



VARIATIONS AND PREDICTORS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE NIGERIAN PRISONS SERVICE, BAYELSA STATE COMMAND

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ABSTRACT

The study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the level of and selected predictors of employee engagement among 198 employees of the Nigerian Prison Service, Bayelsa State Command. Precisely four extrinsic and intrinsic organisational, motivational factors were considered – benefits, career development, autonomy, and recognition. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire covering demographic characteristics and employee engagement components. Then, the data were statistically analyzed using SPSS V. 20.0. T-tests and ANOVA results indicated a modest level of employee engagement in this organisation as well as significant variations in the intensity of engagement by individual employee characteristics (age, sex, job tenure, and income). Using multiple regression analysis, three factors, namely, benefits, career development, and recognition, emerged as significant predictors of employee engagement. A key finding of this study suggests that employee age plays a pertinent role in determining motivational factors driving employee engagement. Implications of study findings for research and practice were discussed to set the direction for future research.

Keywords: Employee engagement, motivation, job expectations, demographics, prison service

INTRODUCTION

A recurrent challenge for management is how best to get employees committed and engaged in their work to put in their best towards the accomplishment of organisational goals and objectives. Employee engagement is a two-way process between workers and management, where both parties have a stake in ensuring that the workplace is primed to bring forth the best results that are beneficial for all stakeholders. However, amidst continuing economic uncertainty, several Nigerian states are grappling with irregular payment of workers' salaries, and internal competition for limited funds. These have consequently led to ineffective structures in the workplace that does not make employees engaged in their work arising from unmet expectations and relative deprivation they experience.

The Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) assists sister security agencies, i.e., the judiciary, the police force, and the entire society to keep the custody of offenders. The task of watching over inmates, no doubt an arduous one, obviously needs the staffs that are responsible for their detention to be adequately engaged and motivated. However, this does not appear to be the case with the staff of the Bayelsa state Command. This, observation during the industrial attachment programme of one of the authors revealed many instances of employees displaying unprofessional and sometimes relaxed attitude towards their duties. This unfortunate attitude to work can be argued to be a result of low morale and work engagement as a result of possible dissatisfaction with their work conditions, resulting in poor performance and output. This reduced output invariably affects the country's development, in the long run, because even inmates in custody are expected to acquire skills and education that would contribute to the socioeconomic growth and development of the country during and after their jail terms.

There is a need for new approaches to work management for organisational survival and progress, of which employee engagement is a crucial one. Numerous reports suggest a low level of employee engagement worldwide. The Gallup Institute in their study suggests that only 15% of workers globally, can be described as fully engaged in their work, while 85% are not engaged or are actively disengaged [Gallup, 2017]. A significant cause for this, according to Forbes, 2014

(cited in Motyka, 2018) is the absence of support to employees in achieving what they perceive for themselves as meaningful results from their jobs. As a result, scholars had called for a more positive approach that focuses on engaging the workforce, rather than concentrating on problem-coping strategies (Saks & Gruman 2011; Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011).

Employee Engagement

According to Bernthal (2009), the concept of employee engagement evolved from past research on empowerment, motivation, organisational citizenship behaviour, and trust. He argues that, in some ways, all of these concepts are variations of the same fundamental issue, namely, employee motivation and behaviour. Much of the academic research on engagement has been inspired by Kahn (1990:694) who defined engagement in terms of a psychological state as ‘the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.’ Schaufeli Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker (2002:74) describes employee/work engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour (e.g., being highly energetic), dedication (e.g., being highly involved in work), and absorption (e.g., being highly concentrated in work)”. According to Men (2015), it is the positive attitude held by the employees toward the organisation and its values. A common theme that emerges is that employee engagement is a desirable attribute, a measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organisation which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work.

Employee engagement is identified in empirical research as an essential correlate of employees’ work attitudes and positive outcomes in the workplace. There are studies that show that engaged employees are emotionally attached to their job and organisation (Ariani, 2013; Schaufeli, 2014), are more focused (Shantz, Alfes, Truss, & Soane, 2013; Medlin & Green, 2014), deal better with the demands of their job (Jeve, Oppenheimer, & Konje, 2015; Chhetri, 2017), give better service (Mathumbu & Dodd, 2013; Raymond & Mjoli, 2013), and stay in their jobs longer (Gichohi, 2014; Kumar & Pansari, 2016).

