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DOES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AFFECT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT? A STUDY IN THE PRIVATE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY OF KOLKATA

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ABSTRACT

Success of any organization largely depends upon its productive workforce. Employees may be motivated on the job by factors like, sense of achievement, recognition, enjoyment of the job, promotion opportunities, responsibility, and the chance for personal growth. Research has demonstrated that emotional intelligence plays significant role in influencing the performance and productivity of employees at workplace. Employee engagement is a relatively new construct in academic literature and an increasingly popular idea in practice. Proponents claim a strong positive relationship between employee engagement and business success, and outcomes including retention, productivity, profitability, and customer loyalty and satisfaction. It is known as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. An engaged employee is always aware of organizational objective, and to work with peer group members to improve performance for the benefit of the organization. Whereas emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and monitor one's own emotions, ability to motivate one self and being empathetic to others. Significant requirement of research is to be conducted in the Indian context to study the relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement which has become the topmost challenge for the organizations in today's world of cut throat competition. The paper attempts to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence among health sector employees. For the purpose of data collection, questionnaires were administered among 95 respondents from health sector organizations located in the region of Kolkata. Pearson correlation analysis was utilized as a tool to determine the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence.

KEYWORDS

health sector, emotionality, Emotional intelligence, employee engagement, well-being.

INTRODUCTION

With the advancements in technology and globalization, organizations recognize that success of any business depends on the human capital which drives and supports the achievement of organizational objectives. Focus of the organizations is to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organizational identity. Engagement can help foster cohesion within an organization by creating a shared sense of purpose and loyalty. Each and every employee needs to be motivated constantly throughout his stay in the organization. An employee needs to be encouraged to put his best for the organization. He needs to be made comfortable to put all his efforts and achieve both organizational and personal goal. Thus it has become very essential to implement various HR policies which support every employee and make them feel valuable. Improving employee engagement can increase productivity and profitability while also reducing employee absenteeism and turnover. A fully engaged employee is intellectually and emotionally bonded with the organization, gives his best, feels passionately about its goals and is committed to its values. Research studies have shown that more the employees demonstrate emotionally intelligent behavior at workplace, greater is their level of engagement. Emotional intelligence works as a stress easer at work and has positive effect on employee productivity. Emotional intelligence is thus highly significant for regulating the performance and engagement of employees at workplace. This is because of the fact that social interaction, effective decision-making and high motivation which actually determine the emotional intelligence have a strong impact on the organizational culture. It has become very much vital for management consultants to develop and nurture their talent through the development of emotional competencies of their employees. For this, it is also essential for organizations to understand the linkage between emotional intelligence and employee engagement. Hence, there is significant requirement of creation of awareness about the importance of emotional intelligence among the employees. Organizations need to follow a proactive approach in this context by developing the emotional competencies and emotional skills of their employees by providing training and propagating research.

Employee engagement is a relatively new concept in academic literature and an increasingly popular idea in practice. Proponents of employee engagement claim a strong positive relationship between engagement and business success, both at the firm and individual levels, and outcomes including retention, productivity, profitability, and customer loyalty and satisfaction. Different corporations including AMD, Travel port and Avis/Budget have roles that include *employee engagement* in the title. Consulting groups including Towers Watson, Price water house Coopers, and Watson Wyatt Worldwide offer services to help firms measure and improve employee engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

