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FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY IN THE FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY IN KOZHIKODE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this article is to identify the role of employee engagement in the development of the footwear industry in the Kozhikode district. The study identifies the key determinants of employee engagement and its impact on employee performance. The sample footwear manufacturing units selected were VKC Group of Companies, Cubix and Campus-Dreams India Footwear Company. Fifty employees were chosen as sample respondents from each unit. A questionnaire was prepared which consist of 25 statements to grade the responses of employees ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree using a 5- point Likert Scale. The statistical tools used were Independent Sample t-test, ANOVA, Factor Analysis and Correlation under SPSS software. The period of the study was from January to October 2020. The result of the Independent Sample t-test revealed that the female gender working in organisations has more engagement to the organisation than male employees. The result of ANOVA showing that demographic factors like age, income, period of employment, educational qualifications and the department of employees do not influence employee engagement. Factor analysis has identified 5 drivers of employee engagement like employee commitment, team spirit and organisational communication, work environment, job satisfaction and employee motivation. Correlation analysis revealed a positive correlation between the engagement drivers and employee engagement in the development the organisations in the district.

KEYWORDS

co-worker relationship, employee engagement, employee retention, job satisfaction and organisational environment.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, due to rapid globalization, organisations have realized that their talent is the key to their growth, and the Human Resource is the strategic resource that any enterprise truly needs. As a result, the Human Resource Manager has made the transition from behind-the-scenes support to become a strategic leader in the business. Every organization knows the importance of engaging and motivating its employees to perform and this has gained more prominence with time. Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business today. Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization and put discretionary effort into their work. It practically affects employee morale, productivity and reasons for retaining in the organisation. Hewitt, (2005) describe engagement as the measure of an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to his/her organization and its success. The various drivers of employee engagement are the organization, management, superior, career development, reward and recognition, performance appraisal, training and monetary benefits.

PROFILES

VKC Group of Companies

VKC Group is a footwear manufacturing and marketing company located in the Kozhikode district of Kerala state. It is considered to be one of the biggest in the organised footwear sectors. It is also the largest branded PU footwear manufacturer in India. It was registered as a Joint Stock Company. The Head Quarter of the VKC group is in Kozhikode. "Quality at an affordable price" made the VKC group's products popular in the market day by day.

The Group was established on 17 August 1984 with venturing into a Hawaii Sheet manufacturing unit. Later on, Hawaii straps were also introduced to the production line in 1986. In 1987, the group initiated the floating of the first RPVC (Rigid Polyvinyl Chloride) footwear manufacturing unit. In 1994 the group ventured the first unit in Kerala to manufacture footwear from virgin PVC. This resulted in a drastic change and the multinational brands confronted competitions from the local brands. In 1998 the group ventured into the first Micro Cellular PVC footwear in Kerala with the help of imported plant and machinery. In 2001 the group introduced the first Air Injected PVC DIP footwear manufacturing unit in South India. In 2003 the group missioned the first Injected EVA manufacturing unit in South –Central India. In 2006 the group started backward integration to produce EVA compound for Injection and initiated the first EVA compounding plant in the South –Central India. The unit went in 2007 to the manufacturing of PU DIP footwear. Now the products offered from VKC Group are VKC Pride, VKC Trends, VKC Stile, VKC Lite, VKC Hawaii, VKC Junior, VKC Slipons, VKC AmArtak, Walkaroo, Skalino and Vestire

Cubix Group of Companies

Cubix is one of the biggest footwear manufactures in India. It is registered as a Partnership firm under the Indian Partnership Act 1932. The competencies in manufacturing quality footwear and their ability to cater to the needs of clients enable to curve of the niche of trust and confidence in the industry. The firm focuses to manufacture high-quality products and acquire the utmost customer satisfaction helps to achieve new heights of business success. Now Cubix is one of the leading footwear manufactures in Kerala, with all imported machinery, with a wide range of products and a large number of the customer base. The Company has a vast and efficient distribution network coverage all over Kerala.

