

EMPLOYEE RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR

A STUDY ON MEDICA SUPER-SPECIALTY HOSPITAL, KOLKATA

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PURPOSE
EMPLOYEE retention and engagement had attracted tremendous attention in management research in recent times. Although research evidence are abundant in sectors like IT/ITEs, retail, financial services comprehensive studies with respect to the healthcare sector are yet to be presented for policy makers and management researchers. Taking this perspective into consideration, an attempt had been made in the present study to identify the casual factors influencing employee retention and engagement in the healthcare sector with special reference to Medica Super Specialty Hospitals, Kolkata, a leading healthcare service provider and hospital chain in Eastern India. The study establishes a model based on empirical findings depicting interrelationships between employee job engagement and factors like job attractiveness, employee participation, fair compensation and supervisor relations.

Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study had used the descriptive research design. Regarding the population 100 employees (working in the Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata) were considered. The sample size constituted 31 employees from various departments. Data regarding employee perceptions on employee retention and engagement practices were collected by using Convenience Sampling method.*

Findings: *The study had shown that employee participation was considered to have had the highest impact on respondent perception regarding employee retention and engagement. This was followed by, fair Compensation and Supervision Relations. Perception on job engagement is having significant correlation with job attractiveness and employee participation. Fair compensation had significant correlation with participation supervision relations had significant correlations with Participation.*

Research Limitations/Implications: *Due to time constraint and administrative issues of the organization, the sample size had to be restricted to 31. With Medica Super Specialty Hospitals spreading its operations across the state of West Bengal and other cities in the Eastern India, the study could be extended on a wider scale in order to have a clear map of the organization's retention and employee engagement perspective.*

Practical Implications: *The study could form the basis of a wider research in emerging issues of employee retention like social antecedents and organizational culture perspectives which had remained under researched till date.*

Originality/Value: *The paper being truthfully original could be deemed to be a valuable input in terms of adding knowledge in employee retention research literature particularly in the Indian Context.*

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Key Words: *Job Engagement, Job Attractiveness, Participation, Fair Compensation, Supervisor Relations, Health Care Sector, Medica Super-specialty hospital.*

Introduction

Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantages – including higher retention, productivity and lower employee turnover. Thus, it is not surprising that organizations of all sizes and types have invested substantially in policies and practices that foster engagement and commitment in their workforces. Singh (2002) found that organisations intend to retain their employees and employees respond to such initiatives.

Though different organizations define employee retention and *engagement* differently, some common themes emerge. These themes include employees' satisfaction with their work and pride in their employer, the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do for work and the perception that their employer values what they bring to the table. The greater an employee's engagement, the more likely he or she is to "go the extra mile" and deliver excellent on-the-job performance. Further this could also mean better retention of employees in the organization. This means, engaged employees may be more likely to commit to staying with their current organization. Software giant Intuit, for example, found that highly engaged employees are 1.3 times more likely to be high performers than less engaged employees. They are also five times less likely to voluntarily leave the company.

Clearly, engagement and commitment can potentially translate into valuable business results for an organization. To help an organization reap the benefits of an engaged, committed workforce at the organization, this dissertation report aims to provide an analysis on the employee engagement perspectives in a leading hospital in Kolkata, based on which guidelines for understanding and measuring employee engagement, and for designing and implementing effective engagement initiatives could be worked out.

Everyday human resource practices such as recruitment, training, performance management and workforce surveys can provide powerful levers for enhancing engagement that would help organizations such as Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata to develop and retain their employees for the long run.

Need for the Study

Inspite of the visible and well known employee relations practices provided by organizations belonging to the healthcare sector, there is very little research evidence regarding the present state and satisfaction towards the employee engagement programs provided by the healthcare organizations located in and around the city of Kolkata. As discussed earlier, with the plethora of changes occurring in the Indian economy, an employee of a healthcare organization like Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata is bound to be affected psychologically and socio-economically. Hence the perception of such workers on the welfare and employee retention strategies of these organizations might change with time.

Hence there could be a possible gap between employee expectation (satisfaction) on welfare and those which were actually provided by their organizations. The present study has been designed in order to identify and analyze such opinions leading to employee satisfaction towards employee engagement of healthcare organizations in the Kolkata.

Literature Review

Employee engagement is a vast construct that touches almost all parts of human resource management facets we know hitherto (Markos, and Sridevi, 2010).

Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) uses the definition "employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis." According to the study, engagement is affected by many factors which involve both emotional and rational factors relating to work and the overall work experience.

