

LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A REFERENCE OF COMMERCIAL BANK IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

A key dimension for effective leadership involves reinforcing and motivating others to encourage superior performance. Visionary leaders those have the capacity of create engagement maintain employee trust, drive optimal level of productivity, increase overall satisfaction and stands the company success. Corporate leaders apply different method to ensure the concept of employee engagement for this purpose. Non-financial rewards sometimes act more powerful than financial rewards for establishing the EE process. This paper attempts to explores importance of employee recognition (ER) and knowledge sharing (KS) as an effective leadership tool for creating an employee engagement condition. For this the author investigated leadership tools on 3 commercial banks in Bangladesh. Both Quantitative and Qualitative approach was adopted with 185 completed responses. The result acknowledged that transformational leadership influenced employee performance through the mediating effect of recognition and knowledge sharing capacity more effectively than before. The findings reveal that the ER and KS capacity of a leader can established the engagement process within the workforce which need to be consider carefully.

Key Words: Leadership, Recognition, Knowledge Sharing, Employee Engagement, Banking Sector

1. INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement act as an “engine” in employee performance drive draws its resilience from the effectiveness of various environment factors from within and outside an organization (Kaliannan & Adjovu., 2014). Historically practitioners and academics have argued that an engaged workforce can create competitive advantage for any company. These authors also realized it is imperative for leaders to identify the level of engagement in their organization and implement behavioural strategies that will facilitate full engagement. Now, how the leaders can truly influence a workforce is a real burning issue. Because employers have to toiling under someone who you feel is incompetent can be demoralizing. People who need to know about what he/she supposed to do, sometimes block due to a lack of constructive feedback or inappropriate answer of any current job in organization. For instance, there might be a situation where traditional training is not the only way to catch the exact task support. Sometimes we required a little but extra.

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In fact, leaders play a pivotal role in creating the environment with which employees can engage with their work (Cornett. I., 2018). Different empirical research has demonstrated association between strong leadership and a range of desirable outcome such as high performance, commitment, creativity, and wellbeing (Hassan, Z. et al (2018). In recent years there has been a focus on engagement as a valuable result of effective leadership (Employee Engagement, 2017). Leadership is considered to be one of the key contributors to ensure proper development of organizational culture through employee engagement (Osborne & Hammoud,2017). This philosophy about leaders became true in every business sector, especially in banks.

Although many segments of the business world have a surplus of qualified people, the banking industry has a shortage of transformational leaders yet. To win the battle for workforce share, companies must rethink their strategies to effectively recruit, motivate and retain committed employees. The task is not tough but required proper process. Today's high-performing employees are looking for more than monetary benefits. At banking sector, research found employees are de-motivated due to the inappropriate knowledge of the seniors, lack of communication and absence of recognition and feedback that is hampering the workplace success (Hasan, M., 2018). This paper examines how incapable leaders make problem in employee engagement and how effective leadership can stimulate and promote engagement.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Knowledge sharing has multifaceted effects on organization, such as improving work performance. Yet the effect of knowledge sharing by leaders on employee performance has not been paid attention sufficiently by previous researches. Additionally, in true sense research on recognition practice of leaders also did not focus for bank employee's performance. Based on different previous researches and findings the author aims here to focus on the two special traits of leadership effect on employee engagement commonly known as Employee Recognition (ER) and Knowledge Sharing (KS) capacity. For this the study demonstrates the practice of these two variables ER and KS by the leaders in the banking industry of Bangladesh and tried to find whether these two variables have any impact on EE or not.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- Find out the importance of leadership quality in terms of recognition and knowledge sharing on employee engagement.
- Examining the impact of knowledge sharing capacity of the leaders on employee engagement

- Examining the impact of recognition capacity of the leaders on employee engagement

