EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT - A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Organizations today as facing issues like high attrition and low performance. One of the reasons cited in literature for this problem is disengagement of employees. The paper reviews the literature available on employee engagement and discusses the levels, types and factors that would drive employee engagement. It further discusses the importance of employee engagement and its key drivers. At the end some steps undertaken by organizations and a framework of employee engagement is discussed.

Keywords: Engagement, motivation, drivers, framework

I.   INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement

Organizations today are facing issues like high attrition and low performance. Often, employees leave the organization when their engagement level is low and they are not satisfied with it. The paper reviews the literature available on employee engagement and discusses the levels, types and factors that would drive employee engagement.

Various authors have described employee engagement in their own ways and all these definitions indicate a wide variety of meanings of employee engagement. For some it means a positive emotional and/or cognitive attitude towards one's work role while for others it refers to employee behaviour in terms of better performance at work. For others, an engaged employee is one who has not only a positive attitude towards his work but also performs better than a non-engaged employees.

The term employee engagement was first introduced by Kahn in 1990. He defined personal engagement as "The simultaneous employment and expression of a person's "Preferred Self" in a task behaviors that promote connection to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performance". According to him, employees can be engaged on a physical, emotional and cognitive level: these levels are significantly affected by three psychological domains: meaningfulness, safety and availability. In turn, these domains create

influence on how employees perceive and perform their roles at work. Baumruk (2004), Shaw (2005) and Richman (2006) defined employee engagement as "Emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization." Robinson et. al, (2004) defined engagement as "A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values, and that engagement is a 'two-way relationship between employer and employee' which the organization must work to develop and nurture."

Truss et. al. (2006) defined employee engagement as passion for work', a psychological state which is seen to encompass the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990), and captures the common theme running through all these definitions. Harter et. al, (2002) defined employee engagement as "The individuals' involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work." According to Macleod (2009), "Employee engagement is a work place approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organization's goal and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are able at the same to enhance their own sense of well-being."

Decision Wise (2016) after extensive research using over millions of employee responses, found that there are five keys (MAGIC) that drive employee engagement namely meaning, autonomy, growth, impact and connection.

II. Importance of employee engagement

An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business resultsi. A highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000). Engaged employees exhibit better performance and are motivated which leads to profitability. Such employees act as advocates of the company and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success.

Engaged employees care about the future of the company and are willing to be attached with the company for a longer period of time and invest their efforts towards achieving the organizational goal. Such employees act as brand ambassadors for the organization and promote the organization as an "Employer of choice".

A. Employee engagement and business performance

Rayton et. al, (2012) highlighted the effectiveness of employee engagement strategies in improving business performance, productivity and profitability.

They emphasized that employee engagement impacts positively on levels of absenteeism, on retention, levels of innovation, customer service, positive outcomes in public services and staff advocacy of their organizations.

High levels of employee engagement are inextricably linked with high levels of customer engagement, good performance appraisal and a safe working environment (Shaw, 2005). Engagement has been described as a fulfilling, positive work-related experiences and state of mind (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentage, 2003); it has been found to be related to good health and positive work affect. These positive experiences and emotions are likely to result in favourable work outcomes.

In 2012 Rayton et. al compiled the benefits of employee engagement from various researches as income growth, productivity and performance, customer satisfaction, innovation, absence and well-being and retention.

III. CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYEES ENGAGEMENT

According to the Gallup[1] there are there are different types of people:

Engaged: "Engaged" employees are builders. They want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them. They perform at consistently high levels. They show passion at work and are instrumental in innovations at the organizations.

Not engaged: "Not-engaged" employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They focus on accomplishing tasks vs. achieving an outcome. Non engaged employees feel that their potential is not been fully utilized and their contributions are ignored.

Actively disengaged: The "actively disengaged" employees are the "cave dwellers." They are "consistently against virtually everything." They constantly affect the engaged employees negatively. In long run, they can be a threat to organizations as their behaviour and actions affect every product and services of the organization.

