



The Power of Employee Engagement: Unlocking the Full Potential of workforce – In Electronic Industry of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract. The contemporary business environment witnesses' fierce competition at all levels and industries are always looking to unlock the full potential of their workforce for gaining an edge over the competition. Employee engagement is the most important tool for unlocking that full potential of the workforce which in turn can drive growth and success in the sector. The electronic industry of Tamil Nadu is a thriving area with the goal to become the top manufacturers in the country. This in turn would require the industry to unlock the full potential of the workforce and this is something that can be achieved with the help of employee engagement. Hence, the aim of this article is to explore the power of employee engagement for unlocking the complete potential of the workforce in context to the electronics industry of Tamil Nadu. The entire concept of employee engagement has been discussed in the article in order to provide the required insights for the electronics industry in Tamil Nadu towards unlocking the full potential of the workforce. The strategies, challenges, metrics, implications and model have effectively been discussed to provide a comprehensive idea on the entire subject.

Keywords: employee engagement, electronics industry, employees, performance, commitment

1 Introduction

In today's competitive business landscape, organisations are constantly searching for ways to gain a competitive edge. While there are various strategies to achieve this, one critical factor that often goes overlooked is employee engagement. Employee engagement refers to the emotional commitment and dedication an employee has towards their work, organisation, and its goals (Sun and Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). It goes beyond job satisfaction and taps into the intrinsic motivation that drives individuals to excel. Employee engagement is very important for the growth and development of an organisation or industry since for engaged employees, the work is more than just a pay check. Engagement is also something that makes the employees passionate about the work that they do and

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this can further be reflected in the success and growth of the industry or organisation (Antony, 2018). Hence, employee engagement should be the primary focus of an organisation/industry in the way of unlocking their full potential for growth and success. One such industry that can significantly benefit from employee engagement is the electronics industry of the state of Tamil Nadu in India.

Tamil Nadu has emerged as the key market for electronics manufacturing in the country and is focused on becoming the top market in the country. Tamil Nadu aims to contribute 25% to the total electronic exports of India while further increasing the industry output to \$100 billion by 2025 (Sivapriyan, 2020). Currently, Tamil Nadu is the second largest manufacturing hub of the country accounting for 16% of the total exports and is home to the top 16 electronic manufacturers including Nokia, Samsung, Flex, Dell, Motorola, Salcomp, HP, and Foxconn. Electronics Hardware Manufacturing Policy 2020 that was released in September clearly highlights the intent of the state to become the leader in the sector (Sannith, 2023). However, one of the key areas that need to be the focus of the industry in the way of becoming the leader in the sector is employee engagement. The commitment and knowledge of the workforce will play a key role in Tamil Nadu emerging at the top of the ecosystem in the sector. Hence, the purpose of this article is to discuss the importance of employee engagement for unlocking the full potential of the workforce for the electronics industry of Tamil Nadu in the way of becoming the top electronics manufacturing hub.

In this article, we will explore the importance of employee engagement and develop effective strategies for fostering an engaged workforce. The challenges of employee engagement will also be discussed in the paper along with metrics to measure employee engagement. The paper will also provide a brief overview of employee engagement and Tamil Nadu's electronics industry to set the tone of the entire research.

2. Methodology

Employee engagement is an area of research that is quite popular in HRM and a significant amount of research has been done in the field. Hence, secondary sources of information have been used in the articles to provide the necessary insights into the topic. Peer-reviewed journals and online articles published by top media houses have only been used in the study to ensure its validity and reliability. Further, the design of the research is qualitative which involves gathering textual information on the topic. Qualitative design helps in providing a comprehensive idea into the topic and aids the collection of large amounts of data on the subject. On the other hand, the collected secondary qualitative data will be analysed with the help of themes. Multiple themes have been developed in the next section of the article to present the findings of the study in a structured and organised manner.

