Structural Equation Modeling for Testing the Impact of Organization Communication Satisfaction on Employee Engagement

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Communication Satisfaction plays a very critical role in achieving employee engagement in organizations. While several researchers have studied the relationship between communication and employee involvement, very few studies have established a relationship between Communication Satisfaction and Employee Engagement. Using the second-generation analytical technique Structural Equation Modeling, the present study examines the relationship between various components of Organization Communication Satisfaction (Organization Integration, Supervisory Communication, Personal Feedback, Communication Climate and Media Quality) and various components of Employee Engagement (Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Withdrawal Cognition). A modified version of the Downs and Hazen's Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire was administered on 235 personnel in the Information Technology/Information Technology Enabled Services industry in India. The scale was tested for reliability and validity using Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The results indicate that Organization Communication Satisfaction has a positive impact on Employee Engagement. The study findings have strategic implications for organizations with regard to laying a greater emphasis on increasing communication satisfaction through various human resource interventions, both at macro and micro levels in the organization.

Keywords: *Organization Communication Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, Information Technology / Information Technology Enabled Sevices, Structural Equation Modeling, Confirmatory Factor Analysis.*

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INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has been drawing a lot of importance in recent times. A Global Workforce Study conducted by Towers Perrin in 2007-2008 revealed that only 21% of the employees were engaged. A more disturbing finding of the study was that 38% of the employees were partly to fully disengage. The study also concluded that companies with higher levels of employee engagement are able to retain their valued employees and also achieve better financial results. Similarly, Gallup has also conducted a study on employee engagement and found that 29% of employees are actively engaged in their jobs, 54% are not engaged, and 17% are actively disengaged. Many researchers have studied employee engagement and have found that employee engagement predicts employee outcomes, organizational success and financial performance (Bates, 2004; Harter et al 2002,). Hewitt Associates LLC, (2005, p.1) have also established a strong relationship between employee engagement and profitability through higher productivity, sales, customer satisfaction and employee retention.

Today, as a result of continuous organizational restructuring (mergers, acquisitions, downturn imperatives), organizations are resorting to right sizing strategies. Every Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the world accords topmost priority to engage the employees surviving a layoff. With the world becoming a global market place, where everything is becoming a commodity, people and their talents are the key differentiators to an organization's ability to service its customer. Managing dis-engaged employees in a customer facing role is therefore, very critical to the success and profitability of the business. Lockwood explains, "As organizations move forward into a boundary less environment, the ability to attract, engage, develop and retain talent has become increasingly important".

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Organization Communication and Employee Engagement

A very exhaustive analysis done by Macey and Schneider (2008) explains employee engagement on 3 facets for example; Psychological state engagement (satisfaction, involvement, commitment, empowerment), Trait engagement (personality, conscientiousness) and Behavioral engagement (organizational citizenship behavior, personal initiative, role expansion). Another research indicates that employee engagement constitutes two aspects for example; job engagement and organization engagement (Saks, 2006). Saks further found that employee engagement was positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior and negatively related to intention to quit.

Downsizing has become a harsh reality over the past 2 decades. These downsizing strategies come with other negative consequences of "attrition of employees who are not impacted by downsizing". The problem is more profound when the attrition of employees is top performers or employees with critical skills. Various studies have proved that downsizing negatively affects attitudes of employees surviving the downsizing by reducing organizational commitment, morale, job satisfaction and also increasing intention to quit and job stress (Arnold and Feldman, 1982; Greenhalge, 1982; Kozlowski et. al, 1993).

It is therefore, very important for organizations to find ways to retain the attrition of employees after downsizing. Organizational Communication and support are possible avenues to reduce the negative effects of downsizing. It has been established that clear, concise and honest communication is an important tool for employee engagement (Lockwood). It is further established that lack of communication or poorly communicated information can lead to distrust, dissatisfaction, skepticism and unwanted employee turnover. During downsizing, communication becomes very critical because employees believe that their organization holds them in low regard and ignores their interest (Anderson, 1996; Mclean Parks and Kidder, 1994). They also suspect that management communication is not credible and that information is being withheld (Noer 1993, O'Neill and Lenn, 1995). Employees need to understand how they fit into the overall plans of the organization in terms of their roles and contribution to the growth plans of the organizations.

Research Objectives

This study therefore, attempts to establish the impact of Organizational Communication Satisfaction on Employee Engagement in the Information Technology / Information Technology Enabled Services (IT/ITES) industry in India. We have selected the IT/ITES industry because of the significance of the impact during the recent recessionary period.

Hypotheses Tested

The following hypotheses are tested in the study:

H1: Dimensions of Organization Communication Satisfaction (OCS) are inter-related

H2: Organizational Communication Satisfaction is explained through Organization Integration, Supervisory Communication, Personal Feedback, Corporate Information, Communication Climate and Media Quality.

H3: Dimensions of Employee Engagement (EE) are interrelated

H4: Employee engagement is explained through Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Withdrawal Cognition

H5: Organization Communication Satisfaction has a positive impact on Employee Engagement.

