

**A Conceptual study on Employee Engagement in Healthcare Industry during COVID-19****Dr S Uma Mageswari*****Abstract***

*Employees are the backbone of any Organisation. Healthcare professionals play a very important role in the livelihood of the humankind all the time but now during COVID. When the entire nation was in lockdown, Doctors, Nurses and other healthcare professionals were on their full swing irrespective of the place they belong to. The remarkable contribution of these professionals has saved many lives. One of the important facets of the healthcare professionals is how they are engaged in the job they are doing during pandemic. This article is an attempt to analyse Employee Engagement of healthcare professionals especially during pandemic.*

*Key Words: Employee Engagement, motivation, healthcare professionals, organisation*

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**INTRODUCTION**

The success and growth of an Organisation depends to a large extent on the employees. They are the one who play a major role in transforming the theory to practicality in all aspects. Healthcare industry has become one of India's largest sector, both in terms of revenue and employment. The entire nation was in mute after the breakdown of Corona from March 2020. The pandemic has reflected in so many ways in everyone's lives. Keeping this aside the whole nation is in praise of the remarkable service rendered by Doctors, Nurses, Technicians and all those in the health care industry. While work from home was the order of the day from March, the only exception was for emergency services – health care professionals who worked and are working tirelessly to save people. The way they engage themselves in their work is beyond words. The paper attempts to relate employee engagement in health care industry and its contribution towards the society.

**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Employee engagement in simple words is how employees engage themselves in the work they do. The match between the educational background and career relates only for very few people.

Having said that when an employee takes up a job finding no other option, initially may not be that much engaged in the job he/she does but as time goes will be self motivated and confident enough to do the job with complete involvement. This is not an exception for healthcare industry as well. Those unable to become doctors end up as nurses or other technicians but can be satisfied that they are in healthcare industry.

Employee engagement has been defined by many authors but there is no clear definition as it is a new term. It was Kahn (1990) who used the term 'Employee Engagement' and defined it as a level of commitment and involvement of the employees towards their organization and its value. Engagement is contemplated by the interest of personal energies into their roles, physically, cognitively and emotionally. High energy means engagement and low energy means disengagement.

### **PLOT OF HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY**

No country is spared by the threat of COVID-19 which is truly a global crisis as well. In such a scenario a notable part of many developing or developed economies is dependent on the health care industry. Though COVID-19 has taken many lives but with the efforts of health care professions and the government the worst scenario is getting reduced. A major challenge faced by Healthcare industry in India is to eradicate COVID- 19 but in the process the doctors, nurses and other technician who are involved in saving COVID cases are victims of the same either through treating the patients or indirectly through asymptomatic patients who visit hospital for other reasons. This is not only a panacea for those treating the patients but also a question on safety measures against the disease. These are critical points of concern both to the hospitals and employees. What measure the hospital is taking towards employee engagement of health care professions during the pandemic?

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004)** define 'employee engagement' as "a positive attitude held by the employees 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 benefits of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee."

**Ranjan (2014)** said that if there is a constant flow of communication from both sides, the relationship between an employee and an employer can only develop and remain solid. Internal contact plays an efficient function in employee engagement. Understanding the ways to collect and evaluate employee input and act on engagement drivers are crucial steps in improving employee engagement. He further clarified that if it wants to expand and keep its clients and workers involved and satisfied, a company cannot afford to ignore internal communication as a critical area.

**Swarnalatha and Prasanna (2012)** discussed that employee engagement within the company is gaining popularity and that its effect is beneficial to the organization. Employee participation is a positive indication for the company to achieve its target.

**Kumar, A., D. Israel, D. Israel. (2012)** findings of the study claim that the standard of leadership has an impact on commitment. Health benefits, empowerment, training & growth, pay structure, equity, networking, empowerment, leisure activities are closely linked to employee involvement, they said.