As individuals are different, it is expected that the personal characteristics of employees would yield differences in the levels of engagement of a workforce within the same organisation. Kahn (1990) found that people get engaged differently at work based upon their experiences of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and mental availability in specific situations. Similarly, Robinson (2006) argued that individual differences play a vital role in determining variations in employee’s potential level of engagement. He explained that the process of perception [how an individual makes sense of his/her environment] is the crucial factor that commands individual behaviour, and is influenced by factors such as a person’s gender, age, experience, education, expectations, current needs, priorities, and interests. These postulates are further supported by empirical results from other studies finding individual variations in employee engagement levels within an organisation (Kapoor & Anthony, 2013; Barron, Leask, & Fyall, 2014; Rigg, Sydnor, Nicely & Day, 2014; Swaminathan, Keerthi & Ananth, 2016).

Employee engagement is a complex concept which is also influenced by many organisational factors like pay and benefits, workplace culture, equal opportunities for promotion, training and development, meaningfulness at work, autonomy, communication, feedback, management styles, career growth, (Fernandez & Moldogaviev, 2012; Shantz, Alfes, Truss, & Soane, 2013; Matula & Uon, 2016; Sabella, El-Far, & Eid, 2016; Konya, Matic, & Pavlovic, 2016).

Workplace Motivation

Increasing motivation, commitment, and engagement levels are vital organisational aspects nowadays. This is of great importance, especially in recent times, as business and organisations are experiencing the biting effects of the lingering economic recession, the understanding of the importance of motivating organisational resources for employee engagement is essential for its continued survival. The development of compensation and reward policies has a vital role in driving a workforce to deliver high levels of proactive efforts and performance. The process of motivation usually starts with someone recognizing an unsatisfied need (Wang & Haidung, 2013). Then a goal is established to be reached and that way to satisfy the requirement. Employees come to work with a set of needs and expectations, which influence their behaviour at work, acting as a source of motivation in significant ways (Pinder, 2014). Either communicated or unexpressed, satisfied or unsatisfied, expectations have a practical impact on an employee’s work processes and are also a leading factor in driving his/her attitude. Green et al. (2017) argue that employees compare their actual experiences at work to their normative expectations of work, and when their expectations are unmet it leads to persistent negative emotional experiences, whereas when their expectations are met it sustains a positive emotional state (Ologbo & Sofian,

2012; Raymond & Mjoli, 2013). Consequently, an employees' response to their expectation actualization (or non-actualization) can be a determinant of their level of work engagement.

Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation can be described as the process of motivation by the work itself, doing something for the inherent satisfaction involved, and it is highly self-generated and self-regulated. In contrast, extrinsic motivation means doing something to obtain a tangible reward; for example, the rewards management provide such as pay rise, praise, or promotion (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) further indicate that employee and their organisations are both motivated to perform to a satisfactory level because they have mutual expectations of receiving inducements from each other. A few studies have attempted to examine the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic job resources on employee engagement. For employees, this could include for example responsibility, freedom to act, courage to use and develop one's own skills (Taylor & Westover, 2011), opportunities for advancement (Amabile & Kramer (2010), getting adequate pay and benefits (Barzoki, Attafar, & Jannati, 2012), proper recognition for work (Drakopoulos & Grimani, 2015), a conducive working environment (Van Beek, Hu, & Schaufel et al., 2012), ethical leadership and interpersonal relations with colleagues (Stefanidis, 2012), receiving promotions within the organisation or being assigned challenging tasks (Karatepe, 2013).

Research Objectives

With this background, the current study seeks to address the following objectives:

- (1) To establish differences in intensity of engagement by employee categories using demographic variables at work
- (2) To identify organisational work components predictors of employee engagement

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to be a quantitative, cross-sectional study, and data were collected from the participants once.