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[1] Gallup Business Journal April 2007,
http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/27145/innovation-equation.aspx)
retrieved on 31/05/2017

IV. COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement should be looked from a holistic perspective as it involves various components. The components may vary according to the time, organization and the individual factors of the employee himself.

Employee engagement has three components, cognitive, emotional and behavioral. The cognitive component reflects workers' approach to the job. It consists of opportunities for career advancement and development, an emotional bond with the organization, positive feelings and a sense of commitment to the company, their manager, department or team, and their work (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000). The behavioral component is marked by high productivity and work quality, along with fewer absence and interpersonal conflicts, when compared to peers[2].

V. KEY ELEMENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employees' satisfaction: It is a measure of how happy workers are with their job and working environment. Happy workers will be more likely to produce more, take fewer days off, and stay loyal to the company.

Employees' motivation: Motivation is directly linked with engagement. Motivated employees are more engaged.

Employees' effectiveness: Engaged employees are always committed and show their positive outlook, their sense of responsibility and their honesty. They are the most productive employees.

Personal impact: Past research (Conger and Kanugo, 1988; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990) concurs that issues such as the ability to impact the work environment and making meaningful choices in the workplace are critical components of employees' empowerment. Development Dimensions International's (DDI) research on retaining talent (Rioux et. al (2000), found that the perception of meaningful work is one of the most influential factors determining employees' willingness to stay with the organization.

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2 Chinn Diane, What Is Employee Engagement?
http://www.ehow.com/info_7750985_employee-engagement.html retrieved on 31/05/2017

Focused work: Clear directions from superiors have a significant role to play in employee engagement. When employees get clear directions, they are more focused on work and will not waste time in irrelevant activities. Clear direction and reduced wastage will automatically bring efficiency, which again will motivate employees.

Interpersonal harmony: Majority of the employees want to be away from organizational politics and desire for a conducive environment, they feel more engaged in the climate where they can depend on each other and trust.

VI. KEY DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Various authors in their studies have identified factors key drives of employee engagement. In 2006, the conference board identified following key drivers related to employee engagement as:

Trust and integrity: According to Perrin (2003), sixty percent of employees did not believe that senior management has their best interests at heart.

Nature of the job: Job-employee fit is essential to improve engagement.

Organizational alignment: Employees will not be engaged unless they know how they are contributing to the performance of the organization.

Career growth opportunities: Employees must feel that the company offers genuine personal growth potential.

Pride about the company: When employees feel proud about their company, they feel more engaged.

Co-Workers and team members: Non cooperative co-workers and team members can affect performance and induce employees to leave.

Employees' development: Engaged employees feel their company is truly committed to their ongoing development.

Relationship with one's manager: Employees' engagement is developed when supervisors are respectful, fair and competent.

Mishra (2012) described key drivers of employees' engagement as follows:
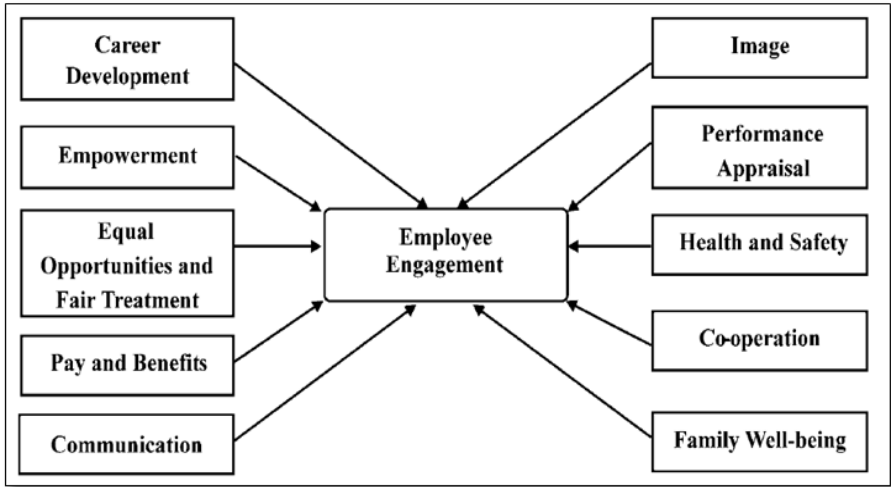
Source: Sahooand Mishra, 2012

