

Exploring a Socially-Constructed Concept and Precursors of Employee Engagement in the Philippine Setting

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory research was undertaken to construct the concept of employee engagement from the views of HR leaders. It emerged the precursors of employee engagement from a multiplicity of lived experiences of HR leaders and rank and file employees working in different industries. Using pure qualitative approach from a phenomenological/constructivist lens, thematic analysis was used to interpret data. The study surfaced contemporary knowledge that challenged traditional views on employee engagement before the emergence of knowledge workers. It provided new learning paradigm towards academic discourses and critical information for industry practitioners in driving engagement. The study provided a solid foundation for future academic and industry research on the precursors of employee engagement, and a framework for the development of a research-based employee engagement measures. The results of the study revealed that employee engagement involved emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physical connection of the employee to work and organization. Employee engagement, as a relationship, is a triad of employee, work, and organization and not simply a two-way relationship between employee and organization. Engagement and disengagement were found to be conscious decision of an employee. The precursors of engagement emerged from the study were (1) meaningful work, (2) trust in leadership, (3) positive and inclusive work environment, (4) career growth opportunities, and (5) compensation and benefits.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Precursors of Employee Engagement, Engagement Drivers, Engagement and disengagement.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has undoubtedly driven talent as a critical resource that organizations can leverage in a highly competitive market. US Foreign Policy Expert Steve Jones (2016) explained that the theory behind globalization is that “worldwide openness will promote the inherent wealth of all nations.” This theory drives businesses to cross national borders and the impact is unmistakable with the formation and alignment of regional economic blocks such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1989, the European Economic Cooperation (EEC) in 1993, the Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS) in 2010, and the integration of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) economy in December 2015. The unprecedented upscale of trade and commerce in the global market has led to a higher level the cut-throat competition of product quality and service excellence across various verticals to meet the discriminating and evolving demands of customers and other stakeholders such as the investors, consumers,

the community (environment) and the workforce. In the process, more pressure is exerted on countries and companies to adapt to the rapid evolution of global business.

Central to the business pressures are competition in the acquisition, utilization and retention of talents that are needed by companies as business leverage in a globalized environment. Leveraging on human capital has seen the evolution of innovative approaches in human resource management. Ulrich, D., *et al.*, (2014) opined that organizations need to evolve and continuously adapt innovative strategic human resource practices with critical focus on how to attract, acquire and “retain the best talent.” The impetus of searching for innovative approaches in managing talent can trace its roots from the 1997 McKinsey study led by Elizabeth Chambers where they concluded that organizations in the US are about to be engaged in a ‘war for talent.’ The conclusion is based on their findings that the number of highly competent managers and leaders is decreasing while the demand is rapidly growing at an unprecedented pace. Kapoor, B. (2011) opined that the existing shortage of global talent in more developed economies is driven by globalization and if the trend continues, even less developed economies where these critical talents are sourced will eventually suffer the same shortage. Thus, the concept of maintaining a highly competitive workforce permeates mainstream business organizations within which human resource management professionals are forced to develop innovative approaches in people management - employee engagement being one of the top priority agenda.

Globally, employee engagement is viewed as producing positive outcomes and the literature provides robust evidence for this claim. In the 2013 report of the Harvard Business Review, employee engagement has become a top business priority for senior executives giving due recognition on the fact that a highly engaged workforce can increase innovation, productivity, and bottom line performance while reducing cost related to hiring and retention in a highly competitive talent market. The 2015 CIPD report provided strong support to HBR’s study that an engaged employee delivers results beyond what is expected of him/her, and produces positive outcomes, increase talent retention. Weigner (2015), likewise opined that engaged employees are happier. Harter, J., *et al.*, (2013), argued that engaged employees think about the company as a whole and are self-driven in findings ways to fit in the systems and culture. Harter, J., *et al.* (2013) added that these groups of employees are the top performers because of their proximity to the best ideas that produced better decisions.

The literature provides strong evidence to support employee engagement a plausible employee retention and productivity improvement business strategy. However, much of the knowledge and evidence provided by the literature are predominantly constructed in the traditional western perspectives. The imbalance of research focus on the engagement outcomes against its precursors is seemingly evident from the studies. Investigation on the outcomes of employee engagement has been extensive but inquiry on its drivers is given little attention. The paucity of contemporary concept-based academic research on the precursors of employee engagement is ostensibly visible as well. This study exposed how employee engagement was understood by HR leaders and rank and file employees in the Philippines to fill the knowledge gap on engagement literature that is (arguably) lacking in the Philippines. In this study, the problem: **What is the socially constructed definition and precursors of employee engagement as viewed by HR leaders and rank and file employees?** was investigated. In the conduct of investigation to this problem, the researcher focused on a research question that explored the concept and precursors of employee engagement in the Philippine setting. The question was: What is employee engagement as viewed by human

resource management leaders and rank and file employees? The objective of the study was to (1) Formulate a socially constructed conceptual definition of employee engagement based on how it is understood by Philippine HR leaders; (2) Analyze the psychological conditions of employee engagement; and (3) Analyze and identify the internal and external drivers of employee engagement.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In light of the seeming importance and popularity of this management construct, recurring debates on how employee engagement should be universally understood continue to persist. As observed by research scholars from the business and academic sector, the lack of a universal definition of employee engagement accounts for much of the confusion (Saks, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Schuck & Wollard, 2009; Schuck, B., *et al.*, 2012). The diverse concepts forwarded by theorists and research scholars characterize employee engagement as a theoretical construct that emanates from voluntariness to attach self in the task and/or organization (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Such voluntariness is driven by internal and external motivations that are hinged on psychological conditions (Kahn, 1990) making the employees highly energetic, enthusiastic and fulfilled in their tasks (Maslach, *et al.*, 2001; Harter, *et al.*, 2013; Bakker, A. B. & Demerouti, A., 2008; Schuck & Wollard, 2009; Schaufeli & Bakker., 2010). The robustness of the concepts put to the fore, nonetheless, complicates the understanding of this management construct but attracted more interest in academic and industry discourses.

