



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN ITES SECTOR DURING A PANDEMIC

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Abstract: In the first quarter of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic culminated into an unprecedented global crisis. The new 'Corona' virus was acknowledged a pandemic by the "World Health Organization" (WHO). The whole world witnessed a sharp rise in cases after mid-March, and thus lock-outs in almost every country were announced. Employee involvement in the 'new normal' has arisen as a big challenge for ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) firms. Knowledge workers are the key partners that help businesses overcome obstacles in changing times. Hence, this paper attempts to assess the effect of employee participation in the pandemic scenario on employee satisfaction. This paper also aims to explore the factors that influence employee participation. A survey was conducted on a set of knowledge workers from the ITES sector. Anonymity of the respondents was strictly followed. Results indicate that while workers in other industries experience job losses and wage reductions, they have not been so affected by their intrinsic professional existence. Findings also suggested that employee engagement has a significant influence on the employee job satisfaction.

Index Terms - Employee Engagement, Employee satisfaction, Job satisfaction, ITES Sector, Pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

Engaging talented people in a firm generates crucial benefits thereof. 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 episode of the 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 the ITES sector in the backdrop of the pandemic. The study focuses on the fundamental ideas and issues that influence employee participation, employee engagement and employee satisfaction.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employee Engagement in the ITES Sector

One of the apt understating of employee engagement is best described as "the extent to which the employees' are committed to the vision and goals of the organization and whether they are involved with the work they do" (Indhira & Shani, 2014). A recent literature survey indicated that prevailing studies had identified the relationship between employee health and employees' purposes of turnover (Sharma, 2019). The authors, however, attempted to better describe the functions as mediators within these variables of employee participation. The study mainly focused on knowledge workers from the Indian ITES sector. The findings indicated that employees play a critical part in modulating the factors. The study illustrated that the mental and physical fitness of employees

influences the decision not to remain with their firm or not. An employee with higher levels of staff participation is not likely to abandon their employer (Business Dictionary, 2019). Engagement results in job satisfaction. Work motivation also plays a pivotal role in this relationship. Work motivation can be fostered through delegation of authority and increased accountability. Additionally, at lower levels of the hierarchy; rewards and recognition help in improving job involvement (Thakur, 2014).

The relationship between talent retention and employee engagement has also been tested. This approach has been used to retain talent and reduce overall attrition. Activities and initiatives such as, skill enhancement programmes, team building workshops and career planning discussions drive employee engagement (Esther Zionia & Sathyapriya, 2019). Scholars have studied the management of talent and its relation to employee engagement. The data from interviews implied strong commitment, although only for a brief duration. The analysis also indicated the need for a more rigorous system for employee involvement (Bhatnagar, 2007). The job quality in the ITES field is highly influenced by employee participation. Outcome of another study established the fact that authority and transparency strengthen the level of motivation amongst employees. At the lower hierarchical level, benefits and fines enormously influence employee motivation (Thakur, 2014).

A study conducted in a neighboring country showcased that employee engagement was highly correlated with increased job satisfaction and performance. The determinant of engagement was highlighted to be work environment, organizational treatment and self-evaluation (Waris, 2018). Few researchers have claimed in their study that business environments have become very unpredictable in terms of change since the industrialization and the IT revolution. The new business role is shaped by lifestyle changes, demanding jobs and altering market trends. Besides other problems like work-life balance and revenue management, retaining staff is the main challenge. This study also explored how employee participation affects work-life balance and what factors companies should consider in strategizing employee involvement and work-life balance. It investigated whether there is an association between employee engagement and the balance between work and life (Pandita, Singhal, & Garg, 2017). In another study on the working women in the IT sector, a significant relation was identified between work engagement and productivity, especially in women employees. Work engagement also had a significant influence on overall wellbeing of the employees (Gaikwad, Swaminathan, & George, 2021). A study on the survivors of the IT sector revealed the fact that internal communication, continuous learning and intrapreneurship positively influenced employee engagement. Resonant leadership was, however, negatively associated with workforce engagement (Tiwari & Lenka, 2020).

