

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND TURNOVER INTENTION - AN EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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Abstract *Employee engagement has become a popular subject of study by both academia and survey houses. This study intends to add new light to the existing body of literature, by identifying factors driving employee engagement and determining the extent to which employee engagement affects turnover intention. A theoretical foundation was compiled for the study, based on the literature review. The target population for this study was the professional management and non-management staff of Ethiopian Airlines located in Addis Ababa. Explanatory research design has been employed. Primary data was collected from 353 staff of Ethiopian Airlines, who were selected through simple random sampling technique. Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) has been used to measure employee engagement. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, which included mean and standard deviation, one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation analysis, and regression analysis. The summary of responses indicated by the overall mean score shows that most of the staff are engaged. On the other hand, Pearson correlation results showed that employee engagement is negatively related to turnover intention. Furthermore, the finding from regression analysis indicated that employee engagement negatively and significantly predicts turnover intention suggesting that organizations that enhance employee engagement can improve employee retention.*

Keywords: *Employee Engagement, Turnover Intention, Drivers of Employee Engagement*

INTRODUCTION

The general principles and practices of employee engagement have been around for decades. However, the concept is relatively new for Human Resource Management and has been appearing in the literature since the past 2 decades (Rafferty, Maben, West & Robinson, 2005; Melcrum Publishing, 2005; Ellis & Sorensen, 2007).

Engagement is conceived sometimes as a state, other times as an attitude or behaviour. In academia, Kahn (1990) was credited with conceptualising the term personal engagement, which he defines as the harnessing of organisational members to their work roles; it is a state where people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. According to Kahn, employee engagement is the energy or power that motivates employees to perform at a higher level. Schaufeli et al. (2002) present work engagement as a contrastive concept to burnout; they define work engagement “as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption”. They also state that engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but is “a more persistent, pervasive and affective-cognitive state that

is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour”.

Work engagement, according to Saks (2006), is associated with an individual’s attitudes, intentions, and behaviours. Engaged employees are likely to identify themselves with their organisation and would have a lower intention to leave it (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This view is supported by several researchers (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Harter et al., 2002). It is to be noted that in most studies, turnover intention is used instead of actual turnover, because turnover intention is the critical antecedent to actual turnover (Rizwan et al., 2013). There is also a growing awareness that shifts in the characteristics of the workforce is calling for organisations to be more focused on retaining skilled employees, keeping them fully engaged, and embedding them in their jobs (Frank et al., 2004). According to Sirota et al. (2005), “employees return the gift of good treatment with higher productivity, work quality and lower turnover”. This view is consistent with the social exchange theory (Homans, 1984).

Today, in the world of globalisation, organisations operate in a fiercely competitive environment. They grapple with many challenges to remain competitive in the market. One of the major challenges that the organisations face is employee

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retention. Turnover rates in organisations are increasing, and disengagement is one of the contributing factors. Engaged employees are less likely to leave their job. If employees have no emotional commitment to their job, there is a greater chance that they will leave to pursue a job that offers higher remuneration or more flexible work conditions (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Thus, this study focusses on identifying engagement drivers; examine their respective impact on employee engagement; and the relationship between engagement and turnover intention.

Employee turnover is a serious issue for many organisations. Turnover is mainly related to employee engagement practices. Employees with low levels of work engagement are more likely to have a higher intention of leaving the organisation, as well as actually leaving it (Mitchell et al., 2001b). This is considered an acute problem, due to its detrimental effect on the organisation, especially when high-performing employees leave the organisation. Moreover, excessive turnover is dangerous for the organisations, and it undermines the efficiency and productivity of the organisation.

Having said this, the study aims to examine the relationship that exists between employee engagement and intention to leave, and identifies the engagement factors/drivers. The area of the study is young, especially in Ethiopia, so this study will be a base for future studies in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Moreover, the study tries to strengthen the engagement practices in the organisation under study, and share the good practices with other organisations to enable a benchmark and adopt best practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention

Engagement has become a popular concept among researchers and practitioners since the 1990s. In everyday language, engagement has received similar connotations to concepts such as involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, zeal, dedication, and energy. To date, there is no single and generally accepted definition for the term employee engagement. This is evident if one looks at the definitions forwarded for the term by survey houses and individual researchers in academia (Markos & Sandhya, 2010).

It is widely believed that the first person who conceptualised engagement and brought it for academic discussion was Kahn (1990). He described employee engagement as "... harnessing organisation members' selves to their work roles: in engagement people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally during

role performances". Building on Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement, Rich et al. (2010) described engaged employees as ones who fully invest their hands, head, and heart in their performance.

There is growing consensus among researchers that engagement is the positive antithesis of burnout. According to Maslach and Leiter (2001), engagement and burnout are the positive and negative endpoints of a single continuum. More specifically, engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy, which are considered the direct opposites of the 3 burnout dimensions: exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of accomplishment, respectively. By implication, persons who are high on engagement are inevitably low on burnout, and vice versa. Schaufeli et al. (2002) view work engagement as a distinct concept that is negatively related to burnout. Work engagement, in this view, is defined as a concept in its own right: "a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption", whereby vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties; dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge; and absorption refers to being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching oneself from work. To put it succinctly, vigour, dedication, and absorption are the 3 aspects of work engagement (Schaufeli, 2012). According to Consiglio et al. (2018), work engagement characterises employees who work hard and persist despite difficulties, are strongly involved in what they do, and feel happily absorbed in their work.

