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BUILDING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Introduction

Employee engagement has a fundamental impact on the effectiveness and high performance of any organization. First of all, it helps retain employees at their workplace for a long time. It also contributes to the improvement of employee efficiency and effectiveness in their activities carried out for the organization. An engaged employee is more willing to take on additional tasks, has a positive attitude to his/her work and demonstrates initiative in creating changes and presenting ideas to improve the organization. Obviously, the benefits resulting from employee engagement are numerous and include various aspects of organization functioning.

The aim of the article is to characterize the elements that are crucial to developing employee engagement in the workplace. The article defines the ideas of engagement and presents the concept of commitment by J. Mayer and N. Allen who split it into three components: affective, normative and continuance. It also describes the determinants of engagement and characterizes the profile of an engaged employee. Moreover, an analysis is conducted of the Gallup Institute survey, presented in the State of the Global Workplace 2023 Report.

1. Concept of engagement

The term *employee engagement* is rather difficult to define and is often variously interpreted. There is a distinction between two approaches to engagement:

- one that is shared by advisory companies and is based on a practical approach,
- and the other one shared by researchers and based on a theoretical and research approach[1].

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[1] R. Mrówka, *Pojęcie zaangażowania pracowników we współczesnych naukach ekonomicznych i praktyce gospodarcze*j, „Nauki ekonomiczne w świetle nowych wyzwań gospodarczych" Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH w Warszawie, Warszawa 2010, p. 3.

The starting point in the study on employee engagement at workplace is the popular concept of Q12 introduced by the Gallup Institute[2]. The survey involves the identification of crucial areas that have an impact on employee engagement at workplace. It consists of a set of twelve questions, constructed on the basis of key analyses, the results of which directly influence the employee engagement level and the assessment of the effectiveness of their activities in the organization[3].

The most common definition of engagement is given by the International Education Society IES, according to which engagement is *a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employees*[4].

However, in the research approach, W. A. Kahn, who is considered the first researcher of the phenomenon of employee engagement, says that engagement involves employee's authentic inner attitude and willingness to devote his/her energy to achieving the organization's objectives and, consequently, to build his/her role in the organization [5]. W.A. Kahn studied not only employee engagement but also the lack of engagement at workplace. In his opinion, employee identification with the organization through emotional attachment to his/her company is the greatest determinant of engagement[6].

2. Employee engagement according to the Meyer and Allen model

Employee engagement is often defined as the employee's attitude towards his/her identification with the organization[7]. Key research on organizational commitment was presented by J. Mayer and N. Allen. Their commitment model was based on three assumptions

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[2] Ibidem, p. 2.
[3] B. Sewastianik, *Tajemniczy składnik sukcesu - zaangażowanie pracownika* „Nowe nurty w zarządzaniu i w ekonomii", Poltex w Warszawie, Warszawa 2004, pp. 6-7.
[4] D. Robinson, S. Perryman, S. Hayday, *The Drivers of Employee Engagement Report*, https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/408.pdf, p. 2, (Accessed: 1.12.2023).
[5] W. Kahn, *Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work*, „Academy of Management Journal" 2016, No. 33.
[6] R. Mrówka, *Pojęcie…*, op. cit., p. 6.
[7] M. Adamska-Chudzińska, *Zaangażowanie organizacyjne pracowników jako źródło uczestnictwa w organizacji*, Zeszyt Naukowy UEK, 2015, nr 8 (944), s. 48.

concerning adequate attitudes: rational, emotional and behavioral. These assumptions are closely related to the different mental states appropriate to behavior at work[8]:

- **affective commitment** is characterized as emotional commitment. Employees identify themselves with the organization and its values and have positive emotions towards their work. Employees with affective commitment are characterized by high quality of tasks performed and willingness to be in the organization. This commitment results in the minimization of such phenomena as employee turnover and absenteeism.

