

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: EVIDENCE FROM BANKING AND TELECOMMUNICATION SECTOR OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The study explores the antecedents and consequences of Employee Engagement in the telecommunication and banking sector of Pakistan. With a qualitative approach, 14 interviews were taken with purposive sampling, and with data saturation, the data was analyzed with thematic analysis. The findings suggest that employees be motivated towards the salary and allowances, however, the employer branding and brand name of the companies, and the office environment creates more engagement with work. It was also suggested that engagement creates a pathway for happiness and commitment for employees.

Keywords: Employee Engagement; Antecedents; Consequences; Qualitative Research

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, the most important factors considered are efficiency and productivity. To stand in this competitive and dynamic marketplace, this leads to creating the demand for every manager to have efficient and productive employees, which leads every organization to conform to the concept of Employee Engagement (EE) in their organization (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2014). Employee engagement has become more prominent and the factor to which every organization has to concentrate as the employee assumed as an asset & investment that leads to achieving organizational goals and enhancing the level of productivity (Morabito & Themistocleous, 2007). According to extant research, when we refer to any employee as an "engaged" employee, it means that the employee is fully involved, has maximum information of his job context, is more passionate to achieve the organization's set goals, is satisfied, not left any chance to make better relations with his employer and enthusiastic towards their work. Employees want to be a part of those organizations where they discover the significance and worth of their work (Obiageli, Uzochukwu, Leo, & Ifeyinwa Angela, 2016). Innumerable organizations are more indulged in the Employee Engagement concept, these business entities believed that there is an absolute affirmative affiliation between Employee Engagement and Organizational performance such as Employees showing an interest to stay, the lowest rate of turnover, higher yield in terms of productivity, profitability, safety, and customer loyalty. Most Organizations are indulging in employee engagement to compete and strong foothold to have a competitive advantage over their competitor to have maximum market share. As this concept not only leads towards Organizational performance, other than that; an entity with more engaged employees linked to achieving highly satisfied customers, the maximum level of creative and constructive job, decrease in the rate of absenteeism, maximum rate of retention, and most importantly high in productivity (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Mansoor & Hassan, 2017; Saks, 2006).

Owing to the significance of the phenomena of employee engagement, its causes and outcomes have been researched everywhere, however, there is always a need to explore more in this regard, with some contextual factors to be explored. This study aimed to explore the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. Employee engagement is to initiate motivation to be an endless and two-way process (between Organization and Employee), - the process in which the organization has to put additional push to engage the employee, and in the effect engaged employee perform their job more willingly, confidently, actively to contribute in the organizational accomplishment and it enhances their motivation and productivity level (Alfes et al. 2010; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Vance, 2006;

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Wagner & Harter, 2006). Mostly job satisfaction and employee engagement are considered the same but (Fernandez, 2007) claims that there is a contrast between job satisfaction and engagement, the concept of employee engagement is more advanced than the concept of Job satisfaction, the managers cannot only rely on the employee satisfaction, but also to compete in the competitive market and to retain the best and the brilliant employees to achieve their organizational goals, it creates the need of employee engagement, and it is all about willingness and devotedness towards the job, the willingness of employee should be fulfilled to accomplish and achieve the goal of his employer. Consequently, the full engagement and its equivalence are drawn by the alignment of maximal satisfaction with the job and maximal work significant addition (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2014).

When the employee is said to be engaged, that engagement demonstrates not only the emotional commitment towards his expected duties. Other than that, that employee is also concerned to achieve overall organizational goals. An employee having proactive and autotelic personality traits in their self are considered the most highly engaged employees in their job and accomplish that jobs in a very efficient manner (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

The workforce of any organization includes four kinds of employees concerning employee engagement (Jha, 2016). These four kinds are mainly categorized as follows.

- Highly engaged (totally engaged)
- Moderately engaged (nearly engaged)
- Passive engaged (nearly engaged, nearly disengaged)
- Actively disengaged (totally disengaged)

The engagement of employees leads to three kinds of dimensions of employee engagement.

