A Comparative study of Employee Engagement in Private and Public Companies in Oman oil and Gas Sector

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Abstract

The oil boom in the Arabian Peninsula has removed Oman's dependence from the agriculture sector and shifted to the oil and gas sector. Oman's economy is dependent on the public sector but the expanding population has made it inevitable to penetrate deeper into the private sector too. This present research study attempts to compare employee engagement in public and private companies in Oman oil and gas sector. It aims to identify the difference that exist in the comprehension of employee engagement. Add to that, this study also aims to compare cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels of employee engagement in the said sectors. Primary data was sourced through structured questionnaire and the information regarding the respondents were collected from 140 respondents. Out of that 70 respondents in public and 70 respondents in private Oil and Gas sector. Snowball sampling method was used to collect the data. The target respondent for this study are middle level employees. The outcome revealed that there is no significant difference in behavioural level of employee engagement but cognitive and emotional level there are some significant differences in employee engagement between public and private companies in oil and gas sector.

Keywords

Employee Engagement, Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Behavioral Engagement, Job satisfaction and Job Commitment

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a representation of the extent of eagerness and association that employees have with their organization. It is a clear indication of their willingness to take up duties beyond those assigned to them in the normal course of their job (Alexis, 2018). Anuradha and Henarath (2015), developed three dimensions of employee engagement such as cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Cognitive engagement refers to the need of the employees to be actually familiar and aligned with the organizational strategy and knows what they require to deliver maximum return on their task effort. Emotional engagement refers to the degree to which employee feel integrated and trust the organization.

Behavioral engagement is connected to participation and being involved at work commitment. There are different types of personnel in any organization such as engaged employees who are loyal, committed and emotionally devoted to the organization and highly motivated to achieve the goals, not engaged employees are those who just pass time and wait to return to their houses and they are relatively happy and satisfied in their role and Disengaged employees are those who create a toxic environment and complain about their work.

Oil and Gas Sector in Oman Scenario

The oil boom in the Arabian Peninsula has removed Oman's dependence from the agriculture sector and shifted to the oil and gas sector. Oman's economy is dependent on the public sector but the expanding population has made it inevitable to penetrate deeper into the private sector too. However, the public sector companies (with it is current Omanization policy) employ 10.2% Omani nationals as mention in Oman statistical yearbook (2018). With the introduction of liberal foreign policies, Oman now has a private sector that comprises of low cost and well-trained foreign workers. Thus, Oman currently exhibits a segmented labour market.
While the private sector according to (2018) census employed 76.8% Omanis as mention in Oman statistical yearbook (2018), it was seen that major oil and gas companies had 81% employees who were Omani as mention in another newspaper at the end of (2017). But still, the citizens in private sector are always on the lookout for a shift into the public sector due to better perks, better pay, less working hours, job security, pension etc. In which private companies are unable to offer. The oil and gas industry in Oman started as a public sector undertaking. It has been the main driving force behind the economy of Oman. Commercial production of oil and gas began only by 1967. As demand for oil grew and as new exploration sites started yielding oil than slowly private sector stepped in with government consent. Now, Oman has many older oil fields and field with complex geology which both the sectors handle. Some of the public sector companies are: (ORPIC, OMAN OIL etc).

While some private sector companies include: (OXY, MB PETROLEUM SERVICES LLC etc). Along with oil, they also extract natural gas, they produce LPG and also hydrocarbon. Currently their activities include water management, renewable energy generation, solar power usage to generate steam for enhanced oil recovery processes etc. Both public and private oil and gas companies are now taking efforts to build up local talent by generating jobs and providing training opportunities for Omani citizens. Oil supports Oman’s modern infrastructure but low oil prices over past few years have caused major concerns. Investment is forecasted to shift towards maximizing output from cost effective reservoirs using innovative technology to reduce costs and get rid of wastes. Both sectors are trying their best to do so without competition with intention of prosperity of Oman.

