# An Investigation into the Antecedents of Employee Engagement & Employee Creativity

## THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**
by
**Amrita Patwa**

Under the Supervision of
**Prof. Anil K. Bhat**



**BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI,**
**2020**

# CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSIONS & FINDINGS

## 6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss the results from data analysis in detail after presenting the consolidated findings from testing of hypotheses, followed by the results and findings from different stages of statistical analysis conducted during this study and model testing of our proposed conceptual models. Further, we have listed the theoretical contributions and practical implications of results derived from this research study. Finally, we have detailed the limitations of our study and scope for the future research.

## 6.2. Major Findings of the study

We have discussed all the major findings from our research study separately, pertaining to the method of analyzing the data.

### 6.2.1. Findings from Canonical Correlation Analysis

The results from this study are mostly consistent with previous empirical findings. We observed a close correlation of each of the antecedents with employee engagement and employee creativity respectively. For example, perceived value congruence with employee engagement (.549) and employee creativity (.537) depict similar strengths in their relationships. Similar is the case for the other antecedents such as task characteristics, intrinsic motivation and creative self-efficacy. **Therefore, with the help of this empirical evidence we can posit that there exists an overlap between employee engagement and employee creativity.** Despite the qualitative differences in the two terms, it is not fallacious to say that in a workplace the two co-exist. That is, when an employee is engaged in his work, he is capable of depicting a certain level of

creativity in his work simultaneously. However, **the relationships between POS/PSS with employee engagement and employee creativity were not consistent with our developed hypotheses**. Even though these relationships show a positive correlation but they appear to be weakly correlated with employee engagement and employee creativity. One plausible explanation to these results could be explained with reference to a study conducted by Zhou (2003) linking supervisor's behavior with employee creativity. The sample included in our study comprises of employees from a popularly known hospitality brand in India. When training sessions are conducted for new employees or existing employees, they are expected to perform their jobs based on SOPs also known as, Standard Operational Procedures. When supervisors evaluate their respective subordinate employees, they are assessed on the basis of these SOPs. In order to maintain their service quality, it becomes important that the hotel staff doesn't deviate from these SOPs which could in-turn lead to controlled work environments. Due to the pressure created from controlling practices, individuals tend to obtain a particular outcome or to behave in a specific way (Zhou, 2003). When employees feel that their organization/supervisors are keeping close tabs on them where they are constantly being watched and evaluated, these employees tend to develop concerns and fears that are irrelevant to their tasks. These pre-occupied concerns and fears create distractions which hinder not just their creativity at work but also affect their levels of work engagement. In such cases, managers need to rethink structures around open and transversal forms and reboot culture by assessing and cultivating the cognitive work and the interplay of individual talents with hierarchy and markets. Managers need to rethink and reinvent management. It is not a luxury; it is a necessity, and an emergency (Cohendet & Simon, 2015)

## 6.2.2. Findings from Structural Equation Modelling

The conceptual model proposes that TC, POS, PSS, IM, PVC and CSE are positively significant to employee engagement and employee creativity. The model also proposes that employee engagement is positively associated with employee creativity.

Table 6.1. Results of Hypotheses Testing from Conceptual Model I

| Hypothesized Relationships | Standardized Regression Weights | P value | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|
| H1a: Task characteristics is positively linked to employee engagement | $\beta$=0.186 | 0.002 | Not Rejected |
| H1b: Task characteristics is positively linked to employee creativity | $\beta$=0.268 | 0.000 | Not Rejected |
| H4a: Intrinsic motivation leads to employee engagement | $\beta$=0.329 | 0.000 | Not Rejected |
| H4b: Intrinsic motivation leads to employee creativity | $\beta$=0.164 | 0.002 | Not Rejected |
| H5a: Perceived value congruence is positively related to employee engagement | $\beta$=0.170 | 0.005 | Not Rejected |
| H5b: Perceived value congruence is positively related to employee creativity | $\beta$=0.229 | 0.000 | Not Rejected |
| H6a: Creative self-efficacy is positively linked to employee engagement | $\beta$=0.176 | 0.002 | Not Rejected |
| H6b: Creative self-efficacy is positively linked to employee creativity | $\beta$=0.674 | 0.000 | Not Rejected |
| H7: Employee engagement is positively linked to employee creativity | $\beta$=0.368 | 0.000 | Not Rejected |

The statistically significant results of this study indicate that TC, IM, PVC and CSE have a positive association with employee engagement and employee creativity (see Table 6.1.). The results here also suggest that CSE and EE are highly positively linked with employee creativity ($\beta$=0.674, p<0.001) and ($\beta$=0.401, p<0.001) respectively.

