

Engaged Organizational Culture as a Precursor to Job Performance: An Evidence from the Hospitality Industry of Himachal Pradesh

Bhawana Bhardwaj*, Namrita Kalia**, Mohinder Chand***, Dipanker Sharma****

Abstract *Recently, the hospitality industry has become the central point for academicians to develop conceptual as well as practical approaches especially related with employees. In fact, employees have capabilities to turnaround this industry in a volatile business environment. Previous researches have struggled to comprehend how engaged workplace culture affects the hospitality section's ability to function in various contexts and on various tasks. Thus, the present study is to examine the factors that predict an engaged organizational culture and how engaged culture affects employees' performance in the hospitality sector. The study was conducted using a sample of 350 frontline employees from various hotels and data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that the factors of engaged organizational culture that influence employees' contextual and task performance include vigor, absorption, trust and experimentation. The results indicate a positive relationship between engaged organizational culture and job performance, with engaged organizational culture being a significant predictor of job performance. The findings suggest that organizations in the hospitality industry should focus on developing an engaged organizational culture to improve job performance and overall business outcomes. The study surface that organizations should strive to create a work environment that promotes engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction among their employees. Overall, the study provides valuable insights for managers and policymakers in the hospitality industry who are looking to improve organizational performance and enhance employee well-being. The study suggests future research avenues to improve the effectiveness of the hospitality sector.*

Keywords: *Engaged Organizational Culture, Job Performance, Front Line Workers, Hotels, Hospitality and Himachal Pradesh*

INTRODUCTION

Hospitality industry has been appreciated as an economic instrument for its contribution in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), employment creation, balance of trade and socio-economic development globally and India is no exception in this context. This industry has ranked 10th out of 185 nations for its GDP (6.9%) contribution towards Indian economy in 2019. According to India Brand Equity Foundation (2022) the industry contributed 8% of all employment in India in 2020 which was further declined

due to COVID-19. According to WTTC (2023) Prior to the pandemic, this industry accounted for 1 in 5 new jobs created across the world during 2014-2019, and 10.3% of all jobs (334 million) and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$ 10 trillion) in 2019 however, the industry is expected to post an annual average growth rate of 5.8% from 2022 to 2032 versus the 2.7% increase in global GDP, and create 126 million new jobs. However, due to the impact of the COVID-19 on the global economy, this industry has lost 40 million jobs (both direct and indirect) and about USD 17 billion in revenue (Ministry of Tourism, 2021).

* Assistant Professor, School of Commerce and Management Studies, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, India. Email: bhawnacuhp@gmail.com

** Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Business Management, DAV University, Himachal Pradesh, India. Email: namrita.kalia@gmail.com

*** Professor, School of Tourism, Travel & Hospitality Management, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, India. Email: mohinderchand67@gmail.com

**** Professor, School of Commerce and Management Studies, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, India. Email: dipankersharm@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

The hospitality sector is a service industry and the attitudes of its employees regarding their work have a significant impact (Lakhera et al., 2022; Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021). The Indian hotel sector has become more practical and useful as a result of the ongoing transition, and it has acquired recognition on a global scale. The “attraction and retention of the appropriate number and quality of young people” is the industry’s most significant challenge (Lewis & Airey, 2001; Bhardwaj, 2021). The sustainability and profitability of any organization is associated with competence, commitment and contribution of its employees (Chand et al., 2023; Crabtree, 2005; Bhardwaj, 2021). According to research (Kahn, 1990; Buckingham, 1999), satisfied and engaged employees can prove to be productive and effective (Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019). According to a study, committed employees perform their jobs 20% better and are less likely to leave their organization (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). Organizational performance and a culture of engagement are closely related. Thus, motivated employees work harder, contribute more, speak well of the company, stay longer and even lesser tendency to move abroad (Bhardwaj, 2017; Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2022).

Today, there are more varying standards for what constitutes a job and what constitutes successful performance. Engaged organizational culture also tends to promote a positive feeling at work and supports in giving employees a sense of belonging. This further enhances innovation and employee advancement (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021; Ghafoor et al., 2011). Performers who are passionate about their job exhibit a powerful, long-lasting intellectual and emotional commitment to it (Colan, 2009). Today, every corporation can gain a competitive edge by having a high performing business culture. Every employee either strengthens or damages the culture (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010). An engaged organizational culture integrates organizations with employees leading to organizational commitment. Thus, organizations now focus on resolving employees’ issues to enhance their performance (Buchner, 2007), especially after recovery from COVID-19 period (Sharma et al., 2022). Job performance is a widely used variable is employee-related research (Staw, 1984, Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021; Bommer et al., 1995; Bhardwaj, 2013).