Gallup organization defines employee engagement as the involvement with and enthusiasm for work. Gallup as cited by Dernovsek (2008) likens employee engagement to a positive employees' emotional attachment and employees' commitment.

Kumar & Singh (2013) presented an employee engagement scale, which can measure the level of employee engagement.

Robinson *et al.*, (2004) define employee engagement as “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.”

If every part of human resources is not addressed in appropriate manner, employees fail to fully engage themselves in their job in the response to such kind of mismanagement. The construct employee engagement is built on the foundation of earlier concepts like job satisfaction, employee commitment and Organizational citizenship behaviour. Though it is related to and encompasses these concepts, employee engagement is broader in scope. Employee engagement is stronger predictor of positive organizational performance clearly showing the two-way relationship between employer and employee compared to the three earlier constructs: job satisfaction, employee commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour. Engaged employees are emotionally attached to their organization and highly involved in their job with a great enthusiasm for the success of their employer, going extra mile beyond the employment contractual agreement.

Most references relate employee engagement to survey houses and consultancies. It is less taken as an academic construct. The concept is relatively new for HRM and appeared in the literatures for nearly two decades (Rafferty *et al.*, 2005; Ellis & Sorensen, 2007).

The construct, employee engagement emanates from two concepts that have won academic recognition and have been the subjects of empirical research-Commitment and Organizational Citizen Behaviour (OCB) (Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Rafferty *et al.*, 2005). Employee engagement has similarities to and overlaps with the above two concepts.

Robinson *et al.*, (2004) state that neither commitment nor OCB reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement-its two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have an element of business awareness, even though it appears that engagement overlaps with the two concepts. Rafferty et al (2005) also distinguish employee engagement and the two prior concepts-Commitment and OCB, on the ground that engagement clearly demonstrates that it is a two-way mutual process between the employee and the organization.

Fernandez (2007) shows the distinction between job satisfaction, the well-known construct in management, and engagement contending that employee satisfaction is not the same as employee engagement and since managers cannot rely on employee satisfaction to help retain the best and the brightest, employee engagement becomes a critical concept. Other researchers take job satisfaction as a part of engagement, but it can merely reflect a superficial, transactional relationship that is only as good as the organization's last round of perks and bonuses; Engagement is about passion and commitment-the willingness to invest oneself and expand one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed, which is beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer (Blessing White, 2008; Erickson, 2005; Macey & Schnieder, 2008). Therefore, the full engagement equation is obtained by aligning maximum job satisfaction and maximum job contribution. Stephen Young, the executive director of Towers Perrin, also distinguishes between job satisfaction and engagement contending that only engagement (not satisfaction) is the strongest predictor of organizational performance (Human Resources, 2007).

According to Penna research report (2007) meaning at work has the potential to be valuable way of bringing employers and employees closer together to the benefit of both where employees experience a sense of community, the space to be themselves and the opportunity to make a contribution, they find meaning. Employees want to work in the organizations in which they find meaning at work. Penna (2007) researchers have also come up with a new model they called “Hierarchy of engagement” which resembles Maslow’s need hierarchy model. In the bottom line there are basic needs of pay and benefits. Once an employee satisfied these needs, then the employee looks to development opportunities, the possibility for promotion and then leadership style will be introduced to the mix in the model.

The Blessing White (2008) study has found that almost two third’s (60%) of the surveyed employees want more opportunities to grow forward to remain satisfied in their jobs. Strong manager-employee relationship is a crucial ingredient in the employee engagement and retention formula. Development Dimensions International (DDI, 2005) states that a manager must do five things to create a highly engaged workforce. They are:

- Align efforts with strategy
- Empower
- Promote and encourage teamwork and collaboration
- Help people grow and develop
- Provide support and recognition where appropriate

The Towers Perrin Talent Report, 2003 (Perrin, 2003) identifies the top ten work place attributes which will result in employee engagement. The top three among the ten drivers listed by Perrin are: *Senior management’s interest in employees’ well-being, Challenging work and Decision making authority.*

CIPD (2006) on the basis of its survey of 2000 employees from across Great Britain indicates that communication is the top priority to lead employees to engagement. The report singles out having the opportunity to feed their views and opinions upwards as the most important driver of people’s engagement. The report also identifies the importance of being kept informed about what is going on in the organization.

