Impact of Managers and Senior Leaders Influencing Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT *Each and every business strives to gain competitive advantage. Business focus is on the efficiency, effectiveness, innovation and responsiveness to its customers and one way to do this is through employee engagement. Organizations of all sizes and types have invested substantially in policies and practices that foster engagement.This study attempts to identify the impact of the Roles and Responsibilities of the Managers and Senior Leaders Influencing Employee Engagement. A quantitative approach were in the managers, executives and employees working in 28 companies were taken purposely which included manufacturing, IT, and service industry Karnataka (India). The study examines that there is relationship between employee engagement and performance outcome a greater percentage of the workforce trust senior leaders and managers, when they are supportive, provide autonomy and give periodical constructive feedback to employees such employees are not only engaged but have also increased their productivity which in turn has reduced turn over.*

Introduction

In order to establish and survive in today's aggressive business world, it is important to create an edge over competitors. Competitive advantage is the ability of one business to outperform other business; therefore organisations have to focus on each and every activity related to its business accordingly. The essence of competitiveness is liberated when human resource believe on what they think and do is important—and then get out of their way while they do it. The challenge today is not just retaining talented people, but fully engaging them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work lives." (Kaye, & Jordan 2003).The economic downturn that started in 2008 has had a substantial impact on decisions by management . Employee engagement is relatively a new term in management and gained its prominence from 2000 onwards. Aligning employee values, goals aspirations with those of the organisation is the best method of achieving sustainable employee engagement.

Employee engagement is defined as "the extent to which employees commit to something or someone in their organization, how hard they work and how long they stay as a result of that commitment (CLC 2004). Melcrum publishing (2005) found from a global survey that 74% of the organisations began to focus on employee engagement between 2000-2004 because engagement is about creating passion, it's about focusing on what people do well, and it's about development and recognition. Employee commitment is related to engagement. Engagement is more than simple job satisfaction. It can best be described as a harnessing of one's self to his or her roles at work. Employee engagement can take very different shapes, depending on the sector, the level of development of the organisation, challenges faced by a specific company and its priorities, its employees' concerns or the management's objectives.

In engagement, people express themselves cognitively, physically, and emotionally while performing their work roles (Kahn, 1990).Engaged employees have a bond with the organization and willingly help achieve organisational goals and are emotionally involved in the tasks of their organization (Buhler, 2006).These individuals feel empowered and in control of their fate at work. They identify with the organisational mission and are willing to commit emotionally and put in personal energies necessary to excel in their work. Fully engaged workers are those who are physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and feel aligned with

the purpose of the organisation (Loehr & Schwartz, 2003). Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give competitive advantages, including higher productivity and lower employee turnover (SHRM 2012) This is accomplished by having the right employees working in the right jobs, that is individuals not only have the skills to do the job ("can do") but also their personal motivators ("will do").

In 2009 80% of a global sample HR Heads top concern was employee engagement. In fact, 2010 engagement levels represented the largest decline in employee engagement research that Aon Hewitt has seen in the last 15 years. In 2010, the global engagement score was 56%, down four percentage points from 60% in 2009 (Report 2011). Among the top 25 drivers of employee engagement identified the most important driver is a connection between an employee's job and organizational strategy. Employees who are engaged perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave the organization (2004). Employee engagement is a key business driver for organizational success. In 2005, low-engagement teams were seen falling behind engaged teams, with a difference in performance-related costs of low- versus high-engagement teams totalling $2,104,823.(Vance 2006).

Employee engagement report (2008) determine that majority of the employees who liked their work were planning to stick to their work but were not bothered about what mattered to their employer. Employee engagement is different from employee satisfaction, motivation and culture. Engaged employees can improve customer satisfaction and they become living brand (MDRF 2012) they are developed as corporate service brand and systematic communication process because they reflect the values and missions.(Antonio Ragusa 2010). Engagement needs to be observed as a broad organisational strategy that involves all levels of the organisation (Frank et al 2004), a series of actions and steps (Shaw 2005), which require the contribution and involvement of organisational members (Robinson et al 2004), as well as consistent, continuous and clear communications (Truss et al 2006). There is not only a direct connection of employee engagement and business performance but also business outcomes like attrition, productivity and safety.(2012 kenexa).Employees usually try to adopt the characteristics and attitudes of their leaders, thus when the managers are engaged staff also are engaged (Kerfoot, 2008).

In the service industry employee engagement has had a positive effect on productivity and customer satisfaction (Harte et al 2002). In a recent report it is seen that when people grow more experienced and vested in their work, or more senior in the organization, engagement increases (Report 2013). Free, healthy and well cooked food was a key ingredient of its employee engagement strategy (Gopalakrishnan 2009).

