



Employee Disengagement: A Fatal Consequence to Organization and its Ameliorative Measures

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ABSTRACT

The consequences of employee disengagement are vulnerable to any organization and considered as an epidemic to the business enterprises. The current paper aimed to highlight the concepts, survey available literature to probe the notions related to employee disengagement. The review of the literature provided ample information to differentiate between engaged and disengaged employees in terms of involvement, satisfaction, commitment, performance, trust, enthusiasm, stress and so on. Further, the author noticed that developed nations have alarming percentage of employee disengagement. The significance of this particular paper provides the ample concept and literature to understand the outcomes of employee disengagement which is harmful to the organizations and individuals. Albeit, the present study suggested some measures, implement to enhance the level of engagement of employees in the organizations.

Keywords: Engagement, Disengagement, Outcomes of Disengagement, Employees

JEL Classification: M

1. INTRODUCTION

It is universally accepted the notion that disengaged employees are not taking part in the problem solving and delinked their thinking patterns with the accomplishment of vision, purpose and values of the organization. Further, such employees are not putting their whole efforts to maximize the productivity in an excellent manner but showing the lack of interest in doing so like an easy going person. The president study tried to explore to understand the consequences of employee disengagement at work with the help of various study conducted in previous years. On the basis of different study, it can be said that it is an epidemic and needs to eradicate such evil behaviors to make the organization more effective.

It is imperative to highlight that disengaged employees are not essentially wicked one but doing their required amount of work necessary to accomplish the task and occasionally not providing the solution to make the workplace more effective and conducive to discharge the responsibilities. However, disengaged employees showing the lackadaisical attitude towards the work and doing the

work within the specified time period of work but not staying at the workplace beyond the stipulated time period or more hour or late hour and even they don't want to revisit their own work after finish a day of work.

In every organization manger's role is to influence, motivate and inspire employees to provide results but also concerned to those who are disengaged in their work seems to be true. Thereby, disengagement of employees is considered as an epidemic in the organization. Gallup poll conducted in 2014 in the United States observed that only 31% employees working with full enthusiasm and engaged with their work whereas 51% were "not engaged" and 17.5% "actively disengaged." The outcome of this poll revealed that majority of the employees in the USA are disengaged in their work and showing less concern to perform the task showing less concern to perform the task (Adkins,2014).

Mark (2012) in his article "Workplace Wrangler citing the Economist" observed that majority of the higher level of manager/ leader (84%) were disengaged employee who are considered as serious threats for the business.

Disengagement refers to “a lack of commitment, interest and enthusiasm to work or a workplace.” It represents that disengaged workforce are less committed and involved in their work and chances are there that they might leave the organization.

Disengagement can be defined by keeping in mind Schaufeli and Bakker works as “a negative, unfulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by weaker, infidelity and disloyalty.”

In realm of management and social science the term engagement is associated with job involvement and flow of the employees (Lawler and Hall, 1970; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Whereas, job involvement refers “the degree to which job situation is central to the person and his/her identity” and flow refers to “holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement.” It is concluded that employee involvement is one of the passions for completing the task, if not indicates low level of productivity and showing the sign of disengagement.

Kahn (1990) conceptualized personal disengagement as “the withdrawing or defending of oneself physically, cognitively or emotionally during their work role performance.” From this definition, it seems that disengaged employees are detached emotionally and cognitively from the real work set up and their behavior became unresponsive, robotic, effortless towards their performance. This might be due to several reasons such as lack of autonomy, perceived little opportunity of advancement in the job and lack of interaction, absence of motivation from superiors and so on. Since employees satisfaction, commitment and involvement are missing; their intention and purposes disappeared in vain to perform in the organization.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Various researchers conceptualized disengagement and tried to explore and understand the reasons for disengagement of the employees. They found an association between disengagement with personal and professional characteristic. The researcher tried to explore the notion from the perspectives of employee engagement to understand disengagement at workplace. Additionally, it is imperative to explain that review has been done with the help of understanding the concept of employee engagement with various constructs taken into consideration among diverse employees working in different sectors.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagement as “a constructive, satisfying, state of mind that is characterized by enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption.” In the light of this particular definition, it can be infer that lack of enthusiasm, absorption and dedication, people cannot involve in their job fully to get things done in a stipulated time period. Abraham (2012) was having the opinion that there is an association between stay in the organization and discharge their responsibility with employee engagement. On the basis of the review of literature, we can say that various reasons have been identified to differentiate engaged and disengaged employees. Fredrickson (2001) argued that employees who will be engaged showing positive emotions, enthusiasm and joy. This indicates that while employee will be on the work using personal

