WHAT DRIVES EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT GLOBAL CONTEXTS? A COMPARISON OF THE ENABLERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND INDIA

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Abstract
As Multinational enterprises are increasingly interested in improving employee engagement across diverse geographies, understanding drivers of engagement across different national contexts becomes crucial. Although there is no 'one size fits all' approach and no master model for successful employee engagement, four common themes have emerged from research that go to make successful employee engagement, these themes are captured as 'The Four Enablers of Engagement Model' by the Engage for Success Movement in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this study is to test the enablers model in two different national contexts to understand which enablers (Strategic Narrative, Engaging Managers, Employee Voice, Integrity) are effective in driving employee engagement in the UK and India. The practical implications of the study are to highlight to multinational enterprises the importance of choosing the right enablers in overseas operations to drive higher levels of employee engagement. An anonymised semi-structured questionnaire, rated the importance of the four enablers in two different global contexts. Key findings from the research demonstrate that there are similarities and differences in the enablers that drive employee engagement in the different national contexts. In India, strategic leadership and engaging managers are key enablers to drive employee engagement in their staff. In the UK, the emphasis is on Employee Voice. The respondents from both national contexts highlighted Strategic Narrative as a key enabler to drive employee engagement.

Keywords: Engagement Enablers, Drivers of Engagement, Employee Engagement, National Comparisons of Employee Engagement.

Introduction
Employee engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organisation to give their best each day. The result is that the staff is committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being (Bridger 2015) [3]. Employee engagement is based on trust, integrity, two-way commitment and communication between an organisation and its members. It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organisational and individual performance, productivity and well-being. (Engage for Success 2010) [10].Factors of employee engagement vary from each country and industry sectors (Taipale et al 2011) [28]. Research has been conducted in a number of consulting firms to measure employee engagement in different global contexts (Aon Hewitt 2018, Gallup 2010, Deloitte 2018) [1,13,9]. There is an identified gap in academic research highlighting the difference in approaches to be adopted to engage employees across different nations (Farndale 2017; Iddagoda and Opatha 2017) [12,17]. Further, 'The Future of Engagement Thought Piece Collection' has cited cross-national differences as a key future area for Employee Engagement research (Kelliher et al, 2013; Rothmann, 2013) [20,23]. Farndale (2017) [12] has identified the spread of Western human resources practices to developing Asian Economies as an under-developed research topic. The author is researching the differences in approaches required by multinational organisations to engage staff in different global locations. This paper aims to compare the drivers of Employee Engagement in two diverse locations in the west and east, the UK and India.

Research Focus
Research Question
The key question to be explored in this research is 'What are the key enablers that drive Employee Engagement in different global contexts? Exploring the differences in employee engagement enablers in the United Kingdom and in India.'

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Research Objectives: In this paper the author explores the following research objectives:
1. To investigate if the 'Four enablers of employee engagement' model is applicable to two contrasting global contexts, India and the UK.
2. To analyse the effectiveness of the four enablers in the UK and India.
3. To recommend how employee engagement can be improved in India and the UK using these enablers.

Research Rationale

Employee engagement has many positive impacts on the overall outlook and growth potential of a business, meaning that investing in a global yet localised engagement strategy will likely have multiple positive impact points on business outcomes (Rayton 2012) [22]. New trends are driving businesses to rewrite their HR strategies to remain competitive, which is being driven by changes in technology (Deloitte 2017) [9]. It has also been pointed out by Bridger (2015) [3] that engagement helps in creating organisation.

Review of Literature

According to Iddagoda and Opatha (2016) [17] employee engagement is concept yet to be fully explored, even though it is a popular word in academia and industry. There are large numbers of research studies and publications on employee engagement, unclear areas or ambiguities still remain unanswered. The desire to change a culture and drive engagement cannot be a short-term ambition. In UK recently, staff morale has taken a hit, as shown in recent CIPD and other surveys (Engage for Success 2010) [10] and CEOs are looking at ways to pick up motivation amongst their people. This has resulted in a scenario where interest in the concept of engagement, and subsequent business performance, has reached an all-time high (Smith 2014) [27].

The increasingly diverse nature of the workforce, with the wide range of expectations, aspirations, and emotional styles involved, understanding how to engage and motivate employees from varying cultures and nations becomes ever more challenging (Cheese 2014) [7]. Employee Engagement is now an essential HR strategy as engaged employees provide positive connection and emotions to their employer and their work (Truss et al 2013) [29]. Moreover, because of cultural differences, the enablers for employee engagement are different in varying cultural contexts. Organisations are now looking at the present and future of engaging a multicultural and global workforce in light of the new environment. Uncertainty and changes within external environments are having massive impact in the workplace. Organisations would benefit from finding a framework to lead the way in regards to engaging staff globally (Truss et al. 2013) [29]

Although there is no 'one size fits all' approach and no master model for successful employee engagement, four common themes have emerged from research that go to make successful employee engagement, these themes are captured as 'The Four Enablers of Engagement Model'(Engage for Success 2010)[10]. Engage for Success is a growing voluntary movement promoting employee engagement as a better way to work that benefits individual employees, teams, and whole organisations. The Four enablers of employee engagement as highlighted by the model are:

Strategic narrative - It is just about the mission, vision, and values, but also the story that it is captured within and how it is communicated to employees – it needs to be in a way that they understand how they fit into the big picture.

