Review of Literature: Employee Engagement

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Abstract

Employee engagement is widely noted as being correlated with reduced workplace injury

and absenteeism, as well as increased productivity and satisfaction. This review of

literature is intended to confirm whether these benefits are readily corroborated. A

secondary purpose is to highlight the key points raised in the literature regarding factors

that influence employee engagement. Employee Engagement is of particular interest in

many areas of business, as organizations increasingly seek to measure and manage it.

The articles selected for this review fall into two categories: effects of engagement on

performance, and the effects of various other factors on engagement. That is, the

outcomes of engagement, and the drivers of increased (or decreased) engagement.

Review of Literature: Employee Engagement

On the subject of employee engagement, there are several definitions offered, and those I encountered in this review were generally complementary rather than contradictory. Employee engagement has been broadly defined as one's investment of self in their job role, expressed outwardly as their commitment to the organization and their willingness to expend "discretionary effort" toward organizational goals. Plainly speaking, this would perhaps be referred to as a willingness and habit an employee has to go above and beyond the minimum requirements of their role. This state of engagement is also commonly associated with great happiness or job satisfaction. The theoretical component parts that comprise this engagement are modeled and described variously in the different articles I reviewed, which will be covered in more detail later on. Most articles describe some spectrum of engagement, ranging from highly engaged (routinely going above and beyond) to actively disengaged (may actually be causing harm through lack of care or negative influence on coworkers).

Many and varied benefits of employee engagement have been asserted. Most commonly mentioned were increases in productivity and performance via mechanisms such as increased creativity, adaptability, and solution- or customer-orientation. Also frequently mentioned were improved safety (reduction of workplace accidents) and reduced absenteeism. Somewhat less frequently mentioned, but of definite note, were improved recruitment and employee retention. Anecdotally, I have observed the cost of recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new employees to the point that they are productive contributors is significant in many types of jobs, such that reducing the costs associated with turnover would be of importance to many managers. It also seems reasonable that employees who are high performers and who like their jobs and their employer

will talk about their experiences at work, and thus attract other, similar candidates, improving the quality of recruitment efforts while simultaneously reducing their expense.

It is no surprise that, given the potential benefits, employee engagement if of significant importance to many organizations. As such, the measurement of engagement is also a matter of great practical interest. In the articles I reviewed, there were two primary instruments, one which was repeatedly referenced and used (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale or UWES), as well as a second, more proprietary instrument (Gallup Q12) that was repeatedly referred to, but not often used directly. There is also a third instrument used in one article (Job Engagement Scale by Rich et. al. 2010, noted as being based on Kahn's conceptualization of engagement.).

The primary objective of this review is to corroborate the supposed benefits of increased employee engagement within extant literature. The secondary objective is to identify the factors which influence engagement, as described in said literature.

Effects of Engagement on Performance

Two of the articles reviewed focus on the effects that employee engagement has on individual and and organizational performance. The first, "Employee Engagement Factor for Organizational Excellence" (Stoyanova and Iliev, 2017), introduces engagement as defined by Wiley (2010), and describes it as the extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplish tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals. The article also refers to Gallup as a very widely recognized name associated with employee engagement, and mentions their characterization of engaged employees as people who are passionate about their work and feel emotionally attached to it. The measurement instrument developed by Gallup (the Q12 survey) is also mentioned and the questions in the survey are provided for reference. This article cites a

positive relationship between employee engagement and organizational excellence. This is seen in performance aspects such as profitability, productivity, and customer loyalty. Employee retention is also noted. Engaged employees are noted as advocates for the company in that they recommend the organization to both prospective customers and potential job applicants.

The article also mentions a variety of factors which can help to increase employee engagement. As these are exceedingly similar across all of the articles reviewed, they will not be commented on here. This article is mostly an analysis and commentary on prior research in the field of employee engagement. I believe that it is reasonably well constructed, however it could perhaps benefit from additional exposition on the mechanisms by which engagement results in improved organizational performance. These benefits are in some cases asserted with limited citation or explanation.

