



## International Journal of Economic Research

ISSN : 0972-9380

available at <http://www.serialsjournals.com>

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Volume 14 • Number 16 (Part 3) • 2017

### Discerning Elements of Human Rights in Employee Engagement for Developing Employee Satisfaction: A Study on Telecommunication Sector in India

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#### ABSTRACT

To achieve an extra mile in stiff competitive world, organisations adopt various strategies to retain and engage employees because they are now recognized as human asset.

Engaged employees perform beyond the normal and help organisations achieve growth ahead of their competitors. The more satisfied an employee is, the more he/she shall say stay and strive. When organizations care for the respect and dignity of the employers, the employees feel valued and in term associate themselves with the employer. Hence it can be said that human rights implementation is instrumented in developing employee engagement. Today many driver elements pertaining to human rights can be discerned and identified which are inherent in employee engagement. The reason-de-tre of this research is to discern such elements. Next is to understand the influence of employee engagement on employee satisfaction and vice-versa specially in telecom sector. Detailed literature review was undertaken for the purpose. For primary data collection, surveys were carried on a total 140 middle level employees of six telecom organisations by administering questionnaires. Statistical results show the priority which respondents have accorded based on mean values to the human right elements in employee engagement. Also there emerged a linear relationship between employee engagement aspect and total or overall satisfaction of employees. Practical implication is that organizations should focus on implementation of human rights at work practices for enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction. This statement becomes more important for telecom organisations since it is a service sector and the intangible aspects get transformed from employee satisfaction to customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Human rights at work, Employee engagement, employee satisfaction, telecom sector.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Now-a-days worldwide organisations have realized the importance and need of treating employee as a business partner and a strategic asset. The human talent should be retained any how for achieving growth and to gain a competitive edge over the competitors. When employee is satisfied and contented with job or work environment, he/she perceives satisfaction from the company and develops confidence & belief in the system which increases his/her interest, commitment, involvement, passion, dedication, loyalty, responsibility and more self absorption in work roles to achieve an extra mile (Harter et. al., 2002). These aspects are part and parcel of employee engagement. HR and business leaders agree today that their employee attend office not only physically but also mentally and emotionally (Pandita and Bedarkar, 2014). An ingredient of building employee confidence, trust, value and for developing a true high level of engagement, is promoting and respecting human rights at workplace related to healthy working conditions and environment, maintaining work life balance, envisaging health and safety for employees, encouraging freedom of association and worker participation, providing equal opportunities and fair treatment. These are also the human right elements pertaining to employee engagement.

## **2. THE OBJECTIVES FOR STUDY**

The research paper aims to fulfill following objectives:

1. To determine human right at workplace elements which are an inherent aspect of employee engagement
2. To understand the influence of employee engagement on job satisfaction
3. To derive suggestive human right at work related practices to enhance employee engagement and satisfaction

## **3. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Human Rights at Work Place**

The United Nations Declaration on human rights declares derivation of human rights from inherent dignity of a human being as stated by Cheruiyot and Maru in 2014. International agreements established human rights standards which are based on universal societal norms. Extending these notions to employees working in organizations the United Nations spelled out the Protect Respect and Remedy framework. The Global Compact 1999 addresses the human rights issues that are linked to business. Businesses are obliged to reflect and support protection of such internationally proclaimed human rights which lie within their sphere of influence. Fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy enshrined in the Indian Constitution lay down principles to uphold labour dignity.

Statutory bodies monitor human right application and implementation, hence companies must respect and implement them at all time. Issues related to human and labour rights, safety at workplace, health, equal opportunity and working conditions are attended to internally under the wider ambit of corporate social responsibility as was concluded by Jones et. al., in 2005.

In 2012, Campbell also concluded that human rights are linked to intrinsic CSR. But instead of being simply as an aspect of CSR strategy, human right implementation should be part of corporate mainstream strategy.

