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# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ITS CROSSOVER FROM SUPERIORS TO SUBORDINATES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF LICENSED COMMERCIAL BANKS OF SRI LANKA

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## ABSTRACT

Emphasizing the importance of the human resource as a competitive asset for modern organizations, this paper investigates how Employee Engagement has become an emerging concept in the field of management in Sri Lanka. Drawing insights from the discipline of Human Resource Management, this study was conducted to explore the perceptions of Sri Lankan managers within Licensed Commercial Banks (LCBs) on the concept of employee engagement and the crossover impact of employee engagement from superiors to their subordinates. Both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches were utilized within the study. Exploring the concept of Employee Engagement was done through the Literature Review and the qualitative element of the study, to better understand it and to identify its relevance within the context of Sri Lanka. A dyadic approach was adopted focusing on the HR managers of the selected LCBs and selected direct reports of them. The findings suggest that there is a growing understanding among the managers about the importance about the concept of employee engagement and that their awareness on it is significant. However, the findings also gave rise to the fact that they lacked the ability to distinguish between the concept of employee engagement as a unique concept which is different to other concepts such as extra role behavior, personal initiative, job involvement, job satisfaction and work holism. There needs to be more discussion and understanding about the concept and the importance of achieving it by organizations in the country.

It was also established that there is a clear crossover impact from the role of superiors on the Engagement of their subordinates. Implications are drawn from these findings and directions for future research are discussed.

**Key Words:** Employee Engagement, Licensed Commercial Banks, Crossover Engagement

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There are a number of 3,512,000 persons employed in various organizations within the service sector of Sri Lanka. This amounts to 42.8% of those employed in the country (Central Bank of Sri Lanka [CBSL], 2012). However, there is little research done to evaluate the quality of the physical and mental effort contributed by these employees. The financial system within Sri Lanka contributes immensely to the services sector of Sri Lanka and LCBs are considered to be the largest sub sector within the financial system.

Schmidt (2004) states that, banks make poor decisions when it comes to investment on the human resource (hereinafter referred to as HR). Though bankers pay special heed to financial analyses, they rarely do so, on HR related issues. It is only when banks begin to realize the importance of the HR and the miracles that it can bring about if leveraged properly, that the HR will truly be their most valuable asset.

With these observations, it is clear that the HR is of utmost importance and thereby the Human Resource Department (hereinafter referred to as HR Department) within a bank has a crucial role to play in managing such resource. However, for the HR Departments to succeed in this process it should possess the necessary business acumen and financial literacy. It is evident that proper HR programmes and practices should be in place within the banks so as to increase the intensity of Employee Engagement (hereinafter referred to as EE) and thereby the ultimate goal of business performance.

It is within this context that the researcher is exploring the importance of EE within the context of six licensed commercial banks (hereinafter referred to as LCBs) within Sri Lanka.

EE is a somewhat new concept in the field of management in Sri Lanka. There is a dearth of scholarly research done on the concept locally.

This is the case even throughout the world. The literature on the construct itself is sometimes very vague and confusing as there is a clear difference on the views of practitioners and academics. This was clearly identified by the researcher when reviewing academic as well as practitioner literature. This itself provides a very good ground to conduct a research study on this area and contribute to minimizing the lack of understanding on the area and to also get an idea as to how Sri Lankan professionals view the construct and see whether there are any mismatches or similarities between the literature and their viewpoints.

Shimazu and Schaufeli (2009) find that EE seems to be contagious and may spread across members of work teams and thereby leaders have an important role to play in fostering EE. But the researcher did not come across any in-depth study done in relation to such crossover impact. The researcher is of the view that if leadership is a key factor contributing towards the engagement of one, then such can be due to the cross over impact that the leadership has on his or her subordinates. This aroused interest within the researcher and induced the researcher to identify any relationship that existed between the engagement level of the superiors and the subordinates

## **2. Objectives of the study**

As per the introduction to the study given above, the main objectives of the study are, a) To understand the perception of top level managers of the selected organizations on EE, b) To gauge the level of engagement of the superiors and their subordinates of the selected organization and thereby, to assess the crossover impact of superiors' level of engagement on the level of engagement of their subordinates, and c) To get an understanding of the processes that are adopted by the selected organizations to enhance EE.

