
A Study on employee engagement in two Indian businesses

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his organization and its values. It is a measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization which profoundly influences their willingness to learn & perform at work. Employee engagement has a direct impact on the employee's productivity. Understandably, the most productive employees are those that are not only committed and loyal; but also but also those whose outputs are healthy and gratifying both for themselves as well as for the organization they work for. Obviously, these are the employees who can be called 'engaged'. In almost a bottom-up fashion, the organization as a whole benefits from employees that are committed, loyal, productive, and engaged. The paper aims at finding the employee engagement across manufacturing organizations and IT organizations, and compares the underlying reasons indicating high or low employee engagement. Fifty middle level executives of a car manufacturing unit and fifty such employees of an IT firm, located in and around the city of Bengaluru, India, were sampled for the study. It was found that the degree of employee engagement was significantly high in the manufacturing organization as compared to that in IT firm. The main causes for a higher engagement in the manufacturing sector were found to be as – the impression that the firm cares for and values the employees, free and frank communication with immediate supervisor, empathetic attitude of the latter towards the former, recognition of one's contributions towards the organizational goals, and freedom to participate in the decision making process.

Key words: Employee engagement, Human Resource Management, Manufacturing, IT

1. Introduction

On 26th November 2008, Karambir Kang, General Manager of the Taj was helping others even as his family was stuck on the sixth floor of the Taj. He did not let personal tragedy overshadow his sense of duty. The terrorist attacks on Mumbai took the lives of Karambir's wife Niti, and their sons, Uday Singh and Samar Veer.

On November 26 at approximately 9.45 pm, when the terrorists entered the hotel, Karambir was Kang was at the Taj Lands End in Bandra in the middle of a conference. Though he rushed back, he could not get to his family, trapped in the sixth floor suite, as the terrorists had positioned themselves in the heritage wing. Kang called his mother in Bahrain. She said if he could not save

his family, he should save other (IBN Live 2010). Over the next 59 hours, Kang and his staff helped evacuate guests from the hotel and saved approximately 700 lives. His own would be changed forever. Niti, Uday and Samar, who could not be rescued, died of asphyxiation. (Flock, 2010). Once again, the instances above confirm that an organization is a social entity. An organization might aim at achieving profitable growth with the help of streamlined operations, robust finances and aggressive marketing. However, its human resources carry out all these functions. Hence, if any business enterprise wants to truly maintain its stronghold in the market, it must nurture and develop its human capital. A happy and committed workforce can steer an organization to success, while demoralized and demotivated employees can paralyze the enterprise's growth. The traditional paradigm of motivation relied heavily on financial reward. To earn the money to satisfy their 'physiological, safety and belonging needs', in Maslow's terms (1954), employees tolerated long working hours and poor work conditions (Goble, 1970). Through the 1960s and 1970s, career progression emerged as additional motivator (Stairs, Galpin, Page & Linley, 2006). But for today's employees, motivators go beyond tangibles like reward and benefits to intangibles like meaningfulness of the work done, congruence of one's personal values with those upheld by the organization and the ability to contribute something worthy (Stairs et. al, 2006). New age organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of human capital management in organizational development. A key aspect of this Human Capital Management is employee engagement (Bassi & McMurrer, 2007) – mediated by a range of non-financial factors like positive work environment, appraisal, exposure, humane conduct, trust, commitment and support from superiors and healthy competitions (Woodruffe, 2006). According to Fleming, Coffman and Harter (2005) the Human sigma – an approach to improve performance and reduce variability – works in the presence of employee engagement.

1.1 Employee Engagement

The first published use of the term employee engagement was made by Kahn in 1990, who described it as being different from other employee role constructs such as job involvement, commitment or intrinsic motivation, asserting that it focused on how psychological experiences of work shape the process of people presenting and absenting themselves during task performances (Kahn, 1990). Since then the term has been variously defined by scholars. Employee Engagement is the positive feeling that employees have towards their jobs and also the motivation and effort they put into it (Macey & Schneier, 2008). Engagement goes beyond satisfaction and commitment. To be fully engaged is to be involved in and enthusiastic about one's work (Falcone, 2006). Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), also Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2001), who view engagement at work as an antipole to burnout, define work engagement as follows: 'Engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior. Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties.

Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption, is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work' (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The three

dimensions of Vigor, Dedication and Absorption together make up the construct of Employee Engagement, that may however be distinguished from Workaholism, in that the former also brings the association of positive attitudes at work, positive mental health and good performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Employee Engagement has been reported to belong on the continuum of stress, as the antithesis of burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). It has also been considered on the time continuum, as measured by the time spent on a job (Goddard, 1999). Employee Engagement has been said to be a measure of Job Involvement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). Employee Engagement has also been associated with commitment (MacCashland, 1999) According to Wellins and Concelman (2005) engagement is “an amalgamation of commitment, loyalty, productivity, and ownership”. To be engaged is to be emotionally and intellectually committed to one’s organization (Bhatnagar, 2007). Employee engagement has also been conceptualized as having two dimensions: Cognitive Engagement – the extent to which the worker is aware of his mission at work and his role in the organization – and Emotional Engagement or physical engagement – the extent to which the worker empathizes with others at work and connects meaningfully with his or her coworker (Kahn, 1990, 1992; Luthans & Peterson, 2002). High engagement on each dimension is predictive of high overall engagement for an employee (Kahn, 1990; Bhatnagar, 2007). According to Tim Rutledge, truly engaged employees are attracted to, and inspired by, their work (“I want to do this”), committed (“I am dedicated to the success of what I am doing”), and fascinated (“I love what I am doing”) (Seijts & Crim, 2006).

1.2 Effect of Employee Engagement on Performance

A recent SHRM(Society for Human Resource Management) new global employee engagement study in 2006 surveyed 664,000 employees from around the world and found almost a 52% gap in the yearly performance improvement in operating income between organizations with highly engaged employees and organizations having employees with low engagement scores. Again, a recent meta-analysis of over 7939 business units in 38 companies revealed the relationship between employee satisfaction-engagement and the business-unit outcomes of customer satisfaction, profit, productivity, employee turnover and accidents (Nowack, 2006). Employee engagement has been linked to superior performance and higher levels of organizational commitment by a number of researchers (Woodruffe, 2006; Lockwood, 2006). Engaged employees leads to engaged customers, and this, in turn converts into long term profitability . Luthans and Peterson (2002) state that Gallup has empirically determined employee engagement to be a significant predictor of desirable organizational outcomes, such as customer satisfaction, retention, productivity and profitability. It was found that employees scoring high on engagement (top 25%) performed better in the areas of sales, customer complaints & turnover in comparison to the employees scoring low on engagement score (bottom 25%) (The Gallup Organization, 2004). The Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) survey revealed that employee engagement leads to 57% improvement in discretionary efforts (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). The CLC contends that emotional engagement has four times the power to affect performance as compared to rational commitment.

The employers attempt to convert as many employees to true believers as they can. (Buchanan, 2004). Low engagement among employees translates in economic loss for the organization. Gallup estimates that in the United Kingdom, unengaged workers cost their companies \$64.8 billion a year. In Japan, where only 9% of the workforce is engaged, the lost productivity is \$232

billion (The Gallup Organization, 2004). Engaged employees within an organization provide a competitive advantage to organizations (Joo & Mclean, 2006). Employee engagement has a substantial impact on employee productivity and talent retention (Lado & Wilson, 1994). Martel (2003) is of the opinion that, “in order to obtain high performance in postindustrial, intangible work that demands innovation, flexibility, and speed, employers need to engage their employees [. . .] Engaging employees – especially by giving them participation, freedom, and trust – is the most comprehensive response to the ascendant postindustrial values of self-realization and self-actualization”. Employee engagement has also been found to bring benefits at the individual level. A research was done by Britt, Adler and Bartone (2001). From this study it has been found that engagement in meaningful work can yield benefit from work. In a recent study it is explored that over the past 6 years, where the level of engagement had increased, absenteeism had decreased among employees (The Gallup Organization, 2004). In a comprehensive review of literature on employee engagement, Stairs et al. (2006) point out that employee engagement has also been linked with higher employee retention (DDI, 2005; Harter, Schmidt and Keyes, 2003; Wright & McMahan, 1992), greater employee effort and productivity (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004), increased sales (HayGroup, 2001), greater income and turnover (Maitland, 2005; ISR, 2006; Harter et al.2003), greater profitability (Harter et al.2003), and faster business growth and higher likelihood of business success (Hewitt Associates, 2004).