- **continuance commitment** is characterized as rational commitment. Employees identify themselves with the organization considering potential costs and losses they would experience after leaving the company. Employees with continuance commitment feel the need to stay in the organization most frequently due to limited opportunities or the lack of adequate offers from the labor market.

- **normative commitment** results from particular social norms. Employees have a strong sense of obligation to stay in the organization due to their sense of loyalty but also because they adopt an attitude consistent with the values and principles of the company. In such cases, the atmosphere in the workplace is based on mutual trust. It is typical for employees with a normative commitment to do their job because of a sense of duty[9].

It should be emphasized, that the key value is the commitment that is reflected in such attitudes of employees as:

- the employee speaks positively about the organization in which he/she works,
- the employee wants to stay in the organization and associates his/her future career plans with it,
- the employee engages in work by undertaking additional tasks[10].

The authors of the above model draw attention, among other things, to other factors that may have an impact om organizational commitment and stimulate a particular type of commitment:

- regarding **affective commitment**: using a range of the employee's valuable skills and abilities; engaging the employee in ambitious projects; including the employee in the

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[8] J. Moczydłowska, *Zaangażowanie pracowników - aspekty psychologiczne i organizacyjne*, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna" 2013, No. 4 (43), pp. 163-164.
[9] M. Adamska-Chudzińska, *Zaangażowanie…*, op. cit., p. 49.
[10] J. Moczydłowska, *Zaangażowanie…*, op. cit., p. 164.

decision-making and problem-solving processes in the organization; building a sense of fair treatment of employees also in terms of the financial aspect; developing company policies with the consideration of the employee needs; clear and open communication regarding the introduction of changes; appreciation of employee competences and skills; sense of security and comfort.

- regarding **continuance commitment:** introducing additional benefits and privileges that are offered by the company and unavailable outside (e.g., subsidies/co-financing); a lack of access to other employment opportunities; having skills that are not commonly desired on the labor market; the employee is the main source of income for his/her family.

- regarding **normative commitment**: actions taken by employers to increase the value and potential of their employees; the employee learns and accepts the norms, values and behaviors applicable in the organization; maintaining harmony between the practices in the organization and the culture of the local community[11].

3. Determinants of employee engagement in organization

Factors that influence and shape the level of employee engagement in organization include:

Work planning and organizing:
- compliance with technical requirements by the organization regarding occupational health and safety in accordance with legal regulations,
- provision by the organization of an easy access to the data, information, materials and resources that are necessary for employees to efficiently perform the tasks they are assigned with,
- inclusion of employees in decision-making processes and offering them the opportunity to influence company functioning in accordance with its policy.

Employee development:
- the organization provides the employees with prospects of career development,
- opportunities for promotion,
- regular training, thanks to which they gain new skills and experience,

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[11] M. Adamska-Chudzińska, *Zaangażowanie…*, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

- employees' knowledge, experience and potential are used and appreciated by the organization,
- employees have opportunities to undertake independent actions.

Employee remuneration principles:

- the organization makes sure that the employees have a sense of justice as regards their remuneration which is adequate to the contribution to work and the results achieved.

Interaction between the employee and his/her immediate superior:

- building authority in the eyes of employees by appropriate attitude, behavior and knowledge,
- appropriate manager's attitude and behavior to build trust among employees.

Atmosphere at work

- mutual interactions between employees in the workplace, understood as cooperation and team support,
- development of good relationships with colleagues,
- relationships in the organization that generate pleasant and positive atmosphere[12].

One should also mention the most important aspects that should be considered by organizations willing to build engagement among their employees:

1. Inclusion of employees in decision-making processes (employee participation).
2. The organization's consent to employees sharing ideas and suggestions in the workplace, which are taken into account by the management.
3. Appreciation and recognition of the work and contribution of employees to the development of the organization.
4. The organization's consent to employees shaping their responsibilities and ranges of activities.
5. The degree of the organization's commitment to ensuring the well-being of its employees[13].