Saks (2006) defines employee engagement as "a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performance". Saks identified "job engagement" (performing the work role) and "organisational engagement" (performing the role as a member of the organisation) as distinct types or states of engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Saks, 2006). Although both constructs are moderately related, they seem to have different antecedents and consequences. However, this multidimensional approach suggested by Saks (i.e., the distinction between job and organisational engagement) has hardly been taken up by other researchers (Truss et al., 2013).

It is expected that engagement leads to low turnover intention. Employee turnover intention is conceptualised as the intention to quit the current organisation and search for other employment. It is perceived as an employee's voluntary intent to find a new job with another employer within the next year. According to Hussain et al. (2012), turnover intention is workers' feeling towards a better working environment;

a turnover intention is a mental decision prevailing in an individual's approach with reference to a job: whether to continue or leave the job. Turnover intentions are instant connections to turnover behaviour. Turnover poses a serious challenge, especially for those organisations that heavily rely on high calibre professionals (Nasurdin et al., 2018). Several studies have depicted turnover intention/intention to quit as an outcome of employee engagement. Turnover intention and employee engagement are inversely related (Andrew & Sofianb, 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Harter et al., 2002; Takawira et al., 2014; Albrecht et al., 2015).

Drivers of Employee Engagement

It is evident that drivers of engagement may vary between organisations; they are influenced by factors such as industry type, role, and company culture. However, there are similarities in drivers of employee engagement across organisations which are found in various engagement models. From extraction of the various studies, leadership, communication, learning and development, organisational support, and working environment are found to be key drivers of employee engagement. Many of those studies rely on social exchange theory (SET). The SET states that a person who received a certain benefit from another person will demonstrate a behaviour that reciprocates the benefit (Emerson, 1981). By the same token, this paper argues that employee engagement is the outcome of the relationship between the employee and his/her organisation.

Leadership

Leaders that respond to feedback from employees and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the employees' well-being positively influence employee engagement. Employee engagement is also related to how positive a view employees have of their senior managers. When employees feel involved, their engagement levels tend to increase (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Saks (2006) also argues that supervisors are crucial in building engagement among employees and that they can also be at the root of disengagement. There are empirical evidences that demonstrate a positive relationship between supportive leadership behaviour and employee engagement (Dathe & Mukulu, 2015; Xu & Thomas, 2011; Ganesan et al., 2017).

Communication

Schaufeli et al. (2002) found out that the 2-way communication channels between employees and managers are key drivers to engaging employees. This can be established by having effective communication channels that allow both upward and downward communication, which will help

create a more open and trusting environment, resulting in higher levels of engagement (Attridge, 2009). Other researchers also found that there is a significant and positive relationship between internal communication and employee engagement (Lee & Ok, 2015; Karanges et al., 2015; Ganesan et al., 2017).

Learning and Development

Training and career development in organisations can lead to an employee having more positive emotions about their organisation. When an organisation invests in its employees, it provides them with a sense of fulfilment, as they are gaining the opportunity to develop their skills. This leads to increased engagement and higher productivity levels (Ahmadi et al., 2012). Khan and Altaf (2015)'s study also demonstrated that there is a significant and positive relationship between employee engagement and training and development. Albrecht et al. (2015) argue that as one of the elements of organisational context factors, training and development can improve organisational climate, thereby contributing to employee engagement.

Organisational Support

Perceived organisational support refers to employees' beliefs concerning the extent to which the organisation values the contribution they make to the success of the organisation, and cares for the employees' well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Employees who feel valued and believe that the organisation is concerned for their well-being are more likely to feel a sense of responsibility towards their employer, resulting in increased loyalty and commitment to the organisation (Lee & Peccei, 2007; Saks, 2006). The level of support employees receive from the organisation influences their psychological safety and enables them to employ themselves without fear of negative consequences (Kahn, 1990). Wickramasinghe and Perera (2014) found that an employee's positive perception towards organisational support influences them to engage more in extra-role behaviour that is not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, but that immediately benefits other individuals at work. Kose (2016)'s study findings suggest that there is a positive and significant relationship between work engagement behaviours and perceived organisational support.

Work Environment

Several studies have shown that a supportive working community is a major contributing factor to an employee's work life that affects engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Attridge (2009) states that the major attributes of work environment are factors such as relationships with

colleagues and relationships with the management. Kahn (1990) described psychological safety as a “feeling of being able to show oneself without fear of negative consequences to one’s self image, status, or career”. From these statements, it appears that working in a safe environment with supportive relationships is one of the key drivers of employee engagement. A more appealing work environment can improve contextual performance of the organisation, resulting in a more productive, satisfied, and engaged workforce (Khuong & To Uyen, 2016).

