

# Disengaging from engagement: Exploring the potential drivers of Performance management

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**Abstract---** *Employee Engagement emerged as a significant important topic in organizations over the recent years. This concept gained even more importance since many drivers have been identified to influence Employee Engagement. Since Human Resources were considered to be the most valuable resource in any organization, well-being of employees was one of the aspects that HR managers focus on. It could be found in literature that organizations that could engage their employees better, achieved greater efficiency in their operations. The term 'Employee Engagement' was first coined by Professor Kahn in 1990 (Khan, 1990). Since then, it has become one of the main interests of many academicians and practitioners. Several studies have been conducted to study how to improve Employee Engagement within organizations.*

*The objective of this paper was to identify the key drivers of Employee Engagement impacting Employee performance from previous studies, through literature review, and to assess how these drivers induce the performance of employees in Management Consulting Firms. Review of past literature on the topic was done through electronic databases.*

*Moreover, this paper also reviewed the four most impactful factors that affected Employee Engagement, in depth, while also providing links to opinions from people in a variety of workspaces, via the help of surveys and questionnaires.*

**Keywords:** *Employee Engagement, Drivers, Career Growth, Leadership, Team Collaboration, Communication.*

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## Introduction :

Today, organizations are evolving into a dynamic environment where the workforce is diverse and demanding. Organizations who fail to attract, retain and manage the right talent, are facing difficulty in terms of achieving the desired results and gaining competitive advantage. Employee Engagement could be one of the main sources of competitive advantage (Khan, 1990) and thus it has emerged as an important topic among the Human Resource professionals. Employee Engagement has become a popular topic of focus as organizations have realized that an employee will feel positive about the organization and its values, if the employee is engaged with the organization (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). It is further suggested in literature that an organization should aim to recognize the efforts of an employee working towards the expectations of that

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organization, (Gupta & Sharma, 2016) because in this current turbulent time, retaining employees is a challenging task for many organizations, and it is one of the main factors which differentiates an organization among other competitors in the industry. Employee Engagement could be a strong factor for organizational success, as it affects employees' retention, loyalty, and productivity significantly. (Andrew & Sofian, 2012)

One of the main challenges of the HR department, is to ensure that employees do not come to work physically fit, but also mentally and emotionally. They need to ensure that their employees are truly engaged, as attentive employees outperform, and have an increased commitment in their jobs compared to the rest. Therefore, Employee Engagement is considered essential for organizational success, (Popli & Rizvi, 2016) as engaged employees are considered the 'backbone' of a good working environment.

## **1. RATIONALE**

Employers know that engaged employees are performing better and are more connected with their organization, and therefore, every organization needs to identify the drivers of Employee Engagement. Employee Engagement has many drivers to speak of, and this study aims to highlight these and identify the most impactful. There are no previous studies about Employee Engagement made in Management Consulting Firms, therefore, this study will be focusing on studying the main drivers of Employee Engagement impacting the performance of Employees in Management Consulting Firms.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This paper is based on a systematic review of the literature on Employee Engagement, which aims to summarize current thinking and findings. The study is focused on four main drivers of Employee Engagement, namely Leadership Styles, Empowerment, Career Growth, and Communication, which I believe have the biggest impact on the performance of the employee. A model has been conceptualized based on these findings. Literature for this study was predominantly sourced from internet searches and use of management journal databases such as EBSCO, EMERALD, Elsevier, and SCOPUS.

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **5.1 Employee Engagement – Meaning, Definitions, Scope and Nature**

Employee Engagement is an important area of interest for business leaders, as it is one of the main factors influencing an organization's achievement, innovation, and competitiveness in its industry. However, it is challenging for organizations to keep their employees engaged and motivated in this competitive environment (Harvard Business Review [HBR], 2013). Engaged

employees' figures worldwide are lower than 50% according to the Gallup Q12 employee engagement survey (Gallup, 2013). Plus, according to the latest Gallup Q12 survey, only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work. (Gallup, 2016). Employee Engagement doesn't have a definition that is universally the same, its definition and scope vary based on the context. Thus, in order to understand the concept better, we have to understand many previous studies on this topic. This paper presents some of the definitions of Employee Engagement demonstrated in past literature ranging from 1990 to 2018.