The principle concerning the organization's consent to the possibility of sharing ideas and the appreciation of the employee's participation by superiors significantly stimulates creativity and innovativeness among employees[14]. The open attitude of the organization towards

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[12] A. Rudawska *Motywowanie do zaangażowania w organizację oraz życie społeczne i rodzinne* „Master of Business Administration" 1/2011 (116), p. 79.
[13] Ibidem, p. 80.
[14] R. Mrówka, *Pojęcie…*, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

employee initiatives not only increases engagement, but also creates conditions favorable to the generation of new, innovative solutions. As a result, the organization is growing, becomes more competitive and willing to adapt to the changing business environment, which is an added value.

4.   Profile of an engaged employee

An engaged employee:

* has the ability to create new and innovative ideas and solutions that he/she uses in the workplace,

* performs his/her duties in an efficient and effective manner having in mind a maximization of the effectiveness and productivity of the organization,

* is open to receiving feedback on his/her work, is not afraid of accepting constructive criticism and accepts changes necessary after the mistakes made,

* is satisfied with the work performed and can share positive energy and satisfaction with others,

* is open to changes in the organization,

* identifies with the organization and its values,

* is motivated to achieve better results and constantly develop his/her skills,

* acts in accordance with the organization's policy and is committed to its objectives, mission and strategy,

* is willing to get involved in the creation of the organization's culture[15].

It is worth emphasizing that a fully engaged employee not only performs his/her tasks in accordance with the requirements, but also engages in work beyond the duties that are not required by the employer. This implies extra effort taken for his/her own reason without waiting for the superior's instructions.

When employees go beyond the sphere of customer requirements and the expectations of their superiors, they help build valuable perception of the organization and generate a greater ability of the company to effectively compete on the market[16].

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[15] B. Sewastianik, *Tajemniczy składnik sukcesu - zaangażowanie pracownika* „Nowe nurty w zarządzaniu i w ekonomii" Poltex w Warszawie, Warszawa 2004, pp. 8-9.

[16] P. Zakobielska, *Rola zaangażowania pracowników w funkcjonowanie organizacji*, „ZARZĄDZANIE XLIV" 2017, No. 3, p. 127.

5. Engagement analysis based on the State of the Global Workplace 2023 Report

The Gallup Institute is a recognized global research agency established by George Gallup in 1935. In 1988 the Gallup Institute developed and patented a set of 12 precisely selected questions, referred to as the Q12 survey. This is an innovative tool that helps measure and analyze employee engagement in the organization and the employees' impact on various effectiveness measures. The Gallup Institute conducts annual employee engagement surveys and their results are presented in State of the Global Workplace reports. At present, such surveys are conducted in over 160 countries, including Poland.

According to the latest State of the Global Workplace 2023 Report, which is based on 2022 data, only an insignificant percentage of employees around the world (23%) are fully engaged and enthusiastic about their job[17]. The group of employees, referred to as T*hriving at work*, consists of employees who are satisfied with the job and take full ownership of the projects they perform. Moreover, they strongly identify with the organization's values. According to the report, there are 59% employees who are not engaged to work (Graph 1); they belong to the *Quiet Quitting* group. They put minimal effort into their work and are more exposed to stress and job burnout than their engaged colleagues. They feel lost and disconnected from the workplace, which has a negative impact on their efficiency and motivation. Employees who are referred to as *Loud Quitting* are actively disengaged, i.e. they loudly quit their work. This group accounts for 18% and it actively harms the organization, undermining its goals and challenging the employers[18].

It should be pointed out that South Asia is a global leader in employee engagement. The percentage of engagement in South Asia amounts to as much as 33%[19]. Looking over the years, the level of engagement according to the recent report shows an increasing trend as this is the highest result since 2009 when the Gallup Institute started research in this area. The Gallup's estimations show that low employee engagement cost global economy as much as 8.8 trillion USD[20].