3. Findings

3.1 Theme 1: A brief idea into Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is something that has been defined by various individuals and organisations but there is no general definition of the entire concept. Gallup and organisation's definition of employee engagement is all about the level of involvement and enthusiasm with which employees perform their task in the organisation. Gallup as cited by Demovsek (2008) links employee engagement with higher level of commitment of the employees and positive emotional attachment with the work. Robinson et al. (2005) argues that employee engagement is the positive attitudes that employees have while doing their tasks in the organisation. Further, Institute of Employment Studies mentions that the overall concept of employee engagement is a 2-way relationship existing between the employers and employees where there are things that need to be done on both sides. Fernandez (2007) highlights the difference between employee engagement and employee satisfaction saying that both are not the same things and managers cannot just rely on employee engagement to retain their best talents. Employee engagement is also about the willingness of the workforce to commit themselves towards the success of the organisation and this is something that goes beyond job satisfaction and loyalty to the employer. Hence, the entire equation of employee engagement can be generated by aligning maximum contribution of employee and maximum employee engagement.

3.2 Theme 2: Tamil Nadu's Electronics industry

Tamil Nadu, a state located in the southern part of India, has a thriving electronics industry. The state has been successful in attracting investments from both domestic and international electronics companies due to its favourable business environment, skilled workforce, and infrastructure facilities. Here are some key aspects of the electronics industry in Tamil Nadu:

Electronics Manufacturing: Tamil Nadu is home to several electronics manufacturing companies, ranging from SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) to MNCs (multinational corporations) (Saripalle, 2015). These companies produce a wide range of electronic products, including consumer electronics, computer hardware, telecommunications equipment, industrial electronics, and automotive electronics.

- **Electronics Manufacturing Clusters:** The state government has established dedicated electronics manufacturing clusters to promote the growth of the industry. One such cluster is the Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) located in Sriperumbudur near Chennai. This cluster houses multiple electronics manufacturing units and provides infrastructure, logistics support, and common facilities to the companies.
- **Special Economic Zones (SEZs):** Tamil Nadu has SEZs specifically designed for electronics manufacturing (Ilavarasan and Hutchinson, 2013). These SEZs provide

various incentives and tax benefits to electronics companies, making it attractive for them to set up their operations. The SEZs in Tamil Nadu offer world-class infrastructure, including reliable power supply, transportation facilities, and connectivity.

- **Electronics Hardware Parks:** The state has also established Electronics Hardware Parks to encourage the growth of the electronics industry. These parks provide facilities such as ready-to-use factory spaces, research and development centres, and testing laboratories. The Tamil Nadu Electronics Manufacturing Support (Elcot) is responsible for promoting and facilitating the establishment of these parks.
- **Information Technology (IT) and IT-Enabled Services (ITES):** Tamil Nadu has a strong presence in the IT and ITES sectors, which are closely related to the electronics industry (Paramasivan and Muthusamy, 2017). Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, is a major IT hub in India and houses numerous software development companies, IT consulting firms, and business process outsourcing (BPO) companies. The IT and ITES sectors contribute significantly to the overall electronics ecosystem in the state.
- **Research and Development (R&D):** Tamil Nadu has several institutions and organisations focused on electronics research and development. The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT Madras) and Anna University are renowned educational institutions known for their contributions to electronics research. Additionally, the Electronics Corporation of Tamil Nadu (ELCOT) promotes R&D activities and supports innovation in the electronics industry.
- **Skilled Workforce:** Tamil Nadu has a large pool of skilled professionals in the fields of electronics engineering, software development, and IT services. The state has several technical institutions and universities that offer specialised courses in electronics and related disciplines. The availability of a skilled workforce is a significant advantage for companies operating in the electronics industry.
- Overall, Tamil Nadu's electronics industry is thriving and plays a crucial role in the state's economy. The government's proactive measures, infrastructure development, and skilled workforce have contributed to the growth and success of the industry in the region.

3.3 Theme 3: The Significance of Employee Engagement

Considering the growth that is being witnessed by Tamil Nadu's electronics manufacturing industry, a focus on employee engagement can serve as a catalyst to this growth and help achieve the goals more quickly. The significance that employee engagement can have for the industry have been discussed below.

Increased Productivity and Performance: Employees who are highly engaged are more likely to go the extra mile and deliver exceptional results (Turner and Turner, 2020). They have a genuine passion for their work, which leads to higher productivity levels and a willingness to take on new challenges.

