

EXAMINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN CIVIL ENGINEERING COMPANIES OF OMAN: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is an important aspect within any company, as it helps in making sure that there is cohesion between employee and management. This helps in making sure that the employee turnover ratio is kept under control, and in turn contributes towards operational efficiency. In the given study, the contribution of employee engagement is identified within civil engineering companies located out of Oman. As of the literature review, it has been found that the presence of a strong internal culture and employee dedication as well. As per the findings it has been found that the presence of work culture can help in making sure that the employees feel engaged but is not limited to only that. On the contrary, as per the findings, it has been noted that the presence of supportive management is also required in the development of employee engagement as well. Cognitive, physical and emotional attachment of an employee to the targets of the civil engineering company and their work ethic go hand in hand with well rounded employee engagement. Employee engagement goes hand in hand with higher productivity as they feel more connected with the goal and values embodied with the organisation. The issue of workplace safety and hazard mitigation, especially when considering civil engineering companies, becomes an essential part of the engagement improvement strategy.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Civil Engineering, Oman, Workplace Culture.

Introduction

Engaging employees is considered as one of the most important jobs of managers or team leaders. Motivating subordinate employees is an essential duty of a manager or a team leader. Employee engagement can be described as the level of involvement and enthusiasm of employees in all organisational aspects of their workplace (Gallup, 2024). Employees who are engaged tend to develop a healthy work life balance which reflects in their work performance. Healthy work life balance helps in generating better output. Engaged employees are generally more attentive and enthusiastic towards their work. They are also more concerned about their job performance. They communicate more effectively with their co-workers and create a positive work environment. They also help in the creation of positive influence over other employees and motivate them to improve their work performance which will naturally generate better work output. Better work output will result in the increase in profits and income of an organisation.

Employee engagement is mainly of three types, Cognitive, emotional and physical (Tenney *et al.*, 2023). Cognitive employee engagement can be described as the extent to which employees are committed to their work. When employees engage with their work cognitively, they are able to focus on their jobs in a better manner, even during distractions. This can only be possible if employees love their jobs. In order to focus effectively on their jobs, they should have interest in it. Emotional employee engagement on the other hand is connected to the emotions of the employees of a company. Such type of engagement is related to how employees of a particular organisation feel about that company. It is also about how they feel about their colleagues and the leadership. Employees who are engaged emotionally with their jobs are generally more invested with their jobs. They are also more likely to experience job satisfaction.

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Physical employee engagement (Satata, 2021) can be simply described as the situation when employees are physically engaged with their work. It is mainly about physical as well as the mental effort which the employees put in their jobs. It is also connected with the physical and mental well being of the employees. When employees are healthier both physically and mentally, they will be able to engage more physically with their jobs which will improve their work performance and generate better work output which will result in the increase of income and profits of the organisation. Better work environment is required for the physical as well as the mental well being of employees of any organisation which will help in improvement of work performance of employees.

Background of the Research Study

In order to understand why employee engagement is important for an organisation, it is essential to know about the important concept of employee turnover of numerous civil engineering companies. This will also help in understanding the current situation of employee engagement on employees of several civil engineering companies. Employee turnover can be defined as the percentage comparison of the number of persons an organisation should replace in a certain period of time to the average amount of total number of persons within an organisation (Ali and Anwar, 2021). In simpler terms, employee turnover refers to the way of measuring how often employees leave an organisation and are replaced by new employees. Employee turnover rate is calculated by dividing the number of employees who leave during a certain period of time with the average number of employees during the same period of time. It is usually expressed as a percentage.

High turnover rate (Guzeller and Celiker, 2020) refers to many employees leaving the organisation whereas low turnover means less number of employees are leaving the organisation and they tend to serve the company for a longer period of time. Employee turnover is quite natural for any organisation but high employee turnover rate is problematic as well as challenging because a company spends both time and money in order to find, recruit and train new employees. Low employee turnover rate (Li, 2022) is the goal of most of the organisations and they try to avoid high employee turnover rate by all possible means. Employee turnover rate is related to employee engagement. If employees feel satisfied with their job and working conditions and engage more with their jobs then employee turnover will be low but if employees do not feel satisfied with their jobs and engage less with their job, then employee turnover will be high. Employee turnover can give a clear idea to the employers about the situation of employee engagement in their company and will thus help them formulate ideas for engagement of their employees in order to prevent high employee turnover.

