

Factors effecting frontline employees

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify the association of employee's engagement with job and how this relationship is affected by mediating variables such as job autonomy, strategic attention, role benefit and turnover's intentions. A conceptual model was developed. The conceptual findings showed that employee's engagement is closely related with turnover intentions. Moreover the research showed that job autonomy, role-benefit, strategic attentions are also highly correlated with job engagement. One general consequence of this study is to measure the effect of employee engagement on turnover intention. This paper enhances the awareness about elements which are related with turnover intention and job engagement.

1. Introduction

Frontline employees play an important role in the hospitality firm. Customers' evaluation of a firm depends on the quality of service of its employees (Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011). The frontline service provider provides an opportunity to tailor in real time (Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996). To remain competitive, organizations and their employees need to make creativity in their jobs. From literature, it is observed that creativity is an important ingredient to remain competitive in the world (Sousa and Coelho, 2011).

It is emphasized that customizing the delivery of service on the frontline is a key to customer satisfaction (Bettencourt and Gwinner, 1996). Frontline employees especially in service firms have an importance since frontline employees consist of three types of peoples.

- i) The customers
- ii) The organizations and
- iii) The frontline employees

The front-line employees are caught in the middle of customers and organizations (Singh, 2000). In past studies, employee commitment has been extensively discussed. In recent years, there has been a great deal of interests in employee engagement. Many authors have suggested that employee' outcomes refer to the employees' engagement; organizational effectiveness and performance (Saks, 2006).

As frontline employees have boundary spanning roles, hence they act efficiently and effectively to make the organization profitable and efficient. All frontline employees have a chance to tailor the situation at the exact time rather than when firms offer their services (Smith and Zenou, 2003). Consider the frontline employees, when it is required from organization to only seek their evaluations into overall assessments of training outcomes then it is good to have a look at the performance of frontline employees (Rust et al., 1996). This research is focused on employees' engagement and it requires many researchers to take part in the research which is related to employee engagement. Specifically this article focuses on employees of all types of organizations. Even though a lot of work has been conducted in the past, this paper is taking different types of organizations under consideration for the first time that have empirically

studied with certain backgrounds and properties of commitment of employees with their organizations. This research is started with a concept of commitment of employees then there is a debate about the factors which are related to employees' engagement. And in the next step a model represents the whole effects of different variables related to study. This research concludes with the limitations, implications and future research.

2. Literature review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Employee Engagement

Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2011) defined job engagement as the job involvement and organizational commitment. Workers are engaged with their jobs when they are physically satisfied; hence psychological conditions have positive influence in job engagement. Silva (2006) suggested that organizational engagement consists of four major factors i.e.

1. Commitment to the organization
2. Commitment to immediate supervisors
3. Commitment to top management
4. Commitment to work groups

Shuck et al. (2011) described that there is a commitment and separations between the roles. It describes that employee engagement was the expression of one's preferred-self and the promotion of connections to others. Disengagement was posited to be the withdrawal of one-self. Gray and Daymond (2010) suggested in his model that 51% of employee engagement depends on senior leadership, 31% on understanding & belief in company direction, 26% on direct line managers, 24% on involvement on company decisions, 22% on understanding of key business issues and 21% on training & development.

Kiliç-Çakmak (2010) described another name of employee engagement as attitudinal commitment, whereas he also defined it as behavioral commitment. Other researchers have demonstrated that the relationship between co-workers and supervisors have an effect on job satisfaction which resultantly affects job engagement (Kim, 2009). Mentor, boss, attitude, environment, fringe benefits effect the job satisfaction and job contentment which consequently affect the employee engagement with the job (Carraher, 2011).

2.2 Antecedents to Employee engagement

2.2.1 Role Benefit

Perceived role benefit, which is inherent in frontline jobs, is a construct which is derived from the role theory. Organization justice determines the ways by which employees influence other work related variables. Trust plays a very important role in role enlargement; it is useful for both theoretical and practical purposes (May et al., 2004). Kim et al. (2011) found that functional capabilities influence the strategic roles. Roles are malleable and can be changed by the behavior of direct leader.

However this study suggests that role-benefits play a very important role in the job engagement, higher the role plays in the organization higher will be the job engagement. So this study hypothesized that role benefits are positively related with job engagement.

