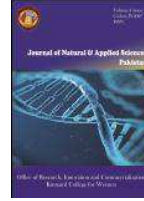




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DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TELECOM SECTOR OF LAHORE

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Abstract

Employees' job engagement has gained momentum in the past few decades, mainly due to the changing work dynamics, workforce diversity and globalization. This study aims to examine the job engagement of employees in the telecommunication sector of Pakistan. It is hypothesized that there is a significant relation of Perceived Opportunities for Career development with Job Engagement and Line manager relations serve as a moderator between the two variables. A sample of 500 employees working in the telecommunication sector in Lahore Pakistan was selected using convenience sampling technique. The data collection instrument was self-administered questionnaire. The Results of hierarchical regression analysis showed a positive and statistically significant relation of Perceived opportunities for career development with Job engagement. The results also showed significant moderating effect of line manager relation on the direct relation of Perceived opportunities for career development with employee engagement. Thus, if an employee interprets more perceived opportunities for career development, he will be more committed towards his job.

Keywords

Job engagement, career development opportunities, line manager relations, telecommunication sector.

1. Introduction

Past few decades have witnessed an increased upward trend in the job engagement literature. Job engagement entails positive employee attitude that is translated into high degrees of employee commitment and dedication to their work (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018).

People, who have high levels of job engagement, outperform their counterparts. Such individuals are intrinsically motivated; they have high degree of satisfaction, and are more willing and committed to perform their tasks at work. Such employees take the organizations' goal as their personal goals and do whatever it may take to achieve those goals (Guan & Frenkel, 2018).

Work engagement is transactional as it relies on the value, trust, genuineness resulting from the two way obligations between employers and employees. Hence, it is an incorporated approach that fabricates the odds of business achievement, consequently, adding into progressive and singular implementation, thriving and gainfulness. Moreover, work engagement also refers to expression of individuals' physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions while performing a given job (kahn, 1990). So we can say that by working on the development of the employees, an organization gains their affective commitment and fosters

organizational outcomes (Chow & Crawford, 2014). The perception of employees' personal development is associated with the level of engagement (Fletcher, 2016).

Past studies indicate that perceived opportunities for career development are necessary for facilitating employee engagement, as they are directly related to it (Bakker & Bal, 2010). To understand the term "perceived opportunities for career development" let us split this term. Perception is basically what individuals think, or how they see the world through their lens. It is basically a psychological contract between an employee and the organization, or the employee with his managers, or the colleagues as a whole. In organizational context, opportunities can either make or break the perceptions of an individual. Human Resource practices can assist individuals in shaping employee perception to promote employee engagement (Fletcher, 2016).

The aim of this study is to investigate the relation of Perceived Opportunities for career development and employee engagement with perceived line manager support as a moderator in the telecommunication sector of Pakistan. Line managers create purpose for their employees by exhibiting behaviors that will raise the sense of commitment and morality in them and also develop creativity in them. Moreover, the line managers are also responsible for the daily implementation of practices related to the HR department.

1.1 Hypotheses Statements

The study incorporates the following hypotheses:

H₁: Perceived opportunities for career development have a significant impact on job engagement

H₂: Perceived line manager relations moderate the relation of perceived opportunities for career development with job engagement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Job Engagement

Mutunga's (2009) study on the telecommunication sector in Kenya, identified factors including age, gender, marital status and length of service period that play a vital role to improve job engagement along with other critical factors such as recognition, relation with the line managers, job security, perceived

opportunities for career development with training & development. . The sample consisted of both managerial and non-managerial staff. employees of an organization. The results indicated that an overall employee disconnect with their job mainly due to poor work-life balance and unavailability of managerial support. Another important finding was lack of autonomy for employees to voice their views and opinions which caused this disengagement.

