



Influences of Demographic Variables on Employee Engagement in the TelecomSector

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Abstract

There is an increasing focus on development of human capital in business organizations in the current times. Organizations are finding new ways to leverage their human capital to achieve organizational outcomes. In line with this thinking organizations are taking well deliberated and crafted initiatives to boost employee performance. Today Organizations are nurturing employee engagement with a view to improving organizational effectiveness.

Several personality and demographic variables have been previously studied to investigate their relationship with employee engagement. But due to a lack of research evidence in this context comprehending such a relationship is a demanding task. This research paper explores the role of three demographic variables namely gender, educational qualification and tenure with the organization in promoting employee engagement.

Keywords: Absorption, Dedication, Employee Engagement, Demographic variables, Vigor

Introduction

Practitioners and academics tend to have the same opinion that the consequences of employee engagement are positive (Saks 2006). There is a general belief that there is a link between employee engagement and business outcomes; a meta-analysis conducted by Harter et al (2002:272) confirms this connection. They concluded that, “Employee satisfaction and engagement are related to meaningful business outcomes at a magnitude that is important to many organisations”. On the other hand, in reporting on the costs of employee disengagement, Meere(2005) discusses a survey carried out by ISR on 360,000 employees from 41 companies in the world’s 10 largest economies and finds that in companies with low engagement both operating margin and net profit margins decreased over a three year period, whereas in companies with high levels of engagement both these measures increased over the same time period. Engaged employees create engaged customers who are essential for sustainable growth of the organization. In other words, creating a work environment with engaged employees is a



prerequisite to achieving profitability, efficiency, sustainability; in short overall organizational effectiveness. Employee engagement varies for employees working in the same organization and subjected to the same conditions. This paper investigates if demographic variable have any role to play in the variation of employee engagement.

Review Of Literature On Employee Engagement and Demographic Variables

One of the initial challenges presented by the literature was the lack of a universal definition of employee engagement. Kahn (1990:694) defines employee engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Most often employee engagement has been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk 2004, Richman 2006 and Shaw 2005) or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their job (Frank et al 2004). Although it is recognized and accepted that employee engagement is a complex construct, as formerly suggested by Kahn (1990), Truss et al (2006) define employee engagement basically as ‘passion for work’, a psychological state which is seen to include the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990), and captures the common theme conveyed through all these definitions.

It is researcher’s endeavor to fathom the conceptual framework presented by other researchers and practitioners and comprehend the variety of meanings the engagement construct includes and the research traditions that give rise to or support those meanings. Thus, an attempt has been made to organize the various literatures relevant to engagement according to four major approaches which are: a) Kahn’s (1990) need-satisfying approach, (b) Maslach et al.’s (2001) burnout-antithesis approach (c) Harter et al.’s (2002) satisfaction engagement approach, and (d) Saks’s (2006) multidimensional approach.

Kahn’s (1990) Need-Satisfying Approach

Kahn contribution to studies on engagement has been noteworthy. Conceptually, Kahn began with the work of Goffman (1961) who proposed that, “people’s attachment and detachment to their role varies” (Kahn 1990:694). However, Kahn argued that Goffman’s work focused on



passing face-to-face encounters, while a different concept was needed to explain organizational life, which is “ongoing, emotionally charged, and psychologically complex” (Diamond and Allcorn 1985). Kahn (1990) proposed that engagement, exhibited outwardly towards work-related activities, was the simultaneous expression of one’s preferred self and the promotion of connection to others. Presently, many of the contemporary conceptualizations of engagement (e.g., Harter et al., 2002; Macey & Schneider. 2008; Saks, 2006) stem from Kahn’s (1990) seminal work, which provides a foundational and empirically tested (May, 8 Gilson, & Harter, 2002) model for comprehending the concept of employee engagement.