Impact of Employee Engagement in Operational Enhancement in Civil Engineering Companies of Oman

The role of employees is significant for the success as well as failure of any organisation. It is important to examine the data related to the employee engagement of the civil engineering companies of Oman like the AL Arkan Construction LLC in order to understand and determine the dedication level of employees of the civil engineering companies of Oman (Susanto *et al.*, 2023). This work performance of employees depends on certain factors like employee engagement and job satisfaction. This once again proves that employee engagement is a precious resource for every company because the employees who are engaged in the working system of a company generally care about the values of the company along with the business goals, performance of the team and other significant factors which decides organisational success.

In simpler terms, if a company is able to maintain all the elements of employee engagement (Lubis, 2024) and becomes successful in providing a healthy workplace to employees, the situation will improve the work performance of all the employees as they will be motivated to engage more with their work which will raise the income as well as the profits of the company. It is important to examine the civil engineering companies of Oman and measure the employee engagement of the employees of those civil engineering companies in order to make the employers of those companies aware about the factors which impact the performance of the employees. Proper recommendations for ways of increasing employee engagement which will help in the better performance of employees which will make the whole industry of civil engineering stable. This work is based on secondary sources about the civil engineering companies of Oman and also about the level of employee engagement within that sector. Employers of these civil engineering companies of Oman like Ahmed Said Engineering Consultancy can follow proper guidelines in order to drive their companies towards success by making their companies better places for employee engagement.

Literature Review

In the given survey, the various implications of employee engagement in Omani civil engineering companies has been analysed. The various methods and means of employee engagement have been studied. The impact of workplace culture and management methods has been examined. Factors such as employee productivity and engagement, the role of workplace culture and value ethics of civil engineering firms have been examined. Their role in sustainable practices, teamwork and collaboration has also been examined. Recommendations for workplace safety and employee engagement improvement follow the studies performed. Personal and professional interactions along with cognitive, physical and emotional engagement with the work enhance employee productivity.

Impact of Employee Engagement in Oman Civil Engineering Companies

As per the studies of Garg *et al.* (2021), employee engagement is considered to be a colloquial term which is presented in multiple ways. In the process of engagement, the employees express themselves in different ways, such as cognitively, physically and emotionally as per their own performances. The engagement with work is defined as a work-related positive aspect which is characterised by the enthusiasm, dedication and the determination of the employees. On the other hand, as opined by Saks (2022) in their studies, employee engagement has been found to be a term which is responsible for making the employees to be dedicated to their works. The emotional and intellectual perspectives of the employees are the major components to be considered in the specific domain of employee engagement.

As per the findings of Baran and Sypniewska (2020), it has been observed that the aspect of employee engagement is related to the dedication and the involvement of the worker towards their companies or organisations. The employee engagement theory is based on the specific psychological aspects of the individual employees which is automatically related to the work ethics and the endeavour of the employees. The engagement of the employees varies depending on the workaholic nature of the individual employees. The employees are defined as being engaged, not engaged and so on. As per the studies of Ababneh (2021), it has been found that employees and management are more focused on the various factors related to the employee engagement which consist of the team management, leadership qualities and work environment and work culture and so on. The three major components of employee engagement are considered to be leadership, work environment and team or coworkers.

Factors Affecting Employee Engagement Rates in Civil Engineering Companies

As per the findings of Ohemeng *et al.* (2020), one of the main factors affecting employee management include factors like workplace culture and dedication of the employees. This can be explained with the help of multiple theories. It has been observed that the Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a theory which is mainly focused on employee engagement, which is important to understand the workplace culture, the attitude and dedication of the employees. As per the findings of Ahmad *et al.* (2023), the concept behind this SET theory is related to reciprocity, which suggests that if a company or organisation try to maintain an unbiased and fair approach to the individual employee, the employees become encouraged to reciprocate the same approach towards their work. The Social Exchange Theory is important to connect the relationship between the employer and the employees. This theory explains the interactions and the interdependent approaches among the employees and the employers as well. The consequences of using SET are vital to maintain the work environment well, for including good leaders to encourage the employees to work with sincerity.