The Company was established in 1996 to meet the growing demand for branded high-quality PVC footwear. In 2008, the company introduced P U technology in production to expand the production capacity and to produce a wide range of trendy models in every category of customers without compromising the style, quality and durability of the product. The company has a wide and efficient distribution network including more than 1000 dealers all over Kerala, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Andra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh. Now the products are also available in almost all of the Middle East countries like Dubai, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Oman. Products offered by Cubix are Cubix. Dot, Cubix.School Days, Cubix. Palm, Cubix. Orthocare and Cubix.Vachappai

Campus - Dreams India Footwear Company

It is a leading Footwear company established in Feroke, in Kozhikode district. It functions as a sole proprietorship business. The product name of the company is 'FASTRO'. It is established in the year 2018. It manufactures PU chappals for ladies, gents, kids etc. The products of it are sold all over Kerala. The employees working here are near to 125 and its annual turnover is Rs. 1.35 crores.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some of the previous studies relating to the topic of employee engagement are discussed below:

Robison (2007) classified employees into one of the following three categories: engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their organization. They drive innovation and move the organization forward. Not-engaged employees are employees who are at work but are making no active contribution to the success of the organization. They are putting in their time, but no energy or passion into their work. Actively disengaged employees are not just unhappy at work, but also act out their unhappiness. These workers undermine the efforts of engaged workers.

Thomas, Kenneth W. (2009) explained the popularity of intrinsic rewards and how these rewards can be used to build a high engagement culture. The study emphasized the sense of meaningfulness, sense of choice, sense of competence and sense of progress. The results show that the intrinsic rewards create a strong, win-win form of motivation for both the organization and its employees. Intrinsic rewards are also considered to be a strong predictor of retention.

Priya Shanmugam & Dr. R. Krishnaveni (2012) in their study it is highlighted that there is a strong link between employee engagement and organisational performance. Organisations around the globe are measuring their employees' level of engagement in the attempt of improving productivity, profitability, turnover and safety. A clear and concise definition of employee engagement can give human resource development practitioners and managers powerful tools to develop workplace strategies that can greatly improve employee satisfaction, fulfillment, and loyalty. Hence, the scope for continued research on Employee Engagement is immense.

Tintumol.P. Joseph et al. (2019) conducted a study to identify the significance of demographic factors like age, gender, marital status, experience, education and income on employee engagement in the Telecom Industry in India. Data collected from 293 employees were statistically analyzed using appropriate quantitative analytical tools and found that employee engagement having substantial relation with education, experience and age.

From the above review, it can be seen that the studies were conducted in organisations other than the footwear manufacturing sector; therefore, the present study is considered relevant.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Employees are the backbone of every organization as they are vital to their spirit and competitiveness. Engaged employees must be considered as the most valuable asset for every organization. Engaged employees may be more likely to commit to staying with their current organization (Vance, 2006). Employee engagement is the energy, passion or fire that employees have towards their work and to the employer. The challenges today are not just retaining talented people but fully engaged them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work performance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is conducted among selected leading footwear manufacturing companies in the Kozhikode district. The study will help to understand the influence of employee engagement in the development of footwear industries in the district. The companies are competing for talent people who are having high performance and high competence in workplace (Berger and Berger, 2004). It will also help to provide awareness to the companies relating to the components of employee engagement which contributes to job satisfaction, employee motivation, team spirit and organisational commitment. Employee engagement strategies implemented by business organisations result in higher levels of employee engagement, customer satisfaction, productivity, and profit and lower levels of employee accidents and turnovers (Blattner & Walter, 2015). The results of this study will provide insight and information for administrators, practitioners, and researchers in the human resource management field.

