

Working Environment- As a Predictor of Employee Engagement with reference to Academicians

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Abstract

We notice, especially, youth generation are leaving their workplace at a faster pace reason being they want more out of their careers. For this employers work a lot to make their employees stick to their organizations because employee's stability has a huge financial affect on productivity and profitability. And to achieve this, management adopts methods of connecting the personal development of its employees with the organizational growth. This connection is possible when employees are truly 'engaged'. Organizations need to fulfill the aspirations of its employees and these aspirations are much beyond their salary expectations. Insight into their psychology towards their work and work environment can provide much information which can be used to engage the employees. Employee engagement is described as an employee's involvement with, commitment to and satisfaction with work. Employee engagement has gained popularity & attention from various practitioners and researchers. Present study is concerned with identifying the impact of working environment on employee engagement among academicians. The study is empirical in nature and done in Gwalior region. The sample size for the study is 130 and multiple regression method was used to arrive results. The findings of the study show the significant relation between working environment and employee engagement.

Key Words: *Academicians, Employee Engagement, Working Environment.*

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement at work was conceptualized by William.A.Kahn (1990) as the “harnessing of organisational member's selves to their work roles”. Research on this concept was started by academicians in 1990's to define the concept of employee engagement more clearly (Kahn,1990; Maslach & Leiter,1997; Schaufeli, Salanova & Gonzalez-Roma, 2002) Employee engagement was then described in academic literature by Schmidt et al.(1993). They described employee engagement as “an employee's involvement with, commitment to and satisfaction with work.” Employee engagement creates greater motivation within employees for the work they do and increases their commitment to

the organization. Engagement is about creating an enthusiasm for their roles, their work and the organization, and ensuring they are associated with the values of the organization. According to Macey and Schneider, engagement is different from satisfaction or commitment. They identified two components of employee engagement:

- Feelings of engagement (focus and enthusiasm), and
- Engagement behavior (proactivity and persistence).

According to William H. Macey and Benjamin Schneider (2008), employee engagement refers to positive feelings on the part of employees about their jobs and also the motivation and efforts put by them

into their work. Engagement leads to positive employee behaviors which in turn lead to organizational success.

The term working environment refers to the surroundings within which employee work (www.businessdictionary.com). It includes the physical, social and psychological conditions and all other factors that influence work. Working environment also includes supervisory support, recognition programs, communication practices etc. (Dr. C.B Gupta, human resource management, 2008). According to European Industrial Relations Dictionary (2007) Working environment covers matters related to work and work activities, training, health and safety, work life balance etc. Working environment includes non-pay aspects, leaves/ breaks, health and safety related aspects such as lighting and ventilation of work places, safety at work place, disciplinary procedures (John Black, 2002).

Working environment is a set of all surroundings, circumstances, environment, situations, behavior of employer and colleagues, organizational attitude etc. Up to great extent, the efficiency of the employees is influenced by the environment in which he works. On the basis of review of literature, research done by Demerouti and Cropanzano, 2010 and Schaufeli and Salanova, 2008 concluded that even engagement is associated with employee attitudes, employee psychological well being, psychological conditions etc. Working environment is also related to the factors present at the workplace that gives satisfaction to the employees. Studies of Mc Cashland 1999, Miles 2001 & Harter et al., 2002, Holbeche and Springett, 2003 reveals that employee engagement is something that is produced by the working environment factors.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Empirical evidence shows that there are well researched axioms regarding the presence of employee engagement in organizations which is driven by working environment. There are so many factors in the work place which impacts engagement level towards organization and their engagement level enhances their intention to stay with the organization. Hewitt and

Associates (2004) described engagement as a measure of the energy and passion that employees have for their organizations. Engaged employees are those who acts to improve business results for their organizations. They “stay, say, and strive- in terms that they stay with and are committed to the organization, they say positive things for their work place, and struggle (strive) to go beyond to do extraordinary work.”

In reviewing the results of 12 major research studies Gibbons (2006) identified the top drivers of employee engagement which are as follows:

- trust and integrity
- nature of the job
- the association between individual and company performance
- career growth
- pride about the company
- attitudes and views of coworkers towards their jobs and the company;
- employee development the extent to which efforts are made to develop the employee's skills; and
- personal relationship with one's manager the extent to which the employee values this relationship.