## 6.2.3. Findings from Moderation Analysis

The results from conducting a moderation analysis suggest that the **effect of creative personality interaction with employee creativity is higher** on those who fall in the innovative style cognitive thinking category as compared to those who are more adaptive in their cognitive approach (see Table 6.2.).

Table 6.2. Moderating Effect on Creative Personality type

| Cognitive style | Moderation Effect | t | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adaptive | 0.425 | 5.083 | 0.000 |
| Innovative | 0.679 | 8.412 | 0.000 |

## 6.3. Discussions

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the relationship between job related work and personal factors with employee engagement and employee creativity. The results we obtained have been discussed in detail in this section. We will describe the relationship we examined between each of the antecedents with employee engagement and employee creativity separately for an in-depth understanding. Since the relationships between POS and PSS with employee engagement and employee creativity respectively, were not statistically significant, we have not included them in for discussions.

## 6.3.1. Task Characteristics with Engagement and Creativity

Our first hypotheses (H1a and H1b) state that task characteristics, has a positive relationship with employee engagement and employee creativity respectively. The results from our analysis support this hypothesis and are consistent with those of previous research. However, **task characteristics depicted a stronger relationship with employee creativity as compared to that with employee engagement**. Task characteristics that is based on the Job Characteristics

96

Model comprises of autonomy, task variety, task significance, task identity and feedback from the job. All of these five core components are essential in a job to contribute to job related outcomes. Results we obtained from exploratory factor analysis (EFA) suggest that components of task characteristics include: autonomy, task variety, task significance and task enrichment. Task enrichment when employees can start and finish a whole piece of work on their own, which in itself, provides feedback on the performance of the employee. Creativity is visible in people when they associate it with higher meaningfulness and since employees find completing an entire task on their own enriching and meaningful, they are highly likely to be creative at work.

## 6.3.2. Job related Personal Factors with Engagement and Creativity

Our nest hypotheses (H4a and H4b), posit **that intrinsic motivation leads to employee engagement and employee creativity respectively. Our data supports this claim and is consistent with previous studies**. Although, time and again this relationship has been tested by various researchers and included in their conceptual models. We, however, chose to include intrinsic motivation in our conceptual model since it is imperative to employee creativity and a significant determinant of employee engagement.

Next, we proposed that **perceived value congruence has a positive relationship with employee engagement as well as employee creativity (H5a and H5b). Our results comply with these hypotheses**. These values that are significant to employees and congruent with those of their organization are related to transcendence, pay, security, variety and autonomy with reference to their workplace. As previous research suggests that when individuals contemplate something or someone as important and meaningful they are likely to make greater amount of personal investment in them, our study also backs this claim.

Next, we have stated that (H6a and H6b) creative self-efficacy is crucial to employee creativity as well as to employee engagement. Both of these relationships are positive in nature. The results from our research support this statement. However, **the relationship between creative self-efficacy and employee creativity appears to be highly significant positively, whereas creative self-efficacy leading to employee engagement is moderately significant positively**.

## 6.3.3. Creative Personality as a Moderator

We proposed that creative personality moderates the relationship between employee creativity and employee engagement. Our results provide support to the above statement, wherein, **creative personality strengthens the positive relationship between employee creativity and employee engagement**.

## 6.4. Implications of our Research

This section will discuss the contributions made by this study to theory and recommendations to managers for practical implications.

### 6.4.1. Theoretical Contributions

Our study makes some important contributions with regard to employee engagement and employee creativity literature. First, we comprehensively developed and documented the constructs of employee engagement and employee creativity. We studied different aspects of employee engagement and employee creativity and discussed the most relevant antecedents from previous research based on the conceptualization of the Job Demands-Resources Model.