Participants

The population/sample of the study was the entire staff of the Nigerian Prisons Service, Bayelsa State Command, which totals 210 personnel. This organisation was purposely chosen because it was the place of industrial training for one of the authors. The questionnaire was self-administered, and the total number of valid returned questionnaires was 198, giving a response rate of 94.3 %. The participants comprised 134 (67.6%) male and 64 (32.4%) female employees whose ages ranged from 25 to 46 years and above, with the majority being in the 25-35 age group (57.6%). 30.8% (n = 61) of participants had worked between 1-5 years in their current organisation, while 51.5% (n = 102) were married. Their highest educational qualification varied thus: 79 (39.9%) had a Secondary School Leaving Certificate, 47 (23.8%) held national diplomas or NCE certificates, 46 (23.2%) held first degrees, and 26 (13.1%) had postgraduate qualifications.

Ethical Considerations

Before commencing the study, ethical clearance and management permission was granted by the authorities of the NPS, Bayelsa State Command. The purpose of the research was clearly explained to the participants and assured that it was not related to any internal employee appraisal or evaluation process. Voluntary participation was maintained and emphasised throughout the data collection process, and participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time. Willingness to complete the survey was taken as informed consent to participate in the study. In terms of confidentiality, participants were assured that their responses would be kept in confidence and that all of the information would be available only to members of the research team. To further ensure confidentiality, no form of employee identification was collected, nor were any employee of the command involved in data collection or data handling.

Measures

The first section of the questionnaire consisted of demographic questions that provide general information about the participants, such as, gender, age (in years), marital status, level of education, job tenure (years), work department and work level. Section 2 included measures of employee engagement. The questions in the survey were adapted from the Employee Satisfaction and Work Motivation Research by Salanova and Kirmanen (2010). We measured employee

engagement using five questions asking about vigour, dedication, and absorption to their work (sample items include: *How much do you enjoy working and performing at your best; Would you say it is usually nice to come to work every day*). All questions were answered on a five-point rating scale, with possible scores ranging from 5-25. Section 3 work motivation resources. Twelve items based on Gagne and Deci’s (2005) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation model, were measured and comprised four themes: career development (measured job security, promotion, and training) and benefits (measured salary and fringe benefits) [extrinsic motivation]; recognition (appreciation by superiors and co-workers) and autonomy (responsibility and taking initiatives) [intrinsic motivation]. Participants rated their motivation intensity on each item based on a five-point Likert scale: very weak (1), weak (2), average (3), strong (4), and very strong (5).

Data analysis

Survey results were analysed using SPSS Version 20.0, and statistical significance was set at 95% ($p < 0.05$). Descriptive analyses included frequencies and percentages for categorical variables and means and standard deviations for continuous variables. Mean differences in employee engagement were examined using Independent T-tests and One-Way ANOVAs for relevant subgroups. Correlation coefficients were used to determine whether the hypothesized direct relationships were significant and in the expected directions. Multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to confirm the relations indicated by the correlation coefficients and identify the key predictors of employee engagement. We used Cronbach’s α to assess the reliability of the summary scores for the scales used to measure both dependent and independent variables.

Results

Employee Engagement Profile

The employee engagement profile was calculated based on the sum of five questions to get the Employee Engagement Index. Only employees with answers to all five of these survey questions were included in the profile, and responses dictate whether an employee has a low, medium, or high level of engagement, or is disengaged. A higher engagement level typically correlates with a higher affinity for their work and employer. From the results in Table 1, a total of 41.4 percent of NPS employees have a medium level of engagement, and 28.3 percent have a high level of engagement, while a total of 30.3 percent are having a low level of engagement.

The degree of employee engagement by the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the respondents are also shown in table 1. There were significant differences in employee engagement scores for all background characteristics except educational qualification. Overall engagement of male employees is (mean \pm SD: 20.51 \pm 4.84) higher than that of female employees (18.79 \pm 5.47) ($p < 0.05$). Employee engagement also significantly increased with age, with the oldest age group having the highest score (46+ years: 21.67 \pm 3.82; $p < 0.05$). Engagement scores for employees whose tenure were between 1-5 years of service were the highest (21.48 \pm 3.28), it then decreased for those who had been in the organisation for between 6-14 years (19.57 \pm 5.64), then slightly increased again for those between 15-25 years of service (20.77 \pm 4.71) ($p < 0.01$). There were also significant differences in engagement levels by income, with those in higher income groups having lower engagement scores ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1 Analysis of employee engagement by the socioeconomic and demographic status of participants (N = 198)

