

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AS A STRATEGY FOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: *In today's rapidly evolving business environment, the importance of employee engagement has emerged as a pivotal factor in driving organizational success. As companies strive to remain competitive, they are increasingly recognizing that engaged employees are not just contributors to productivity but are also catalysts for innovation, creativity, and long-term growth.*

Research purpose: *To examine the concept of employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development and to suggest effective strategies for fostering development in both employees and organisations.*

Objective: *This study explores the foundational elements of employee engagement, dissecting its complex dimensions and underscoring its pivotal role in shaping the organizational landscape.*

Method: *This study conducts a systematic review of employee engagement as a strategic driver of organizational development, employing a desktop research approach grounded in qualitative interpretive methods. Through comprehensive analysis, description, and interpretation of existing literature, the research explores how employee engagement functions as a catalyst for fostering organizational growth.*

Main findings: *Employee engagement is a key strategical tools for organisational strategies, in that the organisational direction and transit is dependent on the quality of employees, and their level of commitment, which is all embedded in the extent of their engagement.*

Practical/managerial: *implications: Employee engagement should be central to any organisational strategic oversight, and managers should command confidence of the employees in their portfolios through consultative processes to ensure organisational development.*

Contribution/value-add: *The study provide practical steps to use employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development, and recommends that to achieve employee engagement and organisational development, organisations should set aside resource and determine capacity of the organisational to fund the outcome of the engagement, because engagement that cannot be followed up and be implemented means nothing, so when engagement has taken place, implementation strategies should be in place.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of today's business environment, where technological advancements and market dynamics shift with relentless speed, employee engagement has become more than a mere human resource concern. It has evolved into a strategic imperative, essential for fostering innovation, enhancing productivity, and cultivating a resilient workforce. As Urme (2023) suggests, a deeply committed workforce is crucial not only for organizational success but also for shaping a positive workplace culture capable of swiftly adapting to change. Yet, despite its critical importance, many organizations struggle to genuinely engage their employees, leading to a disconnect that can drive talent away, destabilize the organization, and contribute to higher turnover rates.

The centrality of employees to organizational development has elevated the prominence of engagement strategies. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) argue that neglecting to integrate employees into organizational development efforts not only undermines performance but also diminishes overall success. In today's

competitive environment, organizations must recognize that employee satisfaction alone is insufficient to ensure loyalty or productivity. Instead, the most valuable employees are those who are both intellectually and emotionally aligned with the organization's goals. When engagement is lacking, it stifles the drive to achieve organizational objectives, thereby impeding progress (Saks, 2019).

Despite the recognized importance of employee engagement, many organizations fail to fully harness its potential as a catalyst for organizational development. The disconnect between the theoretical benefits of employee engagement and its practical application in organizational strategies represents a significant challenge. This study seeks to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive literature review to evaluate the effectiveness of employee engagement as a strategy for organizational development. The problem at hand lies in the persistent gap between understanding the value of engagement and effectively implementing strategies that translate this understanding into tangible organizational benefits.

The primary aim of this study is to critically assess how employee engagement can be leveraged as a strategic instrument for driving organizational development. Through an in-depth analysis of existing literature, the study will explore the philosophical and practical challenges surrounding employee engagement and development. It will examine the factors that hinder successful engagement, analyse best practices, and ultimately provide evidence-based insights. These insights will guide organizations in transforming employee engagement from a conceptual ideal into a practical, results-driven tool that enhances organizational performance and secures a competitive advantage.

In undertaking this systematic review, the study will highlight the critical role of engagement in organizational development, exploring how deficiencies in employee engagement can undermine otherwise well-conceived development strategies. The study's objectives are:

- To explore the intricate psychological meaningful relationship between employee engagement and organizational development.

By bridging the gap between theory and practice, this study aims to offer actionable recommendations that organizations can implement to cultivate a more engaged, productive, and resilient workforce. After the introduction, the paper will review relevant literature and outline the theoretical framework guiding the research questions. The paper will then describe the research methods for data collection and analysis, present the results, and discuss how these results relate to the literature. The paper will conclude with a summary of findings, managerial implications, and suggestions for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Guided by the sub - objectives, the study delved into literature relevant to the employee engagement and organisational development.

