall, it organises, describes and appraises the current literature to gain an integrated perspective to set five propositions. The findings suggest that in order to understand the influence of leadership and management factors on employee engagement and discretionary effort, more refined definitions of employee engagement and discretionary effort are required.

Context is clearly an important factor in affecting the levels of employee engagement and discretionary effort. This review considers the role of national culture as a contextual factor and proposes that while some leadership and management factors act as drivers of employee engagement and discretionary effort in some societies, they may not be as effective or even may function as inhibitors in some cultures. Hence, the authors propose that national culture may moderate the extent to which leadership and management factors function as drivers and barriers of employee engagement and discretionary effort. Furthermore, research on negative leader behaviours is necessary to measure the relative potency of positive and negative leader behaviours.

The five propositions offered are the basis for a conceptual model (Figure 3) that identifies the key relationships proposed between leadership and management factors, employee engagement and discretionary effort to guide future research.

Appreciation of how leadership and management factors influence employee engagement and discretionary effort among employees is fundamental to every industry (Chadwick, 2015; Ghadi, 2012). The outcomes of future research could assist leaders and

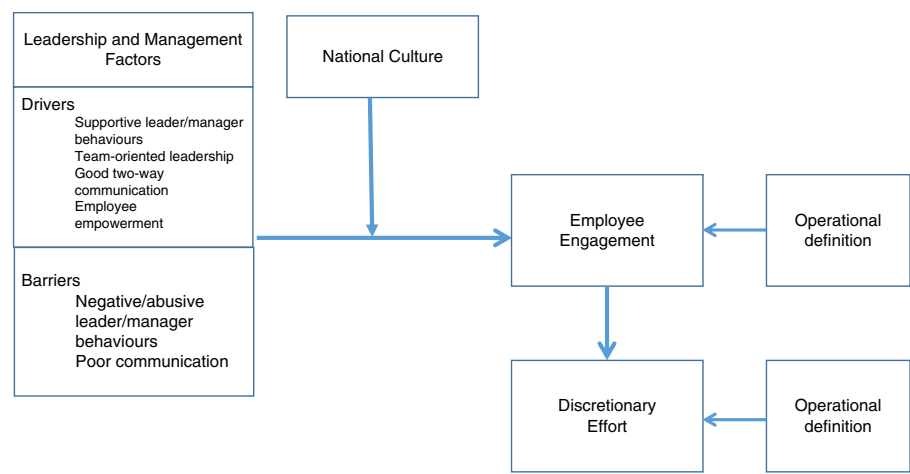


Figure 3.
Conceptual framework

managers in different organisations and countries to create an engaged workforce and foster higher levels of discretionary effort; improving the outcomes for both the individual and the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency.

Conclusion

This paper has both theoretical and practical implications. It has led to three theoretical implications. First, the literature clearly shows employee engagement and discretionary effort as multidimensional constructs and must be investigated as such. Second, continual refinement of the global definitions of employee engagement and discretionary effort is necessary as research delivers a greater understanding of them. Finally, by addressing the influence of national culture on employee engagement and discretionary effort variation is shown of how leadership and management practices and behaviours have different impacts across cultures. Research which attends to this matter can help build on the current theoretical and practical understanding of how leadership and management factors can influence employee engagement and discretionary effort.

Similarly, this paper contributes two practical implications for all leaders and managers across different industries and geographical locations. First, leaders and managers at all levels must play their role in encouraging employee engagement and encouraging discretionary effort. However, to do so effectively, they need to consider the context of national culture, and how it can have different impacts on employee engagement and discretionary effort (e.g. while use of intimidation might discourage employee engagement and discretionary effort within or from some cultures, in others it has been shown to have differential effects on employees). Second, leaders and managers must use their judgement regarding when and how they give employees autonomy and allowing them to participate as business partners may provide a better performance outcome in today's environment. Again, these opportunities for autonomy and close partnerships might help employees and the organisation to become more collaborative and successful in some cultures, however, they may have the adverse result in other cultures. Hence, leaders and managers cannot approach employee engagement and discretionary effort using "a one size fits all" mindset as cultural differences need to be considered.

The contributions of this review form the basis for future research that will facilitate a clearer understanding of the opportunities that employee engagement and discretionary effort provide, including studies to test the five propositions. This study has limitations that are commonly found in theoretical studies. For example, the five propositions are based on the existing literature and require empirical testing to determine their relevance and validity in a practical setting. In addition, in this review only sources published in English were consulted. Furthermore, the inclusion and exclusion criteria used may mean that relevant articles are unintentionally excluded.

Despite these limitations, the review has contributed to knowledge in the field in three ways. First, by providing a refined, up-to-date definition of employee engagement and discretionary effort. Second, it has identified three gaps in the existing knowledge of how to enhance the level of employee engagement and promote discretionary effort as a desirable behaviour among employees. These were, the need for a refined, up-to-date definition of employee engagement and discretionary effort that can find commonality among academics from different disciplines; the lack of studies on the impact of negative leader and manager practices and behaviour on employee engagement and discretionary effort; and the limited consideration of the influence of national cultures beyond western perspectives.

Finally, it has provided a research framework to guide how to achieve these goals.

All leaders and managers want engaged employees and most employees want jobs where they engage and make a difference. Research that helps facilitate increased engagement in the workplace is critical to sustaining and growing individual employees and organisations in today's turbulent times.

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