This paper follows with a Literature Review, the Research Framework, with the conceptualizing of EE and the other variables. The methodology adopted to test the model is next described. The research findings are also presented followed by directions for future research.

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Emergence of studies on Positive Psychology**

Positive psychology has emerged to fill in a gap in psychology, where in the past, psychology concentrated more on addressing mental health rather than addressing mental wellbeing and it has emerged from the recently proposed positive psychology approach (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). The field of Positive Organizational Behaviour has (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). The need for a more positive approach in management and business has been emphasized by Walsh, Weber, and Margolis (as cited in Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008, p. 148).

As Cameron, Dutton and Quinn asserts "the Positive Organizational Scholarship (hereinafter referred to as POS) movement is one where researchers have provided a conceptual framework for organizing and integrating research on positive organizations (as cited in Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008, p. 149). Cameron and Caza (as cited in Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008, p. 149) define POS as the study of that which is positive, flourishing and life-giving in organizations.

Organizations as well as scholars have identified the importance of recognizing the positive side of employees and work. It is in such light that EE receives prominence and importance.

### **3.2. Employee Engagement; the subjective nature**

Literature on this construct has come to being from the 1990s and has continued till today and will do so into the future. The literature has mainly focused on giving an understanding to the reader about the construct of EE; its antecedents; its relationship, similarities, differences and overlapping nature with other constructs and the consequences that the construct brings about.

The literature on EE can be seen as either practitioner oriented or academic oriented as stated by Bhatnagar (2007). Many definitions on EE are based on this distinction.

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (n.d.), the first scholar who conceptualized engagement at work was Khan in 1990. Khan's perception on engagement (as cited in Saks, 2008, p. 601) is that it is a situation where people express and employ themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally and mentally during role performances.

As per the literature available, it is clear that there is a difference in the conceptualizations on engagement and that there is a degree of subjectivity involved. Macey and Schneider (2008) state that this is not something to be surprised about, as it is something normal within the stage of incremental evolution of an applied psychological construct; in this case EE.

Many researchers on EE have tried to view EE as a multidimensional construct, yet show it as one with distinct uniqueness of its own. This view is supported by Schaufeli and Bakker (n.d.), who distinguishes engagement from many other related or similar constructs such as Extra-role behavior – extra, voluntary effort, Personal initiative, Job involvement, Job satisfaction, and Workaholism.

Thereby there is uniqueness in the concept of engagement from the other concepts that look somewhat similar to EE. However, it is clear that some of the above constructs has some sort of identifiable relationship with Engagement. Therefore, the researcher agrees with Schaufeli and Bakker, (n.d.) that EE has added value over and above these related concepts.

### 3.3. Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Though scholars have tried to categorize the antecedents into many categories, the researcher is of the view that all such categorizations falls broadly into the two areas of organizational factors and personal factors. These antecedents have been chosen by the researchers to be the control variables which moderate the relationship between the level of engagement of the superiors and their subordinates.

It has been found that job resources, support from co-workers, support from one's superior, performance feedback, coaching, job control, task variety and training facilities are positively associated with engagement (Shimazu & Schaufeli, 2009). They further state that engagement is positively related to personal resources.

Khan, (as cited in Saks, 2008, p. 602) states that the three conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability should exist for EE or disengagement.

In spite of these mentioned factors, the researcher sticks to the broad categorization

mentioned above, and has adopted such in the research framework.

Schaufeli et al. (as cited by Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 215) reflects on the fact that the availability of job and personal resources increases and leads to daily engagement which in turn brings about objective financial returns for the organization. Therefore it can be safely concluded that the availability of personal resources leads to EE and vice versa.

The researcher views this to be of a virtuous nature and captures it as the virtuous cycle of EE as depicted in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1 The virtuous cycle of EE  
Source: Researcher's original construction

### 3.4. Outcomes of Employee Engagement

The literature on EE emphasizes the fact that EE is a positive construct which paves way for positive outcomes within an organization. Schaufeli and Salanova (n.d.) stresses that engaged employees have increased levels of mobility; meaning that they have the ability to respond to changes, surroundings and activities quickly.

The studies of Bakker et al. and Gievreld and Bakker (as cited in Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 214), has found that EE leads to in role performance and also extra role performance.

