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Identified Research Gaps in Employee Engagement

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Abstract

This research paper sets out to investigate the research gaps in employee engagement for systematic empirical investigations, in order to substantiate future studies. A desk research has contributed to identify seven gaps in employee engagement. The first gap which is about the conceptual confusion, can be minimized by formulating a working definition of employee engagement. The nonexistence of theoretical arguments and empirical tests on the impact of the religiosity on employee engagement, in both the Sri Lankan and in the international contexts, has been identified as the second gap. The third gap has been identified to be the fact that the rapport between personal character and employee engagement being, neither theoretically argued nor empirically tested, in Sri Lankan and the international contexts. The fourth gap is the unavailability of studies in the Sri Lankan context as to how the high performance work practices (HPWPs) impact on employee engagement. The fifth gap identified is the shortage of empirical evidence regarding the link between employee engagement and organizational financial performance in the Sri Lankan context. Absence of empirical evidence on employee job performance to be an intervening variable for employee engagement and organizational financial performance is brought up as the sixth gap. The same absence is found in empirical evidence about religiosity, HPWPs, personal character, leadership and work life balance that significantly affect employee engagement in a nomological network in the Sri Lankan context as well as in the international context, which is the seventh Gap.

Keywords: employee engagement, research gaps, human resource management

1. Introduction

Understanding the essence of employee engagement is a major concern of both the business and academic spheres today. The reason for this trend is its links with the outcome that contributes to employee job performance (Anitha, 2014) and organizational financial performance (Harter et al., 2002). The impact of high performance work practices (HPWPs) on organizational performance is also evident. Appelbaum et al., (2011) bring in theoretical evidence regarding the link between HPWPs and employee engagement.

Gallup (2013) in order to introduce the status of employee engagement in the global arena, brings to light the employee engagement levels in years 2011 and 2012. The study which was conducted from 2011 to 2012 among the 142 countries discovered that 13% of employees are engaged in their jobs and organizations, 63% are not engaged and 24% are actively disengaged. As a country, United States of America (USA) has the highest percentage of 30% engaged workers. As it was revealed in Gallup's study, in Sri Lanka (from 2011 to 2012), 14% employees are engaged, 62% are not engaged and 23% are actively disengaged.

Gallup (2010) has made similar attempts to find the relationship between religiosity and employee engagement, though this study was not based on hypothetico-deductive approach. According to Iddagoda et al., (2016) employee engagement is a rarely understood concept, even though it is a popular word in the management circles. Saks & Gruman (2014) have also come up with a similar view; that although there are large number of research studies and publications on employee engagement, unclear areas or ambiguities still remain unanswered. The Reason is the researchers not paying enough attention to the meaning, theory and measurement of employee engagement, even though they have a passion of research on employee engagement. As a result, the main objective of this paper is to discover research gaps in the literature of employee engagement. It is hoped that discovered research gaps become particular aspects of interest to the future researchers to carryout pure research that will add to the general body of knowledge in employee engagement.

This research paper endeavors to address:

1. Introduction to employee engagement
2. The key studies on employee engagement
3. Research gaps in employee engagement
4. Future implications

2. Method

The overall purpose of this paper is to unearth current research gaps of employee engagement for future systematic empirical investigations. Seven gaps in employee engagement have been identified through a desk research study. The databases such as Sage, Taylor and Francis Online, Springerlink, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, Wiley Online Library and Emerald were used when searching articles in order to collect the data. Similarly many books were studied in detail. Researchers took a range of published works from 1990 to 2015 for the desk research study.

3. Literature Review

Kahn (1990) defined "employee engagement" as the "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances" (p.694). May et al., (2004) study is built on ethnographic work of Kahn (1990). It is a field study. May et al., (2004) found the results from the revised theoretical framework which revealed that all three psychological conditions exhibited significant positive relations with employee engagement.