Enhanced Employee Retention: Employees are less likely to look for new opportunities somewhere else when they feel a sense of loyalty and commitment towards the organisation. This further reduces turnover rates and enhances the rate of retention in the organisation.

Improved Customer Satisfaction: Engaged employees are more likely to provide exceptional customer service. The enthusiasm that these employees have towards work directly translates into exceptional customer service which contributes to the growth of the business.

Innovation and Creativity: Employees are more likely to engage themselves with problem-solving and offer innovative ideas when they feel committed to the business (Markos and Sridevi, 2010). They feel empowered to contribute their unique perspectives and this further leads to a more creative and dynamic work environment.

3.4 Theme 4: Strategies for Fostering Employee Engagement

Effective Communication: Transparent and open communication is vital in engaging employees. Regularly share updates, organisational goals, and provide opportunities for feedback. Hence, it is necessary to encourage two way communication to make sure that the employees feel valued in the company.

Recognition and Rewards: Acknowledge and appreciate employees' efforts and achievements. Recognize their contributions publicly and provide meaningful rewards such as bonuses, promotions, or professional development opportunities (Kaliannan and Adjovu, 2015). This fosters a sense of accomplishment and motivates them to continue excelling.

Professional Development: Companies need to invest in the growth of their employees by providing proper training programs, mentorship opportunities and workshops (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). Employees feel valued when their organisation supports their career progression, leading to increased engagement and loyalty.

Empowerment and Autonomy: Employees must be provided with a certain level of autonomy in the organisation when it comes to decision making. Granting them the freedom to innovate and make meaningful contributions boosts engagement and fosters a sense of trust and responsibility.

Work-Life Balance: Organisations also need to focus on promoting a healthy work-life by providing flexibility, paid leaves or holidays and wellness initiatives (McManus and Mosca, 2015). Encouraging employees to prioritise self-care leads to improved well-being, higher job satisfaction, and increased engagement.

Meaningful Work: Connect employees' roles to the larger purpose and provide them with a clear sense of the way they are contributing in achieving the goals of the business. This will help them in finding meaning with their work and make them more engaged in the process.

Leadership Support: Effective leadership plays quite an essential role in employee engagement. Leaders should set a positive example, communicate

expectations clearly, provide guidance, and offer support. Regular check-ins and mentorship programs can also foster a strong employee-manager relationship

3.5 Theme 5: Challenges of Organization with Employee Engagement

Organisations in the electronics industry might face various challenges when it comes to employee engagement and some of the most prominent challenges have been discussed below.

Communication: Effective communication is crucial for employee engagement, but it can be challenging to ensure consistent and transparent communication across the organisation (Matthews *et al.* 2018). HR managers must find ways to communicate with employees at all levels, keeping them informed about company updates, policies, and initiatives.

Leadership support: Employee engagement initiatives require the support and involvement of top-level management. However, getting leadership buy-in can be challenging, especially if they do not prioritise or understand the importance of employee engagement. HR managers may need to educate and advocate for the value of engagement to gain leadership support.

Creating a positive work culture: Building and maintaining a positive work culture is essential for employee engagement. However, it can be challenging to create an environment that is supportive and inclusive where employees can feel valued and committed (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006). HR managers need to develop strategies, policies, and programs that foster a positive culture and address any issues that may arise.

Diversity and inclusion: Ensuring diversity and inclusion in the workplace is crucial for employee engagement. However, managing diversity and promoting inclusivity can be challenging. HR managers need to develop diversity and inclusion initiatives, address biases, provide training programs, and create a sense of belonging for all employees.

Recognition and rewards: Recognition and rewards for their contributions is vital for engagement in the workplace for the employees. However, developing an effective recognition and rewards system that aligns with employee preferences and motivates them can be challenging. HR managers need to implement fair and consistent recognition programs that acknowledge and appreciate employees' efforts.

Employee feedback and satisfaction: Gathering feedback from employees and addressing their concerns is crucial for engagement. However, creating a feedback mechanism that encourages open and honest communication can be challenging. HR managers must establish channels for feedback, listen actively, and take appropriate actions to improve employee satisfaction.