Talent report by Tower's Perrin (2003) identified some factors which are to be considered for driving employee engagement. These factors included challenging work, employee's well being and collaborative work environment, input on decision making. Career development opportunity was added as the predictor of engagement by HR Anexi Blessing White employee engagement survey report (5 May 2008) Business World. “HR Special Survey for Indian workers - Engage the employee” The study concluded that career development opportunities, more challenging work and more opportunities to do what employees can do their best are huge expectations of Indian employees which further helps sustain the engagement level of those who are already fully engaged. It was also found that 26% of the employees as fully engaged and 27% as almost engaged who are provided with career development opportunities and training. Further, 16% and 17% of the employees are found to be fully engaged and almost

engaged respectively who are given more challenging work.

Moreover research also found that workplaces that focus on strategies regarding skill retention and employee engagement, achieve higher productivity and performance (Clayton Glen, 2006). He found 9 employee engagement predictors which in multiple combinations provide a powerful framework for skill retention across most organizations. Study was conducted to examine the value of assessment and feedback in talent engagement and retention. Study revealed that employee retention and motivation can be achieved more pleasingly and effectively by focusing on retention/motivation elements. These predictors included:

- organizational process;
- role challenge;
- values;
- work-life balance;
- information;
- stake/leverage/reward/recognition;
- management;
- work environment; and
- product/service

In all cases, he found that the above predictors in different combinations cover all aspects of the businesses likely to impact on employee engagement and skill retention.

Researchers C. Balakrishnan, Dr. D. Masthan, Dr. V. Chandra (2013) found communication, rewards and recognition, work environment as the strong predictors of employee engagement. Further, all these factors along with remuneration and compensation, relationships were found to be drivers of retention also. Kahn (1990) indicated that trust in interpersonal relations with supportive team drives engagement in employees. It was found that relationships among employees and with employer at workplace have positive influence on employee engagement (May et al., 2004). May et al., (2004) and Rich et al., (2010) have established relationships between meaningful workplace

environment and employee engagement.

Saks and Rotman (2006) found recognition & rewards as the significant drivers of employee engagement. Various researches (Pitt-Catsouphes and Matz- Costa, 2008, Woodruffe, 2005, Rama Devi, 2009, Pollitt, 2008) found organizational policies and procedures where employee is able to balance their work and home environment leads to higher level of engagement among employees.

Demerouti and Cropanzano, 2010 and Schaufeli and Salanova, 2008 found engagement as related with employee attitudes, employee psychological well being, psychological conditions etc. Working environment, including factors present at the workplace that gives satisfaction to the employees was found to be related with employee engagement.

Employee engagement was found as something that is produced by the working environment factors (Mc Cashland 1999, Miles 2001 & Harter et al., 2002, Holbeche and Springett, 2003)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the factors of working environment which influence the engagement level of the academicians
2. To study the impact of working environment on employee engagement

HYPOTHESIS

H₀₁ There is no significant relation between working environment and employee engagement

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is empirical in nature. The purpose of the study was to empirically test the relationships between working environment and employee engagement and to state whether these research propositions could confidently be accepted or rejected. The study also focuses on identifying the various factors of working environment affecting the employee engagement.

Tools for Data Collection

Primary and secondary data sources were used to collect the information. Primary data were collected with the use of standardized measures with some modifications. For measuring working environment, questionnaire was framed after reviewing certain research papers and the reliability and validity was checked. For employee engagement, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES: Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was used. Survey conducted involved distribution of questionnaires to the faculties teaching in colleges of Gwalior region. Secondary data sources included journals, magazines, newspaper article, research databases like EBESCO and reports from various consultancy firms like Towers Perrin, Gall up studies and Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) were reviewed.

Sample Size

The population for this study was faculties from private colleges in the Gwalior region. The sampling frame was the private colleges situated in the Gwalior region. For this study, 13 private colleges were selected which were having 325 faculties in total. Initially about 150 questionnaires were distributed and out of which 139 were received back. But after discarding 9 questionnaires because they were incomplete only 130 were considered for further analysis.

Sampling Technique

For the purpose of this study Cluster sampling method was used. The list of all the private colleges in Gwalior region was prepared which included 42 private Colleges. Further, various clusters were formed with the list of private colleges in that particular area and 2-3 colleges from each cluster was selected randomly for the targeted sampling frame. In all total 13 colleges were finally selected as targeted sampling frame which were having 325 faculties in total. The faculties from each college have been selected as per their availability in the college (convenience sampling) with the intention to include at least 10 faculties from each college.

Statistical Analysis Techniques

SPSS 20 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used for data analysis. In the study, reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha. Validity was checked through face validity and construct validity. Further, factor analysis was used to determine the underlying factors of working environment and regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis formulated by the researcher.