Rothbard (2001) has conducted a survey with 790 employees. Rothbard (2001) developed a model of employee engagement in multiple roles of work and family. Schaufeli et al., (2002) define "engagement" as a "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (p.465). Bakker & Demerouti (2008) state that vigor is characterized by high levels of mental resilience and liveliness during working. Bakker & Demerouti (2008) further state that dedication denotes being intensely involved in work with a sense of enthusiasm and challenge. Bakker & Demerouti (2008) also mention that absorption is characterized by concentrative and happily engrossed in work.

Structural equation modeling of Salanova et al., (2005) reveal organizational resources and work engagement predict employee job performance, service climate and customer loyalty. Saks (2006) has carried out a survey. Results indicate that employee engagement mediated the relationships between the antecedents of employee engagement and the work related attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. A conceptual model by Joo & Mclean (2006) identified the relationships among business strategy, engaged employees, HR practices and organizational financial performance.

Utilizing a two year longitudinal design the study of Mauno et al., (2007) investigated about employee engagement and its antecedents among Finnish health care employees, which found that employee engagement, mainly vigor and dedication was frequent among the participants, and its average level does not vary across the follow-up period. Drawing on various relevant literatures, Macey & Schneider (2008) bring out a chain of propositions on psychological state engagement, behavioral engagement and trait engagement. In addition, Macey & Schneider (2008) come up with propositions that the properties of job attributes and leadership are main effects on state engagement and behavioral engagement, and as moderators of the relationships among the three facets of engagement. Macey & Schneider (2008) state that, as a vernacular expression, employee engagement has been named as a psychological state, as a behavior or as a combination of both. Macey's & Schneider's (2008) idea is that employee engagement is a blend of psychological and behavioral components.

As Maslach & Leiter (2008) reveal a longitudinal study is capable of forecasting changes in employee engagement and burnout. Maslach & Leiter (2008) have conceptualized that employee's psychological relationship to his/her job ranges between the positive experience of employee engagement and the negative experience of burnout.

Xanthopoulou et al., (2009) conducted a study to examine the link between job resources, employee engagement and organizational financial performance. In their study, Sahoo & Sahu (2009) reveal that the ISR research firm has also cited many examples of increased profit in the organizations, and that, the financial differences were substantial between companies with high employee engagement and low employee engagement.

Dharmasiri (2010) is a Sri Lankan who published an article on employee engagement. His work is a concepual study on employee engagement in Sri Lanka. That study provides an overview of employee engagement. Dharmasiri (2010) mentions that employee engagement captures the essence of employees' head, hands and heart involvement in work. Rich et al., (2010) found that employee engagement mediates the relationship of two

job performance dimensions namely task performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Shankar & Bhatnagar (2010) propose a conceptual model to be tested empirically. Their model's main focus is on work-life balance and its affiliation with other concepts like employee engagement, employee's turnover intention and emotional consonance/dissonance.

Gruman & Saks (2011) come up with a model of engagement management and job performance. They also introduce a new approach to the performance management process which includes employee engagement and the fundamental aspects of employee engagement at each stage. Shuck et al., (2011) examine experiences of the employees when they are engaged in their work. From their analysis three themes immerged, namely, relationship development, attachment to co-workers and workplace climate and opportunities for learning. Findings also highlighted the importance of an employee's immediate boss on employee engagement. The key themes, Bakker et al., (2011) covered in their study, are, (1) theory of employee engagement and measurement (2) task engagement and state engagement (3) climate for engagement versus collective engagement (4) the dark side of employee engagement (5) where job crafting may go wrong and (6) moderators between the employee engagement and performance relationship. Christian et al., (2011) found evidence that employee engagement is related to employee job performance. In their conceptual frame work, antecedents are job characteristics, leadership, and dispositional characteristics, and the consequence is employee job performance.

Meta-analytical techniques were used by Cole et al., (2012) in assessing the extent to which job burnout and employee engagement are independent and useful constructs. Their findings provides an understanding of the dimensions underlying employee engagement and burnout and their measurement. Shuck & Herd's (2012) study has drawn a conceptual relationship between leadership behavior and the development of employee engagement.

