

A study on Work Engagement in Relation to Leadership at public sector undertakings

kohila .T.A

Abstract:

In the current business scenario, every organization is striving to increase profits, improve the quality of goods and services, improve customer satisfaction, while decreasing costs. Organization have started to realize that having a strong brand, new products and new technology alone does not help them get the winning edge over competitors.

What organizations need more than anything else today is the committed participation of a good majority of people within the organization to work out a process map that improves both effectiveness and efficiency. There has to be ownership among the employees that the company is mine and that I care.. There is a need for a complete eco system within the organization that focuses on creating, continuously motivating and retaining great employees more than ever before. Effective leadership and work engagement are two factors that have been regraded as fundamental for organization and lead followers towards achieving desired goals. A capable leader provides direction for the organization and lead followers towards achieving desired goals. In similar vein, employees with high work engagement are likely to exert more effort in their assigned tasks and pursue organizational interests.

Engaging employees of an organization is critical to the organizations success. Work engagement is often the most significant differentiator between competing organizations. This is true both public and private undertakings leadership behaviors have impact on revenues are directly proportional to number of engaged workforce in the organization.

Research has suggested that investment in work engagement activities significantly improves the overall performance of the business unit leadership style of managers drives the culture in the organization. Majority of researches on work engagement from survey houses and consultancies have established the relationship between work engagement, financial business performance and profitability.

Several literatures on leadership have highlighted the relationship between leadership and productivity, in-role performance, and business unit performance. However there has been no research established to find out if there is any relationship between work engagement and leadership. In this research, the researcher is interested to focus on work engagement and leadership in public sector and private sector undertakings operating in India. The research is focused to analyze if the dimensions of leadership indicate the work engagement level.

Boyatzis (1982), Hickson, Butler, Cray, Mallory, Wilson (1986) studied differences between public and private, for-profit organizations in terms of managerial competencies and decision-making processes.

Boyatzis found that managers in the private sector demonstrated higher levels of the competencies of conceptualization, oral presentations, concern for impact, diagnostic use of concepts, efficiency orientation, and proactivity. The public sector managers in his sample showed more concern for close relationships than their private sector counterparts. Hickson et al. found that sporadic decision-making processes characterized public organizations more than private organizations and that the public sector therefore shows signs of the uneven and political decision-making

Rainey, Pandey, Bozeman, (1995) tested a variety of assumptions regarding public-private sector differences. Although they found many similarities, they also found that public organizations show sharply higher levels of formalization in the functions of personnel and procurement.

Hambrick and Finkelstein (1987) defined managerial discretion as latitude of action and asserted that this is determined by the extent to which organizational characteristics constrain the behavior of the manager. A leader, for example, has little discretionary power if (a) job responsibilities are clearly specified in writing, (b) duties, authority, and accountability are documented in policies, procedures, and job descriptions, (c) pay raises do not depend on his or her recommendations, and (d) he or she does not have control over financial and nonfinancial resources. The leader has little discretionary power in those cases because the organizational characteristics substitute for the need for leadership.

Osborn, Hunt (1975) asserted, substitutes for leadership influence the impact of leader behavior on various effectiveness criteria. Leaders in public sector organizations may adopt different behaviors compared with

leaders in private sector organizations because these organizations afford their managers different amounts of discretion.

1.3 Work engagement

Employee contribution becomes a critical business issue because in trying to produce superior output, companies have no choice but to try and engage not only the body but the mind and soul of every employee. Most organizations today realize that a satisfied employee is not necessarily the best employee in terms of loyalty and productivity. The best employee is really an engaged employee one who is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization, who feels passionate about its goals and is committed towards its values. This employee goes the extra mile beyond the basic job requirements.

According to Bakker (2008) engaged employees work hard because they like it and not because they are driven by a strong urge they cannot resist. For workaholics, their need to work is so exaggerated that it endangers their health, reduces their happiness, and deteriorates their interpersonal relations and social functioning.