H₁: Role benefits are positively correlated with job engagement.

2.2.2 Job Autonomy

Esser and Olsen (2011) defined that autonomy is sovereignty. It is an inner endorsement of one's actions. Autonomy is a freedom in decisions, values and interests. No utility can be accomplished which is deprived of autonomy. Improvement of the autonomy will increase the functions of employees (Arnellos et al., 2007). Autonomy is an authority of employees in the

organization. Autonomy promotes positive influence but in many strategies low autonomy give better results rather than higher autonomy (Thompson and Prottas, 2006). According to the Esser and Olsen (2011), research shows that autonomy is not only a dominant entrepreneurial motivation but also it is entrepreneurial satisfaction. Autonomy is crucial action for the friends that focus on the enterprising way of life.

Arnellos et al. (2007) proposes that without autonomy it is difficult to perform the function. Autonomy is the ability to perform the actions and to achieve the aim is possible when there is autonomy in actions. It is a goal oriented approach which can be performed when there is autonomy. This study from the previous research concludes that autonomy has a positive impact on employee commitment with the organization. Therefore there is a positive relationship between autonomy and job engagement.

H₂: Job autonomy is positively correlated to engagement of employees.

2.2.3 Strategic Attention

In early 1960's, it was believed that strategies does not have an impact on business performance but later it started to receive the significant importance and attention. Simons (1991) asserted that the strategic roles influence the functional capabilities and global strategy and external players shaped the development of its functional capabilities. Strategic roles are changed with the development of subsidiary. Three major factors effect in changing a subsidiary's role i.e. first is to assign a work and second is to see which forces that affect the local market. Moreover, according to Day (1999) each employee in the organization should contribute in strategies by following five ways:

First a strategy must be according to mission of the organization.

Second give proper weightage to the idea of employees

Third to get feedback after the implementation of the strategy will be very fruitful for management

Fourth all employees should understand how to deal with the customers.

Fifth a strategy dealing with how to attain an effective and efficient level of performance should be made according to goal.

This study determines how strategies can be implemented and tags as strategic attention. For this purpose, a plan and an action is necessary that is performed to increase the performance and efficiency of the organization. Strategies which are made by the upper level management without taking employee importance into consideration can defect the whole organization's roles, productivity, performance and efficiency. But if it is made with the involvement of employees 'decision making it helps how the issues related with the organization can be dealt and what actions can be taken (Bonn and Fisher, 2011). Strategic attention in this study acts as a guiding principle for frontline employees. In short, this study elaborates that engagement have a positive association with strategic attention. Hence third hypothesis is made on the basis of this study i.e.

H₃: Strategic attention is positively correlated to engagement of employees in job.

2.2.4 Turnover Intention

This study links employee engagement with turnover intention. As Mentor, boss attitude, environment, timing, leaves, compensation benefits and attitude towards benefits are closely related with the engagement of employees' job and as a result it affects the turnover intention. Employee compensation is a major cost factor of production, which is related with the job engagement (Carragher, 2011). The future firm-risk also affects the turnover intentions of employees in the organization. In this research, at the director level turnover's intention is

discussed, and then it examines what is the difference between turnover from that of outside director and inside directors. Inside directors are more sensitive than outside director as if organizational performance is at risk then they will leave the organization (Asthana and Balsam, 2010). As this paper is concerned with how job engagement is linked, results have an impact on the turnover intentions of frontline employees. The turnover intention is also affected with dispositional traits. There are two intentions social and real intention. Social is a predictor of real intention and social intention is related with turnover intention (Chiu and Francesco, 2003).

Morrell et al (2004) described that turnover intention can be voluntary as well as involuntary. Voluntary turnover is related with the willingness of employees. While involuntary turnover is to fire from the organization to employees at organization will. It also suggests that turnover intension can be avoidable. For example employees who want to leave their jobs according to their desires may be due to the fact that they want to increase their salaries, or family problems, or leaving for instance a new office will be "avoidable". Hence from the above discussion we can say that employee engagement is negatively associated with turnover intention.

H₄: Engagement of employees in job is negatively correlated with employee turnover intention.