Variables	No. (%)	Means (SD)	t/ F	df	P
Sex					
Male	134 (67.6)	20.51 (4.84)			
Female	64 (32.4)	18.79 (5.47)	2.23	196	.027
Age in years					
25-35	114 (57.6)	19.18 (5.42)			
36-45	51 (25.8)	20.57 (4.81)	3.62	2, 195	.029
46+	33 (16.6)	21.67 (3.82)			
Educational qualification					
Secondary School	79 (39.9)	20.34 (4.87)			
Tertiary	119 (60.1)	19.69 (5.25)	.87	196	.38

Organisation tenure in years	42 (21.2)	17.50 (5.97)	5.89	3, 194	.001
< 1	61 (30.8)	21.48 (3.28)			
1-5	56 (28.3)	19.57 (5.64)			
6-14	39 (19.7)	20.77 (4.71)			
15-25					
Monthly income (Naira)					
40,000-70,000	89 (44.94)	20.65 (4.45)			
71,000-100,000	41 (20.71)	22.09 (2.81)			
101,000-130,000	36 (18.18)	18.19 (6.01)	8.21	3,194	.000
≥ 131,000	32 (16.17)	17.25 (6.29)			
Overall Employee Engagement	56 (28.3)	25 .00 (0.00)			
High	82 (41.4)	20.80 (1.36)			
Medium	60 (30.3)	14.08 (4.91)			
Low					

Note: Independent t-test was used with categorical variables having only two levels and One-way ANOVA test with categorical variables with 3 or more levels.

Organisational Predictors of Employee Engagement

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics, correlations and Cronbach alpha of the dependent and independent study variables. The results indicate that employee engagement was significantly positively correlated with all organisational predictors: benefits motivation ($r = 0.57, P < 0.01$); career development motivation ($r = 0.64, P < 0.01$); autonomy motivation ($r = 0.21, P < 0.01$) and; recognition motivation ($r = 0.43, P < 0.01$). Career development had the strongest correlation with employee engagement, followed by benefits motivation.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlation matrix, and Cronbach's alpha of study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Employee Engagement	19.95	5.10	(.97)				
Benefits	8.58	2.99	.57**	(.93)			
Career development	10.92	2.44	.64**	.33**	(.78)		
Autonomy	9.70	3.35	.21**	.45**	.07	(.91)	
Recognition	9.44	2.86	.43**	.22**	.29**	.03	(.87)

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$, Cronbach's alpha located on the diagonal in bold

Multiple regression analysis was also conducted to further validate the strength of the relationship between the predictor variables and employee engagement.

Results in Table 3 show that all of the organisational variables jointly accounted for a significant 60% variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = .60, p < .001$), however, the independent influence of the variables on career growth prospects differed. Financial motivation ($\beta = .38, p < .001$), career development motivation ($\beta = .46, p < .001$), and recognition motivation ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) all had significant positive relationships with employee engagement, indicating that the higher the intensity of motivation in these factors, the higher the employee engagement. On the other hand, responsibility motivation had an insignificant negative with employee engagement ($\beta = -.01, p > .05$).

Table 3: Multiple regression predicting Employee Engagement from organisational, motivational variables

Variables	β	t	R^2	F
			.60***	72.62***
Benefits	.38***	6.92***		
Career development	.46***	9.22***		
Autonomy	-.01	-.11		
Recognition	.22***	4.45***		

Note: *** = $p < .001$; Adjusted $R^2 = .59$ ***; $df = 4, 193$

Discussion of findings

This study examined the predictors of and variations in employee engagement among the staff of the Nigerian Prisons Service, Bayelsa State Command. This study has revealed that the level of employee engagement is quite modest with only 28.3 % of the employees being fully engaged, as, against this, 41.4% of the employees were found to be partially engaged, while 30.3% had low engagement scores. The result indicates that there is an urgent need to improve the level of employee engagement in the organisation as it is an essential factor that exerts influence on job satisfaction, employee's performance, and ultimately organisational output. The findings also suggest significant differences in the intensity of employee engagement across employee categories. Employee engagement was significantly higher among male employees, older employees, and for employees who were in their first five years and above 15 years of tenure in the organisation. However, no significant difference was found in employee engagement by educational qualification.