Dimensions of Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement has three core dimensions, which are as follows.

- *Intellectual Engagement*: Considering the job determinedly and persistent improvement in it.
- *Affective Engagement*: Demonstrates optimism towards the job.
- *Social Engagement*: Ready to take opportunities to explore more advancement in work with others.

These are different kinds of dimensions through which different factors can be measured; likewise Satisfaction level, work performance level, and commitment level of employees of the Organization (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Jha, 2016).

Engaged Employees' Behaviors and Organizational Performance

Engaged employees demonstrate three behaviors, and those behaviors eventually lead to enhancing Organizational performance and productivity. Engaged employees show the behavior of employee advocacy which means Employees get their self-involved to promote their organization by this they can get the most potential customers. Though, if the employee gets the chance to work in another organization, the employee shows the desire to stay in your organization. Employees strive to contribute extra effort and take initiative for the betterment of the organization (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2014).

Drivers of Employee Engagement

Numerous drivers have been identified by the extant research that influences employee productivity and efficiency level.

- Effective Communication
- Leadership
- Work-life balance.
- Career opportunities
- Recognition
- Pay

These all the above-mentioned drivers lead to having the most efficient employees that help an organization to achieve goals and the organization can have a competitive advantage in the market. These are the drivers that every employee is looking for and by providing all these drivers, the employee and the employer would be in a win-win situation (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Kompaso & Sridevi, 2014). Management plays a crucial role in engaging employees, to have motivated and committed employees in the organization, the management of the organization must have leadership qualities to answer or address every concern related to employees and punctually satisfy them by considering it as their duty (Jha, 2016).

Employee engagement has a very critical role to gain Organizational productivity and efficiency. Previously, many research studies have been conducted but there is a need to conduct the research in the local context and to explore those factors which are functioning as antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in the organization

that increase the productivity and efficiency in the local context. The innumerable factors of employee engagement could be influenced because of cultural dynamics so there is a need to identify those factors. Research has been conducted on this issue but in a different context, so the gap will be filled by studying in the local context (Pakistan). The purpose of this research study is to explore the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in the banking and telecommunication sector of Pakistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the present era, billions of people go to their job every day, and everyone is trying that they should carry a batch of the employed individual with them, but it is not easy as it seems because when an individual gets an opportunity to do the job in any of the organization and start working there, Work is major and midway identified with an individual's satisfaction, quality of life and most importantly provides status and purpose to stay in that organization to the individual. (Shuck, 2010). Employees intend to stay in those organizations where they get the feel of satisfaction, because work satisfaction is concomitant with the overall satisfaction of one's life, from the physically fit to mentally fit, by these factors a satisfied employee could be identified. In this manner, work is more than basically a spot to win a living; it is the place employees discover individual "worth or meaning, stability of mind and physique, and a feeling a strong bond with the colleagues and recognition" (Ash & Bartlett, 1996; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Shuck, 2010), where the individual gets all those factors only in that organization, the individual could work heartedly and could be highly productive for the organization to achieve their goals. The preference of job seekers is always towards those organizations where their traits are affiliated with organizational traits and the goals that the organization is trying to be accomplished.

The factors that reflect the engagement of an individual towards his or her organization can be recognized by that individual is enthusiastic, impassioned, motivated, and dynamic towards his or her job (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013). The identification of an engaged employee can also be done through that employee staying persistent and resilient towards his or her job, indeed hundreds of obstacles confronted him or her task, that individual exerts energy and remains motivated and impassioned towards his or her job. The employee feels proud for doing his job (Menguc et al., 2013).

