

Predictors of Employee Engagement

¹Alaa Amin Hassan Omar, and ²Yusliza Mohd -Yusoff

Abstract—The purpose of this paper is to highlight the predictors of employee engagement in the Sudanese banking sector. The connections among the antecedents of engagement have not been fully established. Literature indicates a gap exist that produces an opportunity for research experts and likewise presents a critical open door for comprehending engagement and its potential antecedents, this paper investigate namely employee communication, perceived organizational support and perceived supervisor support, and rewards and recognition as significant predictors of employee engagement.

Keywords—Employee engagement, Employee communication, Perceived organizational support, Rewards and recognition.

I. INTRODUCTION

HUMAN Capital is considered to be a crucial asset because the effort and performance of employees ultimately decides the success of any business [1]. Recently, engagement of employees has become more critical to the ultimate effectiveness of organizations, and the engagement of employees has gained popularity as because it affects employee outcomes significantly [2, 3, 4, 5]. Today, employee engagement has become a critical aspect of understanding and enhancing not only an individual's performance but also the organization's performance as a whole [6, 7]. In the contemporary business world, organizations demand high performance and productivity from every employee compared to a few decades ago [8]. Rashid, Asad, and Ashraf (2011) [9] believe that employee engagement is a key concept for business practitioners and academicians because proper engagement is relevant to modern-day business practices. Effective employee engagement is seen as a tool to gain a competitive edge over rival companies [10, 11]. Furthermore, proper employee engagement produces benefits such as increased consumer satisfaction, rising productivity and profits and decreased attrition rates [12, 13, 14].

Almost all organizations today recognise that employee engagement provides their company with a competitive advantage [10, 15, 16]. They are also aware that good employee engagement leads to increased performance, productive and profits and such outcomes are highly valued, especially during an economic decline [11, 17, 18, 19].

Dr. Alaa Amin Hassan Omar is with School of Mangement Studies, University of Khartoum, Khartoum, Sudan (e-mail:alaaamin09@gmail.com).

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusliza Mohd-Yusoff is with the Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 USM, Penang, Malaysia. (e-mail: yusliza1977@yahoo.com).

II. UNDERSTANDING PREDICTORS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

A. Employee Communication

The clear communication of ideas and words with consistency is a critical tool for employee engagement. The Human Resources department is responsible for implementing communication strategies for the work force and keeping that work force energized, focused and productive [20]. Furthermore, continuous and strategic communication gives credibility to the organization's leadership [19]. In contrast, if the communication is not proper distrust, cynicism, dissatisfaction, and withdrawal often follow. Yates (2008) [21] supported this notion by stating that high-level companies offer continuous support, encouragement and active communication from senior leaders to other employees. This enables higher levels of employee engagement that produces better financial performance. A CIPD (2006) [22] survey reported that the two main driving factors of employee engagement were: 1) the chance given to the employees to openly provide their opinions, and 2) prior information about organizational processes. In addition, feedback about performance is also an important part of communication [23]. Internal communication in the organization helps in improving the relationship between the employees and the organization [24, 25, 26]. Welch (2012) [27] stated that poor internal communication would result in poor productivity performance. Conversely, improving the internal communication results in better output [28]. Organizational communication improves employee engagement where both engaged and disengaged employees are properly communicated with [29]. Hence, clear and consistent communication is a important mechanism through which the organization can made the employees to be more engaged to their jobs and their organization and creating a sense of involvement and responsibility resulting in high engagement level with in workforce.

B. Perceived Organizational Support

POS is defined as the extent to which an organization's employees perceive that their contributions to the organizations are considered valuable and that the organization takes care of their wellbeing [30].

Kahn (1992) [31] stated that the feeling of psychological safety created by an organization for employees makes them feel comfortable and the thought of being supported and cared was imposed in their minds. Saks (2006) [32] stated that an important aspect of safety stems from the amount of care and support workers' perceive to be provided by their company and their immediate supervisor. In addition, Kahn (1990) [33] demonstrated that psychological safety is established when

trust between the employee and the management is created. When an employee feels safe, his on-the-job performance improves [34]. Employees thrive best in situations in which support and care are present. New ideas can be tried out in an environment in which a supportive and worthy environment exists and even failure is valued in such a workplace [33]. Saks (2006) [32] empirically indicated that perceived organizational support was an antecedent of job and organization engagement. Higher organizational support increases the job and organization engagement for employees, which in turn helps achieve the goals of the organization [35]. Such a perspective draws upon perceived organizational support derived from social exchange theory and the norm of reciprocity [39]. In other words, employees are believed to respond well when their needs are fulfilled and become more willing to fulfil their obligations by means of higher levels of engagement [32].