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[17] *State of the Global Workplace: Global Insights,* https://www.2468group.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/state-of-the-global-workplace-2023-download.pdf, p. 4, (Accessed: 1.12.2023).

[18] Ibidem.

[19] *State of the Global Workplace: Global Insights*, https://www.2468group.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/state-of-the-global-workplace-2023-download.pdf, p. 3, (Accessed: 1.12.2023).

[20] Ibidem, p. 1.

Graph 1. Employee engagement in the world
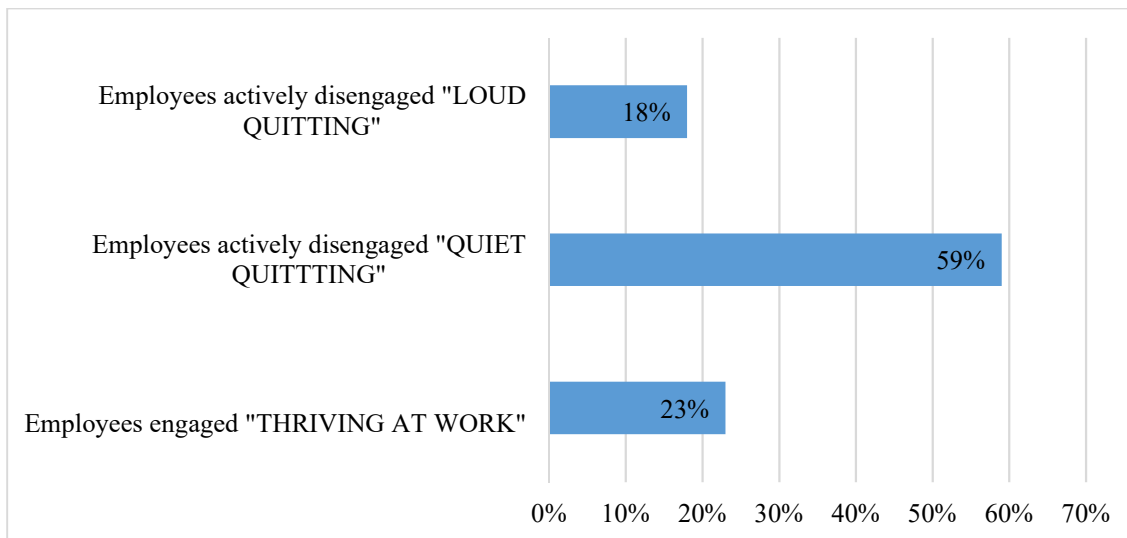
Source: Author's research based on *State of the Global Workplace: Global Insights*, https://www.2468group.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/state-of-the-global-workplace-2023-download.pdf, (Accessed: 1.12.2023).

In 2022, employee engagement amounted to only 13% (Graph 2). Such a low percentage suggests that most employees were not fully engaged in their professional tasks. Moreover, this number went down in comparison to 2021, when the figure was 14%. Additionally, as many as 72% employees were not engaged in work and 15% were actively disengaged[21].

