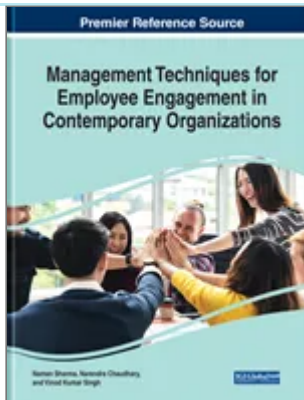


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Employee Engagement: Evolution, Approaches, and Perspectives

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Abstract

Modern organizations are moving towards more sustainable models by utilizing the power of employees to attain their objectives. Organizations are engaging their employees in various activities to ensure their level of commitment towards employers. Positive employee engagement has been linked to a growth in terms of organizational performance, financial benefits, and reduced attrition. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the concept of employee engagement in today's competitive market and to know about the various engagement practices adopted by the global leaders. This study is an attempt to address this need by giving a brief insight into the evolution of employee engagement as an academic discipline, the broad approaches adopted to characterize employee engagement, and the resultants dimensions identified through the studies. The authors also attempt to provide an insight into industrial attempts to execute employee engagement initiatives through brief cases.

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Introduction

To sustain an organization's position in the current competitive markets is a significant task which requires organizations to connect with and engage its stakeholders. The role of internal stakeholders, especially employees takes on additional importance in this as they are the forces behind an organization's production and drive the quest for achieving customer satisfaction. Employees are a unique asset which, if leveraged correctly, can yield a sustainable source of competitive advantage for organizations. In order to leverage this resource in an effective manner, organizations are intently focusing their efforts on engaging employees through a variety of initiatives. Positive employee engagement has been linked to a growth in terms of

organizational performance, financial benefits and reduced attrition. It has also been shown to influence a range of attitudinal, behavioural, performance, and financial outcomes (Albrecht et al., 2015). The concept of employee engagement, in simple words, discusses the extent to which an employee feels connected with, supported by and integral to an organization due to which he/ she outperforms beyond expectations to drive organizational growth. Essentially, an engaged employee behaves as a 'citizen' rather than a 'guest' in an organizational environment. Achieving such a status would be an enviable position for organizations due to the expected and documented benefits of an engaged workforce.

This concept has been extensively studied from both industry and academic perspectives. Multiple approaches taken towards understanding employee engagement has examined its significance from different perspectives. The complexity of employee behaviour, motives and expectations have made it difficult to concisely define and characterize its nature. Thus, it may be said currently, it may benefit researchers to take a step back and assimilate the results of the research conducted at this stage. This would enable the development of a generalized model to precipitate employee engagement in different industries and sectors. This study is an attempt to address this need by giving a brief insight into the evolution of employee engagement as an academic discipline, the broad approaches adopted to characterize employee engagement and the resultants dimensions identified through the studies.

Referring to the literature available in this area of study it is observed that the concept of employee engagement though studied and analysed critically in developed nations is still in its nascent stage in developing and emerging economies. The studies conducted so far has been majorly undertaken to understand the concept, significance and relevance of employee engagement for developed nations. However, how employee engagement contributes to citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction in a developing economy is yet to be explored. In this study the authors have tried to understand and analyse the antecedents and consequences for employee engagement given the socio economic dynamics of a developing nation like India where there is a scarcity of literature in contrast to developed nations where its contribution is significantly considered for organisational performance. Trying to bridge the gap between the academic outlook and the real time scenario faced in industries the authors also attempted to provide an insight into industrial attempts to execute employee engagement initiatives through brief caselets. Studying the practical aspects of employee engagement we can try to inculcate it into the academic perspectives by proposing the following model which helps to build the parity between academic and practical avenues of employee engagement.

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