

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Employee Engagement

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Abstract - Engaging employees has become very essential in today's pandemic situation due to COVID-19. Thinking of seizing the top position devoid of the support of your employees would surely be a dream in this current situation of lockdown. Organizations know very well that engaged employees are the key to success in this tough time. That is why businesses must look forward to keeping their employees satisfied and motivated through the engagement of employees during pandemic circumstances. Under the current situation, establishing employee engagement measures with the help of technology is essential for the growth of the organizations. The present study tries to examine the different strategies of Employee Engagement in during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic had created a Challenging unprecedented impact for the organisations. Most of the organisations are struggling to maintain the levels of employee engagement. This pandemic has forced the organisations to look for and implement various employee involvement programs to make the employees stay bounded towards the organisation. In this rapidly expanding and developing work environment workers tend to be constantly looking out for new career opportunities. Replacing an professional is costly and disengaged employees are a major reason for contributing to high employee turnover. Hence, organisations are focussing on exclusive engagement strategies. In the present business situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, employee engagement has become one of the utmost prominent primacies for human resource managers and practitioners in organizations due to lockdown. The study helps the organizations to engage the employees during this tough time. During pandemic, employees became more stressed and less engaged at work. The study helps to know new management practices to increase employee engagement during this pandemic. The paper is to determine the engagement of employees by various companies during coronavirus pandemic. Organizations nowadays are constantly developing innovative and effective means to engage the employees during this tough time.

Keywords – Covid-19, Employee, Engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Engaging talented people in a firm generates crucial benefits. Emotional connection with the organization is termed as 'engagement'. The satisfaction of employees is essential to the success of every corporate enterprise. Only a happy employee will establish good relations with the workplace, which thereby increases productivity. The current global pandemic drastically changed the working scene. Remote work has developed a colloquial term. This new circumstance not only applies to the employee, but each organization and the general public, and the world generally (Saks, 2006). People were forced by lock-down to live in social isolation as well as mental and psychological distancing. Industry and organizations, with the aid of various digital networking channels and platforms swiftly imbibed the work from home (WFH) approach. Online platforms help promote a variety of programs for employee relations systems, which are typically part of a human

resources mechanism aimed at making the best use of individuals to accomplish a company's purpose (Deloitte, 2016). Employee participation goes beyond drills, games, and executive opportunities. Studies reveal that only 18% of employees are actively engaged in their job at any point of time. It is critical for everyone in the company to know their purpose, where and how they fit in. The concept of employee satisfaction is an examination of how people are happy with their particular employment, and the circumstances. High levels of spirit amongst employees can be a significant competitive advantage for any firm. Organizations with high levels of participation are increasingly being compensated, and the sky is the threshold from there that rewards those relations by low levels of involvement (Mehta, D.& Mehta, 2013). Concepts such as job satisfaction organizational commitment are correlated with employee engagement, which further impact organizational performance. Nevertheless, a

disengaged employee means – loss of productivity, decreased efficacy and operational imbalances. The evolution of employee engagement best practices is based on this premise (Tomar, 2017). The present study relates to the functioning of organisations in the backdrop of the pandemic. The study focuses on the fundamental ideas and issues that influence employee participation, employee engagement and employee satisfaction. During this pandemic situation, organizations are evolving many engagement activities like online family engagement practices, virtual learning and development, online team building activities, webinars with industry experts, online conduct weekly alignment sessions, team meet-ups over video conference for lunch, short online game sessions, virtual challenges and competitions, online courses, appreciation sessions, communication exercises, live sessions for new-skill training, online counseling sessions, recognition and acknowledgment session, webinars dealing with anxiety and stress, providing online guidance for exercise and meditation, social interactions in a virtual office, classrooms training modules digitally, e-learning modules, and many more creative learning sessions. Work-from-home regime engagement activities are very fruitful for employees as well as for organizations. Those organizations doing these kinds of engagement activities for their employees are learning new skills and developing themselves. Employees are feeling committed to the organization and stay motivated during this tough time of COVID-19 pandemic.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Employee engagement is derived from studies of morale or a group's willingness to accomplish organizational objectives which began in the 1920's. The value of morale to organizations was matured by US Army researchers during WWII to predict unity of effort and attitudinal battle-readiness before combat. In the postwar mass production society that required unity of effort in execution, (group) morale scores were used as predictors of speed, quality and militancy. With the advent of the knowledge worker and emphasis on individual talent management (stars), a term was needed to describe an individual's emotional attachment to the organization, fellow associates and the job. Thus the birth of the term "employee engagement" which is an individual emotional phenomenon whereas morale is a group emotional phenomenon of similar characteristics. In other words, employee engagement is the raw material of morale composed of 15 attitudinal drivers.