Confirming past research (Shukla, Adhikari, and Singh, 2015; Sharma, Goel, & Sengupta, 2017), our findings suggest that females have lower levels of engagement than their male colleagues. In this study, women make up the minority of the NPS workforce (32.4%), and this gender imbalance could contribute negatively to their lower level of engagement. Research has documented that minority groups within organisations (e.g., women or sexual minorities) are at risk for high-intensity disadvantages at work (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013; Holland & Cortina, 2016). Banihani, Lewis and Syed, (2013) study further buttresses this point by arguing that work engagement is gendered because the organisational structure and home factors make it easier for men to be engaged at work than women. Their study suggests that male characteristics, ideologies and interaction patterns are more valued in the workplace (rationality, dedication to paid work by being free to work for longer hours, aggressiveness, etc.) and are used as the yardstick for measuring all other employees' work performance. Invariably, women, who do not fit this model, may find themselves sidelined, and they further tend to hide certain aspects of their personality to meet the mould. A second point they raised is that work tasks, and duties are organized in such a continuous way that places women at a disadvantage women because of the conflicts of work and family balance – e.g., longer work hours, travelling on the job. Men find it much easier to separate work and family responsibilities because the home sphere is regarded as the primary responsibility of women (United Nations, 2010). The implication of this is that women may find it more challenging to achieve a sufficient work-family balance, which could put them under undue stress that could negatively affect their performance at the workplace.

This study further confirms findings from surveys which show that older employees are more engaged than younger employees (James, Besen, Matz-Costa, & Pitt-Catsoupes, 2012; Agrawal, 2015). Lowest engagement intensity was found in the 25-35 years age group; a group generally referred to in the literature as the Millennials or Generation Y – a demographic cohort born between the year 1980-2000. They usually have high expectations for themselves; give importance to work, however, with immediate results in their work, and desire for speedy advancement (Gilbert, 2011). They are more demanding and might not be easily satisfied with the available benefits and opportunities in their organisations. The tenure curve also shows that employees in the early years of their career were more engaged, but as tenure increased, engagement decreased before rising back up (Ng & Feldman, 2013). Socioemotional selectivity theory explains that increasing years of service is a resource that helps individuals successfully control their environment and build more resources and stay resilient (Carstensen, Fung, & Charles, 2003; Zacher, Chan, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2015). This constancy in remaining in an organisation for an extended period is likely to lead to stronger career identity in the later years and contributes to better employee engagement the longer they stay on the job.

The result from a multiple regression analysis predicting organisational motivational variables of employee engagement is in line with findings from other studies that both extrinsic and intrinsic variables contribute to employee engagement (Garg & Kumar, 2012; Abraham, 2012; Hofmans, De Gieter, & Pepermans, 2013; Adegoke, Atiyaye, Abubakar, Auta, & Aboda, 2015). However, the external variables, career development, and benefits had higher independent relationships with engagement. So, for employees in this organisation, satisfaction with job security and career advancement opportunities, as well as financial and other welfare benefits on the job are more significant predictors of their engagement intensity. One possible explanation for this is that the workforce is composed of a higher numbers of Generation Y (ages 25-35 = 57.6%), and according to a study by De Has and De Vos (2010) their expectations regarding job content, training, career development, and financial rewards are higher than that of older age cohorts. As previously mentioned, they want rapid advancement, work-life balance, meaning to their work, regular praise and feedback, recognition and reward, training, and development. If these expectations are not met an organisation may find that Gen y become disengaged and restless (Anitha, 2014). Another study by Bajwa, Viridi, Bajwa, Ghai, & Singh et al. (2010) also suggests that older people seem to receive greater job satisfaction out of the intrinsic motivation factors than younger people who lack those internal motivators to a greater extent.

Extrinsic factors such as promotions and recognition can lead to an increase in intrinsic motivation. However, they could also take the focus off being committed to the work itself and on to just going through the motions to earn a prize. Consequently, if extrinsic motivators are not adequately handled, it could lead to lower engagement and higher employee turnover, especially among the younger workforce. Generally, in any organisation, incentives are an essential issue, not only to employers but also to the employees. Therefore, the ability of the organisation to attract and retain employees depends on how much monetary and non-monetary incentives they can give. Poor wages and salaries as well poor working conditions are a constant source of frustration to an employee while promotion, better pays, fringe benefits and job security are essential factors which can propel an employee to work harder. Based on the theory of relative deprivation, employees usually compare themselves to other employees who occupy identical positions, not only in their organisation but in other workplaces, and when an employee sees that equity does not prevail in their organisation they become disengaged and may decide to restore the balance either by reducing productivity or by resigning.