The widely held belief is that the organizational support is a key to attracting, motivating and retaining managerial, technical, and professional employees. In reality, studies that have thoroughly examined the relationship between perceived organizational support and employee engagement is still rare

C. Perceived Supervisor Support

Perceived supervisor support is also an important feature in predicting employee engagement [37]. In fact, unsupportive supervisors have been identified as a factor in burnout [38]. A workplace supervisor plays a critical role in developing the behaviour and attitudes of the workers and also helps in developing employees' perceptions of the organization [36, 39]. First line supervisors have the primary responsibility of developing the engaged employees [40, 41]. Li et al. (2012) [42] stated that the job performances of employees is increased when they are highly supported by their supervisors. This support increases the energy levels of the employees, their mental flexibility, their willingness to invest in difficult tasks, and engagement [43, 44]

Freifeld (2012) [45] indicated that there are three crucial factors for employee engagement: recognition, career development and the direct supervisor's relationship with employees. Perceived supervisor support is a critical aspect for creating and engaged employees, managers and supervisors are key enablers of their employee's job performance, engagement and commitment. A line manager in an organization can enhance trust relationships by encouraging open communication, sharing crucial information and supporting [46]. These actions will result in a positive response of the employee towards engagement [47]. These actions will result in a positive response of the employee towards engagement [47]. The quality of the relationship between the worker and his supervisor will impact the performance and the attitude of the employee [47, 48]. Based on Goulder's norm of reciprocity in social exchange theory, when an employee in an exchange relationship with a key actor in the organization views the relationship as being satisfactory and fair for him, he will repay that support with high performance and a positive work attitude [49].

D. Rewards and Recognition

Much literature states that, the employees become energized by the unique rewards and recognition provided to them for their contributions to the organization [28, 50]. Kahn (1990) [33] reported that people engage in work differently according to the benefits they received. Further, a sense of return on investment can be created through meaningful work and external rewards and recognition.

To increase the levels of engagement, certain benefits and compensations should be provided to the employees; effective employee rewards and recognition are important factor for creating an engaged employee [51, 52, 53]. In addition, employees should feel that the core values of the company are clear and unambiguous [54]. Fatt, Khin, and Heng (2010) [55] stated that the rewards comprise not only monetary gains, but other benefits as well.

Employees become more satisfied in their work and will have the mindset to work even more for the company's benefit if they are genuinely rewarded [56]. Generally speaking, rewards are formulated to support the achievements supporting the values of the organization whether those are reaching sales goals, coming up with innovative ideas or providing the best customer service [57]. The responsibility of the managers is to identify the needs of the employee and the best way in which to reward them. A manager's intelligence lies in rewarding employees by knowing their personal interests, lifestyles and what motivates each of them [58]. In addition, rewards that are provided to increase performance and engagement should be different, unique and flexible [59, 60]. In addition, Lee et al. (2014) [28] proved that reward is the key to increasing motivation and maintaining a high level of performance, especially for service employees. Most employees leave their jobs if they are not encouraged and appreciated [61]. The job of an employee should be designed in such a way that he is rewarded, recognized and well compensated [62]. Saks (2006) [32] stated that managers should encourage the employees with proper rewards that will result in a higher level of engagement. Maslach et al. (2001) [38] indicated that, while insufficient recognition and rewards can result into burnout, proper rewards and recognition are essential for engagement. In addition, recognition not only boosts performance, but also makes employees feel that their efforts, time, and ingenuity were worth it, which engages them more [57, 63].

III. CONCLUSION

This research provides an initial attempt to understand the predictors affecting the employee engagement offering the suggestion employee communication, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support and rewards and recognition are all important and have been stressed by the HR managers during face to face interview with the researchers. These variables are all important factors of Green HRM. This study seeks to empower HR managers and human resource field to move ahead by providing a concrete discussion helping them to actualize employee engagement practices in their organizations. By finding the best ways to do so, they will be able to upgrade the level of employee engagement at their workplaces.