Relationship between Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention

Several studies have noted an inverse relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention. Based on meta-analysis of data from 7,939 business units in 36 companies, Harter and Hayes (2002) have found out the relationship between business-unit outcomes, in which employee turnover is included, and employee engagement. Another study conducted by Albrecht et al. (2015) indicated that employee engagement has a significant relationship with individual outcomes of employees, including turnover. Most of the items measuring intention to leave are negatively correlated to employee engagement. The Towers Perrin Report (2003) indicates that there is a negative relationship between engagement level and turnover intention. According to the same study, 66% of highly engaged employees reported that they have no plans to leave, compared to 36% of moderately engaged individuals and 12% of disengaged employees. Furthermore, 2% of highly engaged employees reported that they are actively looking for another job, compared to 8% of moderately engaged and 23% of

disengaged employees. Consistently, the Segal Group Inc. (2006a) found an inverse relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention. Additionally, the Segal Group Inc. (2006b) found that disengaged employees have the highest turnover intention (38%), compared to renegades (19%), enthusiasts (5%), and engaged employees (1%). The Corporate Leadership Council (2004) found that the most engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave their organisation. The same study found that the 100 best places to work had an average voluntary turnover rate of 13%, compared to the average of 28.5% of other businesses in the same industries. Other large-scale research has found that 12% of disengaged employees have no intention of leaving, while that proportion rises to 66% in engaged employees. Similarly, over half of the disengaged employees would consider leaving their current job for another opportunity, while only 25% of highly engaged employees would consider leaving. Saks (2006) claims that employee engagement practices are negatively related to turnover intention. Employee engagement is a key factor in reducing employees’ intention to leave organisations.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argue that engagement is a mode of work attitude. Thus, employees with this attitude show less intention of leaving their organisation. Engaged employees are likely to be more attached to their organisation and would have a lower propensity to leave it (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This view is supported by several researchers (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Harter et al., 2002; Takawira et al., 2014; Gupta & Shaheen, 2017). Considering the above facts identified in the literature review, the conceptual framework shown in Fig. 1 was formulated. It reflects the relationship between drivers of employee engagement, employee engagement, and turnover intention.

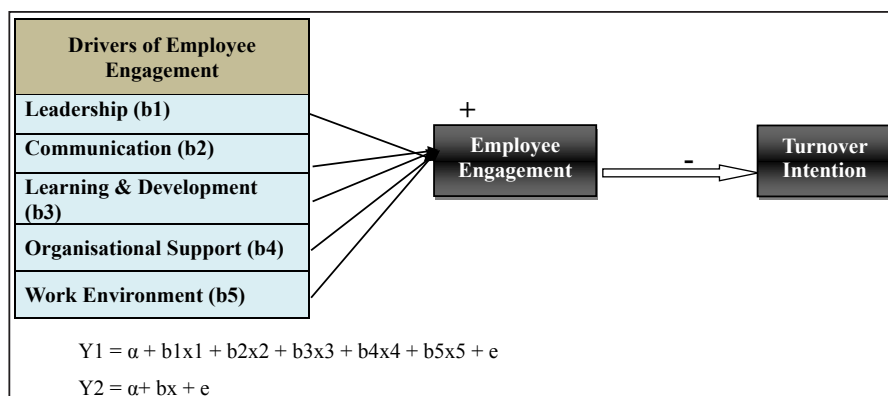


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The following hypotheses were developed for the purpose of this study.

- H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between leadership exercise and level of employee engagement.
- H2: There is a significant and positive relationship between communication practices in the organisation and level of employee engagement.

- H3: There is a significant and positive relationship between learning and development opportunities and level of employee engagement.
- H4: There is a significant and positive relationship between organisational support and level of employee engagement.
- H5: There is a significant and positive relationship between working environment and level of employee engagement.
- H6: There is a significant and negative relationship between employee engagement and employee turnover intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, explanatory research design was implemented to identify why and how employee engagement impacts employee attitude towards quitting the current organisation. Quantitative research approach was employed to test objective theories by examining the relationship among the variables of interest. The sample (353) for this study was selected using simple random sampling technique, out of the total number of professional employees of Ethiopian Airlines (3,019) working in Addis Ababa. The sample size, i.e., 353 has been determined by applying the formula adopted from Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

$$N = N/1 + N(e)^2, \text{ where}$$

n – Required sample size

e² – Error rate, which is 0.05

N – The population size

N = 3019; therefore, n = 3019/1 + 3019(0.05)² = 353.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Factors

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Factors – Leadership

Employee Engagement Factors – Leadership										
Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	SD
I am involved in decision-making that affects my job	Number	10	29	18	96	142	50	345	4.39	1.22
	%	2.9	8.4	5.2	27.8	41.2	14.5	100		
I have a good working relationship with my immediate supervisor	Number	0	14	4	51	164	112	345	5.03	0.94
	%	0	4.1	1.2	14.8	47.5	32.5	100		
My manager cares about my career, keeps me informed, treats me fairly, encourages me to perform well	Number	5	28	21	76	137	78	345	4.58	1.22
	%	1.4	8.1	6.1	22	39.7	22.6	100		
In my job I get feedback and my feedback has value	Number	3	13	16	82	128	103	345	4.82	1.08
	%	0.9	3.8	4.6	23.8	37.1	29.9	100		
Group Total									4.71	0.84

Cronbach's Alpha = 0.928.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Disagree Somewhat, 4: Agree Somewhat, 5: Agree, 6: Strongly Agree.