Schaufeli and Van Rhenen (as cited in Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 215) states that engagement leads or builds up positive emotions within an individual which increases the amount of personal resources possessed by such individual, enabling him or her to accomplish his or her tasks in a more efficient and effective manner.

After much successful synthesizing, Bakker and Demerouti (2008) state that engaged employees are better able to mobilize their job and personal resources which in turn lead to enhanced future engagement of such employees. This compliments the observation of the researches on the virtuous cycle of EE depicted in figure 3.2.

Luthans and Peterson (2002) mentions that disengaged employees uncouple themselves from work roles and withdraw cognitively and emotionally. Hochschild, (as cited in Luthans & Peterson 2001, p. 378) conclude that when employees are disengaged it leads to incomplete role performances and also that their task behaviours become effortless, automatic or robotic.

The above mentioned facts within the literature can be summarized into the Figure 2.2, which depicts that the engagement of an individual leads to an enhancement of personal resources namely, career ambition, motivation, job life satisfaction, health of the individual etc. and thereby lead to an increase in the amount of available resources for the organization leading towards profitability within the organization. However, it should be kept in mind that all these have interrelatedness and that the same situation can take place in the opposite direction as well where the existence of personal and organizational resources can lead towards enhanced EE. This, phenomena, observed by the researcher was depicted in Figure 3.1.

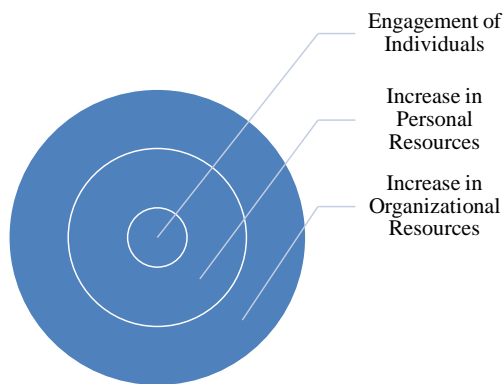


Figure 3.2 Outcomes of engagement  
Source: Researcher's original construction

### 3.5. Crossover Impact of Employee Engagement

As per Engelbrecht (as cited in Bakker & Demerouti, 2008, p. 210), an engaged employee is seen as a source of inspiration to himself and his/her colleagues as well, by. This fact can be linked to the cross over effect of EE which has been focused through some previous studies and also which is set as the main focus in this particular study.

Westman (as cited in Bakker and Demerouti, 2007, p. 3) defines, crossover as a process that occurs when the psychological wellbeing of one person affects the level of wellbeing of another person.

There are only a few studies that examine the crossover of engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). However, the researchers did not come across any such study within their review of literature that looked at the crossover of engagement from the superior to his or her subordinates.

Engagement spills over from one domain to another (Schaufeli and Salanova, n.d.). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), in their preliminary manual to the UWES, state that engagement is not restricted to the individual employee but that it can crossover to others. They name it as "collective engagement".

Therefore, there is clear evidence that many scholars believe that engagement has a crossover impact. Further, as leadership is emphasized in the literature as a factor that can be exploited in a meaningful way to enhance the engagement levels within an organization, this sets a very rich ground for the researcher to examine the crossover impact of the engagement of superiors to their subordinates to their subordinates.

## 4. Research Methodology

To arrive at answers to the research questions, both quantitative as well as qualitative methods have been exploited. The researchers have utilized the multiple case study strategy, one with an illustrative nature as they thought it to be more appropriate for this study as it focuses more on a contemporary issue; that is the state of LCBs of Sri Lanka. This study has also triangulated the case study strategy based on the method and nature of the data collected. The researchers have utilized questionnaires, depth

interviews, records, and has also attended discussions for collecting data which denotes method triangulation within the study. Further, the researchers have utilized both qualitative and quantitative data which signifies triangulation of data. However, the researchers were unable to have any informant/respondent triangulation within the study with regard to the qualitative aspect of the study due to inherent limitations within the contextual setting chosen by the researcher.

The informants for this study is focused on two main parties in the LCBs of Sri Lanka; namely the managerial level or the supervisory level employees and their subordinates of the selected LCBs. Six LCBs have been included for the study. Convenience sampling was adopted in selecting the LCBs from which to gather the data. The urgency of getting the information was also taken into consideration when selecting this particular sampling method.