The second article in this vein, "Employee Engagement: A Strategic Tool to Enhance Performance" (Bhavesh and Kumar, 2016), includes both some new research (a questionnaire was developed and administered) as well as analysis of prior literature. This article notes the importance of the role that employees play in portraying the organization to customers and the public at large, as well as their contributions to effective operations of the companies for which they work. In this case engagement is described as a two-way process between employee and employer. This process has the goal of gaining commitment, motivation, and contribution from employees, toward the organization's goals. The study underlying this article has the stated objective of understanding the benefits of employee engagement, and notes that the employees are the primary differentiating factor for organizations. The authors also refer to Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement as the psychological and physical presence of an individual while they are performing a role, referring to their emotional involvement with the work they are doing.

Some interesting statistics from a 2013 report by Aon Hewitt Consultancy were also referenced. Aon estimated that a single disengaged employee causes an average $1,000.00 reduction in annual profit for the host organization. The report determined that a highly engaged workforce is up to 40% more profitable, and up to nearly 80% more productive when compared with a neutral or disengaged workforce. The article highlights the important role that employees play with a quote from J. W. Marriot, who founded Marriot Hotels: "If you take care of your people, they will take care of your customers and your business will take care of itself." Noting this critical role as the ambassadors of the organization to the world, it thus follows logically that treating employees appropriately in order to secure the best people, and their best efforts, is a matter of some importance for organizations to succeed in a changing business landscape. The article also makes note of several factors believed to enhance engagement. Again these are quite similar to those in the other articles, and will be discussed further along. It is interesting that much of the literature reviewed holds similar and complementary views on how to increase employee engagement, even when using slightly different definitions of engagement.

Factors Affecting Employee Engagement

The remainder of the articles selected for review focused primarily on understanding and influencing employee engagement through various means. The first, "The Role of Needs-Supplies Fit and Job Satisfaction in Predicting Employee Engagement" (Basit and Arshad, 2016) considers how employee needs are supplied by the job and organization, and how this balance, as well as job satisfaction, impact employe engagement. The hypothesis the article seeks to investigate is that needs-supplies fit predicts engagement, and that this relationship is mediated, or explained, by job satisfaction. This work is similar to the others in the benefits it cites as a result of increased engagement. This work differs principally in its focus on various types of fit,

and how they impact engagement. The most important concept here is needs-supplies fit.

Specifically, the needs of the employee and how well the job and organization supply those

needs. Person-organization fit and person-job fit are also discussed. I believe that person-

organization fit (also described as value congruence) is of particular importance and is an

interesting topic for further research in the field of employee engagement. It seems that if a

person's own values do not align with the values of their employer, it will not be possible for

them to connect emotionally and fully engage with their work, their colleagues, and the

organization. This article differentiates between engagement and the related concept such as job

satisfaction, in order to examine the effect of one on the other. This article also refers to Kahn's

conceptual definition of engagement, which is quite common in the selection of articles

reviewed. Basit and Arshad extend their viewpoint to also consider the self-in-role view and

how employees' psychological experiences affect their level of engagement. The psychological

experiences of interest are meaningfulness (feeling that one is receiving a return on their

investment of self in their work), safety (feeling able to engage oneself without negative

consequences to self-image, status or career), and availability (sense of having physical,

emotional, or psychological resources needed to personally engage in the work). These concepts

are among, or are easily inferred from, many of the drivers of engagement mentioned in this

article and the others reviewed. An important point noted from this work is that employee fit

perceptions evolve over time based on their work environment and how they experience it.

Work environment is something that leaders can influence, and as such is commonly

referred to in literature relating to engagement. Employees must perceive that the benefits

provided by the job and organization do in fact supply their needs, in order for them to connect

with the organization and engage in their work. In some cases, the supplies are there but the

