The impact of employee perception and engagement on firm performance: leadership perspective

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Keywords

Abstract

Purpose: This study begins with a view, that employees use various degrees of their cognitive, emotional and physical selves at their workplace, which has an influence on both an individual and the company. The aim of the study was to study if Employee perception has a strong influence on engagement and probably a predictor of company performance.

Methodology/Approach: A quantitative, theory-generating study of a sporting goods company in the United Kingdom was conducted by means of a self-administered questionnaire survey as a tool to explore the emerged hypothesis, to understand employees personal engagement based on their perceptions concerning the various facets of the workplace, such as, respondents were asked about their view of the company they work, employee's attitude towards management, career, performance and pay followed by their job, how they perform their role and their self-initiatives.

Findings: The investigation defines and illustrates psychological specification i.e. perception and its effects on the physical behaviour i.e. engagement through theoretical concepts and research. The two variables had shown relativity amongst each other and a very strong significance with a probability of income and career growth affecting their perception towards their engagement. Furthermore, the study is supported by findings and recommendations for relevant future research.

Limitations/Recommendations: This research took place under time constraints; therefore, it was limited to a smaller target population (58 respondents) of a specific region (City of London). Furthermore, the research was conducted on a very busy business period (Easter) this workload burnouts probably may have an adverse influence on the perception and engagement data. A qualitative research is recommended to further understand the cognitive aspects in a deeper and profound manner which may provide richer data to support the hypothesis and recommending this study to be continued in a timely manner to analyse all the pertinent information periodically on a larger scale of population, time and region.

1. Introduction

This study begins with the argument that people occupy roles at work they are the components of the mechanism in which they apply various different elements of themselves in the roles they occupy such as emotional, physical and cognitive functions. The research here is designed to generate a conceptual framework within which to understand the employee's relationship with the company i.e. their perception towards the company and its influence on their engagement that may, as a result impact company's performance and suggesting directions for future research on another important dependent variable mentioned later in this section of the study (Kahn, 1990), using these definitions as guidelines the research will focus on two most crucial variables, 'Employee perception' and its effect on 'Employee engagement' (Sporting Goods retail company U.K); The attention is on individual performance who are the basic unit on which company performs, what they perceive, the action they take in that snapshot of time when research is conducted that contributes to the company's wellbeing (Campbell and Wiernik, 2015; Saunders et al, 2016).

There is no single universal definition of employee engagement; nonetheless too much time and efforts have been invested in answering the question 'What is employee engagement?' However, despite the ambiguous nature of this question, there are a few key constructs which has emerged through past research, such as involvement, commitment, collaboration, motivation, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, etc. Beyond these earlier found constructs employee engagement is a crucial predictor indicating the two-way relationship between the employer and the employee in delivering positive organisational performance (Markos and Sridevi, 2010; Bridger, 2015).

Many believe that employee engagement should not be classified through a single definition and should be something that you feel, and you know when you see it. Organisations may choose not to define employee engagement and instead create a great work environment and make employee understand the way senior management engage and talk within the organisation (Bridger, 2015). In the year 1990 William Kahn referred in his research particularly the psychological perspective of engagement splitting into 'Personal Engagement' (extent to which people employ and express their personal selves on their job) and 'Personal Disengagement' (extend at which people defend and withdraw their personal selves from their job) instead of the term employee engagement, from which the researcher identified meaningfulness, safety and psychological conditions that impact employee engagement i.e. their perception (Kahn, 1990).

Engagement of the employee is something that the employee has to offer, and may not be an objective setting process or a contract (Bridger, 2015), it is a willing contribution of employee's intellectual efforts by making a positive presence to performance, emotions and connections with others at work creating opportunities for work-related improvements (Alfes et al, 2010), other academia's tend to talk about work engagement in contrast to employee engagement, passionate employees are those who are engaged and dedicated to their work, describing work engagement as affective-cognitive state defined through high level of mental resilience and energy while working, willingness to exert effort with persistence, strongly involved with enthusiasm and full concentration in one's work (Costa et al, 2014). Most of the academic research has been focused on work engagement which is constrained purely in the psychological discipline; this study will focus on the employee perceptions and feelings and how that feeling relates to their engagement (Gourlay et al, 2012). this links between the managerial practices through employees being engaged (Purcell, 2014).

2. Literature Review

Employee engagement as a research subject in itself is infinite; the limitation of this article is it focuses merely on the basic concepts of employee engagement through recent academic literature. It has two major parts, Firstly, this article tries to understand the concepts of employee perception (Borkowski, 2005) correlated to employee engagement and secondly the article discusses the factors and drivers leading to employee engagement and its impact on organisations performance indicators (MacLeod and Clarke, 2014).

Management in this day and age of business unanimously agree that added efficiency and responsiveness is required for a business to perform than any other times in history (Chopra and Mendli, 2013), to fulfil these elements many scholars and researchers have contributed their part by developing best practices for managers, thus increasing organisational performance focussing on operational and process improvisations, therefore, techniques of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR) were recognised in the latter half of the century. As technology evolved business operations continue to get more sophisticated creating a higher pressure on management to employ employees with professional and technical skills (Robinson et al, 2004).

These professional and knowledgeable workers have a different set of demands compare to the old totalitarian way of management, they expect status, job satisfaction, and autonomy at work. These facts have compelled managers to divert their attention towards employee's side of organisations. A later quarter of this century has experienced concepts like employee commitment and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) changing the approach of management in realising that

efficiency and responsiveness come through employee's commitment and ability, moreover, how to keep employees engaged in their job (Campbell and Wiernik, 2015). Without wilful involvement and engagement of the employees it is established that any improvement initiative taken by the management cannot be successful (Robinson et al, 2004; Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

2.1 Reviews on Employee Perception

The management mantras of the 1970s and 1980s were all about prioritising profitability and focusing on market share, as per Harvard Business Review (2008) this conception has recently taken a detour towards understanding the new economics of service, now the employees and customers are the core focus of the management. This focus evolved as 'Service-Profit Chain', where the relationship is established between employee satisfaction, loyalty, productivity, customer loyalty, and profitability. Most of the employee satisfaction comes through the 'Internal Quality' of a work environment; internal quality is measured by the feelings, attitude, and perception of the employee towards the company, their colleagues and the job they do (Heskett et al, 2008).