(Barreiro & Treglown, 2020), Employee engagement is critical for an organization to retain their valued employees. It is very essential for an organization to do effective utilization of human resources in an organization. Without employee engagement, an organization cannot survive for a lengthy period. Adrianto & Riyanto(2020) has studied

positive relationship between employee engagement and individual performance creating a sense of emotional attachment to work and organisation. Rana (2016) has presented a conceptual model for the relationship between employee engagement and high involvement work practices(HIWP). Saks and Gruman (2014)- has validated that making basic conclusions about employee engagement is difficult because of a number of research limitations and unanswered questions. Kim, M. S., & Koo, D. W. (2017) examined how the leader-member exchange impacts the employee engagement. The sample was collected from employees working in Hotels in South Korea. Their research revealed that enhancing the quality of leader member exchange program leads to the enhancement in employee engagement. Employee engagement tends to exhibit the high levels of innovative behaviour and job performance. They argued that engaged employees are significant to retain talented employees and employee talent retention leads to positive outcomes and profitability for growth. The successful employee engagement leads to sustain 1) a learning culture 2) Transparent and frequent communication 3) the pursuit of high performance and 4) alignment between both company and individual goals. There is a significant impact of employee engagement on the organizational effectiveness. Thiagarajan & Renugadevi (2011) has studied that career development, motivational factors and performance appraisal are associated with employee engagement. Shankar and Bhatnagar (2010) has proposed model focussing on work-life balance and its relationship with employee engagement. Fernandez (2007) has displayed the dissimilarity between job satisfaction and engagement. Perrin's Global Workforce Studies (2003)- the study predicted that an inspirational leader, feeling of responsibility, sense of control over work are key drivers of employee engagement. Miles (2001) defined engagement as developing employees to work with not only their minds and body but also with heart. Employee engagement was described in the academic literature by Schmidt et al. (1993) using data from Gallup's Q12 engagement survey as "employee's involvement with, commitment to, and satisfaction with work." Engagement at work was conceptualized by William A. Kahn (1990) who has explained it as a concept where people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.

III. RESEARCH GAPS

Employee Engagement has been identified as one of the critical HR challenges by several studies. Organisations being challenging calls for a special attention of Employee Engagement. The intense competition and the stress associated with the nature work makes employee engagement a more intricate practice for the organisations. Lots of researches have taken place to identify the drivers of Employee Engagement and its relationship with the success of the organization. But as a result of increasing

competitive growth and the current pandemic (Covid-19) makes essential for further exploration into emerging trends and their impact on Employee Engagement. Employee Engagement during this Pandemic situation remains as a grey area and this research study tries to throw light into that aspect.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the factors that influence employee engagement during the pandemic.
- To understand the impact of demographic variables on employee engagement in the organization.

V. HYPOTHESIS

- **Ho** : There is no association between working conditions and Employee Engagement.
- **H1** : There is no association between demographic variables and Employee Engagement.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the survey method using questionnaire. The data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source of information was from the employees of different organisations belonging to Hyderabad using Questionnaire. The secondary data was collected through books, journals, newspapers, research articles and internet.

Sample Size: 124 employees

Table 1: Respondent Profile in terms of Demographic Variables:

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	88 71%
	Female	36 29%
Age	20-30	34 27%
	30-40	79 64%
	>40	11 9%
Experience	0-5 Years	29 23%
	5-10 Years	78 63%
	>15 Years	17 14%

Source: Primary data obtained from the individuals of the selected sample.

Statistical Tool for Analysis:

All the collected data from the questionnaires are uploaded in the SPSS software for the purpose of analysis. Chi square results are obtained to draw the results.