Similarly, Kumar (2012) have described the factors leading to employee engagmeent as follows:
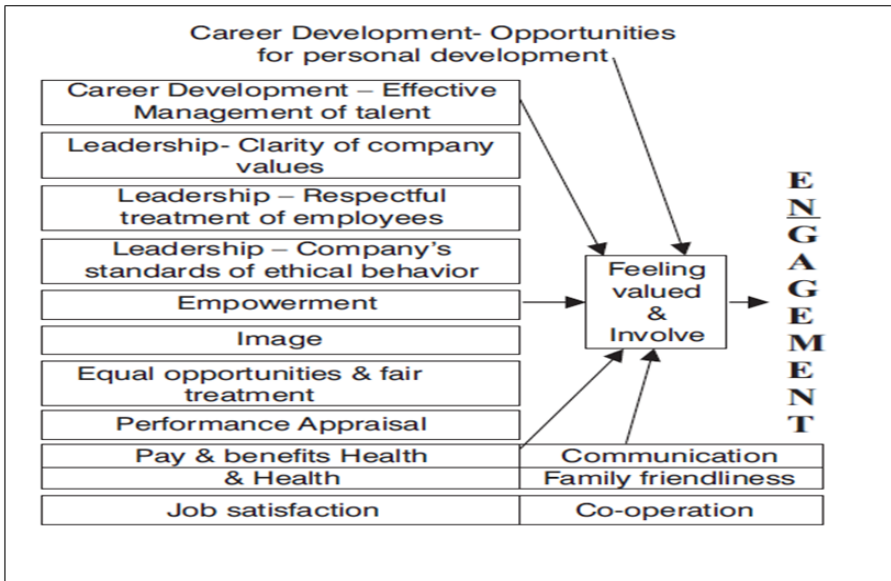
Source: Kumar, J.A., 2012

According to Mehta and Mehta (2013) drivers that enable to enhance employee engagement are a culture of respect where good job is appreciated, feedback, counseling and mentoring, fair reward, recognition and incentive scheme,

effective leadership, clear job expectations, adequate tools to perform work responsibilities and motivation.

Robinson et al, (2004), identified the strongest driver of employee engagement as feeling valued and involved in the organization as depicted in the given above figure.

Source: Robinson et al. 2004 (IES report)

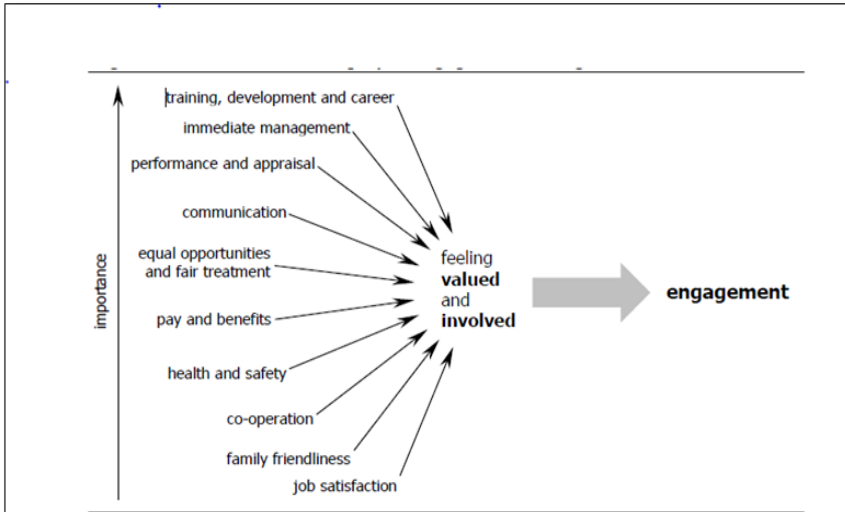Evolving a clear and strong career development path enables organizations to retain the most talented employees by providing opportunities for their personal development (Wellins and Concelman, 2005). If employees are given a say in the decision making and have the right to be heard by their bosses, the engagement levels are likely to be high (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Employees need to feel that the core values for which their companies stand are unambiguous and clear (Pech, 2009).