In the magazine Grocer Hayhurst (2004, p.72), argues that "Energy, Passion and Enthusiasm is contributed by the employees only when they feel involvement and closeness to their company, which in return results in higher productivity, greater drive to perform and better end results" through this insight, it becomes important to understanding employee behaviour and perceptions that engage them in influencing company performance (Maxham et al, 2008).

Employees evaluate the fairness of their contribution through what they input related to work and what's the outcome from which they derive like pay or career etc., this degree in which an employee enjoys the fairness of their input (efforts, experience, and job related stress) is defined as distributive justice, furthermore, there is procedural justice which involves employees perceived fairness of policies and procedures applied for decision building towards them, and finally interactional justice which justifies fair treatment whilst interacting with their superiors. These justifications drill down to the perception of the employee's feeling that the company has treated them fairly, honestly and courteously, these three facets of justice combine to promote the welfare of the company performance (Brockner et al, 1997; Maxham et al, 2008).

Employee perception of work is an interpretation of his/her engagements to make the work environment meaningful and this has an impact which is significant on the workplace etiquettes, attitude, and behaviour, particularly at drastic times when organisation initiates its transformation to change the business model (Stephen and Timothy, 2012). In today's extremely competitive business environment, change is only the answer for a company's successful competitive advantage and companies assume that always such changes results into success (Porter, 1985). However, such changes have serious ramifications on employee's attitudes, morale, feelings, emotions, and perception as a whole because change influences compelling modifications on employee behaviour and actually it is an emotional experience on his/her eternal and attitudinal characteristics, therefore, it is argued that in achieving organisations purpose it is critical that employee workplace attitude is positive. These employees' perceptions of organisational change may influence facilitation or opposition to an organisation change strategy (Katsaros et al, 2014).

2.1.1 Definition of Employee Perception

The word 'Perception' has various definitions. However, the nature of perception cannot be judged as either good or bad in reality, because perception is a very subjective matter and completely relies on an individual's unique way to perceive (Mung et al, 2011). It is a sense which can be felt by all the sensory organs of a human body (Eyes, Ears, Skin, etc.), hence, perception can affect one's actions. Individuals when sense certain situations or changes they integrate, analyse, react and finally conclude with a decision, this gives rise to an emerging concern on an employees' perception in an organisation (Mung et al, 2011).

Perception sometimes defined in psychology as 'The consciousness of particular material things presents to sense' (Angell, 1906). It is not imagination, but perception is what the eye sees and

reacts on the situation instantly ignoring the details and different facets that are responsible for this situation, unless one focuses to see the details which combined to create this situation or a change, however, our immediate reaction to the situation is what is presented as a whole, ignoring that there are many influencing parts involved to create this situation or a new idea, e.g. we see a word as a whole and not as many separate alphabets. Perception represents the direct, systematically organised reaction of an individual upon his environment (Angell, 1906).

There have been several gaps between researchers and scholars in understanding how employee perception changes during new organisational efforts and how does work attitude and characteristics influences these changes. In all the cases of organisational readiness to change relating to management trust and support, perception is the catalyst and the main influencer for a successful organisational change (Katsaros et al, 2014). In this modern era of business, employee perception has gained utmost importance to organisations, because the feeling of employees can affect their decision making in addition to their behaviour towards work which can affect the overall performance of the organisation. Employees exert less effort in performing their everyday work when they perceive that the organisation is not committed towards them, such employee behaviour, in other words, is recognized as organisational psychology (OP) and organisational behaviour (OB) (Campbell and Wiernik, 2015), this merely can just be their attitude, personality, perception, learning, and motivation are known as individual engagement and in many cases has nothing to do with reality (Robbins and Coulter, 2012).

2.1.2 Theories on Employee Perception

In Chapter 3 by Pickens, J. (2005), Borkowski refers to a work by Lindsay and Norman (1977) Perception is the process in which organisms interpret and organise sensation to create a meaningful experience. In another term, an individual is confronted with stimuli or a situation (Borkowski, 2005). An individual may interpret depending on his/her experiences that may produce something meaningful through these stimuli; however, this interpretation may be completely poles apart from reality. A person's awareness of these stimuli or motivators plays a major role in the perception theory. This may limit a person's receptiveness depending on his/her beliefs, attitude, motivation, and personality (Borkowski, 2005). Perception can be correlated to many other theories in combination such as Heidlers (1958) 'Attribution Theory', Broadbent (1958) 'Filter Model', John Stacy Adam's (1963) 'Job Motivation' or 'Adams Equity Theory', Abraham Maslow's (1943) 'Theory of Hierarchy of Needs' and Fredrick Herzberg's 'Two-Factor Theory' of the 1950-60s (Rees and French, 2013).

2.1.3 History of Employee Perception

The father of Psychology Wielheim Wundh in 1879 Germany began his psychological investigation of human behavior with the study of perception. Since that time understanding, human behavior gained great significance in the field of psychology. The most revealing and important outcome of the study was that each person has a unique experience and no two people interpret sensations, situations, or their feelings the same way. Giving the example of lights, when sequentially flash on and off are perceived as motion. The investigations showed that people, in order to interpret and react to their immediate environment, utilize visual and auditory causes around them. Furthermore, people based on their external experiences react to their internal feelings, ideas in addition to other personality experiences (Otara, 2011; McLeod, 2008).

2.1.4 Employee Perception Measurement

There has been a significant attention on the subject of measuring human perception for both scientific and practical reasons. From the scientific viewpoint, perception measurement is vital due to its fundamental connection to study cognitive and emotional functions from a practical angle, they are inherently appealing because they are customer oriented and contain rich knowledge of information. Furthermore, perception facilitates clarification and handling of complexities that sources direct information of the perceived quality of services, product and environment. The subject of measuring

perception was argued since the 1930's and was claimed that psychophysical experiments cannot be explained in purely physical terms, but gradually in the late 20th century projects like 'Measuring the Impossible', 'Measurement on naturalness' and many other such projects were coordinated, from then psychophysical methods were developed giving origin to systems like psychometrics (Rossi and Berglund, 2011).

