THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE FULFILLMENT OF EMPLOYEE NEEDS IN THE BANI WORLD TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, WORK EFFECTIVENESS, AND WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

In a chaotic world, referred to as the BANI world where anxiety is at its peak, the Indian workforce was in dilemma to return back to the office. From 2019 onwards, companies across all sectors have witnessed dual disruption, global health crisis, and digitalization at an exponential rate. In order to sustain this volatility, Companies have come up with innovative strategies and policies to mitigate and to be able to retain employees. Redefining work strategies was welcomed as employees could successfully manage work and life balance. The two years of employee experience while working have also made people realize the importance of life outside work and health. Because of this great realization, employees have begun to question if returning back to the office is "Worth It".

The paper focuses on this challenge and attempts to highlight the relationship of employee expectations, well-being, work effectiveness, and engagement. The solution is based on the responses collected from 244 professionals from the Indian It sector. Multiple regression was used to predict the contribution of employee experience drivers (employee needs) to employee engagement, work effectiveness, and well Being. Empathetic leadership, well-being, compensation, etc were found to be the key employee needs.

Keywords: Employee Needs, Employee Experience, Employee Engagement, Work Effectiveness, Well-Being.

Introduction

Throughout history, mankind has been subjected to unforeseen events time after time. It may be a natural calamity like an earthquake or volcanic eruption, it may be a political or social uprising or war or it may be a global pandemic that puts us through an existential crisis. Throughout history, the human race has successfully overcome all of these. However, it is not without a price. Each of these events teaches us something and makes us wiser. To incorporate learning into our lives, we undergo a process called social reform. Vladimir Lenin once said, "There are decades where nothing happens and there are weeks where decades happen."(Friedman, 2014) This generation is making it a usual affair to live these kinds of weeks. Companies need and have come up with innovative strategies and policies to mitigate the problems of the pandemic in order to sustain in this volatile world and to be able to retain the employees of this generation, which comprises the largest chunk of today's workforce.

The need to design new policies and strategies is imperative in towards world of VUCA and BANI. While the companies focused on business and people strategies to navigate successfully in the VUCA world, covid 19 has forced us to face a new world that is Brittle, Anxiety, Non-Linearity, and Incomprehensible. Covid 19 the biggest health crisis has bought about chaos, destabilizing people management practices to a large extent. The policies of today are not uniform; there is a stark difference between measures employed by similar organizations. For example, some organizations are endorsing working from home as long as the employees wished and others were planning to call employees to the office as soon as it was safe to do so. It would not be wrong to state, that organizations have taken tough decisions to meet the people management needs during the Pandemic. But the challenge today is whether are these practices suitable enough to meet the employee's expectations in the new normal. The new normal in the BANI world, where social economic events and political events have callously created more chaos than before.

Covid 19 have created a new experience that was quite different from that of the pre covid era. The unexpected disturbance caused by COVID-19 made it possible for almost all organizations to work in virtual or telework-

driven workplaces, with the infrastructure and systems in place to support employees facing these sudden workplace changes (Burrell, 2020)(Shipman 2021). Many stressors such as lack of childcare, home-school responsibilities, and concerns for the job and financial security for all workers (Fox, 2020), leading some employees to struggle with the work-life balance (Fox, 2020) were responsible for raised mental and physical issues. However new work policies and "work from home" hybrid work models have been successful during the pandemic period to keep up the business afloat. Employees benefited as they managed to strike a balance between work and personal life, resulting in lower stress, and women employees in particular benefited from the flexibility of work. (Pillai & Prasad, 2022). The impact of Workplace flexibility, environmental conditions of home offices, and organizational support (Yang, 2021) have been positive on productivity, satisfaction with working from home, and work-life balance during the pandemic. While the employees have had positive experiences with WFM arrangements, companies believed that there is no substitute to personal collaborations, but the challenge is that employees have resistance to return back to the office, they have enjoyed the flexibility, autonomy, and feeling of safety that came with work from arrangements.

Creating work infrastructure to enable work from home was a big challenge at the start of the pandemic, and getting back employees to the office is a bigger challenge that employers are facing today. This paper aims to study the relationship between the experience employees had while they were working from home and resistance to return back to home. The study also throws some light on the new behavior employees are exhibiting at work "worth it" equation and quite quitting.