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Out of the 353 questionnaires distributed and collected, 8 were void as they were not filled properly. Finally, 345 questionnaires were found to be suitable for analysis, thus resulting in a response rate of 92%. The questions in the questionnaire are close-ended, in order to ease the process of analysing the data from respondents. The questionnaire consisted of questions that specifically measure factors of employee engagement, the level of employee engagement, turnover intention, and demographic factors of respondents. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) of the adjusted 9-item scale was employed to measure employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The response scale is scored on a 7-point Likert scale, varying between poles of intensity, from 0 'never' to 6 'always'. Employee turnover intention was measured using Turnover Intention Scale (TIS) on a 6-point Likert scale, varying between poles of intensity, from 1 'strongly disagree' to 6 'strongly agree'. An example of a statement from the TIS is 'I intend to leave the organisation in the next 12 months' (Mitchell et al., 2001). The overall reliability of the research was found to be 0.904, which shows the existence of near-perfect internal consistency of responses among the respondents.

The collected data were summarised and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20. Descriptive statistics of background information and study variables were summarised using mean distribution across different categories. Analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was employed to find out the difference in the study variables due to educational background, experience, gender, and marital status. Then, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique was used to identify the relationship between factors of employee engagement, level of employee engagement, and turnover intention. Regression analysis was also implemented to define the pattern of relationship between the predictor and dependent variables.

As shown in Table 1, the research confirmed that leadership has a mean score of 4.71, as measured out of a 6-level Likert scale, with a standard deviation of 0.84. Leadership has the highest group mean score compared to other engagement

factors in the organisation under study. This indicates that employees have a positive perception of leadership practices. This was confirmed by 88.3% of the respondents, while the remaining 11.7% disagreed.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Factors – Communication

Employee Engagement Factors – Communication										
Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	SD
I have readily available information I need to do my job	Number	5	15	31	77	168	49	345	4.55	1.07
	%	1.4	4.3	9	22.3	48.7	14.2	100		
I am able to voice my ideas, my manager listens to these views, and values my contributions	Number	4	15	39	75	156	56	345	4.54	1.1
	%	0.9	4.3	11	21.7	45.2	16.2	100		
I am informed on what is going on in the organisation	Number	6	24	36	98	147	34	345	4.33	1.12
	%	1.7	7	10	28.4	42.6	9.9	100		
Total									4.47	0.93

Cronbach's Alpha = 0.928.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Disagree Somewhat, 4: Agree Somewhat, 5: Agree, 6: Strongly Agree.

The mean score for communication is 4.47, with a standard deviation of 0.93, which shows that most of the respondents perceive the communication practices in the organisation positively. As shown in Table 2, 83% of

the respondents believe that the company avails information needed, updates them on organisational news, and gives the employees a chance to voice their ideas.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Factors – Learning and Development

Employee Engagement Factors – Learning and Development										
Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	SD
I get equal access to training and development opportunities	Number	14	34	18	96	135	48	345	4.3	1.29
	%	4.1	9.9	5.2	27.8	39.1	13.9	100		
I am encouraged to develop new skills	Number	1	20	26	73	145	80	345	4.68	1.1
	%	0.3	5.8	7.5	21.2	42	23.2	100		
I have support for my continuing professional development	Number	7	30	28	112	116	52	345	4.32	1.21
	%	2	8.7	8.1	32.5	33.6	15.1	100		
Total									4.43	1.04

Cronbach's Alpha = 0.928.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Disagree Somewhat, 4: Agree Somewhat, 5: Agree, 6: Strongly Agree.

The summarised employee perception regarding learning and development was similar to that of the above factors, where 82.8% of the respondents agreed

that there is learning and development opportunities in the organisation under study, while the remaining 17% disagreed.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Factors – Organisational Support

Employee Engagement Factors – Organizational Support										
Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	SD
My effort is recognised by the organisation	Number	10	33	53	111	103	35	345	4.07	1.23
	%	2.9	9.6	15	32.2	29.9	10.1	100		
I feel the pay and benefits I receive are fair for my responsibility compared to other staff with similar qualifications within and outside the organisation	Number	19	43	65	104	91	23	345	3.79	1.29
	%	5.5	13	19	30.1	26.4	6.7	100		
My work is motivating, challenging, and rewarding, and helps me to strive for more	Number	9	22	39	95	122	58	345	4.37	1.22
	%	2.6	6.4	11	27.5	35.4	16.8	100		
Total									4.08	1.05

Cronbach's Alpha = 0.928.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Disagree Somewhat, 4: Agree Somewhat, 5: Agree, 6: Strongly Agree.