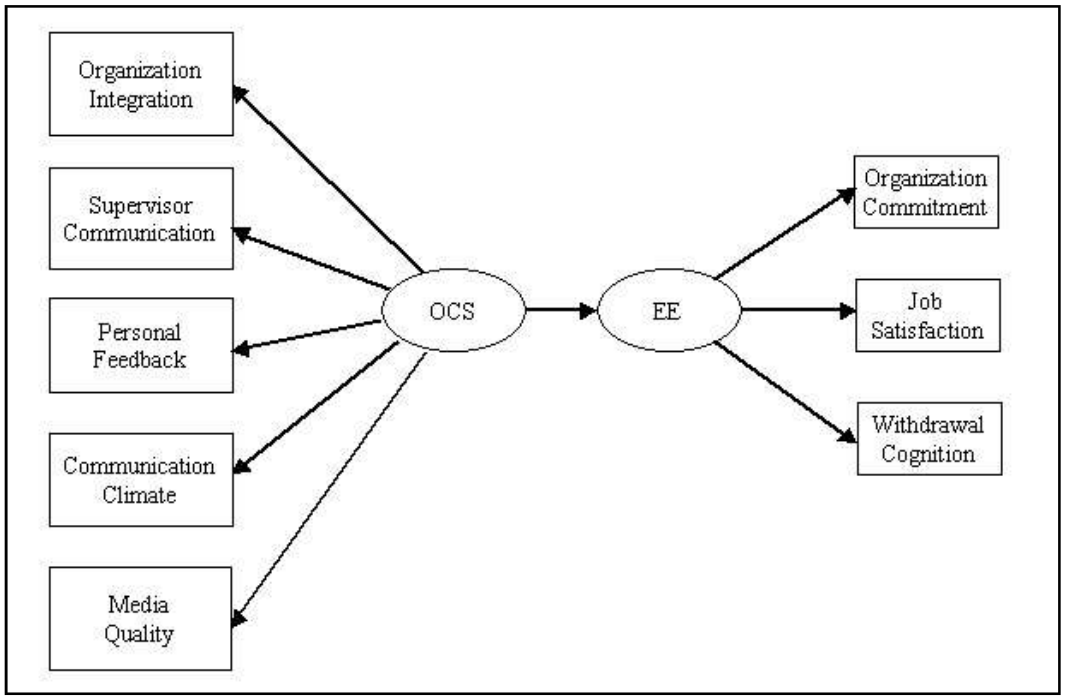

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED OCS-EE MODEL

RESEARCH METHODS

Measures

The modified version of Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs and Hazens, 1977) has been selected for measuring the Organization Communication Satisfaction construct of the study. For the Employee Engagement construct, each dimension was measured on borrowed scale. Job Satisfaction was measured on a 5-item scale developed by Price and Muellar (1986). Organization Commitment was measured on a 6-item scale developed by Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993) while Withdrawal Cognition was measured on a 3-item scale developed by De Coninck and Bachmann (2005).

Therefore, the study hypothesis covered 2 Constructs – Organization Communication Satisfaction (OCS) and Employee Engagement (EE). OCS is measured for 5 key dimensions / Factors for example; Organization Integration, Supervisory Communication, Personal Feedback, Communication Climate and Media Quality while EE is measured on 3 key dimensions / factors for example; Organization commitment, Job satisfaction and Withdrawal Cognition. The 8 categorical dimensions were measured on the items / variables mentioned in Table 1.

TABLE 1: FACTORS AND THEIR MEASUREMENT VARIABLES USED IN THE STUDY

Factor / Dimension	Items / Variables of measurement
Organization Communication Satisfaction (OCS)	
I. Organization Integration (ORG)	1. Information about the requirements of my job (oi1) 2. Information about my progress in my job (oi2) 3. Information about company policies and goals (oi3) 4. Information about changes in our organization (oi4)
II. Supervisory Communication (SUP)	5. Extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me (sc1) 6. Extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job related problems (sc2) 7. Extent to which my supervisor trusts me (sc3) 8. Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas (sc4)
III. Personal Feedback (PER)	9. Information about how I am being assessed (pf1) 10. Information about how my efforts are recognized and rewarded (pf2) 11. Extent to which superiors know and understand the problems faced by subordinates (pf3)
IV. Communication Climate (CLI)	12. Extent to which the organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals (cl1) 13. Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it (cl2) 14. Extent to which communication practices are adaptable to emergencies (cl3) 15. Extent to which I receive in time the information needed to do my job (cl4)
V. Media Quality (MDQ)	16. Extent to which written directives and reports are clear and concise (mq1) 17. Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are basically healthy (mq2) 18. Extent to which the amount of communication in the organization is about right (mq3).
Employee Engagement	
VI. Organization Commitment (OM)	19. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own (om1) 20. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization (R) (om2) 21. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization (R) (om3) 22. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me (om4) 23. I do not feel strong sense of belonging to my organization (R) (om5)
VII. Job Satisfaction (JS)	24. I find real enjoyment in my job (js1) 25. Most days I am enthusiastic about my job (js2) 26. I feel fairly well satisfied with my job (js3)
VIII. Withdrawal Cognition (WDC)	27. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this Company (wc1) 28. Within the next six months, I would rate the likelihood of leaving my present job as high (R) (wc2).