2.2 Employee Engagement during the pandemic

A study into the 'voice of workforce' indicates that providing knowledge workers with the feeling that it is safe to speak to their reporting officers about their concern, ideas and suggestions can have significantly beneficial effects for worker activity within associations (Kumar, Gurrani, Chennuri, & Das, 2020). The author argues that equipping staff with voice openings would not only have beneficial effects within associations but that it will also be central in creating positive relationships that lead to the growth of human potential in social networks. But in this pandemic scenario, most workforce operated from home using different platforms. In the case of the telecom sector, it was not feasible. This paper focused on the relationship between Voice Actions by Employees in this challenging situation where employee participation is viewed as essential for "organizational efficiency" and a factor for advancement and competitiveness (J., 2014).

Another interesting study suggested that most businesses have focused on scenario preparation and primary organizational responses to ensure business coherence during the emerging worldwide pandemic. The tremendous influence of the pandemic on personal and work life is caused; anxiety, anger, and burnout for employees. These emotions can, when left unattended, affect employee loyalty and employee performance. Thereby, resulting in poor job quality, errors, and survival of an organization. This study had two goals to be accomplished, namely to sustain employee engagement and preserve staff efficiency during the pandemic (J., 2014).

In another report, it is explained how employee emotions have a direct connection with the goals of the company and play a significant role in the overall growth and survival of workers and organizations alike. The article explored the mental health of workers in the private sector WFH during the pandemic. A systematic literature review was conducted, and the PERMA method was used to assess employees' emotional well-being. This report emphasized that employee emotions were marginally optimistic, along with mixed feelings of frustration, sorrow, and loneliness. Employers are advised that a process and governance structure be put in place. This would enable firms to be better prepared for potential challenges. The study also indicated that some positive results have been achieved in WFH model, such as a healthier environment and a stronger balance between work and life (Pant & Aharwal, 2020).

Some scholars claimed in their study that, following the nationwide shutdown, many firms were forced to opt for remote work, offering workers and employers numerous challenges and opportunities. This empirical focused on the concept of occupational stress. The impact of workplace stress and remote work on the psychological well-being of workers in IT was studied in detail. Seven independent occupational stress-producing variables were evaluated – including workload, peer work, physiological factors, task uncertainty, organizational environment, psychological factors, and job satisfaction. Psychological well-being was calculated by a magnitude of six subscales, positive development, positive relationships, self-acceptance, autonomy, and life purpose. Independent variables like peers were exposed through multiple regression analyses, which have a profound impact on the psychological well-being of the Information Technology (IT) industry. The study suggested that remote work solutions have to be implemented wherever appropriate in all sectors; to minimize stress and improve employee's psychological well-being (Jena, Pradhan, & Panigrahy, 2018).

III. OBJECTIVES & DESIGN

The recent pandemic has put unprecedented pressure on the capacity of organizations. In the face of uncertainty and volatility, keeping employees engaged is a daunting task. But technology has come to the rescue and has modified the working pattern model. Remote work has become a growing trend as it allows employees to concentrate on completing tasks with limited distractions. Adding to it are the health benefits; while achieving a manageable work life balance. Employers are building relationships with their human resources so that they deliver firm optimistic results.

Organizations ought to religiously follow the criteria of employee involvement and must concentrate on the aspects of communication, treatment, leadership, and, above all, employee satisfaction. During WFH, prioritizing contact and touch points is essential. Successful management of human resources is important for overall development of the individual and the firm. Also, the

style of leadership reveals the interaction with the workforce. The quality of all three contributes to employee satisfaction. Employees must be fulfilled in all ways only when they can keep themselves in the organization. The study, therefore, proposes these objectives:

Objective 1: To explore the level of employee participation during the pandemic, in the ITES sector context.

Objective 2: Identifying the factors influencing employee engagement in the ITES sector during the pandemic.