1.4 Leadership

Leadership in organizations ought to be authentic in order to be effective and successful over the long term. Philosophers, religious leaders, and thinkers from ancient times have given emphasis on the importance of authenticity and ethicality for leaders, if they are to attain effective governance in any circumstances. Leaders are obliged to demonstrate the highest moral standards and ethical demeanor in their everyday talk, actions, decision, and behaviors so that others in their organizations can follow suit. The most recent financial crisis has originated from failed corporate leaders who believed in manipulations of accounts and indulged into obvious unethical corporate practices.

Northouse (2001) in a review of leadership theory identified four common themes in current conceptions of leadership. These were that leadership is a process, that it involves influence, that it occurs in a group context, and that it involves the achievement of goals. Interestingly, there is considerable overlap between

these four themes and what views as the four problems that make consensus around a shared definition of leadership hard to obtain.

Blake and Mouton, (1964) also worked on the idea of different orientations producing different styles, with combinations of concern for task and concern for people producing one of five management styles.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the difference in prevalence of dimensions of work engagement across demographics of the employees.
2. To find out the difference in leadership styles across demographics of the employees.
3. To study relation between work engagement and leadership styles in public sector undertakings.

Research Gap

Literature review has suggested that investment in work engagement activities significantly improves the overall performance of the business unit. Leadership style of managers' drives the culture in the organization. Majority of researches on work engagement from survey houses and consultancies have established the relationship between work engagement, financial business performance and profitability. Interestingly, there are very few academic literatures on engagement. Several literatures on leadership have highlighted the relationship between leadership and productivity, in-role performance, and business unit performance. However there has been no research established to find out if there is any relationship between work engagement and leadership. In this research, the researcher is interested to focus on work engagement and leadership in public sector and private sector undertakings operating in India. The research is focused to analyze if the dimensions of leadership influence the work engagement level.

Hypotheses

Hypotheses were stated in null form for testing in this research. Pearson's correlation analysis, multiple regression, and ANOVA were adopted to treat and test the hypotheses between Work Engagement, Leadership and demographics. The hypotheses were as follows

H₀1: There is no significant difference in prevalence of dimensions of work engagement across demographics of the employees.

H₀2: There is no significant difference in leadership styles across demographics of the employees.

H₀3: There is no significant relation between work engagement and leadership styles in public sector undertakings.

Sampling technique

Judgmental sampling technique was adopted to collect the data from the respondents for the present study.

Employees with a minimum of one year experience were considered to fill the questionnaire.

Tools adopted for the study

The following tools were used to measure the variables of the study.

The independent (predictor) variable measure

The measuring instrument used for the independent variable is the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Form 5X) (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

Dependent (criterion) variable measure

The measuring instrument used for the dependent variable is the Schaufeli & Bakker (2003).

Reliability test

Table 1: Indicating the Cronbach's alpha reliability on Work engagement scale

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Mean	Variance	Std. Dev
0.783	17	92.03	108.36	10.41

Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability. It is commonly used as a measure of the internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric test score. Going by the thumb rule, $.9 > \alpha \geq .8$ interprets into 'Good'

internal consistency. However as per the direction of Nunally, cronbach above .7 is sufficient and good enough to ascertain the goodness of the data. In this study, the alpha value is 0.783 for the constructs.

Table 2: Indicating the cronbach's alpha reliability on Leadership scale

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Mean	Variance	Std. Dev
0.701	30	104.58	119.35	10.92

Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability. It is commonly used as a measure of the internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric test score. Going by the thumb rule, $.9 > \alpha \geq .8$ interprets into 'Good' internal consistency. However as per the direction of Nunally, cronbach above .7 is sufficient and good enough to ascertain the goodness of the data. In this study, the alpha value is .701 for the constructs.

Table3: Indicating the level of Work Engagement

Category	Count	Mean	Std dev
Vigor	240	5.32	0.67
Dedication	240	5.55	0.76
Absorption	240	5.40	0.76

It was found that the level of Work Engagement was moderate with the dimension of Vigor with the mean value of 5.32, Dedication with the mean value of 5.55 and absorption with the mean value of 5.40.