Sample

For this study, primary data was collected through administering structured questionnaires. The respondents for the study were selected from the Information Technology (IT) / Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) industry in India. A total of 235 filled up questionnaires were taken up for analysis.

MAJOR RESULTS

The study used second-generation analytical technique, Structural Equation Modeling to examine the OCS-EE relationship.

Organization Communication Satisfaction

The results of First Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) showed that all the factor loadings were greater than 0.7, except two items of the factor, "Organization Integration". The first item "Information about company goals and policies" has a factor loading of 0.65, which is marginally lower than 0.7. The second item "Information about changes in our organization" has a factor loading of 0.57. Both these items were retained in the final analysis based on its importance specified in the literature as well as researcher's opinion. The Critical Ratio (CR) values for all the items reached the significance level ($p<.001$). Further, the composite reliability for each of the factors was greater than 0.7 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of the factors was greater than or equal to 0.5. The above results confirm the convergent validity and internal consistency reliability of the OCS construct. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were higher than the squared correlations for the constructs in the First Order measurement model for OCS thus confirming the discriminant validity. The other key model statistics and values, CFI=0.91, GFI=0.87 and RMSEA=0.08 indicates an acceptable level of model fit. The second order CFA also gave similar results for factor loadings, CR values, composite reliability and acceptable model fit parameters. These results clearly support Hypothesis 1 and 2 that the dimensions of OCS for example; Organization Integration, Supervisory Communication, Personal Feedback, Communication Climate and Media Quality are inter-related and are adequately explained by the construct, OCS.

Employee Engagement

The results of first order CFA showed that the factor loadings were greater than 0.7 except for the item, "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me", which was marginally lower at 0.67. The item, "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" was removed from further analysis since it improved the overall model fit parameters. The CR values for all the items reached the significance level ($p<.001$). Further, the composite reliability for each of the factors was greater than 0.7, except one factor, "Withdrawal Cognition" which was marginally lower at 0.66. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each of the factors was higher than or equal to 0.5. The above results confirm the convergent validity and internal consistency reliability of the EE construct. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were higher than the squared correlations for the constructs in the

First Order measurement model for EE, thus confirming the discriminant validity. The other key model statistics and values, CFI = 0.96, GFI = 0.94 and RMSEA = 0.08 indicate an acceptable level of model fit. The second order CFA also gave similar results with respect to factor loadings; CR values, composite reliability and model fit parameters. These results clearly support Hypothesis 3 and 4 that the dimensions of Employee Engagement for example; Organization Commitment, Job Satisfaction and Withdrawal Cognition are inter-related and are explained by the construct, EE.

Organization Communication Satisfaction and Employee Engagement

The Structured Equation Model indicated that the overall OCS-EE model reached the range of acceptability, since the value of $\chi 2$ / df equals 2.003, which is considered acceptable (Bollen, 1989). The other indices of model fitness, CFI = 0.91, GFI = 0.83, AFGI = .80, IFI = 0.91 and RMSEA = 0.065 indicate an acceptable level of "Goodness of Fit" (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998). The results also show that OCS has a significant positive influence on Employee engagement (γ = 0.76, p <.001). Therefore, our Hypothesis 5 is supported that "Organization Communication Satisfaction has a positive impact on Employee Engagement."

Managerial Implications

All the five hypotheses proposed were confirmed thereby establishing the importance of Organization Communication Satisfaction in influencing Employee Engagement. This study therefore, serves as a means of empirically validating the understanding of concepts expressed in various literatures from consulting firms and independent research agencies (Towers Perrin, Gallup, Hewitt LLC etc.) With the downturn and associated resource re-organization in various organizations, specifically in the IT / ITES sectors, it has become imperative for the organizations to ensure that their most valued employees are fully "engaged". This study underlines the importance of communication satisfaction in building a sense of organizational commitment – willingness to walk that extra mile to achieve organizational goals and objectives. Organizations would like to use communication as a strategic option to deliver focused messages to segmented employee audiences in order gain their trust and make them "highly engaged". This would help organizations reduce the uncertainty in the minds of their employees about their jobs, future in the organization, especially during uncertain times and thereby reduce attrition of high performing and most valued employees.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

1) This study was limited to the IT and ITES industry thus limiting the generalizability of the results. Therefore, the study could be expanded to check for relevance to all industries.

2) This study has focused largely on the psychological stage engagement facets of Employee Engagement. There are other facets like behavioral engagement and trait engagement that would need to be analyzed. This study could also be extended to research the impact of Organization Communication Satisfaction on other aspects of employee

engagement for example; Organization Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Perceived Organization Support (POS).

3) Lastly, there is a mention of trust (Lockwood, Meyers, Pincus and Acharya) in various literatures and the role of Organization Communication in developing trust among employees. There are also studies that mention the role of interpersonal trust in positively influencing the various facets of employee engagement (Earley, Robinson, Drischoll, Saks, etc). This study could therefore, be extended to examine the mediating role of trust in the OCS – EE relationship.

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