Employee Engagement: An Empirical Study on Telecom Industry in Bangladesh

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Abstract   **Purpose**- The main objective of this research is to focus on the level of employee engagement in telecommunication industry of Bangladesh. In addition, the significant of this study is to locate the reasons of employee engagement which have become increasingly important to HRD scholars and practitioners in this country. **Design/ methodology/approach**- A won prepared questionnaire based on literature review; with the Likert-type scale was used for collecting data in this study. The questionnaire was used for pilot survey primarily then after required correction, it was used for gathering information. The questionnaire was given to 400 corporate executives who were selected based on purposive sampling and stratified random sampling techniques, finally 310 (77.5%) usable responses were received that were used for further analysis. The hypothesized relationships were used using SPSS 19 through regression analysis. **Findings**- The study showed that inspiration of the employees, participation of employees in decision making, willingness of employees to be engaged in work, skills of jobs of employees and commitment of employees play a significant role at confirming employee engagement level in the telecom industry in Bangladesh whereas Clear idea about the role of the employees showed that little relationship with employee engagement. **Research limitations/implications**- the salient limitation of this paper is add some important questions on survey instrument due to the selected companies' privacy policy. Nonetheless, the researchers assume that the result of the study will be very valuable to the service organizations to formulate policy for the employees in Bangladesh. **Originality/Value-** This is an empirical study on employee engagement with a large sample size that has not been carried out earlier in the telecommunication industry in Bangladesh. The study has significance to the HR practitioners in the different organizations particularly in service organizations.

Keywords   Engagement, Commitment, Employee engaged drivers, Organizational performance, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Employee engagement is a vast subject and can take many forms. The Institute of Employment Studies (IES) defines it as "A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two way relationship between employee and employer."

The concept of 'employee engagement' (EE) is rapidly gaining popularity, and importance in the workplace. This is because corporate results have reportedly demonstrated a strong link between some conceptualizations of engagement, worker performance and business outcomes (The Gallup Organization, 2004; ISR, 2005). Engagement may, in fact,

be a global concept, as it seems to be a combination of job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment and intention to stay. Whatever engagement might be, unfortunately the longer employees stay with an organization the less and foster EE in the workplace' (Lanphear, 2004). To ensure this job engagement companies has to do a number of things. Measuring and understanding the attitudes of workers, it can formulate decisions that maintain, and even increase, the engagement of workers who will remain with the organization during these tough times; ensure that worker productivity remains as high as possible while make any short-term changes; strengthen management's ability to keep the right people while luring critical new talent; position your company to be stronger when the economy turns around (Lawrence, 2009). An engaged workplace encourages commitment, energy and productivity from all those involved to help improve business performance (Business Link, 2010).

The intention of employers to make an engaged workforce through building the people oriented management and development policies and the active support of line managers.

This people oriented management strategies and policies need to be matched with those of the wider business. Employers need to make a sense of employees that they are contributing to organizational outcomes that are needed for the organizational success. There is likely to a minority of employees who don't want to be engaged, organizations should concentrate to them. However, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) research into employee attitudes found that the main drivers of employee engagement are: having opportunities to feed your views upwards; feeling well-informed about what is happening in the organization; believing that your manager is committed to your organization; and perceived managerial fairness in dealing with problems.

Similarly, IES has concluded the main components of employee engagement are said to be: involvement in decision-making; freedom to voice ideas, to which managers listen; feeling enabled to perform well; having opportunities to develop the job and feeling the organization is concerned for employees' health and well-being. In this perspective, the researchers of the study tried to trace out whether clear idea about the employees' role, inspiration of the employees, concentration on employees' role, participation in decision making, willingness of the employees, skills of the employees, and commitment of the employees have any influence on employees engagement.

1.1. Unresolved Questions of Existing Literature and Justification of the Study

'Employee Engagement' is a pretty new dimension in HR literature and came into prominence from 2000 onwards. The term cuts a visible place in Workforce Magazine (Wellins et al., 2005), the Washington Post (2005), Harvard Business Review (Fleming et al., 2005), as well as on the websites of consulting firms related with human resources such as Development Dimensions International (DDI) (2005) and Towers Perrin (2003). Employee engagement is a key to retention of talent (Glen 2006) and is an area where lead has been taken by practitioners (Bennett & Bell, 2004; Baumruk et al., 2006; Gallup Management Journal, 2006; Parsley, 2006; Woodruffe, 2006). It is an area where rigorous academic research is required (Macey & Schneider, 2008; IOP Speical Issue, 2008). Employee engagement (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Joo & Mclean, 2006; Rothbard, 2001) is an important mediator variable which is not researched in R&D globally (Bhatnagar, 2007a; Saks, 2005). The term Employee engagement, coined by the Gallup Research Group, has been attractive for the major reason that it has been shown to have a statistical relationship with productivity, profitability, employee retention, safety, and customer satisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002).