Table: 2 Demographic Variable Results:

Hypothesis	Sig. Value	Result
There is no association between Gender and Employee Engagement	0.112	Accepted
There is no association between Age and Employee Engagement	0.003	Rejected
There is no association between Experience and Employee Engagement	0.114	Accepted

Source: Primary data obtained from the individuals of the selected sample.

Factors influencing Employee Engagement:

To check the reliability of the data obtained on different items related to factors including employee engagement activities during pandemic, Cronbach Alpha test was conducted. The Cronbach Alpha values for the corresponding items (related to employee engagement activities during pandemic) was found to be greater or equal to 0.70, which indicates that the data obtained is reliable. The reliability analysis data for the corresponding items (related to employee engagement activities during pandemic) is given in the table below.

Table: 3 Data Validation- Cronbach alpha for all variables:

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.983	16

Source: Primary data obtained from the individuals of the selected sample.

Table: 4 Test Statistics:

S.No.	Factor	Factor analysis Value
1.	Organization is taking appropriate action in response to Covid-19	0.702
2.	I am Satisfied with the way the Organization manages both its business and people during the Pandemic	0.519
3.	Organization is providing all the facilities to work effectively from home	0.668
4.	I feel connected with my team virtually	0.741
5.	Work from home has not affected my job productivity	0.517
6.	I am not worried of losing job during pandemic	0.619
7.	Organization has provided COVID-19 assistance for me and my family during tough time	0.770
8.	I feel satisfied with the timely virtual internal communication	0.543
9.	Organization has also provided trainings virtually, if required	0.737
10.	I never felt stressed working from home	0.513
11.	Work from home has not disturbed my work-life balance	0.710
12.	I am happy with the feedback support system during the pandemic	0.760
13.	Organization has provided all the additional resources required to work effectively	0.560
14.	I am happy with the flexible working hours during the tough time	0.684
15.	My organization has provided health care assistance to the covid affected employees during the pandemic	0.615
16.	My organization is conducting stress management programs during the pandemic	0.764

Source: Primary data obtained from the individuals of the selected sample.

Since, the hypothesis values are more than 0.50, it clearly indicates that majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement whereas very few respondents strongly disagreed to the statement.

VII. FINDINGS

- Gender has no effect on Employee Engagement whereas the age group and experience are the variables that has its effect on the level of employee engagement.
- The Organizations are taking appropriate action in response to Covid-19 where majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement
- Employees are satisfied with the way the Organization has managed both its business and people during the Pandemic.
- All the Organizations are providing with basic facilities to work effectively from home.
- Work from home has slightly effected the job productivity.
- All the Organizations has provided COVID-19 assistance for employees as well as their families during the tough time.
- Organizations has also provided trainings virtually, if required.
- Work from home has disturbed the work-life balance of few employees.
- It has been found that virtual communication needs to be improved for increasing employee performance effectively.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

- To improve engagement of the employees, firstly it is suggested that the employees should know how their behavior affects the organizational performance.
- Expectations from the employees must be communicated clearly even through virtually during pandemic.
- Virtual communication must be improved.
- Organisations need to provide all the necessary resources required to work from home.
- Organisations must make work itself less stressful.
- Offer employees the flexibility to try new work tasks so they can discover their intrinsic interests.
- Continue to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Organisations need to maintain company culture effectively even it has been operating virtually.
- Organisational feedback system need to be improved to increase employee engagement.

IX. CONCLUSION

Covid-19 has been impacting all the sectors of work and employees have been facing various problem from salary

deductions to layoffs but most of the organisations are able to manage the impact of covid-19 successfully with the help of providing employees work from home facility. Employee Engagement have been found to be a positive attitude to improve organisations value. The study shows that factors such as Work Culture, Communication, Job Satisfaction, Leadership & Team work, Recognition and appreciation, Compensation and Benefits, Work-Life Balance, Career Growth and Development, Safety and Security all contribute to an employee's level of engagement, and an employee's level of engagement contributes to organisational commitment. The present research has found various factors that improves employee engagement during pandemic. The research also focuses on finding the areas where the improvement is needed for overcoming such pandemic situations.

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