The researchers have adopted the survey method to complement the quantitative element of the study, which addresses two questions within the study. This helps in introducing objectiveness into the research study. A number of 59 superiors and 177 subordinates were approached to gather data for the quantitative element, which involved getting responses for the survey questionnaire, out of which only 25 and 56 were considered to be valid responses. The **Ulrecht Work Engagement Scale**<sup>1</sup> (UWES) was used to assess the level of engagement of the superiors and the subordinates which was distributed among both the superiors and the subordinates. A survey developed by the researcher was used to measure the perceived level of support received by the superior and the organizational factors identified as control variables which was distributed only among the subordinates..

The qualitative approach included depth interviews, attending meetings at certain research sites, and the examination of documents. The depth interviews were conducted with six respondents which was a representative sample of the employees of the LCBs, including managers related to the Department of HR within the banks. Their designations ranged from, Manager - Learning and Development, Head of

HR Development, Manager – Human Resources, Relationship Manager- Industrial Relations and Employee Relations, Senior Manager – Human Resources, Deputy General Manager – Human Resource Management. The depth interviews lasted for approximately an hour each on average.

#### **4.1 Research Framework**

The researcher intends to draw a link between the engagement level of the superior and the support received from such person towards the engagement level of the subordinates. Therefore the crossover impact that superiors can have on their subordinates is examined, where the engagement of the superior is taken as the independent variable while the engagement of the subordinate remains the dependent variable.

Past research conveys that there can be several other important variables that result in the engagement of an individual, other than the engagement of the superior or his support towards the employee. Such other variables were identified as control variables and incorporated into the framework. The researchers have classified the control variables as personal factors and organizational factors. The personal factors constitute the demographics of the individual. The organizational factors constitute four organizational elements that the researchers saw as were most important than the various other organizational factors, as per the literature. The organizational factors that were incorporated into the study were the talent management strategy within the organization, the reward and recognition system within the organization, the resource availability within the organization and the support that one receives from his or her colleagues within the workplace. The personal factors that were incorporated into the study were age, gender, marital status, status of the job, tenure at the organization and the nature of skills possessed by the individual. The overall research framework is presented in Figure 4.1.

#### **4.2. Conceptualization and Operationalization of the variables within the Research Framework**

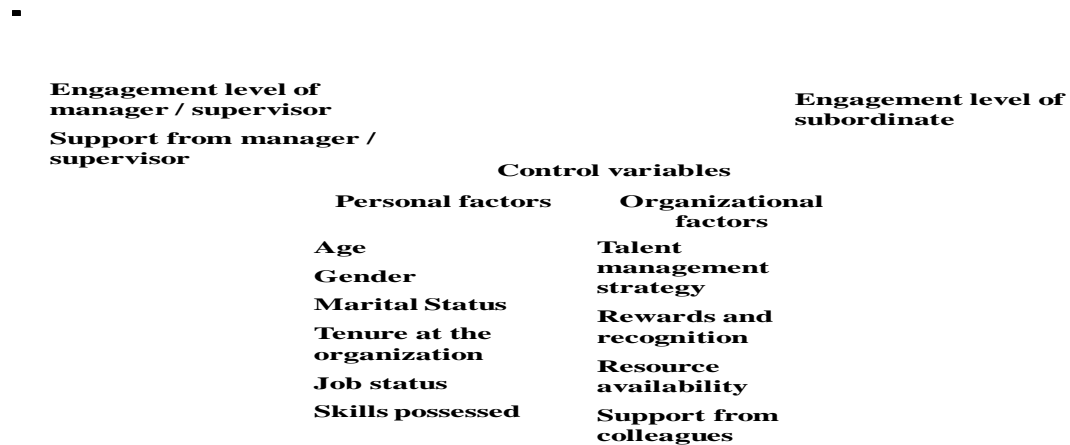
**Engagement level of manager / supervisor** refers to the level of engagement of the superior. This was measured by the 17 questions of the UWES.