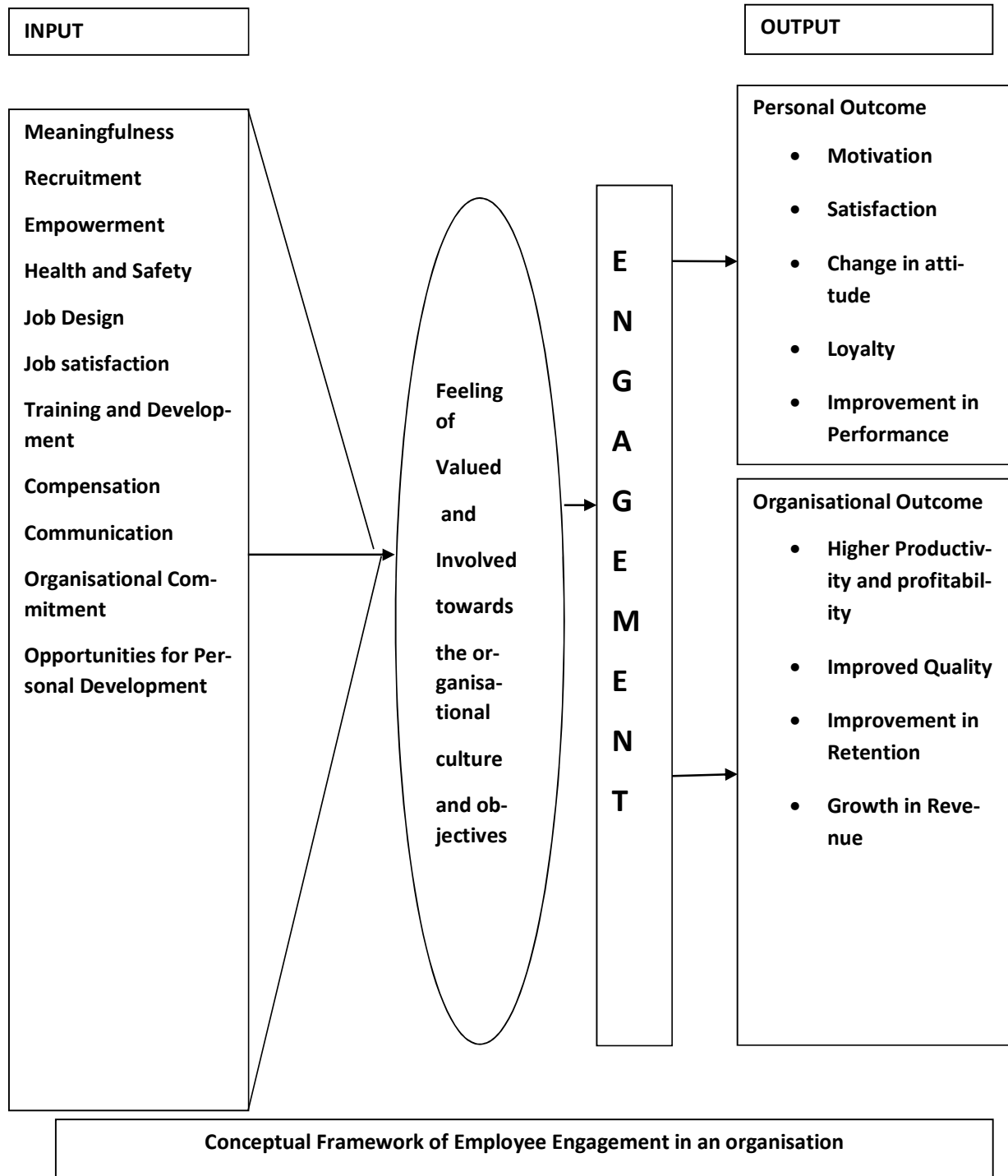
Theoretical Framework- Employee Engagement

William Kahn (1990) referred to engagement as a situation where people express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during work role performance. The primary behavior of engaged employees is speaking positively about the organization, co-workers, potential employees and customers, having strong desire to be the members of organization and exerting extra effort to contribute to organization success. Employee Engagement is the positive feeling that employees have towards their jobs and also the motivation and effort they put into it (Macey & Schreier, 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. Employee engagement may be defined as the degree of commitment to a particular job (Stairs, 2005). According to Stairs commitment is further divided as rational and emotional where rational commitment is driven by self-interest of getting some financial rewards and emotional by deeper beliefs in the job or organization. Markos and Sridevi (2010) described employee engagement as a harmonious and positive relationship between employer and employee, where employee is emotionally committed towards organization and work with zeal. Organizations are therefore putting special efforts to enhance the level of engagement among their employees.

Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of business success factors such as, productivity, safety, employee performance and efficiency, attendance and retention, customer loyalty, customer service and satisfaction, and profitability. Many researchers have found positive

relationships between general workplace attitudes and service intentions, customer perceptions and individual performance outcomes. The quality of an organisation’s human resources is thought to be a leading indicator of its growth and sustainability.

FIG. 1



There is very little evidence available on employee engagement and interventions in the health care sector. The limited evidence suggests that engaged staff provide better patient care leading to patient satisfaction and delight. Higher level of effective employee engagement is related to patient-centred care, patient safety culture and the quality of care provided.