Literature Review

Organizations in the current periods from 2020 till date have witnessed dual disruption with automation and covid 19 creating a world that is Brittle, Anxiety, Non-Linearity, and Incomprehensible. BANI as a framework fits well to describe the workplace and employee experience better than ever. Employees are anxious about almost everything from the quality of their jobs, and mental health issues to managing their homes, companies did a commendable job by designing policies to meet the basic needs of safety, stability, and security during the first phase of the COVID-19 crisis. Research has shown that employees working remotely had a positive impact on daily work, were more engaged, and had a strong sense of well-being. According to the survey conducted by Mckinsey, more than 80% of the employees have stated that leaders have responded appropriately, and acted proactively for employees' safety and security. (Jonathan, 2020.)The quick response of the organization to meet the needs of the employees has had a strong tangible impact in the form of increased productivity. However, these needs are evolving forcing organizations to create more sophisticated and customized approaches as we enter the phase of "return back to work".

Redefined employee needs

The needs and expectations of employees in the post-pandemic world have changed. The focus is more on trust, social cohesion, and the purpose of work. Employees want to work in more collaborative teams and for their contributions to be recognized. The Pandemic has redefined effective work as being well-equipped with skills and knowledge to complete the job effectively with limited resources and time. They desire clear responsibilities and opportunities to learn and grow. They expect their personal sense of purpose to align with that of their organization. And they want an appropriate physical and digital environment that gives them the flexibility to achieve that elusive work–life balance. Employees are also feeling exhausted and overwhelmed and are questioning what work means.(Stefan Moritz, 2021) Weighing the outcomes to work and the impact of work on personal interest and family life, employees are trying to seek answers to the new "worth it equation." This has resulted in either employees resigning to find a more meaningful work life balance or resorting to quite quitting.

According to Microsoft, "Employees' 'worth it' equation what people want from work and what they're willing to give in return has changed. The power dynamic is shifting, and perks like free food and a corner office are no longer what people value most." Employees are taking control of their time spent on work and how and why they work. This is attributed to the realization of family time or personal time during covid. Another important fallout of this realization is "quite quitting". It is the new buzzword at the workplace, where employees do the bare minimum of the required job, not just because of burnout but also because they reject the live-to-work lifestyle. The need is to take control of the work and not let the work control them.

Need-based theories over the years have explained the importance of understanding the needs of the employees and the impact that it has on motivation. The organization this time around needs to do the same if they have to motivate their talented employees to come back to the office full-time. Work from home during the first and second phase of covid 19 and the hybrid model currently, are need-based work models that have helped companies.

Organizations can offer an excellent employee experience (EX) by captivating the needs and feelings seriously at such a crucial time. Use the insights to develop strategies that can negate the behaviors of quite quitting by creating a strong "worth it" equation for the employees. The starting point is to identify the needs that are of immense value.

Research conducted by Microsoft has shown a strong correlation between employees' stated needs and the underlying drivers of their engagement, well-being, and work effectiveness. Over the years, extensive research has been done to study the needs of employees. According to the weforum, the dynamic of today's talent market is shifting as employees adopt new priorities, and reinvent the way they want to work, where, and why of the working life. The power lies in the hands of the employees(talent) as they dictate the employers to reinvent workplace policies to suit their changing needs.   The two years ordeal of living with the virus have made people rethink their lives, jobs, and career. The expectation around work happiness has increased, employees believe that work happiness has a great impact on the happiness back home. The work content matters more than ever before, the expectation around work is feeling energized, a sense of accomplishment, and a sense of belonging, these drivers will make them happy at work. (Jack, 2021). Working from home has changed the way employees have worked and found a balance between work and life. Need to continue to maintain the work-life balance, and find time to spend with family, new interest has pushed the return-to-work arrangement. The employees along with these needs also showed unchanged expectations regarding Compensation, job titles, the status of working at a particular company, stock options, and growth opportunities post covid. According to the survey conducted by the manpower group, Employees demand flexibility not just in work time but also autonomy over when they work; choosing start and end times for their work. Not just this, the relationship with the boss has also seen a transformation. The need to decide where, when, which, and how to work has changed the relationship with the leader. Employees want bosses and leaders that can be trusted and supportive managers who can empathize with the changing needs. The Pandemic has made it impossible to ignore issues with physical and mental health. Employees expect companies to support them in strengthening their mental health.

Research has shown that there is a profound impact on engagement, work effectiveness, and employee well-being when employee needs are met.

Research Methodology
The researcher has provided operational definitions for the purpose of this study and provided sub-variables that are included under each heading.

Operational Definitions
1) Well-being: Employees are classified based on their responses as positive, neutral, and negative state well-being. A positive state of well-being is defined as a broad sense of security, meaningful work, and job security.
2) Work effectiveness: was measured by asking employees if their daily work had been positively affected, negatively affected, and not affected by covid 19 work models such as work-from-home and hybrid models.
3) Engagement: Employees were classified as engaged, passive, or disengaged based on the responses based for the questions on work, organization, and social engagement.