Schaufeli, Bakker, & Van (2009) studied the relation between job engagement and burnout, which is a mental and emotional state of exhaustion caused by excessive stress. Since, occupational burnout is said to be a result of long term and unresolvable on the job problems or stress so it affects job engagement. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique was used for the simultaneous investigation of the data from four of the independent samples (total N=1698). The results affirmed the hypothesized model, indicating (1) engagement and burnout to be adversely related, sharing in the vicinity of 10 to 25 percent of the fluctuations or variance. (2) burnout was caused due to lack of organizational resources and hence affected job engagement. (3) burnout is also affected physical and mental wellbeing of employees, inducing turnover intentions. In reality, job engagement and occupational burnout showed distinct patterns of all the possible antecedents and results that implied intervention strategies to be utilized to improve engagement.

Saeed, Mehreen and Shahid (2014) analyzed how turnover intentions effect the job satisfaction, job performance and job engagement as a whole. The result showed that employees who have strong relations with the organization and subsequently strong organizational commitment tend are better engaged with their jobs. High levels of job engagement motivate the employees to do more and reap rewards and benefits, so, in this way the turnover intention decreases.

2.2 Perceived Line Manager Relations

Kuvaas (2009) analyzed in his study the relation among perceived line manager relation, the perceived investment in employee development and employee's attitudes, behaviors and task performance which was broken down into three dimensions of work quality, organizational citizenship behavior and

work effort. Perceived investment in employee development is the perception of employees about how interested an organization is in the development of its employees, or we can say it is the difference in the thinking among employees of an organization. The line managers play a vital role in the implementation of HRM practices, and the line managers impact the relation between HR department and employees. The results from the cross sectional survey in Norway's telecommunication sector revealed line managers to play an integral role in the implementation of HR practices because they have an effect on how individuals perceive such practices and in turn this affects their behaviors and attitudes.

Alfes et. al. (2013) investigated in their study the relation of the moderating and mediating processes that link HR practices with that of the performance outcomes. Hence, he developed and tested a model in which the HRM practices, specifically that of the line managers, were linked with the organizational citizenship behavior, this type of behavior involves an employee's voluntary behavior, he performs those tasks that are not a part of his job according to his own will and wish. Moreover, in terms of the social-exchange theory, the proposed model puts forward that the effect of HRM practices on the organizational citizenship behavior is mediated by the job engagement, whereas the relation between organizational citizenship behavior and the employee engagement is moderated by the perceived line manager relation. The data was collected from the employees of service sector located in the UK. So, this study asserts that endorsing positive behaviors with relevance to job engagement depends on two things, the overall work environment of the organization, and the relation of employees with that of their line managers.

2.3 Perceived Opportunities For Career Development

Shinnar (2007) based his study on people who have migrated from Mexico with an aim to investigate factors that mold career development motivations and hindrances faced by the Mexican immigrants. The results from in depth interviews from 17 revealed that the careers of the Mexican immigrants were formed by three sets of interconnected

variables: (1) variables at individual level, including personal attributes and personal goals (2) variables at a broader/group level, based on the cultural values of each member of the group holds, their immigrant status and the discrimination at workplace (3) lastly, the contextual variables, featuring the settings in which all the interactions occur entailing trends in immigration and the condition of labor market. The outcomes also suggested a need to examine the development in to line positions of high level separate from their managerial positions.

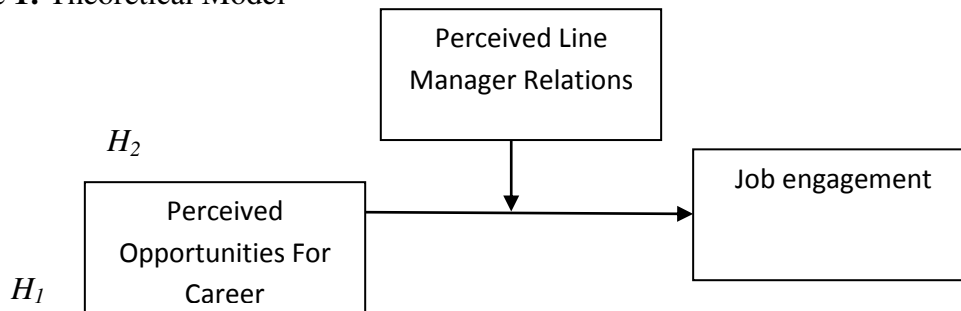
Nielsen et. al. (2008) analyzed the effect of transformational leadership on employee's perceived work attributes and psychological wellbeing. Transformational leadership is a leadership style in which a leader works with his juniors to identify where the change is needed, executes change, creates a vision and inspires the juniors. Hence, transformational leaders have a creative style of leading that inspires others, that enables the employees to be more creative and innovative. Having said that, transformational leadership style traces is observed to be linked with psychological wellbeing of employees. This is still unclear if it is due to a direct relation among affective wellbeing outcomes and leadership behavior, or a relation among leadership behavior and wellbeing which is mediated by the employee's perceived work attributes. Moreover, the work attributes that are taken in this study include, meaningfulness, role clarity, perceived opportunities for development. The data was collected from the employees of Danish local government firms through questionnaires. A model was developed and tested for the relation among work attributes, leadership and psychological wellbeing. The result of the analysis showed that employee's perception of their work attributes did mediate the relation among psychological wellbeing and transformational leadership style.

