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Employee Engagement and Organizational Effectiveness: The Role of Communication, Voice, Participation, and Grievance Procedures

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Abstract

Employee engagement has become an important factor influencing organizational effectiveness, employee productivity, and long-term business success. Engaged employees demonstrate stronger commitment, higher motivation, and improved performance, while low engagement contributes to absenteeism, turnover, and reduced organizational outcomes. This paper reviews the relationship between employee engagement and key organizational practices, including communication, employee voice, participation, and grievance procedures. Effective internal communication strengthens transparency and trust, while employee voice and participation create opportunities for staff involvement in decision-making processes. Grievance mechanisms also play a significant role by ensuring fairness and protecting employee rights. The literature suggests that organizations creating supportive environments where employees feel heard, valued, and involved are more likely to achieve higher engagement and organizational performance.

Keywords: employee engagement, communication, employee voice, participation, grievance procedures, organizational performance



Introduction

Organizations increasingly recognize employees as a valuable resource and a key driver of organizational success. In today's competitive environment, achieving organizational goals depends not only on financial or technological resources but also on maintaining a committed and engaged workforce. Employee engagement has attracted significant attention because of its influence on productivity, motivation, retention, and organizational outcomes. Employees who feel connected to their work and organization tend to demonstrate stronger commitment and higher levels of performance.

Various organizational factors contribute to employee engagement. Among these, communication, employee voice, participation in decision-making, and grievance mechanisms play a central role. Open communication promotes transparency and strengthens relationships within organizations. Employee voice and participation encourage staff to share opinions and contribute ideas, creating a sense of ownership and value. In addition, effective grievance procedures support fairness and trust between employees and management. This paper explores existing literature on these factors and examines their contribution to employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

Employee engagement

Engagement is an important part of job performance and has strong impact on employees' perceptions of the organization's engagement. According to Avery et al. (2007) the companies' losses due to low employee engagement make up about \$300 billion a year. Saks (2006) described engagement as a "set of behaviors that come from a motivated state of mind". According to Gallup (2016) only 15% of employees are engaged and the rest 85% are either disengaged or indifferent. Low engagement leads to decrease in productivity and quality that has negative impact on the organisation in a whole. High level of engagement reduces turnover rate and absenteeism. Employee engagement remains one of the most important factors of organisation development and grows as well as person, team, and organizational success. According to Mani and Mishra (2021) "engaged employees impact both the financial (revenue, profitability) and non-financial



(low absenteeism, low attrition) levers for the company”. It was found out in literature that job characteristics (job autonomy, job satisfaction, meaningful work, role clarity); learning and development (learning organization culture, learning opportunity, training satisfaction) and organizational climate (psychosocial safety) have strong positive impacts on employee engagement. Employee engagement also has positive relationship with company brand development, innovation, employees voice ideas and concerns.

Communication

Communication strategy that supports company goals and objectives is one of the important aspects of employee engagement process. Employee communication and engagement are directly related and effect to each other. Internal communication efficiency has been shown to be a main indicator of organizational performance (Ruck and Welch, 2012). Engaged employees have a high level of communication, while disengagement results in antisocial communication performance.

Employee communication refers to all types of formal and informal communication processes that occur within an organization. By this process people share information, ideas and emotions, participate in decision-making and create relationships. Developed communication process in the organisation helps employees to feel valued and heard, develop transparency and culture as well as have strong sense of belonging to the company.

Two communication processes are provided in the literature: (1) *downward* communication (hierarchy communication) used by top management for informing and updating employee with information; (2) *upward* communication provides opportunity for employees to share ideas and rise issues to employer. According to Mazzei, Butera and Quaratino (2019) there are two major types of employee communication: (1) *corporate*, including sharing of corporate culture, values, goals and processes; (2) *employee engagement and voice* that involve employees in decision-making processes and create an atmosphere for free to employee voice. Research by Mazzei, Butera, and Quaratino (2019) concluded that the most preferred method of employee communication is department meetings and informal meetings with the management team. The same conclusion



was reached by Daft and Lengel (1984) he highlighted that face-to-face meetings are the efficient method of complex communication process due to the fact that it allows use of natural language, non-verbal communication and promptly feedback can be received. This is followed by online communication using the email and social media in choosing the type of communication among employees. At the same time effective communication strategies for managers are believed to be newsletters, blogs, e-mails and corporate intranets. Cameron and McCollum (1993) pointed out that team meetings, group problem-solving sessions, and supervisor briefings are the most effective types of communication strategies for strengthen employee relations.

Voice

Employee voice is important for the organizational effectiveness. According to Jenkins and Delbridge (2013) voice is a “soft management approach” and it has strong connection with employee engagement. Voice is the employees’ ability to participate in the organization's decision making and express their views, ideas and concerns to the management (Lucas et al., 2006). Emelilifeonwu and Valk (2018) describe employee voice as a framework for efficient collaboration between employer and employee in order to improve the company's productivity and employees' economic well-being. Employees who feel that their voice is heard show positive attitude to work, high performance and engagement as well as trust that is in turn increase quality and productivity of the organization (Robinson et al., 2004). According to Bogosian (2011) voice is also effective tool in problem solving, innovation and business development process.