Statement of the Problem

Unlike other organizations belonging to the healthcare sector, the employees of the Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata are often exposed to challenging situations in their work life as they need to handle a wide spectrum of operational problems and projects many of which they may not have prior experiences. In this challenging work perspective, satisfying or fulfilling the various needs of the employees would give them a better motivation and more time to concentrate on job performance. A voluntary approach on the part of the management to offer employee relations perspectives which are over and above what is laid down by the law would boost the morale of the employees and motivate them to perform better. Keeping this perspective in mind an attempt has been made in this study to analyze employee perception towards the employee engagement practices with particular importance on evaluating their satisfaction towards such initiatives/programs implemented by the organization.

Scope of the Study

- To have an insight on the employee engagement perspectives implemented by Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata.

- To understand the satisfaction of the employees on the employee engagement practices initiated by Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata.
- To identify areas of improvement in terms of the employee engagement strategies deployed by Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata.

Objectives of Study: The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To analyze the perception of the employees of Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata regarding the Employee Engagement practices of the organization.
- To assess whether the employees were satisfied by the Employee Engagement initiatives of the organization.
- To analyze the factors influencing employee satisfaction towards various Employee Engagement initiatives taken by the organization.
- To establish a employee engagement model based on empirical findings

Research Methodology

Research Methodology is considered as the nerve of the project. Without a proper well-organized plan, it is impossible to complete the project and reach to any conclusion. The project was based on the survey plan. The main objective of survey was to collect appropriate data which work as a base for drawing conclusion and getting results.

Therefore, research methodology was the way to systematically solve the research problem. Research Methodology not only talks of the methods but also the logic behind the methods used in the context of a research study and it explains why a particular method has been in the preference of the other methods. It is the system of collecting data for research projects is known as research methodology. The data may be collected for either theoretical or practical research for example management research may be strategically conceptualized along with operational planning methods and change management.

The present study adopted the **descriptive research design**. Regarding the population 100 employees (working in the Medica Super Specialty Hospital, Kolkata) were considered. The sample size constituted 31 employees from various departments. Data regarding employee perceptions on employee retention and engagement practices were collected by using **Convenience Sampling** method.

Data Sources

Primary Data: Primary data were collected by administration of questionnaires among the respondents

Secondary Data: Secondary data were collected from company resources, web resources, books and journals etc.

Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire was designed in order to collect respondent opinion on their perceptions regarding ER practices in the organization. The questionnaire mainly consisted of closed-end questions. Respondent opinion was collected on the basis of a five point "**Likert Scale**" as depicted in the Aneexure 1.

Data Analysis Plan

Data collected from the study were presented and analyzed using SPSS and MS-Excel applications.

Limitations of the Study

The study could be limited by the followings issues, namely:

- Due to time constraint and administrative issues of the organization, the samples size had to be restricted to 31.

- The respondents have replied to the queries recalling their memory. Therefore bias in their responses could be possible.
- Data was collected using a schedule as per the convenience of the organization.
- The respondents might not have disclosed their actual opinions on certain issues related to the organization which could be confidential in nature.

Scope of Further Research

The study could be an eye opener to scale research covering all the organizations in the healthcare sector at Kolkata particularly with reference to the employee engagement programs implemented by their management.

The study could take up and put light on additional issues like the additional issues like the impact of employee engagement programs on employee development and career planning.

Data Analysis

Age Profile of Respondents

The following analysis (Table No. 1) depicts the age profile of the respondents.

Table No. 1 : Age Profile of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid <20 Yrs	8	25.8	25.8	25.8
21-25 Yrs	12	38.7	38.7	64.5
26-30 Yrs	3	9.7	9.7	74.2
31-35 Yrs	5	16.1	16.1	90.3
36-40 Yrs	3	9.7	9.7	100.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	

