

Employee Engagement: The Key to Organizational Success

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Abstract- Employee engagement is critical to the success of every organization. Engagement is a result of better understanding of company's goals and their role in helping the organization reach those goals. As human resource is such an important ingredient in every organization, it was necessary to find out what factors led to their engagement in the organization and reach their optimum level of productivity. To find engagement factors of employees in an organization, the motivational theory developed by Abraham Maslow is studied. So, this paper analyses needs-satisfying approach and tries to club it with Abraham Maslow's Life Cycle Theory to understand how an individual's psychological needs defined by Kahn acts as a factor in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. This model can help an organization to understand the needs of employees at each stage and use that to engage them towards better performance and ultimately towards increasing their productivity. When an employee's performance is better the whole organization becomes effective and efficient. Therefore, this model becomes very important to study the effectiveness of human needs and how these needs affect their level of engagement.

Keywords- Employee Engagement, Productivity, Organization, Individual Needs

I. Introduction:

Employee engagement has recently gained increasing attention from larger audiences, including popular business press and consulting firms. Employee engagement is a modern HR practice that business organizations can make use of in order to cope with the uncertainty of turbulent business environment. Nowadays, organizations invest in a considerable amount of financial and human resources to measure, track, and increase levels of engagement among their employees. Therefore, HR professionals must understand how employee engagement is defined within organizations, the role it plays in productivity and employees' morale and its impact on capital management and overall development of business.

Employee engagement is a workplace approach which makes employees feel passionate about their jobs, committed to the organization, and put extra effort into their work to contribute to the success of the organization. It is based on trust, integrity, commitment and communication between an organization and its employees. It enhances the chances of business development, contributing to organizational as well as individual performance, productivity and well-being. It leads to a situation where the employees identify themselves with their work.

Similarly, work engagement refers to a positive state of mind or positive behaviour at work that leads to positive work-related outcomes. It is characterized by three key factors- vigor, dedication, and absorption.

1. **Vigour** – It refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience, and a willingness to invest effort in one's work.
2. **Dedication** – It refers to the intense involvement in work tasks that one experiences as significant and meaningful.
3. **Absorption** – It refers to the state of being focused and positively involved in one's work, to the extent that time seems to pass quickly.

Although typically 'employee engagement' and 'work engagement' are used interchangeably, but work engagement is more specific in nature and is a part of employee engagement. It is the relationship of the

employee with his or her work, whereas employee engagement may also include the relationship with the organization.

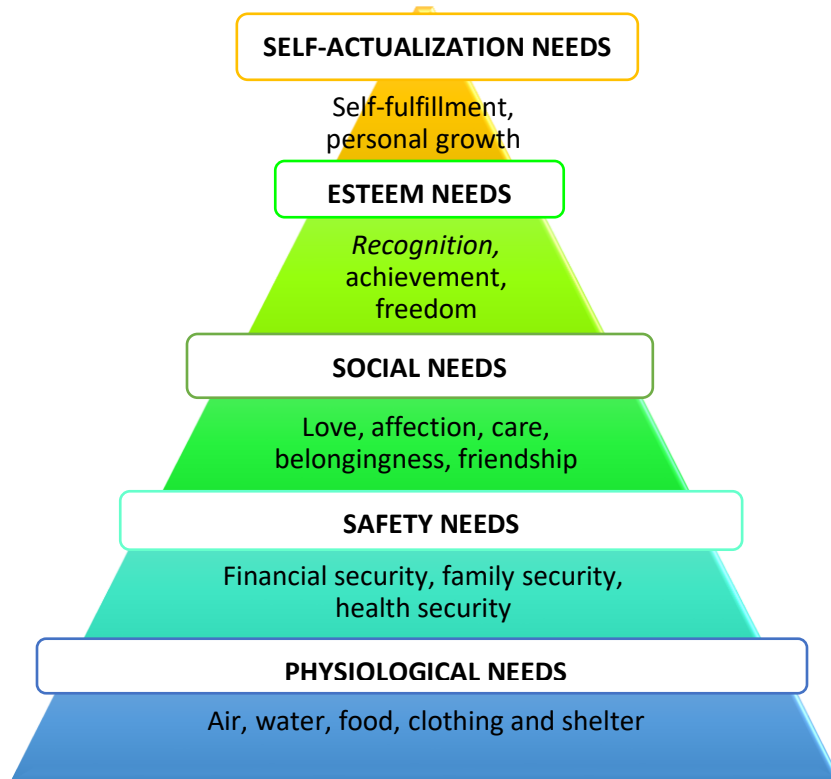
An 'engaged employee' is one who is fully involved and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to advance the organization's reputation and interests. They care about their work and the performance of the organization and ensures that their efforts can make a difference. It is generally considered as an internal state of mind; physically, mentally and emotionally that binds together the work effort, satisfaction and commitment in an employee. Engaged employees are usually the most productive and innovative members in an organization. That is why, companies like Apple, Microsoft, Netflix and many others invest a great deal of time and budget on ensuring engagement of their employees around the globe. According to a study by Wyatt Watson, highly engaged employees produce 26% higher revenue per employee. This is only expected when highly engaged employees are committed to ensuring success for the organization. They can be considered as the 'walking ambassadors' of the organization as they encourage other high performing individuals to join the company.