Level of compliance of human right factors is of concern in Telecom sector as well since this largest growing service sector employs a large workforce. Literature review indicates that the telecom sector organizations maintain an index report of conformance with the global reporting initiative stating the level of compliance. Business responsibility reports, code of conduct and workplace policies of telecom companies address and consider aspects of workplace human rights related to freedom of association and worker participation, social security, health and safety, working environment and working conditions, payment of wages, equal opportunity and fair treatment.

### **Aspects of Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction Related to Human Rights**

Employee engagement is a positive commitment of an individual to the organization both intellectually and emotionally as per Hewitt Associates (2004).

When a motivational environment is created by the organization, for example considering well being as an active HR strategy, then employees also take care to do a good job as opined by Kular et. al., in 2008. This aspect of give and take is also reflected in the social exchange theory. As mentioned by Cropanzarro and Mitchell in 2005 the employees develop a feeling of obligation on being provided socio-emotional and economic resources by the organization and wish to repay. In 2010, Sander et. al., also mentioned about such discretionary behavior.

Schaufeli and Bakker in 2004 also confirmed the positive association of well being and high level of employee engagement. Engaged employees assist their colleagues and develop a better behavioral ability to collaborate as was opined by Robinson, Perryman and Hayda (accessed from <http://www.employmentstudies.co.uk/Summary> on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Lakshmi (2012) also stated that effective labour management is possible by putting employee engagement paradigm into practice by top management. Job satisfaction is a positive emotional state that emerges out of experiences while working as opined by Locke and Henne in 1986. Further as Saks in 2006 and Jose G in 2012 mentioned that it is related positively to organizational engagement. The more the healthy work environment is in an organization, the more would be the employee satisfaction which develops due to this environmental perception and builds a positive attitude and fulfilling when a healthy work environment is perceived by an employee then it develops a positive attitude and a greater job satisfaction, liking willingness and commitment towards his/her job and the organization as well. This has been the essence of the works of Bowen & Ostroff (2004), Ellickson (2002) and Burke (2005)

Dr. Shruti et. al., (2014) reported that the survey conducted by them on Telecom organization in India showed that 77% of the respondents agree with the say, stay and strive framework which helps measure employee engagement. Amongst the three, the STAY state depicts the intense desire of the employee to remain in current organization and is an aspect of retention. It can be said that the organizations would have less employee turnover where human and labour right violations are less.

Respective engagement levels can be created in an employee when he/she is made feel valued and involved. This is the strongest engagement driver and behind its forceful impact are the instrumental aspects of health and safety, pay and benefits, mutual cooperation and fair treatment and equal opportunities amongst others. This is the essence of the employee engagement model developed by the Institute of Employment Studies U.K. as reported by Robinson D, Peryman S & Hayda S (2004).

This value feeling can be traced back to the aspects of respect and participation which spring from the only source of human dignity and it is the prime essence of human rights as opined by Cragg in 2012. Thus these aspects of employee engagement can be said to be related to human rights and can be treated as human right drivers (Chandni et. al., 2016).

A culture of respecting employees qualities respective of job level makes organizations successful beyond normality. If managers develop an attitude of respecting employees and treating them fairly and listening to their suggestions and ideas or involving them in normal practice then employees get motivated and engagement enhances. This shows effective and transparent communication which is essential element of maintaining healthy industrial relations.

Thus following from important areas emerge:

1. Managers to treat employees fairly for a good quality line management.
2. Effective cooperation between management and trade unions.
3. A commitment to employee wellbeing can be strengthened by implementation of health and safety measures, minimizing accidents, injuries, violence and harassment.
4. Maintaining and congenial work environment which enhances mutual cooperation amongst employees.

As opined by Mayer et. al., in 1995, trust is developed in employees based on their organizational experience on fair treatment and justice and wellbeing concern. Similarly findings of research done by McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992 show that fair treatment to employees by the organization communicates its commitment towards them which in turn shapes employee perception as well. Michael O' Malley in 2000 stated that trust on the employer increases by allowing more personal time when needed thereby maintaining work life balance. Worklife balance also emerged as an important driver after the studies conducted by Bedarker and Pandita (2014) and refers to organizational support for family and dependent care, flexitime, compressed work week, working from home, family leave, onsite childcare and eldercare services.