employees may be unaware of them, or may not trust them without encouragement to try them out (as can be the case with training and development opportunities). Some drivers of engagement noted in this article are opportunities for employees to express their authentic selves in work that fits their preferred self-concept, which is similar to Gallup's concept of opportunity for employees to do what they do best at work. A positive relationship between needs-supplies fit and job satisfaction was posited prior to this article's underlying research, based on observation that people tend to have more positive attitudes when their needs are fulfilled (Locke 1976). This article expands upon that knowledge by adding engagement into matter and determining whether there is also a relationship between needs-supplies fit and engagement, and if/how job satisfaction influences that relationship. The article also makes use of social exchange theory to assert that when needs-supplies fit enhances job satisfaction, employees will that the organization cares about and is investing in them, and they will feel motivated to reciprocate. It seems the most obvious way that they can do so is by doing their best work. The underlying research for this article measured these three variables using a three-item scale from Cable and DeRue (2002) for needs-supplies fit, the three-item scale of Overall Job Satisfaction from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh 1979) for job satisfaction, and the Job Engagement Scale of Rich, LePine, and Crawford (2010), which was selected because it is based on Kahn's (1990) theories and definitions of engagement. Through administration of the questionnaires and analysis of the results, the authors did confirm that employee engagement is positively correlated with needs-supplies fit, and that needs-supplies fit is positively correlated with job satisfaction. It was also confirmed that job satisfaction does mediate the relationship between needs-supplies fit and employee engagement. Some interesting findings based on the control variables were that higher education

and higher tenure at an organization both correlated with higher engagement. I believe this

article makes a significant contribution in tying together pre-existing concepts that and

confirming relationships that seem to have been previously unconsidered. The article also

provided fairly thorough explanations (along with clear citation to gain more detail if desired),

which I believe increases its usability for practitioners.

The next article, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and

Employee Engagement", by Vorina, Simonic, and Vlasova (2017), also focuses on satisfaction as

a driver of engagement, without the additional consideration of needs-supplies fit. Similar to

"Employee Engagement: A Strategic Tool to Enhance Performance" (Bhavesh and Kumar,

2016), this work makes note of the important role employees play as the true face of an

organization to its customers, suppliers, business partners, and other constituencies such as

investors and the media - they note this concept with the simple phrase "companies are

employees." In this work, Job satisfaction is defined as the emotional condition of a person

regarding his or her position at work. (Warr & Inceoglu, 2012). This article also calls upon Kahn

(1990) for its definition of engagement, as well as that of Shanmuga and Vijayadurai (2014) and

Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006). These expand upon the concept of engagement by

describing it as one's emotional attachment to their job, coworkers, and employer, and as a work-

related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, respectively. The

authors further break the concept of engagement into three components: cognitive, emotional,

and behavioral. In addition to the aforementioned vigor, dedication, and absorption, the authors

mention that Maslach, Shaufeli, and Leiter (2001) also characterizes engagement as displaying

energy, involvement, and efficacy.

The authors of this article used both the Gallup Q12 survey and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure engagement, and a self-developed scale to measure job satisfaction. The authors provide correlation matrices for both of the engagement scales, which I believe is very helpful for practitioners hoping to isolate high value starting points for their organizations' engagement programs. The survey questions for both scales are also provided, which would be helpful for organizations planning to conduct surveys themselves if they were hitherto unfamiliar with these instruments. The authors do confirm the positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement, which agrees with and is expanded upon by the previous work.

The next and fifth article focuses on the learning climate of an organization, and how it relates to extra-role behaviors. The extra role behaviors identified are proactivity, knowledge sharing, creativity, and adaptivity, which are generally desirable behaviors, as well as commonly described benefits of increased engagement. This work, "A process model of employee engagement: The learning climate and its relationship with extra-role performance behaviors" by Eldor and Harpaz (2016), posits that the learning climate of an organization, which encourages the aforementioned desirable behaviors, is an antecedent of employee engagement. The authors chose to focus on learning climate as an engagement enhancer because of its association with two emerging phenomena: a trend toward self-molded careers, and increasing importance for employees to have access to ongoing learning opportunities. However, they feel that insufficient information has been paid to the link between how employees perceive the learning climate, and employee engagement.