The paucity of academic research focusing on the precursors of employee engagement (Markos, S. & Srividi, M. S., 2010; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Schuck, B., 2010; Bedarkar, M. & Pandita, D., 2014), which is a crucial groundwork in studying the whole concept of employee engagement was ostensibly visible. This inadequacy led researchers to associate employee engagement to various theoretical constructs such as Social Exchange Theory (Saks, A. M., 2006), Self-Determination Theory (Meyer, J. P. & Gagner, M., 2008) and other corollary theories (Macey & Schneider, 2008). The origin of the term 'employee engagement' is actually not clear (Schaufeli, W. B. & Bakker, A. B., 2010). However, it is widely accepted that the concept of employee engagement came into life from the seminal work of Kahn, W. A. (1990). Kahn's (1990) study emerged three (3) psychological conditions for employees to be engaged (attached) or disengaged (detached) from their role: (1) meaningfulness or the value of work the employees get in exchange for their physical, cognitive and emotional investment; (2) physical and emotional safety; and (3) availability of the employees to accomplish the task. According to Kahn (1990), employees unconsciously assess the value of work in return for their effort and time investment, and whether it is physically and emotionally safe for them to do it, and if right amount of time and resources to accomplish the tasks is provided. Kahn (1990) argued that if the three psychological conditions are met, employees are likely to engage themselves. On the contrary, if the employees do not see any meaning or value in what they do, or feel it is not physically and emotionally safe to do the job, they are likely to disengage from the role. Building on the ethnographic research of Kahn (1990), May, D. R., Gilson, R. L. and Harter, L. M. (2004) conducted a field research study to test the validity of the three (3) psychological dimensions of employee engagement and found strong evidence to support Kahn's (1990) findings.

The imbalance in the extent of research attention given to the outcomes of employee engagement at the expense of its precursors is very obvious in the province of related

literature. From the scarce academic inquiries on the precursors of engagement, it was found that job fit (Schuck, B., *et al.*, 2010), job resources and personal resources (Bakker, 2011), employer reputation (Gilbert, 2011; Fukofuka, 2014), relationship with immediate supervisor, belief in senior leadership, pride in working with the company (Dale Carnegie 2012), satisfactory work environment, career growth, job enrichment (Pandey and David, 2013), benefits, organizational culture, and organizational policies (Gupta, Ganguli & Ponnampalnam, 2014) are key drivers of employee engagement. Aon Hewitt 2016 report on the Trends in Global Employee Engagement study stated the global trend of top employee engagement drivers are: (1) enabling infrastructure, (2) employee value proposition, (3) rewards and recognition, (4) career opportunities, (5) learning and development, (7) work life balance, and (8) performance management. Cone Communications (2016) employee engagement study conducted across the US likewise revealed caring company, benefits, and corporate social responsibility as key engagement drivers. Obviously, these studies were dominated by traditional western knowledge construction.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This research was exploratory where the lived experiences of data sources were investigated in order to understand the concept of employee engagement from their personal accounts based on the daily realities that exist in their social and work environment. An exploratory research is a systematic investigation to establish facts or principles or to collect information on a subject (Collins Online Dictionary, 2014). In pursuit of knowledge from the objectives of this research, pure qualitative method was applied using phenomenological/constructivist philosophical lens. The phenomenological/constructivist philosophical lens naturally deemed fit in this study since socially constructed knowledge was used by “accessing and understanding the actual meanings and interpretations of the actors as they subjectively ascribed to the phenomena in order to describe and explain their behavior through investigating how they experienced, sustained, articulated, and shared with others this socially constructed everyday reality” (Duberly, J., Johnson, P. & Casell, C., 2012).

The qualitative research method seeks “answers to questions that underpin how (lived) social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative method allowed this researcher to be exposed to the flow of information that led to discoveries of new possibilities. According to Merriam (1998), “being open to any possibility can lead to serendipitous discoveries” which exactly happened in this study. The application of phenomenological/constructivist philosophical lens was intended to illuminate the concept of employee engagement in constructing knowledge by adapting the social constructivism approach.

3.2 Data sources and process of inquiry

The norm for selection of data sources (respondents) in quantitative research, *i. e.*, randomized selection of a representative sample of respondents, does not apply in qualitative research. The norm in quantitative research places its priority on external validity. This validity is about the survey data whose story is taken to be true of the population from where the sample is drawn. This validity requirement must satisfy two rules. One is to have a representative sample of the population drawn with the use of a sampling algorithm. The

other is drawing a statistically random sample of respondents who have the same characteristics as the population.

In qualitative research, the priority validity concern is with the issue of isomorphism of collected data. In research terminology, the question is: “Are the data that you have collected similar to reality that you intend to study?” That is, are they measuring what you intended to measure? Of course, internal validity is also of importance in quantitative research, but it is not its priority. However, in qualitative research, it is the priority. The question then becomes: Who is the right participant in KIIs and FGDs in qualitative research? Is he the one “who can talk?” Or is he the one who knows the answer to your question and has no reason to lie?

This insight into respondent definition in qualitative research has two scientific bases. The first can be found in the practice of Clinical Psychology. For instance, to understand depression among adults, Freud and his colleagues did not study a randomly-selected sample of respondents from a population of adults. Instead, they talked to the depressed, the people from whom they can learn the most about depression. This is not to say that there’s nothing to learn from those who were not depressed. The question is: “From whom can we learn the most?” Thus, the issue of data-source definition in qualitative research is not about the number of randomly selected data sources, rather it is about who has knowledge of the research problem.

The second scientific basis of this data-source definition in qualitative research is in the meaning of internal validity. In pursuing internal validity, we want to make sure that we are studying what we intend to study. That is, to understand, for example, why people are depressed. Who can tell us why? That is no other than the depressed person who can tell us why or from whom we can learn the most about depression.

Thus, qualitative data for this study were not gathered from a randomly selected representative sample of respondents with the use of a questionnaire. Instead, qualitative data were gathered through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the HR Leaders (whom I referred to as ‘Resource Persons’) and Key Informant Interviews (KII) of rank and file employees (referred to as ‘Key Informants’). The data sources were from different industries, such as Information Technology, Media/Communications, Consultancy, Pharmaceutical, Health Services (Hospitals), General Services, Financial Services, Real Estate Development (High rise buildings), Construction and engineering, Leisure/Hospitality, Sales and Distribution, and Automotive Industry. There were nine (9) Resource Persons in the FGD and the same number of rank and file Key Informants participated in this study.

The FGD was conducted first before the KII. The real-time interface discussions in the FGD generated rich perspectives from the resource persons on the topic under investigation. The FGD allowed the resource speakers to share their knowledge, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, experiences and reactions during the ‘social exchanges’ setting (social constructivism) which is not possible in other data gathering method such as one-on-one interview, survey, and other remote (electronic) data gathering strategy. The FGD had surfaced the individual feelings, attitudes, beliefs and perspectives of the resource persons in a social setting. The session created a lively and healthy interaction from the multiplicity of views and emotional processes among the resource speakers where social and cultural experiences also permeated (Chase, 2005). As for the KII, the one-on-one interview gave this researcher an opportunity

to fully understand the individual feelings, experiences, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs of the data sources in a close encounter that was more personal than the FGD. The one-on-one interview atmosphere allowed the key informants to speak more freely about themselves, work, and organization which are not likely to happen in FGD where apprehensions and fear of being exposed as source of information might pull back the key informants in providing objective data. All the proceedings in the FGD and KII were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis and interpretation.