The focus of this research is upon the level of employee engagement in private and public sector oil and gas organizations in Oman. Since public sector and private sector co-exist in every economy with healthy competition that benefits the entire country, thus self-development and employee preference is the hidden aspect behind each sector. This research tries to examine differences in level of employee engagement in public and private companies, and if they do exist then to what extent along with the causes for such existence. It is a general conception amongst the citizens of our country that the public sector is more developed and has higher level of employee engagement but there is no adequate proof to prove this misconception. The private sector is equally equipped in all fields, also in oil and gas. All the processes starting from exploration of oil field to drilling activities, oil extracting, sand removal, steam injection etc., are done with equal care and expertise by public and private oil and gas companies with utmost care and motivation from its employees. Technology apart, it is vital to know the role of employees in success of any sector. For employees to perform to their fullest potential, employee engagement must be adequately, strategically and timely provided. The problem is the examination of its dimensions with respect to cognitive, emotional and behavioral patterns. Correct examination must be followed by accurate comparison of dimensions in both the sectors of oil and gas that exist in Oman.

The objectives of the current paper are to identify Employee Engagement dimensions (Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioral) in private & public companies in Oman Oil and Gas sector and to compare Employee Engagement dimensions (Cognitive, Emotional and Behavioral) in private & public companies in Oman Oil and Gas sector.

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

Simmons (2018), tried to explore strategies used by leaders of three small coffee shops whereby their interview was taken and transcripts scrutinized in detail. The results showed that the use of strategies by leaders’ increases employee engagement, and such engaged employees develop a significant bond within their social circles too. Also, Pradhan et al., (2017), emphasized that employee engagement were explored to three elements such as compelling job duties, power and responsibility and interpersonal harmony. Compelling job assignment helps employees to engage better when they serve a greater purpose. Authority and accountability, support in a fair matter such as abusive use of power. Interpersonal harmony sustenance for health and performance of the employee. Harney (2017), attempted to understand and estimate the increasing importance of decision making about the best ways to have employee engagement. The results could capture the essence of employee engagement as an emotional commitment, an inspiration to be
involved and a feeling of fulfillment derived from delivering good performance. While, Jaiswal et al., (2017) mentioned that employee motivation is an important factor to be considered from the organization because the more motivation makes good engagement between employees to accomplish the task given. In addition, Kazimoto (2016), examined the employee engagement and the effect on organizational performance of retail enterprises. This was proved with many studies. In this it has been found that delivery of fair rewards for effort, career satisfaction and accessibility of gears and capitals in the establishments have a solid and substantial relationship. This relationship could be positive or negative, the most important factors were employee engagement and job assignment. Moreover, Singh (2016), examined how an organization can develop a culture of attracting and retaining employees physically and mentally through strategic employee engagement sessions. The results showed that organizations loose management direction and alignment efforts without proper employee engagement. Also, Gupta (2015), explored how organizations succeed in achieving their objectives through depending upon employee engagement programs. The astounding results revealed that employees experienced not only educational opportunities and open communication, but also a strong emotional connection towards the organization. Add to that, Quang et al. (2015), conducted a study to investigate the approach of leaders’ emotional intelligence to enhance the employees’ job engagement. The result of this research showed that the leadership, emotional intelligence can get statistically positive effects on employee engagement which implies a strong impact on the emotional intelligent leadership in developing and enhancing the workforce engagement. Also, Rashmi et al., (2014) Compared employees engagement practices at private and public banks. The study revealed that the most critical factors in public banks include loyalty, knowledge sharing and equality between employees while in private banks it includes open communication, Mutual Respect and Trust. While, Sukhmeet (2014) conducted a research to explore the factors that affect the level of employee engagement and their attitude towards their organization in the hospitality industry (star category hotel). The outcome revealed that there are four critical factors affecting employee engagement positive particularly training and development, rewards and recognition, relationships with others, career development. These four factors makes employees more satisfied and committed towards their organization.

With the gathered theoretical information, a conceptual framework were drawn which is exhibited in Figure no 1. This framework represents the three levels of employee engagement which are cognitive, emotional and behavioral. The three levels of employee engagement has been identified as independent variables while employee engagement, job commitment, job involvement, job satisfaction, and intention to stay for long time period are considered as dependent variable.

**Hypothesis**

HO: There is no significant difference in cognitive level employee engagement among employees working in private and public companies in Oil and Gas sector.

HO: There is no significant difference in emotional level employee engagement among employees working in private and public companies in Oil and Gas sector.

HO: There is no significant difference in behavioral level employee engagement among employees working in private and public companies in Oil and Gas sector.