The dedication of workers is a dynamic concept with several challenges that affect the degree of commitment. As a result, there are many ways to encourage involvement with no universal approach applicable to all firms. While each organization will define staff participation differently, the secret to efficient engagement ultimately lies in the simplicity of the methodology that is suitable for each firm. "Job Satisfaction" is characterized by contrasting employee expectations and outcomes of effort at the workplace. It is interrelated to the positive attitude of the employee towards the job and how it is measured from the employers' point of view. Even a layperson would understand that if the workforce is happy with their job and they relate to the company; they will showcase more dedication – resulting in organizational performance and success. With this context in the backdrop, the research goal was defined – "To determine the effect of Employee Engagement on Job Satisfaction"

3.1 Sampling Design

The exploratory study is analytical and descriptive. Quantitative survey was employed for the purpose of collecting primary data. The respondents were predominantly ITES sector employees. 315 questionnaires were distributed and 270 authentic responses were collected. The sample size consisted of 180 males and 90 females. They were primarily in the position of analyst, executive, management trainees and team lead(s).

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire comprises 22 statements. It included terms related to employee engagement, job satisfaction and employee participation in the context of the pandemic. A structured questionnaire based on a Likert scale was used. The reliability coefficient was statically significant; hence the questionnaire was used to collect the data.

3.3 Tool for Analysis

The collated data was analyzed with the help of SPSS 21. ANOVA is used to fulfill the objectives of the study. It enabled better understanding of the influence on variables and helped identify most significant factors. As the paper involves variables having an impact on each other, ANOVA was just appropriate.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

During the pandemic, online platforms were being used to implement several online support programs for employee relations, inevitably part of a process in human resources that is intended to ensure that employees are used in the best possible way through their jobs. As stated by Robbins, four key factors should concentrate on employee relations (Robins, 2017). Employees need to comment, read, evolve, and strengthen the communication between themselves and the firm. This can be fostered by having successive essential meetings, including one-on-one monthly interventions. It is essential to provide the employees with all the tools they need to carry out their tasks and to improve the efficiency of the worker and the organization. Compensating the staff sufficiently is the creation of a community of thankfulness between the worker and the owner, which eventually encourages the members to continue to bend for you and the organization. The idea that your representative's satisfaction at the expert and personal level is essential. This declaration fosters their attention and keeps them locked up with resources and not busy operating, which can benefit everyone (Robins, 2017).

Cronbach's Alpha Test

The Cronbach test was used to test for reliability and internal consistency of the items. A significant alpha value helped validate the elements in the underlying structure. As mentioned in Table 1, the Cronbach's Alpha value for the questionnaire was found to be 0.874, which is significantly greater than 0.7, which implies that the questionnaire is reliable.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha value

Cronbach Alpha	Reliability Statistics
	<i>N of Items</i>
0.874	22

Hypotheses

Even though there would be numerous studies that have identified factors that influence employee engagement, this paper focuses on a select few. Therefore, the rationale of the study was explored and examined based on the following hypotheses.

H₀₁: There is no significant impact on the predictors of Employee Engagement

H_{a1}: There is a significant impact on the predictors of Employee Engagement

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of Employee Engagement on Job Satisfaction

H_{a2}: There is a significant effect of Employee Engagement on Job Satisfaction

Factors influencing employee engagement

As shown in Table 2, the regression analysis indicates that there is a significant variance in the dependent variable and p-value is 0.000 – significant at 0.05. Hence, it can be inferred that H₀ has no significant difference. Whereas, the H_a shows substantial variations. Therefore, it can be implied from Table 3; there is an effect of pandemic on the employee engagement in the ITES sector – particularly on leadership, facilitation, alignment, and growth. Employee Engagement = 0.517 x Leadership + 0.173 x Enablement – 0.437 Alignment + 0.589 Development would be the regression equation.