Wielheim Wundh (1879) Germany concentrated on three areas of mental functioning; thoughts, images, and feelings as these are based on the basics of today's cognitive psychology stream (McLeod, 2008). Is it possible to measure perception is a paradox, as perception can be measured by the outcome of its performance because perception is a cognitive activity which is subjective in nature as people do what they perceive will serve their interest? In workplace when employees and employers have a difference in perception over the set goals, it becomes very hard to achieve meaningful objectives (Otara, 2011).

2.2 Reviews on Employee Engagement

One of the major organisational struggles of the future 10 years will be the capability to engage their employees and make them work for their business (Johnson, 2004). With ever increasing economic tremors, globalisation and competitive market demand there is constant change whether it is the business model, strategies or talent, consequently, the old mantra of 'Job for life' is a lost trend in this day and age, so has changed the psychological contract of the people therein. In this increasingly unpredictable time where the expectations of the employee and the employer differ from the past, engagement is the so-called 'deal breaker' for the organisations continuous struggle for sustainable success (Smith and Markwick, 2009).

Every company's main objective is to increase shareholders wealth and sustainability (Arnold, 2013), financial analysts measure company performance through return on equity (John et al, 2010), and the most important investigation in this corporate era is how organisational practice and processes affects the bottom-line. Each and every department in an organisation let it be Human Resources, Sales and Marketing, Operations management, Finance, etc. are focused on how collectively they can contribute to company's performance (Wall et al, 2004), almost ignoring the actual actors that play an utmost important role in any company's growth and performance. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) research in the U.K. retail sector finally proved that employee engagement has a direct impact on sales through their commitments which improved customer loyalty and decreased absenteeism; on the contrary customer satisfaction and spending intention increased resulting in a positive sales growth. The higher the level of employee engagement, the better is the business outcomes (Robinson et al, 2004).

CIPD (2006) report suggested that employee engagement has three components (Emotional, Cognitive and Physical engagement) and there are different statements to each of the three which can be applied to measure a particular engagement.   The survey results showed that Emotional engagement is higher later two, where 58% of employees were reported emotionally engaged with their work and only 6% were disengaged, where else, 31% were cognitively engaged and 22% disengaged, and in the case of physical engagement the survey returned a result of 38% physically engaged and 11% disengaged. The real values of surveys or measurements are completely dependent to what extent the results are taken and acted upon (Marks, 2006; Scottish Executive Social Research, 2007).

Many authors have unanimously agreed that the management of the company's performance all depends on the management of the employee performance which is directly connected to their motivation and judged by the number of satisfied employees in the organisation by its fluctuation rates and not by its results and satisfaction is attained through engagement (Gabčanová, 2011).

2.2.1 Definition of Employee Engagement

Engagement has developed as a concept over time and has been defined in various, often inconsistent ways that it is rare to find a similar description between two definitions (Macey and

Schneider, 2008). Engagement is conceived in two stages, psychological or affective i.e. employee commitment, their efforts and attachment etc, and the later is a performance construct such as role performance initiative, observable behaviour, organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) etc; or even interpreted as attitude concluding all, in literatures very little consensus has been reached to establish which one is a definite definition or a best-fit to the model of engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Smith and Markwick (2009) quote from the work of Rotter (1990) that a good definition of engagement is one of the cognitive and subjective in nature, where many behavioural examples are stated in such a way that the operations of its measures are clear and logically accepted as reasonable (Smith and Markwick, 2009).

Employee engagement is significantly interwoven with business outcomes in other words company performance, researchers have found positive relationships between employee engagement and company performance outcomes such as profitability, employee retention, productivity, customer loyalty, and safety. Furthermore, researchers have proven that the more engaged the employees are more the company can exceed industry average in its revenue growths (Markos and Sridevi, 2010).

2.2.2 Theories on Employee Engagement

In the National Work force Project (2007) report, NHS sees measurement of engagement through the commitment of their people towards their organisations goal, and their enthusiasm about their role, how they describe themselves to others in context to their job role (doctor, nurse, ward manager etc), and the way they devote extra effort to their activity and says time passes quickly at work (West and Dawson, 2012).

When people employ themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance and harness organisation members and their job is called engagement. Furthermore, when an individual is driving energies into physical, cognitive and emotional labour that means the engagement is at its greatest (Kahn, 1990).

Smith and Markwick (2009) refer to an engagement theory by Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) describing engagement to a psychological and emotional state from which fulfilment is acquired through persistent, positive and affective-motivation. Furthermore, Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006) define it as 'charged with energy and fully dedicated to one's work' is an engaged individual (Smith and Markwick, 2009).

As a folk theory, disengagement is the manner that is opposite to engagement, numerous popular views have implied that engaged employee not only contribute more but are less likely to leave the organisation as this category of employees have higher degree of loyalty, signifying a quote by Wellins and Concelman (2005) that engagement is a fusion of ownership, loyalty, commitment and productivity (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

2.2.3 History of Employee Engagement

To begin with, the early conceptualization of employee engagement is surprisingly very recent, the Academic of management journal published an article "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work" written by Kahn (1990) this was the first article that mentioned employee engagement. In this article the author begins with the classic sociology text by Goffman (1961) 'The presentation of self in everyday life'; this is when the first grounded theory of engagement and disengagement surfaced. Personal engagement was defined by the author as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances" (Kahn, 1990). Furthermore, deriving the work of Goffman (1961), Maslow (1970), and Alderfer (1972) the author posited that a person to be engaged the domain of availability, safety and meaningfulness is important, until 2001 this was the only empirical research on the subject of engagement and disengagement, when Maslach et al (2001) posited that engagement is a contrary thesis to burnouts and defined engagement as a positive affective state filled with high levels of pleasure and creation (Shuck and Wollard, 2009).

2.2.4 Employee Engagement Measurement

Engagement is about complex feelings and emotions, accessing these complex human attributes are not only challenging but a daunting concept. A SAQ consisting of attitude survey statements is a recommended tool for collecting, analysing and measuring employee beliefs and opinions, although it can only be a blunt tool with many ambiguous elements influencing opinion surrounding it. Nevertheless, it is systematic but anecdotal evidence based on which decisions can be made, having arrived at an understanding of organisations view on the nature of engagement such tools can be developed and put into tests in order to understand and learn the cognitive and attitudinal outputs on the theme of engagement (Robinson et al, 2004).