3.3 Instrumentation

An FGD guide was used as a framework of the discussion flow during the FGD session. An interview protocol was used in the KII process for the rank-and-file employees. The data gathering tools for the FGD and KII were personally developed by this researcher. Unlike the questions that I used for the HR managers and leaders, the KII questions did not cover the concept of engagement as this is more appropriate to HR Managers and leaders since it is their inherent job to conceptualize engagement interventions. The research instruments had undergone review and scrutiny by two experts. After the expert's review, the FGD guide and KII interview protocol were pre-tested. The purpose of the pre-testing was to assess the instrumentation's rigor and formulate measures to address any limitations or threats to bias and management procedures before carrying out the actual phase of the research and to increase the methodological and social reliability central to conducting credible qualitative research. The pretesting helped this researcher identify the obstacles such as confidence in running the FGD and conducting interview. In terms of content, the FGD guide and KII protocol were found to be highly reliable as they produced results that could provide answers to the research objectives.

3.4 Method of Analysis

Maintaining the data in an organized and timely manner right after the data gathering session was one of this researcher's primary concerns. More importantly and as suggested by Merriam (1998), preliminary data analysis was conducted immediately from the notes taken down by the researcher in the FGD. According to Merriam (1998), "the right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection." Stake (1995) also emphasized that data are continuously interpreted since qualitative research is inherently reflective, "in being ever reflective, the researcher is committed to pondering the impressions, deliberating recollections and records...data is sometimes pre-coded but continuously interpreted, on first sighting and again and again". Thus, the digital audio recordings were transcribed immediately after the FGD and KII sessions.

Narrative analysis was used in analyzing the data collected from the FGD and KII. According to Reissman, C. K.'s (2008), Narrative Analysis can be undertaken in four (4) approaches: (1) thematic analysis, (2) structural analysis, (3) dialogic/performance analysis, and (4) visual analysis. Among the four approaches of Narrative Analysis, this researcher used 'Thematic Analyses'. The analysis was undertaken within the framework of Braum and Clarke, (2006) Model. This model was applied in this study as follows:

3.4.1. Data Familiarization. Data immersion and familiarization was the foremost activity that the researcher took starting from the literature review up to data gathering and analysis. The whole data was comprised of related literatures, transcript of the FGD, KII and the personal

notes gathered during the FGD and KII sessions. All throughout the process, personal notes were taken containing initial 'big' ideas which were used to aid the researcher throughout the different stages of the data analysis.

3.4.2. Data Transcription and Coding – Prior to encoding, the transcriptions were sent to the data sources for validation. Validated audio transcriptions were uploaded in two separate documents – one for FGD and another for KII. The documents were analyzed separately to determine the views of each group on the scope of topic under inquiry. Computer software MaxQDA was used in the data coding and thematic analysis. The key informants' responses to the drivers of employee engagement were used to validate the responses of HR leaders on this sub-topic of inquiry. An overall analysis was undertaken to determine the common themes between the two groups.

3.4.3. Search for Themes. In the process of analysis, additional codes and sub-codes were created as emerging words, phrases or paragraphs that are relevant in achieving the objectives of this study started to surface. From the codes, emerging themes were identified.

3.4.4. Reviewing Themes. Identified themes were reviewed and refined. Some of the themes were collapsed with others forming a single theme. However, some 'big' single themes were also expanded into multiple themes or smaller components until the themes were properly clustered. The clustered themes were continuously revisited to have an in-depth reflection of the data/information provided by the data sources.

3.4.5. Defining and Naming Themes. After the themes were clustered, initial names or identities were assigned based on what each theme was all about and what aspect of the data each theme captured. An overall narrative of all the data integrated together was created. After creating the narrative, each theme and its individual narratives were analyzed further to determine the sub-themes. As the analysis progresses, themes were labeled with their official names or identity. Following Braum and Clarke (2006) suggestion, the thematic names are concise, and powerful to give the reader immediate grasps of the themes' sense.

3.4.6. Report Writing. The final analysis and write-up of the report was done in this stage. In writing the report, the audience occupied a special spot in the mind of the researcher. They were given utmost consideration in the presentation of the results in the write-up. The research findings and conclusions were written from a phenomenological/constructivist philosophical lens' wherein knowledge on the precursors of employee engagement in the Philippine setting was socially-constructed from the assigned meanings of the resource speakers' and key informants' lived experiences (Appleton & King 2002). According to Crotty, M. (1998), meanings are not static in objects waiting to be discovered but are created as individuals interact and interpret these objects. Discovery of meanings and creating body of knowledge from the meanings of employee engagement and its precursors in the Philippine setting from the stories and lived experiences of the key informants was done exactly in the tradition of phenomenology/constructivism.

3.5. Assessing Accuracy and Credibility of Findings

To ensure accuracy and credibility of the findings, the criteria used by the researcher in judging the soundness of qualitative research was the one proposed by Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985) which, according to them, is comparable to the traditional measurement

in judging the soundness of a quantitative research. The soundness of a qualitative research criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and its analogous quantitative research criteria is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria in judging the soundness of qualitative research and its analogous criteria in quantitative research

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH
Credibility	Internal validity
Transferability	External validity
Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

In this study, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied as criteria to ensure the soundness of the results.

3.5.1 Credibility: According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), *credibility* in qualitative research involves the establishment of the results as credible or believable from the perspective of the research participants (resource persons and key informants in my study). From the perspective of establishing credibility, the aim was to describe the topics under investigation exactly from the view of the research participants. Therefore, only the research participants could legitimately confirm the credibility of the study. The method used in ensuring credibility was Member Checking (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998). The audio transcriptions of all data gathered were sent to the participants where they were originally obtained to check the validity of the account as captured and transcribed. The validated data ensured that the researcher analyzed accurate accounts from the view of the resource persons and key informants.

3.5.2 Transferability: *Transferability* is the degree to which the result of a qualitative study can be generalized or transferred to other context or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that from the qualitative perspective, transferability of results is the primary responsibility of the person doing the generalization. This researcher's responsibility is to enhance the transferability of the results by providing a thorough description of the research context and assumptions that are central to the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) held that the person who intends to transfer the result to a different context is then responsible for making judgment whether the transfer is sensible or not. In enhancing the transferability of this study's result, the method used was Thick Description. This method requires provision of sufficient detail of the phenomena being investigated that the reader can evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn can be transferred to other settings, situations and people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through this method, this researcher provided detailed exemplars where specific findings and conclusions were drawn. These exemplars were extracted as they were told from the transcriptions that were 'member-checked' by the sources.