Work engagement is a first and foremost management philosophy based on the idea of including the right people in the right decisions at the right time in the right way, thus again contributing to the existing muddle of engagement drivers being regarded as engagement. In the prevailing competitive environment, engaged employees are viewed as a strategic asset by both academicians and practicing managers alike. We define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, et. al., 2002a). Macey et al., (2009) provide a working definition of engagement - the employees' sense of purpose and focused energy that is evident to others through the display of personal initiative, adaptability, effort, and persistence directed toward the organization's goals. Mone and London (2009) suggest that managers drive engagement when they provide ongoing feedback and recognition to direct and improve performance and have career-planning discussions with their employees.

Gebauer and Lowman (2009) describe employee engagement as having a deep and broad connection with the company that results in the willingness to go above and beyond what is expected to help the company succeed; they also offer a framework for building engagement based on knowing, growing, inspiring, involving, and rewarding employees and within that framework recommend actions for senior leaders, managers, human resource professionals, and employees themselves. Schmidt (2004) defines engagement as bringing satisfaction and commitment together. Some other definitions equate the construct with satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, pride, etc. DDI (2005) uses the definition that the extent to which people value, enjoy and believe in what they do. Its measure is similar to employee satisfaction and loyalty. Fleming, Coffman, and Harter (2005) (Gallop researchers) use the term committed employees as a synonym for engaged employees. Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) define engagement as a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values.

An engaged employee is aware of the business context, works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must develop and nurture engagement, which is a two-way relationship between employer and employees". They say that engagement over laps with commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, but it is a two-way relationship. Fleming, Coffman and Harter (2005) (Gallop researchers) use the term committed employees as a synonym for engaged employees. Robinson, et al., (2004) define engagement as a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. Right Management (2006) defines true engagement as every person in the organization understanding and being committed to the success of the business strategy. Most of the literature employs a multidimensional approach to define employee engagement, where the definition encapsulates several elements required in order to achieve 'true engagement'. For example, the CIPD (2007) defines employee engagement as a combination of commitment to the organization (i.e. concerned about the growth of the company) and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues.

Employee engagement also, being expressed through work and other employee-role activities, is a construct more directly tied to the interactive component of an employee's work experience, particularly with managers and co-workers, and in fact more immediately determines whether those work activities will take place (Jones & Harter, 2005). Engagement, like commitment, has an affective component encompassing people's emotional reactions to conscious and unconscious phenomena, but it also is centered in the objective properties of jobs, roles, and work context…- all within the same moments of task performance" (Kahn, 1990; P.693). So, affect-based connection to organizations has been associated with desired workplace behavior (Costigan et. al., 1998). One aspect of the potential role of employee engagement that merits greater investigation is the changing nature of the demographic makeup of the workplace.

Although there is uniqueness in each definition and approach for driving engagement, there is also some consistency. New research (Mone & London, 2009) based on a limited study (survey research in a global organization) defines an engaged employee as someone who feels involved, committed, passionate, and empowered and demonstrates those feelings in work behavior. Even though Kahn (1990), Saks (2006), and Bhatnagar (2007a) have tried to provide a concrete conceptual definition of the employee engagement construct, yet literature revealed that the conceptualization and definition of the construct is frequently contaminated with its identification with other outcome variables such as job involvement, intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior. (Bhatnagar 2007a; Saks 2006).

According to Frank, Finnegan and Taylor (2004), engaging employees continues to remain one of the greatest challenges facing organizations in this decade and beyond, e.g. Bhatnagar (2007a) asserts that the lack of awareness amongst Indian software firms on work engagement being the key to the retention of talent, results in them experiencing escalating attrition rates despite paying substantially above Indian standards. This, we contend, can be accounted for on the acute lacunae of academic research and understanding that surrounds the construct of Work Engagement. Engaging employees especially by giving them participation, freedom, and trust - is the most comprehensive response to the ascendant post industrial values of self-realization and self-actualization.

