A Study on the Impact of Top-Down and Bottom-Up Communication on Employee Engagement: Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Study in the Indian Publishing Industry

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1.1 Background of the Study

India is considered as the world’s largest book publishing country with more than 16,000 publishers, in which most of the publishing centres are small players. Furthermore, every year, around 80,000 new titles are published in India in 24 different languages and hence, it is considered as the third largest book market in the world (Sapru, 2016). Moreover, all the leading publishers see India as a lucrative market. With the art of [storytelling](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katha_(storytelling_format)) entrenched in our practice, it is not surprising that India is the world’s sixth-largest publishing market with a populace of over 1.28 billion people and it has been predicted that it will exceed China by 2030 (Mukundarajan, 2016). Thus, in an extremely commercial world, the organizations depend entirely upon their employees and their talents to stay competitive in the competitive market. Therefore, the organizations need engaged employees who have high energy levels, interest and commitment (Bakker, 2017). However, with fewer resources, the organizations working in a comprehensive business environment fight to render customer satisfaction and high-quality services (Spagnoli et al., 2012). Thus, Employees’ job satisfaction is of particular importance to the survival and profitability of these organisations (Coetzee et al., 2015).

On the other hand, Organizational communication is considered as an essential aspect in evaluating the relationships within the organisation. Organizational communication is categorized into external communication and internal communication. “Internal communications are seen as the purview of human resources while external communications are responsible for external communications” (Mishra et al., 2014). When compared to the companies which have lower communication efficiency, the companies with higher communication efficiency are more likely to have a highly engaged workforce, which is 4.5 times higher (Turner, 2003).

Thus, organizational communication and the degree of its effectiveness, influence the practice of engaging employees (CAI, 2014). In the same way, the bottom-up approach could be utilised in scheduling and managing productivity developments (Jagoda et al.2013). Moreover, engaged workers will tend to remain for a longer period and will find newer, clever and further efficient ways to upturn the importance of the organisation, which brings high-quality business where the employees are engaged and sustained over time. Further, most of the scholars agree that employees who are engaged have the higher energy level and contribution to the work through new ideas, teamwork, for their self-professional development and they will be committed to the performance standards (Paulsen et al., 2013).

1.2 Rationale for the study

Business organisations often utilise many types of communication procedure to develop effective communication between the management and the workforce, which is essential to attain organisational procedures. Thus, identifying the appropriate communication technology is also essential in order to achieve the necessary level of employee engagement as the employee involvement, and decision-making process is dependent on the communication procedure that has been adopted by the firm (Delawala, 2019). Furthermore, Andrew & Sofian, (2012) debated that the top-down communication and information within the business organisation enables the managers to examine the efficiency of the employees in utilising the information provided by the firm for enhancing the value of their work. However, de Beer, (2014) argued that top-down communication technique doesn’t provide importance to the feedback of the employees in the decision making procedure of the firms’. In this background, two internal communication techniques such as bottom-up and top-down communication techniques were suggested by Shuck & Herd, (2012) where the increased usage of different workplace communications are provided by top-down communication to make the employees know the information about their accessibility and availability with the supports and programme value of the firms (Cooren, 2012). Conversely, the necessities of the employees and their perception in the occupational work and their valuable opinion are described by bottom-up communication. From this aspect, it can be determined that both bottom-up and top-down communication are essential to achieve the objective of the organisation in a very significant manner. Therefore, it is important to examine if both top-down and bottom-up communication has the potential to build employee engagement in a firm before adopting it as the communication method of the firm (Delawala, 2019). Moreover, previous studies have discovered that workplace happiness will lead to employee engagement which is measured by determining the levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013). Further, employees who are satisfied are bound to feel committed with the organization, which thus, drives employee engagement. Hence, this study will attempt to examine the impact of Top-down & Bottom-up communication on employee engagement with the mediating effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment and to explore effective ways of improving top-down and bottom-up communication to ensure better employee engagement.

1.3 Review of Literature

This section explains the models and theory related to the study and critically examines the existing literature from the perspective of organizational communication, Employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment to identify the gap in the literature.

1.3.1 Theories and models

Social Exchange Theory (Saks, 2006) and Kahn, (1990) will be adopted for the study in order to understand organizational communication, Employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

1.3.1.1 Social Exchange Theory

It is essential to have a clear understanding of the Social Exchange Theory (SET) in order to examine the communication process and employee engagement in an organization. SET theory proposes that relationships are built around mutual obligations. When Saks transferred this theory to the workplace, he found that employees choose to engage themselves based on the resources their organization gives them. The organization provides support, certain conditions, and reward: the employee weighs these up, and if they find the balance suits them, they’ll commit in return. These two-way relationships will continue to thrive and grow, provided the rules of social exchange aren’t broken.