Engaging Managers - Work with employees to ensure that they are engaged in their work, to understand individuals and to act as a coach and to challenge people within their roles.

Employee Voice - Seeing employees as a solution to organisational challenges, seeking feedback from employees and to ensure that they are involved and contributing.

Integrity - This is about walking the talk – this is about following the policies set out that match the Mission, Vision and Values.

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According to the Engage for Success, by focusing on these four key areas to drive employee engagement, a business can improve their overall engagement levels (Engage for Success 2010) [10].

The Four Enablers of Employee Engagement
Strategic Narrative
Engaging Manager
Employee Voice
Integrity

Fig. I

Research Methodology
As a contributor to the Engage for Success Cross-Cultural Special Interest Group in the United Kingdom, the researcher is investigating the 'Four Enablers Model' recommended by 'The Engage for Success Movement' in the UK. The research explores the employee engagement enablers as explained in the Four Enablers Model (Engage for Success 2010) [10] in an attempt to conclude which enablers are effective in specific global contexts and to understand its intricacies in more detail. The key research question is if these four enablers are equally effective across certain cultures or if selected enablers are more effective in a specific cultural setting.

An anonymised semi-structured questionnaire using the Likert Scale, rated the importance of the four Enablers in two different global contexts (Bridger 2015)[3].These began with a focus on information such as Industry and length of occupation, before exploring employee engagement and the effectiveness of its enabler in the chosen culture.103 requests were sent out to early-career professionals in the UK and India in a variety of Industries such as Public Services, Education, Manufacturing, Financial Services. 64 responses were received, with similar representation from the two countries.

The survey questions were related to employee engagement based on the Gallup Q12 (Gallup 2016) [13] and four enablers of employee engagement (Engage for Success 2010) [10]. The questionnaire contained a set of 20 questions/statements, with each enabler linked to five of the questions. Respondents were asked to think about their experience in their workplace, read the statements and include the corresponding number most relevant for them next to each question. Since the twenty statements corresponded to an enabler, each enabler could be given a final score based on the respondents' scoring. Scores for each enabler of employee engagement were determined and then the mean of the responses for each country was presented.

The qualitative research focused on the four enablers and their links to perceived benefits from employee engagement activities in terms of improved organizational outcomes (Court-Smith 2016) [6]. In addition to the quantitative survey, to test the reliability and as suggested by Bridger (2015) [3] and Walker (2012) [31], the author also conducted qualitative interviews.

Key limitation of the research is that the surveys may not alone represent and depict a true scenario of employee engagement as participants may not want to present their companies in an unfavourable manner (Kapborg and Bertero 2002) [19].

Research Findings
The survey results indicate that management in both countries, India and the UK realise the importance of employee engagement and the application of one or more of the enablers to bring out the best in their staff. There are similarities and differences in the enablers that drive employee engagement in the two different national contexts. Results from each enabler in each cultural context were examined to understand which practices resulted in higher levels of engagement.

The comparative scores of the four enablers of employee engagement are presented in the table below. Key Findings from the research demonstrate that in India, strategic leadership and engaging managers are key enablers

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to drive employee engagement in their staff. Professionals from India are of the opinion that positive relationship between employees and managers fosters productivity.

Most respondents from UK commented that Employee Voice and Integrity are key drivers to increase engagement levels. The respondents were of the opinion that most organisations that take into consideration employees' opinions and decisions are more effective in improving the levels of employee engagement. More importantly, professionals from the UK have highlighted the need for organisational integrity and recommended that organisations demonstrate that their values are embedded in operations. The influence of Strategic Narrative, a guiding vision form the top, seems to be gaining significance in India as much as the UK.