Emotional Intelligence- Concept According to Pfeiffer (2001), Mayer and Salovey have been credited with coining the phrase “emotional intelligence”. Definition given by Mayer & Salovey (1993) suggested that, emotional intelligence is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor’s one’s own emotions as well as those of others, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions. Emotional intelligence involves abilities that may be categorized into five main domains namely self-awareness managing emotions, motivating oneself, empathy, handling relationships. Goleman (1995) also popularized the concept of emotional intelligence, by suggesting that there are two components of emotional intelligence-personal competence and social competence. Personal competence consists of self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation. Social competence consists of empathy and social skills. Further, Goleman et al., 2002 modified that the four main domains of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management instead of five. Explicitly self-awareness includes an accurate self-assessment and self-confidence; self-management pertains to emotional self-

control, adaptability achievement, and optimism; social awareness refers to empathy and service, meeting subordinates' or customers' needs. Relationship management includes inspirational leadership, influence, teamwork, conflict management, being a change catalyst, and building bonds. It can be said, emotional intelligence requires that people learn to acknowledge and value feelings in themselves and others and appropriately respond to those feelings. In this manner they effectively apply the information and energy of emotions to their daily lives and work. Humphrey (2006) demonstrated that emotional intelligence is a key in coping with conflict. The key emotional intelligence elements of empathy and the ability to recognize and express one's emotions enable one to more effectively deal with the emotionally-arousing process of conflict.

Emotional Intelligence at workplace

Since the social world is rapidly changing, and interpersonal social skills and emotional intelligence are becoming increasingly critical to successful organizational operations (Fisher et al., 2005) on a regular basis, organizational leaders and researchers see emotional intelligence as a mechanism for improved organizational performance (Goleman et al., 2001; Robbins, 2005) while minimizing organizational conflict. Emotional intelligence is related to organizational performance, and leaders who can recognize the relationship between their organization more effectively to maximize benefits. Emotional intelligence, the ability to understand people and human interactions (Goleman, 1995), has become a significant factor, even surpassing cognitive intelligence, for effective performance at all levels within organizations (Goleman, 1998; Harvey et al., 2006; Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Hence organizations have become more aware of the dynamic of teams, and the emotional intelligence of the team players, and the effect it can have (Miles & Mangold, 2002; Prasad & Akhilesh, 2002). Emotional intelligence can have an enormous impact upon the organization, and implementation of emotional intelligence training into an organization will produce positive results (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001). There is a always relationship between Intelligence Quotient (IQ), emotional intelligence, and managerial competencies (MQ) (Dulewicz et al., 2005). The higher up the organization one goes, the more relevant and important a high emotional intelligence becomes (Dulewicz et al., 2005; Goleman et al., 2002). Emotional intelligence also motivates people to pursue their unique potential and purpose and activates their innermost values and aspirations, transforming them from things they think about to what they live (Cooper et al., 1997).

Relevance of Health care organization in the study

Till about three decades back, the private sectors seriously venture in the health care sector. Now, they are managed by corporate, individuals, non-profit or charitable organizations. Healthcare is a high-demand, high-stress, high-risk industry. It operates in a round the clock manner, for the whole year and mostly healthcare workers are involved in matters of life and death. Healthcare workers have to continuously work with other people at the emotional level. The working environment of the private hospitals play a major role in increasing the mental fatigue of health care workers. Some of the factors responsible for high pressure are: patient satisfaction scores, competitive performance edge, performance and productivity targets etc. All these things have a great impact on the emotional well-being and stress level of workers, working in the health care sector. Employee engagement in this sector can reduce the stress level of the employees, ensure a positive growth in relationships and the work culture holistically.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Using the survey of existing literature, it was found that there have been very few studies which demonstrate the linkage and connect of employee engagement with the emotional intelligence especially in the health care sector. No such study was found in the health care sector in the context of Kolkata and it's different regions. The present study thus aimed to determine the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence. To accomplish the objective of the study, following hypotheses were framed and tested:

H1: There exists significant relationship between well being and employee engagement

H2: There exists significant relationship between emotionality and employee engagement.

H3: There exists significant relationship between sociability and employee engagement.

H4: There exists significant relationship between self control and employee engagement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample size

Sample size consisted of 95 health care sector employees particularly from the middle and top level management. Data was collected through administration of standardized questionnaires among the employees by targeting eight organizations which includes medium and small scale private health care organizations located in different regions of Kolkata city.