Objective of the study: Employee engagement has gained attention by the management and academic communities in the recent years. Despite this, there remains a dearth of critical academic literature and relatively little is known about how employee engagement can be influenced by management. Though there is a great deal of interest by management on engagement, there is also a good deal of confusion. Studies have focused on the concept, drivers, levels of employee engagement necessary for the successful implementation. Not much study is conducted in India on employee engagement and to know whether senior leaders and managers have an influence on employee engagement. Thus the three main research objective are:

1. To develop knowledge and understanding of employee engagement, its drivers, and its consequences.
2. To analyze the impact of roles and responsibilities of managers and seniors leaders influencing employee engagement
3. To examine any changes or development in the working environment due to employee engagement.

Methodology
A quantitative approach was used to enable the researchers to collect data. Permission was taken from the authorities concerned after explaining to them the purpose of the study. The criterion for participation in this study was all employees except top management. It is a study based on self-administered questionnaire .A total of 274 respondents from twenty-eight companies were taken purposively which included manufacturing, IT, and service industry from Karnataka. Care was taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality of their identity. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed using the statistical package SPSS. Findings were described using proportions and percentages.

Analyses and Finding
Figure 1. Baseline Information.
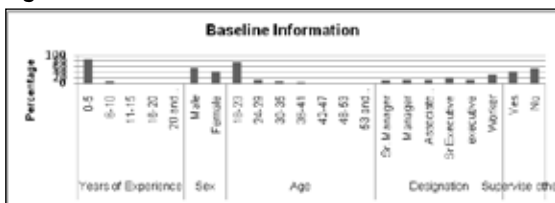
The above figure 1 shows that majority (88.7%) of participants have had an experience working in the organization between 0-5 years. 5.84% of the respondents were having between 6-10 years and 5.47% of the participants were between 11-20 and above 20 years of experience. 56.9% of the respondents were males and 43.1% were female.

Majority 77.4% of the respondents were between 18-23 years and 22.6% of the participants were between 24-47 years.33.2% of the respondents belonged to the worker class 19% were Senior Executives 13.5% were executives 13.9% were associate managers 11.7% were managers and 8.76% were senior managers 44.5% of the respondents supervised others and 55.5% did not supervise anyone

Figure 2. Drivers of Engagement
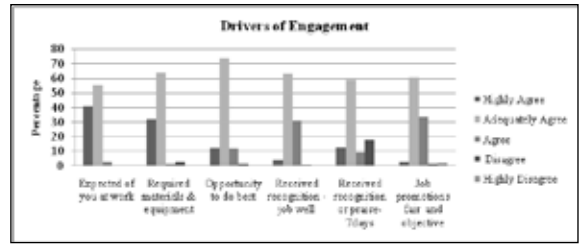
The above figure 2 clearly shows that 55.84% adequately agree 41.24% highly agree and 2.55% agree that they know what is expected of them from their job. 64.23% of the participants adequately agree 32.12% highly agree ,1.46% agree that necessary required materials and equipment's are provided to do their job right it's only a small percentage 2.19% of the respondents disagree to this. Majority 74.09% of the participants adequately agree that they have an opportunity to do their best everyday.12.41% highly agree and 12% of the participants agree. 63.14% of the respondents adequately agree 31% agree and 4.01% highly agree that they have received recognition to do their job well only a small percentage (1.82%) disagrees.

Out of 274 respondents 59.12% adequately agree 12.8% highly agree 9.49% agree that they have received praise and recognition for their job in the last 7 days. 18.61% of the participants disagree to this. Majority 60.58% of the respondents adequately agree 33.6% agree 2.55% highly agree that the job promotions are fair and objective 3.28% of the respondents disagree on this.

Figure 3.Levels of Engagement
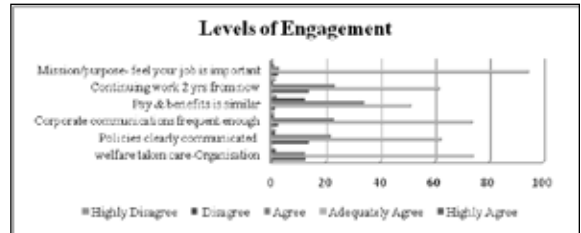
The above figure 3 clearly shows that a majority 93.53% of the respondents adequately agree 2.19% highly agree 2.55% agree that mission and purpose of the company makes them feel that their job is important. 62.41% of the participants adequately agree 21.5% agree13.5% highly agree that policies and programmes are clearly communicated to the employees. Only a small 2.55% disagree to this.

Majority 51.09% adequately agree, 33.9% agree and 1.09% highly agree that the pay and benefit is comparatively similar to other company.13.9% of the respondents disagree that it is similar. More than half of the respondents 55.11% adequately agree 21.9% agree and 12.4% highly agree that they have best friends at work 10.58% disagree to this. Out of 274 respondents 61.68% of the participants adequately agree 23% agree and 13.5% of the respondents highly agree that they would like to continue work for the next two years, a very small percentage dis agree to this. The figure also highlights that the participants 74.09% adequately agree 12.4% highly agree and 12% agree that the organisation takes care of their welfare facilities. Thus we can state that all the above factors are the levels that encourage employee engagement which in turn helps develop employee engagement.