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has been proven that profitability of the organization linked positively with employee engagement (Forbes, 2018). Employee engagement has been regarded as fundamental for organizational success (Sarangi and Nayak, 2016). But have we ever really asked ourselves what are the invisible causes behind this mechanism? For the sake of the businesspeople (2012) published their survey where they belief that six factors are mainly responsible for a healthy workplace. Among them four points indicates completely on managers capacity of being confident, able to promote attendance culture through work discussion, know how to manage organizational health issues like mental health and ability to help people to get back to work. The extra indicator focused by acas (2012) was about employee's feeling regarding how they recognized in the workplace. However, the report of acas (2012) is basically based on Britain based organization. If we move our interest to the large Asian economy, where the employee relations practice is a largely different in nature than west and the result is mix and complex. A survey done by Bersin (2012) on ten (10) countries globally explored about the emerging countries leadership which is far differ from the developed counties due to their culture and economic issues, which need to be check. Previous research of Dorfman et al (1997) also acknowledged that the link between employee performance and satisfaction which influenced by leadership is not investigated systematically in some of the developing countries. However, the evidence also suggests that one of the fundamental problems in Bangladesh holding back the growth of smaller and medium sized organizations is a lack of leadership and management capability to drive performance and enable them to succeed (Ahmed, J., Laila, H.& Kamruzzaman, M., 2015).

Considering the importance, the author here focused on Bangladeshi leadership in the context of the bank employees, the cause behind their poor engagement in workplace and some recommendation to improve the situation with exclusively by a perfect leader or transformational leader.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT (EE)

A person can define as engaged when he/ she is fully involved in and enthusiastic about (Seijts and Crim, 2006). The present business world both academics and practitioners agreed belief that engaged employees are those who are emotionally connected to the organization and cognitively vigilant. But this emotional connection seriously falls in danger due to some obstacles. Dr Tim

Rutledge (2009) explains in his book: *Getting engaged: The new workplace loyalty* that truly engaged employees are attracted to, inspired by, their work ('I want to do this'). Engaged employees care about the future of the company and are willing to invest the discretionary effort.

Today, there is widespread agreement among academics and practitioners that engaged employees are those who are emotionally connected to the organization and cognitively vigilant (Soane, E., 2014).

Now different research focused on some common leadership traits that have great influence on employee engagement. Among them commitment, honesty, confidence, communication is mostly important in practice (Forbes, 2012). But very few researches have been emphasized on recognition and knowledge sharing capacity of the leaders. Strong evidences support about the importance of the recognition mechanism of the leaders on employee movement (Novac, D. 2016). Due to lack of proper recognition which may termed as non-monetary reward, an employee might fall in lack of inspiration cycle in their job.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a process of interaction between leaders and followers where the leader attempts to influence followers to achieve a common goal (CIPD, 2020). It is a common assumption of the most of the organization that a truly effective leader has a clear vision of creating culture, relationship and motivation to inspire people to make most effective use of them. A single leader can easily drop down the ultimate motivation of the people (Avolio et al, 2008). Besides, it is theoretically and practically proved that leaders who use feedback, encouragement and support to the followers can generate their beliefs in their capability to perform activities to be enhanced (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 1999). Canadian career coach Elizabeth Dexter-Wilson (2015) listed 8 bad behaviors of the leaders today in the workplace. She noticed that leaders are commonly involved in

- Failing to listen to those you lead
- Failing to embrace and utilize the talents of those you lead
- Failing to acknowledge the work of those you lead
- Withholding information from those you lead
- Being a spin doctor
- Being a bouncer
- Holding grudges against those you lead
- Bullying those you lead

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION (ER)

"I will tell you and show you how you and your work matters " the statement of a leader indicates the feedback to an employee that engaged him totally.

People get motivated easily by letting know that their hard work is being recognised by the leader (Barnett, J., 2020). When employees never get any rewards or recognition for their work, they quickly start to feel that no one cares (Andriotis, 2018). And if no one cares, why should they bother putting in the extra effort. Managers are often quick to spread out the criticism or correction when needed, but slow to dish out the praise. Feedback can be very tricky. And, if not delivered in the right way, it can cause serious performance decline. Considerable research has been supported the view that non –financial rewards like, recognition can be a persuasive leadership tool which can have a significant positive relation with organizational performance (Luthan, k.w., 2000).

Harvey Stein, (2017) president, Stein & Read Incentives, expressed the importance of recognition as an employee's contribution in his following quote as "We all like to be recognized and appreciated. Just by giving an award or recognition certificate, formally recognizing someone in front of a group or even buying a cup of coffee, we're telling the employee that their work is appreciated."