1.3.1.2 Kahn model

Kahn defines employee engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. The cognitive aspect of employee engagement concerns employees’ beliefs about the organization, its leaders and working conditions. The emotional aspect concerns how employees feel about each of those three factors and whether they have positive or negative attitudes toward the organization and its leaders. The physical aspect of employee engagement concerns the physical energies exerted by individuals to accomplish their roles. Thus, according to Kahn, (1990), engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role.

Kahn found that there were three psychological conditions related with engagement or disengagement at work: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. He argued that people asked themselves three fundamental questions in each role situation: (i) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance; (ii) How safe is it to do so?;and (iii) How available am I to do so? He found that workers were more engaged at work in situations that offered them more psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, and when they were more psychologically available.

1.3.2 Studies on organizational communication and employee engagement

The main goal of organizational communication is to make the employees in the organization engaged (Mishra et al., 2014). Scholars and Researchers have highlighted a significant positive impact of organizational communication on employee engagement. For instance, a study done by Krishnan and Wesley (2013) examined the relationship between communication and engagement of employees. This study adopted a convenience sampling method to select a sample of 163 employees from various star hotels in Coimbatore city. The results of the study discovered that communication and the engagement level of employees are significantly related. Thus, this study concluded that top management and the organizations should pay attention to the policies and strategies and they should ensure its improvement in near future, which in turn leads to the increase in the employee engagement level in the organizations.

Furthermore, Nantes (2017) aimed to analyse the influence of internal communication on the employee engagement of a Dutch and Swiss trading wood firms. This study adopts a qualitative methodology. The study results revealed that features of internal communication are not found in both the firms with some specific complications concerning the strategic quality, the superior openness and the upward communication opportunities as well. Similarly, Academics and scholars have emphasised that there is a significant positive relationship between internal communication and engagement of the employees.

Similarly, a study conducted by Delawala (2019) has analysed how employee engagement is influenced by top-down communication and has provided recommendations to improve top-down communication strategies to ensure better employee engagement. The results of the research have revealed that the productivity of the employees had increased by the ability of top-down communication to maintain the flow of information between the management and the employees. Further, the study has recommended that combining feedback availing facility with the top-down communication process will increase employee engagement.

In addition, Karanges et al. (2015) study revealed that internal organisational communication is a key factor, which maintains the workplace relationships and plays an essential role in engaging the employees. It also revealed that internal communication appears to be the major influential factor in employee engagement. Hence, it is evident that when the internal communication policies are applied efficiently, helping the organisations in sustaining high employee engagement levels, leads to the high performance level. Further, a study done by Welch (2012) stated that when employees are facilitated with consistent opportunities for providing feedback, it can enhance the communication between the management and the employees.

Similarly, Mishra et al. (2014) opined that the involvement of employees acts as the goal of internal communication. In addition, , an exploratory study done by Wilson and Irvine (2013) examined the prospects and boundaries of bottom-up communication. This research offers an impending barrier for the activities of bottom-up communication, in that these may require earlier commitment to be operative.

Moreover, Tkalac, (2016) study confirmed that internal communication leads to engagement of employees. Empirical evidence shows that active internal communication is the antecedent of employee engagement (Karanges et al., 2015). This is in line with the argument of Ruck & Welch (2012) that internal corporate communication influences employee engagement. And also, Watson, (2007) finding, according to Ruck & Trainor, (2012), revealed that organizations that communicated efficiently with their employees were four times more likely to have high levels of employee engagement. (Karanges et al., 2015). This infers that when strategies of internal communication are applied effectually, the organization can make and endure high levels of employee engagement (Tkalac, 2016).

From the above review, it is evident that several studies have focused on the impact of internal organizational communication on employee engagement. However, there is a lack of studies on top-down communication and bottom-up communication on employee engagement. Thus, top-down communication and bottom-up communication are considered as the independent variables, and employee engagement is considered as the dependent variable for the study.