Eldor and Harpaz work from Kahn's (1990) framework for engagement, and also consider a taxonomy added by Macey and Schneider (2008), which breaks engagement into three types: trait, state, and behavioral. The trait component may generally be considered to

encompass the personality traits that employees bring to work with them, and some are more subject to influence than others. The state component refers to the state of the environment in which the employee operates - these are under a relatively high degree of control from the organization. The behavioral component refers to the behaviors and outcomes resulting from the trait and state components. The authors also include Schaufeli and Bakker's (2003) contribution of engagement being a state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. The authors define the learning climate as the organization's beneficial activities in helping employees create, acquire, and transfer knowledge, such as opportunities for continuous learning, setting an example through learning leadership, as well as encouraging a shared vision. The perceived learning climate is, as follows naturally, that learning climate, as perceived by the employees themselves. The authors' assertion is that a positive learning climate will encourage engagement and result in positive behaviors, in particular proactivity, knowledge sharing, creativity, and adaptivity, and they describe these behaviors thusly: proactivity is represented by actions that are self-initiated, forward-looking, and seeking to change the situation, or oneself, knowledge sharing refers to processes by which individuals share implicit and explicit knowledge to create new organizational knowledge, creativity refers to production of new ideas, fueling innovations and improvements, and adaptivity refers to the ability to respond effectively to new circumstances.

In the research underlying this literature, perceived learning climate was measured using the Dimensions of Learning Organization Questionnaire (DLOQ) by Marsick and Watkins (2003). Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). As the work also considers the potential effect of job satisfaction and job involvement, those are measured using items from Schriesheim and Tsui's (1980) job satisfaction scale and

Kanungo's (1982) job involvement scale. The presence and degree of the desirable extra-role

behaviors were measured by surveying participants' supervisors. Proactivity and Adaptivity

were measured using Griffin, Neal, and Parker's (2007) scales for these two behaviors.

Knowledge sharing was measured using Van den Hooff and Hendrix's (2004) scale and

Creativity with Zhou and George's (2001) scale.

The authors found that perceived learning climate has a significant positive impact on

engagement at the employee level, and that employee engagement had a significant positive

impact on proactivity, knowledge sharing, creativity, and adaptivity behavior at the employee

level. It was also found that employee engagement more fully explains the relationship between

perceived learning climate and the four examined extra-role behaviors than the related concepts

of job satisfaction and job involvement.

This work contributes to overall knowledge on the subject of engagement by highlighting

and providing support for the importance of a positive learning environment, and showing it to

be a more valuable focus area for managers, in order to achieve the beneficial extra-role

behaviors, relative to the related concepts of satisfaction and involvement. When faced with

constant constraints and needing to prioritize, this knowledge has definite practical application.

To this point, all of the articles reviewed have focused on the positive benefits of

increased engagement, and on ways to encourage and foster such engagement. However, it is

possible to have too much of a good thing. The next article, "The Influence of Employee

Engagement on the Work-Life Balance of Employees in the IT Sector" by Sarjue Pandita and

Ritesh Singhal (2017), touches on some potential pitfalls. This work adds to practical knowledge

by helping practitioners see and understand potential risks they may encounter as they implement

efforts to manage engagement levels. The authors define engagement based upon prior works of

Kahn, Bakker, Schaufeli, and Gallup, (that is to say, essentially the same way that the other articles do), and define work-life balance as an employee's ability to effectively manage their work and personal responsibilities and commitments. This balance can be said to be good or bad based upon the level to which work intrudes upon an employee's personal time. The author's note from Kanter (1977) that organizational culture and policies affect more than just employees, they also affect the employees' families. It was also noted that prior research has confirmed a link between work stress and family stress, and that work-family conflict is caused by stress that occurs when an employee does not spend enough time with their family, particularly due to work responsibilities that cause a person to fail to meet their personal responsibilities to their family.

       The authors studied work-life balance based on questions related to stress and leisure as experienced by the employees. Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, a prevalent instrument in the works reviewed. The results indicate that employee engagement and work-life balance are dependent and correlated. The risk brought to the reader's attention is that the more engaged a person is at work, the greater the likelihood of work intruding on their family life, resulting in stress and conflict at home, with the resulting stress reducing the individual's energy and capacity for work, causing reduced work engagement. In short, a domino effect can occur. One of the factors measured was the frequency with which the individual's family asks them to leave their job. This highlights the need for employers to be fair-minded in how much they expect of employees, and not to take advantage of an engaged employee's willingness to take work home or put in unreasonably long hours, as this behavior is destructive to the employee's home life and overall well-being. The risk is that if an employer expects high levels of personal and family sacrifice for too long, the

employee will likely become ineffective due to exhaustion or burnout, or leave for another job in order to escape an untenable working environment.