The term Employee Engagement was coined by Professor Kahn in 1990. W.A. Kahn is considered to be an academic parent of the employee engagement movement. He stated that that *'there is an employment of personal presence which involves the emotional aspect of a person'*. According to him, engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role. Employee Engagement is the level of commitment and involvement that an employee demonstrates towards the organization and its values. He also stressed on the need for employees to engage with their work and organizations. He developed the concept of 'personal engagement' which he defines as personal work engagement as the employees are present physically, cognitively and emotionally in their everyday work. Kahn associated three conditions, viz. psychological safety, psychological meaningfulness and psychological availability, which leads to employee engagement. Psychological safety is defined by "being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences of self-image, status or career" (Kahn 1990), psychological meaningfulness is achieved through Job Challenge, Autonomy, Variety, Feedback and Role Fit (Ruslan, Islam, Noor, 2014). The more Employees feel psychologically safe and their work is meaningful to them, they will be psychologically available which means Employees will be completely involved and focused on the role they perform. Kahn's definition of Employee Engagement is based on the philosophy that more an employee commits himself towards a role, the more excited he is towards the job and the performance is improved.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Report (Alfes et al. 2010), employee engagement is considered to have three core facets: 1. Intellectual engagement—thinking intensively about the job and continuous improvement in it; 2. Affective engagement—feeling positive about their job; and 3. Social engagement—ready to take opportunities to discuss the matters of improvement in work with others.

Engagement is a two-way process because organizations try and execute ways to engage employees and employees contribute to the organization's goals and values in return. An engaged employee knows how his work contributes to the bigger context of the business and works with other colleagues to improve performance.

Engaged employees are those who innovate and take the organization to the next level (Gallup, 2004). Organizations will be able to increase their productivity, profits, quality, customer satisfaction, employee retention, and increased adaptability by focusing on engagement strategies. (NAGESH, 2016). This was supported by (Shaheen, Zeba, & Mohanty, 2018) as they mentioned that engaged employees not only keep themselves happy but also their customers happy by delivering efficacious work. Development Dimensions International (DDI, 2005) defined engagement as the extent to which people value, enjoy, and believe in what they do. They are expressed by employees by demonstrating three behaviors in the organization: say, stay and strive (Hewitt, 2005).

Organizations view engagement as being a part of their strategy, having pride and loyalty in the company, being committed, and delivering exceptional work. This was proven in a study by Harter et al. (2013) by Gallup® where he mentioned that Employee engagement was related to nine (9) organizational outcomes such as customer loyalty, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, shrinkage, absenteeism, patient safety incidents, and quality. Over the years, Employee engagement has emerged as an important strategic focus of the management in order to compete and perform in a competitive environment (Neha & Vandna, 2016). Engaged employees not only keeps themselves happy but make others in the organization happy, they spread the positive vibration within their work team. They also care about the future of the organization and are ready to contribute for the organisation's success (Brown, 2006)

## **5.2 Drivers of Employee Engagement**

Having evidenced that Engagement produces various positive outcomes for the individual as well as the organization, the immediate interest of business leaders, practitioners and academicians is to identify the drivers of employee engagement. Below is our literature review on drivers of employee engagement

- A study by Gerard & Dan (2006) which aimed to answer the questions: What do we mean by employee engagement? How much does a lack of employee engagement cost an organization? What steps can leaders take to make employees want to give it their best? Listed a set 10 Cs of Employee Engagement namely Connect, Career, Clarity, Convey, Congratulate, Contribute, Control, Collaborate, Credibility, Confidence.
- A study by Andrew & Sofian (2012), while showing that there is a significant difference between job engagement and organization, found that co-employee support was a major individual factor that influences both measures of engagement and the work outcomes.
- Popli & Rizvi (2016) identified significant relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement. The moderating influence of age and education was also found in the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement.