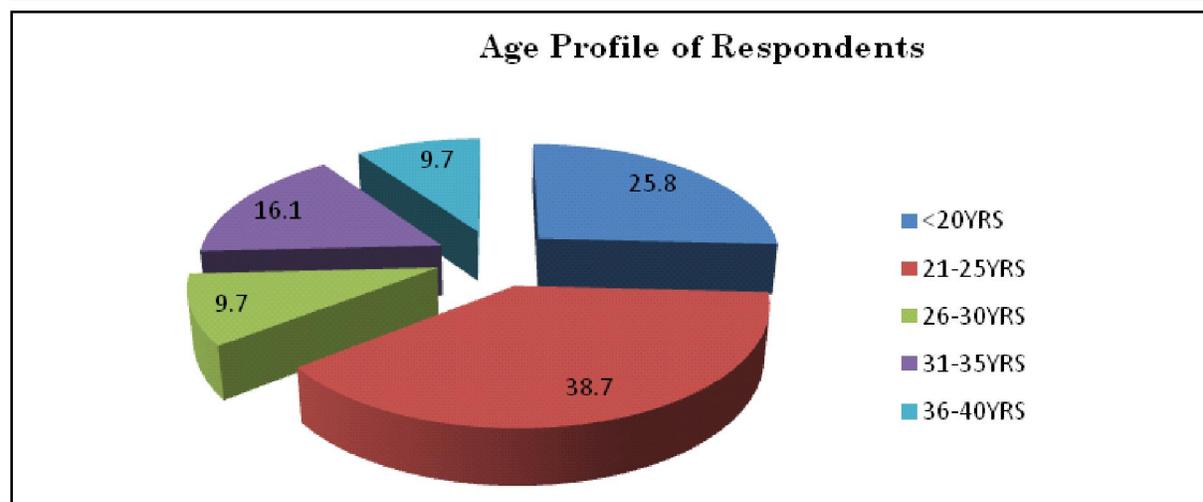


Figure No. 1: Age Profile of Respondents

It is evident from above that 38.7% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 21-28 years, followed by 25.8% belonging to < 20 years category. 16.1% belong to 31-35 years. 9.7% belonged to both the age categories 26-30 years and 36-40 years.

Experience Profile of Respondents

The following analysis (Table No. 2) depicts the experience profile of the respondents.

Table No. 2: Experience Level of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0-1 Yrs	19	61.3	61.3	61.3
2-5 Yrs	10	32.3	32.3	93.5
>10 Yrs	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	

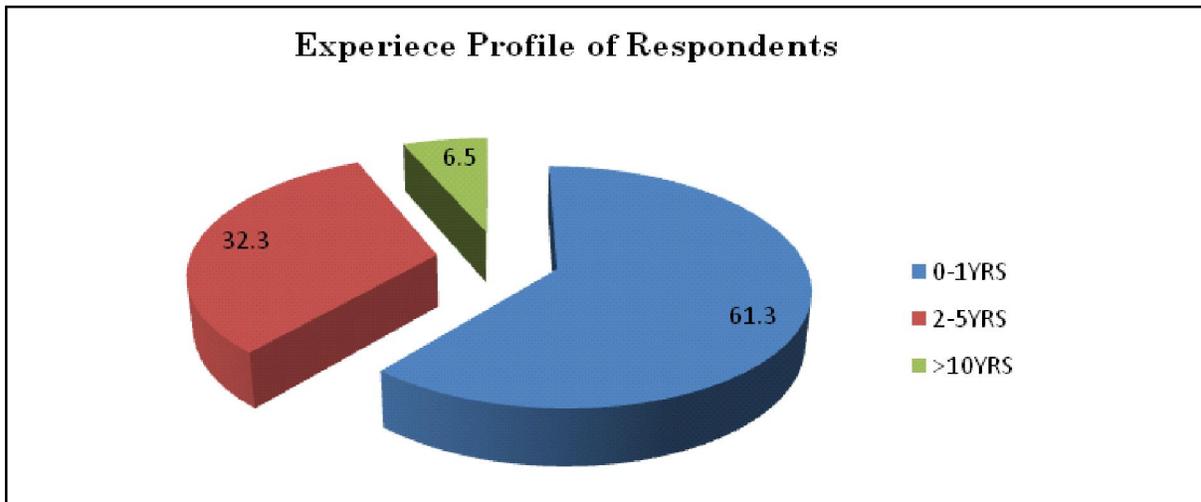


Figure 2: Experience Profile of Respondents

61.3% of the respondents belonged to the experience level of 0-1 years, followed by 32.3% of the people belonging to 2-5 years of experience level. 6.5% of the respondents belonged to the > 10 years of experience level.

Analysis of Respondent Opinion

Questionnaire Analysis Plan

Respondent opinion were computed on a basis of a five point Likert scale where (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Respondent opinions on question sets were categorized under the following 9 factor categories namely:

- Job Attractiveness
- Involvement with the organization
- Goal Achievement
- Fair Compensation
- Availability to resources
- Opportunity to growth
- Supervision Relations

- Participation
- Feedback

Respondent Opinion on Various Factors Influencing Job Engagement

The following analysis (Table No. 3 & 4), depicts the respondent opinion regarding various factors influencing job engagement.