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

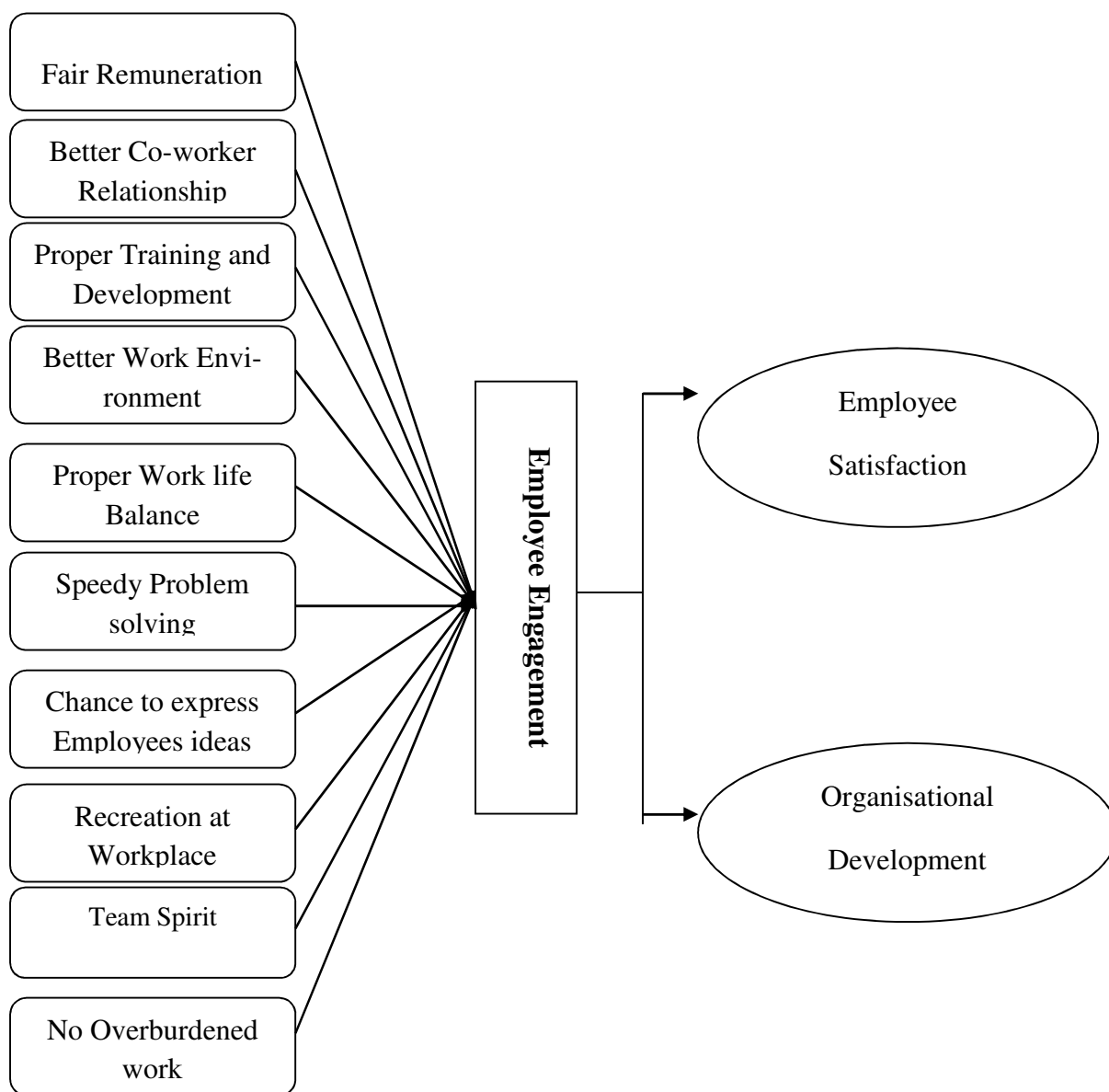
The objectives of the study are to identify the factors which influence the employee engagement of the footwear manufacturing units and the role of the human resource department to achieve the engagement effectively. The hypotheses of the study are demographic factors have an influence on employee engagement significantly and engagement drivers help to improve employee engagement positively.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

- (i) Employee Engagement: Employee Engagement is a concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication a worker feels toward his/her job. Engaged employees care about their work and the performance of the company, and feel that their efforts make a change in the organisation.
- (ii) Employee Retention: Employee retention refers to the various policies and practices which let the employees stick to an organization for a longer period. It is the ability of an organization to retain its employees. Employees who work for long periods in an organization add significant value to the company.
- (iii) Employee Engagement Drivers: Employee Engagement Drivers are the factors that motivate the employees to lead an organisation success. It is the extent to which the organisation is concerned with employees' health and well-being. Better salary, good working conditions etc are examples.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model describes the relationship of different variables that influences the employee engagement of footwear manufacturing units in Kozhikode district.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design chosen for the study is descriptive. Both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected from 150 employees working in six divisions of footwear units belongs to Joint Stock Company, Partnership and Sole proprietorship in Kozhikode district. From among Joint Stock Companies, 'VKC Ltd', from Partnership firms 'Cubix' and from sole traders 'Campus – Dreams India Footwear Company' are selected. Employees working in different departments like cutting, clicker cutting, stitching, soling, quality checking and packing and forwarding are the respondents of the study. A questionnaire was designed so as to grade the responses of the employees based on the degree of their agreement. In designing the questionnaire, a 5- point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) was used to reduce the statistical problems of extreme skewness (Fornell, 1992). The questionnaire consists of 25 statements. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha test and the Cronbach alpha value was found as .816 (>.7), which shows that the instrument is reliable. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's tests were performed to verify if the data is suitable for Factor analysis. Factor analysis was performed to indicate the convergent and discriminant validity. Data was collected by using a convenience sampling technique. Quantitative data analysis has been done with the help of the statistical tools viz., Independent Sample t-test, ANOVA, Factor Analysis and Correlation