**Nwokocho, I., and B. J. E. Iherirohanma. (2012)** a study found that they are viewed as an asset by an organization. Most of the previous research accepted that successful retention techniques in the company contribute to a longer period of time and therefore enable them to do their job dedicatedly.

**Neeti and Leekha (2011)** have written that dedication is one of the organization's significant and effective strategies for attracting, cultivating, maintaining, respecting and managing the workforce. They also established a model of employee engagement in every organization for handling workers. They also measured the level of employee engagement through marital status empirically, and found that the level of engagement of married workers appears to be higher than those who are unmarried.

**Rashid, Asad, and Ashraf (2011)** shed light on the world's competitive world and said that each and every company needs to obtain a competitive advantage over others and the best strategy to achieve that advantage is employee engagement. Employee involvement, decision-making, collaboration, individual employee performance assessment and employee participation are substantially related.

**Rich, Lepine, and Crawford (2010)** provided empirical research that the relationship between value congruence, perceived organizational support, core self-evaluation, and the two outcome

variables, performance of tasks and actions of organizational citizenship was mediated by job engagement.

**Cook (2008)** has stressed that each and every company needs to recruit and maintain talented workers for the organization's success in this age of globalization. An active employee is more efficient, maintains higher customer satisfaction levels, and has loyalty to the organization that contributes to the company's success.

**Garber (2007)** has aptly said that engagement is just like a muscle that needs exercise to expand and evolve continuously. Employee involvement would keep them engaged and competent in their job. If companies do not include their workers, their talents would be underused. Human resource managers should also develop positive employee relationships and direct, truthful and consistent contact within the company in order to increase employee engagement.

**Aswathappa (2005)** said that involvement is a way to support and encourage workers to work together to achieve and improve their technological, administrative and behavioral knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

By considering the degree to which engagement serves as a significant process by which the antecedents of engagement influence job performance, **Rich et al.** research expanded Kahn's (1990) theory. Intrinsic motivation, work participation, and job satisfaction have also not been found to explain higher levels of variation than commitment.

## **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY**

Having a clear meaning of employee engagement, the question is how the hospitals are going to protect their employees who tirelessly involve and engage themselves during COVID-19. It is a known fact that we cannot think of a life without these professionals. Few suggestions are provided based on reviews to provide a comfortable workplace for the healthcare professionals.

- Safe distancing, screening protocols, adequate Personal Protective Equipment, active sanitation equipment, etc.
- Online medical consultation depending on the cases.
- Ensure sufficient equipment and scheduling adequate staff for all shifts.
- Adopting social distancing, shifting operations that is not an emergency, digital operation to deliver services, logistics for medicines.

- Adopting a phased recovery to a “new normal” of business operations, coping with the latent spread and managing a backlog of services.
- Offer a points-based employee reward program
- Encourage a culture of transparency
- Engaging staff
- Hire for heart
- Ensure nurses take breaks for lunch and dinner
- Bring physicians into the fold

### **THE ROAD AHEAD**

Pandemic COVID-19 is a challenge to mankind in all possible aspects. It has brought the Nations, Economy and Industries into a standstill, for a while. Almost all nations are facing a concept called as Lockdown and cessation except for unavoidable services and health care industry is a major one. India is a land full of opportunities for players in the health care industry. The country has also become one of the leading destinations for high-end diagnostic services with dedicated and fully engaged professionals catering to a greater proportion of population.

Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has towards the organization and its goals. This emotional commitment means engaged employees specially the healthcare professionals risk their lives and are the ones who actually care about their work and their organization. Healthcare professionals are engaged employee who do not work just for compensation or just promotions. They connect very closely with the patients and the organization’s goals and its business outcomes. The bottom line is - we’re all in this together. Daily communication from the hospitals with the employees will go a long way in helping the doctors, nurses, technicians and others get through this pandemic. Effective employee engagement activities will help your employees emerge out of this global pandemic smarter and stronger. Leverage this time to connect with your workforce, innovate better solutions, and build a strong sense of camaraderie among your employees.

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