Table 2: Significance of employee engagement

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	sig.
Regression	335.617	9	83.904	9.167	.000 ^b
Residual	1098.335	261	9.153		
Total	1433.952	270			
a. dependent variable: engagement					
b. predictors: (constant), development, leadership, enablement, alignment					

Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

As shown in Table 4, the ANOVA Table shows a significant p-value 0.000 – significant at 0.05. This implies that H_0 be rejected, as there is no significant difference. The H_a of significant differences is accepted. Hence, it can be inferred that employee engagement has a substantial effect on employee / job satisfaction even in the context of a pandemic.

Table 3: Factors influencing employee engagement

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.807	2.179		4.043	0.000
Leadership	0.517	0.138	0.302	3.757	0.000
Enablement	0.173	0.111	0.161	1.561	0.121
Alignment	-0.437	0.174	-0.309	-2.509	0.013
Development	0.589	0.147	0.419	4.000	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Engagement					

Table 4: Significance of job satisfaction

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	364.174	4	364.174	34.761	.000 ^b
Residual	1288.626	266	10.477		
Total	1652.800	270			
a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction					
b. Predictors: (Constant), Engagement					

Table 5: Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

Coefficients ^a					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	9.320	1.660		5.613	.000
Engagement	0.504	0.085	0.469	5.896	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction					

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Employee development prospects influence employee engagement is established in this study. It was claimed in another study that, in the light of this challenging pandemic situation, there is a relationship between employee voice conduct and employee participation that is considered necessary for “organizational productivity” and a factor in advancing and competitive success (Kumar et al., 2020). It was also found that the workforce had access to resources and equipment to complete their assigned tasks and were comparatively more engaged with their job and organization. During the pandemic, employee engagement and workforce efficiency were strongly affected. Another aspect in consideration was alignment. When you work in lock-downs at home, it is difficult to match your priorities with the company. The emotions of the employees get intertwined with feelings of frustration, depression, and isolation have been slightly optimistic (Pant & Aharwal, 2020). Finally, leadership is a dimension that profoundly affects employee participation. Independent variables such as colleagues, position uncertainty, organizational environment, and work satisfactions greatly influence the psychological health of workers (Jena et al., 2018). The author proposes that remote working solutions should, wherever possible, be created by the employer to alleviate stress and improve the psychological well-being of workers in all industries.

The results indicate that the participation of workers has a significant effect on employee satisfaction. Another research scholar stated that personal health influences the decision of workers not to continue with their company and that employees with more significant employee commitment are less likely to abandon their employer (Sharma, 2019). Strong dedication will lead to a high degree, but only for a short period (Bhatnagar, 2007). Research has also established that the former incentive for work could be strengthened by growing delegation of authority and transparency (Organization, 2020). Rewards and penalties are significantly correlated with work activity at the clerical stage. A classic study report indicated that there is a connection between employee participation and employee balance (Pandita et al., 2017).

This study emphasizes the connection between leadership, communication and employee engagement with special reference to ITES industry during the pandemic situation. It can be inferred that leadership, facilitation, collaboration, and growth are the factors

that influence employee involvement in these adverse times. There is also a significant effect on employee engagement on employee satisfaction.

In terms of job satisfaction, just as the satisfaction of customers is important for the company, so is the satisfaction of employees is also essential for development. Owing to the latest COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, income of many employees and workforce was impacted (Noronha, 2020). Many companies dismissed workers in this pandemic situation despite numerous government requests (Bhatnagar, 2007). Organizations ought to involve their workforce in combating the economic repercussions of the pandemic. A collaborative assessment of the short-term tasks and duties would help ensure that the workforce have adequate jobs and that decisions are taken to promote mental health and wellbeing (Kumari, 2021).

The findings of the above study showed that leadership, peer support, collaboration, growth, and job satisfaction have a significant effect on employee involvement in the ITES sector in a pandemic situation. Employee engagement can act as a driver of Job satisfaction – regression analysis depicts the significance. To satisfy employees, all variables must be considered, as “to satisfy customers, first employees need to be satisfied”. Future research may focus on more specific employee related studies such as psychological effects of the pandemic.

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