Pratt (1998) states that if organizations are to be successful, they must actively engage in fostering organizational identification among their employees. "From a managerial view- point, 'member identification' presents a less obtrusive, and potentially more effective means of organizational control than methods that rely upon 'external stimuli' " (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; P. 620). That is, organizational identification effectively acts to make employees choose courses of action that are consistent with affirming their identification (i.e., act in ways that benefit the organization). Gibbons (2006) reports that a manager's decisions and practices have a strong influence on employee engagement.

Mone and London (2009) suggests that recognition and reward are critical to employee engagement and they enhance satisfaction, motivation, and morale. In addition, as reported in Brunand Dugas (2008), beyond sending a positive message to employees in terms of value, research shows that recognition links to employee performance and company success; however, if employees are not recognized for their efforts, they could experience mental and emotional distress and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

We need to better understand the impact of timing, frequency, and depth of communication has on engagement. Receiving feedback on performance is generally considered a positive and motivating experience, especially in the context of constructive feedback (London 2003; Smither & London, 2009). Clearly, managers need to ensure that they are providing their employees with feedback and recognition, but what are the best answers to the questions - "what, how, when, and how often" - when it comes to promoting higher levels of employee engagement?

According to Mulvey and Ledford (2002), managers should provide timely and ongoing feedback - that is, both positive and constructive (Seijts & Crim, 2006) - to employees about their observable behaviors and performance and areas for improvement, and recognition of optimal performance. In the context of employee engagement, Mone and London (2009) demonstrate that when managers provide sufficient opportunities for training and support regarding career development efforts, they help foster employee development and drive employee engagement. Bakker et al. (2008) report that employees need more than learning opportunities alone - they need motivational support and the resources to accomplish their development goals.

Additionally, Mone and London (2009) report that employees having the resources to perform their jobs effectively and being encouraged to be innovative and creative to improve their work processes and productivity are both primary drivers of employee engagement. Moreover with an incessantly deepening "engagement gap" reported amongst employees (Kowalski, 2003), that is threatening to cripple organizational growth and productivity, it becomes imperative to advance research on the construct thus leading to a better appreciation and application of the same in the interest of the organization. More than ever before, managers would a greet hat employees make a critical difference when it comes to innovation, organizational performance, competitiveness, and thus ultimately business success. What can organizations do to attract and keep creative, dedicated, and thriving employees whom organizations flourish? Currently, organizations expect their employees to be proactive and show initiative, collaborate smoothly with others, take responsibility for their own professional development, and to be committed to high quality performance standards. Mone and London (2009) also found that a direct predictor of employee engagement is the extent to which employees are satisfied with their opportunities for career progression and promotion, a finding supported by

Seijts and Crim (2006) who suggest that employees will feel more engaged if managers provide challenging and meaningful work with opportunities for career advancement.

Considering that opportunities for training and development can be incidental, informal, or formal (Marsick & Watkins, 1990), and it might be inferred that informal and incidental learning, which lead to greater learning in the workplace (Rowden, 2002) can also enhance employee engagement. Jacob et al. (2008) support this notion that employee engagement is enhanced when managers offer their employees on-the-job learning opportunities as well as the autonomy to pursue those learning opportunities.

1.2. Research Gap

Although there is much theoretical and empirical research on the employee engagement in different sectors but relatively little empirical work has been done on the degree of employees' engagement in the telecommunication industry and the factors influencing them to be engaged in this industry's job.

1.3. Research Questions

Specifically, this study was undertaken to the answer the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent is the level of employee engagement in telecommunication industry of Bangladesh?

RQ2. What are the factors associated with the employee engagement?

1.4. Hypotheses of the Research

On the basis of literature review and research questions, the following hypotheses tested:

H_1: Clear idea about the role of the employees has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_0^2: Inspiration of the employees has not a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_1^2: Inspiration of the employees has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_0^3: Concentration of the employees has not a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_1^3: Concentration of the employees has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_0^4: Action taking role of the employees has not a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_1^4: Action taking role of the employees has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_0^5: Willingness of the employees has not a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_1^5: Willingness of the employees has any positive influence on employee engagement.

H_0^6: Skills of the employees has not a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_1^6: Skills of the employees has a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_0^7: Commitment of the employees has not a positive influence on employee engagement.

H_1^7: Commitment of the employees has a positive influence on employee engagement.

2. Research Method

There are a number of telecommunication companies in our country. Researchers selected the leading companies in the market like Robi, Grameen Phone (GP), Banglalink, Teletalk, Citycell, Airtel etc.

