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Critical analysis of drivers of employee engagement and their impact on job performance

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Orientation: This study examines the impact of drivers of employee engagement on job performance and investigates the relationship between employee engagement and job performance.

Research purpose: The purpose of this study is to assess how various factors, such as job characteristics, organisational support, support from superiors, rewards, recognition, and organisational justice, influence employee engagement and subsequently affect job performance.

Motivation for the study: The researcher is motivated by the need to understand the drivers of employee engagement and their implications for job performance in organisations, particularly in the context of the Sultanate of Oman.

Research approach/design and method: The study was conducted based on a closed-ended questionnaire across various industries in the Sultanate of Oman, focusing on three levels of management: junior, middle, and senior. Non-probability convenience sampling was utilised. The study employed models of drivers leading to employee engagement and assessed their impact on job performance.

Main findings: The study reveals that drivers of employee engagement significantly affect job performance across all levels of management. Job characteristics and rewards and recognition emerged as strong predictors of job performance.

Practical/managerial implications: Organisations are encouraged to prioritise the development and nurturing of employee engagement, fostering a two-way relationship between employers and employees. Engaged employees contribute to higher retention rates, increased productivity, profitability, growth, and customer satisfaction.

Contribution/value-add: This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between employee engagement and job performance in the Sultanate of Oman, offering guidance for the development of effective employee engagement strategies aimed at improving organisational outcomes.

Keywords: employee engagement; job performance; productivity; relationship; rewards.

Introduction

Orientation

In today's competitive business environment, organisations recognise the fact that their most valuable asset is their workforce. The strategic management of human resources has emerged as a key differentiator, enabling companies to adapt, innovate, and excel (Barney & Wright, 1998). As markets become increasingly complex, investing in employee engagement is crucial for sustaining high performance and achieving long-term success (Alam et al., 2023; Barreiro & Treglown, 2020; Saks, 2006). Human resources bring a competitive advantage by contributing knowledge, skills, and capabilities to an organisation (Hafiza et al., 2011). Employee engagement is an important predictor of job performance (Christian et al., 2011). Engaged employees are more likely to contribute to a high-performance organisation (Mishra et al., 2014). Organisations constantly seek solutions to motivate their employees to be more engaged in their work (Cole et al., 2012). Engaged employees are more efficient and productive, add to the top line, and are more likely to stay with the company (Dabke & Patole, 2014). Engagement refers to the extent of emotional and intellectual dedication an employee demonstrates towards their organisation and its achievements. Engaged employees are inclined to speak favourably about the organisation, exhibit greater retention rates, and contribute to its daily effectiveness (Mishra et al., 2014). Their profound commitment to their employers precipitates significant

enhancements in business outcomes, such as decreased absenteeism, turnover, shrinkage, safety incidents, and product defects.

Employee engagement is continuous and highly specific to each organisation (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) believed that an organisation and its staff have a synergetic bond in which they depend on each other to achieve their desires. Engagement must then be an ongoing process rather than an individual event. Employee engagement can also contribute to organisational success. Having satisfied employees who perform well, are in the right jobs, and are present and committed helps foster engagement (Bin & Shmailan, 2015).

Employee engagement and performance outcomes are interconnected; heightened levels of employee engagement correspond to increased feelings of belongingness, enthusiasm, passion, and work knowledge. Consequently, this fosters improved employer–employee relations, resulting in reduced confusion, fewer conflicts, decreased absenteeism, lower turnover rates, and enhanced role comprehension. This role of knowledge increases effectiveness and efficiency and leads employees to take up extra work or duties to further the organisation's performance and reputation, expediting its process of advancement (Tanwar, 2017).

Research purpose

According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), employee engagement is an 'emergent working condition and a positive cognitive, emotional and behavioural state directed toward organisational outcomes'. Studies on employee engagement have become important in recent academic research because organisations face challenges in improving the performance and productivity of employees from different generations (Douglas & Roberts, 2020). This situation poses a significant challenge for both academic researchers in organisational studies and professionals in the field concerning how to improve employee engagement, which is believed to influence organisational performance and outcomes (Harter et al., 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to assess the impact of employee engagement factors on job performance, investigate the relationship between employee engagement and job performance, and suggest practices to improve employee engagement in the Sultanate of Oman.