resources to get the works done. When employees engaged in their work, perceive psychological well-being and health, it refers to such employees who focus all resources in terms of personal skills and power resources to their responsibilities. As Harter et al. (2002) suggested that manager may motivate their employees towards the realistic outcome, when they were having more engagement at their work. It is important to put emphasis that job satisfaction, commitment, involvement and lessen the role stress are the variables having association with the employees working in the organization to make more effective towards the outcomes of the organization and fully engaged in the work, in the absence of these might lead to disengaged with their work (Allam, 2013; Al-Kahtani and Allam, 2014; Allam, 2007; Stephen, 2011; Ali and Allam, 2016; Allam and Rezene, 2009).

Bakker and Xanthopoulou (2009) have the opinion that engaged employees transfer their engagement to others to do the task. It means that engaged person can easily transfer the good things to others and build a team to generate collaborative efforts to perform exceptionally in their work settings. Albeit, Bakker et al. (2004) revealed the fact that colleagues used to give higher ratings to those employees who perform better on the role and extra-role performance representing that such employees shouldering the responsibilities in an extraordinary manner and urge to go the outstanding.

Heikkeri (2010) said the disengaged employees are considered as one of the dimensions of organizational structure in the form of their severity i.e., complex in nature and also leads to change the behavior in negative directions. Further, the researcher suggested that such complex behavior is detrimental to the organization and therefore the authority needs academic and managerial skills to understand and dealt with such employees to make things happen in a normal manner.

Halbesleben and Wheeler (2008) observed the positive correlation between ratings by the higher officials and employee engagement in relations to performance in the United States in different occupations. It indicates that disengagement employees have the low rating by their own supervisors and found detachment with their work and the lower level of performance. Al-Kahtani and Allam (2013) has said in their study that value play pivotal role to keep away people from various unusual activities. In similar fashion Koodamara (2016) initiated a study to explore the correlation between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee engagement and revealed the statistical significant difference between these variables. Further, they found the positive relationship between engagement and job satisfaction. But in the case of employee disengagement, it can be say that there would be no positive relationship with job satisfaction, commitment and stay in the organization.

2.1. Outcomes of Employee Disengagement

Various outcomes have been explored on the basis of the review of literature; the following aspects have been identified by academicians and management practitioners pertaining to disengagement of the employees.

- i. Negative job attitude: The attitude of the employees who are not taking part in the work seems to be dissatisfied with job,

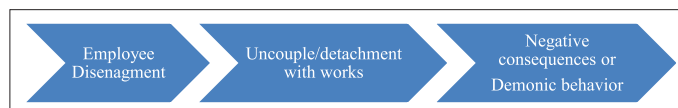
uncommitted, lack of organizational citizenship behavior and so on. These types of employees are not able to generate energy or enthusiasm to do the task and showing negative attitudes at work. Saks (2006) observed that disengaged employees most of the time showed no commitment, dissatisfaction and intent to leave the organization.