Conceptualizing employee engagement as a strategy for organizational development: insights from a literature review

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical component of organizational development strategies, serving as a vital link between an organization's goals and the workforce's commitment and productivity. This concept began to emerge around 1990s with William Kahn pioneering the idea that it involves both engagement and disengagement at the individual level. As matter of modern discourse around employee engagement, Chanana, and Sangeeta, (2021) emphasize that both employee engagement and organisational development hinge on the depth of commitment and involvement between employees and their organization. This relationship is also defined by the organization's dedication to its employees and its adherence to core principles and values.

Byrne (2022) similarly defines engagement as the alignment of organizational members with their work roles on both physical and cognitive levels. In contrast, disengagement occurs when individuals withdraw from their roles, retreating physically and mentally during their performance. Schaufeli (2013) aligns with this view,

emphasizing that engagement and organizational development are rooted in fostering involvement, commitment, and passion. This involves nurturing enthusiasm, immersion, focused effort, zeal, dedication, and energy among employees. Recognizing that engagement encompasses both mental and emotional aspects is essential; overlooking these dimensions can lead to withdrawal (Mone, London, and Mone, 2018). Conversely, Sendawula et al. (2018) suggest that engaged employees demonstrate discretionary effort, high vigor, and strong dedication to their work, while disengaged employees exhibit a lack of enthusiasm and feel disconnected from their roles.

Ayu Putu et al. (2019) further assert that employee engagement and mental stability are critical for organizations to achieve their goals and objectives. The literature establishes a clear link between employee engagement and mental stability, and between mental stability and performance, underscoring that neglecting employee engagement jeopardizes organizational success (Riyanto, Endri, and Herlisha, 2021).

Importance of employee engagement in organisational development

In the realm of organizational development, employee engagement stands as the linchpin that transforms potential into performance, driving sustained growth and innovation through the unwavering commitment and enthusiasm of the workforce. Nienaber and Martins (2020) underscore the pivotal role of employee engagement in the workplace, proposing that organizational employee motivation is a direct outcome of such engagement. They contend that motivated employees are highly prized for their self-drive and minimal need for supervision. Turner and Turner (2020) further assert that engaging employees significantly enhances the likelihood of achieving organizational goals and objectives, thereby fostering organizational development. Similarly, Matthews, Stanley, and Davidson (2018) argue that employee engagement not only boosts creativity and productivity but also mitigates the risk of substandard work. While they do not address employee engagement explicitly, their argument suggests that engaged employees are more inclined to perform their duties voluntarily due to their intrinsic motivation, with engagement serving as the bedrock of that motivation (Moletsane, Tefera, and Migiyo, 2019).

Arslan and Roudaki (2019) underscore the pivotal role of employee engagement in organizational development, highlighting that fully engaged employees take ownership of decisions and actions, leading to effective execution and high performance with minimal supervision (Meintjes and Hofmeyr, 2018). Engaged employees feel valued and appreciated, which reduces the need for additional staff. Similarly, Amah (2018) contends that these employees act as builders of the organization, demonstrating a natural curiosity about their roles and the company. Verčič (2021) further argues that engagement fosters a strong sense of belonging and value, driving employees to consistently perform at high levels and leverage their talents daily.

Johnson et al. (2018) emphasize that employee engagement is crucial for retention, as engaged employees are less likely to leave due to their deep commitment. In contrast, disengaged employees often focus solely on completing tasks without striving for meaningful outcomes, as noted by Houssein, Singh, and Arumugam (2020). The true value of employee engagement lies in its capacity to transform task completion into significant achievements. Engaged employees are more likely to perceive their contributions as valued and their potential as effectively utilized, whereas disengaged employees may feel overlooked and disconnected from both managers and colleagues (Jena, Pradhan, and Panigrahy, 2018).

Engaging employees is essential for significantly boosting their commitment and drive. When employees experience a strong sense of belonging and connection to their organization, they are more motivated to deliver outstanding results (Mansor, Jaharudin, and Nata, 2018). Conversely, the literature reveals that disengaged employees, despite their qualifications and skills, often become ineffective due to a lack of opportunity to showcase their abilities (Singh and See, 2022). Swindall (2011) further explains that actively disengaged employees are particularly harmful; they not only resist change but also disseminate negativity and

undermine the efforts of their engaged peers. Turner (2019) highlights that the problems stemming from disengaged employees can severely disrupt organizational operations, leading to increased costs, diminished quality, customer dissatisfaction, and missed opportunities.