Demographic Variables and Employee Engagement

Jones and Harter (2005) investigated the relation between race, employee engagement, and intention to turnover. He used a sample of 2014 employees. Gallup researchers inquired two questions (i.e., “What is your race?” and “What is the race of your current manager or supervisor?”) in addition to the standard twelve items on the GWA. The aim of the research was to examine patterns of engagement and intention to turnover differences among employee-manager dyads of different races. Results showed that employees who reported higher levels of engagement and were in cross-race dyads had a higher short term intention to remain ($r = .21$) than the respondents from same-race dyads. While race and engagement levels were not reported in the results, inferences suggested that one’s race could be a prominent factor in engagement levels when working with supervisors of a different race. In another study the impact of age on employee engagement was explored. Avery et al. (2007) assessed the relation between age, organizational tenure, perceived co-worker age, and satisfaction with older (> 55) and younger (< 40) co-workers in the United Kingdom. The study was conducted on 901 employees. The outcomes of the research indicated that engagement was negatively correlated to organizational tenure ($r = -.11$), positional tenure ($r = -.17$), and age ($r = -.12$). On the other hand employee engagement had a positive relation with job satisfaction of younger co-workers ($r = .29$) and gender dissimilarity ($r = .08$). The findings suggested that higher satisfaction with coworkers also led to higher engagement. The employees who had been with the organization or in the particular position longer showed lower engagement levels.



Research Objectives

The research questions and subsequent hypothesis were framed as following:

1. Do females and males differ significantly in employee engagement score, and which group is higher than the other? The null hypothesis to be tested is:

H₀: There is no significant difference between employee engagement score of male and female employees.

2. Are the employee engagement scores different for different Educational Qualification levels, and are highest for which Educational level. The null Hypothesis to be tested is:

H₀: There is no significant difference between employee engagement score and level of Educational Qualification of employees.

3. Is there a difference in employee engagement scores with the time the employee has been with the organization? The null Hypothesis to be tested is:

H₀: There will be no significant impact of tenure of employees in the organization on Employee Engagement score

Research Design and Methodology

In the present study a sample of 500 respondents from companies in the Telecommunication sector was collected across 18 districts of the State of Madhya Pradesh. Random sampling was followed in collection of responses. It was ensured that the responses collected had equal representation of the three management levels of Hierarchy. Out of 500 respondents that were considered, 167 respondents were from Top management, 166 from Middle and 167 from Lower management hierarchical levels. Out of the 500 respondents 131 were females and 369 were males. The educational qualification of 319 employees surveyed was graduation while 181 employees surveyed had post-graduation or higher qualifications. This research was done in non-contrived settings because natural environment was preferred to analyze the organizational employees. Data was collected only once so the study is based on cross sectional analysis.



Table 1: Sample Statistics

Sample Size	500
No of respondents belonging to top management level	167
No of respondents belonging to middle management level	166
No of respondents belonging to lower management level	167
Number of Female employees	131
Number of Male employees	369
Number of Graduate employees	319
Number of Post Graduate employees	181

Research Instruments Used

- 1) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker (2003) was used to measure employee engagement scores
- 2) Questionnaire was used to capture data related to the demographic variables

Data Analysis

A sample size of 500 employees from the Telecommunication sector across the State of M. P. was taken for analysis. The data was subjected to statistical analysis using statistical package of SPSS 16 and MS Excel. The analysis of demographic factors was done using three demographic variables namely gender, educational qualification and tenure with the organization. The variable gender had two sub categories i.e. male and female. The variable Educational Qualification had two categories i.e. Post Graduate and Graduate. The level of significance is considered as 1 percent. The results of analysis are presented in tables below.



Univariate Analysis of Variance

Table 2: Univariate Analysis of Variance Between-Subjects Factors

		N
Gender	1	131
	2	369
Educational Qualification	1	181
	2	319

Here 1 stands for Female and 2 stands for Male employees. Likewise for educational qualification 1 stands for post graduate and 2 stands for graduate.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Dependent Variable: employee engagement				
Gender	Educational Qualification	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1	1	65.84	25.518	50
	2	61.90	22.937	81
	Total	63.40	23.935	131
2	1	60.98	21.231	131
	2	64.45	18.732	238
	Total	63.22	19.697	369
Total	1	62.33	22.528	181
	2	63.80	19.877	319
	Total	63.27	20.866	500