I thought this was a very interesting concept, and I can relate to it personally, having a couple of borderline workaholics in my staff and feel a need to encourage them to take more time for themselves and to double check their instinctive prioritization - maybe it will be okay if an assignment takes an extra two days, and it would be better for the employee not to work over the weekend. The article itself was well-written and provided lots of explanation and commentary, as well as a good amount of data resulting from the surveys. I think these contribute to this article being a particular useful resource for practitioners seeking to increase engagement in their organizations or teams. While the focus was on IT sector employees in particular, I believe the concepts are general enough to apply to any knowledge workers.

The next two articles focus on the effect that leadership behavior, authentic leadership in particular, has on employee engagement. The first of these two, "Does Authentic Leadership Predict Employee Work Engagement and In-Role Performance? Considering the Role of Learning Goal Orientation" by Qaiser Mehmood, Samina Nawab, and Melvyn R. W. Hamstra (2016) works from the position that authentic leadership has an effect on both engagement and in-role performance, and proposes that learning goal orientation is a driver of those effects because it is a likely outcome of authentic leadership.

Learning goal orientation is described as an internal mindset that drives individuals to work at self-improvement by learning new skills. The authors propose that learning goal orientation may be predicted by authentic leadership largely because the behaviors associated with authentic leadership, such as acknowledging mistakes and learning from them, and a focus on continuous development of self-awareness and improvement of weaknesses, are behaviors

that set an example and may inspire employees to follow it. The self-development and learning that are part of authentic leadership are also key components of learning goal orientation. While there are other aspects of authentic leadership, it would seem fair to consider learning goal orientation as a subset of authentic leadership mindsets and behaviors, which is novel and noted by the authors when their conclusions are shared. According to Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) cited in this work, authentic leadership, in contrast to other forms of leadership, is principally about consistency, self-awareness, and fostering the continuing development of self and others personally and professionally. It is about self-actualizing, and supporting one's employees as they do so.

The authors measured authentic leadership using a scale from Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008), learning goal orientation using a scale from Button, Mathieu and Zajac (1996), and work engagement with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. In-role performance was measured by supervisors using a scale from Van Dyne and LePine (1998). The results indicated that authentic leadership did predict follower's in-role performance and engagement, through the mechanism of employee adoption of learning goal orientation. The definition of engagement was similar to that used in other articles. It is notable that in this work the authors took great care in designing and conducting their measurements, taking multiple waves of measurements and ensuring that leaders were rated by multiple followers when evaluating authentic leadership. I believe this would help protect against skew that might occur if a leader (whether knowingly or not) treats employees inconsistently.

The next article involving authentic leadership and engagement, "Does supervisor-perceived authentic leadership influence employee work engagement through employee-perceived authentic leadership and employee trust?" by Hsieh and Wang (2015) provides a more

thorough overview of authentic leadership and engagement concepts, as well of the concept of interpersonal trust in an organizational environment. Of the two, this is the one I would most recommend to a manager or similar practitioner, as the key points may be readily absorbed without extensive additional reading.

This work is adding to knowledge by testing authentic leadership from both supervisor and employee perspectives, which it asserts had not yet been done at the time of writing. The work also places a great deal of emphasis on trust between people as a key element in the supervisor-employee relationship, as well as in business and interpersonal relationships in general. Much like the preceding article this one describes authentic leadership as leaders behaving in ways that are consistent, self-aware, open to feedback, and continuously working on getting better. Employee trust is noted as vital to effective leadership, and also as something that can be earned when employees perceive that a leader's behavior is authentic. If a leader behaves honestly and fairly only some of the time, or if they behave well consistently, but their employees are unaware of it, then the employees may not trust the leader. The authors note that in social exchange theory, trust operates as an important influence on cooperative relationships, such as those between team mates or between employees and their supervisors.

The authors more fully define authentic leadership based upon the initial definition by Luthans and Avolio (2003), which was later expanded by Walumbwa et al (2008), as

> a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development.

The potential effect of authentic leadership to increase trust would in turn increase employee's willingness to engage in behaviors they might see as risky, such as taking on a difficult project, because they believe that the supervisor will support them through the process as they learn what they need to know in order to do the work. In order to perceive their supervisor as effective, it is important that employees believe their supervisor has both the intention and the capability to do what they say they will do. Leaders who have their heart in the right place but simply cannot deliver on their promises may also struggle with gaining the trust of their direct reports.