The error between the level of engagement that exists in the organisation and the perceived importance of engagement is a cause of major concern; however, it opens an infinite arena to Human resource department, scholars and practitioners to develop practical strategies and research agendas at the very forefront of this emerging concept (Shuck et al, 2011).

Research Gap

Although the research has reached its aim, there are some unavoidable limitations, as follows:

Study design limitations: 22% samples could be obtained out of the total population as the study population based on the fact that retail business stretches over 14-hour operating hours a day, decreasing the accessibility of the employee in the appointed time cohort. Furthermore, the survey was rolled out in one of the busiest periods of the business season 'Easter' this caused a barrier to the researcher on the availability of the staff and shortage of free time acquiring the staff for survey due to work overload. Moreover, this factor to some extent may have affected the motivation and attitudes of the target population.

Impact limitation: The sample collection suffered a limited impact from factors such as a strong regional focus i.e. London stores due to population diversity. However, making it too population-specific on employees from a busy city, and secondly their willingness of availability to contribute from their personal break time to fill in the SAQ.

Statistical or data limitations: Due to time constraints and limited budget availability of the research, enrolment was more difficult than expected, under powering the results as more samples were anticipated initially. Statistical limitations produced more serious limitations in terms of interpreting the findings as the study was involved with the cognitive activity. The circumstantial burnouts and work environmental influence supposedly have had an adverse effect on the data. The study secluded the social background of the sample population; furthermore, the cultural factor was not included in the study which apparently is a direct influencing variable on perception (Seppala and Cameron, 2015).

As the study is quantitative in nature the lack of probability sampling is an important, obvious limitation to the research. As this will prevent from making generalisations on the overall population of the research subject, as it focused merely on the retail shop floor employee of the case specific sporting goods company in London. It was beyond possibility to get in contact with the complete U.K. employee's due to time limitations; therefore, probability sampling being ideal could not be put into practice.

3. Methodology

This section will define and discuss the research methods that will apply to conduct this study. Here the researcher explains the research philosophy behind the intended research and its classifications. Furthermore, it will present the outline of the research hypothesis supporting the intended research question. Alternatively the chapter will emphasis on the aim and objectives of the study through the many stages of the research onion (Saunders et al, 2016); describing the research strategy involved, research approach, research design with sample techniques explaining how the data will be collected, presented and analysed, concluding each section with a justification for its application (Bryman et al, 2011).

4. Analysis and Findings

This section starts by presenting the description of the sample respondents followed by the demographic, of the target population, 58 SAQ survey questionnaires, each had 38 statements and 2 categories, 22 statements in the first category (perception) and 16 statements in the latter category (engagement) were collected from 6 retail stores of the case company throughout London region. The research was looking at the hypothesis posed in Chapter 1, Sec 1.4. Two fundamental variables processed the collection of the data and the subsequent data analysis, the goal was to understand the effects of perception of employees over their engagement level and to determine that the current perception is consistent with the engagement attitude; this objective of the study was accomplished. The findings in this chapter will demonstrate the relativity and significance of perception on engagement.

4.1 Description of the sample respondents

This data has resulted from the SAQ survey conducted on approximately 25% of the population throughout 6 locations in London; the target population were the retail store floor employees of mix gender invited randomly in the time of the survey of the target sporting goods company, overall 58 surveys were completed which represents approximately 22% of the total staff force of the company's retail sector in London.

The questionnaire was developed targeting the initial part of 4 sections focussing on the employee's perspective and the following 3 sections focused on their engagements followed by demography, income, and employment status.

4.2 Description of the Demographics sample of Respondents

The first information in the below table (N) validates the case, in this case, all 58 respondents are considered valid for both variables confirming all returned surveys were usable.

Table 1 - Demographic Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	58	1	2	1.43	.500
Age	58	1	3	1.19	.438
Time with the company	58	1	5	2.24	.802
Education	58	1	3	2.34	.762
Monthly Income	58	1	2	1.91	.283
Valid N (listwise)	58				

Furthermore, the researcher has produced the different parts of the output related to the first key element i.e. demography and employee status. The following tables are the simple frequency for the variables of Gender, Age, and Time with the company, Education, Monthly income and Employee grade (Hierarchy level).

In the below tables, the highlighted figures represent the maximum percentage involved in each category.

Table 1.1 – Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	33	56.9	56.9	56.9
	Female	25	43.1	43.1	100.0
	Total	58	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.2 – Descriptive Statistics by Age

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20 less than 30	48	82.8	82.8	82.8
	30 less than 40	9	15.5	15.5	98.3
	40 less than 50	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	58	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.3 – Descriptive Statistics by Time in the Company

Time with the company

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	8	13.8	13.8	13.8
	1 year-less than 3	32	55.2	55.2	69.0
	3 years-less than 5	15	25.9	25.9	94.8
	5 years-less than 7	2	3.4	3.4	98.3
	7 years or above	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	58	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.4 – Descriptive Statistics by Education

Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Equal to secondary education or equivalent	10	17.2	17.2	17.2
	Diploma	18	31.0	31.0	48.3
	University degree	30	51.7	51.7	100.0
	Total	58	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.5 – Descriptive Statistics by Monthly Income

Monthly Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1000	5	8.6	8.6	8.6
	Between 1000 and 2000	53	91.4	91.4	100.0
	Total	58	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.6 – Descriptive Statistics by Employee Grade

Employee Grade

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	P4	30	51.7	51.7	51.7
	P3	19	32.8	32.8	84.5
	P2	8	13.8	13.8	98.3
	P1	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	58	100.0	100.0	

4.3 The Reliability

The overall target population, in this case, consists of 56.9% of Males and 43.1% of Females from the total sample of 58 respondents, and they fall into a younger group of age as 48 respondents are under the age of 30 years i.e. 82.8% of the entire sample population comprising of 51.7% university graduates which are a very high qualified group of employee's for the role as sales floor associates, is this because of the shortage of employments in other fields of work or a surplus of vacancies in the retail sector arises a question that can be answered through later research on this subject. 55.2% of the sample staff force comes in-between 1 year less than 3 years category which indicates that there is a high turnover rate of employee's, where else, only 3.4% are working stable for above 5 years this result arises to employee loyalty and retention, and what discourages them in considering the employer reliable for their future career? This may be a focus of another study as a whole.

