

ABSTRACT

Engaged and creative workforce has become a necessary condition for all organizations for their long term sustainability. Employee engagement has been conceptualized as a “*positive, fulfilling work related state of mind that is determined by vigor, dedication and absorption*”, whereas employee creativity has been defined as the ability of making unique combination of ideas or unusual association between them. Both constructs are known to have a positive influence on individual and organizational performance. In order to survive in the present extremely challenging and dynamic business environment, organizations are required to have both an engaged, as well as a creative workforce. Most of the service organizations see employee engagement as a promising solution to improve overall performances. It is ironical that majority of leaders and top level managers rank employee engagement as highly important with regard to company success and yet there is a dearth of engaged employees. For service organizations, such as hotels, highly engaged employees are an important requirement. Because those employees who interact directly with customers become a part of the service product.

Until now, employee creativity has been looked upon as a job performance outcome, resulting from engaged behavior of employees at their workplace. However, we wish to explore the engagement-creativity relationship from a different prism altogether without challenging the present stance. Nomenclaturally, innovation is more likely the outcome of people being creative. Therefore, we posit that employee creativity could be how people behave under stipulated circumstances. The context of our research is limited to hotel industry since it is a labor intensive industry and there is a constant necessity that employees demonstrate engaged and creative behaviors at work.

The main purpose behind conducting this research is to first examine the relationships among employee engagement, employee creativity and their antecedents, and the extent to which these antecedents overlap. The antecedents included in our study are based on the rationale of the Job Demands-Resources Model. The theory proposed by this model posits that job resources and personal resources positively affect employee engagement which further leads to higher performance outcomes such as, creativity.

Second we attempt to explore the question as to whether engaged behavior, at work, of individuals is a necessary condition to bring out their creativity at work. We have further attempted to examine the reversed relationship between employee creativity and employee engagement with the help of a moderator (creative personality characterized by individual's cognitive style).

To our best knowledge ours is singularly a unique study to empirically examine all these factors in the same work setting simultaneously. We surveyed hotel employees using self-administered questionnaires. Each of the constructs in the study was measured using pre-validated scales. A total of 395 questionnaires were handed over to respondents, out of which 274 were fit to be used for data analysis.

Data analysis for this research was conducted in three parts. First we conducted a canonical correlation analysis on the antecedents and employee engagement and employee creativity. The findings provided us an understanding of the extent to which each of the antecedents overlap with reference to employee engagement and employee creativity. Next, with the help of Structural Equation Modeling technique, we tested and validated our conceptual model. Finally, we conducted a moderation analysis to examine the effect of creative personality on the reversed relationship of employee creativity and employee engagement.

Most of our results were consistent with the previous studies. However, our findings suggest that most of these antecedents (viz. task characteristics, perceived organization support, perceived supervisor support, perceived value congruence, intrinsic motivation, and creative self-efficacy) are highly positively related to employee engagement and employee creativity with the exception of perceived organization support (POS) and perceived supervisor support (PSS). The rationale for that could be controlled work environments created by the organization and respective supervisors. Majority of these hotels operate on SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) which are an important aspect of evaluating their employees' job performance. Even though these SOPs are followed to maintain service quality and all the employees are required to follow SOPs and not deviate, this could lead to a controlled working condition which restricts the possibility for individuals to indulge willingly and be more creative.

As the relationships between POS/PSS with employee engagement and employee creativity were not statistically significant these antecedents had to be dropped from the model. However, the results indicated that, employees who found their work interesting and meaningful were highly engaged and creative. Further, employees who identified with their organization's values and these aligned with their own, were more creative and highly engaged. These employees were also internally driven and believed in their creative efficiency. Most importantly we found that creative personality moderates the relationship between employee creativity and engaged behavior at work.

We also examine in detail the theoretical contributions of our study and practical implications of it for managers as well as the limitations and future scope of this research.