Conceptual model and literature review

Many researchers have tried to identify drivers of employee engagement and developed models to draw implications for managers. In this study, the author has developed a conceptual model consisting of job characteristics, organisational support, rewards and recognition, and organisational justice, all of which lead to employee engagement and contribute to job performance (see Figure 1).

Gallup characterises employee engagement as the active participation in and passion for one's work (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Turner & Turner, 2020). Employee engagement entails a favourable disposition exhibited by the employee towards the organisation and its principles. A fully engaged employee comprehends the business environment and collaborates with peers to enhance job efficacy for the organisation's advancement. Fostering engagement demands concerted efforts from the organisation, necessitating a two-way relationship between employers and employees (Robinson et al. 2004).

The connection between employee engagement and important business results is considerable. Studies have revealed a positive link between employee engagement and organisational performance outcomes (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).
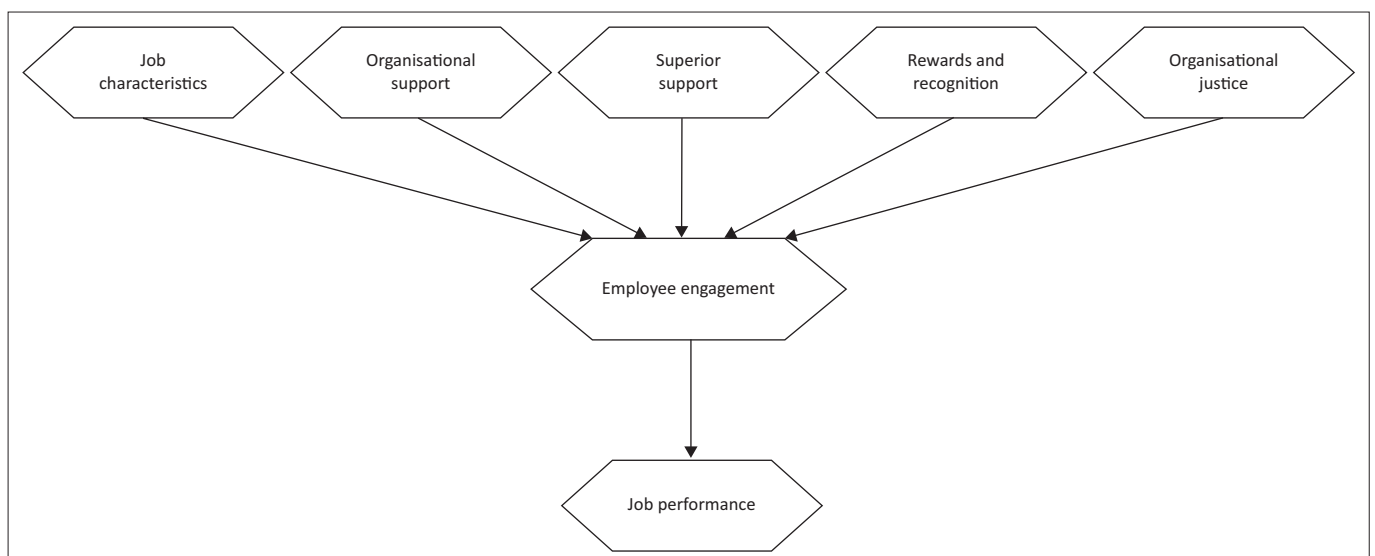

FIGURE 1: Drivers of employees' engagement and contribution to job performance.

Job characteristics are regarded as the 'system factors' that can impact employees' behavioural outcomes (Williams, 2002). This is because of the influence of job attractiveness on the level of effort that employees are willing to invest in their job responsibilities (Johari & Yahya, 2016). Empirical evidence (Christen et al. 2006; Grant, 2008; Wood et al., 2012) has demonstrated a significant and direct influence of job characteristics on job performance.

According to Organisational Support Theory, employees develop overall perceptions concerning the extent to which their organisations furnish sufficient resources and appreciate them as individuals, encompassing the probability of the organisation rewarding their performance and assisting them during difficult circumstances (Cullen et al., 2014). A positive perception of the support employees receive from an organisation contributes to beneficial outcomes for both the employees and the organisation itself. Additionally, organisational support is associated with increased levels of job satisfaction and enhanced performance. It increases performance in standard work-related activities, helps surpass the predetermined standards, and increases organisational identification significantly (Köse, 2016; Turunç & Çelik, 2010).