Table No. 3: Respondent Opinion on Various Factors Influencing Job Engagement

		Job Attractiveness	Involvement with Organisation	Goal Achievement	Fair Compensation	Availability to Resources
N	Valid	31	31	31	31	31
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.03	3.35	3.94	4.03	3.77
Std. Deviation		0.912	0.877	0.892	0.948	0.990

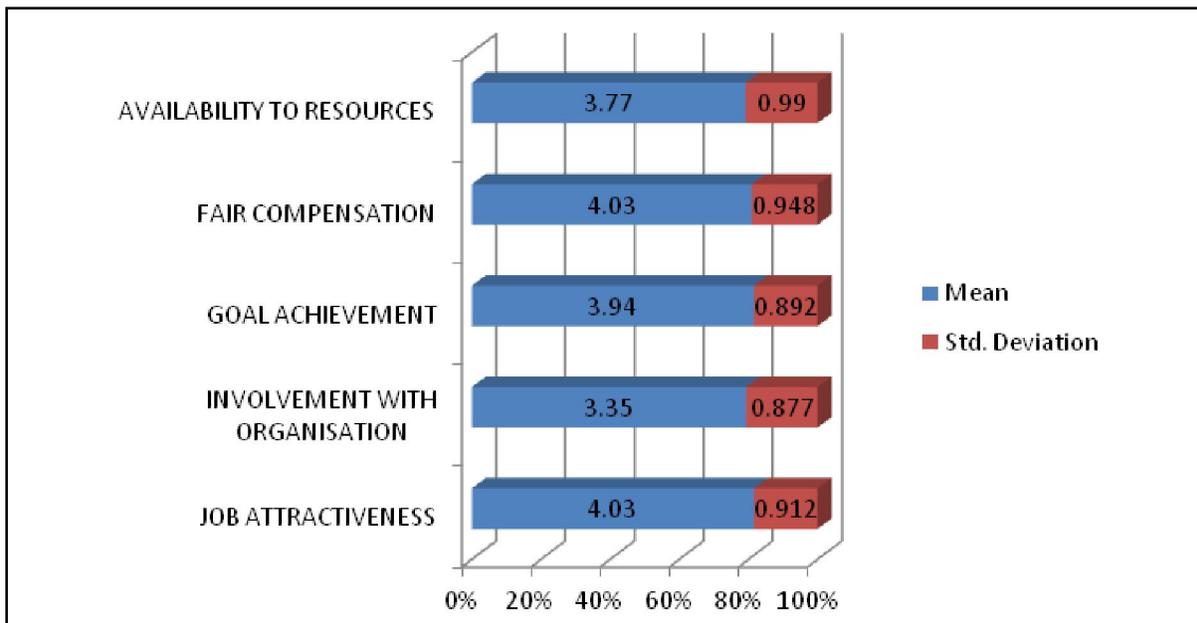


Figure No. 3: Respondent Opinion on Various Factors Influencing Job Engagement

Table No. 4: Respondent Opinion on Various Factors Influencing Job Engagement

		Opportunity to Growth	Supervision Relation	Participation	Feedback
N	Valid	31	31	31	31
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.81	3.84	3.84	2.65
Std. Deviation		0.946	1.068	0.969	1.199