To further explain the causality and effect between the time in the company and employee grade, based on the below crosstabulation, it is assumed that 2 elements can be responsible for this section of study affecting retention or loyalty towards the company, going further below is the company's grading system:

P4: Sales Associate
P3: Sr. Sales Associate
P2: Shop Floor Manager
P1: Assistant Store Manager
M4: Store Manager

Table 2 – Crosstabulation Statistics by Employee Grade and Time with the Company

Time with the company * Employee Grade Crosstabulation

Count

		Employee Grade				Total
		P4	P3	P2	P1	
Time with the company	Less than 1 year	7	1	0	0	8
	1 year-less than 3	21	10	1	0	32
	3 years-less than 5	2	6	6	1	15
	5 years-less than 7	0	1	1	0	2
	7 years or above	0	1	0	0	1
Total		30	19	8	1	58

Table 2.1 – Chi-Square by Employee Grade and Time with the Company

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.946a	12	.006
Likelihood Ratio	29.627	12	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	17.432	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	58		

a. 17 cells (85.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

Chi-Square results shows significance of 0.06 which is >0.05 b

The duration gap of promotion between one grade to another is huge (See Table 2), to ascend from a sales associate position to senior sales associate position can be anywhere between 1 to 3 years (See Appendices, Figure 1), furthermore the monthly income assumedly does not justify the employee growth as shown below in (See Table 3), probably be a cause of higher attrition rates (See Appendices,

Figure 2). The below highlighted figures show a similar average of income spread over a vast duration of time suggesting a slow rate of income increments, these elements are strong influencers on employee's perception affecting engagement and impacting company's performance.

Table 3 – Crosstabulation Statistics by Time with the Company and Monthly Income

Monthly Income * Time with the company Crosstabulation

Count

		Time with the company					Total
		Less than 1 year	1 year-less than 3	3 years- less than 5	5 years- less than 7	7 years or above	
Monthly Income	Less than 1000	2	3	0	0	0	5
	Between 1000 and 2000	6	29	15	2	1	53
Total		8	32	15	2	1	58

Table 3.1 – Chi-Square by Time with the Company and Monthly Income

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.446[a]	4	.349
Likelihood Ratio	5.156	4	.272
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.503	1	.061
N of Valid Cases	58		

a. 7 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.

Chi-Square results shows very strong significance of 0.35 whic

Table 4 – Crosstabulation Statistics by Employee Grade and Monthly Income

Monthly Income * Employee Grade Crosstabulation

Count

		Employee Grade				Total
		P4	P3	P2	P1	
Monthly Income	Less than 1000	5	0	0	0	5
	Between 1000 and 2000	25	19	8	1	53
Total		30	19	8	1	58

Table 4.1 – Chi-Square by Employee Grade and Monthly Income

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.107[a]	3	.164
Likelihood Ratio	7.032	3	.071
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.814	1	.051
N of Valid Cases	58		

a. 5 cells (62.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.

Chi-Square results shows very strong significance of 0.16 whicl

Table 5 – Crosstabulation Statistics by Time with the Company, Monthly Income and Employee Grade

Monthly Income * Employee Grade * Time with the company Crosstabulation

Count

Time with the company			Employee Grade				Total
			P4	P3	P2	P1	
Less than 1 year	Monthly Income	Less than 1000	2	0			2
		Between 1000 and 2000	5	1			6
	Total		7	1			8
1 year-less than 3	Monthly Income	Less than 1000	3	0	0		3
		Between 1000 and 2000	18	10	1		29
	Total		21	10	1		32
3 years-less than 5	Monthly Income	Between 1000 and 2000	2	6	6	1	15
	Total		2	6	6	1	15
5 years-less than 7	Monthly Income	Between 1000 and 2000		1	1		2
	Total			1	1		2
7 years or above	Monthly Income	Between 1000 and 2000		1			1
	Total			1			1
Total	Monthly Income	Less than 1000	5	0	0	0	5
		Between 1000 and 2000	25	19	8	1	53
	Total		30	19	8	1	58

4.3.1 Reliability Analysis

The rationale behind the variable reliability is through understanding its dependency on each other, as in the above chart there is a clear indication of dependencies between the Time in the company, Monthly income and Employment grade, arguably, this indicates towards employee longevity in their role, the income factor is or is not a motivator for continuation, the duration of growth from one grade to another and its financial increments all inclusively points towards how much assumedly employees are engaged with the company (See Table 5).

Table 6 – Cronbach's Alpha reliability Total Correlation (Time, Income and Employee Grade)

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Time with the company	3.57	.811	.560	.318	.283
Employee Grade	4.16	.835	.565	.322	.269
Monthly Income	3.90	1.954	.287	.083	.712

4.4 Descriptive Statistics: Independent and Dependent variables

Descriptive statistics measures the 'central tendency' and 'dispersion' or 'variability', there are three common measures of central tendency, Mode: value that appears with the most frequency, Median: is the sum of the middle two values or the middle value and Mean: the sum of all the entries divided by the number of entries or an average of entries. Variability is the standard deviation this is to summarise the dispersion of a deviation (Saunders *et al*, 2016).

The SAQ survey consisted of 1 to 5 'Likert Scale' where 1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree to allow the employee to express how much they agree or disagree with a particular statement (Arkkelin, 2014). Following are the outputs of the survey results:

Table 7 – Descriptive Statistics Independent Variable of Employee Perspective

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The reason I prefer this organization to others is because of what it stands for, its values	58	1	5	3.69	1.030
2. This organisation is known as a good employer	58	1	5	3.72	.970
3. I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization	58	1	5	3.64	.986
4. This organisation really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	58	2	5	3.78	.839
5. I talk about this store as a great place to work	58	1	5	3.38	1.282
6. Do you have an intense desire to be a member of the organization despite opportunities to work elsewhere	58	1	5	3.16	1.295
7. Do you advocate for the organization to co-workers, and refer potential employees and customers	58	1	5	3.48	1.143
8. My supervisor/manager respects the work I do	58	1	5	3.33	1.248
9. I can usually trust my supervisor/manager to do what is good for me	58	1	5	3.19	1.191
10. My supervisor/manager is fair when making decisions	58	1	5	3.31	1.127
11. My supervisor/manager makes good decisions that are appreciated by me	58	1	5	3.19	1.146
12. My supervisor/manager gives a great deal of consideration to people's views when making decisions	58	1	5	3.29	1.257
13. Do you feel that your salary reflects your worth to the organization	58	1	4	2.02	1.017
14. Do you feel appreciated for your work performance	58	1	5	2.98	1.383
15. Do you feel a sense of achievement for your work efforts	58	1	5	2.98	1.277
16. Are you given the opportunity to learn new skills through formal training	58	1	5	3.19	1.162
17. Do you feel overwhelmed by your workload	58	1	5	2.91	1.514
18. Do you experience a positive work environment which is safe, exemplified by communication, involvement of staff, and an emphasis on quality	58	1	5	3.41	1.257
19. Do you feel the policies of the organisation is fair	58	1	5	2.90	1.238
20. Do you feel the appraisal system is fair and unbiased	58	1	5	3.00	1.284
21. The appraisal helped you improve how you did your job	58	1	5	3.29	1.214
22. Did the appraisal involved setting objectives for your work	58	1	5	2.86	1.146
Valid N (listwise)	58				

Table 7 indicates that there is constant neutrality expressed by the respondents. However, the highlighted statements have a low Mean indication, suggesting the employee's perspective towards their income, appreciation, evaluation and fairness in the company's policies needs to be revisited in order to induce positivity in their perception. Where else, it is arguably assumed that there is no strong agreement on any of the statements.

Referring to Table 8 comparatively the engagement levels have a subsequent overall increase in the Mean to that of the respondent's perception. However, this comparison gives some initial evidence of relativity and does not direct towards any established outcome.

Table 8 – Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable of Employee Engagement

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
23. I really put my heart into my job	58	2	5	4.26	.785
24. I often feel emotionally detached from the job	58	1	5	2.52	1.287
25. I am rarely distracted when performing my job	58	1	5	3.64	.986
26. I have a sense of personal accomplishment from my job	58	1	5	3.90	.968
27. Performing my job is so absorbing that I forget about everything else	58	1	5	3.72	1.022
28. I really care about the future of my company	58	1	5	4.09	.884
29. I understand how retail/my store contributes to company success	58	1	5	3.93	1.057
30. I understand how my role relates to company goals and objectives	58	1	5	3.71	1.043
31. I am personally motivated to help my company succeed	58	1	5	4.02	.982
32. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected	58	1	5	3.91	1.014
33. This organisation really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	58	1	5	3.88	.938
34. I always do more than is actually required	58	2	5	4.21	.853
35. I try to help others in this store whenever I can	58	3	5	4.21	.811
36. I volunteer to do things outside my job that contribute to the organisation's objectives	58	1	5	3.59	.974
37. I frequently make suggestions to improve the work of my team and services	58	1	5	3.59	1.140
38. I believe that my engagement will create customer loyalty	58	1	5	4.52	.822
Valid N (listwise)	58				

4.5 Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation, known as (*r*) calculates and evaluates the relationship between continuous variables, in other words, it is a statistic used to establish direction and degree of relatedness between continuous variables (Arkkelin, 2014). As in Table 11, the Person (*r*) value is highlighted in Blue, the second row contains the two tailed probability (*p*) or significance level is highlighted in Yellow and the third row indicates the pairs of the score on which the value *r* is calculated.

Table 9 – Correlations of 7 Predictor Variables

		Organisation Perspective	Employee's Management Perspective	Employee's Personal Expectation	Evaluation Perspective	Job Engagement	Your Role	Initiatives
Organisational Perspective	Pearson Correlation	1	.173	.195	.246	.065	-.004	.087
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.194	.142	.063	.628	.979	.516
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Employee's Management Perspective	Pearson Correlation	.173	1	.257	.267*	-.057	.065	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.194		.052	.043	.673	.627	.902
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Employee's Personal Expectation	Pearson Correlation	.195	.257	1	-.065	.219	.051	-.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.142	.052		.627	.098	.703	.605
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Evaluation Perspective	Pearson Correlation	.246	.267*	-.065	1	.157	-.028	.027
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.063	.043	.627		.239	.837	.843
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Job Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.065	-.057	.219	.157	1	-.042	.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.628	.673	.098	.239		.754	.684
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Your Role	Pearson Correlation	-.004	.065	.051	-.028	-.042	1	.547*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.979	.627	.703	.837	.754		.000
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58
Initiatives	Pearson Correlation	.087	.017	-.069	.027	.055	.547*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.516	.902	.605	.843	.684	.000	
	N	58	58	58	58	58	58	58

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.5.1 Result of Analysing and testing dissertation hypothesis based on the Correlation coefficient between research variables

In a positive correlation if one variable increases the other variable increases, and a negative correlation indicates that if one variable increases the other variable decreases. A value of 0.0 in a correlation means there is no relationship (Arkkelin, 2014).

Following the 0.05 criteria and referring to Table 9 where a majority of the variable (r) value highlighted in Blue is weakly correlated, however, this does not justify any variables are inferior or superior to each other due to its weak correlation. On the other hand, the majority of the variables are very strongly significant as illustrated in the above Yellow highlighted probability index.

(r) > .50 indicate a strong correlation
(r) around .30 indicates a moderate correlation
(r) < .20 indicate a weak correlation
(p) > .05 concludes the probability is due to chance

Applying the above index as a benchmark, Table 9 explains the output of Pearson's correlation, where the value (r) stands at 62% and Significance (p) at 90% amongst the 7 predictor variables. The (r) value consists of:

71% r < .20 indicating a weak correlation
24% around .30 indicating moderate correlation
1% r > .50 signifies a strong correlation

Only two variables failed to meet the statistical significance as shown below.
H2. Employee management perspective and Evaluation perspective (r= .26, p= .043)
H6. Your Role and Initiatives (r= .54, p= .00)

That is why it can be approved that H_0 partially or by chance has a significant correlation coefficient between the variables.

4.5.2 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis output below is to predict the dependent variable in this study i.e. 'Employee Engagement' in correlation to the predicting independent variable i.e. 'Employee Perspective'.