Research has shown that frontline supervision plays a pivotal role in fostering employee engagement, underscoring the significance of proficient communication and managerial support (Mishra et al., 2014). Sparrowe and Liden (2005) acknowledged the fact that the quality of the relationship between supervisors and subordinates correlates with engagement. Similarly, Brunetto et al. (2013) proposed that the supervisor–subordinate relationship affects teamwork quality, which in turn positively influences engagement levels.

Hafiza et al. (2011) found that reward systems increase employee satisfaction, which directly influences performance. According to San et al. (2012), if an organisation fails to reward employees, employee performance will decrease; furthermore, an efficient reward system can be a good motivator, but an inefficient reward system demotivates employees and causes low productivity, internal conflicts, absenteeism, high turnover, a lack of commitment and loyalty, lateness, and grievances. Therefore, organisations must develop strategic reward systems to retain competent employees and maintain a competitive advantage (Edirisooriya, 2014). Ajila and Abiola (2004) concluded that reward systems increase employee performance by enhancing skills, knowledge, and abilities to achieve organisational objectives.

Conversely, the impact of organisational justice may be contingent upon cultural context and could have a diminished role in fostering employee engagement within Eastern cultures, where leaders tend to adopt a more directive approach in decision-making processes (He et al., 2014). Organisational justice refers to an employee's perceptions of their organisation's policies and procedures (Loi et al., 2012). According to research by Brebels et al. (2011), fairness in the workplace is a significant factor that encourages cooperative behaviour and improves job performance. Conversely, as noted by Skarlicki et al. (2008), a perceived lack of fairness can result in harmful and unethical behaviours like retaliation.

Research design
Research approach
This research was conducted within various industries in the Sultanate of Oman. Data collection, processing, and analysis were carried out from April 2023 to June 2023. Primary and secondary data are used in this research. The primary data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire, and the secondary data were obtained through relevant literature.

Research method
The primary method utilised in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire. This questionnaire focused on evaluating several drivers of employee engagement, including job characteristics, organisational support, support from superiors, rewards and recognition, and organisational justice. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire included 35 statements, and it was pretested. Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.839, meeting the reliability condition.

Sample definition and selection
The study's sample was drawn from several sectors in Oman, including oil, gas, and energy; manufacturing; retail; education; information technology; construction; banking and insurance; and services. The focus was on employees across three management levels: junior, middle, and senior. Using a non-probability convenience sampling method, participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to partake in the study. This approach was deemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of the research and the aim to capture diverse perspectives across industries.

Research procedure
The research procedure commenced with the researcher providing a detailed explanation of the study's purpose prior to data collection, ensuring transparency and ethical compliance. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Arab Open University, Oman, adhering to all stipulated ethical requirements, including confidentiality assurances.

Subsequently, a validity test was conducted involving academicians, practitioners, and an English proofreading expert to assess the appropriateness of formulated objectives and statements. Following this, a reliability test was performed on the questionnaire, which consisted of 35 statements, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.839, meeting reliability standards. As this falls within the range from 0.60 to 0.90, one might suggest that all the scales met the reliability condition (Hair et al., 1998).

The questionnaire was then distributed directly to the targeted population encompassing the oil, gas, and energy; manufacturing; retail; education; information technology; construction; banking and insurance; and service sectors of the Sultanate of Oman, with data collection and analysis conducted using SPSS software. Out of 151 initial samples, 133 were deemed valid after excluding instances of missing or duplicate information.

Furthermore, rigorous evaluation led to the identification and removal of 12 erroneous samples, resulting in a final dataset of 121 samples for subsequent analysis and hypothesis testing. Throughout the process, meticulous attention was paid to maintain accuracy and integrity in data collection and analysis procedures.

Statistical analysis

The study conducted a comprehensive statistical analysis to derive insights from the collected data. Descriptive statistics summarised the variables, while inferential techniques such as ANOVA, Chi-square tests, Pearson correlation analysis, and multiple regression were employed to explore relationships and test hypotheses. This rigorous analysis facilitated the identification of patterns and predictive factors related to employee engagement and job performance, enabling evidence-based recommendations for enhancing engagement practices in Oman.