Figure 4.Responsibilities of Senior Leaders towards Employee Engagement

The above figure 4 clearly shows that majority more than half 72.3% ,62.41% ,84.31% of the respondents adequately agree 22.3%, and 23% agree ,12.4% and 12.8% highly agree that their supervisors are not only concerned about employee welfare ,well-being but also care of them at work. Majority 63.14% and 74.82% of the respondents adequately agree 24.5% and 22.6% agree and 1.46% of the participants highly agree that seniors not only count on the subordinates opinions but also takes their opinions seriously.10.9% and 1.09% disagree to this. 62.77% adequately agree 32.5% agree and 2.92% highly agree that seniors encourage juniors to work better.

A majority of the respondents 72.26% and 62.77% adequately agree that seniors and managers have spoken about the respondent's progress in the last 6 months. 22.6% and 24.5% agree on this 2.55% and 2.92 % highly agree 1.82% disagree about this. Since majority of the respondents agree that their mangers have supported them in their decisions we can interpretate that managers and senior leaders have certain responsibility towards employee engagement.

Figure 5: Advantages of Employee Engagement

The above figure 5 show the Advantages of Employee engagement and the role managers and senior leaders play in influencing employee engagement. There is an equal distribution 38.68 % and 37.59% of the participants adequately agree and highly agree and 21.53% agree that they have confidence on their managers and seniors leadership quality. 2.19% of the participants disagree on this. Majority 62.41%and 35.04% of the participants adequately agree and agree that their leaders are committed to quality work.

Out of 274 participants 51.82% and 60.58% of the respondents adequately agree that there is adequate planning and follow up of departmental objectives.38.69 and 25.18% agree 7.29% and 12.04% highly agree that there is proper planning and follow up by the managers and leaders of the organisation. Majority 62.41% of the participants adequately agree 22.26% agree and 13.5% highly agree that the managers treat them as a person not a number only 1.82% disagree to this. To be engaged employees want opportunity to grow, to learn, and to make a difference moment of connection, of conversing with those who lead, which will help to engender a sense of meaning and purpose within the team members (Tanveer 2012). The above figure also shows that the leaders can influence employee engagement.

Majority 59.49% and 82.85% adequately agree 32.12% and 2.92% highly agree 7.66% and 13.5% agree that the manag-

ers and senior leaders give prior importance to quality and they provide opportunity at work to learn and grow. Out of 274 participants 55.11% adequately agree 21.9% agree and 12.41% highly agree that the respondents are friends with senior leaders at work. 10.6% state they have no friends as seniors at work. Majority of the participants 62.77% and 72.26% adequately agree that when they are engaged their performance increases and that they are overall satisfied with the employer 24.82% and 22,99% agree 12.41% and 2.55% highly agree that their performance has bettered on employee engagement and they are satisfied with the employer overall. A small percentage of respondents 2.18% disagree to this.

5.Summary and Conclusion
In organizations every individual is accountable for his or her own engagement but at the same time the managers and senior leaders have a vital role to play. When organisations concentrates and gives prominent importance to employees commitment, potential, creativity and capability business functions is at its best (David & Nita 2009). Results of this study provide an insight and information for organisations, top management, administrators, practitioners, and researchers about managers and senior leaders influence in employee engagement

The study highlights that when the employees welfare facilities are taken take care, the managers, supervisors or senior leaders be friends with their subordinate, do adequate planning of the departmental work and follow-up, frequently communicate the purpose of the employee's job and make them feel that their job is important, their ideas, opinions are taken seriously and are considered then the employees are not only engaged but also are dedicated and like to continue their job in the same organisation. This not only provides an overall satisfaction to an employee but also encourages them to build confidence on their leaders, better their performance and improve their level of engagement at work. When the level of employee engagement is measured, and the managers and senior leaders provide their support, implementation of change strategies becomes easy and this could actually improve employee engagement in their organization, thereby potentially increasing the overall effectiveness of the organisation, and possibly decreasing turnover. There is a clear rationale behind employee engagement, and its potential impact on employee retention and the optimization of human resources (Solange 2012). Most people do not leave their jobs; they leave their bosses. Managers have to make an effort to know the individuals on their teams as people, not just employees he has to know their aspirations, interests, and recognise him as a "whole person" this will send a powerful message to employees that the organization understands and appreciates that they have a life outside work. Therefore senior leaders should work towards creating a work environment that lends itself to engagement from themselves and from the staff.

Researchers can use the information to conduct similar studies that will contribute to the knowledge base employee engagement to further determine what similarities exist across various occupations. An engaged employee can contribute significantly to reaching positive outcomes with the support of his senior leaders and therefore employee engagement concept should be at the forefront of research and policy implementation. It is the most important issue that any organization needs to resolve if they have to maintain credibility. It is simple in concept but difficult in execution, it is never achieved or finished—only improved. Leaders, organizational systems, strategies and employees are three driving forces that work in concert to build an engaging work environment. It might take years of steady progress to build high levels of employee engagement, and without the proper care and feeding, these gains can wither and fall away.

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