3. Methods

3.1 Sample And Procedures

Data were collected from 500 employees of telecommunication sector in Lahore, Pakistan using self-administered and standardized questionnaires, which were distributed irrespective of the gender and during working hours in different branches of telecommunication companies in Lahore.

Figure 1: Theoretical Model



4. Results

3.2 Measures

Job engagement was measured using 10 items scale adopted from Rich. et. al (2010), a sample item includes, “At work, I am absorbed in my work”, Perceived Opportunities for career development was measured using 4 items scale adopted from Fletcher (2016), a sample item includes, “this organization actively supports my personal development and learning” and perceived line managers relation was measured using 4 items scale adopted from Fletcher (2016) and a sample item included, “My immediate manager recognizes my efforts when I have performed well”.

A five point Likert scale was incorporated to measure the attitudes of respondents, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree.

3.3 Research Methodology

Cronbach alpha was used to check the internal consistency and reliability of the item scales. Pearson Correlation analysis was used to analyze the direction and strength of association between variables. Hierarchical Regression Analysis was carried out to test the moderating role of line managers’ relations on the relationship of job engagement and perceived opportunities for career development. In step one simple regression is estimated with job engagement as dependent variable and perceived opportunities for development as independent variable. In the second step, interaction term is added to check the moderating effect of line managers’ relation.

Table 1: Demographics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Gender	Male	306	61.2
	Female	194	38.8
Age (Years)	21-25	106	21.2
	26-30	213	42.6
	30-35	81	16.2
	36 or above	100	20
Qualification	Graduation	292	58.4
	Masters	102	20.4
	M.Phil	74	14.8
	Any Other Certificate	32	6.4

Table 1 reports demographic characteristics of the sample indicating 61.2% of the aggregate Sample to be male and the remaining 38.8% female. 21.2% of them fall between 21-25 years of age, 42.6% between 26-30 years, 16.2% between 30-35 and 20% between 36 years or more. The capability level of 58.4% of the Sample is graduation, 20.4% have Masters Degree, 14.8% is MPhil, and 6.4% of the sample has other certifications.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.D	items	α
Job Engagement	2.231	1.19	10	0.912
Perceived Opportunities For Development	2.545	1.52	4	0.894
Line Managers Relations	2.200	1.17	4	0.835

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and Cronbach Alpha values of the study variables. Job engagement feature has a mean value of 2.231 and standard deviation of 1.19. Perceived opportunities for career development have a mean value of 2.545 and Standard deviation is 1.52. Moderator (Perceived Line manager relation) is having mean value of 2.200 and standard deviation of 1.17. All the values of standard deviation also indicate that the data is not much widely dispersed so the results obtained from this sample are reliable to be further evaluated.

Cronbach alpha value is used to check the reliability of the scales used to measure the study variables. Scale of Job engagement showed an excellent reliability where the value of α is 0.912. Similarly scale of Perceived opportunities for career development also showed an excellent reliability where the value of α is 0.894. The moderator perceived line manager relation also showed excellent reliability where the value of α is 0.835.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3
Job Engagement	1		
Perceived Opportunities	0.533	1	
Line Managers Relations	0.324	0.320	1

n = 500, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Table 3 reports results of correlation analysis. The analysis of the correlation matrix shows that Job Engagement has a significant positive correlation with Perceived Opportunities for career development (r = 0.324, p <0.01). This means that an increase in Perceived opportunities for career development predicts greater Job engagement. The moderator Perceived line managers shows a significant positive correlation with job engagement (r = 0.320, p <0.01) validating the fact that the moderator is powerful enough to alter the level of Job engagements.