Generally speaking, it is important for organizational growth and sustainability that employees to have examples that they can look up to and emulate to their betterment, and it is the job of leaders to provide those examples.

In the research underlying this article, authentic leadership was measured using the scale from Walumbwa et al (2008), which was administered to both supervisors and their employees with appropriate adjustments to wording. This is the same scale as used in the prior article, although in that case it was administered only to employees. Employee trust was measured using a scale from McAllister (1995), and employee work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, as was common in the works reviewed. The authors found that employee-perceived authentic leadership was positively and significantly related with both trust and engagement, and that trust likewise related with engagement. Supervisor-perceived authentic leadership was also positively correlated with employee trust, engagement, and employ-perceived authentic leadership.

Practically speaking, I believe this work gives employers plenty of reason to look for and foster the development of authentic leadership within their organizations, as well as describing the characteristics so that leaders seeking to improve at their task have some guidance.

The final two articles in this review both focus on organizational surveys. The first, "How Should Organizational Leaders use Employee Engagement Survey Data" (Gable, Chyung, Marker, Winiecky. 2010) gives advice aimed at organizations that are already conducting engagement surveys in the process of walking the reader through a case study conducted at a nonprofit health insurance provider, evaluating how the organization responds to the annual survey results. The article describes engagement by way of describing some of the positive symptoms one might observe as a result, and notes limited evidence that engagement directly impacts an organization's bottom line. All the same, the authors note that it is viewed as a priority by a majority of organizations, and that there is research indicating that selected interventions can help increase engagement. This assertion is cited from Kotter and Heskett (1992).

It is noted that annual surveys are a common method for organizations to measure employee engagement, and that a common pitfall associated with the surveys is that organizations fail to take action upon the results. Imagine as an employee, asking your boss what you need to do better in your job, and then failing to acknowledge, appreciate, and act upon any of their suggestions. This is what it is like when organizations ask employees for their opinions and concerns, and then offer no response to the results. It is not a leap of inference that if this happens multiple times, employees might begin to think it is a waste of their time to offer their suggestions. The authors note that if no action is taken in response to feedback, engagement is unlikely to improve, and may even decline.

In order to determine how organizations use engagement survey results, the authors conducted two sets of interviews, one with division heads, and one with supervisors. The results of these interviews were used to create a questionnaire to assess how representative the

interviews were, with a larger set of participants. Participants were asked about how the

engagement survey results were communicated to them, as well as whether they felt the

engagement survey was a valuable tool. It turned out that those who received the results only via

email had the lowest opinion of the survey's value and usefulness, where those who received

communication about the results in both a group meeting and one-on-one with their managers,

had the highest opinion. This seems to suggest that the personal contact may give a cue to

supervisors that the survey is important to the organization and should be treated with some

priority.

A majority of supervisors (about two thirds) reported sharing the results of the survey

with their direct reports. I am particularly curious about the last third, and why they chose not to

share the information. It seems that discussing the results may lead to useful insights about

improvements that the organization or supervisor can make. This would be an interesting matter

to inquire about if future research is conducted on this topic. Also of interest is that division

heads generally perceived the surveys to be more valuable than supervisors did.

Supervisors were also surveyed as to their opinions of both benefits of the engagement

surveys, and barriers to their use. As one might expect, greater perceived benefit correlated with

higher perceived value of engagement surveys as a management tool. The authors leave us with

several suggestions for ensuring effective use of engagement surveys within an organization.

These are to consider and manage how results are communicated through the organization, and

provide a sample agenda of such a conversation. It is also suggested to communicate the results

to frontline employees as well as supervisors, and to integrate engagement survey results into

ongoing communications, in order to link actions the company takes to feedback obtained from

the survey, and demonstrate to employees that the organization values and uses this feedback.

By taking such an approach, the company can work to reduce the barriers to using survey results to drive positive change, while also normalizing communication about engagement.