Recognition, intrinsic motivation was also another significant predictor of work engagement for the study participants. It is essential for employees that their work performance is not only appreciated by their bosses but that it is also equally recognised among their colleagues within the organisation. Only by recognizing and acknowledging employees for their work can generate an intense emotional commitment from them to their organisation (George & Jones, 2012). Employees, who receive recognition and credit for their work, are getting useful resources from their organisation or immediate boss by fulfilling their self-esteem needs, which they, in turn, can respond to and reciprocate through higher engagement levels. Some organisations have incorporated this into their company culture by holding award services for deserving employees or work teams who have contributed to or performed outstandingly within a year. This is an effective way to propel employees to put in their best so they would be the next on the pedestal receiving the praise, recognition, and rewards for their excellent service. Finally, our study indicates the emphasis of extrinsic motivation over intrinsic motivation within this workforce, which can be possibly attributed to the dynamics of the workforce age composition. Management, therefore, has to work on improving intrinsic motivation by making the job itself provide a sense of meaningfulness and accomplishment to its employees, rather than they seeking only instrumental rewards such as payment, benefit, and promotion.

The applicability of the findings concerning the professional practice of the government is the reduction of costs associated with the turnover of employees and improving on the resourceful use of available human resources to further provide better services to the general public. Motivating employee towards work engagement should be taken as a continual process that should be developed, sustained evaluated regularly as individual and organisational factors change over time. It may be of interest to have a continuous view of factors that motivates employees and provides them with satisfaction while striving to maintain the balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Delimitations and recommendations for future studies

The following limitations of this study should be considered. First, we utilised a cross-sectional research design, and thus, this study is not capable of assuming cause and effect, future studies could include moderator or mediator variables like personality factors or organisation size. The quantitative survey involved self-report measures that can introduce common method bias, even though we used a psychometrically sound questionnaire. Hence, collecting data at different periods and including qualitative methods of data collection would be one way for future studies to gain a better understanding of the outcomes of quantitative research.

Also, as our study is exploratory, we only studied a single organisation that may not be representative of other types of civil service organisations and organisations in general. Hence, the results of this study should be used with caution in making a statistical inference. There is a need for studies covering different forms of organisations and various techniques employed in motivating and engaging their employees. Furthermore, the study has included only a few of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational determinants identified in the literature. We did not consider the influence of factors outside the workplace and personality factors such as social support from significant others, work-family balance, individual and personality traits, on employee engagement in this current study. We, therefore, recommend that future studies could cover these determinants as, individual differences, owing from different cultural and socioeconomic background could affect motivation and workers performance on the job.

Conclusion

A significant change in today's world of work is the evolving demographics of the workforce in terms of age, employees' expectations, and their relationship to work. The workforce of the NPS being predominantly male, coupled with, the dominant patriarchal system of the Nigerian society at large, could have implications for work operations and processes that may probably favour male employees over female employees. It is vital that organisations try to achieve a gender balance in the composition of their workforce as well as adopt policies and practices that would enable women better achieve an excellent work-life balance, reduce burnout and better contribute to the productivity of the organisation. There is a need for further comprehensive investigation on the gendered nature of employee engagement in different forms of organisations to better understand its processes.

Our findings also show that over half of the workforce is of the Generation Y, and we have highlighted meanings attached to work within this group by examining their expectations on the job and for their career development. Although employees across all categories may be more similar than different in the job conditions that predict employee engagement, the differences identified suggests that age matters and that employers should be thinking more about age as the new diversity issue. The unique requirements of younger workers are just as crucial to making employees feel energized and engaged as are those of the older workers. This category of workers would benefit greatly from mentoring programmes and aligning them with the appropriate resources to cultivate and grow their careers. It is imperative that organisations should conduct periodic assessments of their employees' expectations and needs on the job and discuss organisational imperatives so that employees and the organisation have the same understanding.

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