Remote and dispersed workforce: With the rise of remote work and dispersed teams, engaging employees who are geographically scattered can be challenging. HR managers must find innovative ways to keep remote employees connected, engaged, and included in company culture and activities.

Managing change and uncertainty: Change initiatives and periods of uncertainty can impact employee engagement. HR managers need to effectively manage and communicate during times of change, ensuring employees feel informed, supported, and engaged throughout the process.

Measuring and evaluating engagement: Measuring and evaluating employee engagement can be challenging as it involves capturing subjective experiences. HR managers need to implement reliable methods to assess engagement levels, such as surveys, focus groups, or performance indicators, and use the data to inform their strategies (Saks and Gruman, 2014).

Overall, these challenges require HR managers to be proactive, strategic, and empathetic in their approach to employee engagement, continuously adapting to the evolving needs and dynamics of the workforce. Employee engagement plays a crucial role in improving employee retention and commitment within organisations.

3.6 Theme 6: Ways in which employee engagement contributes to employee retention and commitment

Sense of belonging: Engagement further helps feel a sense of belonging within the organisation and this leads to them developing a rather stronger relationships with their colleagues, supervisors, and the overall company culture (Geldenhuis *et al.* 2014). This sense of belonging fosters a supportive work environment and encourages employees to stay and contribute to the organisation's success.

Job satisfaction: Engaged employees are generally more satisfied with their jobs. When individuals feel that their work is meaningful, challenging, and aligned with their values, they are more likely to find satisfaction in their roles. Satisfied employees are less inclined to seek opportunities elsewhere, leading to higher retention rates.

Development and growth opportunities: Organisations that prioritise employee engagement often provide ample opportunities for professional development and growth. Employees who are engaged are more likely to receive training, mentorship, and opportunities to learn and advance within the organisation (Shahid and Azhar, 2013). This investment in employee growth not only enhances skills and knowledge but also demonstrates a commitment to employees' long-term success, fostering loyalty and reducing turnover.

Recognition and rewards: Effective recognition programs in place can make the employees feel valued in the company and also they might feel appreciated for the work that they do,. This recognition can take various forms, such as verbal praise, bonuses, promotions, or other incentives. Acknowledging employees' hard work and offering appropriate rewards boosts morale and reinforces their commitment to the organisation.

Open communication and feedback: Engaged employees thrive in environments where communication is transparent and feedback is encouraged. Organisations that foster open communication channels and provide regular feedback create an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. Engaged employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas, concerns, and suggestions, knowing that their voices are heard and their opinions matter. This level of engagement and involvement leads to increased loyalty and commitment.

Work-life balance: Organisations that prioritise employee engagement understand the importance of work-life balance. They support initiatives such as flexible work schedules, remote work options, and wellness programs. By promoting a healthy work-life balance, organisations demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of their employees, leading to higher retention rates and increased loyalty (Cartwright and Holmes, 2006).

Overall, employee engagement is integral for increasing commitment and motivation of the employee to give their best in achieving the set goals and objectives.

3.7 Theme 7: Measuring employee engagement

It is crucial for organisations in the electronic industry in Tamil Nadu to assess the level of commitment and satisfaction among their employees. While there are various methods to measure employee engagement, here are some commonly used approaches:

Surveys: Employee engagement surveys are a popular method to gather quantitative and qualitative data. These surveys typically include questions about job satisfaction, motivation, work environment, communication, and overall engagement.

Pulse Surveys: These are shorter, more frequent surveys that focus on specific aspects of employee engagement. They provide real-time insights and help identify any emerging trends or issues (Welbourne, 2016). Pulse surveys are useful for capturing immediate feedback and monitoring changes over time.

Focus Groups: Conducting focus group discussions allows employees to openly share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions in a facilitated group setting. This method encourages collaborative discussions and can provide rich qualitative insights into employee engagement.

One-on-One Interviews: Individual interviews with employees, either face-to-face or through a structured questionnaire, can provide in-depth information about their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improving engagement. These interviews allow for a personalised approach and a deeper understanding of individual perspectives.