However, all the efforts in achieving a dedicated and committed workforce will be ineffective if the employees are disengaged. According to a Gallup survey, 51% of employees are not engaged at work, which is certainly a big problem. When the number of disengaged employees is more within the organization, it will lead to a huge loss in the long run. Poor career, limited recognition, lapse in communication, lack of tools might be the reason behind employees being disengaged. They lower down the productivity level and quality of work, which can be a long-term threat for the organization. They might possess anger issues at work, avoid responsibilities, arrive late for work and also leave early intentionally. The HR professionals should never take disengaged employees for granted, rather solve their issues and help them become driven towards their job.

II. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory

Abraham Maslow is well renowned for proposing the Hierarchy of Needs Theory in 1943. This theory is a classical depiction of human motivation. This theory is based on the assumption that there is a hierarchy of five needs within each individual. The urgency of these needs varies. These five needs are as follows-

1. **Physiological needs-** These needs are the biological need that is essential for human survival. For e.g. - air, water, food, clothing and shelter. These are the basic needs and the most important for any human function optimally. One cannot survive and cannot move to the next level unless these needs are met.
2. **Safety needs-** Once the physiological needs are met, safety needs become more critical. At this level, individual look for safety and security to protect themselves, to experience predictability, and to have control in their lives. Safety needs include physical, environmental and emotional safety and protection. For example- Job security, financial security, protection from animals, family security, health security, etc.
3. **Social needs-** After the physiological and safety need, people long for deeper human bonding and love from the surrounding. The need for interpersonal relationships initiates in this stage. Social needs include the need for love, affection, care, belongingness, and friendship.
4. **Esteem needs-** The fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs emphasizes on esteem needs. It can be classified into two categories:
 - **internal esteem needs** -self- respect, confidence, competence, achievement, freedom and
 - **external esteem needs** -recognition, power, status, attention and admiration.



of Needs Theory

Source- Secondary Data

5. **Self-actualization need-** Maslow describes this level as to desire to accomplish everything that one puts their mind into; to become the best possible self. This need includes realizing one's true potential and to use it consciously for self-fulfillment, personal growth, and peak experiences. The self-actualization needs are never fully satiable. As an individual grows psychologically, opportunities keep cropping up to continue growing.