KNOWLEDGE SHARE (KS):

Knowledge sharing is the process by which individuals exchange tacit and explicit knowledge to create new knowledge (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). Knowledge sharing can occur between individuals, within teams and across the organization. A unsuccessful knowledge process indicates mistrust in between leader and employee which ultimately responsible for poor performance that harm organization (Wilson, 2015). In fact, many researches has already found that leadership and trust have a positive direct impact on team knowledge sharing (Lee, Gillespie, Mann, & Wearing, 2010)

Strategy scholars have argued that managing knowledge effectively can provide firms with sustainable competitive advantages. Leaders are central to the process of this managing knowledge effectively. Managing knowledge includes three key processes: creating, sharing, and exploiting knowledge (Bryant, S. E., (2003). Leaders are central to each of these processes at multiple levels of the firm. The best leaders are acutely aware of how much they do not know (Myatt, M., 2012).

BANK EMPLOYEE'S ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Bank employees are facing a different nature of organizational structure due to their customer service specification (Deninzon et al., 2019). Especially the loan and credit officers have more different nature of jobs that based on their prompt and prudent feedback instantly to the customer. These employees have to manage their task with an essence of managerial interaction. Investment banking is among the most complex financial mechanisms in the world (The economic times, 2017).

Commercial banks worldwide have been dealing with varieties types of service. Employees in this sector are have to work under huge pressure. Specially the loan and advance division, where employees must face challenges with instant queries and have to solve them with prudence and accurate feedback (Sarker, D. 2013, Pressure on Loan Officers in Microfinance Institutions: An Ethical Perspective).

For instances in Bangladesh, loan officers need a close supervision which let them to manage their customers and take in time decisions (Interview, 2019). They also required a very clear understanding of their action as the decisions need a great impact on the action they took. This huge pressure de-motivated them in their proper planning frequently. Organizations sometimes creates a threading environment against such bad performance. Loan officers became frustrated and inefficient and finally go for turnover in large scale (Islam et al., 2019).

Loan officers may also be demoralized if they must regularly deal with difficult customers. Therefore, the bank managers need to find ways to keep morale and productivity up and to enhance the employees job satisfaction.

For ensuring sustainability of the organization, reputation, achieving desired ethical objectives, Managers should be more proactive to deal with this issue. Considering the importance of the leadership effect the author tried here to discuss how loan officers in commercial banks in Bangladesh are becoming less engaged due to managerial consequences as well as some practical recommendation for managers to reduce pressure. Author own experience helps her to get proper ideas.

3. METHODOLOGY

The author conducted an empirical research that is relies on experience and observations. Such research based on data usually come up with conclusions which are verified by observation or experience and considered to a powerful research.

The study was conducted in Bank A, B, C and D in the following regions, Dhanmondi, Motijheel and Uttara regions was used to generalize the findings of the research. The regions were chosen due to the proximity of the researcher and also because a larger focus has been laid by the bank in these regions in terms of branches, employees and client base. participants were professional level employee

3.1 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Studying the whole of the population was impossible. For this reason, the researcher picked a representative sample of the whole population from staff inventory. To achieve a representative sample for a research study, the people who were studied (i.e., the subjects) were carefully selected using a simple random sampling method. The researcher used a sample of 260 respondents was chosen since it represents the permanent employees in the region and also these respondents have worked for the bank for more than two years leading to reliable assessment of both perception of leadership study and own performance on the job. The 185 respondents gave their feedback among 260 include 30 senior executives, 60 mid-level executives and 95 junior staffs.

3.2 VARIABLES AND MEASUREMENT PROCEDURES

The researcher formulated questionnaires to obtain data regarding age of respondents, gender, education levels, and length of service in the organization which helped in understanding the respondent's background information. The key variables include the independent variables, which are leadership attributes namely RC and KSC. The second variable measured was the dependent variable which was employee engagement.

3.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study was collected using a structured self-complete research questionnaire (Close and open end) which was distributed to the target population and collected after a few days. Primary data was collected from the subject of study through structured close questionnaire. The second questionnaire used in this study had 14 open end questions. These questionnaires were sent to the HR departments in each of the selected branches.

3.4 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

After the data was collected, it was coded and entered into spreadsheet. Correctness of data entry was checked.