A survey was conducted online and a questionnaire was circulated to 117 employees belonging to the Indian IT sector. The Indian IT sector was considered for the survey as IT is a matured industry where work from home and flexibility needs of the employees had been catered to even before the pandemic. The data collected were analyzed using regression and correlation.

Research Objectives
1. To study the relationship between employee-stated needs and engagement, well-being, and work effectiveness.
2. To identify factors driving employee engagement, well-being, and work effectiveness during and after the covid crisis

Data Analysis
Respondents were asked to rank employee needs and expectations that were identified from the literature review. The ranks based on the respondent's responses were as follows.

S.no	Employee Needs	Rank
1	Trust and collaboration	1
2	Meaningful work	2
3	Work from home	3
4	Job security	3
5	Rewards	3
6	Flexibility	3
7	Physical and mental health	4
8	Empathic leader	4
9	Upgrades technology	4
10	Involvement	4
11	Learning	5
12	Clear communication	5
13	Ethical Practices	6
14	Workplace design	6
15	Supportive co-workers	7
16	Fairness	8
17	Diversity and inclusion	8
18	Recognition	9
19	Tools	9
20	Technology training	10

Table no 1. Factor Rank

Descriptive Analysis.
1) Engagement Index

The respondents were asked questions about organizational, work, and social engagement. The data is as follows.
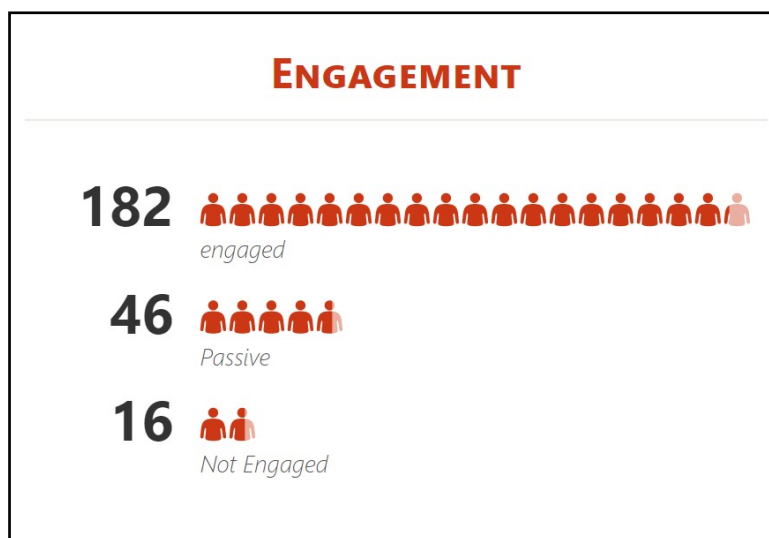

Fig no 1: Work Effectiveness

It was found that 182 respondents were engaged during the work-from-home and hybrid models. The items of this scale included statements of Pride, Workplace recommendations to family and friends, enablement by mentors and leaders, etc/
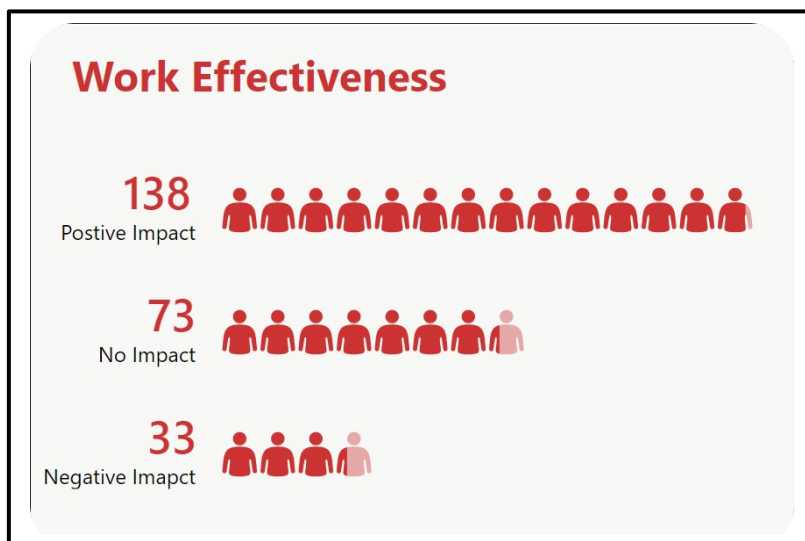
2) Work Effectiveness

Fig no 2: Work effectiveness.