Figure 1 - Maslow's Hierarchy

III. The Needs-Satisfying Approach (Kahn,1990)

The needs-satisfying approach was introduced by Kahn in the section on the definition of engagement. Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as the “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally during role performances”. He assumes that employees become engaged when three psychological conditions or needs are met: **meaningfulness** (i.e. the feeling of receiving return on investments of one's self in role performance), **psychological safety** (i.e., feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences), and **availability** (i.e., the belief of having the physical and mental resources to engage to self at work).

Meaningfulness is influenced by the nature of the job, that is, its task characteristics and role characteristics. In Kahn's conceptualization, the meaningfulness variable completed a circular model where employees added value and significance to the work they were doing as well as received feedback about their value and significance to an organization (Kahn, 1990; Maslow, 1970).

Psychological safety is mainly influenced by the social environment; that is, by interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, management style, and social norms. For Kahn (1990) safety revolved around each employee's need to trust their working environment cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally as well as the need to reasonably understand what was expected of them at work (i.e., job descriptions, contingency plans, feedback from a supervisor, etc.).

Finally, **availability** depends on the personal resources that people can bring to their role performance, such as physical energy. For the availability variable, Kahn suggested that employees must feel they have the tools to complete their work or that, at a minimum, these tools can and will be obtained for them. Tangibly, the availability of resources could be understood as items such as supplies, sufficient budget, and manpower to complete a task (Harter et al., 2002; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Intangibly, availability of resources could be understood as opportunities for learning and skill development (Czarnowsky, 2008), a reasonable degree of job fit (Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007), and commitment to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