See appendices (Figure 14 15 16) exhibit linear relationship between the two variables under investigation, recommending linear regression analysis application to the hypothesis:

Table 10 – Regression of X: Employee Personal Expectations (Perspective) Y: Employee Initiative (Engagement)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.069ª	.005	-.013	.42679

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee's Personal Expectation

The R value is .069 which indicates a high degree of correlation i.e. >0.05, the total value of correlation in the dependent variable is indicated by R^2 in this case, 0.05% confirms a positive effect.

Table 10.1 – ANOVAª: Employee Personal Expectations (Perspective) and Employee Initiative (Engagement)

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.049	1	.049	.271	.605^b
	Residual	10.200	56	.182		
	Total	10.250	57			

a. Dependent Variable: Initiatives
b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee's Personal Expectation

The ANOVA^a table indicates α > 0.05 i.e. 0.605 means it is a strong fit to the data.

Table 10.2 – Coefficients: Employee Initiative (Engagement)

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.157	.311		13.348	.000
	Employee's Personal Expectation	-.055	.105	-.069	-.521	.605

a. Dependent Variable: Initiatives

There is a significantly supported relationship between Employee expectation and Initiative because *p* value is > 0.5, approving H_0.

Table 11 – Regression of X: Employee Management Perspective Y: Employee Job Engagement

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.057^a	.003	-.015	.45902

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee's Management Perspective

The *R* value is .057 which indicates a high degree of correlation i.e. >0.05, the total value of correlation in the dependent variable is indicated by R^2 in this case, 0.03% which is very low.

Table 11.1 – ANOVA^a: Employee Management Perspective and Employee Job Engagement

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.038	1	.038	.180	.673^b
	Residual	11.799	56	.211		
	Total	11.837	57			

a. Dependent Variable: Job Engagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee's Management Perspective

The ANOVA^a table indicates that α > 0.05 i.e. 0.673 means it is a strong fit to the data.

Table 11.2 – Coefficients: Employee Management Perspective and Employee Job Engagement

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.715	.262		14.182	.000
	Employee's Management Perspective	-.033	.078	-.057	-.425	.673

a. Dependent Variable: Job Engagement

There is a significantly supporting the relationship between Employee management perspective and Job engagement because p value is > 0.5 i.e. .673, approving H_0.

Table 12 – Regression of X: Organisation Perspective Y: Employee Role Engagement

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.004[a]	.000	-.018	.49215

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organisational Perspective

The R value is .004 which indicates a very low degree of correlation i.e. <0.05, the total value of correlation in the dependent variable is indicated by R^2 in this case, 0.00% which is insignificant.

Table 12.1 – ANOVA[a]: Organisation Perspective and Employee Role Engagement

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.000	1	.000	.001	.978[b]
	Residual	13.564	56	.242		
	Total	13.564	57			

a. Dependent Variable: Your Role

b. Predictors: (Constant), Organisational Perspective

The ANOVA[a] table indicates that α > 0.05 i.e. 0.978 means it is a strong fit to the data.

Table 12.2 – Coefficients: Organisation Perspective and Employee Role Engagement

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.942	.392		10.052	.000
	Organisational Perspective	-.003	.109	-.004	-.027	.978

a. Dependent Variable: Your Role

There is a strong support to relationship between Organisation perspective and Employee role because p value is >0.5, approving H_0.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears to be clear that in this most uncertain time in business history employee engagement has become an imperative subject for organisations who are committed to founding a committed employee base which will prove to be a key source of competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). Therefore, such organisations are changing their direction of approach towards their employee's, understanding that the employees choose to be engaged and not paid to be engaged (Shuck et al, 2010). It has become a major concern for the organisations to understand the difference between the perceived importance of engagement and the level of engagement that affects the employee's experience of their work and ultimately affecting company's performance (Shuck et al, 2010).

This research suggests that for employees of the case organisation, the evidence supports the hypothesis H.1 and H.2 (Sec. 1.4) that perception has influence, relativity and strong significance on engagement, through this it becomes very important to manage perception with serious efforts because bad perception ignores considering all the facts that are involved in a situation and will harness negative consequences.