Second, to the best of our knowledge, our study is the first that has contributed to theory by positing the relationships between work and personal factors (i. e. task characteristics, perceived

98

organizations support, perceived supervisor support, perceived value congruence, intrinsic motivation, and creative self-efficacy) with employee engagement and employee creativity in the same setting. Previous studies have examined these relationships in either parts or with the inclusion of other personal and contextual factors. However, in our study, perceived organization support and perceived supervisor support were statistically not significant when linked to employee engagement or employee creativity. Additionally, this study is the first of its kind in the tourism and hospitality context. In work environments such as hotels and restaurants, employees are more likely to feel engaged and be creative on the basis of the characteristics of tasks they perform, the extent of support from their organization and supervisors, congruence between their values and that of their organization and more importantly how intrinsically motivated and creatively efficient they perceive themselves.

Third, we attempted to examine the role of personality characteristics (i.e. cognitive style) in determining whether employees' perception and approach towards the work and personal factors are different. Also, our study is the first to look at the link between employee engagement and employee creativity from a different perspective. Previous studies have mostly focused on employee creativity as a performance outcome of employee engagement i. e. employee engagement was mostly depicted as an imperative to creativity. However, we have proposed that an employee's creative personality, based on his cognitive style (adaptors and innovators), moderates the relationship between employee creativity and employee engagement. Both adaptors and innovators are known to be creative personalities, but their way of doing things is very different from each other. On one hand where adaptors are generally happy and content with their environments and are more likely to stay engaged at work, innovators on the other hand are difficult to please and are often known to complain about issues of ineffectiveness and

unorganized management which leads them to disengage from work. Therefore, we attempted to examine this engagement-creativity link from a different dimension.

Overall, the research in this study has attempted to advance the literature of extensively growing areas for research: for example, creative personality, employee engagement, person-organization fit and employee creativity.

## 6.4.2. Practical Implications

From a managerial perspective, we have a few recommendations to offer to the management to build a productive and engaging work environment that benefits both the organization and its employees. In the beginning of this dissertation, we have distinctively discussed that highly active, engaged and creative workforce is quintessential for service organizations (such as hotels) to be able to achieve and maintain high standards of customer service. For example, hotel employees who have direct interactions with customers are expected to be highly responsive and extremely sensitive to customer needs at all times. Such active behavior can be accomplished only when employees feel engaged at work. This study indicates that higher levels of absorption, dedication and enthusiasm among employees prevail when they perform jobs that score high on its characteristics. These characteristics that include task identity, task variety, task significance, autonomy and feedback provide an association of psychological meaningfulness to employees. Employees feel valued and useful and these characteristics assure them of that. Managers must therefore adopt strategies that help employees to realize their worth to the organization and also the value of their contribution towards the hotel services and the organization as a whole. For example, performance appraisals and incentive programs might drastically enhance work engagement levels of hotel employees. Constructive feedback from time to time would provide

employees with information regarding their workplace behavior and task accomplishments. Customer feedback on service quality by hotel employees would be a useful and efficient practice to foster higher levels of enthusiasm and dedication of these employees.

The findings of this research also suggest that high intrinsic motivation and high creative self-efficacy leads to higher levels of engagement and creativity among hotel employees. In order to maintain high levels of motivation, managers should introduce other financial factors and remunerations to reward employees for outstanding performances and accomplishing their work related goals on or before time. Unfortunately, average salaries of hotel employees in India are dramatically low as compared to other service industries. Therefore, hotel managers and owners must redefine and accordingly modify their compensation plans since monetary benefits make a huge contribution in motivating people to achieve higher in their performances.

Managers must conduct frequent training and development programs to boost their employee's efficiencies and learning abilities. This will help hotel employees boost their morale and confidence in themselves when they are challenged to learn new things on the job. When individuals learn new skills and methods of doing their job, they perceive themselves to be better and efficient at being creative. This confidence in them fosters their engagement and dedication towards providing better services and assistance to customers and guests at the hotels.