- A study on the drivers of employee engagement impacting employee performance by Madhura & Deepika (2014) extracted the below drivers of employee engagement from past literature:
  - Mani (2011) - employee welfare, empowerment, employee growth, and interpersonal relationships
  - Seijit (2006) - Connect, Career, Clarity, Convey, Congratulate, Contribute, Control, Collaborate, Credibility & Confidence
  - Wallace et al (2006) - contributions, connections, growth, and advancement
  - Britt et al (2001) - employee involvement and commitment
  - IES (2004) - leadership, relationships at work, total reward, recognition, work-life balance and work itself
  - Hewitt (2004) - Say, Stay and Strive
  - IES (2005) - job satisfaction, feeling valued and involved, equal opportunity, health and safety, length of service, communication, and co-operation
  - Towers Watson (2009) - Rational - how well the employee understands roles/responsibilities, emotional - how much passion employee can bring to work, motivational - how willing is the employee to invest discretionary effort to perform their role
  - Bhatla (2011) - organizational culture and organizational communication

According to Madhura & Deepika (2014), the top four engagement drivers for 2010 were: career opportunities, brand alignment, recognition, people/HR practices, and organization reputation.

- By a survey conducted by Aon Hewitt in 2011, it was identified that Career Opportunities was a common driver across several regions, its impact on Employee Engagement was almost similar in all the regions: Global (61%), Asia-Pacific (62%), Europe (60%), Latin America (60%) and North America (64%)
- Soumendu & Jyotsna (2013), assessed the mediating role of employee engagement between perceived organizational support (POS) and person-organization fit (P-O fit) as the antecedents and organizational commitment and job satisfaction as the consequences. Data from six Indian organizations were collected and consisted of a sample of 246 Indian managers. The findings suggested that when individuals perceive positive levels of organizational collaboration, they are intrinsically encouraged towards exerting considerably higher levels of effort.
- Ahmad & Mohammad (2015) showed that employee engagement mediated the relationship between employee communication, clear career growth opportunities, employees' pride in their organization, managers' trust and integrity, rewards and recognition, feedback and mentoring, work motivation, psychological empowerment, internal corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, organizational and supervision support and organizational justice, as well as organizational culture and job satisfaction. This study was done on a random sample comprising 250 subjects from academic institutions in Jordan.

- A Review Paper on Factors affecting Employee Engagement by Chandani, Mehta, Mall, & Khokhar (2016) extracted the below drivers from the literature: Career development, Effective management of talent, Leadership, Clarity of company values, Policies and Practices, Respectful treatment of Employees, Company's standards of ethical behaviors, Empowerment, Fair treatment, Performance appraisal, Pay and benefits, Health and safety, Satisfaction, Family friendliness, Talent recognition, Communication, Nature of job, Organization politics, emotional factors, productivity, personality factors. The findings of this study will help organizations to redesign the work and policy based on the factors presented in this paper.
- Another study by Fazna& Zubair (2016) on factors influencing Employee Engagement on Telecommunication Network provider in the Maldives revealed that the five dimensions of employee engagement which are communication, teamwork and collaboration, job role, company management, and learning and development have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement
- However, a study by Anitha&Aruna (2016) on Gen Y at the Workplace in Automobile Sector showed that show that Career development does not have an impact on the engagement level of Gen Y in the Indian context. And the result also shows that mentoring, nature of working style and teamwork are the significant contributing factors for engaging Gen Y employees.
- Neha &Vandna (2016) aimed to identify different dimensions of employee engagement and develop a conceptual model based on the identified factors or drivers of employee engagement, and its outcome. This employee engagement model represents the employee engagement framework, which is centered on an engaged employee, driven by several factors or drivers, namely training and development, health and safety, pay and benefits and results in engagement outcomes, categorized as organizational outcomes and employee outcomes
- Naman Sharma and Pratibha Garg, (2017) aimed to explore the contribution of psychological contract and psychological empowerment towards employee engagement within the Indian IT sector. Psychological empowerment was found to be a significant contributor to employee engagement. Also, it was found that the psychological contract was a weak but positive contributor towards employee engagement.