Assessing, enhancing, stimulating, and sustaining employee engagement and work engagement is the key concern of every business entity (Knight, Patterson, & Dawson, 2017). Various kinds of engagement have been discovered; the first kind of engagement was discovered by Kahn in the year 1990, he distinguished two kinds of engagement; Personal engagement and Personal disengagement; Personal engagement refers to that kind of engagement in which an employee possesses that he is connected towards his job actively by physically, cognitively connected and emotionally as well, and if we put a light on Personal disengagement, in this kind the employee is taking a back step towards his job, his behavior reflects the withdrawing attitude and not even possess his cognitive ability and not connected physically & emotionally towards his job performance (Simpson, 2009). Another engagement is burnout but in the year 2002, Schaufeli argued that burnout and engagement are unlike, and few researchers claimed that it is a state of engagement in which an employee possesses a lack of engagement towards his or her job. It is considered that burnout happens due to the presence of psychological disorders portrayed by fatigue, inefficacy, and low involvement; these all factors initiate when an individual is suffering from the prolonged stress of a job. On the other hand, engagement could be recognized when an individual possesses high efficacy, high involvement, and high dynamism toward his work performance. As far as the organizational goals are concerned, so the management should have an eye on those employees who are having the characteristics of burnout because eventually, their behavior affects the performance of the job (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Simpson, 2009).

Four elements of antecedents are identified that are necessary for the engagement; which are (a) clearness of desires and fundamental materials and the equipment being delivered, (b) the feeling to contribute to the organization, (c) having a sense of affinity and attachment to something beyond oneself, and (d) possess the attitude by discussing though there are more chances for progress and growth in the organization (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

The other antecedents for employee engagement are how the job is designed because mostly the managers failed to create a job that is well attractive and interesting for the employee if employees are having a clear picture of their job and what is expected from them, but it should be designed in a way that the difficult should look like the easy one, his physical and cognitive involvement developed naturally towards the job that would eventually decrease the level of absenteeism and enhance the job satisfaction level of the employee. Individuals also get engaged in a culture where creating equality among the employees is essential, where employers don't make any differences between, doesn't make biased decisions while promoting the employees or at the time of announcement of bonuses, but the findings of this research study are only limited to the IT professionals (Benjamin Balbuena Aguenza, 2012).

Three other potential antecedents of employee engagement have been identified by the research studies of (Harter et al., 2002; Brown & Leigh, 1996; Rhoades et al., 2001) that were.

- Job fit
- Psychological climate
- Affective commitment

“Job fit” is characterized as how much an individual’s feel their identity and qualities fit with their present place of employment. Great job fit is that degree that enables the employees of having a feeling or sense to promote belonging and it is consequent to professional association with interest and values it has been seen that it meaningfully affects the attitude which is linked to the employee job such as employee engagement. The second antecedent is “Psychological climate”, which can be explained as the interpretation and insight of an organizational environment in affiliation to an employee’s insight of well-being, research suggests that it is considered one of the important dynamics for the development of employee engagement. The last antecedent which has been discovered is “Affective commitment”, it can be explained as a sense of emotional committal and affinity with his job and the organization in which the individual is working, as emotional committal is considered as one of the prior elements for the development of employee engagement.