VII. WAYS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employers can encourage employee engagement in many ways, including communicating expectations clearly, offering rewards and advancement for excellent work, keeping employees informed about the company's performance, and providing regular feedback. The efforts to improve employee engagement can be undertaken at all the levels. Top management should believe that improving employee engagement will affect the efficiency of employees. Managers have to play a critical role in this aspect. They should enhance two-

way communication, ensure that employees have all the resources they need to do their job, give appropriate training to increase their knowledge and skill, establish reward mechanisms in which good job is rewarded through various financial and non-financial incentives. They should encourage hard work, develop a strong performance management system, place focus on top-performing employees to reduce their turnover and maintain or increase business performance (Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

All types of organizations have taken steps to improve employee engagement. Google has inculcated practices like high pay packages, caring, benefits beyond the grave, training and development, wellness programmes, food and other facilities etc.[3] Organizations like Accenture have introduced 'Shared services' for improving employee engagement[4].   At Bharti Airtel Ltd, the new joiners and   the best   performers   for   the month   are rewarded with   a special dinner / lunch with their Chief Operations Officer. The Tata Motors cultural group   arranges various   cultural   events   on   music, drama,   dance and other activities   to promote the creativity   among the employees   and their families (Siddhanta and Roy, 2010)

Based on the literature, a framework for employee engagement is developed and shown at the end of the article.

VIII. CONCLUSION
Given the importance of employee engagement, organizations should try every possible way to increase the level of engagement. Engagement focuses on factors beyond compensation; it focuses on linking individual's employee's personal aspiration and values with those of the organization and it's alignment with the business strategy. Ultimately, improving employee engagement is a win-win situation for organizations and employees both.

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FRAMEWORK OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

NOT ENGAGED

DISENGAGED

INDICATORS OF NOT ENGAGED
- Only focus on the task
- No soul & mind attachment
- No self-initiative
- Every time being told to perform
- No botheration about the outcome
- Only interested number of hours spent on the job.
- Poor relationship with the Manager, co-worker
- Focus to get maximum benefits out of the job
- Always require pushing to move forward.

CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYEES ENGAGEMENT

INDICATORS OF DISENGAGEMENT
- Always Frustrated
- Always busy in acting out their unhappiness
- Show negativity at every occasion
- Create problem and tension to the organization
- No contribution to the organization
- Only focus to the pay package (I am here for money only)
- No intention to continue for a long time
- No commitment
- No excitement
- Redundant

ENGAGED

JOB INTRINSIC FACTORS
Responsibility
Decision Making
Empowerment
Skill/Task Fitment
Autonomy on the job
Workload

JOB LEXTRINSIC FACTORS
·Pay and perquisites
·Team work
·Co-worker ·
Working Condition/
Physical work
environment ·
Career Progression
/development ·
Training ·Job Security
·Health and Safety
·Flexibility ·Work-life
balance

SR MANAGEMENT /LEADERSHIP
·Integrity ·Openness
·Respect
·Commitment/fairness
·Support/coaching
·Performance
feedback ·Recognition
·Resource Provision
·Value to customers
·Organization
Dynamics ·Care and
concern for
employees

COMMUINICATION & TEAM WORK
· Transparency in communication
· Feel informed
· Corporate Purpose/Mission
·Role Clarity
·Cohesion

FEELING VALUED

Indicators of feeling valued and involved
Organizational commitment ·Motivation
·Job Satisfaction ·Intention to stay
·Pride/High Self esteemed ·Disciplined
·Display innovativeness and creativity
·Belongingness

Engaged

Outcome of High Engagement Level
·Retention ·Low absenteeism ·Advocacy Result, focused/goal oriented ·Ethics/attachment to Organization values ·High performing organization ·Increase in productivity/profit ·Reduction in on the job accidents ·Financial success ·Business growth ·Less Industrial disputes/Union avoidance ·Feeling of ownership ·Less breakdowns.

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