Most drivers which are identified are found to be non-financial in nature. But it definitely doesn't mean that organizations should ignore the financial benefits to their employees. Organizations who are strong in non-financial drivers of employee engagement such as committed leadership, effective communication, a good teamwork can improve the level of engagement of their employees at a lesser cost than others in the industry.

### 5.3 Conceptual Framework

The most repeating drivers among all the drivers extracted from literature are Leadership Styles, Empowerment, Career Growth and Communication. This study will focus on the relationship between these specific dimensions of Employees Engagement leading to Employee Performance. For employees to find meaningfulness at work, organizations will have to provide the atmosphere that acts as stimulants to drive employee engagement.

<b>Drivers of Employee Engagement</b>	<b>Number of times repeated in literature</b>
<b>Leadership</b>	<b>6</b>
Co-employee support	1
Employee welfare	3
Empowerment	3
<b>Career Growth</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Teamwork and Collaboration</b>	<b>8</b>
Clarity	1
<b>Communication</b>	<b>6</b>
Congratulate	2
Contribute	2
Credibility & Confidence	1
Employee involvement	1
Commitment	1
Work life balance	1
Job satisfaction	2
Feeling valued and involved	2
Length of service	1
Co-operation	1
Organizational culture	1
Fair Treatment	1
Performance and Appraisal	1
Pay and Benefits	1
Family friendliness	1
Nature of Job	2
Organization Politics	1
Emotional Factors	1
Learning and Development	1
Trust and Integrity	1

Table 1

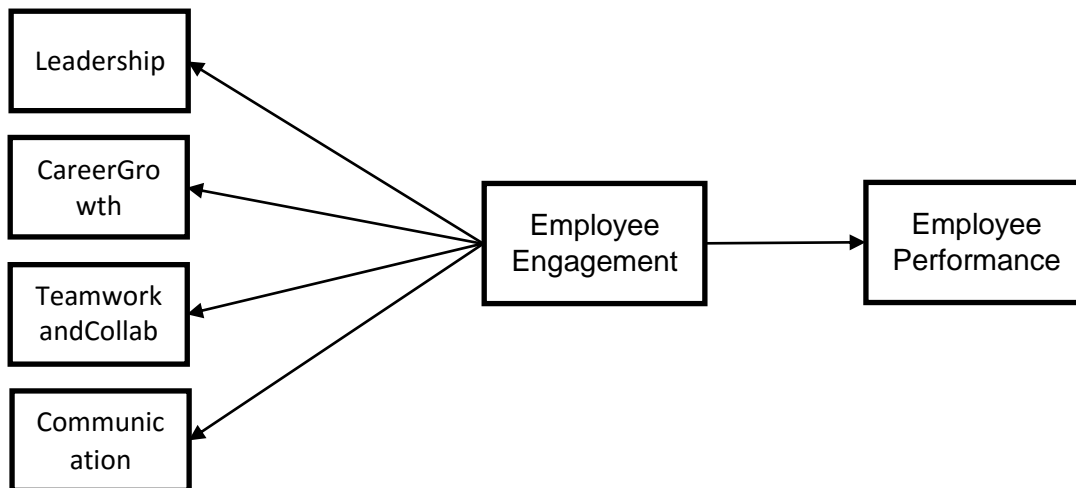


Figure 1

#### 5.4 Leadership and Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement and Leadership qualities are heavily interlinked. Most of the survey findings suggest that at least 75 percent of the employees leave the company due to the employee-manager relationships (Gallup, 2017).