The result of the question item “I feel the pay and benefits I receive are fair for my responsibility compared to other staff with similar qualifications within and outside the organisation” was found to have the least mean score, i.e., 3.79. This indicates that the

organisation under study has to review salary and benefit packages to ensure internal and external equity. Compared to other engagement factors, organisational support group mean score is the least (Mean = 4.06 on a 6-point scale).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Factors – Working Environment

Employee Engagement Factors – Working Environment										
Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	SD
In my organisation there is a harmonious and conducive working environment	Number	7	21	53	114	111	39	345	4.21	1.15
	%	2	6.1	15	33	32.2	11.3	100		
I work in a cooperative working environment where employees value teamwork	Number	2	17	37	71	134	84	345	4.65	1.14
	%	0.6	4.9	11	20.6	38.8	24.3	100		
My organisation takes health and safety seriously, and works to minimise accidents, injuries, violence, and harassment	Number	11	14	25	53	120	122	345	4.81	1.28
	%	3.2	4.1	7.2	15.4	34.8	35.4	100		
Total									4.56	1.04

Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.928.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Disagree Somewhat, 4: Agree Somewhat, 5: Agree, 6: Strongly Agree.

The group mean score for working environment is 4.56, with an SD of 1.04 (i.e., 81.9% of the respondents

perceive the existence of a favourable working environment).

Level of Employee Engagement

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement Level

Level of Employee Engagement											
Variable		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	SD
At my work, I feel as if I am bursting with energy	Number	3	7	14	42	84	104	91	345	4.53	1.298
	%	0.9	2	4.1	12.2	24.3	30.1	26	100		
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	Number	2	12	22	26	67	99	117	345	4.63	1.408
	%	0.6	3.5	6.4	7.5	19.4	28.7	34	100		
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	Number	0	17	19	38	63	74	134	345	4.62	1.47
	%	0	4.9	5.5	11	18.3	21.4	39	100		
I am enthusiastic about my job	Number	0	15	22	29	59	98	122	345	4.65	1.419
	%	0	4.3	6.4	8.4	17.1	28.4	35	100		
My job inspires me	Number	13	10	12	43	55	103	109	345	4.5	1.565
	%	3.8	2.9	3.5	12.5	15.9	29.9	32	100		
I am proud of the work that I do	Number	4	12	17	16	67	102	127	345	4.74	1.405
	%	1.2	3.5	4.9	4.6	19.4	29.6	37	100		
I am immersed in my work	Number	3	16	18	30	72	92	114	345	4.56	1.46
	%	0.9	4.6	5.2	8.7	20.9	26.7	33	100		
I get carried away when I am working	Number	3	11	22	24	72	108	105	345	4.59	1.391
	%	0.9	3.2	6.4	7	20.9	31.3	30	100		
I feel happy when I am working intensely	Number	6	16	16	30	67	90	120	345	4.57	1.518
	%	1.7	4.6	4.6	8.7	19.4	26.1	35	100		
Total Engagement Level									4.599	1.19	

Cronbach Alpha = 0.943.

Key: 0–Never, 1–Almost Never, 2–Rarely, 3–Sometimes, 4–Often, 5–Very Often, 6–Always.

The summary of responses in Table 6 shows that most of the staff in the organisation under study are engaged (overall mean score of 4.6, with an SD of 1.19). More detailed question-item level analysis of engagement indicates that 80.9% of the staff are engaged, while the remaining 14.17% and 4.87% are engaged somewhat and disengaged, respectively. The total mean value of engagement, which

falls between 2.89 and 4.66, shows an average engagement level, as suggested by Utrecht work engagement scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Further, an attempt was made to determine the level of engagement on 3 dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption.

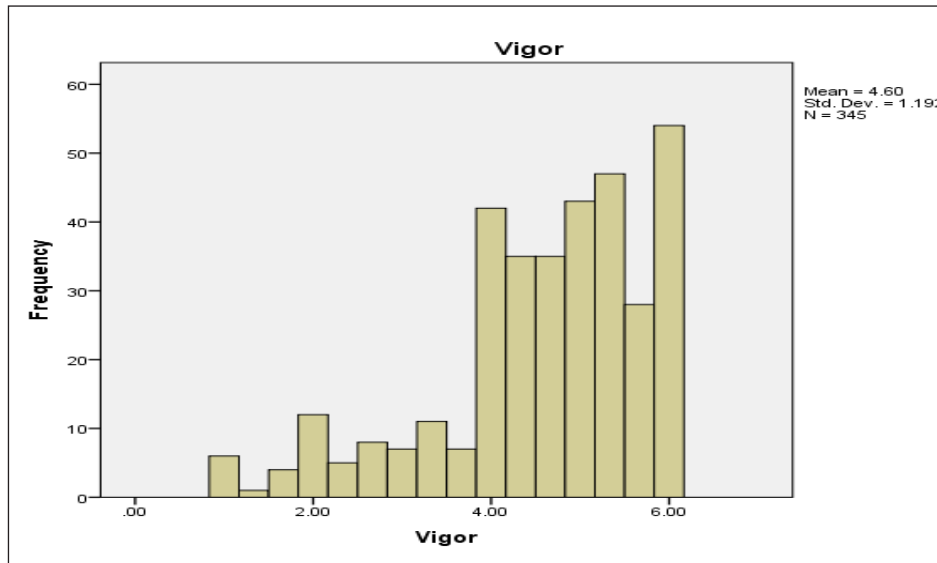


Fig. 2: Employee Engagement Dimension – Vigour

Vigour was measured using 3 question items, i.e., in my work, I feel as if I am bursting with energy; at my job, I feel strong and vigorous; and when I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work, based on UWES. The group mean score for the vigour dimension as shown in Fig. 2 is 4.6, with an SD of 1.192, which implies that employees very often feel energy, strength, and stamina when working.