Performance Metrics: While not solely focused on engagement, analysing performance metrics such as productivity, absenteeism, turnover rates, and customer satisfaction can indirectly reflect employee engagement levels (Matthews, 2018). A decline in these metrics may indicate lower engagement and serve as a starting point for further investigation.

Social Network Analysis: This involves examining the relationships and interactions among employees within an organisation (Kim *et al.* 2016). By analysing communication patterns and networks, organisations can gain insights into collaboration, information flow, and the strength of relationships, which can influence engagement levels.

Exit Interviews: When employees leave the organisation, conducting exit interviews can help identify any underlying issues that may have contributed to their decision. This feedback can provide valuable insights into areas that need improvement and help prevent future turnover.

The key to effectively measuring employee engagement is to use a combination of methods that suit your organisation's culture, goals, and resources. It is also crucial to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and transparency throughout the measurement process to encourage honest feedback from employees.

3.8 Theme 8: Impact of employee turnover as a result of poor employee engagement

The impact of employee turnover can be quite detrimental to the organisation and the reasons behind the same have been discussed below.

Cost implications: Employee turnover is costly for businesses. It requires resources to recruit, hire, and train new employees. Moreover, the loss of institutional knowledge and experience can impact productivity and hinder the overall performance of the organisation. High turnover rates lead to increased recruitment and onboarding costs, which can significantly strain a company's budget (Barik and Kochar, 2017).

Disruption in operations: Frequent turnover disrupts the stability and continuity of operations. When employees leave, there is a temporary gap in staffing, which can result in reduced productivity, delayed projects, and increased workloads for remaining employees (Rees *et al.* 2013). This can negatively affect customer satisfaction, product quality, and overall efficiency.

Reduced morale and engagement: High employee turnover is something that can lead to insecurity and instability among the employees of the organisation. Constantly witnessing colleagues leaving can erode morale and create a negative work environment. Employees may become disengaged, leading to decreased productivity and increased absenteeism (Ram and Prabhakar, 2011). Additionally, a high turnover rate can damage trust and loyalty within the organisation.

Impact on organisational culture: Employee turnover can disrupt the organisational culture. When employees with valuable knowledge and skills leave, it can impact the cohesion and continuity of the workforce. This can lead to a loss of institutional memory, difficulty in maintaining consistent processes, and challenges in preserving the company's values and identity.

Customer satisfaction and reputation: Continuity and consistency in customer service are crucial for maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. High employee turnover can result in inconsistent service delivery, as new employees

may lack the necessary experience and knowledge to effectively serve customers (Barik and Kochar, 2017). Unsatisfied customers can damage a company's reputation, leading to a decline in business and potential revenue loss.

Training and development setbacks: Employee turnover disrupts training and development efforts. Organisations invest time and resources in training employees to enhance their skills and knowledge. When employees leave shortly after being trained, the return on investment for training programs decreases. It also creates challenges in maintaining a skilled workforce, impacting long-term growth and competitiveness.

While some turnover is natural and can bring fresh perspectives and new talent to an organisation, excessive employee turnover is generally detrimental to an industry. It is in the best interest of businesses to focus on employee retention strategies like better compensation, growth opportunities, right environment and effective communication, to minimise turnover and its negative impact.

3.9 Theme 9: A review of 'Zinger Model on Employee Engagement' for unlocking the full potential of the workforce

Zinger Model is one of the most popular models of employee engagement which has been developed by David Zinger, a management consultant, for fostering relationships that helps in increasing employee engagement within the company. The model highlights 12 key actions that need to be taken by an organisation in the way of engaging their employees. These 12 key actions are further supported by two essential tasks of achieving results and crafting strategies for employee engagement. However, this particular review will focus on the 12 keys that are integral to employee engagement. The key at the centre of employee engagement is connect and refers to the connection that employees feel with the organisation. The next key is authenticity where the entire process of employee engagement must be authentic and not phoney at any moment in time (Zinger, 2023). Recognition is the third key of employee engagement which involves giving importance to the tasks that are done by the employees and recognising their efforts in the process. The next key is engagement which refers to a continuous effort from the management to engage the employees rather than conducting just a one-time survey. Enliven work roles is another key for employee engagement where the tasks and responsibilities assigned to the employees must be redefined which eliminates the aspect of boredom from their work (Zinger, 2023). Excel at work is the next key where the employees need to be motivated to give their best and become a star performer that is beneficial to the customers and organisation.