3.5.3 Dependability: *Dependability* emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This researcher is responsible in accurately describing what actually transpired or occurred in the research setting. Thus, the need to independently check and validate the findings, assumptions, and conclusions by other people who could provide objective assessment of the accuracy of the

findings was necessary. The method that was used to ensure dependability of the results was Inquiry Audit. Under this method, the researcher's adviser served as the *inquiry auditor* wherein she evaluated whether the findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by sufficient data and whether the exemplars from which they were drawn are accurate and consistent.

3.5.4 Confirmability: Qualitative research is inclined to assume that each researcher brings with him/her a unique perspective of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Duberly, J. *et al.*, 2012). *Confirmability* of qualitative research refers to the degree from which the result could be confirmed by others and several ways how to do it was offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Among the suggestions offered by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the most appropriate approach that was used in this study to ensure confirmability was Reflexivity. Reflexivity is an approach of systematically looking at the context of knowledge construction at every phase of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Under this method, constant reflection on the findings vis-à-vis the data was diligently undertaken. The journal and notes that were kept by the researcher during the entire data gathering process proved to be very helpful as it allowed him to focus on the topic that was being analyzed and not to be influenced by his personal experiences, background, and biases that, according to Malterud (2001) is likely to happen in qualitative research.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues arising from my research were anticipated since data would be collected from people and about their lived experiences. In the whole process of the research, the welfare of the research participants was protected. Safeguards that are used to ensure observance of research ethical practices were (1) trust in the research participants was developed by promoting integrity of the study; (2) their rights, needs, and values were respected; (3) all participants were given written informed consent of their participation in the study indicating therein that their participation was voluntary, not related to their organizational affiliation, and they could withdraw from the study anytime without any question asked or obligation from them; and (4) personal identity of the participants and their organizational affiliations were kept confidential in this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socially-constructed concept of employee engagement

The stories told from the lived experiences drawn from workplace realities and social interactions of the resource speakers demonstrated how employee engagement was viewed and understood in the Philippine setting. From the diverse views and understanding of the resource speakers, this researcher was able to co-construct the concept and meaning of employee engagement in the Philippine setting. The conceptual elements of employee engagement include: (a) attachment, (b) discretionary effort, (c) motivation, and (c) goal achievement.

4.1.1 Attachment

This study revealed that employee engagement in the Philippines goes beyond physical involvement (external attachment) of the employee in accomplishing what is required by the

role or the organization. It runs deep to the person's inner self. It involves emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connection and acts of volunteerism or discretionary effort (internal attachment) of the person to attach self to work and organization leading to positive outcomes that satisfy what is desirable to both the employee and organization. This study revealed that employee engagement is more than delivering what the company needs. It is a reflection of a desire to contribute and require good manners and right conduct from the employee. It requires moral uprightness that is supposed to have been developed from childhood through proper upbringing by the parents. Part of volunteerism is not just the management providing direction what needs to be done but it also involves voluntary acts of the person to help implement or conduct certain activities. Engagement is externally manifested also by the employees' active involvement in company-sponsored or recognized activities. It crosses the border towards an act of willingness (volunteerism or discretionary effort) to assume responsibilities over these activities. The views of active physical involvement of an employee in activities whether these are company sponsored or initiated by the employees themselves were shared by all resource speakers, citing among others the voluntary engagement of employees in celebrating events, and participation in corporate social responsibilities.

4.1.2 Discretionary Effort

The act of volunteerism in attaching self to work and organization had been found to be an important component of employee engagement. Volunteerism did not only occur in the employee's role performance but also in enhancing their personal growth. This revealed that engaged employees were fully cognizant of their career growth and that they actively pursued competency improvement using their own time and resources and did not put too much burden on the management with respect to their intellectual growth. Engaged employees were found to be fully aware of the boundaries of management responsibilities when it comes to their competency development as they also knew the types of training they should be requesting from the management. Being aware of the competency requirements of their roles, they took the initiative of pursuing formal education such as post graduate courses or short training courses whether these were sponsored or not by their organization.

4.1.3 Motivation

Motivation was found to be an essential component of engagement. Employees were found to be internally and externally motivated by what they were passionate of doing. This study revealed that when an employee is engaged, it does not only mean they are passionate with what they do but they love doing the job in pursuit of something that is pleasurable. Engaged employees who were attached to their jobs were found to likely spurn career shift even if it was more financially rewarding because they found pleasure and great motivation from what they were doing. For example, it was reported in the study that an HR Staff who excelled in building collaboration among employees spurn the offer to be promoted to a sales position despite of being aware of the attractive financial rewards if she opted to shift career. The staff felt that aside from her passion talking to and helping people resolved their concerns, she continuously learned and intellectually grew from her day to day interaction with people that, according to her, is not likely to happen if she is in sales where the focus is to generate revenue. This view of role attachment as a manifestation of engagement was widely shared by other HR leaders who participated in the study.

4.1.4 Goal Achievement

Employee engagement was found to be directed at achieving positive personal and organizational outcomes. This study revealed that employee engagement is something that the employees can do individually or as a group in order to achieve their common goals which are either personal or organizational goals. On the sphere of organizational goals, engage employees were focused in meeting the expectations and delivering business results. On the personal aspect, engage employees were found to do to their job better because it gave them a personal sense of fulfillment. It was also found that engaged employees were not too much particular whether or not they received recognition for a job well done. For them, any recognition or reward was a 'bonus' because their foremost prize was the feeling of fulfillment in achieving their personal goals (sense of personal satisfaction) and meeting the expectations of the company.

Based on the shared lived experiences of the data sources, this researcher is co-constructing with them the concept of employee engagement in the Philippine setting as a distinct emotional, cognitive, behavioral and discretionary effort of attaching self to work and organization. It is externally manifested by active role and organization engagement. It is driven by internal and external factors with the objective of achieving personal and organizational goals that bring internal feeling of satisfaction, pleasure, and self-fulfillment to the employee, and positive outcomes to the organization. It is a triad of the employee, the work, and the organization. Based on this concept, employee engagement is defined as:

A distinct emotional, cognitive, behavioral and active role attachment to work and organization, characterized by discretionary effort driven by internal and external factors directed towards producing positive personal and organizational outcomes.