1.3 Employee Engagement: Its Determinants

While employee engagement is “the key to building a sustainable high-performance organization’, according to Macey and Schneider (2008) it is the organization’s responsibility to create conditions that truly engage the workforce. Several factors, operating simultaneously and in interaction with one another, determine whether a given worker in the organization will be engaged or not. Individual differences have been found to play a role in the level of engagement. Again, socio-cultural factors, such the community to which one belongs (Schein, 1970, 1987), and satisfaction with the organization mediates one’s level of engagement. Organizational features play a major role in determining how engaged will a given worker feel in the workplace. In this context, Salanova, Agut and Peiro, (2005) identified predisposing factors such as organizational-level treatment, social comparison, leadership influence, and social influence. Two major determinants of employee engagement are ‘Care and Recognition’, which are, primarily a function of Manager’s leadership practice and style. Recognition typically consists of acknowledgement given for the good work done, whereas Care represents an emotional bonding that makes an employee feel valued and have a sense of belongingness to the ‘family’ (Gilson & Harter, 2004). It is seen that when supervisors behave positively to employees and show regards, employees feel obliged to reciprocate that exchange – leading to a mutually beneficial interaction (Wayne & Green, 1993). Studies show that relationships with managers were the biggest influences on the satisfaction and commitment of employees, followed by the relationships with colleagues (ISR, 2004). The behavior and personal engagement of line managers has a direct influence on the engagement levels of the immediate subordinates (DDI, 2005).

Managers create an environment that maximize the performance of employees and provide employees with a passion to work (Baumruk, Gorman, Gorman & Ingham, 2006; Lockwood, 2006), thereby influencing the level of employee engagement of the employee. Opportunities for growth also enhance the level of engagement of the employees. Employees tend to stay with organizations, which are “talent-friendly” and progressive (Towers, 2006).Seijts and Crim

(2006), while summarizing the existing literature on how leaders can ‘engage employees’ heads, hearts, and hands’ identified ten factors, named the ‘Ten C’s of Engagement’ – steps that the management may take to enhance the level of engagement of the employees. These may be enumerated as follows:

1. Connect: the extent to which management convey that it cares for and values the employees.
2. Career: the extent to which the management provides to the workers work that is ‘challenging and meaningful’ and fostering one’s career growth.
3. Clarity: the extent to which the goals, rules and the organizational operations are transparent and understood by the employee.
4. Convey: the extent to which the management communicates goals and provides feedback.
5. Congratulate: the extent to which good performance brings praise and recognition.
6. Contribute: the extent o which one’s contribution to the ‘success and future’ of the company is understood.
7. Control: the extent to which the management allows the worker to participate in decision making and drive initiatives.
8. Collaborate: the extent to which the organization upholds team work over pursuance of self-interests.
9. Credibility: the extent to which the management demonstrates transparency and high ethical standards.
10. Confidence: the extent to which the organization demonstrates high ethical and performance standards, creating a sense of positive identification among the employees.

We expect that the ten factors are significant predictors for employee engagement, i.e., perceived status of the organization on these factors would determine the extent to which the employees of the organization feel engaged.

2. The Present Study

In order to maintain a healthy employee-organization interaction organizational scientists need to apprise companies about the barometer reading of “employee engagement” as it exists in a particular organization. Understanding the specific factors influencing the engagement levels of the Indian work force will be important to any Indian company looking to positively influence the productivity of its work force (Blessing White and HR Anexi Report, 2008). The latest Employee Engagement Report by global consulting firm Blessing White indicates that even though the majority of employees express positive feelings about their work, their employers, and even their managers, less than one-fifth are fully engaged in their work. According to available reports, conducted by Kenexa, Indian companies seem to top (73% Employee Engagement Score) in the world in measures of job satisfaction (“Indian companies best in terms of employee satisfaction”, 2009).