Managerial Implications

The main aim of the study was to address the hypothesis which developed from the literature review and case studies from Chapter 2; the investigation was conducted to support insufficient knowledge of what it means to concentrate on cognitive psychological harmony i.e. perspective and how that can influence quality of engagement in the target company which may produce an inevitable superior by-product i.e. performance. Considering the analysis and results of the case, the practice of learning how to manage perception needs to be taken seriously, in order to do this manager's must analyse all the pertinent information's involved in a timely manner, and developing good skills in listening, empathy, compassion, creating a healthy organisational environment to succeed and be able to deal effectively with the problems that are affecting employee perception. In this analysis it has appeared that the major elements that influence an adverse effect on employee engagement are their perception towards their income, slow career growth and hesitance to open to their beliefs, this assertion is reflected in the results derived from the respondents input average of 'Neutral' selections (Perspective: 21% Neutral responses; Engagement: 27% Neutral responses) in the survey SAQ in specific categories. Furthermore, 27% respondents scaled low in the perception category which totals to 47% out of the 58 targets respondent's perspective ranging between Low and Neutral ranks (See. Figure 8 and 9), which provides a solid ground for managers to put into operation a serious workshop to overcome this cognitive process and manage waste of effort and bleed talent.
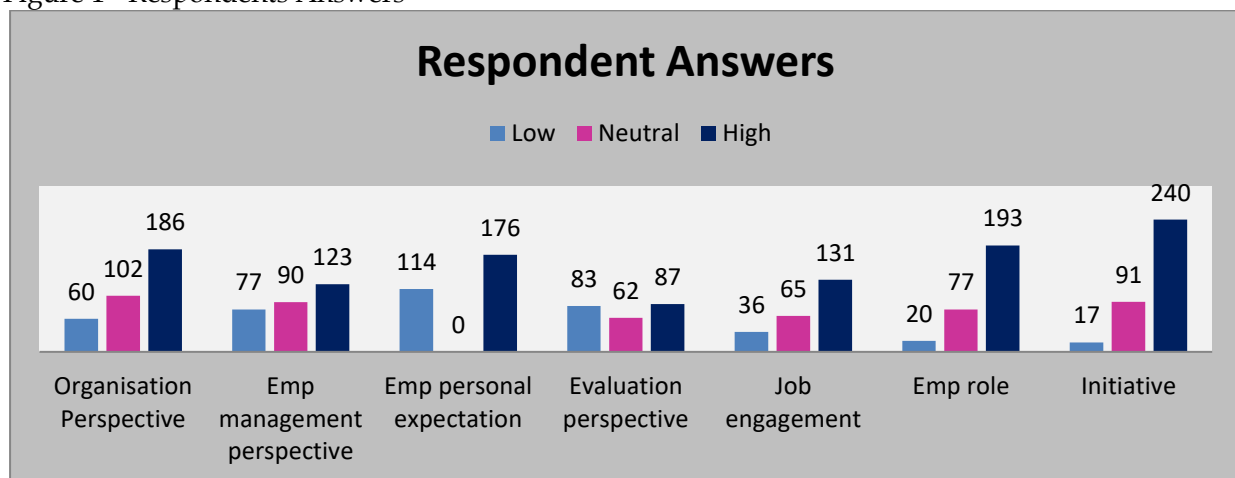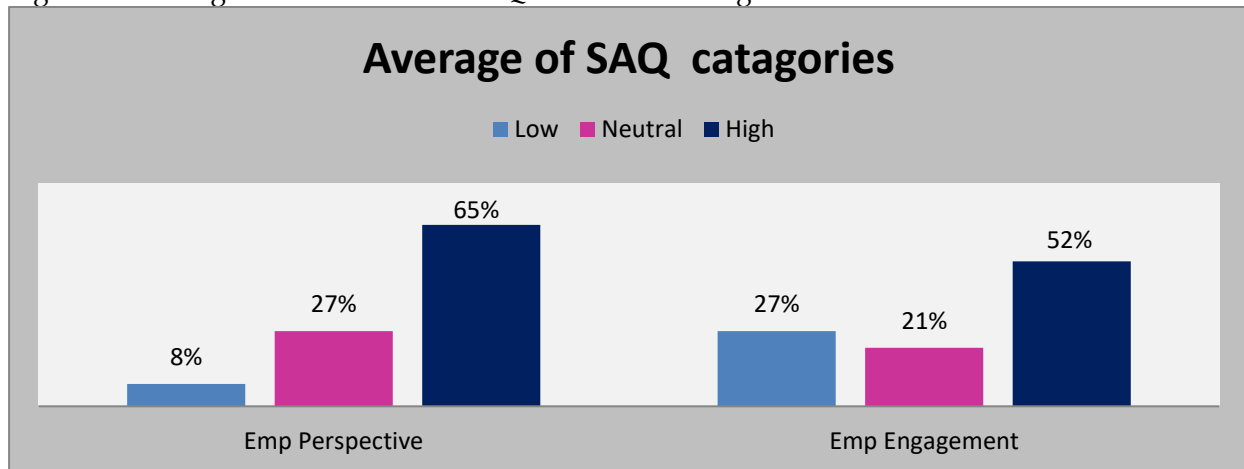
Figure 1 - Respondents Answers

Figure 2 - Average of Self-administered Questionnaire categories

Average of SAQ catagories

■ Low ■ Neutral ■ High

Emp Perspective: Low 8%, Neutral 27%, High 65%
Emp Engagement: Low 27%, Neutral 21%, High 52%

6. Limitations

Although the research has reached its aim, there are some unavoidable limitations, as follows:

Study design limitations: 22% samples could be obtained out of the total population as the study population based on the fact that retail business stretches over 14-hour operating hours a day, decreasing the accessibility of the employee in the appointed time cohort. Furthermore, the survey was rolled out in one of the busiest periods of the business season 'Easter' this caused a barrier to the researcher on the availability of the staff and shortage of free time acquiring the staff for survey due to work overload. Moreover, this factor to some extent may have affected the motivation and attitudes of the target population.

Impact limitation: The sample collection suffered a limited impact from factors such as a strong regional focus i.e. London stores due to population diversity. However, making it too population-specific on employees from a busy city, and secondly their willingness of availability to contribute from their personal break time to fill in the SAQ.

Statistical or data limitations: Due to time constraints and limited budget availability of the research, enrolment was more difficult than expected, under powering the results as more samples were anticipated initially. Statistical limitations produced more serious limitations in terms of interpreting the findings as the study was involved with the cognitive activity. The circumstantial burnouts and work environmental influence supposedly have had an adverse effect on the data. The study secluded the social background of the sample population; furthermore, the cultural factor was not included in the study which apparently is a direct influencing variable on perception (Seppala and Cameron, 2015).

As the study is quantitative in nature the lack of probability sampling is an important, obvious limitation to the research. As this will prevent from making generalisations on the overall population of the research subject, as it focused merely on the retail shop floor employee of the case specific sporting goods company in London. It was beyond possibility to get in contact with the complete U.K. employee's due to time limitations; therefore, probability sampling being ideal could not be put into practice.

7. Further Research

The most prime suggestion for researchers is to develop a dynamic process model that how the interrelated variable fluctuate during a different period of time, location, new context, economic and social environment and even culture, applying the result of this study to compare the outcome of the future investigation.

Most of the research accentuate on the importance and positive impacts of employee engagement, and its benefits to the company ignoring the associated cost, therefore, there is a need to

study the cost aspect of engagement decisions and quantify the ratio of its impact on company's performance.

This study strictly focused on two variables, perception, and engagement, the research outcome can be utilised as a foundation for investigating the final and important dependent variable expressed in this study 'Company Performance' which can help construct a clearer definition and dimensions that can justify the engagement concept relativity to the dependent variable.

The employee time with the company, their income and career grade (hierarchy level) were included in the studies conceptual framework but was not elaborated, these predictor variables have a very strong interrelationship with engagement and company performance and it is imperative to investigate these in future research studies. Furthermore, a qualitative research is desirable since the topic deals with cognitive and emotional factors and a rich wealth of data can be achieved through rigorous open-ended investigations, interviews, and probing.

In sum, large number of research and development has taken place in the field of engagement and performance, including a wide range of contextual variables, which has shown so much progress in this subject, it is recommended, as many other human resource initiative enthusiasm fades off, there is a necessity to perform further investigations on the same or similar hypothesis/variables/findings at different intervals of time, region and circumstances and understanding the dependent variable side of the equation performance itself. Furthermore, adding more predictor variables to the theoretical framework and SAQ which can harness stronger outputs.

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