Employment relationships and paid work environment are affected by working conditions which cover work hours and schedules and rest periods, remuneration, physical and psychological demands that are at workplace. Working conditions and work-life balance issues and developments are monitored by international labour organization as well. For improving these aspects, protecting and promoting health, benefitting wellbeing and work life balance of workers and promoting sustainability in enterprises, the International Labour Organization has collaborations with academic institutions and research institutes at national level so that state-of-the-art knowledge can be imbibed and obtained for implementation organizations should provide services to all workers for impressing working conditions and making them consistent with human dignity and well being whether mental, physical or social. The more safe and secure an employee feels and perceives, the more is he/she free of mind during work and it increases the level of engagement.

ETI Code 2005 emphasises that human dignity is upheld on recognition of the principle of freedom of association. Also negotiating position of workers can be strengthened by exercising the right of collective bargaining. United Nations, ILO conventions and declarations recognize the above mentioned rights as universal human rights.

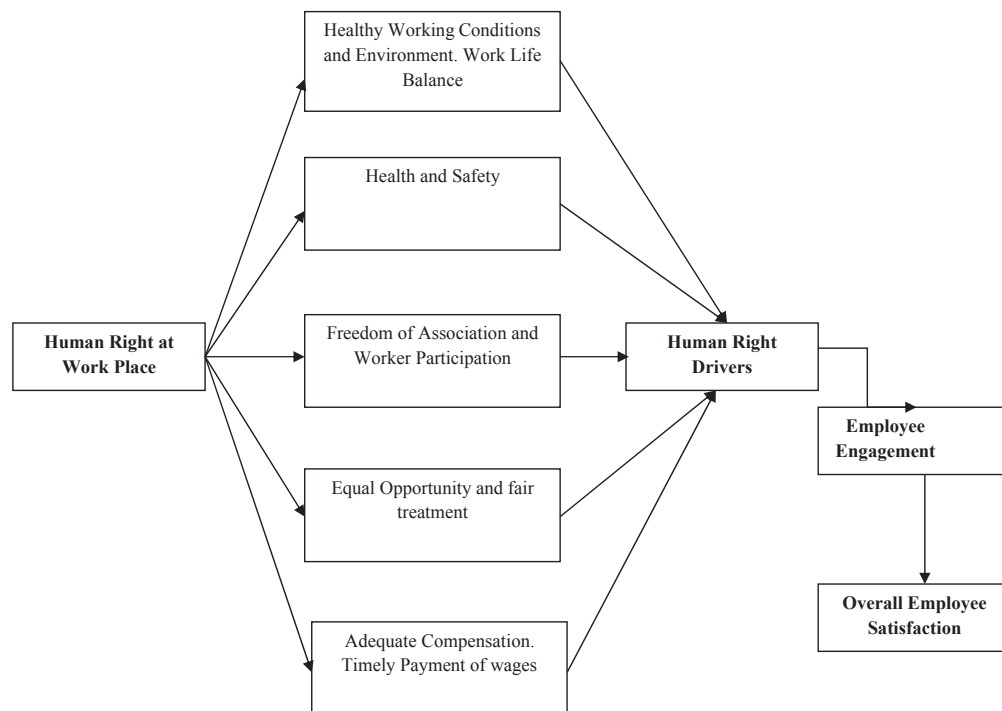
If working conditions are poor especially health and safety levels, pay is low and work hours are long then due to dissatisfaction amongst workers, labour turnover becomes high and productivity gets low.

Adequate compensation and timely payment of wages is a right of employee recognized in low and international covenants as a part of social justice and quality to ensure socio-economic development and remove disparities. Strategically in India, organizations go a step ahead to provide compensation to employees in such a measure that they get a feel of being an essential business partner.