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

INDEPENDENT SAMPLE t-TEST AND ANOVA

Independent sample t-test and ANOVA are the tools used to find out the statistical significance of demographic variables. Gender, age, monthly income, the period of employment, educational qualification and sections of the organisations are the demographic factors supposed to affect employee engagement. The result is shown in Table No. 1 and 2 below.

TABLE 1: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE EMPLOYEES

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t value	p value
Male	122	94.09	7.572	7.585	.007
Female	28	95.82	5.888		

Source: Survey Data

As per table 1, the mean score of employee engagement of the male employees of footwear industries in Kozhikode District is 94.09 with a standard deviation of 7.572 and that of female employees is 95.82 and 5.888 respectively. Further, the calculated p-value (.007) is less than the significant level of 0.05, which indicates that there is a significant difference between male and female employees concerning employee engagement. From the statistical values, it was understood that the employee engagement of female is greater than male employees among footwear industries in Kozhikode district.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Demographic Variables	No. of Respondents	Employee Engagement				
		Mean	SD	F	Sig	
Age	20-25	34	93.47	7.246	.799	.528*
	26-30	32	94.28	6.892		
	31-35	37	93.51	7.545		
	36-40	23	96.30	6.938		
	Above 40	24	95.50	7.962		
Monthly Income	Below 15000	37	91.51	6.870	9.849	.070*
	15000-30000	87	94.18	7.386		
	Above 30000	26	99.31	4.954		
Period of employment	Below 5 years	24	92.50	6.821	6.897	.101*
	5-10 years	50	92.14	7.714		
	Above 10 years	76	96.51	6.608		
Educational qualification	School level	126	94.11	7.524	.680	.508*
	Higher secondary	18	95.89	5.497		
	Graduation	6	96.33	7.474		
Section in the organisation	Cutting	29	94.28	8.163	.210	.958*
	Clicker	29	93.55	7.376		
	Stitching	29	94.52	6.139		
	Soling	28	94.39	9.378		
	Quality Checking	8	96.38	5.290		
	Packing and Forwarding	27	94.81	5.785		

Source: Survey Data

*Significant at 0.05 level

To know the influence of the demographic factors on employee engagement, ANOVA has been used and the results have been summed up in the above table. Considering the significant level, it can be said that no demographic factors like age, monthly income, period of service, educational qualification and sections in the organisation (p-values 0.528, 0.070, 0.101, 0.508 and 0.958 respectively) influence the employee engagement significantly since p-value greater than 0.05 at 5% significant level.

When the mean values of the demographic factors are compared, we can infer the highly engaged group of every factor. As far as the Age group is concerned, the 36-40 years group respondents are highly engaged (mean 96.30, SD 6.938) and they are followed by above 40 years (mean 95.50, SD 7.962), 26-30 years (mean 94.28, SD 6.892), 31-35 years (mean 93.51, SD 7.545), 20-25 years (mean 93.47, SD 7.246) respectively. Hence it may be concluded that when respondents' age increases the engagement also increases.

The mean of monthly income says that employees with income above 30,000 and income 15,000-30,000 are engaged at most with the mean 99.31, SD 4.954 and mean 94.18, SD 7.386 respectively, followed by monthly income 15,000 with a mean 91.51 and SD 6.870. The result reveals that when the monthly income increases the employee engagement also increases.