Overview of Civil Engineering Companies of Oman

Construction in Oman is considered to be an important aspect that is highly responsible for the economic growth of the country. But the present construction projects of Oman are getting delayed due to the barriers related to the completion of the work. The critical factors which are directly or indirectly related to affecting the constructions to be completed have been focused on.

Engagement in work is considered to be one of the main propagandas and it is used to unite all the employees by making them able to maintain the dedication towards their works. Besides this, the companies and the organisations are solely responsible for maintaining the employee engagement properly. The given study is mainly focused on the employee engagement in the Oman civil engineering companies like Al Nasser Business and Services Co. The employee engagement in the Oman civil engineering companies are related to the work environment, organisational aspects and self-evaluating techniques of the individual employees.

The factors which are related to client satisfaction are considered directly or indirectly to have a huge impact on the progress of the construction projects in Oman. The most important factors related to this are the quality and experience of the team and the employees. The significant aspects related to the success of construction have been shown appropriately. As per the studies of Al Amri and Marey-Pérez (2020), it has been observed that the companies in Oman tend to adopt value engineering as one of their important aspects, value engineering is a term which can be described as a concept which can help in promoting a systematic, organised approach. This approach can in turn help in making sure that the civil engineering companies can now provide necessary functions at a lowest cost. With the help of value engineering, it is now possible to make sure that the given construction companies are more sustainable. This has been made possible with the help of using substitute materials, which might include alternatives that cost less and create less damage towards the environment in the long run. With the help of value engineering, it is now possible that functionality within the operations are now maintained with sustainability as well.

Recommendations for Improving and Enhancing Employee Engagement Rates

As per the studies of Saks (2022), employee engagement is considered to be an important aspect in the field of civil engineering. It is related to the sense of purpose which suggests the well-maintained connections between employers and the employees. When the employees feel supported, they become willing to reciprocate the same towards the organisations and companies. As per the observations of Siswanto *et al.* (2021), employees who are engaged cognitively with the strategies and goals of a company should be aware of the things they need to do in order to help in the achievement of goals of a company. As per the studies of Barreiro and Treglown, (2020), high levels of emotional engagement contribute significantly in the creation of a positive work environment where it will be much easier for other employees to engage more with their work. Some factors like recognition, benefits and better work life balance will help in the development of positive emotions towards the organisation. These factors will also contribute towards reducing work related stress which will in turn reduce negative emotions regarding the organisation. As per the studies of Grzegorzczuk *et al.* (2021), company employers tend to hire more efficient employees to enhance the productivity of the companies and the organisations. The base of maintaining the trust between the employer and the employees is effective communication. The relation among the leaders, the organisers and the employees is dependent on both trustworthiness and honesty.

Summary

Positive workplace culture and employee engagement in terms of cognitively, physically and emotionally being attached to the targets of the civil engineering company were found to be positively correlated. Employee engagement was found to be a driving factor in creativity and employee productivity. Emotional engagement was enhanced by worker recognition and provision of benefits and well rounded off by a positive work life balance. Leadership and proper human resource management has a positive impact on employee morale and this improves the overall experience of the employees while working. Dedication and a positive work ethic on behalf of the employee complement successful management strategies that together sustain and improve employee engagement.

Research Methodology

Aims and Objectives of the Research

Aims

To examine employee engagement in civil engineering companies of Oman: an empirical investigation. With this, it will be possible to establish factors impacting employee satisfaction overall.

Objectives

- To identify the impact of employee engagement on overall productivity in civil engineering companies.
- To identify factors affecting employee engagement rates in civil engineering companies.
- To examine the employee engagement rates in civil engineering companies of Oman.
- To provide recommendations for improving and enhancing employee engagement rates in civil engineering companies of Oman.

Research Questions

- How to identify the impact of employee engagement on overall productivity in civil engineering companies?
- How to identify factors affecting employee engagement rates in civil engineering companies?
- How to examine the employee engagement rates in civil engineering companies of Oman?
- How to provide recommendations for improving and enhancing employee engagement rates in civil engineering companies of Oman?