REFERENCES

- [1] Handa, M., & Gulati, A. (2014). Employee Engagement. *Journal of Management Research* 14 (1), 57-67.
- [2] Alvi, A. K., Abbasi, A. S., & Haider, R. (2014a). Relationship of Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Engagement. *Science International*, 26 (2), 949-952
- [3] Gostautaitė, B., & Buciumiene, I. (2015). Work Engagement During Life-Span: The Role of Interaction Outside the Organization and Task Significance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2015.05.001.
- [4] Rasheed, A., Khan, S., & Ramzan, M. (2013). Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement: The Case of Pakistan. *Journal of Business Studies Quarterly*, 4 (4), 183-200.
- [5] Shuck, B., Ghosh, R., Zigarmi, D., & Nimon, K. (2013). The Jingle Jangle of Employee Engagement further Exploration of the Emerging Construct and Implications for Workplace Learning and Performance. *Human Resource Development Review*, 12 (1), 11-35.
- [6] Miller, H. S. (2014). The 10 Best Practices for Enhanced Employee Engagement. Retrieved from the web on 30 March 2015 from www.millergroup.com.
- [7] Singh, J. (2015). *Employees Engagement And Family Friendly Initiatives A Study Of Selected Corporate Enterprises In India*. PhD Dissertation, Punjabi University. Retrieved from the web on 13 May 2015 from <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/32454>.
- [8] Sahoo, C. K., & Mishra, S. (2012). A Framework towards Employee Engagement: The PSU Experience. *ASCI Journal of Management*, 42 (1), 94-112.
- [9] Rashid, H. A., Asad, A., & Ashraf, M. M. (2011). Factors Persuading Employee Engagement and Linkage of EE to Personal and Organizational Performance. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 3 (5), 98-108.
- [10] Anitha, J. (2014). Determinants of Employee Engagement and their Impact on Employee Performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 63 (3), 308-323.
- [11] Bhuvanaiah, T., & Raya, R. P. (2014). Employee Engagement: Key to Organizational Success. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management*, 11 (4), 61-71.
- [12] Chat-Uthai, M. (2013). Leveraging Employee Engagement Surveys Using the Turnover Stimulator Approach: A Case Study of Automotive Enterprises in Thailand. *International Journal of Business & Management*, 8 (6), 16-21. doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v8n6p16.
- [13] Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-Unit-Level Relationship between Employee Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, and Business Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87 (2), 268-279. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.87.2.268.
- [14] Yalabik, Z. Y., Popaitoon, P., Chowne, J. A., & Rayton, B. A. (2013). Work Engagement as A Mediator between Employee Attitudes and Outcomes. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-25. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2013.763844.
- [15] Rodriguez, J. O., & Shaw, M. E. (2014). Leveraging Employee Engagement for Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Business Leadership Today*, 5 (2), 1-25.
- [16] Saks, A. M., & Gruman, J. A. (2011). Manage Employee Engagement to Manage Performance. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 4 (2), 204-207. doi: 10.1111/j.1754-9434.2011.01328.x.
- [17] Macey, W. H., & Schneider, B. (2008). The Meaning of Employee Engagement. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1 (1), 3-30. doi: 10.1111/j.1754-9434.2007.0002.x.
- [18] Macey, W. H., Schneider, B., Barbera, K. M., & Young, S. A. (2009). *Employee Engagement: Tools for Analysis, Practice, and Competitive Advantage*. Malden, WA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- [19] Rees, C., Alfes, K., & Gatenby, M. (2013). Employee Voice and Engagement: Connections and Consequences. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-19. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2013.763843.
- [20] Ruck, K., & Welch, M. (2012). Valuing Internal Communication: Management and Employee Perspectives. *Public Relations Review*, 38 (2), 294-302.
- [21] Yates, K. (2008). Becoming an ROI Builder: Delivering Effective Employee Communication. *Employment Relations Today* 35 (1), 19-23. doi: 10.1002/ert.20184.