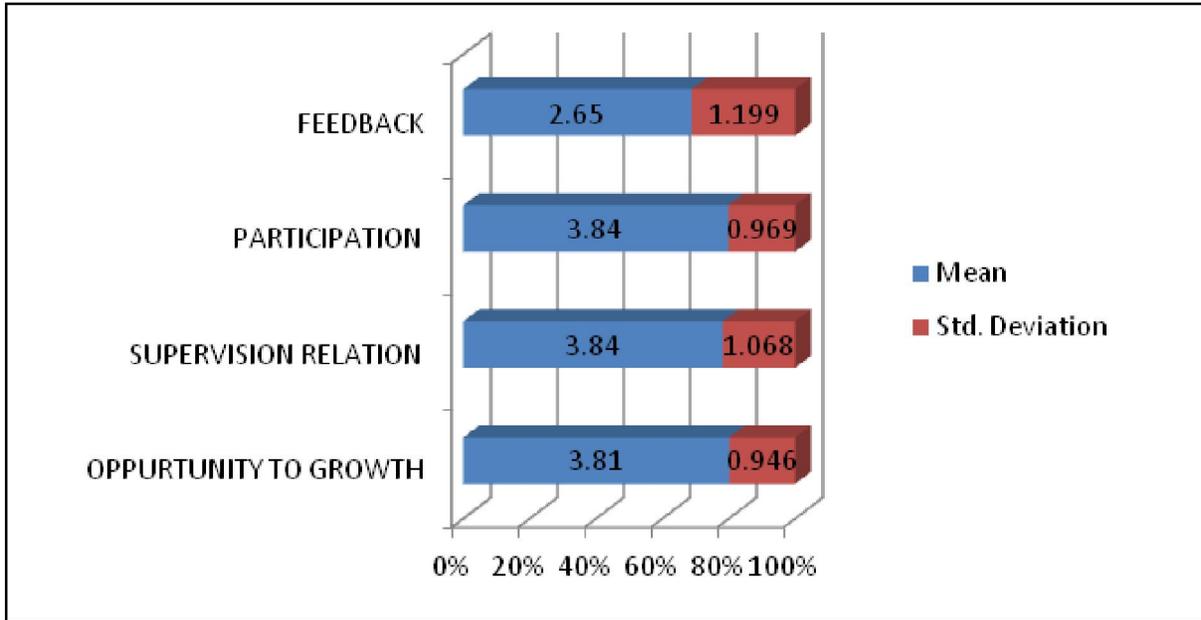


Figure No. 4: Respondent Opinion on Various Factors Influencing Job Engagement

It is clear from the above that, out of all the factors, “Job Attractiveness” and “Fair Compensation” received highest level of agreement with a mean score of 4.03 respectively, followed by “Goal Achievement” (Mean score: 3.94), “Participation” (mean Score: 3.84) and “Supervision Relation” (Mean Score: 3.84). “Feedback” received lowest mean score of 2.65 in terms of agreement, clearly showing the dissatisfaction of the respondents on this factor.

Respondent Opinion on Job Engagement

The following analysis (Table No. 5 & 6) illustrates respondent opinion regarding their “Job Engagement” in the organization.

Table No. 5: Respondent Perception on Job Engagement

N	Valid	31
	Missing	0
Mean		3.42
Std. Deviation		1.177

Table No. 6: Respondent Perception on Job Engagement

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	DA	9	29.0	29.0	29.0
	N	8	25.8	25.8	54.8
	A	6	19.4	19.4	74.2
	SA	8	25.8	25.8	100.0
	Total	31	100.0	100.0	

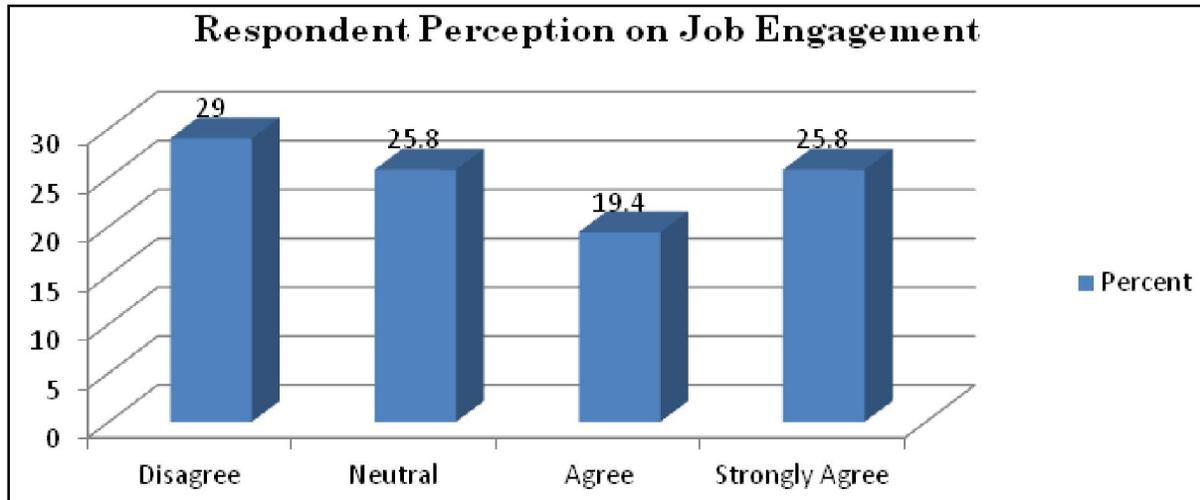


Figure No. 5: Respondent Perception on Job Engagement

It is clear from the above that, 45.2% of the respondents were in agreement that they were engaged with their jobs in the organization. This can be further established by the mean score of 3.42 depicted in the Table No. 7 on the statement.

Impact of Various Factors Where Respondents Have Expressed High Level of Agreements on Job Engagement

In order to analyze the impact of the variables on Job Engagement, where the respondents have expressed high levels of agreement, the data was analyzed by instrumenting “Factor Analysis”, as illustrated by the following account.