Alfes et al., (2013) mention that employee engagement mediates the relationship between perceived HRM practices such as recruitment and selection, training and development or performance management and individual behavior. Alfes et al., (2013) suggest that the positive behavioral outcomes, as an outcome of employee engagement, mainly rely on employees' relationship with their immediate boss and organizational climate. Truss et al., (2013) state that employee engagement might consist of the system through which HRM practices influence employee job performance and organizational performance.

The study of Anitha (2014) found that employee engagement had a significant impact on employee job performance. Guest (2014) highlighted a differentiation between employee engagement with its concern to improve employee well-being and organizational performance. Zhang et al., (2014) have discovered that most of the research focuses on leaders, ignoring the effect of follower's characteristics on either leadership or employee engagement. They discovered employee characteristics of need for achievement, equity, sensitivity and need for clarity moderate the relationship between four leadership paradigms and employee engagement. The nature of the moderation varies in complex ways.

Concluding the study, Saks & Gruman (2014) state that a lack of agreement regarding the meaning of employee engagement still exists, as a result of many unanswered questions about the theory of employee engagement. Two Sri Lankan researchers, Wickramasinghe & Perera (2014), have found that organization citizenship behavior intervenes the relationship between perceived organization support and quality performance, as well as employee engagement and quality performance. They have conducted their study in the Sri Lankan context, with the main aim to study the organizational citizenship behavior rather than the factors that affect employee engagement and the consequences of employee engagement. Internal communication, as Karanges et al., (2015) state, is a significant concept that has links to positive organizational and employee outcomes such as employee engagement. The empirical test by Karanges et al., (2015) has highlighted the importance of the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.

Keating & Heslin (2015) mention that several ways of mindsets such as enthusiasm for development, focus of attention, interpersonal interactions and interpretation of setbacks, influence employee engagement. Rana (2015) presents a conceptual model by analyzing the relationships between employee engagement and high involvement work practices (HIWPs). HIWPs proposed by Rana (2015) consist of four main attributes: (1) power – involve employees in decision making process (2) information – share information among employees (3) reward – employees are rewarded and given recognition for their strong performance and (4) knowledge - essential training and development. Their study is a theoretical groundwork for an empirical test for future research.

4. Key Studies on Employee Engagement

Key studies on employee engagement are presented under Table 1.1. These key studies are from the researchers worldwide.