**METHODS**

The research design used in this study is descriptive research. It describes variables characteristics in this research. The honest opinion of employees working in the public and private Oil and Gas companies were collected for this research. Their responses will include the characteristics of employee engagement based on cognitive, emotional and behavioral patterns. This research initiates to find out about the differences in the levels of employee engagements in public and private oil & gas companies. The sampling method used in this study is snowball sampling; it is a non-probability sampling technique where chosen research participants suggest other participants for the study. This method helps the study to get a
sufficient number of participants in a way asking the subject to nominate others who are interested to be participating in the study. As well saving the research time. It is the best method for this research because it helps in identifying and selecting the target which may be unique or hard to reach. The research respondents in this study were a middle level employee in public and private oil and gas sector. Since they are large in number, they will have more diverse opinions, suggestions and reactions. Their opinions and responses will have greater variations.

The sample size decided by the researchers were 140 respondents. Out of that 70 respondents from public and 70 respondents from private oil and gas sectors were targeted. Questionnaire method was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of 25 statements. Researchers used Likert 5 point scale to realize the thoughts and views about Employee Engagement in private and public Oil & Gas companies. The data that were obtained from the questionnaires are analyzed by using SPSS 20 Software. For an analysis of the obtained data, after its proper compilation, independent T- test were used in this research to test the hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
From the table no.1, it is found that the null hypothesis were rejected in cognitive level and emotional level employee engagement. Hence, it is concluded that there are some difference in cognitive level and emotional level employee engagement between private and public Oman Oil & Gas companies. The reason might be that there are difference in learning opportunities provided to employees in public and private sector to improve their creativity abilities and they are aligned to the organizational goals and objectives. Also, it might be that employees are interested also differ based on public and private sector to learn and develop themselves. Employees are also given a chance to express their ideas and thoughts more in public sector than private sector.

There might be also a difference in the sense of belongingness between the employees because of care and concern shown as well as the interpersonal relationship between employees is strong. From the table no.1, it is found that the null hypothesis was rejected for overall employee engagement factor. Hence, it is concluded that there is some difference in employee engagement level between private and public Oman Oil & Gas companies.

It is also revealed from the table no.1, the null hypothesis was accepted for behavioural level employee engagement. Hence, it is concluded that there is no significance difference in behavioural level between private and public Oman Oil & Gas companies. The reason might be that there is no much difference in rules and regulation they follow which are set by the companies of the both sectors which makes employees more punctual and discipline.

CONCLUSION
Employee engagement is vital for the organization growth, development and success. Hence, the researchers have collected significant and useful data to conduct a study of employee engagement in public and private sector oil and gas companies in Oman. Through this comprehensive study, the researchers have reached the conclusion that the public sector employees are more engaged in some aspects while the private sector employees are engaged in few aspects. Oman’s economy relies on the public sector; however, the increasing population has created it inevitable to enter deeper into the private sector too. Hence, more employee engagement is needed in the private sector for the development of our country. Public sector employees are more casual with respect to their jobs and work, but the private sector is more careful because of lack of job security.

So, job security was the most crucial factor that has negatively impacted the public sector as well as the private sector. Job security has made the public sector develop a more caring attitude towards their work, and though they are ready to learn through training, still they aren't prepared to take extra initiatives. Furthermore, the study shows that lack of job security has affected the private sector employee’s willingness to do quality work. They tend to exercise less authority and power in the workplace and they have less loyalty towards their organizations, their excitement and encouragement in their jobs. Due to the policy of the organization, the public sector companies of Omani employees so positive effect are that there is no discrimination but negative effect is that there is no workplace diversity.
On the other hand, it is seen that in the private sector, due to the existence of diversity, there is a higher level of discrimination. Furthermore, the study reveals that private sector employees need equal opportunities for growth and fair treatment at workplace so as to increase their loyalties and emotional connect with the organization. They need more care and concern from their seniors. Lastly, the research found that the senior management in public sector companies has a carefree attitude towards their juniors. They are less supportive, give less inspiration to take actions and decisions and are more inclined towards few who are well known to them.

They do not give adequate encouragement to juniors and are less prompt in giving periodic performance appraisal feedbacks. Thus, flaws exist in both sectors and there still a long way to perfection. Accordingly, employee engagement is intensely and excessively beneficial to any workplace because it increases employee satisfaction, retains talented employees, and boost productivity. Any organization that encourage and support employee engagement is going to successfully and do better overall.

REFERENCES


between employee engagement and behavioral outcomes. [online] Available at: https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/meta

**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**
Table 1. Independent "T" Test:

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