4.2 Psychological Conditions of Employee Engagement

The subsequent findings and discussions in this research supported by empirical evidence from the stories of the data sources provided further reinforcement to the concept and definition of employee engagement that was co-constructed. This research also provided strong evidence on the existence of the three psychological conditions of employee engagement as theorized by Kahn (1990) and the role and organizational engagement as theorized by Kahn (1990) and Saks (2006). Significant findings were revealed in this study. In terms of assessing the value of role attachment, it was revealed that employees consciously assessed the value they get from the work. These findings contradicted Khan's (1990) study that people **unconsciously** assess how meaningful the work they will bring in themselves. In terms of role attachment and detachment, this study provided strong support to Khan's (1990) findings that employees make a conscious decision to engage and disengage self (self-out calibrate) from the role and organization.

Khan's (1990) theory of employee engagement is grounded on three psychological conditions – meaningfulness of work, emotional and physical safety to do the job, and availability to accomplish the job that includes time and physical resources. The existence of these three engagement preconditions was validated in this study

4.2.1 Psychological Meaningfulness

Psychological meaningfulness is the feeling that employees experience or value what they get in exchange for investing their emotional, cognitive and physical energy. From the stories told by HR leaders, employees consciously assessed the value of work or what the role offers to them in exchange of investing their time and resources. This finding contradicted Kahn's (1990) study that employee unconsciously asks self before being engaged. This study revealed that employees consciously self-in calibrate after assessing that their time and resource investment in the job and organization were meaningful and thus brought them sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. This study revealed that the meaningfulness of the work depends on what value it offers to the employee. It was found that the meaning or value of role engagement varied depending on what was held most valuable by the employee. This study revealed that work value are characterized as: (1) self fulfilling in doing what the employees are passionate to do which is self-manifesting, (2) personal satisfaction for performing an excellent job, (3) feeling of self-worth, and (4) competency improvement. The work value drove the employees to voluntarily attach self to the role and organization. Passion to work are translated into great outcome because those who found meaning in their role self impose the bar of excellence and are even ready to take the consequential pain in pursuit of what was pleasurable to them.

The personal stories and lived experiences of rank and file employees validated meaningfulness of the job as a psychological condition of engagement. Similar to what the HR leaders had reported, the rank and file employees also found the value of the job to be what made engagement meaningful. The value of work from the experiences of rank and file employees are characterized by: (1) an exciting job, (2) unexplainable feeling of satisfaction, (3) self-manifesting job, (4) learning opportunity, and (5) a way of helping others.

4.2.2 Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is described by Kahn (1990) as the expressed feeling of attaching self to work and organization without hesitation or fear of any adverse consequences to the person's self, image, or career. This is encompassing to the person's physical, social, emotional and psychological safety. As a condition of engagement, the person must feel safe across the three dimensions when performing a job or while associated with the organization. This study revealed that psychological safety is a condition of employee engagement. The result of this study revealed that psychological safety was moored on emotional safety. The type of emotional safety as viewed and expected by employees from the role and organization varied in context which demonstrated the differences in perception and degree of importance to the employees. It was found that emotional safety came in many forms but they were usually germane to the nature of the employee's work and work environment. These are characterized by two factors: First, the degree of trust in leadership that is manifested by a healthy working relationship with superiors, and trust and confidence of superiors given to employees; and Second, an inclusive work environment that is manifested by a caring company, peer support, and family-oriented work environment.

From the stories of HR leaders, the psychological safety conditions that employees sought were "emotional" that was predominantly influenced by **'trust in leadership.'** For example, aside from good pay, the reason why employees stay in their organization was mainly because of the comfort that employees feel working in the organization. Meaning, employees did not want to leave because they had seen something from the leadership that made working

emotionally comfortable. The most common reason surfaced from this study why employees feel emotionally safe working was that - the organization (leadership) has shown its care for the employees by extending itself beyond what is written in the handbook like leaders digging their pocket deep when employees are in dire need, personal visit when close family members are sick, and sincere sympathy from leaders felt by employees if a family member passed away. This study revealed that these simple leadership gestures appeared to have profound impact in developing trust in leadership because employees were emotionally assured that the company is always there to help them in times of need.

The rank and file employees validated that psychological safety was grounded on emotion and provided consistency to what the HR leaders reported. From the lived experiences of the rank and file employees, trusts in leadership were developed by: (a) fair policies, (b) nice management, (c) supportive leadership, (d) concern for physical and financial security, (e) caring company, and (f) stability of the company.

This study also revealed that the psychological safety condition depended on the personal circumstances and nature of the employee's job. As an example, almost all the Key Informants revealed that emotional safety was the foremost consideration they looked for from an organization. It was revealed that if the company could not provide proper compensation, the employees' income would not be enough to secure their future need and that would affect them emotionally. This would result to being out of focus if something happens to them or to their loved ones. Evidence uncovered from this study that physical security depended on the nature of the employee's role pointed to the experience of one key informant who is exposed to risky job locations being occasionally assigned to government projects in critical areas in Mindanao. For him, physical security is a foremost concern. However, key informants who were office-based appeared to be not concerned at all about their physical security or safety but were more concerned about their working relationship with their superiors.

4.2.3 Psychological Availability

Kahn (1990) described psychological availability as the sense of physical, emotional, or psychological resources that prepare an employee to be personally engaged. This study revealed that the discretionary effort of the organization in providing physical, psychological and emotional preparedness of employees was crucial in preparing them for engagement. Examples of psychological preparations were (a) competency development composed of or a combination of formal training, on the job training, and job enrichment; (b) empowerment which is characterized by giving voice to the employees, employee participation in planning and implementing activities; and (c) freedom by allowing employees to do what they are passionate of doing or engaging them in self-manifesting activities.

This study revealed that providing free training to applicants ensured that when they were onboarded, they were already prepared to do their job by having acquired the right competency and mindset about their tasks and the company. This practice demonstrated that engagement starts from the hiring process which ensures that the successful candidates were already physically, emotionally and psychologically prepared for the role because, if they would not be trained or pass the training, they would not be hired. Involving the employees in designing company activities and participating in their execution also increases the attachment of the employees to their role and organization because they were given a voice or

were empowered to participate in crafting and executing company activities that they own or have a sense of ownership. This study also revealed that giving the employees the freedom to choose activities they could live by or self-manifest could increase engagement. For example, employees were encouraged to participate in the Corporate Social Responsibilities - a company initiated or endorsed activities. However, employees were likewise allowed to create their own activity like organizing an Arts Club and adapting a public park for beautification - on their own which was not initiated by the company. It was found that although companies did not initiate the creation of the club, the explicit act of freely allowing the employees to participate in the club's activities and non-interference supported their engagement program. The management's explicit sanctioning of the activities that were not company-endorsed strongly suggests that it strengthened the employees' emotional and psychological preparedness to be engaged with the company. The permissive act of the organizations for their employees to participate in activities that were not necessarily sanctioned by the company provided support to the contention that such an act was a mechanism to physically, emotionally, and psychologically increase engagement because it provided freedom to the employees to perform things they were passionate about and that was self-manifesting.