Survey results

The demographic analysis provided insights into the respondents' composition based on gender, age, management level, and type of organisation, accompanied by their corresponding frequencies and percentages. Notably, 64% of respondents identified as male, whereas 36% were female. Age-wise, 10% were under 25 years old, representing recent graduates, while 45% fell within the 26–40 years old age range, and 35% were aged between 41 years and 55 years. Moreover, 10% of respondents were above 55 years old.

In terms of management hierarchy, 15% held lower-level positions, 48% occupied middle-management roles, and 37% were part of upper management. The distribution across various organisational sectors indicated 17.2% in oil, gas, and energy and 26.4% in education, with the remaining percentages dispersed across sectors such as manufacturing, retail, construction, banking and insurance, information technology, and service.

Multivariate test on management levels and drivers of employee engagement

> **H0:** There is no significant difference in the drivers of employee engagement between management levels.

One can infer from Table 1 that the test yielded a significant result (Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.934$, $F [10, 228] = 2.791$, $p = 0.001$). A separate ANOVA was conducted for each dependent variable, with each ANOVA evaluated at an alpha level of 0.05.

Table 2 shows that a significant difference was found in organisational support between management levels: $F (2,118) = 1.425$, $p = 0.045$.

The estimated marginal means across management levels reveal distinct values for key factors impacting employee engagement. For organisational support, middle management demonstrates the highest mean score of 19.8889, followed by senior management with 19.1556 and junior management with 19.5517. Similarly, middle management leads in supervisor support with a mean of 20.0862, while senior management follows with 19.1111 and junior management with 20.4444. In rewards and recognition, middle management scores the highest (17.5345), followed by senior management (16.5556) and junior management (16.5000). Lastly, for organisational justice, middle management achieves the highest mean score (18.8448), with senior management at 17.9333 and junior management at 18.7778. These findings underscore the substantial influence of management levels on various aspects of employee engagement, suggesting a partial rejection of the null hypothesis (H0).

TABLE 1: Multivariate tests‡ on management levels and drivers of employee engagement.

Effect	Measure	Value	F†	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig. §
Management levels	Wilks' Lambda	0.934	2.791	10.000	228.000	0.000

df, degree of freedom; Sig., Significance.
†, Exact statistic.
‡, Design: Intercept + Management Levels.
§, Computed using alpha = 0.05.

TABLE 2: Tests of between-subjects effects on management levels and drivers of employee engagement.

Source	Dependent variable	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Management levels	Job characteristics	7.966	2	3.983	0.325	0.723
	Organisational support	59.296	2	19.648	1.425	0.045
	Supervisor support	33.517	2	16.759	0.913	0.332
	Rewards and recognition	29.925	2	14.962	0.551	0.578
	Organisational justice	22.733	2	11.367	0.647	0.525
Error	Job characteristics	1446.034	118	12.255	-	-
	Organisational support	2454.952	118	20.805	-	-
	Supervisor support	1777.458	118	15.063	-	-
	Rewards and recognition	3206.042	118	27.170	-	-
	Organisational justice	2071.515	118	17.555	-	-

df, degree of freedom; Sig., Significance.

Association between management levels and employee engagement levels (H1)

A Chi-square analysis was carried out to find the significant association between management levels and employee engagement levels:

H0: There is no significant association between management levels and employee engagement levels.

H1: There is a significant association between management levels and employee engagement levels.

Table 3 shows a significant association between management levels and employee engagement levels at 5%. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The table shows that employee engagement is high for middle management.

Relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels (H2)

Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to find the relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels:

H0: There is no significant relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels.

H2: There is a significant relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels.

Table 4 shows a significant relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels at 1%. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The table shows that all drivers of employee engagement are positive and highly correlated with employee engagement levels.

TABLE 3: Association between management levels and employee engagement levels.

Management levels	Employee engagement levels		Total
	Low	High	
Junior			
n	7	11	18
%	29.0	11.0	15.0
Middle			
n	11	47	58
%	46.0	48.0	48.0
Senior			
n	6	39	45
%	25.0	40.0	37.0
Total (n)	**24**	**97**	**121**

Note: Statistical inference: $\chi^2 = 11.08$**; $df = 2$.
df, degree of freedom.
**, 5% Significance level.