Table 4: Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Moderation

		Step 1		Step 2
	β	p-value	β	p-value
Constant	1.05	0.000	3.210	0.000
<i>Independent Variable</i>				
Perceived opp. for	0.184*	0.000	0.506*	0.000
<i>Moderator</i>				
Perceived Line Manager			0.526*	0.000
<i>Two Way Interaction</i>				
P.O.D X P.L.M.R			0.618*	0.000
R	0.420		0.567	
R ²	0.359		0.405	
Durbin Watson			2.341	
DDurbin	1.718			
Change in R square	0.351		0.397	
F. Statistics	187.5*	0.000	132.0*	0.000

Hierarchical Regression Analysis is carried out to test the relation of Perceived opportunities for career development with the job engagement. Results are reported in table 4. The test is significant which approves positive contribution of Perceived opportunities for career development with Job engagement. The R^2 value is 0.359 which states that Perceived opportunities for career development explain 35.9% of variance in the dependent variable (Job Engagement). In simple linear regression analysis Perceived opportunities for career development showed a positive and statistically significant relationship with the Job engagement ($\beta = 0.184, p < 0.01$).

Facts validate Perceived opportunities for career development to have a positive and statistically significant relation with the Job engagement. As Perceived opportunities for career development increase Job engagement also increases. By putting the values obtained in the regression analysis in an equation, contribution of Perceived opportunities for career development in predicting Job engagement summarizes as:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta x_1 + u_i$$

$$\text{Job Engagement} = 1.05 + (0.184) \text{ Perceived opportunities for career development}$$

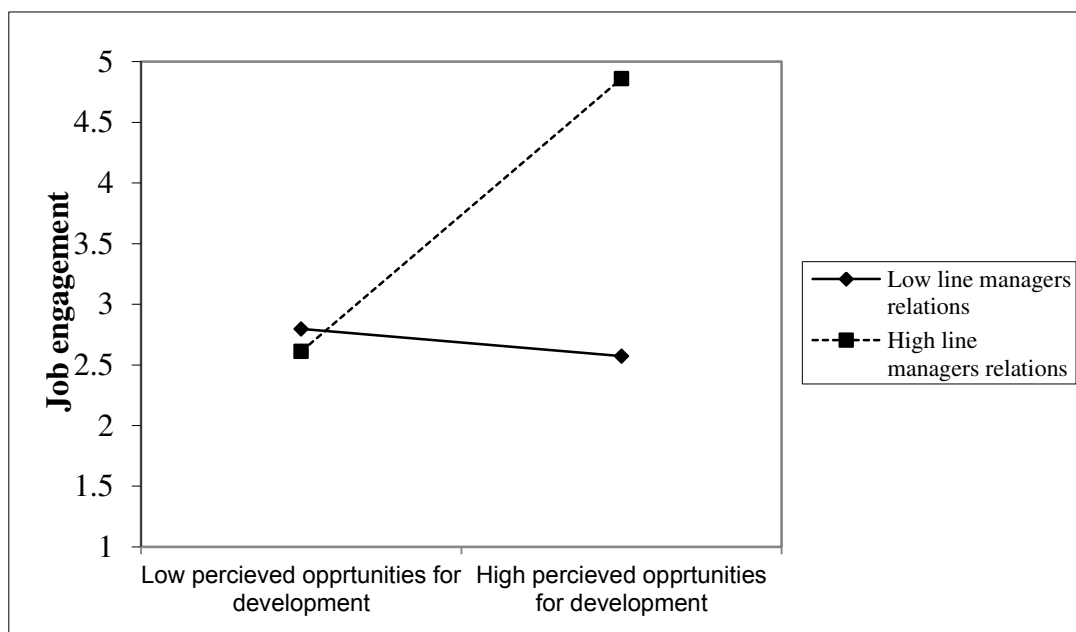
To test the moderating role of perceived line managers' relation on the relation of perceived opportunities of career development with job engagement in the next model interaction term is added as independent variable. General form of model is