4.2.4 Discussions on the findings on the psychological conditions of employee engagement

The existence of the three psychological conditions of engagement – meaningfulness, safety, and availability, as theorized by Kahn (1990) were validated in this study. Evidence showed that engagement as a relationship is built through the triad of employee, work and organization. As revealed in this study, attachment to role and organization is an important relationship of engagement. Employees who loved their work but found their organization to be unsupportive or their work atmosphere to be not inclusive were less likely to be engaged. Those who like their organization but found that their job was no longer challenging were also likely to leave the organization. This strongly suggested that work and organization were distinct controlling forces of engagement which supported Saks' (2006) findings that although work and organization are correlated in engagement, there are various distinct differences between the two that drive engagement like the work content (for role engagement) and leadership (for organization engagement). The findings in this study supported Saks' (2006) arguments which provided evidence that engagement is a triad of employee, work, and organization, and not just a reciprocal relationship between the employee and the organization.

This study also revealed that prior to engagement, employees appeared to be consciously assessing the benefits they could get from the opportunity for role and organization engagement offered. The **conscious** assessment of work value as revealed in this study countervailed the findings of Kahn (1990) that people **unconsciously** ask self what value they can get for engaging like the case of the employee assigned to risky places in Mindanao. Taking the role of a project leader, though it is in a very risky location, satisfied the value that the employee saw from the job. He saw in it the opportunity to level up his engineering competency, and a sense of fulfilment from being entrusted to lead big projects by the company President. The human dynamics of assessing what value one can get in social interactions found in this study is consistent with Homans' (1950) Social Exchange Theory (SET). This suggested that cost-benefits and assessment of alternatives came into play in the process of deciding for engagement. Ryan and Deci's (1985) Self Determination Theory (SDT) posited as a conscious discretionary action or autonomous regulation (Meyer

&Gagner, 2008), of the person to assess what's in it for him and the degree of control he will have in the interaction. It was also revealed that the expected value of what the employees could get from their engagement varied depending on what matters most to the employees as individuals. The varying value of engagement as seen by the employees was consistent with the argument of Thibaut and Kelly (1959), that there is no definitive measurement of the engagement values under consideration by the employees but the expected returns are quantified from different situations and employees decide on the basis of what is desirable, satisfying and fulfilling to them in return for investing their personal time and resources.

As revealed in this study, some employees felt that all the psychological conditions must be satisfied prior to role and organizational attachment but there were those who did not share the same view. For example, two of the interviewed Key Informants were not psychologically prepared having no proper training to perform the task when their superiors exposed them to their roles. However, both were still engaged as manifested by their attachment to their role and to the organization albeit differently, because they found something that was meaningful in the job being offered. One Key informant revealed that it was the trust and confidence of her boss that she could do the task while the other Key Informant revealed that it was a matter of reciprocating the caring attitude of the company to him and an opportunity to learn something new was the primary reason why she took the role. Kahn (1990) explained this phenomenon when he said that an employee can still be engaged even if there was just one of the psychological conditions of engagement that is met because there is still tangible or intangible value to be found in the work or role that attracts employees to self-in calibrate. The perception of the employees that their company trusts and supports them and their discretionary reciprocal act of accepting the role although they are not psychologically prepared is consistent with Saks' (2006) findings that employees who feel higher organizational support are likely to reciprocate with a higher level of role and organizational engagement. The provision of a more responsible job to the employees was a manifest act of support by the organization to them. Organizational support leading to positive outcomes also provided consistency with the study of Longsdon (2016) which suggested that the inclination of an employee to experience work in a positive, energetic and proactive manner, will make them behave adaptively by displaying effort in going beyond not just what is necessary but by initiating change to facilitate relevant outcomes.

4.3 Precursors of employee engagement

From the stories shared by the HR leaders, this study provided strong evidence that engagement drivers were internally and externally driven and were situated in the role and organization. The work and organization engagement findings were consistent with Saks' (2004) concept of engagement while the internal and external driving forces are consistent with Kahn (1990) and Saks' (2004) theory as sources of engagement drivers. From the personal and professional lived experiences of HR leaders, it was found that the dominant external drivers of employee engagement were (1) meaningful job; (2) personal and career growth opportunities; (3) trust in leadership; (4) positive and inclusive work environment; and (5) compensation and benefits.

Table 2 is a comparative matrix of internal and external engagement drivers between the lived experiences of HR leaders and rank and file employees and where these engagement drivers are situated.

Table 2. A Comparative matrix of engagement drivers from the lived experiences of HR leaders and rank and file employees and where they are situated

DOMAINS	WHERE ENGAGEMENT IS SITUATED			
	HR leaders		Rank and file employees	
	Work	Organization	Work	Organization
INTERNAL	Meaningful job		Meaningful job	
EXTERNAL	Personal and career growth	Trust in leadership Positive Inclusive work environment	Personal and career growth	Trust in leadership Positive and inclusive work environment Compensation and benefits

The comparative matrix as illustrated in Table 2 shows that there is no internal engagement driver situated in the organization as reported by the HR leaders and rank and file employees. This explains that internal engagement drivers are purely on the basis of the value offered by the role and nothing comes from the organization. The organization can only offer external drivers. The external engagement drivers and where they are situated are almost the same for the rank and file employees and HR leaders except for one - compensation and benefits, coming from the rank and file employees.

4.3.1 Meaningful work

This study revealed that the meaningfulness of the job as perceived by the employee is the only internal engagement driver. From the stories of the HR leaders and rank and file employees, the value of the job that meets their expectations drove employees to attach self to the role. The role appears to be valuable to the employees if it meets the unwritten 'self-imposed criteria' such as (1) it is self-manifesting, (2) it gives freedom and empowerment, (3) it meets their personal social responsibility, (4) it is their passion, and (5) it is rewarding for their personal and career growth. Objective feedback coming from superiors has been identified as a key factor in letting the employees feel the value of their contribution to the team and organization objectives.