Employee engagement of above 10 years period of service has high with a mean of 96.51 and SD 6.608 while compared with other employees have below 5 years and 5-10 years service with a mean of 92.50, SD 6.821 and 92.14, SD 7.714 respectively. It can be inferred that employees having long years of service has more engagement.

The qualification has the arithmetic mean showing that Graduate employees are engaged higher than other groups (mean 96.33 and SD 7.474), higher secondary level employees reside at second place (mean 95.89 and SD 5.497) and secondary level employees (mean 94.11 and SD 7.524) stay last. Based on qualifications, employees with higher-level qualifications, engagement is higher.

When comparing the means of sections in which employees are working, the quality checking section (mean 96.38 and SD 5.290) is highly engaged followed by packing and forwarding (mean 94.81 and SD 5.785), stitching (mean 94.52 and SD 6.139), soling (mean 94.39 and SD 9.378), cutting (mean 94.28 and SD 8.163) and clicker section (mean 93.55 and SD 7.376)

FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is carried out to distinguish the major contributing factors of employee engagement of footwear industries in the district.

TABLE 3: KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.744	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1575.165
	DF	300
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey Data

The number of samples that could be considered adequate for carrying out a factor analysis for the value of KMO was found to be 0.744. Further, the high value obtained in Bartlett's test and the value of p (0.000 < 0.05) indicated that the data is appropriate for factor analysis. Factor analysis was carried out for 25 different variables that have a profound impact on employee engagement that has resulted in five components. Factor Analysis was employed on the variables in each of the theoretical dimensions of the questionnaire in this study. The Principal Component Analysis method was used with Vari-max Rotation. Table 4 shows the Factor loadings of each item through the Rotated Component Factor Matrix for Factor Analysis. Hence the following factors, viz., Commitment to the organisation, team spirit and organisational communication, organisational environment, job satisfaction and employee motivation were considered for further study

TABLE 4: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Factor	Variables	Score
Commitment to the organisation	Speed of settling personal grievances	.902
	Commitment to the organisation	.837
	Friendly and helping nature of Co-workers	.650
	Organisation is rewarding properly	.568
	Opportunities to express the ideas and thought of employees to the higher-level managers	.550
	Proper importance to employees' entertainments	.530
	Training and development programmes for employees	.480
Team spirit and organisational communication	Team spirit in the organisation	.828
	Professional and career growth	.803
	The effective communication system of the organisation	.772
	Praise and recognition of the supervisor's	.719
	Achieving the organisational goals effectively	.674
Organisational Environment	The environment that balances work and personal life	.873
	Confidence in the management of the organisation	.838
	Confidence in the management of the organisation	.838
	Relationship with superiors is warm, friendly and co-operative	.744
	Sharing of organisational problems	.633
Job satisfaction	Job satisfaction	.855
	Never over burned with work	.746
	The working environment of the organisation to perform better	.592
	Feedback of the superior	.459
Employee Motivation	Whether to accept a job in another organisation	.858
	Express your opinion in the decision-making process	.851
	Motivated you to contribute more towards the organisation	.624
	Opportunity for job promotion	.486

Source: Survey Data

Correlation

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) measures the degree of relationship between the two variables. Here the variables under consideration were the factors leading to employee engagement and the intensity of engagement among different kinds of footwear units. The result is summarised in the following table.

TABLE 5: CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Factors	Company		Firm		Sole trader	
	Sig	Correlation	Sig	Correlation	Sig	Correlation
Commitment to the organisation	.000	.568** Positive	.000	.482**	.001	.461**
Team spirit and organisational communication	.000	.557** Positive	.001	.161**	.000	.489**
Organisational Environment	.000	.501** Positive	.000	.635**	.000	.499**
Job satisfaction	.002	.593** Positive	.000	.612**	.000	.486**
Employee Motivation	.020	.328* Positive	.008	.374**	.004	.512**

Source: Survey Data

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result of correlation analysis reveals that there is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement drivers and employee engagement intensity among all types of organisations like joint stock companies, partnership firms and sole trader organisations. Since the p-value in all cases is less than 0.05. The correlation values of Employees' commitment to the organisation (r =.568), Team spirit and organisational communication (r =.557), Organisational Environment (r =.501), Job satisfaction (r =.593), and Employee Motivation (r =.328) are significant at 5% (p<0.05) level hence concluded that factors contributing employee engagement in a company form of footwear industry have a significant correlation with its overall development.