TABLE 4: Relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels.

Drivers of employee engagement	Employee engagement levels (R)	Statistical inference	
		N	p
Job characteristics	0.528	121	0.001
Organisational support	0.497	121	0.001
Supervisor support	0.482	121	0.001
Rewards and recognition	0.512	121	0.001
Organisational justice	0.459	121	0.001

Association between employee engagement levels and job performance levels (H3)

A Chi-square analysis was carried out to find the significant association between employee engagement levels and job performance levels:

H0: There is no significant association between employee engagement levels and job performance levels.

H3: There is a significant association between employee engagement levels and job performance levels.

Table 5 shows a significant association between employee engagement levels and job performance levels at 5%. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The table shows that high employee engagement levels result in high job performance levels.

Relationship between employee engagement levels and job performance levels (H4)

Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to find the relationship between employee engagement levels and job performance levels:

H0: There is no significant relationship between employee engagement levels and job performance levels.

H4: There is a significant relationship between employee engagement levels and job performance levels.

The analysis indicates a significant relationship between employee engagement levels and job performance levels, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.295 and a

TABLE 5: Association between employee engagement levels and job performance levels.

Employee engagement level	Job performance level		Total
	Low	High	
Low			
n	19.0	5.0	24.0
%	45.0	6.0	20.0
High			
n	23.0	74.0	97.0
%	55.0	94.0	80.0
Total (n)	**42.0**	**79.0**	**121.0**

Note: Statistical inference: $\chi^2 = 12.43$**; $df = 1$.
df, degree of freedom.
**, 5% Significance level.

TABLE 6: Multiple regression for job performance based on drivers of employee engagement.

Independent factors	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		p
	B	Standard error	Beta	T	
(Constant)	33.083	3.658	-	9.044	0.000
Job characteristics	0.486	0.257	0.248	2.889	0.041*
Organisational support	0.168	0.222	0.113	0.755	0.452
Supervisor support	0.118	0.173	0.067	0.682	0.496
Rewards and recognition	0.533	0.170	0.406	3.140	0.002**
Organisational justice	0.028	0.239	0.017	0.118	0.906

Note: Statistical inference: $R = 0.534$; $R^2 = 0.385$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.354$. $F = 9.182$**; $df = 5.115$.
df, degree of freedom.
**, Significance at 0.01 level; *, Significance at 0.05 level.

p-value of 0.001. This suggests a positive correlation between employee engagement and job performance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Impact of drivers of employee engagement on job performance (H5)

Multiple regression was used to predict the impact of drivers of employee engagement on job performance. Table 6 displays the unstandardised regression coefficient (B), the unstandardised standard error of regression coefficients (SE B), the standardised regression coefficient (β), R^2, and *F* for changes in R^2.

Table 6 shows that the drivers of employee engagement together explain 38.5% of the variation in job performance. The adjusted R^2 (0.35) for the overall study on the five factors shown in Table 6 suggests a moderate effect on job performance. The *F* value (9.182; degree of freedom [*df*] 5.115) is significant, which indicates that the model fits well. The table shows that job characteristics and rewards and recognition significantly impact job performance. The independent variable with a higher level of β has a stronger impact on the dependent variable. This study's results reveal that rewards and recognition (β = 0.406, *p* < 0.01) are the most influential factors impacting on job performance, followed by job characteristics (β = 0.248, *p* < 0.05); both show significant and positive influences. The Standardised Coefficients Beta column gives the coefficients of significant independent variables in the regression equation $Y = 0.248$ (Job Characteristics) + 0.406 (Rewards and Recognition).

This suggests that Job Characteristics and Rewards and Recognition are significant predictors and play significant roles in job performance.

Discussion
Outline of the results

The results reveal a significant effect of the drivers of employee engagement across the levels of management. Employee engagement was measured and found to be highest in middle management. Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to find the relationship between drivers of employee engagement and employee engagement levels. The findings show that all drivers of employee engagement are positively and highly correlated with employee engagement levels. Multiple regression was performed for job performance based on drivers of employee engagement. This comprehensive approach highlights that all drivers of employee engagement are positively and significantly correlated with both subjective and objective performance measures.

