



# **ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN AN ORGANISATION: A THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

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## **Abstract**

*Employee performance is indispensable to the survival of any organization. Yet, to improve performance, there is a need to engage the employee in his work. Therefore, the central purpose of this research is to assess the effect of employee engagement on employee performance in an organisation. Based on the comprehensive review of the extant literature, this paper presented a logic-based and empirically-based conceptual discussion regarding the effect of employee engagement on employee performance. The findings of this paper indicate that employee engagement is a significant predictor of employee performance. Based on this finding, it is suggested that an organisation must work to develop and nurture employee engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between organisation and employee so as to enhance employee performance. In addition, the literature review conducted in this paper revealed that there is a dearth of research on the effect of employee engagement on employee performance. Therefore, future researchers should direct their focus towards employee*

*engagement-performance relationship research field as this will expand the scope of the existing body of knowledge.*

*Keywords: Assessment, Effect, Employee Engagement, Employee Performance, Organisation*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Employee performance upon which the organisational success hinges refers to the outcomes achieved and accomplishments made at work by an employee. It is a set of workers' conducts that can be examined, gauged and evaluated with the achievement in individual level (Muchinsky, 2003). Ivancevich and Matteson (1996) assert that employee performance could be designated as employees doing their greatest to attain their precise work which ends into good consequence and performance. According to Boyne et al (2003), performance is very vital to the administration of any establishment. Performance refers to keeping up strategies while aiming for the results. Although performance evaluation is the heart of performance management (Cardy, 2004), the performance of a worker or an organisation depends heavily on all organisational practices, policies, and design features of an organisation. Superiors' eye is on how to make employees performed in their job. Organisations now realize that by focusing on employee engagement, they can create a more efficient and productive workforce. Any initiatives of improvement which are taken by management cannot be fruitful without voluntary/wilful involvement and engagement of employees (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010).

Therefore, employee engagement is perceived as a good device to assist every organisation to struggle to gain competitive benefit over the other organisations. An employee is one element that could not be duplicated or imitated by the competitors and is considered the most valuable asset if administered and engaged appropriately. Employee engagement is one of the key determinants fostering high levels of employee performance, as is constantly shown in a number of studies (Macey et al., 2009; Mone and London, 2010). Employee engagement is "defined in general as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values" (Anitha, 2014, p.308). When a worker is engaged, he is aware of his duty in the organisation objectives and inspires his co-workers alongside, for the attainment of the organisational aims. Thus, employee engagement was generally revealed as one of the needs to be established to offer an innovative and supportive occupation environment resulting in performance and effectiveness.

The extant works in the organisation research field indicate that engagement of employee and performance of employee are essential to the effective organisation, because,

organizational performance and achievement significantly centres on worker engagement (Devi, 2017) and performance of employee (Al Kahtani, 2013; Ismail, Abdul Halim, & Joarder, 2015). The logic in this discussion is that an organisation could be saved from under-performance through employee engagement because an engaged workforce performs a critical function in the attainment of organizational targets. The intention of this study is to assess concepts of employee engagement and performance, the effect of employee engagement on employee performance, and strategies the organisation need to take to keep employees engaged in order to improve their performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employee performance

Performance is very vital to the administration of any organisation (Boyne et al (2003). Performance as a concept lacks a generally accepted definition (Andersen, 2010). Performance signifies the process of change from inputs to output with the purpose of realising a specific outcome. Some authors have noted that two different views are involved in the definition of performance, the two views are the behavioural aspect of performance and outcome aspect of performance. Some researchers further opined that one aspect should be the measure of employee without the other while some of them believe that two aspects should form the measure of employee performance (e.g., Ahmad, & Shahzad, 2011; Aguinis, 2009; Kanfer, 1990; Roe, 1999; Campbell, 1990; Campbell, McCloy, Oppler & Sager, 1993).

