RESEARCH ARTICLE

Employee Retention through Employee Engagement: Observation from Telecom Sector

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Abstract

Employee engagement leads to commitment and psychological attachment and reflects in the form of high retention (low attrition) of employees. The level of engagement in employees can be enhanced by identifying its drivers (influential factors) and work on them. The construct employee engagement is built on the foundation of earlier concepts like job satisfaction, employee commitment and Organizational citizenship behaviour. Engaged employees are emotionally attached to their organization and highly involved in their job with a great enthusiasm for the success of their employer, going an extra mile beyond the employment contractual agreement. The relationship between employee engagement and employee retention is examined from the response to separate questionnaires from 132 employees who are chosen based on random sampling. The study finds that the employee retention can be improved by increasing the level of employee engagement and focusing on few non-financial drivers. Organizations can design good practices in the light of findings to retain their best talent (highly skilled and specialized human resources) without much financial burden.

Keywords: *Employee engagement, Employee retention, Organizational citizenship behaviour, Job satisfaction, Employee commitment.*

Introduction

Managers unequivocally agree that this century demands more efficiency and productivity than any other times in history. Businesses are striving to increase their performance. Managers have been grappling with many challenges to succeed putting their company ahead of competitors. To help managers manage, different scholars, researchers and consultants have been contributing their part showing the best ways they think are useful to managers. Among those suggested techniques, concepts like Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) earned recognition from many authors in the second half of twentieth century and were found helpful in increasing organizational performance by focusing on operational and process improvements. They were still being used as tools for management in their effort to plan, execute and control of the desired changes in the operational quality.Thanks to technology, nowadays business companies are making use of advanced techniques of operation. As sophistication of technologies continues to evolve, they pose more challenges for managers because organizations will have to need more number of employees with increased technical and professional skills. These knowledge workers cannot be managed with old styles of totalitarian management. They expect operational autonomy, job satisfaction and status. It is because of these facts that attention of managers is shifting towards employees' side of organizations. From last quarter of twentieth century onwards, concepts like employee commitment and Organizational Citizenship behaviour (OCB) started to appear on the ground that efficiency and productivity lie within the employees' ability and commitment. Managers' eye is on how to keep employees engaged in their job. Employers now realize that by focusing on employee engagement, they can create more efficient and productive workforce. Any initiatives of improvement which are taken by management cannot be fruitful without willful involvement and engagement of employees. Employee engagement as a concept is very vast.

Review of Literature

Most references relate employee engagement to survey houses and consultancies. It is less taken

as an academic construct. The concept is relatively new for HRM and appeared in the literatures for nearly two decades [1,2].The construct, employee engagement emanates from two concepts that have won academic recognition and have been the subjects of empirical research- Commitment and Organizational Citizen Behaviour (OCB) [1,3]. Employee engagement has similarities to and overlaps with the above two concepts. Robinson et al. [3] state that neither commitment nor OCB reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement – it is two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have an element of business awareness, even though it appears that engagement overlaps with the two concepts. Rafferty et al [1] also distinguish employee engagement and the two prior concepts- Commitment and OCB, on the ground that engagement clearly demonstrates that it is a two- way mutual process between the employee and the organization.

Definition of Employee Engagement

To date, there is no single and generally accepted definition for the term employee engagement. This is evident if one looks at the definitions forwarded for the term by three well-known research organizations in human resource area, let alone individual researchers. Below are the definitions: Perrin's Global Workforce Study [4] uses the definition "employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis." According to the study, engagement is affected by many factors which involve both emotional and rational factors relating to work and the overall work experience. Gallup organization defines employee engagement as the involvement with an enthusiasm for work. Gallup as cited by Dernovsek [5] likens employee engagement to a positive employees' emotional attachment and employees' commitment. Robinson et al. [1] define employee engagement as "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of business 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 gives a clear insight that employee engagement is the result of two-way relationship between employer and employee pointing out that there are things to be