Managing employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development

Managing employee engagement as a strategic approach to organizational development is vital for any organization's success. Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) highlight that trust and integrity, job nature, and career growth opportunities are crucial factors influencing both organizational development and employee engagement. They emphasize that effective engagement hinges on how well managers communicate and uphold their commitments, alongside the mental stimulation provided by the work itself. This underscores the notion that employee engagement is fundamentally a mental endeavor. Furthermore, Bedarkar and Pandita stress the importance of employees understanding how their roles contribute to organizational goals, a critical driver of engagement (Beese et al., 2023).

Tiwari and Lenka (2020) assert that the success of employee engagement and organizational development depends on how well an organization manages and values its employees' contributions throughout the engagement process. Similarly, Pesce and Neirotti (2023) argue that organizations should instil a sense of pride in their employees by aligning them with the organization's identity and strategy. They also point out that fostering employee self-esteem through a well-structured engagement process is essential for long-term success. Suomi et al. (2021) add that employee engagement is crucial in shaping or undermining self-esteem, influenced by the level of involvement and support from organizational leaders. Proper management of engagement empowers employees to make decisions confidently, especially when the process includes constructive feedback (Na-Nan, Pukkeeree, and Chaiprasit, 2020).

Chanana and Sangeeta (2021) emphasize that managing employee engagement is key to cultivating a workplace culture where members consistently strive for excellence and remain dedicated to the organization's goals and values. Recognizing that well-engaged employees are pivotal in boosting productivity leads to higher customer satisfaction, increased sales, and improved profitability (Sendawula et al., 2018). Effective engagement helps organizations achieve their mission, execute their strategies, and deliver substantial business results. This can be enhanced through various practices, including job design, recruitment, selection, compensation, training, and performance management (Crawford, Rich, Buckman, & Bergeron, 2013).

Factors hindering successful employee engagement and organizational development

While numerous factors contribute to enhancing employee engagement and organizational performance, several challenges can hinder these efforts. Al-Dalahmeh, Khalaf, and Obeidat (2018) pinpoint key obstacles, noting that organizational decision-making often reacts rather than proactively aligns with long-term strategic goals. This inconsistency in management, influenced by individual managers' attitudes, breeds perceptions of unfairness and mistrust among employees, which significantly undermines engagement. Macleod and Clarke (2016) support these findings, identifying poor communication and restricted knowledge sharing as major impediments—often a result of rigid communication channels and entrenched cultural norms. They also highlight that insufficient visibility of senior management, and the low quality of downward communication are critical barriers to fostering a fully engaged workforce. Further analysis reveals additional challenges related to misalignment with organizational culture and strategy. Loerzel (2019) emphasizes that the effort and resources required for successful employee engagement are frequently underestimated, arguing that inadequate training, development, and support—whether financial, operational, or strategic—can severely weaken engagement initiatives.

Kahn Model as a Theoretical Framework for Assessing the Relationship between Employee Engagement and Organizational Development

The theory of psychologist William Kahn for employee engagement is focused on three crucial factors to attain employee engagement, including: meaningfulness, availability, and safety.

Table 1. Kahn model

Factor	Description
Meaningfulness	Psychological meaningfulness can be seen as a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy.
Availability	Availability is the notion that the employee is physically and mentally capable of performing the role, and
Safety	Safety refers to feeling a sense of psychological protection where employees don't feel judged or criticized by management or peers.

Source: Researcher (2024)

The theory binds the study to underpin the concept of employee engagement and organisational performance. It ensures that employee engagement produce meaningful, available, and employee safety. This will in return make sure that organisation develops into successful organisations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study conducts a systematic review of employee engagement as a strategic lever for organizational development, employing a desktop research methodology grounded in qualitative interpretive methods. The aim is to analyse, describe, and interpret the existing body of literature to elucidate how employee engagement can be harnessed to drive organizational growth. By adopting a qualitative lens, the researcher assumes the role of an observer within the textual world, facilitating an in-depth interpretive exploration of the interplay between employee engagement and organizational development. The study meticulously identifies and organizes themes emerging from the data set, enabling a comprehensive examination of shared meanings across the literature. An inductive thematic analysis is employed to uncover insights, trends, and constructed meanings, in alignment with the study's objectives. Themes are derived organically from the literature review, reflecting the flexible and adaptive nature of the generic inductive approach. This methodology ensures that the study remains rooted in the data, avoiding the imposition of preconceived notions or themes, and thereby providing a more authentic and nuanced understanding of the relationship between employee engagement and organizational development.

4. RESULTS

This section explores the study findings in respect of a systematic review of employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development. The findings are in line with objective one, which sought to establish a relationship between employee engagement and organisational development.