Table 1: Mean Scores from Quantitative Surveys

The Four Enablers of Employee Engagement	Mean Scores Professionals From India (Max=20)	Mean Scores Professionals From The Uk (Max=20)
Strategic Narrative	14	14
Engaging Manager	16	12
Employee Voice	11	16
Integrity	13	12

Discussion of Findings
1. In India, mostly the organisations actively embed the key concept of employee engagement to enable performance of employees and improve their job satisfaction. The most effective enabler in India was found to be the Engaging Manager followed by the Strategic Narrative, where employees are empowered by the leadership within the organisation providing a strong strategic goal for the organisation. The enabler 'Engaging managers' is perceived to be the most effective to build a culture of engagement by equipping managers to improve the rapport with employees, assisting them to reach their full potential. However, it was observed that in India there are a few mechanisms for employee voice and little emphasis on demonstrating Integrity and improving the Employee Value Proposition, in terms of meeting expectations set with employees. In the UK, the emphasis on Employee Voice to drive engagement is gaining significance. The respondents also highlighted Strategic Narrative and Integrity as key enablers to drive employee engagement.
2. These differences in the effectiveness of enablers of employee engagement can be linked to the difference in Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede 1994) [16]. For example, higher power distance in India as compared to UK, can explain the effectiveness of the Engaging Manager as an enabler in India whereas higher individualism in the UK can explain how Employee Voice can be effective in driving employee engagement in the UK. This means that Employee Voice is an effective mechanism to deal with falling engagement levels in the UK, which may be result of the anxiety in the uncertainty due to Brexit (Aon Hewitt 2018) [1]. Hence, employee voice is a key enabler to improve employee engagement levels in the UK.

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Table 2: Analysis of Survey Responses

Comparison of Employee Engagement Enablers in India and UK

Practical Importance and Implications of Research:
Employee engagement has many positive impacts on a business's overall outlook and growth potential, meaning that investing in a global yet localised engagement strategy will have multiple positive impact points on business outcomes (Rayton 2012) [22]. New trends are driving businesses to rewrite their HR strategies to remain competitive, which is being driven by changes in technology (Deloitte 2017) [8]. It has also been pointed out by Bridger (2015) [3] that engagement helps in creating organisation value (competitive advantage, intangible assets, and difficult to replicate) with employee values (customer advocacy, business growth, successful implementation of change, and controlled operating costs).

For each country, there was one enabler that stood out amongst all the others which was the Strategic Narrative, showing how crucial the leadership of an organisation is to its employees (Deloitte 2018)[9] One of the key conclusions from this study is that Employee Engagement in collectivist cultures could be improved by improving the supervisor- employee relation (Varma et al 2005)[30], training for creating 'Engaging Managers' would be instrumental here as Budhwar and Khatri (2001)[4] found subordinate performance is much more dependent on the supervisor's relation. On the other hand, the individualist cultures may require Employee Engagement interventions that promote Employee Voice (Schaufeli et al 2016) [25], hence employee engagement methods in individualist cultures could focus on encouraging and seeking feedback from all employees (Shelton, Gartland and Stack 2011) [26].

Recommendations for Practice
Considering Strategic Leadership is emerging as a key driver of employee engagement globally (Aon Hewitt 2018, Deloitte 2018) [1,9] the focus needs to be for senior leaders to be sharing the motivating mission, vision and values. This would also include policies that promote engagement. More importantly, ensuring that the company follows the values set out are crucial to engaging employees as integrity and Employee Value Propositions (Aon Hewitt 2018) [1] are emerging as key enablers in the western and non-western contexts. A clear strategic narrative should drive the operations of a Multinational Enterprise from the headquarters and the local adaption of the employee engagement practices would prove beneficial in terms of creating and maintaining high levels of engagement in contrasting national business systems (Björkman & Budhwar 2007) [2]. Thus, for organisations expanding their operations to different countries, the localization of practices to driving employee engagement must be noted for the design of suitable engagement initiatives in different locations.

Conclusion

The Four Enablers Model provided by the Engage for Success Movement is applicable to global businesses today, by focusing on these four key areas a business can improve their overall engagement levels (Engage for Success 2010) [10]. This paper has provided some key recommendations for the differences in approaches required by multinational organisations for the application of the Four Enablers Model to engage staff in diverse global locations. For example, in High-power distance countries the effectiveness of the Engaging Manager as an enabler must be emphasised, whereas in low power distance countries and countries with a higher individualism score, Employee Voice can be effective in driving employee engagement. The most effective enabler globally is found to be the Strategic Narrative (Aon Hewitt 2018) [1], where employees are empoweredby the leadership within the organisation providing a strong strategic goal for the organisation. Therefore, employee engagement practices do vary across national cultures, with different enablers affecting the variations of employee engagement in each country. The difference in the required approaches to driving employee engagement must be noted for the design of suitable engagement initiatives in different locations, while some enablers are universally applicable, some maybe more effective specifically in certain global contexts.

Future Research in this Area

The author has proposed differences in enablers of employee engagement in the UK and in India. Future research may consider interpretations of the term Employee Engagement in different global contexts while exploring further if the enablers that drive engagement are convergent in nature or require divergent applications in the contexts under consideration (Farndale 2017). Also, another area that is worth exploring is the investigation of whether these employee engagement enablers depend on the industry and size of the organisation under consideration.

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