The results underscore the importance of addressing specific drivers of engagement, such as job characteristics and recognition and reward systems, to enhance organisational performance. These findings emphasise the need for tailored engagement strategies across different management levels to maximise employee engagement and ultimately improve job performance.

Practical implications

This research has several practical implications. Firstly, the findings suggest that managers should be aware of the positive impact of various drivers of employee engagement. Secondly, this study further enhances our comprehension of the significance accorded by top management to their responsibility in preserving and enhancing a firm's reputation (Chetty & Price, 2024). Employee engagement should not be a one-time exercise, but it should instead be integrated into the company culture (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Prior research has shown that organisations that invest in employees are viewed as better employers by external audiences (Gill, 2010). This study emphasises the roles that job characteristics, organisational support, support from superiors, rewards and recognition, organisational justice, and employee engagement play in job performance. By incorporating both subjective and objective measures of job performance, our findings suggest that organisations benefit from a holistic approach to performance assessment. This includes leveraging objective metrics alongside employee self-assessments and peer reviews to capture a complete picture of job performance.

Organisations characterised by high levels of employee engagement experience enhanced employee retention because of decreased turnover rates and reduced intentions to leave the company. Moreover, they exhibit heightened levels of productivity, profitability, growth, and customer satisfaction. Conversely, enterprises with disengaged employees encounter inefficiencies, talent attrition, diminished employee commitment, and elevated absenteeism. They demonstrate diminished customer orientation, reduced productivity, and lower operating and net profit margins (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009) underscored the role of engagement in allowing employees to invest themselves in their work and fostering a sense of self-efficacy. Research suggests that engaged employees may experience improved health and harbour positive attitudes towards their work and the organisation. Additionally, engaged employees demonstrate superior task performance with fewer errors compared to their disengaged counterparts (Gonring, 2008).

Organisations are encouraged to adopt 'radical transparency', prioritising communication with employees as a fundamental practice. By disseminating information widely, companies foster a sense of inclusion among employees and cultivate a shared commitment to the organisation's mission. This engenders a foundation of trust between the organisation and its employees, thereby promoting employee engagement (Mishra et al., 2014). Additionally, top management should ensure that employees have access to necessary resources, provide adequate training to enhance their competencies, implement reward systems, cultivate a unique corporate culture that values diligence and preserves success narratives, and establish robust performance management mechanisms.

Limitations and recommendations

The study has some limitations. Firstly, this research employed convenience sampling to accomplish its objectives. Therefore,

the limitations associated with convenience sampling apply to this study. Secondly, the sample size is another limitation, as it is insufficient to represent all industries.

To foster engagement, companies are advised to practise transparency, starting with open communication with employees. Providing resources, training, establishing reward mechanisms, fostering a corporate culture that values hard work, and developing a robust performance management system are essential strategies for top management. Organisations in the Sultanate of Oman must develop effective employee engagement strategies that include value-added activities to generate future improvement in job performance.

This study significantly advances the field of organisational behaviour by identifying key drivers of employee engagement and assessing their impact on job performance across management levels. Through rigorous statistical analysis, it provides empirical evidence supporting the theoretical link between employee engagement and organisational outcomes, such as productivity and profitability. The study enriches theoretical understanding by emphasising the importance of integrating employee engagement into organisational culture, highlighting its role as a fundamental aspect of organisational functioning. Additionally, it offers practical insights for managers, bridging the gap between theory and practice and guiding the development of effective engagement strategies. By identifying areas for future research, the study contributes to ongoing discourse, paving the way for further empirical investigations and theoretical development in this field.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of employee engagement factors on job performance, investigate the relationship between employee engagement and job performance, and suggest practices to improve employee engagement in the Sultanate of Oman.

The analysis of the data involved the utilisation of various statistical tools, revealing a significant impact of employee engagement drivers across management levels. Particularly, engagement was found to be highest among middle management. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to ascertain the relationship between these drivers and engagement levels, indicating a positive and highly correlated association. Additionally, multiple regression was performed to assess job performance based on engagement drivers, with results highlighting the significant predictive roles of job characteristics and rewards and recognition.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contributions

M.A.-H. contributed to the conceptualisation, design, and implementation of the research, analysis of the results, and writing of the article.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Arab Open University Ethical Research Committee (no. 105/23).

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, M.A-H., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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