Table 1. Key studies on employee engagement

Author	Year	Description
Kahn	1990	- The study illustrates the nature of personal engagement and disengagement. - Discusses and illustrates three psychological conditions in order to find and influence their behavior. - The three psychological conditions are namely, 1. Meaningfulness 2. Safety 3. Availability
Rothbard	2001	- The study develops a model of employee engagement in multiple roles of work and family. - The study examines both the depleting and enriching processes linking with employee engagement.
Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker	2002	- Define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind.
May, Gilson and Harter	2004	- Explore the determinants and mediating effects of three psychological conditions namely, meaningfulness, safety and availability on employees' engagement.
Salanova, Agut and Peiro´	2005	- When employees are engaged, they are more likely to put energy into interactions with clients.
Saks	2006	- Employee engagement mediated the relationships between the antecedents of employee engagement and the work related attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior etc.
Joo and Mclean	2006	- A conceptual model is suggested of the relationships among business strategy, engaged employees, HR practices and organizational financial performance.
Mauno, Kinnunen and Ruokolainen	2007	- The study investigates the experience of employee engagement and its antecedents among Finnish health care employees. - Employee engagement, especially vigor and dedication, was relatively frequently experienced among the participants and its average level did not change across the follow-up period.
Bakker and Demerouti	2008	- Employee engagement is a state including vigor, dedication and absorption. - Engaged employees are creative, productive and willing to go an extra mile in order to achieve the organizational goals.
Macey and Schneider	2008	- Offer propositions about psychological state engagement, behavioral engagement and trait engagement. - Offer propositions regarding the effects of job attributes and leadership as main effects on state and behavioral engagement and as the moderators of the relationships among the three facets of engagement. - Engagement is a combination of psychological and behavioral components.
Maslach and Leiter	2008	- Employee engagement is the opposite of burnout.
Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli	2009	- There is a link between job resources, employee engagement and organizational financial performance.
Sahoo and Sahu	2009	- Comparing high employee engagement to low employee engagement in companies over a three year period, during which the financial differences were substantial.
Dharmasiri	2010	- Employee engagement captures the essence of employees' head, hands and heart involvement in work.
Rich, LePine and Crawford	2010	- Employee engagement mediates the relationship of two job performance dimensions namely task performance and organizational citizenship behavior.
Shankar and Bhatnagar	2010	- The proposed model focuses on work-life balance construct and its relationship with other variables such as employee engagement, employee's turnover intention and emotional consonance/dissonance.
Gruman and Saks	2011	- Present a model of engagement management and job performance. - Engagement management model has more focus on employee engagement than traditional performance management model.
Shuck, Rocco and Albornoz	2011	- Three themes emerged, namely, i. relationship development ii. attachment to co-workers iii. workplace climate and opportunities for learning - Leadership plays a key role on employee engagement.
Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter	2011	- Key themes of the study are: (1) theory and measurement of engagement (2) state and task engagement (3) climate for engagement versus collective engagement (4) the dark side of engagement (5) where job crafting may go wrong (6) moderators of the employee engagement and performance relationship.
Christian, Garza and Slaughter	2011	- Employee engagement leads to job performance.
Cole, Walter, Bedeian and O'Boyle	2012	- Used meta-analytical techniques to assess job burnout and employee engagement. - Findings suggest that doubts about the functional distinctiveness of the dimensions underlying employee engagement and burnout cannot be dismissed as pure assumption.
Shuck and Herd	2012	- A conceptual relationship has been drawn between leadership behavior and the development of employee engagement.
Alfes, Shantz, Truss and Soane	2013	- Positive behavioral outcomes, as a consequence of employee engagement, mainly depend on employees' relationship with their immediate boss and on the organizational climate.
Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes and Delbridge	2013	- Employee engagement may consist of the mechanism through which HRM practices impact on employee job performance and organizational performance.
Anitha	2014	- Employee engagement has a significant impact on employee job performance.
Guest	2014	- A differentiation is highlighted between employee engagement with its concern to improve employee well-being and organizational performance.
Zhang , Avery Bergsteiner and More	2014	- Most researchers focus on leaders and ignore the influence of follower characteristics when conducting research on leadership or employee engagement. - Employee characteristics of need for achievement, equity, sensitivity and need for clarity moderate the relationship between four leadership paradigms and employee engagement.
Wickramasinghe and Perera	2014	- Organizational citizenship behavior mediates the relationship between perceived organization support and quality performance, as well as employee engagement and quality performance.
Saks and Gruman	2014	- Validity of the most popular measurement of employee engagement lacks agreement. - Making basic conclusions about the antecedents and the consequences of employee engagement is difficult because of a number of research limitations and unanswered questions.
Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, and Lings	2015	- Internal communication has a significant part to play in developing and maintaining optimal employee engagement.
Keating and Heslin	2015	- Mindsets potentially influence employees' engagement in several ways; specifically, through the enthusiasm for development, effort, focus of attention, understanding the reasons for setbacks and interpersonal interactions.
Rana	2015	- Presents a conceptual model for the relationships between employee engagement and high involvement work practices (HIWPs). - HIWPs consist of four main attributes: (1) power – involve employees in decision making process (2) information – share information among employees (3) reward – employees are rewarded and give recognition for their strong performance and (4) knowledge - training and development. - A study of theoretical groundwork for an empirical test for future research.

5. Identified Gaps in the Literature of Employee Engagement

The above literature review has identified many theoretical and empirical gaps in the knowledge with regard to employee engagement.

Gap 1: There is a conceptual confusion with regard to the meaning of employee engagement, the labels of employee engagement and whether employee engagement is a behavior or an attitude.