Except, for all these above-mentioned antecedents, there could be numerous antecedents that can create any employee an “engaged employee”. The antecedents or the factors that create the drive in the employees to focus on their job and for the organizational goals could differ in which culture or the area they are doing their job, because in developing countries, the prime motivational factor or the factor that creates the employee engagement is the high amount of income, the organization that provides accommodation to their employees, providing medical services, transportation services. On the other hand, an organization that doesn’t provide monetary kind of benefits but provides their employees the trips to other countries or other fringe benefits keeps employees tied to their jobs. There could be any factor that may drive employee engagement; the factors influenced by the culture, and individual choices. Maybe the individual who is working in a country where the living expense is high, but his own choice is to explore new places or get a chance to get trained by professionals. In this way, it influences employee engagement levels (Gagne, 2011). Employee engagement is linked to individual differences as it is related to the psychological field. It is considered that individual differences could have significant effects on employee engagement; the main element that is discussed is that psychological differences may affect individuals to engage or disengage in their role performance (Kahn, 2018). Individual differences differ as per the perception of that individual, factors that are worthy and meaningful for the individual. Individual personality and their perception varies, every individual perceives an information differently that is delivered to him, or the factors the organization is providing to make them engaged, maybe that is not meaningful for the individual, further discussed that individual make sense of the situations and events that arises they create the perception in their unique different style that is mostly linked to their priorities, past experiences, interest, current needs and expectations, (Sandeep Kular, Mark Gatenby, Chris Rees, Emma Soane, 2008) but there is a criticism on this that whether individual differences does a significant effect on the employee engagement, but the demographic factors also have their own importance in the individual differences, for instance that working women who also have a family, their priorities and the factors that can make them engaged could be different from men, but women tend to remain more focused and passionate towards her job if they find all those factors that make them engaged in the work environment (Edwards & Rothbard, 2004), the marital status of the individual also plays a significant role; it has been found that married employees are more engaged towards their job rather than the employees who are single because when they are satisfied in their personal lives they tend to be more relaxed and active so eventually they enhance their engagement level, but it also varies according to the personality of the individuals, few individuals feels relax in their own world. Differences in health and personal values also affect the level of engagement of employees, but still, it also varies according to individual differences likewise, the employees who take their tasks and challenges open-handedly and be optimistic towards their job and towards their personal life as well, who establish a good relationship with his subordinates, tends to be more engaged with the job (Sandeep Kular, Mark Gatenby, Chris Rees, Emma Soane, 2008).

There is an influence of workplace culture on the level of engagement of employees, a culture in which an employee feels a strong bond or a sense of belongingness like she feels with her own family, research reveals that organizations that provide a workplace culture in which employees sense the meaningfulness in their jobs, the culture provided to employees should make them feel like they are perfect for the particular job (job fit), and feels secure from their job, the managers are supportive with them and all the resources are available that are necessary to carry out their job tasks. More than that, the organization could earn employee loyalty by providing a culture of admiration and integrity. The study claims that the more an organization respects its employees and treats them with dignity, the more that organization could have loyal and engaged employees. These all factors could be achieved by working on the culture of the organization (Morabito & Themistocleous, 2007).

Employee engagement is associated with a few other factors which are; high yield productivity, the satisfaction of the customer, loyalty of the customer, high profitability ratio, and negatively associated with the turnover of the

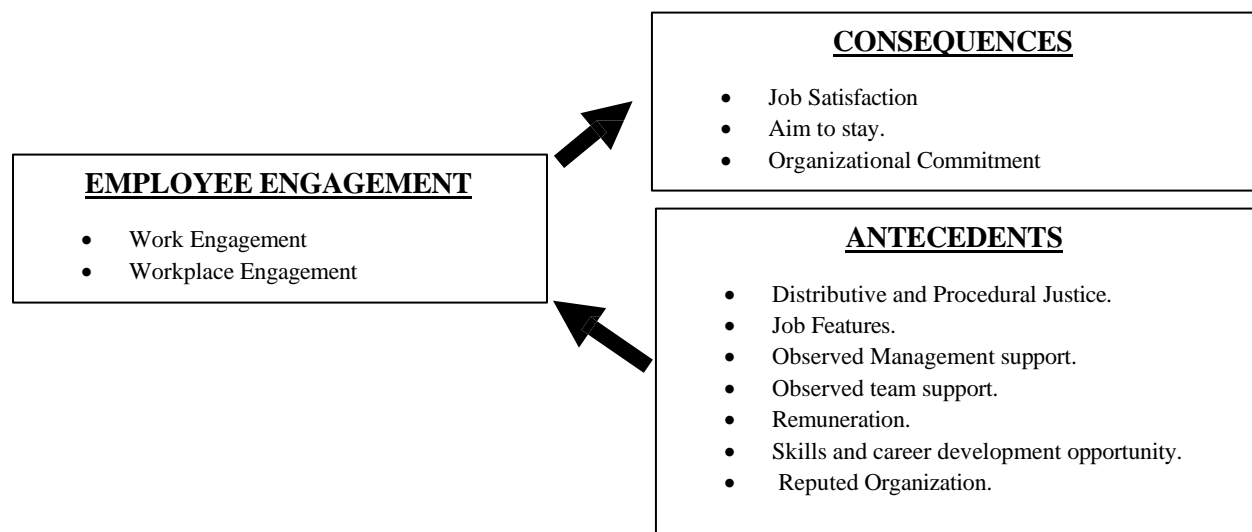
employees of the organization (Harter et al., 2002). It has estimated by the study that is conducted by Towers Perrin, 2008 that the organizations which hire highly engaged employees enjoy a spread of more than five percent of operating margin and three percent in the net margin in comparison to the organizations which are having disengaged employees, the employees which are categorized in burnout disengagement (Menguc et al., 2013). So, to get an engaged employee in the organization, the most important role played by the management of the organization, there are many factors and attributes of the management that can enhance the level of engagement or create an engaged employee. Effective communication from the employer enhances the productivity level of any employee which eventually gives significant power to business outcomes, it means that the level of engagement is influenced by the organization's management to some extent. The self-efficacy of managers influences the engagement level of every employee in their organization. Employee engagement level depends on how much his manager believes in his abilities and how much he has the quality to build an engaged team that enhances the performance level of the organization. It has been tested previously that there is a positive strong relationship between managers' self-efficacy and employee engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2002). There is a very strong role of management to engage their employees towards their job, the management policies, systems, and processes should design in a manner in which employees of that organization should feel emotionally stable, can use their cognitive abilities to accomplish the task and feel physically relaxed in the work environment. The management should provide regular feedback to their employees to sustain their motivation level toward their job, ambiguous feedback affects the behavior of employees (Ludwig & Frazier, 2012).