Findings and Analysis

Findings

Cognitive, emotional and physical engagement of employees is pivotal to increasing employee productivity in the workplace (Garg *et al.* 2021). Employees express their degree of engagement as enthusiasm and excitement. This is crucial to the employee expressing desirable ownership to work and is crucial to them improving their productivity (Baran and Sypniewska, 2020). However, employee engagement is also dependent on the dedication and degree of interest of the worker. As such, work ethic has a pivotal role to play in deciding employee engagement. The literature provided above presents the importance of employee satisfaction within the construction companies like Al Jadaf Engineering L.L.C, which can now help in making sure that the overall operational inefficiencies associated with a given operation is enhanced. As per the findings of the given study and observations, it can be seen that the majority of the employees within the construction sector of Oman are mostly affected by the leadership qualities and quality management practices associated within the company (Khalfan *et al.*, 2022). Positive work life balance has a positive impact on employee engagement and productivity. It showed employee innovation improved when employee engagement increased. Flexibility and blending between employees working under the same corporation are the most basic characteristics that lead to innovation in the corporate civil organisations.

The ability of such employees to collaborate and integrate extends to their lives as well. These skills and attributes have been shown to be able to improve their ability to balance personal and professional commitments (Al Darmaki *et al.*, 2020). Critical Success Factors (CSFs) such as Management support lead, detection of deviations from Standards, distribution of responsibilities and spirit and cooperation were identified as critical factors in the successful functioning of civil engineering corporations of Oman and continuous employee improvement (Al Qayoudhi *et al.*, 2021). Cognitive engagement indicates that the employee is mentally focused and committed to their job; physical engagement indicates that their body language shows that they are invested in their work and emotional engagement indicates that the employee has emotional and psychological relationships between their work and themselves (Yao *et al.*, 2022). The Oman Vision for 2040 accounted for various benefits for the civil and construction industries in the country (PwC Middle East, 2021).

The Ministry of Manpower issued Ministerial Decision no. 286/2008 which provided the Regulation of Occupational Safety and Health for Establishments governed by the Labour Law (Description of National OSH Regulatory Framework, 2024). It covered all occupational health and safety laws that regulate safety under the Omani administration and its civil engineering project. It enumerates the various standards of lighting, ventilation, heat, noise, personal protection equipment, first aid and occupational diseases that need to be ensured in order to protect construction workers (Occupational safety and health country profile: Oman Occupational Safety and Health). According to the International Labour Organization, this law mandated that workers must not have to work outside between 12.30 pm and 3.30 pm and must be allowed a midday meal break. However, several Omani companies have been found to violate this rule. Even during non-summer months, workers are exposed to heat stroke hazards as temperatures soar in the Omani desert territory. These controversies are imminently in need of being addressed. Civil Transactions Law (Sultani Decree 29 of 2013) (Civil Code), in particular Book 2 Part 3 Chapter 1 (Muqawala) is the central law that governs construction and civil engineering contracts in Oman (Construction Law, 2023).

Contracts are drawn up on Oman Standard Form Documents between public entities, individuals or private companies. The rights and responsibilities of Omani employers that may span public sector firms, the Omani government, real estate developers and project companies are outlined in the Omani Civil Code (Rashdi, 2023). The relationship between stakeholders of the various projects involved in Oman is very adversarial. Hence, their contracts are governed by black letter law. Both local and international contractors via collaborations may act as constructors. Deals between subcontractors

and contractors are mutually agreed and must abide by Omani law, public policy and Sharia. Individuals providing funding for the civil construction project are called financiers and are usually sourced through local lenders, export credit agencies and international institutional lenders. The rights and obligations of the financier are agreed between the parties and are treated as sacrosanct.