That said, till date, many companies miss the fine line that separates a satisfied employee from an engaged one. It is only an 'engaged employee' who is intellectually and emotionally connected with his employer, is proud of being a part of it and is committed towards its growth. Besides, there is still a dearth of company specific studies on employee engagement when compared to those conducted in the west. Findings from those studies may therefore, not be fully applicable to the Indian scenario, which is influenced by a collectivist culture and a booming job market. In the present study we attempted to determine the trends in employee engagement in the Indian context and the determinants for the same. We conducted an investigation on two Indian firms belonging to the same business conglomerate – one, manufacturing cars and the other, an IT service provider – with the following objectives:

- To find out, if there is any, significant difference in the Employee Engagement level of IT and Manufacturing employees in the same group.
- To find out, if there is any, difference in the perceived levels of the predictors of Employee Engagement of the IT and Manufacturing employees.
- To find out the extent to which the nature of the organization influences one's score on the above dimensions.
- To identify the predictors which happen to create maximum impact in distinguishing between high engaged and low-engaged employees.

2.1 Participants and Procedure

The present sample included 100 male middle level executives – fifty from the car-manufacturing firm and 50 from the IT service provider firm belonging to a large business conglomerate in the city of Bengaluru, India. Both companies have an annual turnover of over Rs. 1000 crores. The prospective participants were contacted via their supervisors, and informed consent was obtained, with full assurance of confidentiality. Following this, the two principal questionnaires, along with the General Information Schedule, discussed under Measures were sent to 200 willing participants. 130 sets consisting of two questionnaire each were filled up and returned (response rate of 65%). After careful screening, and matching of the subjects on the parameters of age, marital status, and socio-economic standing, 100 sets of completed questionnaires were selected for the purpose of research and analysis.

2.2 Sample Demography

Table 1 summarizes the information regarding the sample characteristics. The average age for the samples was 40 years.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Sample	Age	Education	Income range	Marital status	Social class
Male Middle level Executives working in the manufacturing sector	30-45 years	Graduates and above	Rs. 5 – 10 lacs per annum	Married	Middle and Upper middle class
Male Middle level Executives working in the IT sector	30-45 years	Graduates and above	Rs. 5 – 10 lacs per annum	Married	Middle and Upper middle class

3. Measures

For the purpose of the present research the following tests and tools were used:

- General Information Schedule
- Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) – English version: Developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), it is a self report questionnaire with 17 statements about how one feels at work, to be rated on a 7 point scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (Always/everyday). The scale yields score on 3 domains – Vigor, Dedication and Absorption – as well as a full scale score on the level of employee engagement. Chronbach’s α ranges from .88 to .95 and the test retest reliability of the measure is as high as .72.
- The Employee Engagement Predictor Questionnaire (EEPS)- Developed by the present researchers, the EEPS is a multiple choice questionnaire with 32 items, to be rated on a 5- point scale (ranging from Strongly Agree / Always to Strongly Disagree / Never), that was designed to measure the extent to which an employee perceives his/her organization is striving to ensure the Ten C’s of Employee Engagement, as conceptualized by Seijts and Crim (2006) – namely ,Connect, Career, Clarity, Convey, Congratulate, Contribute, Control, Collaborate, Credibility and Confidence. The questionnaire also had one ‘write in’ or descriptive question ‘.The reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.83 and the test was found to be sufficiently valid.

3.1 Statistics Employed

To find out whether there is any significant difference between the sample from the two organizations in terms of their reported levels of engagement at work and the levels of the employee engagement predictors in the organizations as perceived by them, we subject the data collected to analysis by t-test. We also used t-statistics to identify the specific Predictors, which are perceived to have significantly different levels in the two organizations. To find out whether the difference in Employee Engagement, if any, was solely due to the perceived status of the organization on the Predictors or it was due the difference in the nature of the two organizations, we employed the two-way Analysis of Variance. Finally, correlational analysis was done to find the extent to which Employee Engagement and Employee Engagement Predictors may be expected to coexist in an organization.