- [22] Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. (2006). Reflections on employee Engagement: Change agenda. London: CIPD. Retrieved from the web on 4 March 2013 from <http://www.cipd.co.uk/changeagendas>.
- [23] Andrew, O. C., & Sofian, S. (2012). Individual Factors and Work Outcomes of Employee Engagement. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 40 498-508. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.03.222.
- [24] Karanges, E., Beatson, A., Johnston, K., & Lings, I. (2014). Optimizing Employee Engagement with Internal Communication: A Social Exchange Perspective. *Journal of Business Market Management*, 7 (2), 329-353.
- [25] McMahon, C. (2014). *Internal Communication: Does It Help To Create Employee Engagement And Trust In A Single Irish Retail Company?* Master Thesis, The National College of Ireland. Retrieved from <http://trap.ncirl.ie/1755/1/conormcmahon.pdf>.
- [26] Nordin, S., Halib, M., & Ghazali, Z. (2011). Strengthening Internal Communication: A Case of Communication Satisfaction in an Organization. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 24 (4), 617-624.
- [27] Welch, M. (2012). Appropriateness and Acceptability: Employee Perspectives of Internal Communication. *Public Relations Review*, 38 (2), 246-254. doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.12.017.
- [28] Lee, Y., Kim, S., & Kim, S. Y. (2014). The Impact of Internal Branding on Employee Engagement and Outcome Variables in the Hotel Industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 19 (12), 1359-1380. doi: 10.1080/10941665.2013.863790.
- [29] Bakker, A. B., Albrecht, S. L., & Leiter, M. P. (2011). Key Questions Regarding Work Engagement. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 20 (1), 4-28. doi: 10.1080/1359432x.2010.485352.
- [30] Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived Organizational Support. *Journal of applied psychology*, 71 (3), 500-507.
- [31] Kahn, W. A. (1992). To Be Fully There: Psychological Presence at Work. *Human Relations*, 45 (4), 321-349.
- [32] Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21 (7), 600-619. doi: 10.1108/02683940610690169.
- [33] Kahn, W. (1990). Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33 (4), 692-724. doi: 10.2307/256287.
- [34] Biswas, S., & Bhatnagar, J. (2013). Mediator Analysis of Employee Engagement: Role of Perceived Organizational Support, PO Fit, Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction. *VIKALPA*, 38 (1), 27-40.
- [35] Rhoades, L., Eisenberger, R., & Armeli, S. (2001). Affective Commitment to the Organization: The Contribution of Perceived Organizational Support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86 (5), 825-836. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.86.5.825.
- [36] Deconinck, J. B., & Johnson, J. T. (2009). The Effects Of Perceived Supervisor Support, Perceived Organizational Support, and Organizational Justice On Turnover among Sale people. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 29 (4), 333-350.
- [37] Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived Organizational Support: a Review of the Literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87 (4), 698-714.
- [38] Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job Burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (1), 397-422.
- [39] Pati, S. P., & Kumar, P. (2010). Employee Engagement: Role of Self-efficacy, Organizational Support & Supervisor Support. *The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 46 (1), 126-137.
- [40] Bates, S. (2004). Getting engaged. *HR Magazine*, 49 (2), 44-51.
- [41] Frank, F. D., Finnegan, R. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2004). The Race for Talent: Retaining and Engaging Workers in the 21st Century. *Human Resource Planning*, 27 (3), 12-25.
- [42] Li, X., Sanders, K., & Frenkel, S. (2012). How Leader-Member Exchange, Work Engagement and HRM Consistency Explain Chinese Luxury Hotel Employees' Job Performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31 1059-1066. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2012.01.002.
- [43] Bakker, A. B., & Bal, P. M. (2010). Weekly Work Engagement and Performance: A study Among Starting Teachers. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 83 (1), 189-206.