Table 4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Powerb
Corrected Model	1497.294a	3	499.098	1.147	.329	.007	3.442	.310
Intercept	1450803.149	1	1450803.149	3.335 E3	.000	.871	3335.260	1.000



Gender	120.457	1	120.457	.277	.599	.001	.277	.082
Educational Qualification	5.084	1	5.084	.012	.914	.000	.012	.051
Gender * Educational Qualification	1240.659	1	1240.659	2.852	.092	.006	2.852	.392
Error	215754.794	496	434.990					
Total	2218672.000	500						
Corrected Total	217252.088	499						
a. R Squared = .007 (Adjusted R Squared = .001)								
b. Computed using alpha = .05								

1. Females did not have employee engagement score higher than males or vice versa. $F=0.277$, $p=0.599$. Since the calculated value of F is less than Tabulated value, it is not significant, hence H_0 is true.
2. There is no significant main effect for Education Qualification levels : The employees who are graduate did not have employee engagement scores higher than post graduate employees or vice versa. $F=0.012$, $p=0.914$. Since the calculated value of F is less than Tabulated value, it is not significant, hence H_0 is true.
3. The tenure of employees in the organization was divided into four categories:
 1. Up to two years
 2. Between 2 and 6 years
 3. Between 6 and 9 years
 4. More than 9 years

The null hypothesis to be tested is:

H_0 : There will be no significant impact of tenure of employees in the organization on Employee Engagement score.



Table 5: Variance of Employee Engagement Scores across tenure of employees- ANOVA

Employee Engagement	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7811.007	3	2603.669	6.166	.000
Within Groups	209441.081	496	422.260		
Total	217252.088	499			

Since the calculated value of $F=6.166$ (Table 4.37) is more than tabulated value, it is significant, hence H_0 is rejected. The tenure of employees in the organization has an impact on Employee engagement score. The employee engagement shows an increasing trend with tenure.

Discussion and Road Ahead

Workforce diversity is being encouraged in organizations. The source of diversity could be age, gender, educational qualification, cultural backgrounds. It is imperative for organizations to ensure employee engagement even in diverse groups. By being aware of the unique needs of diverse groups, as well as by recognizing individual differences within these groups, one can better understand the challenges of increased diversity in the organization's workforce. The current study attempted to explore if there existed any specific engagement pattern with respect to demographic variables. Research in the past has reported that gender differences have also been found, such that men experience enrichment from work to family, while women experience depletion from work to family. While women experience enrichment from family to work, men experience no links from family to work (Rothbard 1999). Gallup's US research (2010) concluded that women tend to find more fulfillment in their jobs and are more engaged than men are. However, no clear difference was found between employee engagement levels of Thai men and women (Johnson 2004). With reference to the current study it was hypothesized there would be no significant difference found between engagement levels of male and female employees. The findings of the current study did not reveal any significant difference between the



engagement level of male and female employees in the telecommunication sector. No distinguishing pattern was observed as far as engagement of men and women were concerned. The investigation regarding the influence of educational level on employee engagement found there was no significant impact of the level of education on engagement levels. There was no significant disparity in engagement levels of graduate or post graduate employees. The present study revealed that the tenure of employees in the organization had an impact on employee engagement score and employee engagement showed an increasing trend with increasing tenure. The current research yielded findings which are contradictory to findings of researchers at Gallup (Brim 2002) and Truss et al (2006) who reported an inverse relationship between employee engagement, or the degree to which a worker is fulfilled by his or her job, and the length of service. According to Brim (2002) such evidence indicates that for most employees, the first year on the job is their best and thereafter it is 'downhill'. The reason for the increasing trend of employee engagement levels with tenure in the current study can be explained as new joiners being in the process of understanding the philosophy and values system of the organization. They are in the adjusting phase and looking for alignment of their expectation with those of the organization. Older employees identify with the organization. They have experienced growth opportunities and found a fit with the culture of the organization. The managerial implication of this research finding is that the management needs to devise ways for engaging the relatively new employees in the organization also. Employee engagement should begin at recruitment and selection stage itself. It is important to understand the attitude of candidate towards work, life and organization.



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