1.3.3 Studies on organizational communication leading to job satisfaction and organizational commitment

Organizational communication is a resource to develop commitment and to encourage employees to attain organizational goals. Organizations and directors willingly share information and inspire bi-directional communication to have a higher employee job satisfaction rate (Allen & Brady, 1992; Allen, 1995; Neves & Eisenberger, 2012). In line with this, the findings of Giri & Pavan Kumar (2010) reveals that organisation communication positively leads to job satisfaction

Scholars have shown that effective communication is essential for employee job satisfaction and organisational commitment Abugre, (2011), (Ridder, 2004), Pang (2014), (De Nobile, 2017). A study done by Syallow et al., (2017) revealed that effective organizational communication leads to job satisfaction. Moreover, a study by Simsek & Forces (2015) examined top-down communication and its impact on job satisfaction quantitatively. A sample of 205 employees working in various sectors in Istanbul was selected for the study. The study results show that there is a positive association between top-down communication and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, a study done by Akpinar et al. (2013) revealed that organizational communication and job satisfaction has a significant positive impact on organizational commitment. Moreover, the study reveals that organizational communication has an impact on satisfaction, commitment, trust and justice in an organization as communication and job satisfaction are regarded as a display of organizational commitment in the organization. Similarly, Farahbod et al. (2013) study results also revealed that there is a positive significant impact of organizational communication in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In line with these studies, a study done by Kakakhel et al., (2015) showed that there is a positive significant relationship between organisational communication, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Whereas (De Nobile, 2017) also endorse that numerous features of organisational communication were allied with job satisfaction and organisational commitment in an organisation. Thus it is evident from the previous studies that organizational communication leads to job satisfaction and organizational commitment in an organization

1.3.4 Studies on job satisfaction and organizational commitment leading to employee engagement

In an organizational setting, employees are expected to be engaged in the work as they contribute to the business in the greater sense (Marciano, 2010). Employee organizational commitment, job satisfaction and engagement are considered as the critical requirements of the organization. This is because organizations endure challenges, globalization, and innovation (Bailey et al., 2016; Anitha, 2014). A study done by Men et al. (2019) analysed the impact of the employee-organization relationship on employee engagement. This study adopted a quantitative research methodology with the help of the primary data collection method. A sample of 311 employees was selected from different sectors in the United States through Amazon Mechanical Turk. The results of the study revealed that the factors such as investment size and the satisfaction of employees have a significant positive impact on engagement and organizational commitment of the employees. Furthermore, this study concluded that future studies could consider organizational factors such as organizational culture, communication, etc.

Similarly, a study conducted by Sanneh and Taj (2015) revealed that the employees who are engaged and committed with the organization show their maximum interest to the work and the organization, which in turn develops the performance. In addition, few studies have empirically revealed that there is a significant positive impact of commitment on employee engagement (Kang & Sung, 2017; Rivkin et al., 2018; Men, 2015; Zhang et al., 2015).

Also, a study done by Nguyen et al. (2014) revealed that organisational commitment has a positive impact on the job satisfaction of the employees. Thus, employees with organisational commitment support the organisation for its betterment. Casimir et al.(2012). This in turn leads to the engagement of employees to the organisation. From the above review, it is evident that most of the studies have focused on the employee engagement, job satisfaction and organisational commitment and performance.

Relational results of employee satisfaction and commitment were found to be basic indicators for employee engagement (Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013. At the point when workers appreciate a quality relationship with the organizations, they will, in general, respond with dynamic support and contribution in the organizational activities and they feel engaged. Employees who are engaged are attentive, dedicated, and committed to their work and often feel a sense of belongingness to the organization. Similarly, when employees feel that they are committed to a long-term relationship with the organization, they will, in general, be available with ownership, positive feelings, and draw in with the organization effectively. Further, employees who are satisfied are bound to feel committed with the organization, which thus, drives employee engagement. Thus, organizational commitment and job satisfaction are considered as the mediating factors for this study

1.4 Research gap

Previous studies have extensively focused on organizational internal communication (Nantes, 2017; Karanges et al., 2015) and few studies have focused the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement (Simsek & Forces, 2015; Mishra et al., 2014; Pang, 2014). Furthermore, some studies reveal that organisational commitment and job satisfaction have a significant positive relationship (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Hunt et al., 1985; Kotzé & Roodt, 2005). Moreover, previous literature agrees that satisfaction results in organisational commitment (Huang et al., 2012). However, many researchers highlight the significance of internal communication and employee engagement relationship, but its relationship has not been tested empirically with the mediating effects of job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the Indian context. However, very little studies have focused on the type of organizational communication (Top-down and bottom-up). Moreover, top-down and bottom-up aspect of internal communication within the organization with respect to employee engagement has not been studied in the Indian context, specifically in the publishing sector. Furthermore, quantitative and qualitative methods were not combined in this context. Thus, this study explores the relationship between Top-down & Bottom-up communication and employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment and their impacts using survey and interview method to get in-depth insights.