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<sup>1</sup> the UWES is a widely utilized measurement for measuring the level of engagement of individuals available in 17 languages

**Engagement level of the subordinate** refers to the level of engagement of the subordinate. It

was operationalized by means of the 17 questions of the UWES



*Figure 4.1* Research Framework  
Source: Researcher's original construction

**Support received from the superior** refers to the Level of perceived support received by the subordinate from the superior. 18 questions on a Likert type scale measuring the perception of subordinates of the support received from their superiors was utilized for the operationalising of such.

**The Personal factors** of the control variables which constitute of Age, gender, Marital status, Tenure at the organization, skills possessed refer to the Personal factors other than the superior's level of engagement that has an impact on the level of engagement of the subordinate. This was operationalized by means of six questions posed to the respondents within the questionnaire.

**The Organizational factors** of the control variables which constituted of the Talent Management Strategy, Rewards and Recognition, Resource availability, Support from colleagues refer to the Organizational factors other than the superior's level of engagement and the support received from the superior that has an impact on the level of engagement of the subordinate. The perception of the subordinates about such factors was looked into through 13 questions posed on the questionnaire to inquire about the perception of the subordinates of the mentioned organizational factors.

### 4.3 Validity and Reliability

The UWES, which was the questionnaire that was utilized for to measure engagement of the

subordinates and the superiors is one that is used extensively for engagement studies throughout the world. Its reliability and validity have been established and it is one that has versions in many languages (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The reliability of the questions developed by the researchers for to measure the perceived level of support received by the superior and the organizational factors identified as control variables were proved reliable through statistical analysis.

The same interview protocol was used by the researchers for all the in-depth interviews that were conducted so as to ensure reliability and the consistency of the questions that were asked. Further the questionnaire that was distributed among the superiors in all the research sites was similar. This was the case with the questionnaire distributed among the subordinates as well.

## 5. Data Analysis, Research Findings and Discussion

### 5.1. Analysis of the Quantitative element of the study

Table 5.1 depicts the results of the Chi Square Test carried out based on the factors such as age, gender, marital status, tenure at the organization, job status and the nature of skills possessed and according to the results obtained therein, the probability (herein after referred to as P) values of age, gender, marital status, tenure at the organization and status of the job is highly insignificant. Therefore, it is clear that the level of engagement of an individual, be it a superior or a subordinate is not dependent on age, gender, marital status, tenure at the organization or status of the job.

However, the engagement level of subordinates is dependent on the nature of skills possessed by him or her. It means that being multi skilled makes a subordinate more engaged in his or her work and towards the organization. However, the dependence of the superiors' level of engagement on the nature of skills possessed cannot be commented on as all the respondents of the category of superiors were ones who possessed multiple skills.

Table 5.1  
*Chi Square Test on the dependence of Engagement on personal factors*

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	
	superior	subordinate
Age	.226	.294
Gender	.374	.513
Marital status	.501	.718
Tenure at organization	.756	.244
Status of the job	.684	.471
Skills possessed	a	.018

no statistics are computed because skills possessed is a constant

Source: Researcher's original construction based on the survey data gathered from respondents.

Both the engagement of the superiors and the subordinates were measured by utilizing the variables developed in relation to the questions of the UWES.

According to the responses received, the results of the One sample T-test is provided in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2  
*One sample T test – Engagement*

Test value	Sig. (2tailed)	
	Superior	Subordinate
0	.000	.000
1	.000	.000
2	.000	.000
3	.000	.000
4	.000	.094**
4.5	.915**	.000
5	.000	.000
6	.000	.000

\*\*insignificant at 5%

Source: Researcher's original construction based on the survey data gathered from respondents

According to the One sample T-test carried out, the engagement level of the superiors lay at a level of in between 4 and 5, (4.5), which meant that they were in between being engaged often and very often.

The subordinates' level of engagement on the other hand lay at a level of 4, which meant that they were often engaged.

This means that the superior's level of engagement is insignificant at a level of 4.5 and that of the subordinate at a level of 4, where the null hypothesis will be accepted. Thereby, the null hypothesis defines that the subordinate's engagement scale is at 4, whereas the superior's engagement scale is at 4.5.

Therefore, it can be safely concluded that the engagement level of the superior does have an impact on the level of engagement of the subordinate. However, the relationship could have been established in a more thorough manner if the responses of the subordinates were captured with their relevant superiors.