Therefore, employee performance is typically conceptualized on a micro level to be the activities and behaviours of an individual that plays a role in the accomplishment of firm's goals (Ahmad, & Shahzad, 2011; Aguinis, 2009; McShane & Glinow, 2005; Campbell, 1990; Murphy, 1989). Three notions accompanied the above conceptualization. The first notion states that the definition of employee performance should be from the behavioural perspective, and output/result should be used in defining employee performance. The second notion indicates that employee performance connotes those behaviours that are germane to the accomplishment of the firm's objectives, and the third notion signifies that employee performance is not one-sided but multidimensional.

In addition, Muchinsky (2003) defined employee performance as a set of workers' behaviours that can be examined, gauged and evaluated with the achievement on an individual level. Also, McConnel (2003) defined employee performance as an accomplishment that can be measured and assessed. Employee performance according to Cronje, et.al. (1995) is also described as the extent and value of exertion, support, devotion, lateness or absenteeism and obedience with norm shown by a worker. Likewise, Ivancevich and Matteson (1996) assert that

employee performance could be designated as employees doing their greatest to attain their precise work which ends into good consequence and performance.

Güngör (2011) affirm that performance of employees could involve the extent of output, significance of output, appropriateness of output, presence on the job, and supportiveness. In the setting of the organisation, the concept of employee performance is described as the level to which an individual worker of an organization impacts to accomplishing the objectives of the establishment. Dulewicz (1989) says “there is a basic human tendency to make judgments about an employee is working with, as well as about oneself”. Therefore, performance involves not only of what people accomplish but how they accomplish it (Armstrong & Baron, 2005). Therefore, workforces are a key basis of competitive benefit in service-oriented establishments (Luthans & Stajkovic, 1999; Pfeffer, 1994).

### **Employee engagement**

Employee engagement was a popular concept in the industry during the period 1999-2005 where it was extensively discussed among managers, consultants, and policy makers. Academicians became interested in the concept to a large extent only from 2006 (Welch, 2011) when a number of studies extended the concept of employee engagement to job engagement, work engagement, and organisation engagement. Saks (2006) employed Khan’s (1990) explanation and established the construct comprising job and organisation engagement. The backgrounds of employee engagement according to Saks (2006) were “job characteristics, perceived supervisor support, perceived organisational support, rewards and recognition, procedural justice and distributive justice”.

Employee engagement can be seen as a good device to assist every organisation to struggle to gain competitive benefit over another organisation. The worker is a component that could not be simulated and it is thought to be the utmost important resource if administered and engaged appropriately. This view has been stressed by Baumruk (2004) that employee engagement is seen as the most influential element to assess an organisation’s vigour. The concept of engagement has referred to as organisational effectiveness in the work related (Katz and Kahn (1966). However, it was generally revealed as one of the requirements to be established to offer an innovative and supportive occupation environment prominent to performance and effectiveness. According to Anitha (2014) “employee engagement is defined in general as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values” (p.308). When a worker is occupied and engaged, he is attentive of his obligation in the corporate objectives and inspires his co-workers alongside, for the

attainment of the organisational aims. Engaged personnel go beyond the demand of obligation to accomplish their job in excellence.

Therefore, conceptualisation of engagement at work was first established by Kahn (1990, p. 694) as the “harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work roles”. He expressed further that in engagement “people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Kahn also asserts that three psychological engagement circumstances are required for a worker to be properly engaged: “meaningfulness (work elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process, and organisational norms) and availability (individual distractions)”.

Perrin’s Global Workforce Study (2003) sees employee engagement as “employees’ willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis”. Engagement according to the study, is influenced by numerous factors which comprise both rational and emotional factors connecting to occupation and the general job experience. Gallup organisation describes worker engagement as the connection with an interest for occupation. Gallup, as stated by Dernovsek (2008) equates employee engagement to a constructive workers’ emotional connection and workers’ commitment. Employee engagement was also described as “the right people in the right roles with the right managers drive employee engagement” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 248). They maintained that a completely engaged worker is one who could reply yes to the wholetwelve (12) questions on Gallup’s workshop questionnaire.