Graph 2. Employee engagement in Europe
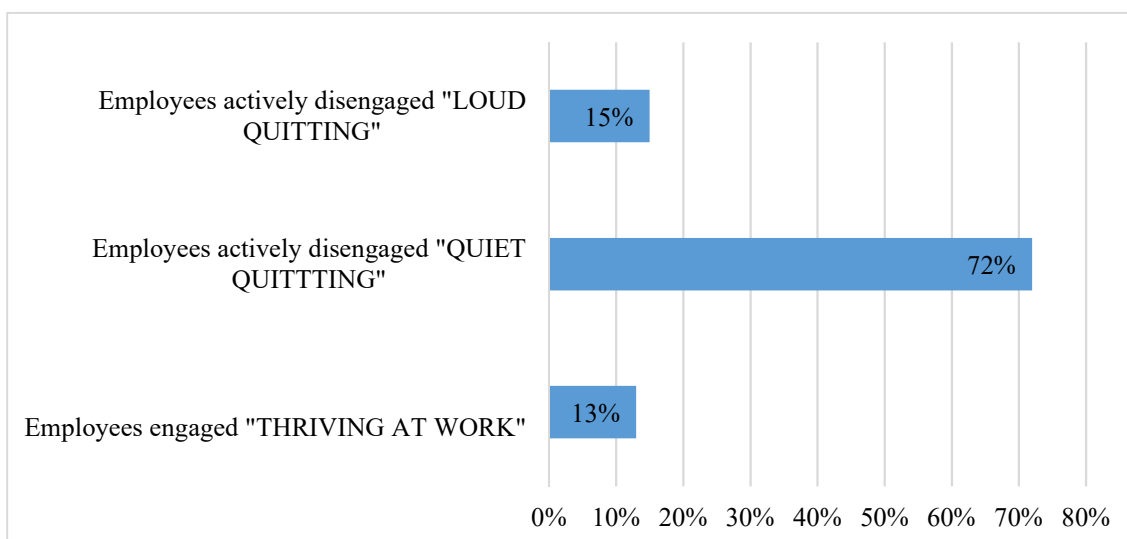
Source: Author's research based on *State of the Global Workplace: Global Insights*, https://www.2468group.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/state-of-the-global-workplace-2023-download.pdf, (Accessed: 1.12.2023).

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[21] Ibidem, p. 30.

In 2022, the level of engagement in Poland was the same as in 2021 and amounted to 14%. Thus, Poland ranked 27th among 38 countries that were surveyed. The leaders were: Romania with the engagement level of 35%, Northern Macedonia (29%) and Iceland (26%). The lowest value of engagement was noted in Spain (10%), France (7%) and Italy (only 5%)[22].

Conclusions

The aim of the article was to describe the elements that are crucial in building employee engagement in the workplace. The concept of engagement is a general one and may be variously defined. J. Mayer and N. Allen distinguish three types of engagement: affective, continuance and normative engagement. A key role in the organization is played by affective engagement, where the employee not only identifies with the company and its values but also is more efficient, creative and innovative. Emotional/affective engagement constitutes the highest value in the company. The most important factors that have an impact on the development of employee engagement include employee participation - opportunities to share their creative ideas or suggestions. Equally important is the organization's consent for employees to define their work and its ability to offer working conditions that contribute to employee satisfaction. Building engagement also involves providing appropriate career development paths that will expand the employees' skills and competences. The manager has a fundamental role in developing employee engagement and he/she should care about good relationships with employees. The manager's role is also to express appreciation, implement the employees' new ideas for improving organization and to provide feedback after each project is completed.

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[4] Mrówka R. *Pojęcie zaangażowania pracowników we współczesnych naukach ekonomicznych i praktyce gospodarczej*, „Nauki ekonomiczne w świetle nowych wyzwań gospodarczych" Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH w Warszawie, Warszawa 2010.

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[22] *State of the Global Workplace: Global Insights*, https://www.2468group.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/state-of-the-global-workplace-2023-download.pdf, p. 73, (Accessed: 1.12.2023).

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[9]   Zakobielska P., *Rola zaangażowania pracowników w funkcjonowanie organizacji,* „ZARZĄDZANIE XLIV" 2017, No. 3.

Abstract

The paper characterizes the concept of engagement with respect to the theoretical and practical approach. It also presents the ideas of J. Meyer and M. Allen who distinguish three aspects of commitment: affective, continuance and normative. It also presents the determinants of employee engagement in the organization and discusses the most important ones which include employee participation, prospects of career development, good atmosphere in the workplace, recognition and appreciation by the manager. The author identified the key features of an engaged employee: identification with the organization, positive attitude to work, willingness to develop professionally and achieve good results, taking on additional tasks. An engagement analysis in the workplace was conducted on the basis of the State of the Global Workplace: 2023 Report.

Key words

Engagement, engaged employee, building employee engagement