done by both sides. Furthermore, Fernandez [6] shows the distinction between job satisfaction, the well-known construct in management, and engagement contending that employee satisfaction is not the same as employee engagement and since managers cannot rely on employee satisfaction to help retain the best and the brightest, employee engagement becomes a critical concept. Other researchers take job satisfaction as a part of engagement, but it can merely reflect a superficial, transactional relationship that is only as good as the organization's last round of perks and bonuses; Engagement is about passion and commitment- the willingness to invest oneself and expand one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed, which is beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer [7,8,9]. Therefore, the full engagement equation is obtained by aligning maximum job satisfaction and maximum job contribution. Stephen Young, the executive director of Towers Perrin, also distinguishes between job satisfaction and engagement contending that only engagement (not satisfaction) is the strongest predictor of organizational performance [10]. Recent researches also indicate that Employee commitment and OCB are important parts and predictors of employee engagement in that commitment is conceptualized as positive attachment and willingness to exert energy for success of the organization, feeling proud of being a member of that organization and identifying oneself with it. OCB is a behaviour observed within the work context that demonstrates itself through taking www.ccsenet.org/ijbm International Journal of Business and Management Vol. 5, No. 12; December 2010 *Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education* 91 innovative initiatives proactively seeking opportunities to contribute one's best and going extra mile beyondemployment contract. However, these constructs constitute the bigger construct employee engagement and they cannot independently act as a replacement for engagement [1,9].The bad news for management is that global surveys conducted by survey houses and research organizations indicate that significant size of employees are disengaged being skeptical of any organizational initiative or communication and rather more likely indulging in contagious negativity [2,4,5,7]. The problem with these surveys is that they use their own items to measure employee engagement. If looked at the available literatures on measuring employee engagement, one would get surprisingly several measurement items to the extent that it

seems different constructs are being measured [1,4,5]. Future researches are expected to come up with clear definition and dimensions of employee engagement on basis of which the level of engagement can be measured thereby pointing out to managers the roadmap for fully engaging employees in their job. As the old saying goes "what you can't measure, you can't manage". Thus, there is a call for future researches, as suggested by Endres GM, Mancheno- Smoak L. [11].To define engagement in clear terms to avoid interpretation by subsequent users giving to the construct different meanings.

Impact on Employee Retention

Employees are assets of any organization and organization always try to avoid losing the key performers. Employee retention can be defined differently as per the context of its usage. It can be represented mathematically in percentage such as retention level is 87%, which means the organization could keep its 87% of its employees with them for a specified period which is normally taken as a year. In other context employee retention refers to the ability of an organization to retain its employees. In this case the employee retention is considered as a strategy, based on the effort by which the organization attempts to retain the employees. Employee retention involves taking measures to encourage employees to remain in the organization for the maximum period. Whereas retention management has become major source of competitive advantage in the modern rapidly globalizing business world [12]. The employee turnover affects family, organization and society. It brings stress in family as relocation of family and employee will become necessary and financially related issues in connection with the relocation also arise. For organization it may lead to disruption of service to clients and dissatisfaction of employees due to extra workload. When an employee with critical skills to support the society leaves the organization, it impacts the society badly.With retention a growing concern for organizations, understanding the factors that drive commitment and loyalty among employees is essential for managing increasing turnover risk in the months and years ahead. As per Corporate Leadership Council report [13] the highly engaged organizations have the potential to reduce the staff turnover by 87%, the disengaged are four times more likely to leave organization than the average employees. It was observed that the employee retention can be improved by improving employee engagement. Role of HRM in Employee Engagement and Retention Human Resources

Management (HRM) play important role in retention of employees. HR managers have to identify the right retention strategies which their employees perceive to be effective. Good HRM practices in the area of compensation, reward, career development, supervisors' support, culture and work environment can help to improve retention [14]. Many organizations now utilize extensive range of human resources management factors that influence employee commitment and retention [15-17]. According to them, the factors which influence employee retention are work environment, supervisor support, organization image, employee value match, remuneration, reward and recognition, employees' career development etc. Hay Group study [18] has identified five key factors that differentiate "stayers" (those committed to the company more than two years) from "leavers" (those planning to leave in two years or less).The key factors are confidence in the organization and leadership, room for employees to grow, a fair exchange between organization and employee, an environment for success and authority and influence. Factors influencing engagement include work environment, rewards and recognition, career development, supervisor/leader, compensation/remuneration, and employee-organization value match.

Drivers of Employee Engagement

Many researches have tried to identify factors leading to employee engagement and developed models to draw implications for managers. Their diagnosis aims to determine the drivers that will increase employee engagement level. Meaning at work has the potential to be valuable way of bringing employers and employees closer together to the benefit of both where employees experience a sense of community, the space to be themselves and the opportunity to make a contribution, they find meaning. Employees want to work in the organizations in which they find meaning at work. A new model they called "Hierarchy of engagement" which resembles Maslow's need hierarchy model. In the bottom line there are basic needs of pay and benefits. Once an employee satisfied these needs, then the employee looks to development opportunities, the possibility for promotion and then leadership style will be introduced to the mix in the model. Finally, when all the above cited lower level aspirations have been satisfied the employee looks to an alignment of value-meaning, which is displayed by a true sense of connection, a common purpose and a shared sense of meaning at work. The Blessing White [7] study has found that almost two third's

(60%) of the surveyed employees want more opportunities to grow forward to remain satisfied in their jobs. Strong manager-employee relationship is a crucial ingredient in the employee engagement and retention formula. Development Dimensions International (DDI, 2005) states that a manager must do five things to create a highly engaged workforce. They are:

- Align efforts with strategy
- Empower
- Promote and encourage teamwork and collaboration
- Help people grow and develop
- Provide support and recognition where ever appropriate.