Measures

(i) Emotional Intelligence- To measure the emotional intelligence, Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire was administered among the service sector employees. The TEIQue is composed of fifteen facets that were derived from a comprehensive content analysis of prominent EI literature: adaptability, assertiveness, emotion appraisal (self and others), emotion expression, emotion management (others), emotion regulation, impulsiveness (low), relationship skills, self-esteem, self-motivation, social competence, stress management, trait empathy, trait happiness, and trait optimism (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). These fifteen subscales were used to provide scores on four broader factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability (Petrides, 2001). A *high well-being score* indicates an overall sense of well-being. In general, individuals with a high score on this factor are fulfilled and satisfied with life. On the other hand, low scores represent individuals that have poor self-esteem and are not satisfied with their professional lives at the present time. The *self-control factor* refers to one's degree of control over their urges and desires. Individuals with a high self-control score have the ability to manage and regulate external pressures. However, individuals with a low score tend to display impulsive behaviors and are unable to properly manage stress. *Emotionality* is the another factor where individuals with a high *emotionality* score possess a wide array of emotion-related skills: recognizing internal emotions, perceiving emotions, and expressing emotions. In turn, these skills are often used to form and nurture close relationships with family and friends. On the contrary, individuals with a low emotionality score have difficulty recognizing their own emotions and conveying their feelings to others. In turn, these individuals generally experience less gratifying personal relationships with others. The *sociability factor* focuses on one's social relationships and social influence. This factor differs from the emotionality factor in that it evaluates one's influence in a variety of social contexts, rather than just in personal relationships with family and friends. Individuals with a high sociability score are good listeners and effective communicators. Individuals with a low score are not as effective at social interaction. They appear unsure of themselves in social interactions and are unable to affect others' emotions (Petrides, 2001).

(ii) The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale - The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) consists of a total of 17 items based on Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). All 17 items use the same frequency scale from 0-6; 0 being "never" to 6 being "always". Each item referred specifically to measure one of the three constructs namely vigor, dedication and absorption. 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 has difficulties with detaching oneself from work."

ANALYSIS

Pearson correlation analysis was utilized as a statistical technique to measure the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence. Pearson correlation analysis was run between employee engagement and four factors of emotional intelligence namely well-being, self-control, emotionality and sociability.

TABLE 1

EMPLOYEE		Well being	Emotionality	Sociability	Self-control
ENGAGEMENT	Pearson correlation	0.446**	-0.546**	0.009	-0.180
	Sig (2 tailed)	0	0	.933	0.085
	N	95	95	95	95

Table 1 represents correlation analysis. The correlation Table 1 shows the relationship between employee engagement and four factors of emotional intelligence that are well being, self control, emotionality and sociability.

HYPOTHESES EVALUATION

H1: There exists significant relationship between wellbeing and employee engagement

From Table 1 it can be seen that there exists significant relationship between wellbeing and employee engagement. Wellbeing has significant positive relationship with employee engagement at $r = 0.446$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, H1 can be accepted.

H2: There exists significant relationship between emotionality and employee engagement.

Table 1 shows that there exists significant relationship between emotionality and employee engagement $r = -0.546$. It signifies that emotionality and employee engagement has relationship but emotionality has negative but significant correlation with employee engagement at $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. H2 can be accepted.

H3: There exists significant relationship between sociability and employee engagement.

Table 1 indicates that sociability and employee engagement has positive relationship at $r = 0.009$. It signifies that sociability is positively correlated with employee engagement. However, this correlation was found to be insignificant at $p = 0.933 > 0.05$. Therefore, H3 can be rejected. The relationship between sociability and employee engagement is not significant.

H4: There exists significant relationship between self control and employee engagement.

Table 1 depicts that there exists no significant relationship between self control and employee engagement $r = -0.180$. This shows that there exists negative correlation between self control and employee engagement with $p = 0.085 > 0.05$. Hence, H4 can be rejected.

FINDINGS

Therefore, it is clear that emotional intelligence is positively related with employee engagement. Sub-factors of emotional intelligence like emotionality and well-being are related to employee engagement, while self control and sociability was not significantly associated with employee engagement. One possible explanation for this can be as the data was collected from health care sector, where employees should be more emotionally strong as they have to deal with patients 24x7 and deal with the most crucial factor called life. And secondly they require more of wellbeing as this indicates that they are satisfied with their lives and have high self esteem. Employees who are emotionally strong are more engaged as compared to employees who have fewer score on emotionality and wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that, employees working in these organizations are more engaged in their jobs if they have good level of emotional intelligence. Factors like wellbeing and emotionality have more effect on employee engagement as compared to the other factors. This can be justified as people in health sector need to have good level of emotionality as in health sector employees are the touch points. They deal with patients and their relatives in and out. They need to have emotional stability and should be able to understand other people's/ community's/patients' demands easily. Second most significant factor was wellbeing. People of higher ranks, despite of work pressure are happy with their professional lives in these organizations and the rate of retention is high. That's why they have high level of employee engagement. So it can be concluded that employee engagement in service sector is affected by emotionality and wellbeing factors of emotional intelligence.

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