Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Employee engagement is a buzzword nowadays in business organizations. This is a very crucial issue for organizations. This concept proposes that employees are of two types i.e., engaged employees and non-engaged employees. Engaged employees are those who involve in their job physically, mentally, emotionally and with a much more enthusiasm than needed. Employee engagement is very necessary for organizational especially in this competitive age of business. In present study researchers had tried to point out a conceptual framework of employee engagement concept with its major antecedents and consequences in business organizations. Study is conceptual and theoretical in nature. Concepts and facts had been clarified with the help of appropriate literature.

Key Words:*Employee Engagement, Organization, Performance, Job, Business.*

1. Introduction

In recent years business environment is going to be very complicated. Employee turnover and employee retention has become very crucial issue for organizations. Organizations are facing various human resource management problems. Among these problems, employee engagement is one of the burning issues for organizations especially for business organizations. A lot of

resources are allocated for training and development of employees which makes additional burden on the profit of organizations. When employees are not working with that enthusiasm and commitment which are expected from them then it becomes a challenging situation for organizations. Here the concept of employee engagement becomes very significant for organizations. Organizations should know this concept, its importance, its various dimensions so that they can be familiar with this concept and make their employees much engaged physically and mentally because engaged employee do better for organizations as compared to unengaged employees as it has been proved with various research findings.

2. Employee Engagement: A Conceptual Framework

In business organizations Employee Engagement has emerged as a new paradigm in HR community. Organizations are realizing that in workplace if employees are physically or mentally disengaged this will be a very harmful for entire organization. Advantages and importance of employee engagement has been widely discussed among academicians, managers, employees, HR practitioners and researchers etc. According to some scholars Employee engagement can be considered as new version of 'employee satisfaction'. Satisfaction is also termed as contentment whereas engagement is called as commitment in workplace which leads employees to do that work which is beyond to their duties and work profile to earn organizational goals (Tejpal and Nath, 2012). Employee engagement term assumes that engaged employees are very committed to the assigned task, they are very much concerned with their organization, feels pride in their job, do very much effort and, time and energy to fulfill organization goals, and also express significantly higher level of productivity and performance in contrast to other employees in the organization who are not much engaged as previous one (Singh et al. n.d.).

The term employee engagement was firstly coined by Kahn (1990) in academics and its literature. He has elaborated and well defined this concept. He defined employee engagement as "the harnessing the organization member's selves to their work roles; in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during their

performance". Kahn also stated that employee could be engaged with only one dimension of engagement aspect but if employees are engaged with maximum dimension of engagement their overall personal engagement will become much higher. Antecedents and consequences of engagement were necessary to find out because it will give a basic advantage proof regarding employee engagement. In this line various scholars presented their views but Kahn(1990) and Maslach et al. (2001) study demonstrated necessary antecedents, consequences, and psychological conditions for employee engagement, but due to some study constraints these research work were unable to find out to elaborate the reasons for showing various degrees of engagement in different conditions faced by individual. Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al. (2001) work showed the necessary antecedents and psychological conditions for engagement, but they were not able to describe the reasons for showing different degrees of engagement in different conditions by individuals. In general employee engagement has been explained as emotional and intellectual commitment to the job and organization (Baumruk 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw 2005) the amount of discretionary endeavour attempted by employees at workplace (Frank *et al* 2004). Kahn (1992) described the job as the main antecedent of the state of engagement. Balain and Sparrow (2009) has defines the engagement as employees' involvement and satisfaction with much enthusiasm for work, work place and organization.

3. Literature Review on Employee Engagement: A Bird Eye View

In academic literature employee engagement holds a very prominent space because employee engagement has been discussed by various scholars (Reissner & Pagan, 2013; Francis et al., 2013; Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013; Arrowsmith & Parker, 2013). Saks (2006) conceptualized a multidimensional approach to measure different aspects of the concept and construct of employee engagement. In this line various researchers (i.e.,; Karasek et al., 1998; Menguc et al., 2013; Wollard & Shuck, 2011; Freeney & Fellenz, 2013; Wang et al., 2013) conducted studies and reveals about o job demand resource model which indicated that in every job type, there exist a different set of resources which is useful in what the job requires (also termed as job demand) and which kind of support (also termed as job resources) is available to the employees to perform their task perfectly. Scholras like Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al. (2001) proposed the

psychological conditions or antecedents that are important for engagement of any individual at workplace, but they were unable to explain those factors which are necessary to make an individual engaged at various degrees. Another theory known as social exchange theory (SET) which strongly explain the concept of engagement with its factors. This theory proposes that various SET argues that compulsions are generated through a series of interactions between those parties who are in a state of mutual interdependence (Cropanzano and Mictchell, 2005).

4. Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Since employee engagement is considered as a very critical issue for business organization, in literature, there exist various antecedents of employee engagement which has been discussed in below line:

4.1 Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Perceived Organizational support is also a predictor of employee engagement (Saks, 2006). A study carried out by Seijit and Crim (2006) revealed and explored 10 Cs of employee engagement namely Clarity, Connect, Career, Congratulate, Contribute, Control, Credibility, Collaborate, Convey, and Confidence. In another research done by Saks (2006) concluded that POS, PSS and organizational justice are significantly positively associated with employee engagement and also contribute to employee engagement.

4.2 Job Characteristics

Job characteristics are considered as an antecedent of employee engagement because jobs that are high on core characteristics provide an opportunity for employees to be more engaged. In a research conducted by May et al. (2004) it was revealed that job enrichment was significantly positively associated with job meaningfulness and meaningfulness was found as a mediator relationship with job enrichment and engagement.

4.3 Perceived Supervisory Support (PSS)

Perceived supervisory support (PSS) is expressed as a normal view that how much superiors provide importance to their subordinate employees contribution for organization, take care of employees well-being, put their interest forward (Kottke and Sharafinski, 1998). Supervisors are also employees of organization and other employees also examine his work of supervisory support (Levinson, 1965).

4.4 Work life Balance (WLB)

Work life balance is an important antecedent of employee engagement. Study of Hallberg et al., (2007) show that there is a connection between excessive workload and emotional exhaustion. They also concluded that increased workload was related to higher level of employee engagement. According to another scholar Maslach et al., (2001) working life of employee significantly influences employee engagement in various aspects such as working hours, support from management, social activities with colleagues etc.

4.5 Rewards and Recognition

Researchers have urged that reward and recognition is a strong predictor of employee engagement. Researchers such as Maslach et al. (2001) have concluded that lack of reward and recognition could lead the employees to employee burnout and if management of organization provides proper recognition to employees it could lead employees to much more engaged. Some other scholars i.e., Andrew and Saudah (2011) concluded in their study that some factors such as peer relationship, employee development, firm's image, recognition and reward significantly positively contributes to employee engagement level.

5. Consequences of Employee Engagement

Likewise antecedents there are some consequences which are associated with employee engagement. Some major consequence of employee engagement has been discussed in below lines.

5.1 Meaningful outcome of business

Various scholars (e.g., Harter et al., 2002, 2004) found tat meaningful outcome is strong consequence of business because employees who are much engaged can contribute well for business which leads better business outcome. Some other studies also demonstrate that better financial performance had been noted down with the help of engaged employees in the organization (Gallup, 2003; Towers Perrin, 2003).

5.2 Reduced employee turnover

Employee engagement is negatively associated with employee turnover and positively related to employee retention. It is also helpful in reducing employee recruitment cost (Shaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

5.3 Other consequences

There are other significant consequences which took place in presence of employee engagement in organizations. Research findings of Towers Perrin (2003) shows that employee engagement is positively associated with employee productivity, company sales performance and revenue generation. Other studies say that employee engagement is helpful in maintaining positive emotions at work, happiness, enthusiasm, interest and contentment (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Furthermore, engaged employees always publicize positively about their company, its working condition and environment, its products and work culture which makes a good image of company in public domain (Baumruk, 2004). An engaged employee provide his best to satisfy customers, increase productivity and provides better services to companies' clients (Harter et al., 2002).

6. Conclusion

Employee engagement is very significant concept for organizations. Human resource is that resource which has its own thinking capabilities. Organizations can manage their other resources as per their capacity and requirement because these are non living resources but managing human resource is a very difficult. Employee engaged in their work with their own expectations and requirements. Managers should know what are the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement so that they can take a proper decision regarding engaging their

workforce. In present study various antecedents and consequences which are supported by many study outcomes could be fruitful for managers and policy makers to take appropriate measures and decisions to engage their employees so that organizational goals couldbe achieved and employees requirements could also be fulfilled.

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