The literatures indicate that employee engagement is closely linked with organizational performance outcomes.Companies with engaged employees have higher employee retention as a result of reduced turnover and reduced intention to leave the company, productivity, profitability, growth and customer satisfaction. On the other hand, companies with disengaged employees suffer from waste of effort and bleed talent, earn less commitment from the employees, face increased absenteeism and have less customer orientation, less productivity, and reduced operating margins and net profit margins. Most researches emphasize merely the importance and positive impacts of employee engagement on the business outcomes, failing to provide the cost-benefit analysis for engagement decisions.

As any other management decisions, engagement decision should be evaluated in terms of both its benefits and its associated costs, without giving greater emphasis to neither of the two, not to bias the decision makers. Thus there is a need to study the cost aspect of engagement decisions. The remarkable fact is that the findings of today's researches can be used as corner stone for the building of complete essence to the construct. Furthermore, much of the works related to "employee engagement" construct is attributed to survey houses and consultancies. Therefore, there is a need for academia to investigate this new construct and come up with a clear definition and dimensions that will be used for measuring employee engagement justifying the importance of engagement concept. Otherwise, it will pass away shortly as many other human resource fads did.

Research Objectives

- To study the various factors influencing employee engagement.

- To ascertain the correlation of employee engagement with retaining
- To examine the impact of employee engagement on organizational effectiveness.

Methodology

- This field study examined the relationship of job satisfaction and employee engagement with organisational productivity among the employees of telecom sector in Odisha.

- Secondary data collection was gathered by the help of previous researcher's articles and journals while the primary data was gathered by the help of survey through questionnaires.

- Data was then analyzed and were tested using correlation and regression analysis.

Sampling

It was an exploratory study for the purpose of looking into work-life balance concerns in case of both executives & non executives employed in Telecom Sector in different companies in Odisha. The study was conducted in Odisha. There were 132 respondents personnel of IDEA, RELIANCE, and VODAFONE & AIRTEL selected from Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. It was a simple, non-probability sampling that comprised of personnel of Telecom Sector.

Data Collection

After preparing both questionnaires the data was collected for finding out the initial level of engagement and retention of employees. After this many engagement boosting activities were implemented on the drivers which don't require financial support. The hypotheses have been formulated for the purpose of the study. Again level of engagement and retention was evaluated by administrating the questionnaire after 6 months. The result was studied in comparison with original scores and the hypotheses were tested.

Hypotheses

H_1: There is no significant impact of implementation of action plans for non-financial drivers to the level of engagement of employees.

H_2: There is no significant improvement in the level of employee retention due to increase in the level of employee engagement.

Data Analysis

Demographic Profile Analysis of Respondents

It may be seen from Table-1 below, that out of the 132 respondents 66 (50 %) are an Age bracket of 25 to 35, 45 (34.09%) are new entrant and are below 25 years & 21 (15.91%) are above 35 years. While analyzing the gender of the respondents it was found that 56% of the respondents are married & 44% are unmarried. Majority i.e 48 % respondents are under graduate 52 % are Graduate or above. A major chunk of respondents-56% are having less than 15000 per month salary intake, 34% are in-between 15 k to 25 K with more of variable component & 8% having more than 25 K per month salary

Table 1: Socio Economic Profile of the sales personnel selected for the Study (N = 132)

Details	Category	f	%
Age	Up to 25 years	45	34.09
	25 to 35 years	66	50.00
	35 to 45 years	21	15.91
Marital status	Single	58	43.94
	Married	74	56.06
Education	Below graduation	63	47.73
	Graduation/Diploma	51	38.64
	Post-graduation /Degree	18	13.64
Monthly income in rupees (Rs.)	**Below 15,000**	74	56.06
	15,000 to 25,000	48	36.36
	Above 25,000	10	7.58

Reliability and Validity

We use validity and reliability technique in our research to test the questionnaire for its validity and reliability (Table-2). It helps to make our research free from any systematic and variable errors. Here in this analysis, the items used are Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the homogeneity of the items and it shows that all the items belong to the same cluster and dropping any item would not improve that one cluster. Further Table-2 reveals that, the Cronbach alpha value of all the fourteen factors used for the purpose of studying the retention of personnel of Telecom sector are more than 0.5. This being a good measurement validates the questionnaire.

Table 2: Item-Total Statistics (Reliability Analysis)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
.895	.897	14

It has been observed in the Table-3 above that, out of the total fourteen factors the total mean score of the 1st factor i.e. My official work schedule does not interfere with my personal and regular family schedule is highest. The second in the order is 11th factor i.e. "Does the Sales target influence the work life balance" which consists of three variables such as "Rationality of the sales target, is the sales target is achievable, Do you believe in Daily target". Means and Standard Deviations for each construct were calculated to determine the motivational needs for each.