As shown in Fig. 3, I am enthusiastic about my job, my job inspires me, and I am proud of the work that I do are the UWES test scales to measure dedication. Accordingly, dedication mean score was found to be 4.63, with an SD of 1.329, which indicates high staff dedication. It is also the highest contributor for the organisation under study, among the 3 dimensions of engagement.

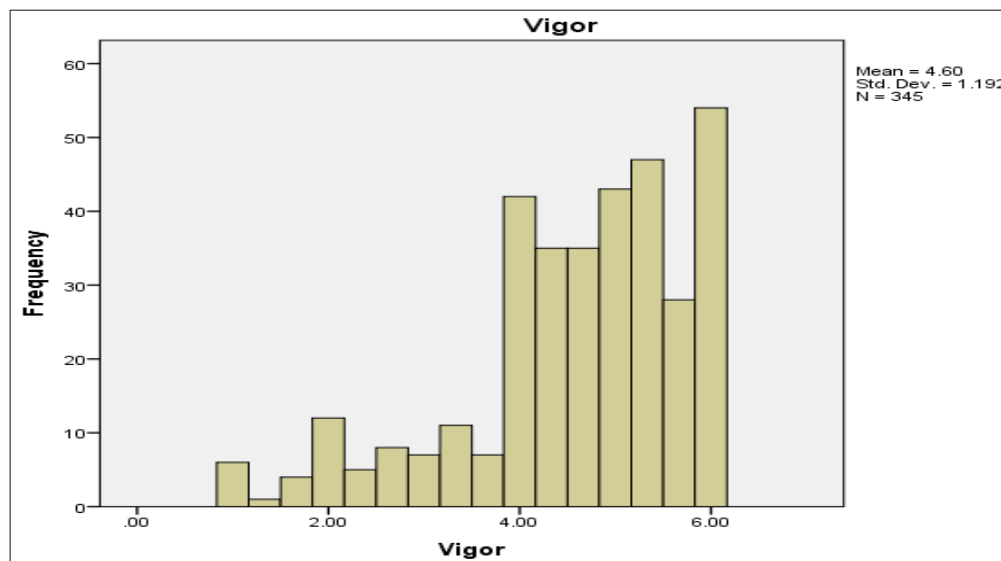


Fig. 3: Employee Engagement Dimension – Dedication

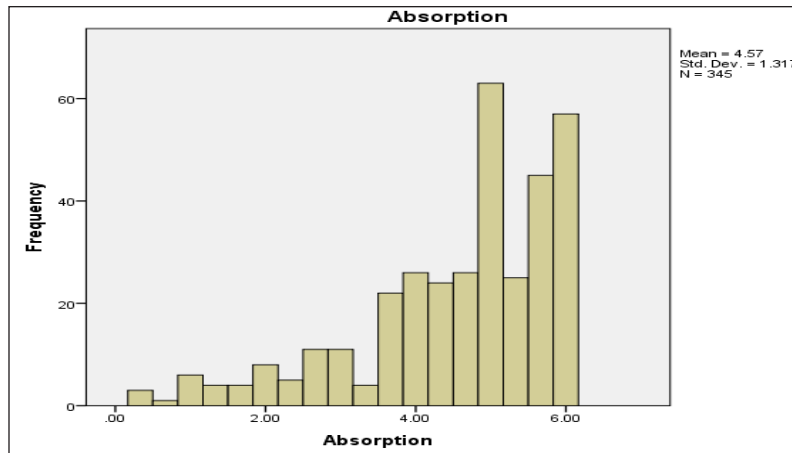


Fig. 4: Employee Engagement Dimension – Absorption

The last dimension of employee engagement is absorption, which was measured using 3 question items: I am immersed in my job, I get carried away when I am working, and I feel happy when I am working intensely’. The average mean score is fairly similar to the other dimensions of engagement, i.e., 4.57, with an SD of 1.317.