Fair treatment and equity is based on the right of equality. When this is in the context of organizations then it implies growth and advancement opportunity provided to all employees, pay structures developed in equalitarian guidelines, performance appraisals done distributively and transparently with justice. These aspects when taken care of by the senior management result in higher employee engagement levels as was opined by Linda Russel in 2010. This dimension of engagement involves employees feeling of getting fair treatment in terms of recognition, rewards, job and career advancement opportunities. In addition, fair treatment and equality involves creating an environment in which employees feel comfortable challenging the status quo, offering suggestions for improvement and taking the initiative. In an environment that is perceived as fair and equitable, supervisors offer equal opportunities for recognition and rewards and do not play favourites.

#### 4. PROPOSED MODEL

Based on the literature review, we have developed an integrated human rights driver model of employee engagement as depicted in Figure 1. The model shows that out of work place human rights, specific human right drivers of employee engagement can be discerned which are instrumental in developing high level of employee engagement. These are of healthy working conditions and environment, work life balance, health and safety, freedom of association and worker participation, equal opportunity and fair treatment, adequate compensation and timely payment of wages. The high level of employee engagement would further enhance overall employee satisfaction.



**Figure 1: Integrated Human Rights Driver Model of Employee Engagement**

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design and Sampling***

Comprehensive literature review was undertaken to discern and gauge human right elements at work place which are an inherent aspect of employee engagement. Descriptive research design has been followed for the study. To ascertain aspects of employee engagement and human rights being instrumental in employee satisfaction, the policies and procedures followed by the telecom industry and the practical implementation measures or schemes adopted by the organisations for the purpose, unstructured interviews were conducted with senior level officers of six telecom organization in the city of Lucknow, the state capital of Uttar Pradesh, India. The organisations were Bharat Sanchar Nigam ltd., Telenor, Airtel, Tata docomo, Reliance communication ltd. Random Sampling procedure was adopted to survey a sample of total of 140 middle and initial level respondent employees on availability basis for primary data collection out of which 60 employees were administered instrument number one and 80 employees were administered instrument number two since there was a limitation and constraint of time provided by same employee to fill two questionnaires.

### ***Instrument Design***

Appropriately structured questionnaires were developed based on inputs retrieved from literature review and as revealed from unstructured interviews with senior officials of six telecom organisations. For the purpose of extracting ordinal primary data, the items were anchored on a five point Likert Scale (1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree). Instrument one consisted of satisfaction oriented 16 questions on employee engagement and work place human rights aspects to ascertain the priority accorded by respondents to human right drivers of employee engagement. Instrument two consisted of satisfaction oriented 24 questions on human rights at work place, employee engagement, employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness aspects. Amongst which one direct question was asked on employee engagement aspect so that relationship between it and overall satisfaction could be worked out based on the responses from the respondents.

### ***Data Sources***

Thus the primary data has been collected by distributing questionnaires and secondary data through web search, research articles, reports etc.

### ***Data Analysis & Findings Generated from Instrument One***

The computed analysis table 1 of mean scores and standard deviation generated as SPSS output from statistical results for various employee engagement parameters covered in administered questionnaire one shows that seven out of sixteen parameters of administered questionnaire one are aspects related directly to human right elements in employee engagement and are those to which respondents have accorded more priority and concern as detailed below :

- Aspect of freedom to work as per conscience is related to worker participation and autonomy in decision making which is further related to feeling valued. It is having a mean score of 3.8,

- Maintaining high level of enthusiasm with colleagues at work and enjoying open work environment are related to working conditions and environment are having a mean score of 4.03 and 4.13 respectively,
- Provision of adequate infrastructure by the employer to support performance is related again to working conditions and concern for health and safety is having a mean score of 3.93,
- Financial reward of credit of timely payment by the employer for the work performed by the employee is related to payment of wages and has a mean score of 4.03,
- Innovative ways of work and methods are an encouragement factor and that there is value of work are related to feeling valued and respect having a mean score of 3.93 and 3.42 respectively,
- Supporting individuals in professional development and availability of adequate framework for voicing concerns is related to equal opportunity and fair treatment having mean scores of 3.28 and 3.57 respectively,
- lastly providing flexibility by management to balance personal and work life of employee is related to working conditions having a mean score of 3.45.