The findings of the research study (Morabito & Themistocleous, 2007) claimed that there is a strong bond between the practices of the management, and the commitment of the employees towards their organization, the manager is the person, who creates the strong bond between employee and organization, that eventually builds a more strong bond between the manager and employees. The practices of the management influence the employees to stay in the organization, managers make a trustful relationship to retain them, otherwise, the organization eventually loses that talent, and later that talent will be utilized by the competitors.

The antecedents of employee engagement and the management role and strategies, the combination of these two helps to achieve an engaged employee, but the antecedents can differ from culture and the context point of view in which the research study has conducted. Eventually, the organizations that are striving hard to make their employees engaged, primarily have a competitive advantage in the market and can be more productive and have a high-profit margin.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study takes an exploratory strategy and a qualitative approach. The data was collected from the managers of the telecommunication and Banking industry of Pakistan through semi-structured interviews. The interview protocol was designed because of previous literature to ensure the validity of the interview questions. Sampling was halted at 14 interviews as the saturation point was reached. The participants were selected with a purposive sampling strategy. The interviews were recorded and transcribed properly keeping the paralinguistics and extralinguistic intact. The data were analyzed with coding in two levels and thematic analysis was then performed to reach the answers to the research questions. The following figure is representing the codes and themes emerged as findings of this study.



4. DISCUSSION

Numerous studies from different countries on different sectors have been done to explore the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. This research study aimed to explore the antecedents and consequences of Employee engagement in the context of Pakistan, the study was mainly focused on the telecommunication sector and Banking sector of Pakistan.

The antecedents that are explored in this research study are Distributive and Procedural Justice, Characteristics of job, Perceived Management support, Perceived team support, Remuneration, skills and career development opportunity, and Reputed Organization. The consequences that are explored are aimed to stay, the satisfaction of the job, and organizational commitment.

4.1 Antecedents

Distributive and procedural Justice both antecedents are served by the management of the organization to have an engaged employee, distributive justice is when there is a fair distribution of goods and duties to the individuals from the management of the organization and Procedural justice is when management fairly resolves disputes among the employees and assign or allocate resources. An employee answered that *“whether we work in a team but still the workload is distributed fairly and equally, and, in the end, we get rewards as a team and on an individual basis.”* The antecedent distributive justice and procedural justice have been explored and there is an affirmative and strong association between distributive & procedural justice and employee engagement. When the employee perceived a fair work environment they feel obliged to do the work and make themselves engaged in the work (Saks, 2015).