3. Research Model

Figure 1 provides instant information about the variables which are related with turnover and engagement of employees with the organization. As shown in the diagram that role benefits, strategic attention, autonomy have a positive association or have a positive effect on employee engagement while employee engagement have a negative association with turnover intention. It is shows in the diagram that engagement of employees acts as mediating variable which affect both independent and dependent variables

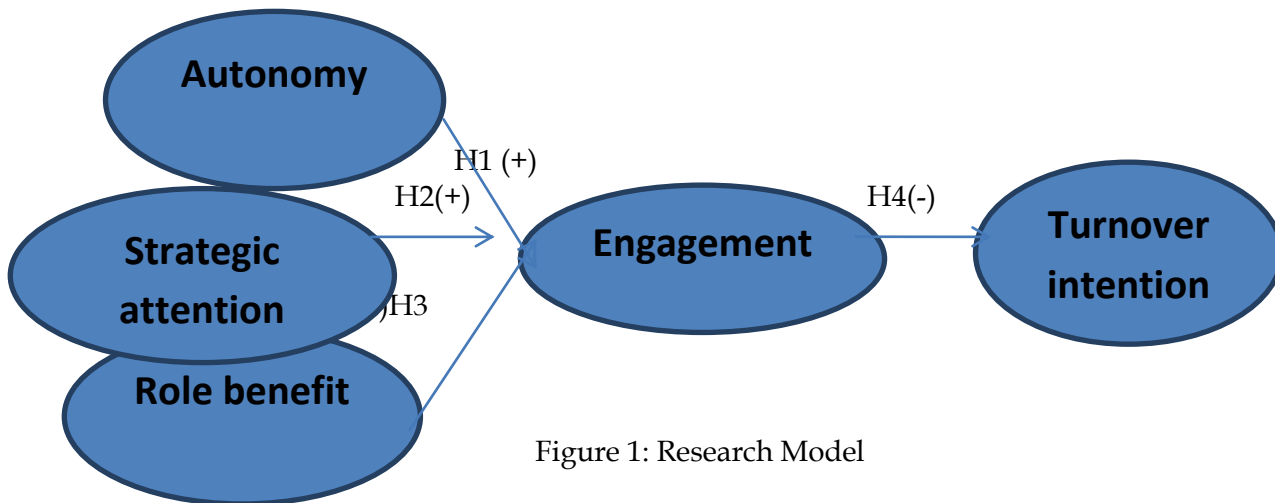


Figure 1: Research Model

4. Discussion

This study has analyzed the effect of employee engagement on turnover intention. It has also discussed the others variables which affect the turnover intention. The findings are highly relevant with the role of frontline employees and engagement of frontline employees as employee engagement is considered as a key factor of success of an organization (Saks, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004). However previous research had a focus on the performance of an organization, this research is inspired by the ideas of service providing firms (Heskett et al., 1997).

In sum, this study finds that engagement of the employees with the organization is a key factor for the effectiveness of a firm. Many variables which can enhance the engagement of employees with their organization are autonomy, strategic attention and role benefits. On the other hand, turnover intention reduces the employee job engagement. In literature, it is also observed that there are some negative aspects of roles which are role conflict, role ambiguity, and role stress (Slåtten and Mehmetoglu, 2011). According to literature, strategy has a vital role in the organization. And when organization doesn't implement the strategy in the organization then it becomes worthless. This study proves that autonomy plays a vital role for the performance of an organization.

4.1 Implications

On the basis of finding, this study suggests managers to focus on how they can get the benefit from the use of roles. From the role perspective, how employees can enhance their performance; develop their career and enhance their status because career development is one of the most important factors for the employee development.

Autonomy is one of the major factors in an organization. In this study, autonomy is a second factor. And it is mentioned that managers give the opportunity to employees that they can make their decisions independently and it is necessary that to give the employees a chance to take part in the decision making or when goals are made which can increase the effectiveness of organization. It is also necessary to implement the strategy in the organization and to ensure that the strategy is implemented in the organization because strategic attention has an important role in employee engagement and turnover intention.

4.2 Future Research

This study is based on hospitality firm, but this study can be done for other firms. And other variables can also be used as independent variables like employee performance, organization effectiveness etc. In future, this study would be empirically tested.

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