4. Results

Table 2 represents the measures of central tendency and the measures of variability of the scores obtained by the two sampling groups on each of the questionnaires. It may be seen that for the UWES, the middle level executives from the car-manufacturing company obtained a higher mean score ($M = 5.096$) than that obtained by executives from the IT company ($M = 3.35$). In each of the sub domains, viz. vigor, dedication and absorption, the former obtain higher mean scores (4.5, 4.2 and 4.8 respectively) than that obtained by the latter (3.2, 2.9 and 3.5 respectively). The same pattern is visible in case of the scores on the EEPS. While the executives from the car-manufacturing firm obtained a mean score of 195.72, the executives from the IT firm obtained a mean score of 150.92.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics relating to the scores obtained by the Middle level Executives of the Two Organisations on UWES and EEPS.

	sample	Manufacturing firm employees			IT firm Employees		
		Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Mean	Median	Standard deviation
Work and Well Being Survey	Vigour	4.5	4.1	0.36	3.2	2.8	.75
	Dedication	4.2	3.7	0.43	2.9	2.35	0.45
	Absorption	4.8	4.5	0.28	3.5	3	0.35
	Total	5.096	5	20.86	3.35	3	0.93
The Employee Engagement Predictor Questionnaire	Total	195.75	134	29.09	150.92	99	29.96

Table 3 shows the significance of the difference between the means of the scores obtained by the two sample groups on the two variables. There is a significant difference between the scores obtained by the two sample groups on the UWES ($p = 0.0083$) – indicating a superior level of

employee engagement for the employees of the car-manufacturing firm as compared to that of the employees of the IT firm. Similarly, Table 4 shows a significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the two groups on the EEPS ($p = 0.0021$). Thus the perceived status of the Employee Engagement Predictors in the car - manufacturing firm is much superior to that in the IT firm.

Table 3: ‘p’ value of the difference between the scores obtained by the Manufacturing Firm Employees and the IT Firm Employees on the UWES and the EEPS

Scale on which the difference in scores is measured	Probability value
UWES	0.0083*
EEPS	0.0021*

Significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 shows the possible interaction effect of the perceived status on the Employee Engagement Predictors (high/low) and the nature of the organization (car-manufacturing firm/IT firm) on the level of employee engagement of an employee. We found that while considering the total score, the perceived status of the Employee engagement predictors in the organizations influenced the level of employee engagement of an employee, irrespective of the nature of the organization (f ratio = 131.91). The data also revealed no interaction effect of the two independent variables on the domains of Absorption, Dedication and Vigor.

Table 4: The F ratios for the Levels of employee engagement for employees scoring high on the EEPS and that for employees scoring low on the EEPS in the car-manufacturing firm and the IT firm.

Dependent Variable	F ratio for variation due to		
	Nature of the organization (car-manufacturing/IT service provider)	Perceived Levels of Employee Engagement Predictors	Interaction effect
Vigour	0.0017	9.9*	2.22
Dedication	0.18	17.34*	2.19
Absorption	0.15	31.59*	2.1

*indicating significance at the 0.01 level.

The magnitude of the intercorrelations of the variables, as shown in Table 5, was high. As expected, both employee engagement and the perceived status of the employee engagement predictors were positively correlated with one another both in the case of the middle level executives of the car-manufacturing firm (0.75) as well as in the case of the middle level executives of the IT firm (0.67).

Table 5: Intercorrelations of levels of Employee Engagement and perceived levels of Employee Engagement Predictors for the employees of the car-manufacturing firm and employees of the IT firm.

Coefficient of Correlation in case of the employees of the car manufacturing firm	0.75
Coefficient of Correlation in case of the employees of the car manufacturing firm	0.67

To find the specific predictors of employee engagement that are affecting the levels of employee engagement of the employees of the two organizations under study, we calculated the significance of the difference between the mean scores obtained by the two groups on the various domains of the EEPS (Table 6). The analysis revealed a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the domains of Connect ($p = 0.00713$), collaborate ($p = 0.00732$), congratulate ($p = 0.0022$), contribute ($p = 0.0093$) and confidence ($p = 0.0003$).