Instrument Development

Questionnaire was used to collect data. Items for working environment were self designed according to the nature of the academic environment. But the help was taken from the previous studies conducted on working environment. This scale has 17 items with acceptable levels of Cronbach alpha of .90. For employee engagement, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES: Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) was used. All items were measured with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Results and Discussion

Reliability Analysis

First of all the reliability of all the constructs was measured. The tendency toward consistency found in repeated measurements is referred to as reliability Carmine and Zeller (1979). The reliability of the working environment construct items was evaluated using SPSS software through Cronbach's alpha. The reliability score of the working environment construct was found to be of acceptable value i.e. 0.90 (greater than 0.7). High scores of Cronbach's Alpha represent high consistency and reliability among items in questionnaire which confirms that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Validity Analysis

To test the validity in this study, two most widely accepted forms of construct validity were examined:

Item to total correlation and factor analysis. Factor analysis measures the degree to which conceptually similar sub-dimensions are distinct. Factor analysis was performed to see the correlation among measurement items of each variable. Factor scores of measurement items were considered acceptable if they exceed .5 (Hair et al., 2010).

The item-total correlation test is performed to check whether any item is not consistent with the rest of the

scale and thus can be discarded. It eliminates “garbage” items prior to determining the factors that represent the construct Churchill (1979). A correlation value less than 0.2 or 0.3 indicates that the corresponding item does not correlate very well with the scale overall and, thus, it may be dropped (Everitt, B.S., 2002)

Item to total correlation values for each item is given in the following tables.

Table 1 : Item to Total correlation of Working Environment

| S. No. | Item | Correlation Value | Accepted or Dropped |
|--------|--|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Provisions related to leave are satisfactory | .516 | Accepted |
| 2 | Provisions for wage, incentive, bonus etc. are satisfactory | .521 | Accepted |
| 3 | Organization provides adequate social security | .511 | Accepted |
| 4 | Working Environment of my organization is good. | .556 | Accepted |
| 5 | We got comfortable personal work space to work | .640 | Accepted |
| 6 | Organization has safe and healthy working condition | .596 | Accepted |
| 7 | My boss always encourages employees | .607 | Accepted |
| 8 | I get enough guidance from my supervisor / boss | .590 | Accepted |
| 9 | We have objective performance evaluation system | .509 | Accepted |
| 10 | Our employer recognizes efficient work | .653 | Accepted |
| 11 | The policy of the organization motivates me | .608 | Accepted |
| 12 | There is smooth communication System in the organization | .750 | Accepted |
| 13 | My organization provides opportunities for career growth and advancement | .612 | Accepted |
| 14 | Relationship with peers is harmonious | .576 | Accepted |
| 15 | Relationship with subordinates is harmonious | .596 | Accepted |
| 16 | Relationship among all departments are cooperative | .565 | Accepted |
| 17 | There is balanced disciplinary environment | .577 | Accepted |

Table 2 : Item to Total correlation of Employee Engagement

| S. No. | Item | Correlation Value | Accepted or Dropped |
|--------|---|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | At my work, I feel energetic | .673 | Accepted |
| 2 | At my work, I feel strong and vigorous | .703 | Accepted |
| 3 | When I get up in the morning, I look forward to going to work | .629 | Accepted |
| 4 | My job inspires me | .612 | Accepted |
| 5 | I am enthusiastic about my job | .597 | Accepted |
| 6 | I am proud of the work that I do | .541 | Accepted |
| 7 | I feel happy when I am working intensely | .526 | Accepted |
| 8 | I am engrossed in my work | .616 | Accepted |
| 9 | Time flies when I am working. | .679 | Accepted |
| 10 | I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose | .484 | Accepted |
| 11 | When I am working, I forget everything else around me. | .512 | Accepted |
| 12 | I am immersed in my work. | .635 | Accepted |
| 13 | I can continue working for very long periods at a time. | .432 | Accepted |
| 14 | I get carried away when I'm working. | .572 | Accepted |
| 15 | At my job, I am very resilient, mentally. | .579 | Accepted |
| 16 | It is difficult to detach myself from my job. | .389 | Accepted |
| 17 | At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well | .495 | Accepted |

FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analyses was performed to analyze interdependent correlations among a large number of items which helped to identify common underlying dimensions or factors (Hair et al., 2010). For extracting factors, most commonly used method is Principal component analysis. The absolute value of .50 was set for the significance of factor loadings. Loading of .50 or more are practically significant (Hair et al., 2010).

The Kaiser Meyer Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for which the value found was 0.883, which is above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity, chi-square value of 2328.20 at p value 0.000 indicates that it is suitable to apply factor analysis as high values are shown in below table of KMO test.