**Table 1**  
**Mean scores and standard deviation tabulation of statistical results for various employee engagement parameters covered in administered questionnaire one**

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Sample size (N)</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
1	Freedom to work as per my conscience	60	3.8	1.038
2	Options in decision making	60	3.28	1.209
3	High level of enthusiasm with colleagues at work	60	4.03	0.663
4	Open work environment	60	4.13	0.853
5	Knowing job requirements and expectations	60	3.63	1.193
6	Adequate infrastructure to support performance	60	3.93	0.972
7	Role played by Trade unions or associations or forums	60	3.3	1.28
8	Encouragement to innovative ways of work	60	3.93	0.778
9	Value of work	60	3.42	1.293
10	Timely payment for work performed	60	4.03	1.057
11	Balancing personal and work life flexibility	60	3.45	1.241
12	Recommending close ones to work in same company	60	3.75	1.002
13	Stress aspect due to work deadlines	60	3.8	1.054
14	Duty to stay beyond office hours	60	3.88	0.993
15	Adequate framework for voicing concerns	60	3.28	1.136
16	Supporting individuals in professional development	60	3.57	1.212

### **Data Analysis & Findings Generated from Instrument Two**

Data prepared post tabulation of responses was run on SPSS tool to ascertain total or overall satisfaction by working up on the sum of all responses against 24 parameters in Questionnaire two for each respondent upto 80 respondents. Then correlation was worked upon between responses tabulated for Active contribution in

engagement programmes parameter and overall satisfaction. The Pearson correlation coefficient computed was  $r = 0.28$  shows correlation exists between two variables and it is statistically significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed) as per Table 2. (Value of  $r \geq 0.25$  as per standard statistics is considered significant). The  $p$  value is also 0.013 indicating that it is significant and not zero.

The above results show that there is a linear relationship between employee engagement and satisfaction meaning that the more is employee engagement, the more is the satisfaction amongst the employees.

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive statistics from SPSS output showing relation between active contribution in engagement programmes – an employee engagement aspect and total or overall satisfaction**  
**Descriptive Statistics**

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>N</i>
Active Contribution in engagement programs	4.20	.537	80
Total Satisfaction	96.8987	5.70559	79

<b>Correlations</b>			
		<i>Active Contribution in engagement programs</i>	<i>Total Satisfaction</i>
Active Contribution in engagement programs	Pearson Correlation	1	.277
	Sig. (2 tailed)*		.013
	N	80	79
Total Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.277	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)*	.013	
	N	79	79

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

One way ANOVA technique was further applied for ascertaining overall satisfaction due to employee engagement aspect in six telecom organisations. It has been revealed as per Table 3, that  $p$  value at 95% confidence level is 0.74, hence result is non-significant (as per standard statistics if  $p < 0.05$  then significant). It means there is no difference in overall satisfaction or to say employee satisfaction is same across groups or six telecom companies due to employee engagement, thereby showing that there is a pan industry effect.

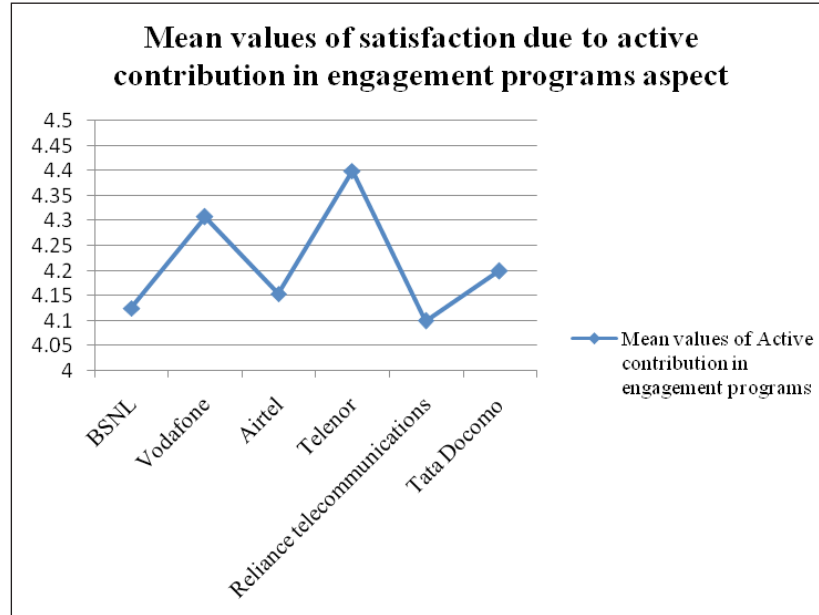
**Table 3**  
**Statistical results of one way ANOVA analysis by SPSS output of overall satisfaction due to employee engagement aspect in six telecom organisations**  
**ANOVA Table**