A relationship between employee engagement and organisational development

The study finds that there is a fundamental relationship between employee engagement and organisational development. The relationship is premised on the fact that engaged employees craft the passion among associates to perform beyond average measures and to exceed expectations. Furthermore, when employees are positively and affectively engaged, they share an emotional bond with their organisation.

Employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development aim to encourage employee to contribute, work hard, share a sense of belonging, defend their organisation and commit to the organisation strategy and development.

- The relationship between employee engagement and organisational development has furthermore, demonstrated that if employees are disengaged, a relationship gap between employee's effort and their organisational effectiveness become visibly negative in respect of the organisational development.

- The relationship between the employee engagement and organisational development was how the relationship between employee and organisations should be managed, because if not managed, there is a high probability that the organisation will fail in its strategy.
- The study also found that there are factors that impede on the effective and success organisational development. Lack of engagement, consultation, participation, and conflict management between organisational strategic leadership and employees were a major factor.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section explores the study recommendations in respect of a systematic review of employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development. The findings are in line with objective two, which sought to suggest effective strategies for a successful employee engagement and organisational development.

Strategies for successful employee engagement and organisational development

- The study recommends that the fundamental relationship between employee engagement and organisational development is monitored and evaluated so that it can be used to as a key strategy for organisational development.
- Organisations should craft practical and effective strategies and guides to cultivate a culture of employee engagement to facilitate smooth organisational development.
- Engaged employees craft the passion among associates to perform beyond average measures and to exceed expectations, organisations should create clear communication lines to clearly define the roles and expectations of the organisation towards its employees.
- Organisation should provide an effective wellness program and follow up program in respect of wellness outcome and recommendations. This will assist in organisation providing a safer emotional, physical, and psychological space, and with a healthy raport, employees are positively and affectively committed, they share an emotional bond with their organisation.
- Employee engagement should also afford opportunities of financial growth as an incentives as a strategy for organisational development and aim to encourage employee to contribute, work hard, share a sense of belonging, defend their organisation and commit to the organisation strategy and development.
- The employee engagement and organisational development should also set aside resource and determine capacity of the organisational to fund the outcome of the engagement, because engagement that cannot be followed up and be implemented means nothing, so when engagement has taken place, implementation strategies should be in place.
- The relationship between the employee engagement and organisational development was how the relationship between employee and organisations should be managed, because if not managed, there is a high probability that the organisation will fail in its strategy.

The role and implications of employee engagement and organisational development for managers

- Managers ought to understand that while there are other pillars that are key in the strategic development of the organisations, employee is equally important. Therefore, managers ought to have active and proactive engagement, and consultative approach in the organisations, to allow for effective participation by the employees.
- Employee engagement will assist managers with understanding the personal leadership and other skills for their employees, this will assist the organisation to have more than one leaders who can complement the developmental strategies, but also will assist managers with ability to effectively use skills of employees as a strategy.
- Managers will understand the dynamics in the micro units in the organisations, because not every time, you must push implementation, other dynamics, like checking whether employees are ready and or not. Employee engagement will assist management to aware whether there are any factors that could possibly impede on the quality of the implementation.
- Employee engagement would possibly assist managers with strategies to resolve potential and existing conflict between employees, organisations and employees, and clients and employees, and or organisation.
- Employee engagement would also assist managers in organisations to identify areas of skills development, and promotions cases, where some employee possess skills that could assist the employers at different strategic organisational development.
- Employee engagement would assist managers to use the employee participation as guideline for the manager progress and areas of improvements.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to examine the concept of employee engagement as a strategy for organisational development and to suggest effective strategies for fostering development in both employees and organisations. This study conducted a systematic review of employee engagement as a strategic driver of organizational development, employing a desktop research approach grounded in qualitative interpretive methods. Through comprehensive analysis, description, and interpretation of existing literature, the research explores how employee engagement functions as a catalyst for fostering organizational growth. The study found that employee engagement is a key strategic tools for organisational strategies, in that the organisational direction and transit is dependent on the quality of employees, and their level of commitment, which is all embedded in the extent of their engagement.

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8. COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

9. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors conceptualised, reviewed, edited, and wrote the original draft of the study, Dr Khonjelwayo, devised the methodology and conducted the formal analysis of the study, Dr Moyane, developed the visualisation of the study, managed data curation.

10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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12. DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available on reasonable request from the corresponding author, M Khonjelwayo.

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