Table 4: Showing the level of Leadership

Category	Count	Mean	Stddev
Autocratic Leadership	240	3.54	0.46
Participative Leadership	240	3.51	0.48

Democratic Leadership	240	3.49	0.46
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It was found that the level of leadership was moderate with the dimension of autocratic leadership style with the mean value of 3.54, participative Leadership Style with the mean value of 3.51 and democratic leadership style with the mean value of 3.49.

Table 5: Indicating the relationship between Leadership styles and Work engagement in public sector organizations.

		Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Autocratic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.238**	0.226**	0.148
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.004	0.006	0.05
	N	120	120	120
Participative Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.192*	.161*	0.140
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.018	0.039	0.063
	N	120	120	120
Democratic Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.116	.169*	0.143
	Sig. (1-tailed)	0.104	0.033	0.059
	N	120	120	120

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Pearson correlation is employed to prove the above said hypothesis, the leadership style is measured based on three dimensions such as Autocratic, participative and democratic style. In similar way, work engagement is measured with help of three dimensions such as Vigor, Dedication and Absorption. The analysis is done for respondents from public organizations. The size of the sample is 120. Leadership style dimension and work engagement dimension for public organization are statistically significant at minimum 5% level.

The above table, clearly depicts that the degree of relation between Autocratic leadership and work engagement found to be 0.238 for vigor, 0.226 for dedication, 0.148 for absorption with the significance value 0.004, 0.006, 0.05 respectively with the significance value which is $< .05$ hence it is statistically significant. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The degree of relation between participative and work engagement found to be 0.192 for vigor, -0.161 for dedication, with the significance value 0.018, 0.039, respectively with the significance value which is < 0.05 hence it is statistically significant. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The degree of relation between democratic leadership and work engagement found to be 0.116 for vigor, and 0.143 for absorption with the significance value 0.104, 0.059 respectively, which is > 0.05 . Hence it is statistically not significant. Hence we reject null hypothesis. But in case of dedication significance value is > 0.05 , Hence null hypothesis is accepted.

Major findings of the study

1. The employees are found to have moderate level of vigor, dedication and absorption.
2. In public organizations there was significant correlation between autocratic leadership style and the dimensions of work engagement, ie ; Vigor, dedication, not on absorption dimension.
3. In public organizations there were significant correlation between participative leadership style and the dimensions of work engagement, ie; Vigor, dedication, not on absorption dimension.
4. In public organizations there were no significant correlation between democratic leadership style and the dimensions of work engagement, ie; Vigor, absorption.
5. In public organizations there were significant correlation between democratic leadership style and the dimensions of work engagement, ie; dedication
6. In public sector the work engagement level of employees have the positive relationship with autocratic leadership style and participative leadership style.
7. From the secondary data ie; reviews and articles, it was found that an employee-employer relationship is very important. It plays very crucial role in work engagement of employees. So the organization should

develop and put in to practice programs which help to improve this area. At the same time the organization should have clear communication process to solve the problems faced.

8. As it is said if the right person is hired for the position it will be easy for their engagement in to work. So the organization should have strong and apt recruitment process and at the same time it should be well executed.

Suggestion for future research

- The research to establish a casual relationship between work engagement and leader behavior can be undertaken.
- Additional study is required to identify manageable work place antecedents of work engagement in order to guide manager interventions which is lacking in academic literature.
- Mangers evaluation of leadership style may give different and unbiased perspective of work engagement of employees and its impact on work.

- **5.14 Conclusion**

The fact that work engagement is critical to business success, should be well understood by Human Resource professionals in public organizations. The study has brought in a new variable leadership which drives work engagement. Public sector Human Resource should understand that there is significant relationship between work engagement and leadership style. The mangers should engage in ideal leadership style for improving the level of work engagement among the employees which will result in optimum productivity of the employees. Rather, the willingness of the employee to stay with the company and his job satisfaction level indicated the level of work engagement to a higher extend. Good employees' retention techniques, challenging job, good pay and benefit package, improved managerial system with unambiguous evaluation feedback, equal opportunities in internal vacancies could improve the work engagement level.

Managers and researchers should search for ways to increase work engagement activities to increase the frequency and intensity of engagement levels among employees which would bring superior business result.

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