Table No. 7: Correlation Matrix (Perception on Job Engagement Vs Factors receiving high level of respondent agreement)

		Perception in Job Engagement	Fair Compensation	Job Attractiveness	Goal Achievement	Supervision Relation	Participation
Correlation	Perception in Job Engagement	1.000	0.316	0.732	0.058	0.427	0.675
	Fair Compensation	0.316	1.000	0.153	0.042	0.796	0.767
	Job Attractiveness	0.732	0.153	1.000	0.289	0.074	0.421
	Goal Achievement	0.058	0.042	0.289	1.000	0.059	0.026
	Supervision Relation	0.427	0.796	0.074	0.059	1.000	0.715
	Participation	0.675	0.767	0.421	0.026	0.715	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Perception in Job Engagement		0.042	0.000	0.378	0.008	0.000
	Fair Compensation	0.042		0.206	0.411	0.000	0.000
	Job Attractiveness	0.000	0.206		0.057	0.346	0.009
	Goal Achievement	0.378	0.411	0.057		0.377	0.445
	Supervision Relation	0.008	0.000	0.346	0.377		0.000
	Participation	0.000	0.000	0.009	0.445	0.000	

It is clear from Table No. 7 that:

- “Perception on Job Engagement” is having significant correlation with “Job Attractiveness” (Correlation Coefficient: 0.732) and “Participation” (Correlation Coefficient: 0.675).
- “Fair Compensation” is having significant correlation with “Participation” (Correlation Coefficient: 0.767)
- “Supervision Relation” is having significant correlation with “Participation” (Correlation Coefficient: 0.715).

Table No. 8 illustrates the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy for Factor Analysis of the presented data.

Table No. 8: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.757
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	109.895
	Df	15
	Sig.	0.000

It is clear from above that, with Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, the sampling adequacy test revealed KMO measure of Sampling adequacy of 0.757 (which indicates a fairly good score of data adequacy) with an approximate Ch-Square value of 109.895 which was significant at a df of 15.

Table No. 9 illustrates the computation of Communalities for factor analysis based on the extraction method of principal component analysis.

Table No. 9: Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Perception in Job Engagement	1.000	0.789
Fair Compensation	1.000	0.845
Job Attractiveness	1.000	0.885
Goal Achievement	1.000	0.262
Supervision Relation	1.000	0.841
Participation	1.000	0.880

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table No. 10 illustrates the total variance of the factors analyzed based on their initial Eigenvalues and the subsequent computation of extraction sums of squared loadings.

Table No. 10: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.106	51.762	51.762	3.106	51.762	51.762
2	1.397	23.281	75.043	1.397	23.281	75.043
3	0.943	15.716	90.759			
4	0.295	4.914	95.673			
5	0.178	2.969	98.642			
6	0.081	1.358	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table No. 11 illustrates the Component Matrix by using the principal component analysis as the extraction method.

Table No. 11: Rotated Component Matrix

	Component
	1
Perception in Job Engagement	0.782
Fair Compensation	0.803
Job Attractiveness	0.565
Goal Achievement	0.149
Supervision Relation	0.802
Participation	0.930

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

It is clear from Table No. 11 that, out of all the factors analyzed, “Participation” (Component Matrix Score: 0.930) had the highest impact on respondent perception regarding Job Engagement. This was followed by, “Fair Compensation” (Component Matrix Score: 0.803) and “Supervision Relation” (Component Matrix Score: 0.802). “Goal Achievement” (Component Matrix Score: 0.149) had the least impact on Job Engagement.

Discussions

The study brought out interesting findings regarding the choice of the respondents on job engagement related issues in their organization. “Job Attractiveness” and “Fair Compensation” received highest level of agreement with a mean score of 4.03 respectively, followed by “Goal Achievement” (Mean score: 3.94), “Participation” (mean Score: 3.84) and “Supervision Relation” (Mean Score: 3.84). “Feedback” received lowest mean score of 2.65 in terms of agreement, clearly showing the dissatisfaction of the respondents on this factor.

Job attractiveness means the extent to which the job is more acceptable to an individual, engaging and rewarding. Robert Ford (1973) had presented his research findings supporting similar view points with respect to AT & T. Reward outcomes in the compensation offered to the employees and job attractiveness were clearly important for employee retention at Medica hospitals. So was participation. This finding can be justified by the outcomes of an organizational climate survey done at Voltas (Rao, 2010), where it was seen that, in case of a problem on the job, seniors and peers go out of their way to facilitate task achievement. The study indicates that feedback was being given lesser important which could lead employees into a state of confusion and non conformance if not resolved quickly. Team leaders and senior staffs should guide employees on performance sharing their perceptions on accomplishments, quality management, customer service emphasizing on areas of improvement. A similar approach had been discussed by Pareek & Rao (1990).