It was found that 138 respondents were positively impacted by the changes in work practices during the work-from-home and hybrid model. The items of this scale included statements on confidence in utilizing telecommunication tools, Work expectations during this crisis by the managers, New learning/training that has helped in performing the job effectively, Flexibility in work, and time have made me feel more productive, etc.
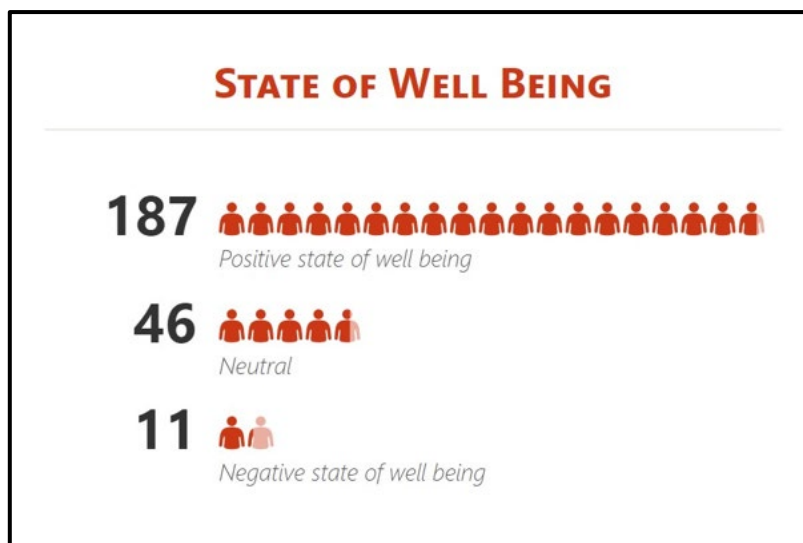
3) State of Wellbeing

Fig no 3. State of Well-Being

It was found that 187 respondents were in a positive state of mind as the organization responded quickly to the crisis by providing health facilities, and upgrading insurance policies to cover covid. The counseling session and meditation sessions have to reduce the anxiety level through the fear of contracting the covid 19 has always there.

Reliability of the scales

S.no	Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Engagement	.859
2	Work Effectiveness	.747
3	State of Well-being	.853

Table No 2 Reliability of the scales

Factors that lead to employee engagement, well -being and work effectiveness during and after the covid crisis
To determine the factors that lead to employee engagement, well-being, and work effectiveness, multiple regression was performed. 4 main drivers of employee engagement were used – HR practices, Culture, Technology, and workplace design. These constructs were taken as the independent variables to predict engagement, Work effectiveness, and Well-being. It can be inferred from the table that when the employee expectation(needs) are met, resulting in a positive experience, it drives employee engagement.

Need (Rank)	Employee Experience Drivers	Improvement		
		Work effectiveness (%)	Engagement (%)	Well-Being (%)
Empathic Leader (4)	Hr Practices	60	41.30	53.30
Compensation Salary (2)		11	21.00	44.00
Learning (5)		21.50	39.30	21.80
Rewards and Rec (3)	Culture	21.00	19.30	22.50
Team collaboration (1)		7	43.70	25.40
Clear communication (5)		48.80	21.80	30.30
Diversity and inclusion (8)		19.70	22.50	26.70
Tools (9)	Technology	12	25.40	51.20
Technology Learning (10)		9.20	30.30	34.2
Upgrades Technology (4)		8.88	26.70	9
Ethical practices (6)	Workplace design	8	29.40	11
Involvement (4)		51.20	30.40	21.50
Workplace design (6)		34.2	19.30	21.00
Flexibility (4)		9	12.20	15

Table no 3. Factors that lead to employee engagement, well-being, and work effectiveness

Discussion And Conclusion
For organizations to continue to adapt to the post-pandemic changes, they can meaningfully improve the employee experience. For example, while organizations are not able to match the compensation needs immediately, the survey results show that they can achieve a 19 percent improvement in engagement by addressing employees' need for work recognition through nonfinancial means. This will bring an improvement of 21 percent in work effectiveness and 22.5 percent in well-being. The survey results also emphasize empathic leaders, employees want their leader to understand and support their crisis times. It has been the number one need which has predicted as improvement of 60 percent, 41.30 percent, and 53.30 percent in work effectiveness, engagement, and well-being respectively.

Work effectiveness, employee engagement, and employee well-being have a profound impact on business value innovation, attracting and retaining talent, Revenue, and customer satisfaction to name a few. Thus, it is imperative to address employees' needs and help them thrive during the return, organizations should focus on four areas: employee experience constructs.

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