2.1. Procedure and Sample Size

The researchers collected data for the present study from 310 working executives employed in different levels of management in the telecom industry in Bangladesh. For this purpose different strata of managers viz., senior-level, middle-level, and junior- level managers were randomly assigned the survey instrument. Thus, purposive sampling in selecting the organizations of the respondents and stratified random sampling for selecting the respondents themselves were applied for data collection.

2.2. Survey Instrument Development

A questionnaire with 20-items related with the employee engagement, based on literature review was included and was carried out for this research. Furthermore, to confirm the consistency and suitability of the prepared questionnaire a pilot survey was conducted using the prepared questionnaire and after necessary adjustment the ultimate survey was conducted.

2.3. Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaire from Robi, GP, Banglalink Teletalk, Citycell, Airtel offices and secondary data were collected from annual reports, journals, magazines, websites, and papers etc. The annual reports, magazines were poised from the offices during the time of questionnaire survey and the papers related with the study, were composed from the central library of the Chittagong University. Journals associated with study, were studied through the internet and a number of allied published books. Furthermore, the official websites of the companies contain enormous information about their companies that helped us much to prepare this report.

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

With the intention of collecting data, a printed questionnaire with a brief introduction of the study was given to 400 executives working in different telecom companies in Dhaka City and Chittagong City. On an average, the executives took twenty minutes to complete the questionnaire. Finally, 310 (77.5%) usable responses were received. Due to some constraints, it was not possible to collect an equal number of responses from the each organization. The present study has been used a sophisticated method of statistics, SPSS software, version 19.

3. Analysis of Findings

3.1. Reliability of Scales and Validity of Data

Reliability reflects the consistency of a set of items in measuring the study variables/concepts (Cooper & Schinder, 2001). It illustrates the individual differences concerning the amount of agreement or disagreement of the concepts or variables studies (Malhotra, 2002). Cronbach's alpais most widely used method to measure the reliability of the scale (Cooper & Schinder, 2001; Malhotra, 2002). It may be mentioned that Cronbach's alpa value ranges from 0 to 1, but satisfactory value is required to be more than 0.60 for the scale to be reliable (Malhotra, 2002; Cronbach, 1951). Thus, the data were tested for using Cronbach's alpha to assess reliability. Internal consistency (reliability) values of the measurement items were assessed before entering into the analyses.

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Clear idea about the role	2	0.788
Inspiration	2	0.695
Concentration	2	0.788
Participation in decision making,	2	0.702
Willingness	2	0.772
Skill	2	0.769
Commitment	2	0.721

In our research, to measure the dependent variable (Employee Engagement) and independent variables (clear idea about the employees' role, inspiration of the employees, concentration on employees' role, participation in decision making, willingness of the employees, skills of the employees, and commitment of the employees), we have used 15 items. Among these, 1 item was developed for measuring the dependent variable and rest of the 14 items were developed for measuring independent variable. 7 independent variables were used in our research. From the reliability test we find that the Cronbach's Alpha for all variables among 0.690 to 0.788, which means that all the variables have an internal consistency of 69% to 78.8% among each other.

3.2. Consideration of the Independent Variables for Further Regression Analysis

For measuring influence of the independent variables (clear idea about the employees' role, inspiration of the employees, concentration on employees' role, participation in decision making, willingness of the employees, skills of the employees, and commitment of the employees) on the dependent variable (Employee Engagement), the researchers considered 2 items for six independent variables and 4 items for one independent variable (concentration on employees' role). From the reliability test, the researchers find the cronbach's alpha value of the independent variables are 0.788; 0.695; 0.788; 0.702; 0.772; 0.769; and 0.721

respectively. It is here mentioned that Cronbach's alpa value ranges from 0 to 1, but satisfactory value is required to be more than 0.60 for the scale to be reliable (Malhotra, 2002; Cronbach, 1951). As the cronbach's alpha values of independent variables are more than 0.60 then it can be easily mentioned that all the independent variables have an internal consistency of 78.8%; 69.5%; 78.8%; 70.2%; 77.2%; 76.9%; and 72.1% correspondingly among each other. Therefore, item scales of the independent variables are mostly seemed to be perfect to further regression analysis.

3.3. Regression Analysis

3.3.1. Model Summary

The value of R Square (0.594) and R (0.771) shows a moderate association between the set of independent variables and the dependent variable with the standard error of 0.776 percent (Table 1).

Table 1. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.771(a)	.702	.298	.77571

In the above table, it indicates that the employee satisfaction is, only 70.2%, influenced by willingness, participation in decision making, concentration, inspiration, clear about the role, commitment. The rest 29.8% is influenced by some other factors that we have not considered in our research.