To advance in the hierarchy, an employee needs the proper attitude, tolerance, and listening abilities especially with the increase in gender diversity (Bhardwaj, 2013). To develop positive interpersonal and public relations skills among employees, there is still more work to be done. This calls for research to identify the causes of low employee motivation so that new reward and training programs can be created. This study will highlight crucial areas where employee motivation is required and educate management in hospitality organizations about engaged organizational culture and the useful tools that can support it. So, in order to

optimize employee contribution, a thorough examination of the elements influencing an engaged organizational culture and improved job performance is continuously required, particularly in the hospitality sector of a nation like India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The quality and amount of work completed by employees or a group of employees after completing a task within a certain frame is referred to as job performance. Measures of an employee’s work performance may be used as a standard for promotions, salary adjustments, incentives, punishment, and assessments (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021; Schermerhorn, 1989). Lee et al. (1999) stated that job performance may have three dimensions namely- efficiency, efficacy, and quality. Efficiency is the capacity to complete work ahead of schedule and refers to an employee’s output rate. This relates to how quickly employees respond to customers. Efficacy is the percentage of goals that are achieved by personnel, as well as their suggestions and performance on tasks that have been given to them by clients. Quality includes the employee’s error and complaint rate as well as supervisor, client, and coworker satisfaction. It also relates to how well an employee serves customers. Both effort and ability improved job performance (Christen et al., 2006; Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019). The performance of employees’ jobs can be improved by a number of different strategies. Some of these include work experience, job knowledge, efforts, and skill, among other things (Christen et al., 2006; Sharma et al., 2022).

Organizational Culture is “the system of personal and collectively accepted meanings of work, operating for a given group at a given time” (Pettigrew, 1979). In the 1980s, researchers asserted (Barney, 1986) that a company’s strong organizational culture may give it a competitive advantage. Culture characterizes an organization and sets it apart from other organization (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2017; Forehand & Gilmer, 1964; Kroeber & Parsons, 1958). Hofstede (1989) defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from another. This includes shared beliefs, values and practice that distinguish one organization from another”. The culture of an organization is implicit, invisible, intrinsic and informal and shapes itself out of the actions of its employees (Ince, 2023; Scholz, 1987; Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019).

Goodman and Syntack (1999) argued that organizational culture is a significant predictor of contextual performance and task performance. Cognitive aptitude and a culture of openness are positively related to overall job performance. Employees who scored highly for openness were more receptive to new learning opportunities, which enhanced engagement and improved job performance (Bing & Lounsbury, 2000). Occupational freedom and the caliber

of supervisory feedback and ethical leadership style positively affect work effort (Christen et al., 2006; Ince, 2023; Thakur et al., 2020). Employee welfare was enhanced by management's trust and employees' support. Managers' support at all levels helped to promote the engagement of employees. Engaged employees are found to be innovative and productive (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). An engaged workforce helped in improving the productivity of the employees and improved organizational output (Bhardwaj & Kalia, 2021). Employee engagement is significantly impacted by incentives, recognition, and welfare, and the hotel business is no different (Chand et al., 2022; Kapoor & Chand, 2021). Trust positively influenced job satisfaction among employees which in turn promoted job performance (Ghafoor et al. (2011). Work engagement is found to mediate the relationship between organizational politics, organizational commitment, extra-role performance, and turnover intentions (Bhardwaj, 2013; Kalia & Bhardwaj, 2019; Karatepe, 2011).

Mutual trust between employees and Management improves employee engagement (Chughtai & Buckley, 2011) as well as organizational effectiveness (Bhardwaj, 2012). Employee engagement is highly correlated with the task, contextual performance, and active learning evaluations. The performance of individuals and organizations is highly impacted by demographic characteristics (Chaudhry & Sharma, 2016).