According to a leading consultant specialized in Employee Engagement (Kate, 2019) “People don’t leave companies. They leave bosses.” It is strongly perceived that leaders who regularly interact with their employees and who focus on building relationships, developing their teams and listening to their concerns can make a huge difference to the performance of the team. Leaders tend to disregard employees’ personal and professional concerns resulting in loss of motivation to perform better in their job roles. Some of the team development activities commonly adopted in the European companies are: organizing team building activities such as karting, bowling, recreational outings, family fun days to extend the support of the employers to their employees and their families. Sometimes even E-mail responses are considered to be less effective compared to a personal appreciation from the Team Managers. To increase Employee Engagement, leaders must demonstrate that they care about their employees, listen to their concerns and respond to their needs. Good leaders act as mentors and they embed a culture of coaching in their organization, which will support innovation, skills development, and employee engagement. Research also has indicated that the qualities of Transformational Leadership result in outcomes, such as a lower intention to turnover and higher performance of employees (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Feeling of the Psychological safety of employees is greatly influenced by the leadership (Kahn, 1990) and similarly, Leadership is responsible for other drivers of Employee Engagement such as career development, training and development, pay, rewards and benefits and other management practices (Popli and Rizvi, 2016). Different Leadership styles found in the literature



are classified as Transformational, Transactional, visionary, organic. A literature study shows evidence of strong negative associations between classical leadership style and employee engagement, transactional leadership style and employee engagement, and positive associations between visionary leadership style and engagement and also between organic leadership style and employee engagement. (Zhang, 2010)

### **5.5 Career Growth and Employee Engagement**

According to a quote, “today’s managers are yesterday’s employees”. So, career progression is an integral part of every employee’s vision in an organization. Some organizations understand this basic principle and provide a lot of importance to career growth and its impact on employee engagement. Not every employee is focused on money, an individual’s appreciation of career growth varies vastly based on their personal preferences, socio, economic needs, and ambitions. Organizations need to create the right environment to reward talented individuals and their retention. Career Growth can be divided into two aspects: within the organization and between organizations (Qingxiong, James, Paula, & Liu, 2010).

The results showed that the major performance of the career growth within the organization is employees’ career development in the current organization system, and it can be measured with four dimensions: the development of professional ability, salary increases, the progression of career goals and the promotion of jobs. Providing career growth opportunities for the right employees is very important as career growth is positively correlated with employee engagement and employee engagement has a positive correlation with employee retention (Nurul, Norzanah, &Roshidi, 2014). Organizations can satisfy employees’ career growth needs such as economic, power, ability, social and emotional needs to improve employee’s commitment towards work. (Jie, Xiaowen, &Jinming, 2017). Similarly, all four forms of career growth, career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth are positively correlated with organizational commitment (Qingxiong, James, Paula, & Liu, 2010).

### **5.6 TeamCollaboration and Employee Engagement**

Teamwork is essential in today’s competitive world. In the past, during the industrial era, most job roles were monotonous on a manufacturing line, so Teamwork was not as important as it is today. Now the jobs are more demanding and dynamic in nature so constant communication and a good level of collaboration are required within the Team members. Effective Teamwork is critical for any business’s higher performance as it helps to achieve the overall goals and objectives of an organization. It creates motivation among all the Team members and aligns them to work harder and be supportive of one another. Every individual possesses different talents, experiences, skills, and strengths. Therefore, if there is no unity within the Team, it can lead to serious inefficacy in the working environment.

Teamwork and collaboration are influenced by Job Demand and Individual Characteristics which can control the level of supervisor and co-work relationship and boost Employee Engagement (Alshammari, 2015). Engagement is significantly influenced by organizational culture, team climate and job resources (Simon L. Albrecht 2012). Employee health and psychological well-being which is a critical factor in Employee Engagement can be influenced by Teamwork and collaboration between the employees. (Nancy, 2007).

Team spirit is the key to success and its impact on whole organizational success depends on it. Some business models rely heavily on team competitiveness, a collaboration between team members. For example, motorsport industries, Formula1 racing, and Football, Cricket and other sports clubs i.e football clubs such as Manchester United, Barcelona, Indian cricket team, etc are some of the business models that will heavily depend on collective performance.