Turnover Intention

Turnover intention was assessed using an 8-item standard questionnaire and the survey result is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of Turnover Intention

Turnover Intention												
Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Mean	Group Mean	SD	
*I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months	Number	95	93	51	49	26	31	345	2.74	2.656	1.6	
	%	28	27	15	14.2	7.5	9	100				
*If I have my own way, I will not be working for this organisation one year from now	Number	118	93	57	36	35	6	345	2.41		1.399	
	%	34	27	17	10.4	10.1	1.7	100				
*There are other comparable jobs available	Number	83	50	61	76	58	17	345	3.08		1.56	
	%	24	15	18	22	16.8	4.9	100				
*I am attracted to opportunities somewhere else	Number	109	79	69	59	23	6	345	2.5		1.35	
	%	32	23	20	17.1	6.7	1.7	100				
*I believe that I could easily find an equal or better job	Number	118	73	50	61	32	11	345	2.56	1.49		
	%	34	21	15	17.7	9.3	3.2	100				
**I feel that I might lose valuable experience if I leave this organisation	Number	21	17	29	101	102	75	345	4.37	4.425	1.37	
	%	6.1	4.9	8.4	29.3	29.6	21.7	100				
**I feel that I owe the organisation because it has supported me	Number	9	27	26	85	141	57	345	4.43		1.23	
	%	2.6	7.8	7.5	24.6	40.9	16.5	100				
**I feel obligated to stay in this organisation	Number	12	29	24	84	108	88	345	4.48		1.35	
	%	3.5	8.4	7	24.3	31.3	25.5	100				
Total Turnover Intention									3.319			0.48

*Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.643, ** Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.749.

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Disagree Somewhat, 4: Agree Somewhat, 5: Agree, 6: Strongly Agree.

The group mean score of the first group, consisting of 5 questions, is 2.656, which indicates that most of the staff want to stay with their current organisation. Item-by-item level analysis was conducted as follows:

In the question, ‘I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months’, the replies show that 69.3% of the respondents do not have a plan to leave their employer in the near future, while the remaining 30.7% are on their way

to finding another job. The mean score, i.e., 2.74, indicates that most of the employees disagree to some extent their intention to leave their organisation.

‘If I have my own way, I will not be working for this organisation one year from now’ has the lowest mean score, i.e., 2.41. Around 77.7% of the respondents do not want to leave the organisation, even if they have other options. Lowest mean score indicates lower turnover intention, mostly attributed to organisation engagement practices, as confirmed by the correlation and regression analysis hereafter. The remaining 22.3% may leave if they find better options.

The remaining 3 items, i.e., ‘There are other comparable jobs available’, ‘I am attracted to opportunities somewhere else’, and ‘I believe that I could easily find an equal or better job’ have mean scores of 3.08, 2.5, and 2.56, respectively. The respondents believe that their current job is better than other jobs in the market, so they are not tempted to move somewhere else. When we further analyse the percentage distribution, 43.7% of the staff believe that there are other comparable jobs in the market, while 56.3% disagree. On the other hand, only 25.5% of the employees replied that they

are attracted to opportunities somewhere else, while 74.5% are comfortable with their current job. In the last item, which is, ‘I believe I could easily find another job’, 30.2% agreed. The remaining 69.8% believe that their current job is better.

On the same note, the average mean score for the remaining 3 questions was 4.425, thus showing positive signs of the need to stay with the organisation, feeling of obligation to the support received, and fear of losing valuable experience if they leave.

Relationships between Employee Engagement Factors, Engagement, and Turnover Intention

Employee engagement factors (leadership, communication, learning and development, organisational support, and working environment) were considered as antecedents for engagement and turnover intention. An attempt was made to determine the relationship between employee engagement factors and employee engagement, and the results are presented as follows.

Table 8: Correlation Results

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Engagement Factors (1)								
Leadership (2)	.783**							
Communication (3)	.870**	.697**						
Learning & Development (4)	.853**	.554**	.684**					
Organisational Support (5)	.836**	.498**	.621**	.682**				
Working Environment (6)	.831**	.491**	.653**	.642**	.686**			
Employee Engagement (7)	.702**	.392**	.586**	.608**	.702**	.648**		
Turnover Intention (8)	-.563**	-.346**	-.488**	-.443**	-.549**	-.528**	-.576**	

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson Correlation results showed that employee engagement, as well as all engagement factors, are negatively related with turnover intention, with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of $r = -.576$ and $-.563$, respectively, which are significant at $p < 0.01$. This suggests that improvement on these organisational factors can both increase employee engagement level and ensure employee retention. The result further indicates that employee engagement factors (i.e., leadership, communication, learning and development, organisational support, and work environment) have a significant and positive relationship with employee engagement, with a Pearson Correlation coefficient of $r = .392$, $.586$, $.608$, $.702$, and $.648$, respectively, significant

at $p < 0.01$. Items that measure organisational support gained the highest score. This item explained 70.2%, very strong positive relationship between organisational support practices and level of employee engagement.

Linear regression analysis was conducted to measure the extent to which the engagement factors (predictor variables) affect the level of engagement (dependent variable).

Adjusted R-Square value was found to be 0.569, which illustrated that 56.9% of variance in the level of employee engagement is explained by the aforementioned factors of engagement indicated in the model; the rest is left for other factors that are not considered in the study.

Table 9: Coefficients of Engagement Factors

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.637	0.256		2.489	0.013
	Leadership	0.167	0.072	0.117	2.333	0.020
	Communication	0.231	0.078	0.181	2.966	0.003
	Learning and Development	0.144	0.064	0.125	2.236	0.026
	Organisational Support	0.462	0.063	0.406	7.384	0.000
	Work Environment	0.262	0.062	0.228	4.203	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement.