1.5 Research objective

The main objective of the study is to analyse the impact of Top-down & Bottom-up communication on employee engagement. To attain the aim of the study, the following objectives are framed.

* To examine the role of Top-down & Bottom-up communication in relationship with employee engagement.
* To explore the relationship between Top-down & Bottom-up communication and employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
* To analyse the impact of Top-down & Bottom-up communication on employee engagement when mediated by job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
* To identify effective ways of improving top-down and bottom-up communication to ensure better employee engagement.

1.6 Research model

Based on the review of the previous studies, the following research model is framed

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Top down Communication

Bottom up Communication

**Independent Variables**

**Mediating Variables**

**Dependent Variable**

Employee Engagement

Job satisfaction

Organizational Commitment

H2

H3

H5

H4

H1

Age Gender Experience

1.7 Hypothesis

H1: There is a relationship between Top-down & Bottom-up communication and employee engagement, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

H2: There is a positive impact of top-down communication on employee engagement.

H3: There is a positive impact of bottom-up communication on employee engagement.

H4: There is a positive impact of top-down communication on employee engagement when mediated by job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

H5: There is a positive impact of bottom-up communication on employee engagement when mediated by job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

H6: The relationship between top-down communication and employee engagement is moderated by age, gender and experience

H7: The relationship between bottom-up communication and employee engagement is moderated by age, gender and experience

1.8 Research Methodology

This study will adopt a mixed methodology as it takes the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. This type of methodology covers the weaknesses of both the methodologies and provides a comprehensive understanding of the topic which is being studied (Scammon et al., 2013). The present study will employ quantitative methodology to examine the relationship between Top-down & Bottom-up communication and employee engagement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment using surveys. A sample of 450 employees working in the publishing industry in Delhi NCR region will be used to gather primary data. Further, a set of questionnaires related to the context will be designed based on the questionnaires of previous studies including Saks, (2006) and Men (2011) which will be used to measure employee engagement, the questionnaires of Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Rusbult, 1983; Sung & Choi, 2010 which will be used to measure the organizational commitment, and the questionnaires of Ewen, Smith, and Hulin (1966), Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Rusbult, 1983; Sung & Choi, 2010 which will be used to measure job satisfaction, questionnaires of Scale Downs and Hazen (1977) which will be used to measure top-down communication and questionnaires of (Smith, 1973) Paul Berman (1978), Richard F. Elmore (1985) and Michael Lipsky (1978) which will be used to measure bottom-up communication using using Reliability and Validity test with 5 point Likert. The collected quantitative data will be analysed using SPSS software. Further, the Qualitative method will be employed in this study to identify effective ways of improving top-down and bottom-up communication to ensure better employee engagement using an interview tool. A sample of 15 mangers and subordinates working in publishing industries in the Delhi NCR region will be interviewed, and the collected data will be analysed using NVIVO software. As top publishing firms including Penguin India, [Harper Collins Publishers India](https://harpercollins.co.in/), Rupa Publications, Pan Macmillan India are based in Delhi NCR region, it has been chosen for the study.

1.9 Scope and Significance of the Research

The scope of this study is limited to the Indian publishing sector based in Delhi NCR region. Furthermore, the variables adopted for the study are limited, the impact and the relationship of other variables such as organisational leadership, size and structure, and climate, culture, organisational citizenship behaviour will not be explored in the study. However, this study finding will contribute to the scholars and academicians of public relations and internal communication. Through this study, the researcher will shed light upon the relationship between the organisational communication and the employee engagement within Indian publishing sector based in Delhi NCR region. Furthermore, this study will also help communication experts and administrative management to recognise the specific elements that affect employee commitment and employee engagement relationship dynamics better. Moreover, the outcome of this study will empower employee engagement to improve better in the fast developing business environment from a strategic perspective. Further, this study will contribute theoretically to the growing body of literature by providing new statistical evidence on organisational communication and employee engagement and the relationship between them. This study further builds evidence on the mediating effects of organisational commitment and job satisfaction, which could result in the improvement of engagement strategies effectively, not only in the publishing industry but also in organisations in general in this developing economy.

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