3.5 VALIDITY

To understand the validity of the data the researcher used environmental and methodological triangulation research strategy, which ensures the consistency of the research findings (Denzin, 1978). For instance, the spread sheet analysis and open-end questionnaire feedback presumed for the data validity and taking information from different regions supports the mechanism.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Our research makes two distinct contributions. First, our overall contribution is that we have observed the result of employee engagement that uniquely integrates leadership behaviours. Although several studies have investigated relationship between leadership traits (e.g. self-motivated, accountable, visionary) and employee engagement. (e.g. Saks, A. M. , 2006 ; Leary et al., 2013) , recognition and knowledge sharing concept has been surprisingly absent from true consideration. Second, our study contributes to both the leadership and the employee engagement literatures by examining and confirming recognition and knowledge sharing capacity as a mediating mechanism through which leadership ultimately influences employee engagement strongly.

Our results found that leadership operating through providing appropriate recognition and sharing knowledge has a positive effect on employee engagement. The survey applied on 130 employees with the range of position as 30 seniors, 95 mid-level and 60 Junior. In terms of recognition and constructive feedback the result is positive for the juniors but extremely negative for the seniors and mid-level employees.

QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED:

- C1=My supervisor praises me for a job well done
- C2=My Manager values my work
- C3=My supervisor is open to suggestion
- C4=Hard work is usually rewarded
- C5=I receive enough recognition for work that I do
- C6=I receive recognition whenever I do a good job
- C7= My supervisor knows what they are doing
- C8= My supervisor keeps me informed about important issues
- C9= my supervisor is approachable and easy to talk with
- C10=My supervisor provides real opportunity to improve my skills
- C11=My supervisor is available to me when I have questions or need help
- C12=leadership is able to implement ideas and suggestions

The figure in table 1, 2 and 3 show that the mid-level executives are Junior’s feedback on recognition

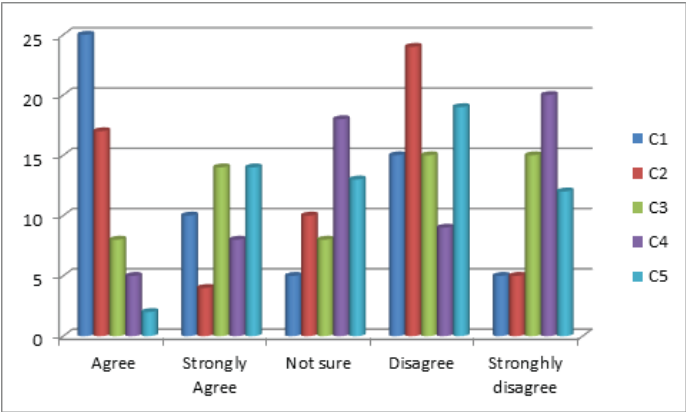


Figure-1: Junior’s feedback on knowledge sharing

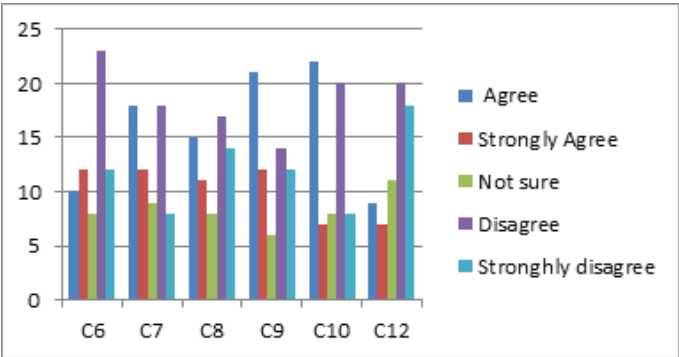


Figure -2: Knowledge sharing response of the mid-level executives

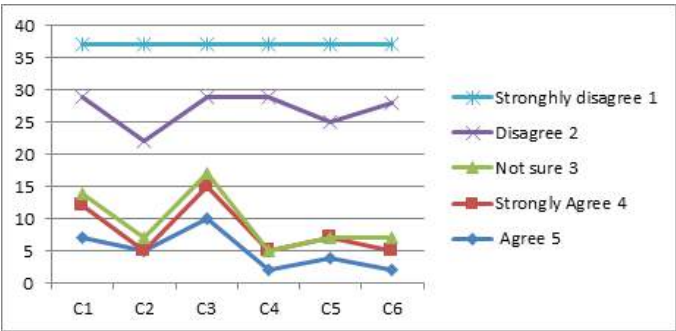


Figure – 3: Recognition capacity of the senior executives

The figure (1-3) indicates that the junior loan officers are satisfied with the practice of knowledge sharing through their managers. But in terms of recognition the response is not 100 % ok (figure 1). The findings and interview feedback for the junior staffs about their leaders are in a mix pattern. The reason behind the ambiguity is probably for the lack of the maturity about their own understanding. Junior employees usually approved about their leader's capacity as obvious. Sometimes they failed to correlate between their manager's competency with their practice. For instance, some loan officers mentioned that "If they would have a flexible learning ground in practicing it would be more generative for them to take decisions. Company manual and website is not sufficient enough to have instant decision" This feedback indicates the urgency of getting appropriate knowledge in time.