4.3.2 Career growth opportunities

For the external engagement precursors, this study revealed that personal and career growth opportunities were important drivers of engagement. Personal growth refers to competency development while career growth refers to promotion of jobs in the organization hierarchy. As revealed in this study, perceived personal and growth opportunities offered by the job and the organization increased productivity and retention. Personal growth that employees expect is the knowledge they get from continuous training and development, mentoring, or exposure to a more responsible role. Employees who feel that they are learning from their job feel satisfied because aside from developing a new set of competencies, they are able to apply the new skills in their role which make them more competent and productive. Being given the opportunity to share their ideas and participate in the implementation of the activities drawn

from their knowledge sharing also provides a sense of empowerment and ownership to the outcomes of what the employees do which further boosts their self-confidence and morale.

Challenging jobs also add to the mix of personal growth opportunities that an employee expects from his/her organization. It was revealed that when the job becomes routine, it does not add value to the employees anymore and they start to feel bored, and that would trigger the process of emotional and physical withdrawal from role and organization. To foster personal and career growth, leadership support has been identified as a critical factor. As revealed in this study, employees who are not supported by their organization or leaders in pursuit of their desire to learn lost interest in their job and trust in leadership. Thus, they are likely to disengage as well. This finding supports the argument that engagement is a triad of the person, work and organization represented by its leaders.

Long term career growth opportunity is something that employees are looking forward to from the company. Those who experienced career growth expressed a feeling of satisfaction and were likely to stay in the organization. Employees who got recognition and were rewarded for their good performance by way of career advancement were likely to manifest a feeling of self satisfaction and fulfillment. Long term career growth appeared to be more evident to the millennial workers who admitted that their generation has fun exploring career opportunities. Despite being adventurous in exploring their career, the millennial workers appeared to stay long if the organization could provide them what they value in their jobs, like learning, career advancement and appropriate compensation. Personal and career growth opportunities as an engagement driver finds consistency in the study of Pandey & David (2013) where they found that career growth that includes valuing employee's opinion (ideas), fair policies for promotion, opportunities for growth, and open sharing of ideas are key engagement drivers.

4.3.3 Trust in leadership

Trust in leadership is another engagement driver that was emerged from this study. Based on the stories of the employees, trust in leadership was developed in two ways. First, trust was developed based on the subjective perception of employees of their immediate superior or management, how leaders and management conduct themselves in making decisions, the manner in which employees are treated, and if business is managed ethically. Second, trust was also developed based on the employees' feeling that they were trusted by their superiors or their organization. The thought that the company cared for them was reciprocated not just by trust in leadership but also a feeling of indebtedness or "*utangnaloob*" (debt of gratitude). This finding is consistent with the findings in the study of Desai, *et al.*, (2010) that empathetic attitudes of supervisors towards their subordinates were significant drivers of high engagement.

Employees who trusted the leadership manifested a feeling of emotional safety which is important for them to focus on their job. Unsupportive leadership and unethical business practices resulted to loss of trust and confidence by the employee in the leadership which resulted to emotional and physical disengagement from role and organization. Being entrusted with a meaningful role also developed trust and confidence in the leadership which kept the employees from leaving the organization. These findings were consistent with the findings in the study of May, *et al.*, (2004) that supportive supervisors (leadership) create a feeling of psychological safety that made employees feel comfortable and more focused in

working. Given more responsible jobs also result to psychological meaningfulness which give the employee the feeling of being trusted by the leadership. This study revealed that those who were entrusted with more responsible jobs became more engaged in their job (drive productivity) and to organization (drive retention).

Trust in leadership also developed better relationship between the employees and their superiors as revealed in this study and this was consistent with what Saks (2006) discovered in his study saying that engaged employees had a better relationship with their employer resulting to positive attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. This study strongly suggested that personal relationships between the employees and their supervisors, and how employees were treated by their superiors, were high engagement driver. This finding was corollary to the study of Dale Carnegie (2012) that the supervisor's attitudes and actions towards their subordinates creates an atmosphere that would enhance engagement or create a reason for employees to be disengaged.

4.3.4 Positive and inclusive work environment

Positive and inclusive work environment appeared to be the most dominant engagement driver from the lived experiences of HR leaders and rank and file employees as this theme was the most widely discussed driver of engagement during the FGD and one-on-one interviews. Having a positive and inclusive work environment creates a supportive work atmosphere that enabled the employees to feel emotionally, psychologically, cognitively and physically safe in attaching self to role and organization. The factors that contributed in fostering high engagement in a positive and inclusive work environment were the internal and external positive image of the company, a family-oriented work environment, caring company attitude, healthy working relationships, fair policies, and fun company activities. Company image drove attraction and brought a sense of pride to the employee who became part of the organization. Being connected to a company with positive image gave the employees a sense of pride and pleasure. Positive company image as an engagement driver revealed in my study supported Gilbert's (2011) findings that one of the most important engagement threats was 'employer reputation.' Gilbert's (2011) study revealed that millennial workers were less likely to join or leave companies that were perceived not reputable.

This study also revealed that a family-oriented work atmosphere made employees emotionally and psychologically safe especially in manifesting their personal values in the organization. This finding was consistent with Dale Carnegie's (2012) study that providing an atmosphere to employees to reflect on their personal values in the organization gave them more freedom to manifest who they were and that gave them a sense of belongingness. Thus, allowing them to enjoy working and staying focused to their job, free of any worries and stress that might distract them because their personal beliefs and values were constrained. The supportive workplace allowed employees the freedom to perform other tasks and to be creative in their approaches which were a means of decision-making that, according to Desai, *et al.*, (2010) is a high engagement driver. Workplace support as an engagement driver was validated in the study of Gosh, *et al.* (2016) finding that support coming from peers and leaders drive voluntariness on the part of the employees to contribute their effort and abilities. The caring attitude of the company was a reflection of its values and that deepened the attachment of the employees to the organization. This is a distinct Filipino value of "*utangna loob*" that is cultivated. This finding was consistent with the findings in the study of

Dale and Carnegie (2012) that the organization's show of care to the employees' feelings and concerns drove engagement. Fair company policies and healthy working environment manifested by a culture of peer-support and fun activities in the workplace were also found to lessen the stress levels and to afford employees a sense of work-life balance that resulted to attachment to the role and organization.

4.3.5 Compensation and benefits

Compensation and benefits emerged in this study as a key engagement driver. It revealed that insufficient compensation and lack of adequate benefits made the employees emotionally disturbed and that caused them to be out of focus in their work. However, if properly compensated, employees were likely to stay in the organization and to become more productive because they can be more focused in their job. Compensation as an engagement driver was found consistent with the findings in the study of Pandey & David (2013) that fair compensation drove engagement. This study also revealed that benefits were important engagement driver as they made the employees feel that the organization cared for them. In the study of Cone Communications (2016), benefits that were above the standard financial and health packages showed that the company cares for the employees and serves as a high engagement driver. This study directly correlate compensation and benefits with emotional safety which was one of the three psychological conditions of engagement theorized by Kahn (1990).