Job Characteristics, various characteristics counts in the domain of job characteristic like intrinsic motivation, feeling valuable or worthy, low absenteeism, high rate of performance, task identity, and opportunity to make an important contribution. These are the characteristics that employees perceive while carrying out the job duties that make them engaged with their job. One of the participants said, *“I want to stay in this company for a longer period because my manager always assigns me different tasks and different corporate managers to make them agree to invest in our bank and get services from this company, sometimes it's difficult but I like to bring myself out from my comfort level and I feel that my contribution becomes very important in this company.”*

Perceived Management Support is a kind of support that every employee needs from the employer. This is a kind of psychological safety or assurance at the workplace that makes the employee more engaged and dedicated to the job. The interviewee said related to management support *“My manager has created the branch environment in a way that motivates every individual to do the task beyond the expectations and supports us in every decision.”* This antecedent for employee engagement reinforced that management support in the organization to the employee leads to psychological safety and motivates them as well. There is a strong relationship between management support and psychological safety and that directly leads to get the engagement of employees in the organization (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, & Fletcher, 2017).

Perceived Team Support also refers to psychological safety because when the team member or whole team supports each other to carry out their assigned tasks it gives support on an individual basis in the banking and telecommunication sector both sectors have to accomplish the task on a team basis most of the times so strong teams and supporting team members make the organization achieve their organizational goals and the team support is considered as an antecedent of employee engagement because it gives them to support that safe the organization from employee burnout.

Remuneration, this term contains all kinds of extrinsic benefits are basic salary, allowances like a company car, medical plan, and other bonuses. In this research study, remuneration is reflected as the most important antecedent for the engagement of the employee. One of the respondents said, *“I want to end my career in the banking sector because of the benefits and salary security that the banking sector provides there is no other sector in Pakistan provides, and as my position gets higher, I will get more benefits as every post has a different kind of perks.”* Although previous research has divided salary and other benefits into two in this case these two together work to get employee engagement.

Skills and Career Development Opportunity providing these two to the employees helps the organization to get an engaged employee. In this research study, these two are working as antecedents to have employee engagement in the workplace as every individual who wants to prosper needs an organization that provides them the opportunity of skills and career development, and as participants said, *“for me, the salary doesn't matter the thing is I am learning every day new things and accomplishing new tasks and indirectly it is helping me to develop my career”*.

Reputed Organization this factor also plays the role as an antecedent of employee engagement because in the case of this research study the name of the organization makes the employee more engaged towards their organization like the employees of certain big companies do not want to leave these reputed organization because these remain on the

top of the list among their sectors. One participant puts it this way, “I am working in the no.1 commercial bank of Pakistan I feel proud when I tell anybody that I am an employee of this bank.”

4.2 Consequences

Intention to stay, satisfaction with the job, and commitment toward the organization; these all are the consequences of employee engagement. Participants reiterated in their interviews, and as the repeated codes and categories suggest, that whenever they feel motivated towards the job, or they remain engaged, they feel highly associated with their company. This fosters their intention to stay in that organization since it keeps them satisfied with the job. Their commitment to their work and responsibilities is also the outcome of their engagement with the work and sense of duty. It was also revealed that they are committed more because they are happy, and not because of any accountability process.

5. CONCLUSION

Employee engagement, as discussed earlier, is pivotal in the efficiency and success of organizations. However, their causes should be explored with every passage of time due to volatility in the environment and because this change according to changes in culture and other social factors. This study concludes that antecedents of employee engagement are predominantly like what researchers have already found. Moreover, the consequences, create a certain link for quantitative studies, as engagement enhances satisfaction which results in the commitment of the employees. The study has implication for theorists and practitioners as the former may derive the future scales based on these antecedents and later may implement the dimensions investigated in this research to foster more employee engagement.

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