During the recruitment and selection process, managers should consider those applicants whose values match with that of the organization. Prioritizing values over other factors would lead to optimal levels of person-organization fit. It is a conclusive proof that fit matters to both applicants as well as employers because it strongly impacts their behavior at the workplace. However, just matching applicants' values is not going to be enough as having a homogeneous

group of people with similar values could adversely affect employee creativity. Therefore, managers and recruiters must instead imply a more holistic approach including the demands and resources of a job along the requirements of the organization.

Another important factor that managers should consider during recruitment and selection of job applicants is hiring the right employees for the right job based on the applicants personality characteristics such as, their cognitive style. In other words, demands-abilities fit wherein; the applicant's cognitive style is more suited with a particular job. For example, individuals with divergent cognitive style (also known as innovators) should be hired for jobs where the requirement of the job is to have 'out of the box' approach or different ideas such as banquet & sales where hotel employees are responsible for organizing and managing events. Similarly, those with a convergent cognitive style (also known as adaptors) must be hired for jobs were the tasks are predefined and the individual has to follow them. Irrespective of all the contextual factors affecting engaged behavior among employees, it is the individual's own character trait (in this case, cognitive style) that influences how they choose to act or behave.

Consecutively, a great deal of research has been conducted to examine that employee creativity is a performance outcome of employee engagement. Our study suggests that employee engagement may not be an imperative to employee creativity because sometimes even highly creative employees may not feel engaged at work and yet have the tendency to perform well. Creative employees could be cynical and harder to please sometimes. The innovators find it difficult to work under someone else's authority and have a predisposition to defy status quo. They are more likely to disengage from work and complain about issues of inadequacies and bad management. Such employees even though difficult to deal with but they cannot be marginalized since they are a substantial source of creative enthusiasm and energy. Here, an individual's

personality (cognitive style) moderates how creative employees depict engaged behavior at the workplace.

## 6.5. Limitations of our study

There were some limitations while conducting this research. Our sample included employees working in hotel organizations only which means the scope of this study is limited to hospitality organizations in India. This restricts the generalizability of our findings. The organizations that were approached for this study were consciously aware of employee engagement since they conduct regular surveys to measure their employees' level of engagement. However, during the data collection phase the researcher observed that employees were not highly engaged at work, in spite of these surveys. This subsequently leads us to another limitation of this study.

In this study we faced limitations due to response bias for two reasons. Initially, respondents sometimes consciously provide inflated responses in order to appear socially desirable to others. For example, during this research when we asked some employees to respond to questions related to their perception of their own behavior, a few of them purposely responded dishonestly since they wanted to maintain a good image in front of the researcher administering the survey. Also, respondents were chosen irrespective of their functional or educational background from all across the managerial levels and the different departments. Since all measures used for the variables were self-reported by the employees, the understanding towards a particular question may have varied from person to person. However, such biases were minimized by maintaining complete anonymity of respondents' identity and all incomplete and insincerely filled questionnaires were discarded.

The objective of our study was to investigate the relationships between antecedents or in other terms, the predictor of employee engagement and employee creativity and therefore we used cross sectional data. Nonetheless, data collected through cross sectional study does not allow us to infer cause and affect relationships. For example, to examine the consequences or effects that occur due to variation in the level of employee engagement, cross sectional data will not solve the purpose.

## 6.6. Future Scope of Research

The limitations discussed above present a foundation for recommendations for future research.

The scope of our research was limited to Indian hospitality organizations, which mostly included hotels. Whereas, hospitality as a whole includes restaurants, diners, motels, guests house and even hospitals. Future studies could replicate among other industry types and organizations. Additionally, the use of qualitative research may provide rich insights and comprehensive understanding of employee behavior. The models proposed in this study can be tested across other services industries in India as well as the manufacturing industries to compare the results and validate the findings from this study. For the purpose of validation this model can be tested across demographic groups based on gender, work experience and education.

We used cross sectional research design to conduct this study where we get data through objective questionnaires. Future researchers could observe the relationship among study variables and changes that occur in employees' behavior using longitudinal research design. This could help researchers make causal inferences.

The interaction effect of employee creativity and creative personality on employee engagement can be tested in different other settings to be established as a theoretical background.

Subsequently, whole or parts of these influential constructs can be combined in order to include them as constituents in the formation of a new influential compound construct (Newman, Harrison, Carpenter, & Rariden, 2016).