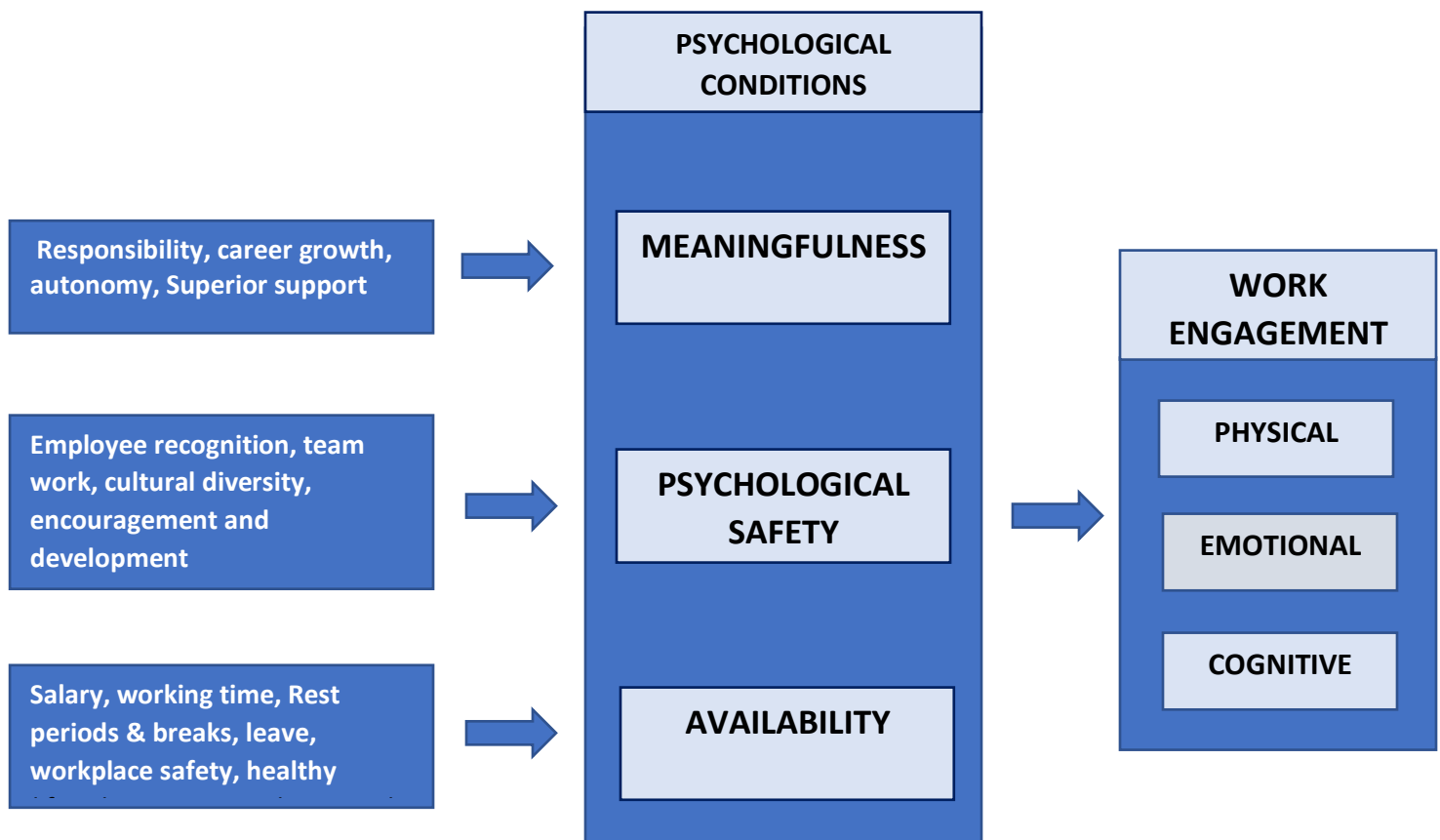


Figure 2- The Needs-Satisfying Approach data

Source- Secondary

IV. Methodology-

This paper is based on secondary data collected from various research papers listed in references. Information about the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and the Needs-Satisfying Approach by Kahn was collected from the reputed journals and around 11 research papers were studied.

V. Analysis-

Based on the findings of the literature view, the researcher has come across various factors contributing to Employee Engagement. Keeping in view the factors, the researcher has developed a model putting the values that is obtained from primary data. The model is as follows-