Clearly, the existing literature had touched upon the relationship between organizational culture and job performance, but there are limited studies that have explored this relationship in hospitality industry in context to Himachal Pradesh. Additionally, there are very few studies that have specifically explored the impact of engaged organizational culture on job performance among the workers in hotels and restaurants. Therefore, the research aims to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between engaged organizational culture and job performance in the hospitality industry of Himachal Pradesh. The hospitality industry has unique characteristics that require a high level of employee engagement and that engaged organizational culture can play a critical role in improving job performance in this industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The focus of our study is to examine the factors that predict an engaged organizational culture and how engaged culture affects employees' performance in the hospitality sector with special reference to the hotels. The study was conducted on frontline employees of the hotels of Himachal Pradesh. A total of 180 hotels in Himachal Pradesh were considered for the study. Kullu, Shimla and Kangra districts were chosen

for data collection through simple random sampling. Every fifteenth hotel in these districts was chosen for the study after being arranged alphabetically. 410 front-line employees of these hotels each were distributed the questionnaire. However only 350 were considered for analysis after initial screening, the rest were excluded due to incomplete information.

RESEARCH VARIABLES

Job Performance Dimensions

Employee performance includes task-related or in-role behavior and contextual or out-of-role behavior (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Goodman & Svyantek; 1999; Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). These in-role performance actions influence both individual and organizational performance, either directly or indirectly. Employees engage in task activities that are mandated by their roles in exchange for a salary. Knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are crucial human qualities for fulfilling task activities. Task proficiency typically co-varies with these KSAs. Employees' performance is also influenced by their compensation and supervisory style (Thakur et al., 2019). Extra-role performance/Contextual performance refers to volunteer actions such as civic virtue, helping others, courtesy etc. which do not have a direct impact on an employee's productivity (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

Engaged Organizational Culture

Intense participation in one's work, high levels of energy towards work, psychological fortitude while working, and feeling a sense of significance in an open, trustworthy, independent work culture that encourages collaboration and avoids conflict are characteristics of an engaged organizational culture. An active corporate culture encourages perseverance to put effort into one's work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). High-concentration workers are completely immersed in their tasks, exhibit stronger levels of absorption, and have lower turnover intentions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Verma & Shama, 2018). Freedom to interact, discusses, and communicates with coworkers without inhibitions define an open culture. Get customer feedback and provide team members with thoughts and comments. The results of being open are the unrestrained expression of emotions and thoughts, as well as providing and receiving feedback (Vats, 2013). Workers courageously confront difficulties and challenges and do not back down from them. They carefully examine interpersonal conflicts. Congruence between one's actions, words, and feelings, as well as freely communicating emotions to better oneself, are characteristics of authenticity.

Taking initiative, preparing ahead, and taking preventive action are all examples of proactive. Preparing and executing responses to urgent concerns. In order to plan and act in one's own area, one must have the freedom to do so. Builds ties between people, which lessen references to authority figures. Cooperation in a group entails supporting and welcoming others. On-time completion, enhanced communication, and resource sharing. Using and promoting creative problem-solving methods is part of experimentation in the creation of novel products, processes, and techniques (Subrahmanian, 2012).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The major focus of this study is to find out the role that engaged work culture plays in influencing job performance. The data was collected from the respondents using a structured questionnaire. The scale was checked for its reliability and validity. When the scale was put through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of sphericity to determine its suitability for factor analysis, it was determined that an exploratory factor would be appropriate. Varimax rotation was used in an exploratory factor analysis on the

engaged organizational culture variables. After running the factor analysis, it was found that some items had low communality values.

The factors analysis was repeatedly run by deleting the items with low factor loadings and meaningless dimensions. These analyses led to the identification of eight dimensions. The item loadings, composite reliability coefficients, and AVE values for each variable used in the study are displayed in Table 1. Significant factor loadings for each item are shown by the analysis. The value of combined reliability coefficients (Dillon-Goldstein's rho) is also more than 0.7 showing adequate internal consistency. AVE Value for all the constructs is also above the recommended level of 0.5, demonstrating the data's convergent validity. In order to examine the role of each dimension in influencing the contextual and task performance of hospitality employees, regression analysis was performed. The result of regression analysis is depicted in Table 2, which reveals high contribution of engaged organizational culture dimensions towards different dimensions of job performance. 41.2 percent ($R^2 = .412$) variance in contextual performance and 48.5 percent ($R^2 = .485$) variance in task performance are attributed to different dimensions of engaged organizational culture.