Another significant explanation was from Hewitt Associates LLC (2004) who described employee engagement as “the state in which individuals are emotionally and intellectually committed to the organisation or group, as measured by three primary behaviours: Say (y) stay (y) strive” (p. 2). Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) have perceived work engagement as “the psychological state that accompanies the behavioural investment of personal energy” (p. 22). The above descriptions of the concept depict that an engaged employee is intellectually and emotionally bond with the organisation, feels passionate about its goals and is committed to live by its values. Gallup scholars Fleming and Asplund (2007, p. 2) moved a stair further and seen employee engagement as: “the ability to capture the heads, hearts, and souls of your employees to instil an intrinsic desire and passion for excellence”, thus adding a spiritual element to Gallup’s established cognitive and emotional aspects of engagement.

An engaged employee is aware of occupational context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee. This verdict and definition forwarded by Institute of Employment

Studies give a clear insight that employee engagement is the result of a two-way relationship between employer and employee pointing out that there are things to be done by both sides.

### **Effect of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance**

Employee engagement has appeared as possibly significant employee performance and organizational subject (Karatepe, 2009; Endres & Mancheno-Smoak, 2008). A number of researches establish that a significant method to boost performance of worker is to concentrate on nurturing worker engagement. Study (Leiter and Bakker, 2010; Christian et al., 2011; Rich et al., 2010; Richman, 2006; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Fleming and Asplund, 2007; Holbeche & Springett, 2003) further proposes that the presence of high degrees of employee engagement improves task performance, occupation performance, and organisational citizenship behaviour, discretionary effort, productivity, continuance commitment, affective commitment, levels of psychological climate, and customer service. Besides, in a study conducted by Anitha (2014) establish that employee engagement had a substantial effect on employee performance. Thus, the significances of engagement were an organisational commitment, job satisfaction, aim to leave and organisational citizenship behaviour (Saks, 2006). So, the existence of higher degrees of worker engagement greatly decreases turnover aim (Saks, 2006; Maslach et al., 2001) and enhance employee performance. Dalal et al., (2012) assert that “employee engagement is the best predictors of overall employee performance” (p.295).

More so, Demerouti and Cropanzano (2010) maintain that engagement could lead to boosted performance as an outcome of numerous factors. These outcomes are corroborated by a rising number of researches resulting in a constructive association amongst engagement and individual performance (Mone & London, 2010; Halbesleben, 2010). It was further suggested by Mone and London (2010) that upon enhancing performance supervision, institutes can create and maintain great levels of worker engagement, and thus greater degrees of performance. It is therefore obvious that the vigour and attention inherent/acquired in job engagement permit workforces to give their full capability to the work which improves the quality of their main work assignments. Hence, the relationship between engagement and performance is consistent with engagement research, theory and models.

### **Employee Engagement Strategies**

So far we have discussed the definition of employee engagement and performance, the effect of employee engagement on employee performance in an organisation. However, in order to have engaged and performed employees in any organisation, executives need to look at the following

as described by Kompasso and Sridevi (2010) as it is believed that will solve employee disengagement problems.

- i. **Commence it on day one:** Numerous establishments do have clear new aptitude acquisition plans. Nevertheless, they shortage employee retention policies. Effective staffing and orientation plans are the first thing to be placed on the first day of the new worker. Organisations have to be cautious in pooling out the possible talent of the new worker via effective staffing. The newly appointed employee must be offered both overall orientation which is linked to the organisation task, vision, standards, rules and processes and job-specific orientation such as his occupation responsibilities, and tasks, aims and present priorities of the unit to which the employee fits so as to allow him to improve accurate occupation expectations and decrease job conflict that could happen in the future. After the employment choice is made, the manager has to guarantee role-talent match when assigning an employee in a definite place and exercise all decision-making efforts necessary to keep that talent in the establishment.
- ii. **Commence it from the uppermost:** Worker engagement entails management commitment via creating clear vision, task, and values. Unless the individuals at the uppermost believe in it, own it, pass it down to executives and employees, and improve their leadership, worker engagement would at no time be more than merely a “corporate fad” or “another HR thing”. Employee engagement does not need lip-service rather dedicated heart and action-oriented service from top management. It requires “Leading by Being example”.
- iii. **Develop employee engagement via two-way communiqué:** Organisations must encourage two-way communiqué. Workers are not groups of persons to which you give your thoughts without offering them an opportunity to have an expression on matters that concern to their occupation and existence. Consistent and clear message of what is expected of them gives the avenue for engaged workers. Include your individuals and frequently show admiration to their contribution. Assign power to your staffs via participatory decision-making in order for them to feel sense of belonging thus enhancing their engagement and performance.
- iv. **Offer satisfactory prospects for improvement and progression:** Inspire autonomous thinking via providing them additional occupation self-sufficiency so that workforces would have an opportunity to create their own liberty of decide on their personal best method of performing their occupation in as much as they are giving the expected outcome. Administer via outcomes rather than attempting to administer all the procedures by which that outcome is accomplished.