- ii. The absence of teamwork: Showing little cooperation and collaboration to get things done together as team members.
- iii. Rigidness to accept feedback: Disengaged workers don't show courage to listen the truth about their performance and not accepting their criticism given by others.
- iv. Lack of trust: The disengaged employees hide all information and not sharing ideas, opinions, views and information with anyone due to lack of trust. Allam and Harish (2010) suggested that trust is having correlation with job satisfaction.
- v. Low morale: The disengaged employees showing less confidence, spirit, discipline and energy to perform in the organization. As suggested by Branham (2005) that disengaged employees often negatively impact on income and morale of the employees.
- vi. No learning: Engaged employees wants to get new knowledge and information whereas, disengaged employee not showing interest to get new skill and abilities towards their work to complete the task assigned to them.
- vii. The higher rate of turnover: Due to disengagement in the job at the workplace the rate of voluntarily or involuntarily leaving the organization will be more than what is expected in the business set up by the management.
- viii. More workplace violence and bullying: Workplace violence and bullying both are unacceptable at the workplace but disengaged employees show such actions in the form of aggressiveness, fighting, physical assault, threatening behavior, abusive, teasing and regular jokes at workplace with someone.
- ix. More health problem: Disengaged employees observed to have more headaches, stomach problems and cardiovascular disorder due to the characteristic shown during the working hours.
- x. Higher conflict: The relationship of disengaged employees with subordinate, peers and superiors observed unhealthy, disagreement and bitterness reflects the higher level of conflict.
- xi. More absenteeism: The disengaged employees frequently keeping themselves away from real work situation and have unusual reasons for not reporting to work.
- xii. The lower level of productivity: It has been noticed that disengaged employees not putting all efforts to make better performance and complaining others fault and by the results their productivity is low.
- xiii. The higher rate of accident and safety problem: Safety at work is considered as a tool to avoid the accident at workplace. Disengaged employees paying the lower level of attention towards the hazardous element at work, ignoring defects in machine, tools and equipment and putting the employees' life into danger or accidental situations.
- xiv. More deviant workplace behavior: Employees who are disengaged at work not obeying the rules and regulations of the corporate/business sector and indulge in varieties of

deviant behavior such as vandalism, sabotage the resources and infrastructure, spreading the rumor, acting rudely with seniors/juniors.

- xv. Lateness: Employees not reporting on the time at workplace of start of the work and used to come late and explains that on the way it was an accident, heavy traffic and transportations problems. As Blau (1994) observed three different types of lateness such as pattern, duration and frequency. Disengaged employees are always showing these attributes towards the lateness or delay.
- xvi. Loss of cultural values: Researchers have observed that culture influences the entire organization but if the organization has disengaged employees automatically they will sabotage the culture and have the greater effect on productivity.
- xvii. Postponement/withhold of works: Disengaged employees have one of the personality characteristics that they do not keenly taking all things in serious manner or keeping away from the seriousness/urgency of the work. Most of the time such employees used to withhold of works and postponed the task for another day or time.
- xviii. No innovation and creativity: They do not provide new ideas, views, opinion or any kinds of creativity to the organization to make more effective results at work.
- xix. Lack of interpersonal relations: Disengaged employees showing little concerned/relations towards different stakeholder particularly customers. Such employees harm the organization because they have lack of interpersonal relations in dealing with the customer satisfaction would be a great loss of the organization (Vajda and SpiritHeart, 2008).

Moreover, the aforesaid ideas generated by the author to delve into the knowledge, skills and opinion related to disengaged employees. In brief, disengaged employees placing the organization in the negative directions and that may be huge costs to the organizations. It can be well understand through the below diagram:



3. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of conceptual framework, understanding, review of the literature and results due to disengagement of the employees discussed above, it is necessary to have ideal human resource practices in every organization to overcome from such demonic characteristics of employees to make them engaged in work set up. Aristotle said "In the arena of human life, the honors and rewards fall to those who show their good qualities in action." Albeit, it is the responsibilities of higher officials to make them engaged in their work necessary to give financial and non-financial rewards to their quality work performed in the organization and to delve into their abilities to shoulder the task prescribed to them. Management must be open to discuss the issues through proper communications. Training should be given to the employees to enhance knowledge, ability, attitude and skills to perform task

and engaged at work. Generate trust, match the roles, create a conducive environment or atmosphere, create a culture of meaning of work and develop interpersonal skills to minimize disengagement at the workplace and have the engagement in their work. This study has own limitations and the author suggested that there is a need to have the exhaustive review of the literature to provide meaningfulness to the variables taken in the present exploratory study to understand in a better manner.

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