Table 1: Item Loadings, Composite Reliability Coefficients and AVE Values

Constructs	Indicators	Loadings	CR (D.G. Rho)	AVE
Vigor	"Energy at workplace"	0.770	0.775	0.634
	"Be resilient at workplace"	0.821		
	"Persevere (even when things do not going good)"			
Dedication	"Meaningful and purposeful work"	0.833	0.809	0.679
	"Enthusiastic about job"	0.816		
	"Challenging job"			
Absorption	"While working, I forget everything else around me"	0.716	0.895	0.617
	"I feel happy when I am working intensely"	0.778		
	"Immersed/engrossed in work"	0.731		
Confrontation	"Confronting problems"	0.758	0.753	0.604
	"Deeper rather than doing surface-level analysis of interpersonal problems"	0.796		
	"Facing challenges being important component of job"			
Trust	"Moral support and help to employees in crises"	0.760	0.752	0.602
	"Interpersonal support among employees"	0.792		
	"Confidence/trust in seniors"	0.782		
Authenticity	"Congruence between feelings and behavior"	0.779	0.802	0.697
	"Tactfulness, smartness and a little manipulation to get things done"	0.793		
	"Owning up to mistakes"	0.753		
Autonomy	"Taking independent decisions"	0.765	0.735	0.621
	"Close supervision"	0.736		
	"Obeying Seniors"	0.678		
Experimentation	"Teamwork and team spirit"	0.785	0.728	0.611
	"Accepting and Appreciating help offered by others"	0.740		
	"Performing Immediate tasks rather than large organizational goals"	0.725		

Table 2: Role of Engaged Organization Culture in Job Performance (Regression Analysis)

Engaged Organizational Culture Dimensions	Job Performance Dimensions			
	Extra-Role/Contextual Performance		In-Role/Task Performance	
	B-Value	t-Value	B-Value	t-Value
Vigor	.226	5.552*	.190	5.531*
Dedication	.123	2.887*	.053	1.486
Absorption	.158	2.676*	.258	5.180*
Confrontation	-.028	-.402	.040	.675
Trust	.178	2.393*	.124	1.986*
Authenticity	.087	1.572	.013	.272
Autonomy	-.013	-.270	.119	2.907*
Experimentation	.304	3.622*	.177	2.505*
R ²	.412		.485	
F value	21.518*		28.954*	

It is evident from Table 2 that vigor can lead to 22.6 percent ($t=5.552$, $p<0.05$) change in contextual performance and 19 percent ($t=5.531$, $p<0.05$) change in task performance. Dedication causes 12.3% variation in contextual performance ($t=2.887$, $p<0.05$). Similarly, absorption also leads to 15.8 percent ($t=2.676$, $p<0.05$) variability in contextual performance and 25.8 percent ($t=5.180$, $p<0.05$) in task performance. Furthermore, a change in trust is expected to

produce significant 17.8 percent ($t=2.393$, $p<0.05$) and 12.4 percent ($t=1.986$, $p<0.05$) change in contextual performance and task performance respectively. Autonomy only contributes for 11.9 percent ($t=2.907$, $p<0.05$) change in task performance. Experimentation causes 30.4 percent change in contextual performance and 17.7 percent ($t=2.505$, $p<0.05$) change in task performance.

Thus, we can infer following relationship:

$$\text{Contextual Performance} = 1.427 + .226 \text{ Vigor} + .123 \text{ Dedication} + .158 \text{ Absorption} + .178 \text{ Trust} + .304 \text{ Experimentation}$$

$$\text{Task Performance} = 2.212 + .190 \text{ Vigor} + .258 \text{ Absorption} + .124 \text{ Trust} + .119 \text{ Autonomy} + .177 \text{ Experimentation}$$

The analysis reveals that the factors of engaged organizational culture that influence both contextual and task performance of employees include vigor, absorption, trust and experimentation. Dedication contributed only towards contextual performance of employees.