Further, esteem organisation is an important key of employee engagement where the employees feel proud to work at the company and serve as an ambassador to their organisation. Foster community is a strong key of employee engagement where the organisation serves as a community where employees have strong relationships with one another in the process. Serving customers is an integral key to employee engagement where the best level of service is provided to the customers by the organisation in the manner where the employees are provided

with the similar service. Developing a career is the next key for employee engagement where the employees have ample opportunities for professional growth and development in the organisation (Zinger, 2023). Energy is another vital key of engagement where the employees provide the organisation with a higher level of energy and stay motivated for the completion of the task. The last key to employee engagement is employee well-being where the entire work that the employees do at the organisation contributes to their well-being. Hence, all of these keys would contribute to effective employee engagement that would help in improving the organisational performance. Organisations need to develop appropriate strategies for all these keys for achieving employee engagement that would provide them with the desired result.

4. DISCUSSION

The above findings have presented the various aspects related to employee engagement in a structured and organised manner while highlighting the importance that it holds of the electronic industry of Tamil Nadu. The ambitious plan of the state of Tamil Nadu to become the electronics manufacturing hub of the country would require unlocking the full potential of the workforce and this in turn makes employee engagement quite important. Employee engagement can be defined as the level of commitment that employees have towards the organisation and efforts that they put in work. Tamil Nadu's electronic industry is thriving and playing a key role in the development of the state. Employee engagement can aid this growth and help the state achieve its growth at a faster rate in the electronics manufacturing industry. Employee engagement can increase productivity and performance of the industry while fostering creativity and innovation in the industry. However, achieving employee engagement requires organisations to implement appropriate strategies like effective communication, work-life balance, professional development, meaningful work, leadership support and many more. There are also various challenges that can be faced by organisations in the way of achieving employee engagement like communication, leadership support, diversity & inclusion and others. Employee engagement can further lead to employee retention by ensuring higher job satisfaction, work-life balance and sense of belonging. Organisation can further measure employee engagement with the help of pulse surveys, focus groups, performance metrics, social network analysis and exit interviews. On the other hand, being unable to achieve employee engagement can lead to employee turnover which can be quite detrimental to the organisation. The employee turnover due to poor engagement can lead to disruptions in operations, increased costs, setbacks, low customer satisfaction and lower morale. In regards to this, the Zinger model serves as an effective tool for higher engagement of employees in the organisation. The 12 keys of the model can be used by leaders or managers to achieve higher engagement and contribute to the overall growth of the business. Hence, it is only important for the electronics industry of Tamil Nadu to incorporate the concepts and models of employee

engagement to fast-track their goal of becoming the leading player in the Indian market.

5. CONCLUSION

There is generally a positive correlation between employee retention and employee engagement practices. When organisations prioritise and invest in employee engagement, they create a work environment that fosters satisfaction, motivation, and commitment among employees. As a result, employees are more likely to stay with the organisation for longer periods of time. While a positive correlation generally exists between employee retention and engagement practices, it's important to note that other factors such as competitive job markets, external economic conditions, and individual circumstances can also influence retention rates. However, organisations that prioritise employee engagement are more likely to create an environment that fosters higher retention. Employee engagement is not a mere buzzword; it is a vital aspect of organisational success. By investing in strategies to engage employees, organisations can unleash the full potential of their workforce, driving productivity, innovation, and customer satisfaction. Remember, engaged employees are not just committed to their jobs; they are committed to the overall success of the organisation. Embrace employee engagement as a strategic priority, and watch your organisation thrive in today's competitive landscape. Based on this, it can be concluded that Tamil Nadu needs to prioritise employee engagement for becoming the top electronics manufacturing hub in the country.

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