- v. **Guarantee that workers have all they want to perform their works:** Managers should ensure that personnel have all the means include material or physical, fiscal and information means so as to effectively perform their occupation.
- vi. **Provide workforces with suitable training:** Assist personnel update themselves in growing their knowledge and talents via offering suitable trainings. Usually it is comprehended that when workers develop to know further about their occupation, their self-assurance rises thus they would be able to function without considerable supervision from their instant bosses which in shot build up their loyalty and commitment.
- vii. **Have strong feedback scheme:** Organisations need to improve a performance management structure which keeps bosses and workers answerable for the extent of engagement they have demonstrated. Carrying out frequent review of employee engagement level aids in making out elements that could make employees be more engaged and performed. After concluding the assessment, it is desirable to ascertain all the factors that inspiring engagement in the organisation, and limit the number of factors to concentrate on two (2) or three (3) areas. It is imperative that organisations commence with a focus on the issues that would create the greatest difference to the workforces and put vigour around enhancing these aspects as it could be problematic to attend to all issues at once. Managers must support such assessment outcomes and improve action-oriented schemes that are precise, assessable, and answerable and time- bound.
- viii. **Incentives have a part to play:** Organisation managers have to work out both financial and non-financial benefits for workers who demonstrate additional engagement in their occupations. Numerous administration theories have specified that when workforces receive additional pay, praise and recognition, they tend to apply additional energy into their occupation. There must be a clear relationship amongst performance and incentives offered to the workforces.
- ix. **Create a unique organisation culture:** Organisations must encourage a strong occupation culture in which the objectives and ethics of managers are supported across all occupation units. Establishments that create a culture of mutual admiration by keeping achievement stories informed would not merely keep their present workforces engaged but likewise they induct the fresh incoming workforces with this transmissible soul of occupation culture.
- x. **Concentrate on top-performing workforces:** A research carried out by Watson Wyatt Worldwide in the year 2004/05 on Human Resource practices of fifty (50) large USA organisations' specifies that high-performing institutes are concentrating on engaging their top-performing personnel. Based on the research finding of this study, what high-performing



organisations are undertaking is what top-performing personnel are requesting for and this lessens the turnover of high-performing personnel and as a result leads to top/high organisation performance.

Therefore, if the strategies discussed above are adequately applied and followed by the organisations and managers to engage the employee in their job would definitely, in turn, improve employee and organisation performance. An engaged worker is aware of the occupational background and works with co-workers to enhance performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

## CONCLUSION

The current study examined the effect of employee engagement on employee performance, and it is found that employee engagement is closely linked with employee performance. Organisations with engaged employees have higher employee retention as a result of reduced turnover and reduced intention to leave the organisation and enhance employee performance. Thus, it could be suggested that organisational management should focus more on employee engagement because the engaged employee could do his/her best in accomplishing tasks assigned to him/her which would eventually translate to organisational accomplishments. Management must improve two-way communiqué, guarantee that workforces have all the resources they require to perform their occupation, offer suitable training to improve their knowledge and talent, create reward devices in which good work is rewarded through many fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, create a distinctive organisation culture that inspires hard work and keeps achievement stories informed, develop a strong performance management system which holds managers and employees accountable for the behaviour they bring to the workplace, place focus on top-performing employees to reduce their turnover and maintain or increase employee and organisation performance.

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