4.3.6 Discussion on the findings of the precursors of employee engagement

It must be noted that the HR Leaders and rank and file employees differ in their view for compensation and benefits as an engagement driver. The failure of the HR leaders to recognize compensation and benefits as an engagement driver suggested that there was a degree of misalignment between what the HR leaders perceived and what the rank and file employees felt about the factors that drive engagement. Thus, the need for HR leaders to better understand what drives employees to be engaged these days is deemed imperative. Interestingly, those who reported that salary was an important factor for their emotional security were millennial workers and none of the resource speakers belong to the millennial generation. The permeation of financial and benefit factors as engagement driver in this study could be attributed to two assumptions: (1) the rise of knowledge workers has modified the way modern workforce think of themselves, their jobs and organizations paving the way for compensation and benefits to emerge as a critical engagement driver; and (2) cultural differences and economic conditions prevailing in the local context had impact on how employees are engaged to their role and organization.

The implication of these assumptions is relevant to managing the complex workforce where their needs and demands may be subtly re-configuring the way people management should be approached, thus slowly relegating the traditional engagement concepts we knew 'yesterday' into an era of obsolescence. The 2014 Aon Hewitt Report and Balakrishan, *et al.*'s (2013) study provided strong support to this argument. It is therefore plausible to deduce that compensation is slowly, if not already becoming a key engagement driver but HR leadership maybe is still in a state of denial trying to cling to the old-school thought that compensation is more of a hygiene factor.

This study revealed that there could be no engagement if the work and organization are not appealing or do not generate interest to the employee to do the job or be associated with the organization. Henceforth, there can be no 'authentic engagement' following the definition that was socially constructed in this study. This finding is countervailing the view from most western theorists belief that employee engagement is a reciprocal relationship between the employee and organization. With the exception of Kahn (1990) and Saks (2006) who situates engagement to role and organization, the line of earlier engagement theorist to contemporary research scholars has held the belief that in the context of engagement, work is part of the organization, thus, making engagement relationship just between the employee and organization. While this concept of engagement maybe true in one culture, the reality of differing conceptual views that has long been kept might have finally revealed that employee engagement actually contrasts with different cultures depending on where the knowledge is constructed. While it is prudent to advocate further study on this claim by the researcher, the findings of Macey and Schneider (2008), and Schuck, et al. (2014) in their respective meta-studies asserting the imperatives of conducting a concept-based research to fully understand employee engagement provide credibility on this researcher's assumption.

5. SUMMARY

Employee engagement was defined as: a distinct emotional, cognitive, behavioral and active role (physical) attachment to work and organization that is characterized by discretionary effort driven by internal and external factors directed towards producing positive personal and organizational outcomes that are satisfying, pleasurable and fulfilling. There are three psychological conditions of engagement – psychological meaningfulness of the work in exchange of investing emotional, cognitive, and physical energy; psychological safety to accomplish the tasks; and psychological availability of time and resources to complete the tasks.

Role attachment as found in this study was characterized by an active involvement of the employee to the role and to the organization. Role attachment and detachment were conscious acts of the employees that were consistent with Khan's argument. Assessment of the value of role is a conscious act made by employees before attaching themselves to their role and this was found contradicting Khan's (1990) argument that role value was an unconscious act of assessment made by employees.

Engagement is driven by internal and external factors. There were five key engagement drivers identified from this study: (1) meaningful job, (2) positive and inclusive work environment, (3) trust in leadership, (4) career growth opportunities, and (5) compensation and benefits.

6. CONCLUSIONS

From the socially-constructed knowledge, it is plausible to conclude that employee engagement is a conscious decision of employees to attach and detach self to role and organization. Employees consciously assess the value of engagement. Engagement is a triad of employee, organization and work, not a two-way relationship between the employee and the organization. There can never be no authentic engagement if one of the triad is detached from the two. Employee engagement increases employee attachment to role and organization that produce positive personal and organizational outcomes. Role attachment is internally

driven just by a single factor: work content. No internal engagement driver is offered by the organization. Compensation and benefits are key engagement drivers in the local setting. There is no standard measure in the determination of the degree of importance of engagement drivers, but they are purely dependent on individual assessment of employees based on the meets their expectations. Engagement drivers are not prescribed but discretionary role and organizational attachment effort of the employee. Engagement, therefore, is a state of behavior and not a set of behaviors.

It is important to note that this research is conducted on the premise that there is no universal meaning of employee engagement, and the result provides evidence that the absence of a single unifying universal concept and definition of employee engagement continue to persist, because culture and context always come into play in the engagement equation.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of my conclusions, I am proposing several recommendations. First, to be relevant and responsive to its purpose, employee engagement must be continuously studied, understood, and approached in a context or concept-based exploratory research taking into account related corollaries that have impact on the desired results. This can be undertaken by examining employee engagement in different specific geographical locations across the Philippines and explored within the cultural context in the research locale, including the economic and environmental condition, and other factors that have impacts on engaging employees.

Secondly, the established traditional concepts of employee engagement should be revisited and revised to avoid obsolescence in the light of the workplace changes and challenges, shaped by technological advancement in the workplace and the rise of millennial workers. This entails more attention for academic research to create knowledge that will respond to the current conditions and suit the future challenges of engaging a more complex workforce. Millennial workers have already re-configured the way employee engagement is approached. There will be more challenges and changes in the workplace for the next generation which the millennial workers may offer. Thus, traditional concepts and approaches in engaging employees such as the notion that engagement is dominated by innate-voluntary act, money matters as hygiene factors, engagement as directed solely on positive organization outcomes, among others, must be reflected upon, evaluated, and re-aligned to the current workplace realities.

Thirdly, since the foundation of employee engagement concept in the local setting has been established, further studies correlating the socially constructed concept of employee engagement with other established management constructs such as globalization, disruptive management and innovation, transformational leadership, workplace diversity, equal opportunity, health and wellness, among others are deemed imperative. This requires industry-academe partnership and the best group that the academic community can partner with would be the different chambers of commerce and industry as well as professional organizations in the Philippines. And lastly, the mediating effect of culture, the multiplier factors of leadership in engagement, and engagement practices in diverse workplaces need further exploration. To realize this study, industry-academe partnership is also needed. The ultimate goal of undertaking future exploratory research covering the research implications that this researcher is proposing is to create a viable concept of engagement precursors in the

Philippine setting that will ultimately lead in the development of a context-based employee engagement model.

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