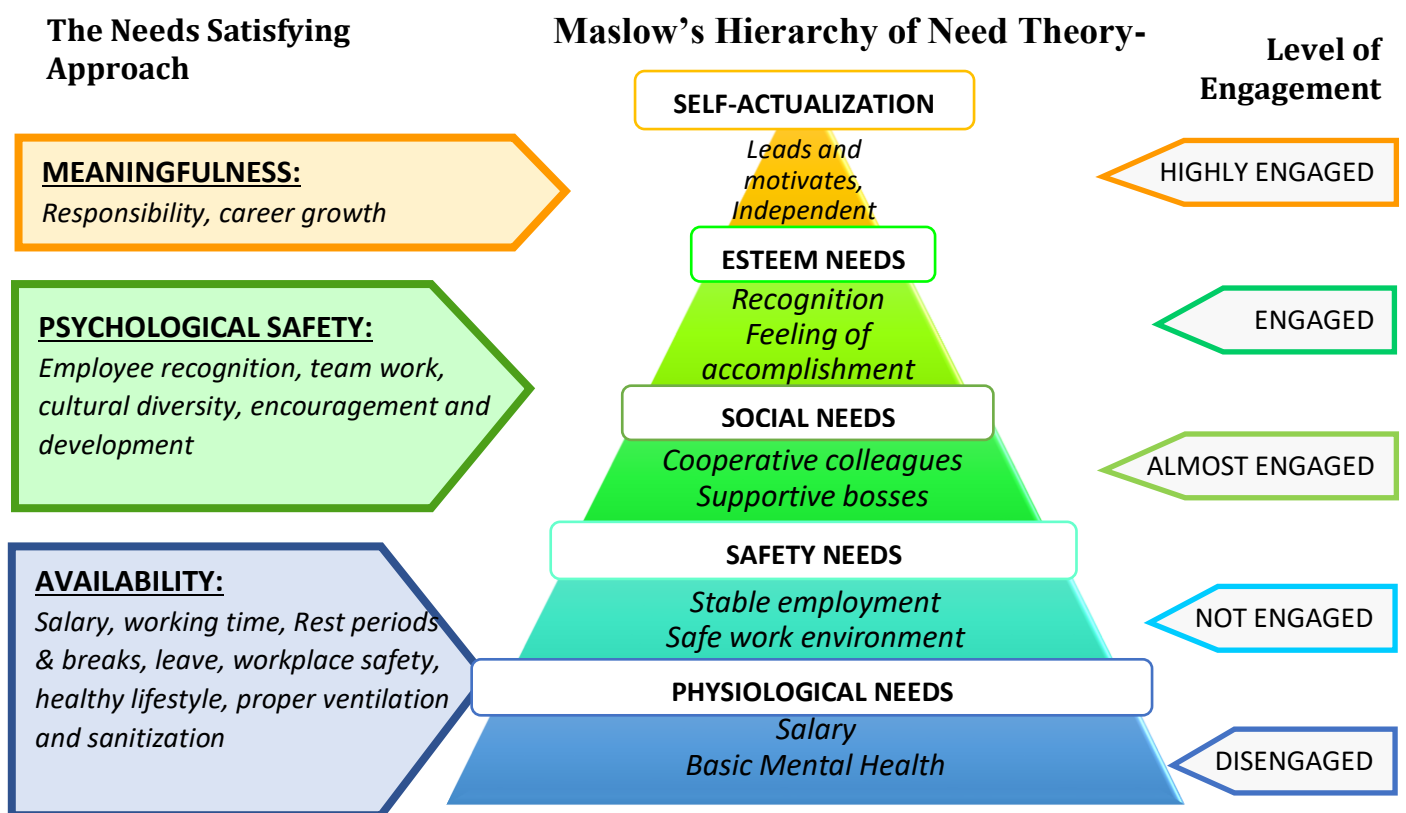


Figure 3 - The Model of Measuring Employee Engagement

Source- Secondary Data

Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory	Meaningfulness University	Psychological safety	Availability	Level of engagement
Physiological Needs	N/A	N/A	Salary	Disengaged
			Working Time	
			Rest Periods and Breaks	
			Leave	
Safety and Security Needs	N/A	N/A	Workplace Safety	Not engaged
			Healthy Lifestyle	
			Proper Ventilation	
			Proper Sanitization	
Social Needs	N/A	Team Work	N/A	Almost engaged
		Cultural Diversity		
Self-Esteem Needs	N/A	Employee Recognition	N/A	Engaged
		Encouragement and Development		
Self-Actualization Needs	Career Growth	N/A	N/A	Highly engaged

Table 1 - The Model of Measuring Employee Engagement

Source- Secondary Data

It can be seen from the above table that there are five stages of human needs in an organization that motivates an individual's behaviour. These stages are significant for the overall growth and development of an employee working in an organization. The level of engagement is determined at each stage in order to understand the factors that lead to a positive and engaging working atmosphere. The factors contributing to employee engagement are identified by three psychological conditions as per the Needs-Satisfying Approach by Kahn. At each stage, the engagement factors/ conditions are identified and these are discussed below-

- i. **Physiological Need-** The physiological need refers to the most basic needs of an individual such as the need for food and rest. When it comes to workplace, the basic need of an employee is money and good mental health. Meaningfulness and psychological safety have no impact on the

physiological need, whereas availability component close us good amount of impact. Availability includes -

- *Salary*
- *Working time*
- *Rest periods and breaks*
- *Leaves*

After analysis, employees at this stage are found to be ‘disengaged’ as they can fit into the company culture and management and basically stay there because of the money or have no other choices. They don’t know how their work impacts the greater good of the company, and haven’t found many opportunities to connect with other team members.