The final article reviewed, "Perceptions of Organizational Surveys Within Employee Engagement Efforts" by Jeff Sugheir, Malcolm Coco, and Gundars Kaupins (2011), focuses more generally on employee surveys, rather than on engagement surveys specifically. Their work suggests that surveys are quite common, while engagement is perceived by the survey participants to be generally fairly low. They also found that the common subject for surveys was not directly engagement related, though it was followed closely by more engagement-oriented topics.

As most of the reviewed articles have done, this one also mentions the association between increased engagement and increased organizational performance, also mentioning improved recruitment and retention of top talent. These authors note, like the previous ones did, that while there are a variety of prescriptions for increasing engagement there is limited quantifiable evidence of their effectiveness. This work sought to explore the prevalence of organizational survey usage and compare it to perceived levels of employee engagement. This information was gathered by surveying HR Professionals attending chapter meetings of the Society for Human Resource Management in several cities in Texas in 2009.

While many studies on the effects of increased engagement are proprietary to the firms that develop the models and conduct the studies, the authors note one study (Irvine, 2009) which found that firms with the highest engagement performed approximately 50% better than those with the lowest engagement in regards to income, and another (Dernovsek, 2008) which indicated that higher engagement was correlated to lower absenteeism, reduced turnover, and increased productivity. That said, it is also noted that measuring some aspects of engagement via

survey is a generally accepted practice, and that there has been research indicating a relationship between business outcomes and employee opinions for quite some time.

Kahn's 1990 work is noted for its definition of engagement, and for distinguishing engagement from related constructs such as commitment and motivation, and firms like Gallup are credited for being particularly visible as employee engagement grows in importance. The authors note both organizational characteristics (such as effective leadership and clear job expectations) and employee-centered factors (such as opportunities for learning, a sense of contribution, and emotional connections to supervisors or colleagues) that are believed to support increased engagement with citations to various authors (Appendix A). Briefly mentioned is the work by Macey and Schneider (2008) to classify definitions of engagement into three groups: trait, state, and behavior, which provides a framework that can be used to understand elements of engagement and how interventions may be implied to encourage it. Macey and Schneider's work, as cited, points to two points of influence for organizations, in that leadership (specifically transformational leadership was mentioned) can directly influence state engagement by shaping the work and workplace, and indirectly influence behavioral engagement by fostering an atmosphere of trust.

The survey conducted was in three parts, the first on employee survey practices, the second on perceived levels of employee engagement, and the third on general demographic and organizational information. The survey was pre-tested on human resources management students. The authors suggest in their hypothesis that management follow-through on the results of surveys is essential to increasing engagement, and furthermore that employees need not only to feel that they are listened to, but also that management understands and acts on employee issues in a timely manner. This is a concept echoed in the previous article specifically, and is

very much compatible with points made in the other articles. Sometimes being heard is enough

to make a constituency feel better about an issue, but not always - sometimes action is needed.

The researchers found the use of surveys was quite common, with about two thirds of

participants reporting at least every other year, with slightly less than 60% reporting surveys at

least annually. The most common subject of survey questions (at 64.5%) was reward and

incentives programs. Other relatively common subjects were job satisfaction (55.5%), manager-

employee relations (54.8%), organizational communications (49.2%) and job responsibilities and

expectations (46.2%). While these are concepts related to and potentially able to influence

engagement, only the last subject is directly included in either of the most commonly cited

engagement measurement instruments, the Gallup Q12 and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale.

This is a point of potential interest, as the surveys in use may not focus on the variables that the

literature has identified to be of value or influence where engagement is concerned. Survey

respondents did indicate the use of questions more directly related to engagement, all at

frequencies below 40% - the authors make a point to note that in nearly 40% of cases, the

surveys were developed in-house.

The HR professionals responding to the survey generally perceived engagement to be low

(averaging between 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 to 4) based on questions that come from the Gallup

Q12 instrument (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999) with some modifications to wording and

some additional questions on related concepts such as organizational trust. The question on

organizational trust was in itself "conspicuously low scoring" at 1.56.

The primary conclusion made in this work is that engagement remains low despite

regular surveys, suggesting that it's not the surveys themselves that increase engagement. They

also suggest that engagement will occur despite the use of surveys because organizations fail to

take steps necessary to improve engagement. Some suggested steps are readily inferred from the measurement instruments, such as providing recognition, including employees in decision making and strategy, providing an environment of trust, with adequate challenge and autonomy, and opportunities for employees to learn and develop themselves.