Participation

Employee participation is the process whereby employees take control of the work and involved in decision making processes (Strauss, 2006). Employees feel valued and see contribution by the organisation being involved in decision making process. Miller and Monge’s (1986) found out that worker can have important contribution in process of taking right decision due to the fact that employees have dipper knowledge about work process. Participation process increase motivation among employees and participation in decision making leads to implementation



of the decision by employees. Employee participation increase job satisfaction and productivity, develop commitment and relationship with management team that it turn rise organisation performance.

According to Uma (2015) there are three elements of employee participation: (1) mental and emotional involvement; (2) personal motivation to contribution in organisational objectives; (3) encourage staff to take part in the decision-making process by sharing responsibility. Gallie (2013) mentioned three main types of employee participation namely autonomy, semi-autonomous teamwork and consultative participation (Gallie, 2013). In autonomy participation individual staff is in charge of both the design and implementation of the work process. According to Kalleberg and Vaisey (2005) this type increases quality of the work, while semi-autonomous participation process develops involvement performance and commitment (Butler et al., 2004). Consultative participation provide opportunity to employees to have impact on companies issues by direct communication with employer.

Uma (2015) in their research pointed out four forms of employee participation: *collective bargaining* – negotiating process between an employer and employees; *works council* – has different functions in the leading the organisation; *joint management councils and committees* – consultative bodies for employees, final decision is made by management team; *workers ownership of enterprise* – employees run and control business processes.

Literature discussed following levels of employee participation:

- Direct – employees participate in decision making;
- Information – employees are provided with information about their work and business in general and can give an opinion;
- Consultative – employees provide advices on issues related to their work. Employees have the right to express their expectations but the final decision is made by management. This type of participation provides opportunities for exchanging ideas between employees and employer (Fleetwood and Hesketh, 2010);
- Administrative – employees have a part in the management of the organization (partial ownership);
- Decisive – decision is jointly taking by both employer and employees;



- Representative – interests of employees are represents by trade union. In direct participation process employees directly contact management and participate in decision making process, while in indirect participation employee interests and communication are provided through an intermediary – Trade Union (Akkerman et al., 2015). Trade Union represents the workers' common voice. Trade Union is beneficial for staff, it focuses on employment interests and conditions, protects workers' rights in grievance and disciplinary procedures, increases wages, provide job security and promote equal treatment. Trade Union is not for profit and from employer side it costs organisation additional expenses and it does not align with strategic goals of business. Levine (1995) highlighted the main aim of Trade Union is “to use collective bargaining as a tool to force organizations for better employee welfare programs and work life”. According to Ojasalo and Tahtinen (2016) organizations with successful employee engagement practices have better outcomes such as commitment, job satisfaction and low turnover rate.

Grievance

Britton (1982) describe grievance as “any dispute that arises between an employer and employee, which relates to the implied or explicit terms of the employment agreement”. Every employee who has any issue can apply grievance against the employer. Grievance is the process for employee to defend job rights and contract violation, to voice up and use upward communication channels (Freeman and Medoff, 1984). Grievance process useful tool that deals with need of both employer and employees. Grievance procedure provide opportunity to employees represent the issue and appeal against the decisions made. Effective grievance process deals with complains in timely manner and conclude with fair decision outcome.

According to the research the most common reasons for filing complaints against an organization are unfair treatment, violation of employment agreement and defamation. While disciplinary procedures is the process of employers' complaints and they are usually based on absenteeism, insubordination, misconduct, unsatisfactory performance, and safety and health violations (Hunter, 2004).



The following methods are more often used to penalize employees such as disciplinary layoff (temporary suspension) or monetary penalty. The record should also be kept. A written reprimand is considered a softer type of disciplinary misconduct. Hunter (2004) provided following factors in evaluating of the penalties:

- The type of the offence,
- Employee behavior (following company's policies),
- Employee's past work record,
- Employee's work experience within the company.

Satisfaction of the job and company rises when employees have voice, feel valued and cared. Employees understanding of organizational goals, value and culture that can be shared through internal communication processes help to increase workers engagement, contribution and belonging to the company (Bindl and Parker, 2010).

Conclusion

Employee engagement is strongly influenced by organizational practices that support communication, participation, employee voice, and fair grievance procedures. The literature demonstrates that employees who feel heard, informed, and involved are more likely to develop commitment and positive attitudes toward their work. Effective communication strategies enhance transparency and trust, while participation and voice create opportunities for employees to contribute to organizational development. Grievance procedures further strengthen employee confidence by ensuring fairness and protecting workplace rights. Organizations that invest in these practices can create a supportive work environment that promotes satisfaction, productivity, and long-term success.

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