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X + \beta_2 M + \beta_3 X * M + \mu_i$$

$$\text{Job Engagement} = 3.210 + (0.506) \text{ Perceived opportunities for career development} + (0.526) \text{ line managers relation} + (0.618) \text{ Perceived opportunities for career development} * \text{line managers relation}$$

Perceived Line Managers' relation proves to be a significant moderator for the relation of the perceived opportunities for career development with job engagement. The fact is validated by the interaction term that comes out to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.618, p < 0.01$). The moderating role of Perceived Line Manager relationship is therefore explained as high perceived line manager relations positively moderates the relation of perceived opportunities for career development with job engagement. Thus when line managers relations are high, perceived opportunities for career development will lead to high job engagement. Model is statistically significant with the value of R^2 0.405 and F statistics of 132 ($P < 0.000$).

Figure 2: Perceived line manager relations moderates the effect of perceived opportunities for development and job engagement



The moderating effect is presented in the form of two way interaction term in figure 2. This plot further explains that line manager relations strengthen the impact of perceived opportunities for career development with job engagement. As slope of the curve increases at high line manager relations, therefore, this further supports hypothesis 2.

5. Discussion

This research aimed to examine the impact of Perceived opportunities for career development on job engagement with the moderator role of perceived line manager relations. Facts validate that Perceived opportunities for career development has a positive and statistically significant relation with the Job engagement. As Perceived opportunities for career development increase, job engagement also increases.

This result is in line with the results of previous studies conducted under different environments. Fletcher (2016) also observed similar relation in personal career development with job engagement among UK workers. It's valuable for organizations to provide career development or personal development opportunities to its employees. When employees will be more engaged in their job they will also perform better. Thus this will ultimately improve employees' productivity. Moreover, according to results line managers should build more positive relations with employees to boost their engagement in work. People who are more engaged in their work and are more passionate and concerned about their daily tasks tend to do better job (Roberts & Davenport, 2002). When line manager will be supportive and helpful, there will be more positive effect on organizational resources (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; Mendes & Stander, 2011).

6. Practical Implications

This study has important implications for the managers of telecom sector of Lahore from where the data was collected for the analysis. Considering the results of the analysis managers should build strong and positive relationships with employees in order to enhance their performance in the organization. Organizational

do provide career developmental opportunities to employees to increase their satisfaction and performance but if line managers play an integral role they can further amplify this effect. Effective management of job resources and job demands is the key to increase employee engagement (Saks & Jamie, 2014).

7. Limitations And Future Directions

The findings of the study should be used with following limitation. Analysis is based on the perception of employees about line manager relation with opportunities for career development. This might lead to self-selection bias. Although the scale used to measure the variable of line managers relation was tested for reliability and Cronbach alpha value showed that scale is reliable but in future researches this scale can be further improved.

In order to increase the response rate questionnaire was kept simple and short. All the dimensions of the model variables could not be added during operationalization. For future researchers it is suggested that other related variable such as meaningfulness could be added in the model. It can be tested that how meaningfulness mediates the relationship of personal development and engagement. Furthermore, line manager relation is used as a moderator of perceived opportunities for career development only. It can be tested as a moderator of different HR practices and could be investigated how employees in presence of line managers relation perceive the effect of different HR practices.

Data is collected from the employees of telecommunication sector of Lahore only. Results can be generalized if data from other cities of Pakistan is incorporated too.

8. Conclusion

Finally, this study concludes that in the telecom sector of Lahore, employees feel more engaged with their jobs if they perceive that organization is providing them adequate opportunities for career development. And if line managers build good relations with employees it further enhances the effect. As any organization's success depends on its employees having a certain type of

engagement, therefore, organizations should make sure that the available job resources provide the necessary psychological conditions to employees (Saks & Jamie, 2014).

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