The authors suggest principally that organizations take care to connect survey results to subsequent actions, and to ensure they are observable by employees. They also suggest that the surveys in use could be improved, and offer the idea of providing additional training or consultation for those developing the surveys, or sourcing the surveys from outside the organization.

Conclusions

A total of eleven articles pertaining to employee engagement were reviewed, with the goals of ascertaining if the popularly reported benefits of increased engagement are readily supported in the available literature, as well as identifying commonly suggested factors shown in the literature to encourage increased engagement. While the specific focus of each article varied, they fell into two broad categories: demonstrating benefits of engagement, and variables that influence engagement. In the latter category, articles fell loosely into the effects of the organizational/work environment, leadership, and survey practices on engagement.

The previous work of Kahn, Macey, Schneider, Schaufeli, and Bakker were all very commonly cited within these articles for definitions of engagement, with expansions from other authors as suited the specific focus of each work. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, attributed to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) by some authors and to Schaufeli and other collaborators in other articles, was very consistently used for measuring engagement. Likewise, Gallup's Q12 survey was attributed to a couple of different sources. It also was commonly

mentioned, though somewhat less commonly used. All articles appeared to be well put together, and to support their hypotheses adequately. I have a definite preference for the works by Vorina, Simonic, and Vlasova; Basit and Arshad; Eldor and Harpaz; Hsieh and Wang; and Sugheir, Coco, and Kaupins, as these works are notable for the additional context and explanation they provide, making them more suitable for broader audiences. These are the ones I would consider recommending to colleagues.

The objectives of the review were met, in that I have found ample evidence of prior research demonstrating benefits correlated with employee engagement such as increased productivity and profitability. Likewise, I was readily able to identify actions that can be taken to increase engagement, which are well supported in the literature, such as ensuring that work expectations are clear, employees have the resources they need to do their work, and that their efforts are recognized.

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Appendix A

The below table summarizes the most commonly cited work associated with key points

from the eleven reviewed articles.

Work Cited	Citations
Kahn W. A., (1990), "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 33, pp. 692-724.	13
Griffin, M. A., Neal, A., and Parker, S. K. (2007). A new model of work role performance: Positive behavior in uncertain and interdependent contexts. Academy of Management Journal, 50, 327–347. 10.5465/AMJ.2007.24634438.	6
Macey, W. H., and Schneider, B. (2008). The meaning of employee engagement. Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 1, 3–30. 10.1111/j.1754-9434.2007.0002.x.	4
Schaufeli, W. B., and Bakker, A. B. (2003), UWES – Utrecht Work Engagement Scale: Test Manual, Department of Psychology, Utrecht University, Utrecht.	3
Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., and Hays, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology, 87 (2), 268-279.	3
Albrecht, S. L., Bakker, A. B., Gruman, J. A., Macey, W. H. and Saks, A. M. 2015. Employee engagement, human resource management practices and competitive advantage: An integrated approach. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance 2(1): 7-35.	3

Appendix B

Below is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, as attributed to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) and Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002) in the articles reviewed. There are two versions, one with 9 items, and one with 17. UWES-9 is provided below for reference, UWES-17 was not used in the articles reviewed.

UWES-9 (Vorina, Simonic, and Vlasova, 2017)

S1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy,

S2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous,

S3. I am enthusiastic about my job,

S4. My job inspires me,

S5. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work,

S6. I feel happy when I am working intensely,

S7. I am proud of the work that I do,

S8. I am immersed in my job,

S9. I get carried away when I am working.

Appendix C

Gallup's Q12 survey as also mentioned in multiple articles, and is included below for reference.

Gallup (Vorina, Simonic, and Vlasova, 2017)

G1. I know what is expected of me at work.

G2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

G3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

G4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

G5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

G6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.

G7. At work, my opinions seem to count.

G8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

G9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.

G10. I have a best friend at work.

G11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

G12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Appendix D

Citations noted from reviewed articles are included below.

Albrecht, S. L., Bakker, A. B., Gruman, J. A., Macey, W. H. and Saks, A. M. 2015. Employee

engagement, human resource management practices and competitive advantage: An

integrated approach. Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance

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