<b>Active Contribution in Engagement Programs</b>					
	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	.813	5	.163	.548	.740
Within Groups	21.987	74	.297		
Total	22.800	79			

To supplement findings from Table 3, a graph of mean values of likert scale responses against Active contribution in engagement programs parameter question asked in questionnaire 2 – an employee engagement aspect was plotted for six telecom organisations utilizing SPSS as depicted in Figure 2. It shows



that plots indicate that the value of means for the responses provided by respondents ranges between 4.1 to 4.4 showing that it is nearly same for all six telecom organizations meaning that employee satisfaction as a result of employee engagement has similar effect in all organisations. Thus it can be said to be applicable to the entire telecom industry and is a pan industry effect.



**Figure 2: Mean Plots Graph of overall satisfaction values due to employee engagement aspect of active contribution in engagement programs in six telecom organisations**

### **Inference and Suggestions for Enhancing Employee Engagement and Satisfaction based on above Findings**

Analysis and findings of this study in the telecom sector bring to light the fact that organizations should focus to actually practice and implement human rights at workplace policies as stated below, so that disengagement may be minimised:

1. The organisations should respect work by encouraging innovative methods and welcome ideas so that employees participation makes them feel proud and they associate themselves with the employer
2. They should encourage team work and volunteering for a cause so that healthy employee relations and conducive work environment develops
3. Organisations should celebrate people and make them feel valued and empowered. It can be achieved by building emotional connection by organizing family functions and common festival celebrations.
4. Maintaining dignity of every employee should be a cornerstone of every department.
5. Reward and award schemes should be often launched for enhancing recognition like there should be a policy of even distribution of incentive to all team members or timely payment for work performed.

6. Health and safety measures should be strictly implemented for well being and better work conditions. Employee development can be done by conducting periodic safety trainings, ascertaining feedback and outcome of the same and further derive an assessment for conduct of future trainings so as to improve employee skills. It shall help build a psychological security in the mind of the worker and he/she can work without fear of in general and specific job or workplace hazards
7. Interactive measures like Lunch or coffee with CEO should be adopted repeatedly so that employees develop more confidence and work environment can be improved
8. Adequate framework should be made available for voicing one's concern so that fair treatment and equal opportunity prevails
9. Periodic satisfaction assessment and feedback would further help understand the gaps so as to bridge them by imparting human right at work awareness trainings if necessary
10. Flexibility and autonomy should be provided to the employee so that there is balance between work and personal life

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Implementation of human rights at work place and recognition of employee respect, dignity and value helps build an inclusive workplace and create a better work environment where every employee gets an opportunity to get engaged and prove his/her skills to perform beyond desired goals which leads to sustainable long term organizational growth. The human right drivers instrumental in augmenting employee engagement are healthy working conditions and environment, work life balance, health and safety, freedom of association and worker participation, equal opportunity and fair treatment, adequate compensation and timely payment of wages. Employee engagement can be measured as a direct assessment on the basis of satisfaction with the company and work environment characteristics. The employer-employee relations may go beyond give and take contractual obligations arising out of employment, if the employer cares for the well being of the employee and his family and the employee is ready to achieve that extra mile. Employee satisfaction, in light of the organization, enhances retention and saves on company's cost towards training. It translates into a better customer dealing and building strong relations with them especially in the services sector of telecom where the product is intangible.

A limitation of this study is that the primary survey could be done covering one sector of industry and in one city. Further future research can be done to conduct the study covering other sectors of the industry apart from telecom.

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