Table 6: Significance of the difference between the mean scores obtained by the employees of the car-manufacturing firm and the employees of the IT firm on the domains of the EEPS.

domain	P value for difference between means
Connect	0.00713*
Career	0.0519
Clarity	1.2342
Convey	0.9736
Congratulate	0.0022*
Contribute	0.0093*
Control	2.912
Collaborate	0.00732*
Credibility	3.1264
Confidence	0.0003*

Significant at 0.01 level

5. Discussion

Employee Engagement is a major factor contributing to organizational productivity, performance and long term survival (e.g., Nowack, 2006; Maitland, 2005; Hewitt Associates, 2004). Organizations with highly engaged employees tend to show greater profits (Woodruffe, 2006) and turnover (Harter et al.2003). In the present study, since both the organizations were selected on the criterion of fair business performance, with an annual turnover of over INR 500crores, we expected moderate to high levels of employee engagement in both the organizations. The findings confirm the expectations – in both organizations the mean score on employee engagement is above average. The statistical analyses of the data reveal that there is a significant difference between the mean scores ($p = 0.0083$) obtained by the two sample groups on the measures of Employee Engagement. This conforms to previous findings; viz. the level of engagement varies across industries (Towers, 2003). Further, there was a significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the two sample groups on the perceived levels of the Employee Engagement Predictors – factors expected to mediate the level of employee engagement of the employees in an organization (Seijts & Crim, 2006). High positive coefficients of correlation (0.75 and 0.67 in case of car-manufacturing firm and IT firm

respectively) between the scores on the variables in both the organizations confirms the expectations that the differences in the perceived levels of employee engagement predictors will co-exist with differences in the levels of employee engagement in organizations. This is also supported by the f ratios calculated – irrespective of the nature of the organization; perceived levels of employee engagement predictors will determine the levels of employee engagement of an employee, with respect to all the three domains of vigour, dedication and absorption. In order to find the specific predictors that are affecting the levels of employee engagement in the organizations, we obtained the significance of the differences between the mean scores of the employees of the two organizations on each of the predictors. It was found that a significant difference exists in the perceived levels of the following predictors – Connect, Collaborate, Congratulate, Contribute and Confidence. Hence, we may conclude that differences on these domains are causing the differences in the reported levels of employee engagement. The results conform to previous findings and observations (e.g., Stairs et al., 2006; Sadavarti, 2005). Due to the buoyant job market and the high rate of attrition that characterize the IT sector in India, we expected a significant impact of the nature of the organization on the levels of employee engagement of the organizations. By offering time and cost advantages to the global consumers across the world (Patnaik, 2001), the Indian IT and ITES industry has emerged and been accepted as one of the key players in the global market. While this translates in high salary packages and growth opportunities for the employees, it also leads to high rates of attrition – in a market that is growing too fast for the growth in human resources to catch up. In this situation, it was expected that high levels of Employee Engagement Predictors alone may not determine the level of employee engagement of an executive. Conversely, we expected the trends to differ for the car –manufacturing firm – as the car market in India, though buoyant, does not witness the growth phenomenon that characterizes the IT and ITES sector. However, the results showed that there is no significant difference due to the nature of the organization. Further research is required with a more representative sample to reach any conclusion in this regard. In the descriptive or ‘write in’ answer where the respondents were asked ‘What one thing you would like to see improved in the organization that you will make you more committed towards your organization?’ they mainly came out with their need for identifying with the manager with statements like, ‘Manager should always support and encourage’, or ‘Manager should allocate work according to employee’s interest’ or ‘My manager should meet to each employee personally once a month for any difficulty or any other matter.’ While these were the common concerns amongst the manufacturing and IT staff of the group, the technology personnel from the IT firm also expressed their opinion through statements like ‘I need technical cooperation’, ‘Manager must involve me in the issues and projects before assigning me the work’, ‘Our manager should involve us at time of project scheduling, that will motivate us to carry out our project’ and the like.