**Relationship between the support received from the superior and the organizational factors on the level of engagement of the subordinates**

A regression analysis was carried out in order to identify the above mentioned. The results of such are presented in Table 5.3. It explains the relationship between the variables; support from superior, talent management strategy, rewards and recognition, resource availability, and support from colleagues, on the engagement of subordinates.

As per the below table, it is clearly seen that all the factors of; support from the supervisor as well as the four other organizational factors have a high significance on the dependent variable, which is the engagement level of the subordinate. These correlations statistics are for the independent variables when tested within the overall model.

When looking at the results above it can be seen that the engagement of subordinates have a certain degree of positive sensitivity towards a change in the variables of; support received from superior, talent management strategy, rewards and recognition, and

support received from colleagues with the exception of the variable of, the availability of resources.

**5.2. Analysis of the Qualitative element of the study**

**Defining employee Engagement**

The interviewees who gave their definitions on Employee Engagement had a very vague idea on it. They tried to refer to concepts such as involvement, emotional attachment, enthusiasm and commitment in explaining their view on what EE is. One manager came up with a definition given by a consultancy organization saying that the concept can be wrapped into Say, Stay and Strive.

**An Engaged Employee**

An engaged employee was viewed by the respondents as an employee who is happy at work, with fewer complaints. They saw them as people who criticize what is wrong and appreciate what is right within the organization. An engaged employee was described to be a person who is creative and goes the extra mile to get things done, way over and above the

Table 5.3  
*Relationship between the support received from the superior and the organizational factors on the level of the subordinates*

**Correlations**

		Support from superior	Talent management strategy	Rewards and recognition	Resource availability	Support from colleagues
Subordinate engagement	Pearson Correlation	.477**	.376**	.374**	.391**	.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.004	.004	.003	.002

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

Source: Researcher’s original construction based on the survey data gathered from respondents

duties assigned to him within the Job Description. They are also viewed as individuals who are willing to help out others within the work place when need arises and tend to be good team players.

**A Disengaged employee**

Employees who see negativity in work and their work places, who overly criticize and is always in a

complaining mood are considered to be disengaged. The hearts of such employees are not bound to the organizations that they work for. They tend to strictly stick to the scope of the job and would never go the extra mile. They are not individuals who like to network and be involved in other extra events and functions of the organizations. They also tend to be unhappy at work. Further they are less committed and are not concerned about the quality of their output. They are also employees who are not aware of the organization’s vision, mission and objectives of the organization.

## **The importance of EE to a bank**

All the interviewees agreed to the fact that EE is of utmost importance to the organizations. In one particular organization, heavy importance was given to EE by setting target levels of EE to be achieved by the country operations and where such targets were cascaded down to the lower levels within the organization. All organizations feel that EE is important to achieve higher levels of performance and to sustain within the business.

## **Objective measurement of EE**

Only one out of the six organizations had a formal means to measure the level of EE through an online survey which consists of 100 questions based on the dimensions of corporate sustainability, the organization's value groups, behavior change, strategy and vision, the employee's job itself, customer orientation, direct manager, job effectiveness, leadership, reputation, diversity and inclusion, performance management, work life balance, rewards, and growth and development. Other than that, all other banks had no specific method of evaluating EE within the organizations. However, they are of the opinion that techniques such as having service level agreements, balance Scorecard systems, annual and midyear performance reviews, conducting employee attitude surveys and internal and external customer surveys play a role in assessing the level of EE within their organizations.

## **Drivers of EE**

As per the survey conducted by the Company "A" in 2010, the top ten key drivers of EE were viewed to be open, honest two way communication; the organization being dependable and doing the right thing, provision of opportunities for growth and development; feeling that individual contributions are valued, commitment to providing equal opportunities for all employees; motivation by leaders for individuals to achieve the highest levels of performance; promotion of the person best able to perform the job; actions of the leaders being consistent with the messages that they deliver and satisfaction with the career opportunities that are available.

Other responses received from the interviews highlighted the factors such as interactive communication and opportunity to connect with people as drivers of EE.

## **Role of Superiors in enhancing Employee Engagement**

All interviewees were of the view that it is very important for supervisors to be actively involved in career development of their subordinates. They believed that superiors should be role models and good communicators. Conducting performance discussions with subordinates was also viewed to be an important role to be played by supervisors. They should also be fair and equitable to all employees while striving their best to be a people's manager. One interviewee also highlighted the importance of enabling the subordinates to have work life balance as important.