Table 3: Summary Statistics of Quantitative Variables

Sl. No.	Factors	Mean	SD	N
1	Communication	4.32	0.89	132
2	Rewards and Recognition	3.53	0.99	132
3	Manager/Supervisor relationship	3.39	1.03	132
4	Teamwork	3.99	0.80	132
5	Role clarity	4.04	0.79	130
6	Work environment	3.94	0.67	129
7	Career development	3.86	0.75	131
8	Compensation and benefits	2.89	0.61	132
9	Work Life Balance	3.87	0.68	132
10	Work environment	3.63	0.92	132
11	Supervisor/Manager support (relationship)	4.10	0.85	132
12	Organization Image	3.98	0.86	132
13	Employee value match	3.45	0.88	131
14	Remuneration and Compensation	3.56	0.87	132

To show that variables under each construct that are used to create segments are valid, there needs to be a clear difference between the respondents that makes it possible to separate them into segments. In order to show the significance of the variables a One-Way Analysis of variance, is used to test for differences among two or more independent variables.

Table 4: One Way ANOVA

S. N.	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
1	Between Groups	165.99	11	15.09	11.77	0.00	1.795
	Within Groups	1988.32	1551	1.28			
	Total	**2154.32**	**1562**				
2	Between Groups	937.67	4	234.42	272.61	0.00	2.39
	Within Groups	557.21	648	0.86			
	Total	**1494.88**	**652**				
3	Between Groups	34.64	8	4.33	3.95	0.00	1.95
	Within Groups	1261.49	1151	1.09			
	Total	**1296.13**	**1159**				
4	Between Groups	11.55	1	11.55	12.39	0.00	3.88
	Within Groups	242.21	260	0.93			
	Total	**253.76**	**261**				
5	Between Groups	133.27	10	13.33	11.65	0.00	1.83
	Within Groups	1634.094	1428	1.144			
	Total	**1767.36**	**1438**				
6	Between Groups	60.84	8	7.61	7.33	0.00	1.95
	Within Groups	588.91	567	1.04			
	Total	**649.75**	**575**				
7	Between Groups	22.05	1	22.05	21.45	0.00	3.88
	Within Groups	267.22	260	1.03			
	Total	**289.26**	**261**				
8	Between Groups	2.286	3	0.76	1.26	0.29	2.62
	Within Groups	312.65	518	0.60			
	Total	314.93	521				
9	Between Groups	40.01	3	13.34	11.24	0.00	2.62
	Within Groups	616.98	520	1.18			
	Total	**656.98**	**523**				
10	Between Groups	87.34	4	21.84	56.20	0.00	2.39
	Within Groups	254.47	655	0.389			
	Total	341.81	659				
11	Between Groups	1127.36	6	187.89	461.32	0.00	2.11
	Within Groups	373.48	917	0.41			
	Total	1500.84	923				
12	Between Groups	658.20	10	65.82	143.32	0.00	1.84
	Within Groups	661.76	1441	0.46			
	Total	**1319.96**	**1451**				
13	Between Groups	57.44	3	19.15	76.33	0.00	2.62
	Within Groups	131.44	524	0.25			
	Total	**188.88**	**527**				

14	Between Groups	433.1	4	108.28	237.28	0.00	2.39
	Within Groups	298.89	655	0.46			
	Total	**731.99**	**659**				

On applying the formula of z-test, both the null hypotheses were found to be rejected at 0.05 level of significance. The result of hypothesis testing by z-test is shown in table. It shows that there is significant impact of implementation of action plans for non-financial drivers to the level of engagement of employees. It can be largely attributed to the nature of job. In this sector, job hopping has become a common trend [19-41].

Table 5: Result of hypotheses testing by z-test

S. No	Statement	Calculated value of z	Result
H01	H_1: There is no significant impact of implementation of action plans for non-financial drivers to the level of engagement of employees.	2.229	H01 rejected
H02	H_2: There is no significant improvement in the level of employee retention due to increase in the level of employee engagement (H2).	2.713	H02 rejected

Conclusions

The study brought out how employee retention can be improved by improving engagement level of employees. There was statistical evidence in the study to confirm that the employee retention can be improved by addressing non-financial drivers of employee engagement like communication, recognition, manager/supervisor support (relationship), work engagement, team work and role clarity. Therefore it has given a very positive message that even without financial expenditure the employee engagement and hence retention can be improved. The result can be applied as a starting point for further studies or can be emulated in similar cellular sectors or organizations which really require a cost effective way of retention.

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