Team motivation and employee engagement are fabrics of the collective performance result in any sportive group. It plays deciding factor between success and failure. However, it may be less influential in some sectors such as customer-facing the retail industry, fashion, service sector, tourism and hotel businesses where most individualistic job roles offer customer satisfaction and bring more additional new business opportunities and organizational effectiveness. Hence teamwork and employee engagement need to be carefully valued in any business, and appropriate levels of resources must be allocated based on the business model.

### **5.7 Communication and Employee Engagement**

Communication is one of the most effective ways for organizations to connect with their employees and to connect employees who have different cultures and backgrounds (Towers Watson, 2010). Effective and timely communication helps to motivate the Employees by giving them clear visibility of what is happening within the organization, what are their goals, company values, vision and mission, and objectives and how should the Employees react to it. Gallup (2012) found the following activities to be the key drivers to employee engagement

- Encouragement from superiors
- Praise and recognition
- Well-defined job expectations

When Managers keep constant and effective communication with their team members, it increases their level of engagement as they are aware of what is happening at the larger level and how their contribution is helping for the overall objective of the organization. (Welch, 2011; Xu & Thomas, 2011;).

A study conducted by C Balakrishnan and Dr. D Masthan in the year 2013 at Delhi International Airport with a sample size of 300 Employees measured the presence, quality and effectiveness of internal communication as well as the presence and level of employee engagement. The study considered five important factors like superior-subordinate communication, superior openness,

opportunities for upward communication, reliability of communication, and quality of communications. Correlation analysis between the factors of communication and factors of engagement showed that there is a significant positive correlation between internal communication and employee engagement (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013).

Another study conducted in Australia which studied the relationship between internal communication (organizational and supervisor) and employee engagement found that a significant and positive association between the two variables was found ( $\beta = .48, p < .001$ ).

Communication helps to improve the motivation of employees by informing and clarifying the task which is to be performed, explaining to them how they are performing and informing them how they can improve the performance and then provide them the right feedback at the right time.

### **5.8 Employee Engagement and Employee Performance**

In the current business scenario, organizations must outperform their competitors in order to keep their place in the industry. High performance of employees leads to higher organizational performance and its success. It greatly help organizations to survive after recessions. This is relevant to almost all industries and especially to service industries where the impact of the performance is direct to the consumer in most of the cases. A number of studies show that an effective way to enhance employee performance is to improve employee engagement.

A study conducted by Harvard Business Review found that highly engaged workforce can increase innovation, productivity, and bottom-line performance while reducing costs related to hiring and retention in highly competitive talent markets (Harvard Business Review, 2013). Performance of the employees is the key differentiator of every organization compared to their competitors as the performance of every employee directly impact the overall performance of the organization.

Performance of Employees can be increased through various dimensions of Employee Engagement such as Work Environment, Leadership, Team relationship, Training and career, Compensation, Policies and procedures and Wellbeing (Anitha, 2014).

On the other side, disengaged employees tend to waste their time in activities that are not very important, settle with what they do and compromise on customer satisfaction (Blessing White, 2006).

Therefore, for any organization it is crucial to keep their employees engaged for improving the individual performance of their employees which in turn improves organization's overall productivity, performance and competitiveness compared to its competitors.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Organizations must create an environment where employees are highly engaged but this is one of the most challenging task of HR department. Performance of Employees who are engaged is higher than those who are disengaged with their organization. Several drivers are found to be

influencing the level of employee engagement. This article identifies these dimensions of Employee Engagement impacting Employee Performance. Among those drivers, Leadership, Career Growth, Team Collaboration and Communication were found to be the most repetitive drivers in past literature. The importance and effect of these drivers may vary from one Organization to another. Organizations must fulfil the expectations of employees in order to achieve the organization's overall objectives and goals and thus, improve the performance of employees.

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