### **5.3. Common factors identified through the quantitative and the qualitative elements of the study**

As expected the quantitative and the qualitative study complimented each other and verified the findings revealed through each method. Some common factors identified were, that the superior himself or herself should be engaged if to expect engagement from the subordinates and believed that it may spill over from the superior to the subordinate, but that it would depend on the individual.

It is important for superiors to show the necessary support to their subordinates. Through the qualitative study it was established that for this the superior should provide opportunities for career development, be a good communicator, be a role model, be fair and equitable, provide constructive feedback, provide necessary resources, encourage the employees, have self awareness, create organizational culture, delegate responsibilities, and appreciate the good work of subordinates. The Quantitative study too verified the importance of the role played by the supervisors in making their subordinates engaged.

Talent management strategy seen through both the quantitative and the qualitative study as of vital importance to the engagement level of subordinates

All interviewees and respondents agreed that subordinates should be recognized and rewarded to the contributions that they make towards the organization and that is essential for them to be engaged in their work and with the organization. All interviewees agreed that subordinates should be provided with the necessary organizational resources for them to be engaged in their work.

It was also revealed that the atmosphere within the workplace should be a supportive and friendly one for the employees to be engaged in their jobs

## **6. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Limitations of the study**

This study has certain limitations and this section will discuss such.

The data gathering process took a very long time. This was due to the busy environment within the banks and getting back responses from the respondents was not an easy task. This had an impact on the overall results of the survey as the response rate was also very low. However, it is mentioned in the literature, that the response rate for cross over research is normally low (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Further, the researcher's initial requirement was to track the superior to his or her subordinates, so that the results of the study on the crossover impact would have been more meaningful. However, as the response rate was very low, and the fact that certain superiors did not give their feedback on the survey, it became impossible.

If respondent triangulation could have been improved, the study would have been even more objective, especially in the case of the qualitative element of the study. However, due to certain practical reasons within the research sites which were inherent to LCBs and which were beyond the researchers' control, the subordinates could not be used for the qualitative study. The fact that the qualitative data being biased and not represent true and honest opinions is also beyond the control of the researcher.

The inability of the researchers to individually administer the surveys within the research sites imposed a problem on the reliability of the responses that were received. The researchers had to omit all the responses to the survey received from Company F. This was because the researchers were doubtful about the reliability of such responses. The researcher had enough facts to observe that it was the personnel at the Company F who administered and coordinated the survey for the researcher from the organization's point of view, who had filled in all the questionnaires herself.

The researchers were not able to be consistent with the personnel who were contacted for the in-depth interviews due to the unavailability of certain personnel. Further, an audio recorder was not allowed

at the interview at Company C, with whom the researchers had the longest in-depth interview. This posed limitations on the amount of data and information that could be gathered from such interview.

The fact that certain LCBs were unwilling to support the study made the representativeness of the study weak.

### **6.2. Directions for Future Research**

This study mainly focused on exploring the concept of EE and on the crossover impact of EE from superiors to subordinates with LCBs. A study of similar nature can be conducted in different industries. The comparison of engagement levels between the public sector employees and the private sector would also provide a good ground for future research. A researcher can also explore the possibility of the direct opposite of this study; that is the crossover of the subordinate's level of engagement to his or her superiors. Another area for research would be the differences in the levels of engagement of employees of global organizations based in Sri Lanka and those of local organizations. Exploring the differences in the EE enhancing practices adopted in the West and in Sri Lanka would also be an interesting area to focus on.

### **6.3. Conclusion**

The paper is an exploration into the construct of employee engagement within the context of LCBs in Sri Lanka. It tries to identify the manner in which EE has received prominence in Sri Lanka and the extent of knowledge possessed by the managerial level employees of the research context.

It also examines the nature of crossover engagement of superiors to their subordinates emphasizing on important elements that leads towards crossover of engagement.

Through the findings it can be concluded that the superiors within these organizations did have only a very vague idea on what EE really is. However, there are certain practices adopted by them unknowingly which may enhance the level of engagement of their employees. However, the concept is not mature enough in the Sri Lanka context to a degree where it is measured and evaluated.

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