5.1 Application of the Findings

The study helped identify some predictors of employee engagement whose perceived levels varied for the executives of the two organizations, as mentioned in the beginning of this study. We find it reasonable to observe that these predictors may play an important role in determining levels of employee engagement in the Indian context. On the basis of the factors identified and based on our interviews with several practitioners from the industry, we recommend the following practices at the workplace for enhanced employee engagement and commitment. Firstly, the organization should make it possible for the workers to contribute

adequately to the system. This may be done by involving the executives more and more in the decision making process or by providing them more autonomy in their functional areas regarding everyday decisions. The strategic vision of the company, the CEO's vision, may be to the employees at regular intervals. It is also necessary to make HR policies clear to the employees, especially to the new incumbents. Secondly, management of any company should take care to appreciate good performance and encourage them. Good work should be recognized consistently, through monthly and annual staff awards, and may be acknowledged publicly, through shared e-mails or in group meetings. Thoughtful rewards such as personalized souvenirs or even a chocolate can help build engagement in an inexpensive but effective manner. One should be specific about the task for which a worker is being appreciated; thereby reinforcing appropriate behaviors and helping employees set achievable goals at the workplace. It is important to thank employees as often as one can – managers with teams with world class engagement levels say 'Thank You' in the annual appraisal form (Ludwick, 2006). Thirdly, engagement may come from encouraging personal relationships develop in the workplace. To have happy and engaged employees, work should be joyous. Research has shown that playfulness is positively related to both job satisfaction as well as job performance, thus ensuring higher commitment (Yu, Wu, Chen, & Lin, 2007). One may plan group activities for the employees to facilitate socialization; through movies, picnics or sports, or celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and other social and religious occasions at the workplace, which are of cultural and emotional significance to the employees. Some companies like Mindtree even organize 'newlywed's night' to welcome new families (Bagchi, 2005). Also effective are the Off Ramp projects – that encourage housewives return to work after long breaks ("Great Place to work. Standard Chartered", 2010). It may also be a fruitful idea to call up the employee's spouse / children and telling them about the good work that was accomplished while he/she missed an important family function or dinner during the weekend. Engagement comes from perceiving one is cared for (Penna, 2005), a feeling that can be encouraged through sound health policies and a safe and injury free workplace. With regard to encouraging health amongst it may not be out of place to refer to the General Motor Weight loss plan – a plan designed exclusively for the GM employees that became hugely popular worldwide (B4TEA, 2010) owing to its effectiveness and simplicity. The Art of Living programs (Art of Living Corporate Executive Program, n.d.) that started in India, as also the Buddhist Vipassana courses (Raja, 2003) have also been embraced widely by corporates within the country as well as outside. Finally, it appears essential to develop and sustain an ethical organizational culture, upholding and reinforcing the organizational brand image (Bhatnagar, 2007) to the employees through repeated exercises in organizational socialization and safety. Intel Corporation, rated one of the best companies by Great Places to Work Institute (2008), strives to conduct business with integrity and professionalism. This can begin with simple steps – such as meeting commitments made to external customers as well as employees and paying attention to details (Bhattacharya, 2008).

5.2 Limitations of the Present Study

It is important to note the limitations of the present study. The chief shortcoming is that the sample size is not large, and hence the study requires further work to arrive at generalization of any form. Secondly, since the research was limited to only two organizations, significant variations in trends within organizations of similar nature could not be explored. While the findings provide valuable insights into the trends in employee engagement in the Indian scenario, it cannot be said whether the same trends hold for female executives and for employees working

at different levels in the organization. Moreover, qualitative analysis was required to find the ways in which the perceived levels of the different employee engagement predictors varied in the two organizations – using in-depth interviews, focused group discussions and content analysis of the data collected.

5.3 Conclusion

The importance of employee engagement in the organizational setting is undeniable. The present study reveals many factors that appear to affect the level of employee engagement of the middle level executives in the Indian scenario. Overall, the components that were found to be important were; training and development, organizational culture and community, all of which must be undertaken simultaneously in order to achieve the best results. Hence, we may recommend that these factors should be considered while designing organizational policies on decentralization, rewards and incentives, communication of information, employee career development, and developing organizational brand image. Further investigation is required, with a larger and more representative sample, to find whether the present findings hold for female executives, for employees at the top as well as the operational level, and for other organizations in the Indian scenario.

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