On the other hand, these (mid-level) officers are not satisfied with the lack of appreciation by their leaders (Figure -2). The senior officers are in the extreme position in terms of recognition violation by their managers. The answer of few officers was shocking as they replied, "we are working more than 13 hours leaving our families, but our management is not recognizing it positively". Most of these officers have sufficient knowledge about their tasks. Therefore, the KSC of the managers had few impacts on them. But still they felt about some prudent decisions' requirement severely. Specially for the closed question C10 the response rate is high for the employees who don't believe that supervisors are about to providing facility in their growth.

One interesting response of the closed question C5 for juniors marked high, but very low for the midlevel officers (figure 2). This reason behind this could be the insufficient judgment capacity by the juniors about the reward management, where the midlevel officers really required it in accomplishing their hard time.

5. DISCUSSION

Different studies about Employee engagement showed that rather than money the strongest and most persistent driver is the situation how creative an employee feels when working in a workplace. Leaders and managers have to have play their role for ensuring this feeling among the individuals (Pruzan & Miller, 2006). A company might not be ready to rearrange extra payment for making time for training and other things to encourage the employees. It is the duty for the senior managers to find special techniques to motivate employees and keep them hungry and passionate without substantial pay increases (Day et al., 2004).

The author observed the rush conditions of the loan officers, where they frustrated most of the time due to the overload, inadequate authority on the task

and lack of supervisory support (Financial Express, 2019). Now this supervisory support has been identified as the leadership style complexity (Darioly & Mast, 2011). Bangladeshi commercial banks facing these sorts of problems in almost in every bank and in loan divisions. To some extent loan dealing officer seemed to have frustrated and even drastically lose their productivity (interview records). Not only the dealing officers, the senior bankers are also facing stresses situation now a days (Cruise and Davies, 2016). In this paper the author investigated the response of the loan officers, how they valued, what is their area of authority and feedback condition have been revealed in new way (Table 2).

The study found most of the employees except those who have one to three years job duration, have expressed in similar expression about their leaders in competency towards their engagement practice. The poor knowledge sharing capacity and willingness of recognition delayed their ability of better performance and losing their interest accordingly (Hasan, M., 2018).

6. CONCLUSION

Participation and leadership are critical to building an engaged employee process. As Philip Crosby, a renowned quality specialist says: he does not want "commitment" from the top leadership; he wants "participation. Financial institutions have been facing an unprecedented competition these days (Rashid, M., 2015). Through sharing knowledge, a leader can disseminate information's within the organization that will ensure a strategic success of the business (Cakir & Adiguzel., 2020). Because employees usually il feeling of trust in the vent of knowledge sharing (Barutçugil, 2002). Banks and any other type of financial service providers are now interested more than before in adopting of such leadership techniques and tools to survive and excel. Banks benefit tremendously from proper leadership quality like recognition and knowledge sharing (Financial express, 2019). These specific quality implementation for the mere fact that their success depends on superior employee engagement. The study provides the evidence and feedback from the employees that suggest that, banks should have employee transformational leaders who have the capacity to stimulate interest among colleagues and followers to view their work from new perspective (Bass and Avolio, 1994). By harnessing the power of recognition, organization can revitalize company culture and connect people back to the company, creating a catalyst for bottom line results and widespread confidence that everyone is important in the organization (Novack, D. 2016).

7. RECOMMENDATION

Managers who've been able to motivate their employees successfully

realize how easy it is to achieve tasks when employees feel inspired. However, there are many organizational and managerial practices that can kill employee motivation. It's important for the company to have formal and informal programs that allow managers to recognize and reward great performance (Cates, Jeff., 2010). And it's vital for managers to make it a practice to regularly acknowledge and thank employees for their hard work and efforts. Because for the lack of recognition has a direct impact on productivity (Novac, 2016). Whenever there is an opportunity for positive feedback, leaders should take it & fill the employee with praise.

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