As concerned with partnership organisations also the result reveals a significant positive correlation between the components of employee engagement and employee engagement strength. The correlation values of Employees' commitment to the organisation (r =.482), Team spirit and organisational communication (r =.161), Organisational Environment (r =.635), Job satisfaction (r =.612), and Employee Motivation (r =.374) are significant at 5% (p<0.05) level thus concluded that the factors leading to employee engagement in a partnership form of footwear industry have a significant correlation with the general growth of the business. The result of a single owner footwear unit is also not different from a company or a partnership, the analysis reveals that there is a significant positive correlation between the employee engagement drivers and rate of employee engagement. The correlation values of Employees' commitment to the organisation (r =.461), Team spirit and organisational communication (r =.489), Organisational Environment (r =.499), Job satisfaction (r =.486), and Employee Motivation (r =.512) are significant at 5% (p<0.05) level, therefore, found that various factors leading to employee engagement in a single owner form of footwear unit have a significant correlation with its improvement.

FINDINGS

The study adopted SPSS Software to analyse employee engagement and organizational efficiency. The study attempted to understand the influence of demographic factors on employee engagement and the correlation between employee engagement and the intensity of engagement among different kinds of footwear units in Kozhikode district. The demographic variables considered for the study were gender, age, monthly income, period of service, education qualification and different sections of the organisation. The analysis of demographic variables and employee engagement reveals that the engagement of female is greater than male employees among footwear units in Kozhikode district even though the numbers of female employees are comparatively lower than male. As concerned with other demographic variables viz age, when employees' age increases, their engagement also increases. Related to monthly income, when monthly income increases the employee engagement also increases. While analysing the employee engagement and period of employment in the organisation, it was inferred that the employees having long years of service has more engagement towards the organisation. Based on qualifications, engagement is higher to those having higher qualifications. Concerned with the sections in which employees working, the employee engagement is higher to the employees of quality checking department.

Factor analysis helped to identify the most contributing factors of employee engagement in the footwear units in Kozhikode district. They have listed Commitment to the organisation first followed by Team spirit and Organisational Communication, Organisational Environment, Job Satisfaction and Employee Motivation respectively. While analysing the correlation of these drivers of employee engagement in the kinds of footwear organisations like company, partnership and a sole proprietorship, the result revealed that all contributing factors have positive relationships in these organisations because of the p-value in all the cases is below 0.05. Organizations that have highly engaged employees have greater profits than those that do not (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2014). It was inferred that employee engagement will be higher where the human resource manager must concentrate on the employees' matters positively and enthusiastically.

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study considered the opinion of 150 employees working in three different sectors of footwear manufacturing units. From their responses, it was concluded that the management provides all facilities to the employees for their retention and well-being. The age, monthly income, educational qualifications and long period of employment have a close bearing on the engagement of employees irrespective of the type of organisations. This study confirms the role of the human resource managers to improve the engagement drivers such as the team spirit, employee commitment, job satisfaction, employee motivation, work life balance, proper training to employees etc. Based on the result, majority of the respondents considered technological capabilities as the main indicator for improving performance. Struggling to improve their capabilities both management and employees observe technology as their saviour.

The study has its limitations. The first is the poor response rate of the employees of the organisations due to the time factors. The second limitation of this study was that the survey was conducted only in three organisations, one from each category.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employee engagement is not something that simply just happens; it only develops in organization that cares for employees and their wellbeing (Bowen, 2016) Assessing and measuring employee engagement truthfully is important to identify what drives employee engagement in their organization. Identifying the areas on which organizations can focus to improve employee engagement will succeed in the future. Employees spend a major portion of their time and effort in the workplace. The practices in the workplace can affect their attitude and ultimately their performance. Therefore, organizations have to create a pleasant working environment where employees can enjoy their work life. Excellent work environment, good incentives and pay, frequent training and development, the involvement of employees in decision making (for that employees should be included in the grievance redressal forums), quick response system for all employee-related issues, cordial supervisor and co-worker relation and ethical image of the organisation is considered to be the key factors driving employee engagement. Companies can also include monthly or annual staff awards for well-performing employees, organizing cultural and sports day, giving scholarship for the higher studies of children of staff and annual tours for employees' families so that employees feel valued.

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