Discussion

It is important to note that the presence of competent quality management practices can help in making sure that the quality procedures implemented within the given company help in making sure that there is no unnecessary overworking of the employees, and the waste generated has been reduced as well. The study has also mentioned that the operational performance associated within the given business can also enhance working efficiencies as well. The study also found that the QM practices have significantly influenced OP. This link between work life balance, employee engagement, innovation and collaboration and blending between employees innovation and collaboration and blending between employees has been established in this study. High-performance work systems (HPWS) in addition to employee incentives for higher productivity are attributed to better employee enthusiasm and engagement. This has been shown to lead to better work life balance. These strategies were identified as essential tools in the sector, and their attributes and distribution was conceded to be crucial to the functioning of civil engineering companies by their management. This in addition to the above factors adds a competitive advantage to the corporation arsenal. It was associated with lower product recall, higher overall sales, and lower prodigy processing time. The decline in processing time led to increased cost savings for the company. When employees are provided with monetary or other incentives, it generally improves employee motivation and engagement. Work engagement, job performance and psychological capital were found to be positively correlated in various studies, showing employee engagement was positively correlated with job performance. Workplace culture and how employees are guided by their superiors are important indicators of how employee productivity might improve or decrease.

Employee engagement first and foremost is a function of how management deals with issues and delegates responsibilities to its workers. Creating a sense of belonging to the workplace and aligning the mission of the employees to the mission of the company is essential creating a positive sense of employee engagement. Employee engagement goes hand in hand with other positive attributes of the workplace, such as collaboration and integration. Creating employee engagement is also a derivative of how safe and comfortable employees feel at their workplace. Workplace hazards are a prominent danger to employees working in the dangerous heat of the Omani desert. These workers are not only exposed to the dangerous aspects of heavy machinery or chances of accidents occurring while working with civil engineering equipment but also the threat of heat strokes or health issues due to prolonged heat exposure. Several Omani laws and decrees have been reviewed by this study, which serve to protect employees working under harsh conditions under imminent threats of the civil infrastructure workplace. These laws define the decrease and agreements, and how they serve to define the rights of and protect the rights of financiers, employees, contractors and subcontractors. These sacrosanct deals serve to prevent infringement of property, violation of employee rights, and escalation of issues when they arise. Employees who enjoy a good work life balance tend to have better engagement and feel more connected to the vision of the company.

Organisations with better management and crew resource management strategies have better employee engagement. A crucial part of management especially in civil infrastructure firms is to provide better safety to employees and take occupational health and safety of workers seriously. To provide employees with a better workplace engagement opportunity, construction must take place sustainably. Oman is witness to this, because it is a country that encompasses the principle of value engineering. Value engineering aims to provide the lowest cost to achieve the best outcome while maintaining sustainability standards. Since Omani infrastructure and civil engineering companies embody this ideal, it is highly probable that this will improve employee interest and engagement in the long term.

Conclusion

Civil engineering and construction are considered to be important aspects which are highly responsible for the economic growth of Oman. But the present construction projects of Oman had been delayed mainly due to the barriers related to the completion of the work. Engagement in work is considered to be important for better performance of employees. This better work performance will automatically generate better work output which will naturally result in increase in income and profits of a company. This process is also used in order to unite all the employees by enabling them to

communicate effectively with each other as a result of which they are able to maintain the dedication towards their work. The companies and the organisations should be solely responsible for maintaining the employee engagement of their employees properly.

This study has examined how the levels of employee engagement in the civil engineering sector of Oman have changed across time. The study mainly focused on the employee engagement in the civil engineering companies of Oman. The employee engagement in the civil engineering companies of Oman are mainly related to the work environment, organisational aspects and self-evaluating techniques of the individual employees. The factors which are related to clients are considered to have a huge impact on the progress of the construction projects in Oman. The most important factors which are related to this are the quality and experience of the team as well as the employees of that team.

Employee incentives for higher productivity and High Performance Work Systems are generally attributed to better employee enthusiasm and engagement. These methods were identified as important tools in the sector, and their attributes and distribution was conceded to be critical to the functioning of civil engineering companies by their management. This, in addition to the above factors, has added a competitive advantage to the corporate arsenal. It was associated with lower product recall, higher overall sales, and lower prodigy processing time. The decline in processing time had led to increased cost savings for the organisation. It is believed that when employees are provided with monetary or other incentives, it generally improves employee motivation and engagement. Work engagement, job performance and psychological capital were found to be positively correlated in several studies, which show that employee engagement was positively correlated with job performance of employees. This study established the links between employee engagement, work life balance innovation and collaboration and blending between employees of a workforce.

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