The results of regression as presented in Table 9 revealed that leadership practice has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement, with a beta value of $\beta_1 = 0.117$ (p-value = 0.020, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$). Therefore, this finding supports hypothesis H1. Standardised Beta (β) coefficient showed a value of .181 for communication, with a p-value of 0.003, which explained that there exists a positive and significant relationship between communication and employee engagement. Therefore, the researcher accepts the hypothesis, and it is accepted that for each unit increase in leadership practices, there is a 0.181 unit increase in the level of employee engagement.

Beta (β) under standardised coefficients showed a value of .125 for learning and development, with a p-value of 0.026, which explained that there exists a positive and significant relationship between learning and development opportunities and level of engagement. The result of regression also revealed that organisational support practice has a positive and significant effect on level of engagement, with a beta value of $\beta_1 = .406$ (p-value = 0.00, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$). Organisational support is found to be the highest contributor to employee engagement with a standardised beta coefficient value of 0.406 (p-value = 0.000). The result demonstrates that work environment has a positive and significant effect on level of engagement, with a beta value of $\beta_1 = .228$ (p-value = 0.00, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$). Working environment is considered to be the second highest contributor to the level of engagement in the organisation under study, making up 22.8% of the contribution among the 5 contributing factors.

Relationship between Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention

In Table 8 it was indicated that employee engagement is strongly negatively correlated ($r = -.576$, $p < 0.01$) with turnover intention. This section demonstrates to what extent engagement affects turnover intention.

Based on regression model summary results, adjusted R-Square value was found to be 0.33, which indicates that

33% of variance in the turnover intention is explained by employee engagement level. The ANOVA score also showed that the model is significant with the value obtained at 0.000.

Table 10: Coefficient of Turnover Intention

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	4.772	0.168		28.49	.000
	-0.46	0.035	-0.576	-13.047	.000

Dependent Variable: Turnover Intention.

The results of regression model indicates that level of engagement has a negative and significant effect on turnover intention, with a beta value of $\beta = -.576$ (p-value = 0.00, which is less than $\alpha = 0.05$). Therefore, based on the above results, the hypotheses stated are accepted.

CONCLUSION

As presented in the descriptive analysis section, the level of engagement with the overall mean score of 4.599 shows that an average level of engagement is exhibited in the company under consideration in this study. The results of the study further indicated that intention to leave is negatively correlated with employee engagement. The analysis demonstrated that employee engagement is instrumental in reducing staff turnover. It was confirmed that the 5 engagement factors considered in this study (leadership, communication, learning and development, organisational support, and work environment) have a positive effect on the level of engagement. This study demonstrated that organisational leadership, communication, learning and development, organisational support, and work environment are the determinant factors of staff engagement. This is consistent with the available literature. Organisational support, work environment, and communication contribute the highest to employee engagement. Thus, organisations should work to ensure availability of those engagement

factors which, as a result, would contribute to a higher level of engagement, thereby reducing turnover intention. The findings supported all hypotheses stated in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisations need to recognise that engagement is an important part of organisational responsibilities towards the employees. The airline, in addition to the current engagement practices, should work on different engagement initiatives to drive employee engagement towards the organisation. Ethiopian Airlines has an engagement office; however, it is not strengthened and active. The organisation has to support the section in working on different engagement initiatives, so that the airline can have a dedicated and engaged workforce at all times. Currently, there is no employee engagement survey conducted at the corporate level, though there are efforts here and there being made at the engagement section level. It is of paramount importance to conduct an engagement survey, at least semi-annually, to identify employee engagement level and the underlying causes, to be able to respond proactively.

On the other hand, the airline's strategy is to recruit young and inexperienced candidates with the right attitude and train them to fit the organisational demand. This means more staff are injected into the system every year, when some resign naturally. Thus, a different engagement approach is needed for different generations. The system has to accommodate the demands of all groups, without dramatically shifting the corporate culture, values, and beliefs. On the same note, there are different professions working under the same umbrella, therefore, tailored engagement approaches to different professions is required.

The research findings show that organisational support is one of the most critical factors, where pay and benefits were identified to be areas for improvement. The organisation has to continue the effort to benchmark and survey the pay and benefits package to ensure the engagement of staff, as it was a high concern area for many of the respondents and was considered to be one factor that motivates employees to look for other opportunities, thus increasing employee turnover. The engagement practices should also be centred at developing strategies that can enhance work environment, leadership effectiveness, communication, and employee learning and development.

Correlation analysis of the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intention is a young phenomenon. There is much yet to be discovered with regards to the relationship between the employee engagement factors, level of engagement, and turnover intent. Future research can be carried out to identify the impact of employee engagement on turnover intention by taking the level of engagement as a mediating factor and by modifying the conceptual model.

Future researches may also consider other engagement factors in addition to the ones included in this research. It is the researchers' belief that further studies should include more groups, from both professional and non-professional staff, as the factors driving employee engagement may vary across different work groups.

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