3.3.2. ANOVA Test

The F value of the test for the data is 4.212. The p-value associated with this F value which is 0.001 which is lower than the alpha value 0.05 (Table 2).

Table 2. ANOVA Table

ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Significant
Regression	10.579	7	1.511	4.212	.001
Residual	7.221	12	.602		
Total	17.800	19			

The study shows that there is significant impact of these independent variables on the dependent variable and the model applied is significantly good enough in predicting the dependent variable.

3.3. Tests of Hypotheses

At $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance, the above hypothesis was tested.

Decision Rule:

H_0^1 will be rejected, if P Value is less than Significance Level i.e. 0.05; otherwise H_0^1 accepted at 5% level of significance.

Variable(s):
Dependent: Employee Engagement
Independent: Clear idea about the role, Inspiration, Concentration, Participation in decision making, Willingness, Skills, and Commitment.

Table 3. Summarized Results of the Hypothesis 1-7

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	P Value	Significance Level	Implications
Employee Engagement	Clear idea about the employees' role	0.07	0.05	Dissatisfied
	Inspiration	0.00	0.05	Satisfied
	Concentration	0.01	0.05	Satisfied
	Participation in decision making	0.00	0.05	satisfied
	Willingness	0.01	0.05	Satisfied
	Skill	0.01	0.05	Satisfied
	Commitment	0.00	0.05	Satisfied

Source: Compiles by the researchers from the field study

Results of the hypothesis:

The result of hypotheses show that the P value of some hypotheses are higher and a few are lower than the esteemed significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). It helped the researchers to reach decisions which hypotheses are accepted and which are rejected. In this respect, it is clearly viewed that the ''P Value'' of the hypothesis 1 is greater than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Hence it can be concluded that H_1 is rejected that means employee engagement is not greatly influenced by the assumed factors (Clear idea of employees about the role).

On the other hand, the ''P Value'' of the hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are lower than the esteemed significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Thus H_2, H_3, H_4, and H_5 are accepted that means employee engagement is greatly influenced by the factors of the degree of inspiration of employees, concentration of the companies on the welfare of the employees, Participation of employees in decision making, willingness of employees to employ them to the assigned job, job related skills of the employees, and commitment of the employees (table 3).

4. Discussion

Companies that want to boost employee engagement sometimes can't make their efforts stick. These businesses seek the benefits that come from increased engagement improved productivity, profitability, safety, retention, and customer focus, among others -but they don't feel that employee engagement is becoming integrated into the company's culture. Engagement has to be equal on both ends - the supervisor and employee. It is the key to confirm the

retention of talents. The ever changing dynamics of the talent market have ensured that employers now compete for the best employees as well. Recent surveys have reported that to attract, recruit, train and retain the best talent is possibly the single biggest predictor of corporate success. The key ingredients of employee engagement are: nature of work, support, recognition, loyalty, advocacy and values.

4.1. Implications

As all the telecom companies are well established, therefore, it is very tough to recommend on any aspect of the company. However the researchers have come up with few recommendations, after conducting the research. To achieve employee engagement the telecommunication companies should firstly, defining the engagement goal in real- world terms. Secondly, talk with team members one to one about engagement. Thirdly, empower team members to lead team engagement sessions. Fourthly, unify the experiences to identify factors responsible for engaging and disengaging employees and unify the common experiences and problems to design employee engagement strategies accordingly. Finally, ensuring open communication in the form of discussions can really help in bringing the various issues and identifying the main problems in the organization.

5. Limitations

The researchers faced a few problems during the of study such as some employees were reluctant to response the questions, it was impossible to add some important questions on survey instrument due to the selected companies' privacy policy, and the websites of the telecom companies were not so informative.

6. Conclusions

The telecom companies of Bangladesh are working all the time to sustain and satisfy its employees. However, the organizations need to be clarified about the demands of the employees especially of the permanent employees to satisfy them. On the other side employees also should engaged with the company's activities. According to the research the employees seem quite satisfied and fulfilled in the organizations. Still it is very much difficult to work towards perfection. Therefore the organizations are all the time moving towards making the work environment the "employee choice". Employees are also cooperating with their employer according to the survey. They are always engaged with their responsible work. The most important thing is the major percentages of the employees give the best effort on their work. So in Bangladesh the telecom company's employee engagement percentage is satisfactory. They properly maintain the HR practices especially at employee engagement tools.

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