- [44] Bakker, A. B., Hakanen, J. J., Demerouti, E., & Xanthopoulou, D. (2007). Job Resources Boost Work Engagement, Particularly When Job Demands are High. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99 (2), 274-284. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.99.2.274.
- [45] Freifeld, L. (2012). I Want to Work There! Employee Engagement Secrets from Companies on Fortune's Best Companies to Work For and Training's Top 125 and Hall of Fame lists. *Training-Excelsior*, 49 (4), 16-18.
- [46] Beattie, R. S., & Crossan, F. (2015). Exploring Employee Engagement in Scottish Nursing at a time of Multi-Faceted Change: Developing a Research Agenda. *Public Money and Management*, 35 (3), 211-218.
- [47] Alfes, K., Truss, C., Soane, E. C., Rees, C., & Gatenby, M. (2013b). The Relationship Between Line Manager Behavior, Perceived HRM Practices, and Individual Performance: Examining the Mediating Role of Engagement. *Human Resource Management*, 52 (6), 839-859. doi: 10.1002/hrm.21512.
- [48] Otken, A. B., & Erben, G. S. (2010). Investigating The Relationship Between Organizational Identification and Work Engagement and The Role of Supervisor Support. *Journal of Economics and Administrative*, 12 (2), 93-118.
- [49] Ladebo, O. J. (2008). Perceived Supervisory Support and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: Is Job Satisfaction a Mediator. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 38 (3), 479-488.
- [50] Esq, O., & Adoko, P. (2015). Influence of Extrinsic and Intrinsic Rewards on Employee Engagement (Empirical Study in Public Sector of Uganda). *Management Studies and Economic Systems (MSES)*, 2 (1), 59-70.
- [51] Duncan, A. (2015). Improve Engagement, *Training Journal*, pp. 42-45. Retrieved from the web on 4 March 2015 from www.trainingjournal.com.
- [52] Iqbal, N., Karim, S., & Haider, N. (2015). Impact of Rewards and Leadership on the Employee Engagement in Conventional Banking Sector of Southern Punjab. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, 2015. doi: 10.4172/2223-5833.1000132
- [53] Lardner, S. (2015). Effective Reward ensures Effective Engagement. *Strategic HR Review*, 14 (4), 131-134.
- [54] Pech, R. J. (2009). Delegating and Devolving Power: a Case Study of Engaged Employees. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 30 (1), 27-32. doi: 10.1108/02756660910926948.
- [55] Fatt, C. K., Khin, E. W. S., & Heng, T. N. (2010). The Impact of Organizational Justice on Employee's Job Satisfaction: The Malaysian Companies Perspectives. *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 2 (1), 56-63.
- [56] Giancola, F. L. (2014). Should HR Professionals Devote More Time to Intrinsic Rewards? *Compensation and Benefits Review*, 46 (1), 25-31.
- [57] Brown, J. J. (2011). *An Examination of Management Practices as Predictors of Employee Work Engagement*. Master Thesis, San Jose State University. Retrieved from the web on 30 March 2015 from http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/3912.
- [58] Gostick, A., & Elton, C. (2007). *The Carrot Principle: How The Best Managers Use Recognition To Engage Their People, Retain Talent, And Accelerate Perform*. New York: Simon & Schuster Audio.
- [59] Brown, D. (2014). The Future of Reward Management From Total Reward Strategies to Smart Rewards. *Compensation and Benefits Review*, 46 (3), 147-151.
- [60] Brown, D., & Reilly, P. (2013). Reward and Engagement The New Realities. *Compensation and Benefits Review*, 45 (3), 145-157.
- [61] Mcmanus, J., & Mosca, J. (2015). Strategies To Build Trust and Improve Employee Engagement. *International Journal of Management and Information Systems* 19 (1), 37-42.
- [62] Rana, S. (2015). High-Involvement Work Practices and Employee Engagement. *Human Resource Development International*, 1-9. doi: 10.1080/13678868.2014.1003698.
- [63] Bartłomiejuk, G. (2015). *How do recognition programs impact employee engagement and how have companies with a large global footprint structured such programs to drive results?*. Retrieved from the web on 12 June 2015 from <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/student/90>.



Alaa Amin Hassan Omar holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration (Hons.) and a Master of Business Administration from University of Khartoum. She obtained a PhD in sustainable development and management from Universiti Sains Malaysia. She is currently working at School of Management Studies University of Khartoum. Her current research interests include employee engagement and job performance, HR practices, E-HRM, HRM effectiveness, and topics in Organizational Behaviour and HRM. She has presented and published her research papers in local and international conferences and proceedings.



Yusliza Mohd-Yusoff holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration (Hons.) majoring in human resource management and a Master of Business Administration from Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia respectively. She obtained a PhD in administrative science from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. She is currently an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Business Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Her current research interests include repatriation and international students' adjustment, HR roles, HR competencies, E-HRM, HRM effectiveness, empowerment, Green HRM, and topics in Organisational Behaviour. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yusliza currently holds a number of research grants from USM, the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, and MOTOROLA, under the topics of E-HRM, International Students Adjustment, OSH, Academic Leadership, Academic Mobility, Bureaucracy, and Brain Drain. She has published several articles in international and national journals, and local mass media, and has also presented and published her research papers in several local and international conferences and proceedings.