- ii. **Safety Need-** The safety need includes financial security, health and wellness, safety against accidents and injury. At work, the safety need of an employee may include personal safety (like, comfortable furniture) or professional security (like, job security). Like the previous stage, meaningfulness and psychological safety have no impact on safety need, whereas availability component has a good impact. Availability includes-

- *Workplace*
- *Healthy Lifestyle*
- *Proper Ventilation*
- *Proper Sanitization*

After analysis, it is found that the employees are ‘not engaged’ at this stage. Employees in this stage does not feel that their skills are being utilized appropriately, and does not feel that the job, the management or the team they are working for is the right place to be. They do what is expected of them, but nothing more. These employees offer a higher service for the company than the previous one, but their cultural/ social need to find satisfaction in their job tend to move them to look for new possibilities.

- iii. **Social Need-** Social needs include love, acceptance and belonging. At work, the social need of an employee is fulfilled by building good relationship with the co-workers and supervisors. At this stage meaningfulness and availability have no such impact, whereas psychological safety component closes a good impact. Psychological safety includes -

- *Team Work*
- *Cultural Diversity*

After analysis, the employees are found to be ‘almost engaged’ at this stage. Here, the employees like their jobs and have a good relationship with their team and co-workers. They are ‘almost engaged’ but the needs are not completely satisfied. They are not sure how their roles contribute to the company. The work performance is, in any way, usually very good since the employee share a good bond with the surrounding environment.

- iv. **Self-Esteem Need-** Self-esteem need is the need for appreciation and respect. At work, self-esteem need is fulfilled when the employees feel rewarded and achieved. Meaningfulness and

availability have no impact on this need, whereas psychological safety close a good impact. Psychological safety includes

- *Employee Recognition*
- *Encouragement and Development*

After analysis, it is found that the employees are ‘engaged’ at this stage. The employees understand their roles in helping the company achieve their goals and feel as an important part of the organization. The feeling of “being able to make the difference” and the perception that a growth path is possible to make this kind of employee ‘engaged’ and motivated.

- v. **Self- Actualization Need-** Self-actualization need refer to the realization of a person's potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. At work, this need is fulfilled when employees feel empowered and trusted, which encourages growth and engagement. Meaningfulness has a great impact on this need, whereas psychological safety and availability have no such impact. Meaningfulness includes

- *Career growth*

After analysis, the employees are found to ‘highly engaged’ at this stage. When employees are motivated with factors like recognition and career growth, they tend to be ‘highly engaged’ in their work. This will enable to be highly successful and become an asset to the organization, inspiring others along the way. It is very unlikely in this stage that an employee wants to leave, as his/her commitment to the company and the job is the greatest.

VI. Conclusion

Employee engagement as a concept remains new with relatively little academic research conducted on it. Engaged employees tend to develop an obligation to reciprocate favorably to their organization for the job resources provided, hence developing a strong commitment to their organization. As the COVID-19 crisis hit the entire world and caused detrimental damage to people’s lives, businesses, jobs, and the economy, employee engagement dipped slightly and then had meaningful growth. Engaging employees has become very essential in today's pandemic situation due to COVID-19. Thinking of seizing the top position devoid of the support of employees would surely be a dream in this current situation of lockdown. Organizations know very well that engaged employees are the key to success in this tough time. That is why businesses must look forward to keeping their employees satisfied and motivated through the engagement of employees during pandemic circumstances. To identify the factors that contribute to employee engagement and help the organizations to keep their employees engaged, this model of measuring employee engagement has been developed. Understanding the hierarchy of this model helps us to determine the needs of employees and their engagement at work in each stage. It must be noted that the basic availability needs should be fulfilled first and then move to psychological safety and meaningfulness need in order to retain talents and best performers ins an organization. The level of engagement is derived from the article ‘How Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs influences Employee Engagement’ by Steve Smith. This model can play a huge role in an employee's level of engagement in an organization. This model can help an organization to understand the needs of employees at each stage and use that to engage them towards better performance and ultimately

towards increasing their productivity. When an employee's performance is better the whole organization becomes effective and efficient.

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