The maximum contribution for contextual performance is shown by experimentation followed by vigor, trust, absorption and dedication. Frontline employees are in continuous contact with the customers', their job is more of situation-specific. The freedom which was given to the employees to handle any situation within the preview of organizational policies affected their extra role performance. Comfortable work environment and competence to accomplish the desired results helped enhance job performance (Goodman & Syntack, 1999).

Absorption shows major contribution towards task performance followed by vigor, experimentation, trust and autonomy. Thus, source of internal motivation and job resources help employees meet their basic requirements,

including those for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Broeck et al., 2008). The feeling of being employed and working in reputed organization enabled the employees to work with full enthusiasm in their job. Having confidence in top management has a significant effect on employee performance (Chughtai & Buckley, 2008). An environment of openness with the accessibility of top management helped enhance the trust factor among employees. Perception of role benefits and freedom to take risks increased the employee engagement at workplace.

This findings of this study is in line with conservation of resources theory, which states that an engaged employee is more inclined to devote his/her surplus resources to improving his/her performance at work, including additional role performance (Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Thus contextual performance is influenced by experimentation, vigor, dedication, trust and absorption. Further absorption, vigor, experimentation, trust and autonomy contribute towards task performance of employees.

Managerial Implications

The study holds a vital importance for improvement of hospitality industry in the state. As it is a major contributor to the economy of the state therefore measures should be taken to uplift the working conditions of employees. Engaged organization culture that encourages participation of the employees should be given preference. As mainly the hotels in the state are low or medium level properties therefore the owners should hold regular meetings with their frontline employees. They should ask for more involvement of the employees in framing hotel policies. Tourism department should regularly conduct surveys in the region to know about employees problems and should develop more schemes for the upliftment of working conditions of hotel employees. Training sessions of small duration may be started by the tourism department which enables the employees to know about latest development in this industry.

An engaged culture open for new ideas and built on trust will help to enhance the performance of employees. Small attitude-building exercises like fish bowl, focus group etc. should be practiced in the organization at regular intervals. This will help employees understand each other and develop a feeling of trust. Rewards and recognition to the employees with respect to their work like best supportive employee, best initiator of the month can be given to the employee so that they feel absorbed in the organization they are working. The goal of career development programs should be to help employees identify their career path and the chances for growth that are accessible to them. Employees should be able to comprehend the way the organization will support them in achieving their career goals through these programs, as this will help them feel more a part of the organization and contribute to its engaged culture. These small practices will help build up engaged organization culture which in turn will enhance job performance of employees.

However, this study is based on a self-reported rating questionnaire therefore the problem of self-reported bias needs to be taken into account. Future research can be undertaken to overcome this bias through mixed approach or qualitative study. Other dimensions of engaged organizational culture like commitment, competence and motivation. Studies on women staff, dual-career couples, and skilled migration in the hospitality industry (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2022; Bhardwaj, 2017) can be undertaken at national and International levels. The performance and work efficiency (Thakur & Sharma, 2019) of the employees can be studied with respect to demographic and organizational variables. Also, a study of online booking, loyalty of customers and its relation with employee engagement can be undertaken in future (Bhardwaj & Sharma, 2017). In the future, a comparison of employee involvement in public and private hotels may be conducted.

CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to examine and understand the role of engaged work culture on employee job performance. A detailed analysis was done on frontline employees of hotels in Himachal Pradesh. The findings reveal that the factors of engaged organizational culture that influence employees' contextual and task performance include vigor, absorption, trust and experimentation. Dedication contributed only towards the contextual performance of employees. Experimentation makes the greatest contribution to contextual performance, followed by enthusiasm, trust. Regarding task performance, absorption plays a major role followed by vigor, experimentation, trust and autonomy. A culture of employee participation plays a major role in increasing contextual performance on the other hand belongingness and feeling of oneness with the organization affect task performance of employees.

Enthusiastic, energetic employees who have a sense of belongingness and are involved in their work when working in an organizational culture of trust and innovation contribute towards the contextual performance of employees. Employee task performance is aided by a work atmosphere that values trust, independence, and experimentation. Employee task performance is influenced by those who are happily engaged in their work and are willing to put up the extra effort. Thus, in order to create an engaged organizational culture, organizations should organize regular interactive sessions with top management, should focus on enhancing the skills of employees. Different attitude-building exercises should be done regularly. Rewards and recognition of employees should be encouraged in the hotels.

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