The Job Engagement Model: Based on the correlations between Job Engagement and other factors like Job Attractiveness, participation, fair Compensation and Supervisor Relations, the following model (Figure No. 6) could be developed.

Causal Variables

The model based on the above empirical findings (correlation analysis) establishes interrelationships between job engagement and job attractiveness and employee participation. The later however has

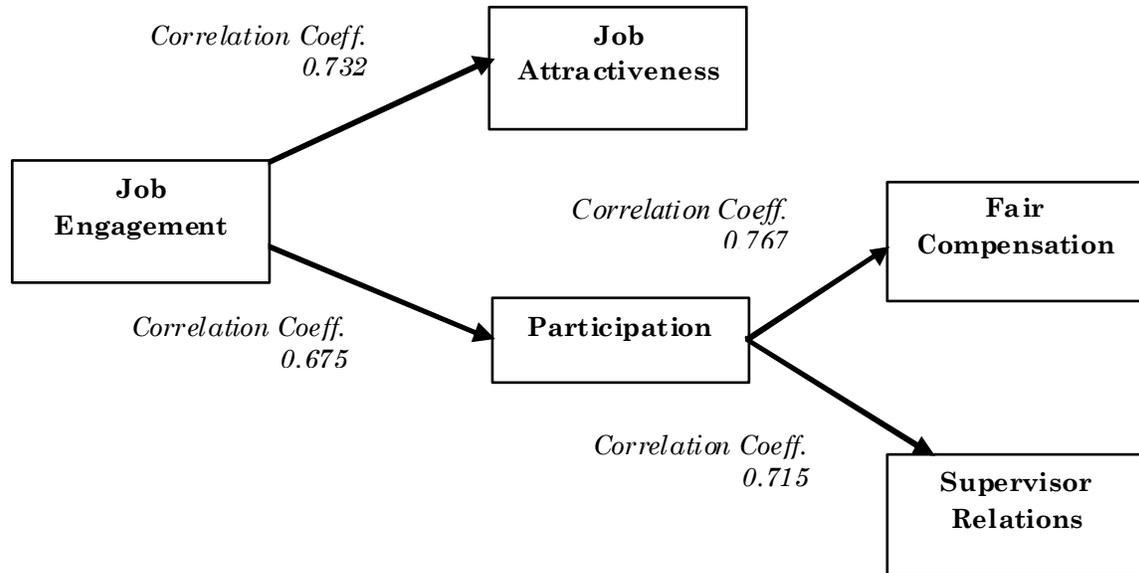


Figure No. 6: Model Depicting the Interrelationships between Job Engagement and Other

significant correlations with fair compensation and supervisor relations showing the influence of the last two variables on job engagement at Medica hospitals.

The model is further supported by factor analysis findings which shows that “Participation” (Component Matrix Score: 0.930) had the highest impact on respondent perception regarding Job Engagement. This was followed by, “Fair Compensation” (Component Matrix Score: 0.803) and “Supervision Relation” (Component Matrix Score: 0.802).

Recommendations

Super Specialty hospitals like Medica need to work out an engagement model appropriate for their organization based on participative work culture. However, importance of the attractiveness of the job and compensation-reward systems so as to motivate and recognize employee contributions could not be neglected. Employee benefit programs and quality of work life (QWL) need to be given serious consideration to make the work-life stress free, engaging, rewarding and interesting. Career planning and skill development programs could be used as essential HRD initiatives to enhance and realize the potential of the talented employees for making them more accountable and performance oriented. The management may also benchmark HR initiatives and practices from other A grade hospitals across the country to as to ensure a more competitive and employee engaging workplace. Keeping in mind the challenges faced by the healthcare sector to attract and retain talents the HR department of Medica might have to work the extra mile by aligning the HR goals with the strategic goals of the organization which would not only benefit the management on the long run but would also ensure the HR function emerging as the strategic partner shaping the future of the organization.

Conclusions

The present study had brought out with a job engagement model based on empirical findings from the study conducted at Medica Hospitals, Kolkata. The model could be validated and expanded with further research work on other similar organizations in Kolkata as well as other metropolitan cities in and around the country. This would facilitate policy makers and HR specialists implement changes in their organizational approaches for making their organizations more employable and employee engaging.

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