A KMO measure of sampling adequacy value is close to 1 (in table 3) which indicates that patterns of correlations are relatively packed in and so factor analysis will give reliable factors.

Table 3 : KMO and Bartlett's Test

| | | |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .884 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 2328.203 |
| | Df | 136 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Factor analysis was conducted to obtain Eigen values for each item in the data. Three items had Eigen values higher than Kaiser's criterion of 1 and, in combination, explained 58.34% of the variance. Table 5 shows factor loadings after varimax rotation, Eigen values, and the percentage of variance accounted for by the three factors. The items that clustered on the same factors suggested that factor 1 represented relationship & communication system, factor 2 represents quality of work life, and factor 3 represents appreciation. Accordingly, the extracted components were labeled.

Table 4 : Summary of factors extracted

| Factor Name | Eigen Values | % variance | Variable Convergence | Loading |
|--|--------------|------------|--|---------|
| 1. Relationship & Communication System | 6.664 | 39.198 | 5. We get enough personal work space to work | .509 |
| | | | 12. There is sound communication System in the organization | .545 |
| | | | 14. Relationship with peers is harmonious | .777 |
| | | | 15. Relationship with subordinates is harmonious | .749 |
| | | | 16. There are harmonious relationship among all departments | .726 |
| | | | 17. There is balanced disciplinary system | .695 |
| 2. QWL | 2.059 | 12.112 | 1. Provisions related to leave are satisfactory | .643 |
| | | | 2. Provisions for Compensation and Remuneration are satisfactory | .688 |
| | | | 3. Organization provides adequate social security | .800 |
| | | | 4. Quality of work life of my organization is good. | .623 |
| | | | 13. My organization provides opportunities for career growth and development | .647 |
| 3. Appreciation | 1.196 | 7.035 | 6. Organization has safe and healthy working conditions | .531 |
| | | | 7. My boss always motivates employees | .709 |
| | | | 8. I receive guidance from my supervisor / boss | .803 |
| | | | 9. We have objective performance appraisal system | .688 |
| | | | 10. My employer recognizes efficient work | .509 |
| | | | 11. The policy of the organization motivates me | .524 |

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between working environment and employee engagement

H_{a1} : There is significant relationship between working environment and employee engagement

To examine the direct effects of working environment on employee engagement as stated in hypotheses, first of

all correlation analysis was done on the working environment and employee engagement used in the study to measure the association between them. Correlation between working environment and employee engagement was found to be $r = 0.771$ at $p < 0.01$ & $n = 130$ which shows high correlation among variables. Further, employee engagement was regressed on working environment.

REGRESSION RESULTS

Table 5 : Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .777 ^a | .635 | .634 | .37212 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), WE

Table 6 : ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 73.527 | 1 | 73.527 | 530.986 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 42.234 | 305 | .138 | | |
| | Total | 115.762 | 306 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: EE

b. Predictors: (Constant), WE

Table 7 : Coefficients^a

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | .978 | .120 | | 8.176 | .000 |
| | WE | .754 | .033 | .797 | 23.043 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: EE

The model summary as depicted in table 5 reports the strength of the relationship between the factors of working environment and employee engagement. Working environment was identified as predictor of employee engagement with R square value of 0.635. It can be seen that model explained 63.5% of variance in the employee engagement. As per ANOVA table (table 6) probability value is found to be significant. Thus, the results of regression analysis reveal that there is significance relationship between working environment ($t=23.043$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .797$) and employee engagement. Hence, H_{a1} is supported.

CONCLUSION

Researcher was interested to find out the relationship between working environment and employee engagement. Through regression results it was found that working environment is contributing up to 63.4 % towards employee engagement i.e. if employees feel satisfied with the working environment or they get favorable environment at the work place, they feel engaged at work and thus their efficiency towards work increases. This study specifically found quality of work life, appreciation and harmonious relationships and communication system as factors of working environment which influence employee engagement. It was concluded through the results of factor analysis that relationship with boss & communication system, quality of work life and appreciation or recognition given to employees plays important role in enhancing their level of engagement.

LIMITATIONS

Data is collected from Gwalior region and from only few colleges. The results may vary if it would have been collected from wider area. Although the method of sampling was random but while selecting individual faculty member convenience sampling method was used.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study will be useful for the institutions who seek to engage their faculties. This study provides a useful tool for institutes to keep their employees engaged by increasing the level of engagement

through making working environment healthy. Specifically, relationships with colleagues, boss & communication system, quality of work life and appreciation are identified as important factors in contributing towards engagement level of the faculties. The institutes may focus on these factors in order to increase the level of engagement.

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