Guest (2014) mentions that Kahn (1990) is the author of the first paper on employee engagement, and that Kahn wrote about the concept and defined employee engagement. Kahn (1990) in his paper used the label "personal engagement". Luthan & Perterson (2002); Anitha (2014) and Guest (2014) used the labels interchangeably because they thought that all these labels are a part of a common thread. In addition to the interchangeable use of labels, Hallberg & Schaufeli (2006) state that the interchangeable use of terms such as job involvement and organizational commitment with employee engagement has confused the terminology. It is also evident that job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior were used parallel to employee engagement either synonymously or non-synonymously, in addition to job involvement and organizational commitment. Saks (2006) reveals that employee engagement has been defined in various ways by various researchers. Saks (2006) also reveals that such definitions and measures often reflect other constructs like organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior.

Due to the conceptual correspondence of employee engagement, in comparison with the other well-known concepts such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job involvement, some researchers perceive employee engagement as "old wine in a new bottle". Saks (2006) attempted to establish the fact that employee engagement also includes certain characteristics of "new wine". As Saks (2006) mentions, employee engagement is distinguishable from the work related attitudes like job involvement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Dharmasiri's (2010) idea is that employee engagement can be considered as an umbrella term encompassing many related concepts. There are debates as to whether employee engagement is an attitude (Schaufeli et al., 2002) or a behavior (Bevan et al., 1997). As Macey & Schneider (2009); Shuck & Wollard (2010); Hewitt (2014) consider, employee engagement is an amalgam of psychological state and behavioral outcomes.

Gap 2: There are no theoretical arguments which indicate the linkage or relationship between employee engagement and religiosity. It reveals that the impact of the religiosity on employee engagement has neither been theoretically argued nor empirically tested in the Sri Lankan context, perhaps in the international context.

Pocket Oxford English Dictionary (2007) defines "religion" as the belief in and worship of a god or gods and a particular system of faith and worship. According to Pocket Oxford English Dictionary (2007), "religious" means related to or believing in religion. "Religiosity", defined by Adeyemo & Adeleye (2008), includes having belief in and reverence for God or a deity, as well as participation in activities in that faith such as attending service/worship regularly and participating in other social activities with one's religious community. The view of Adeyemo & Adeleye (2008) is that religiosity includes "Reverence" and "Participation". Researchers agree with Adeyemo & Adeleye (2008). First, anyone should have belief in and reverence on his/her founder of the religion or God. Only then such a person practices what the founder of the religion or God preached. For instance, practicing responsibilities and duties of employers and workers in "Sigalowada sutta" (Pali canon which includes The Buddha's words) may increase employee engagement. King & Williamson (2005) state that religiosity has an influence on the job satisfaction of the employees. Dent & Bozeman's (2014) view is that modern management principles have spread out to have an effect on most aspects of people's lives including their religions.

Gallup (2010) states that, as it was discovered through the surveys in 114 countries in 2009, religion plays a significant role in many people's lives all over the world. According to Gallup's (2010) study on religiosity, in Sri Lanka in 2009, for 99% religion is an important factor in their lives while only 1% has said "No" giving an example as to how the religiosity plays a huge role in the lives of Sri Lankans. Truss et al., (2014) also mention, in their book, about Gallup's (2010) survey. Table 1.2 presents the responses to one of Gallup's question: "Is religion important in your daily life?" and the number of "yes" answers has been used to measure national religiosity.

Table 2. Country level measure of religiosity

Country	Gallup measure of religiosity
Philippines	High
South Africa	High
USA	Medium-High
Canada	Medium
Germany	Medium
Australia	Medium
France	Low
UK	Low
Hong Kong	Low
Japan	Low
Sweden	Low

Source: Truss et al., 2014

Truss et al., (2014) state how Gallup's survey shows that more religious the countries surveyed are, poorer they become; a GDP per capita of <$5000. The issue with Gallup's (2010) survey is that they have measured the religiosity level, based on one question; "Is religion an important part of your daily life?". They have, clearly, not studied it enough, and thus, have not taken it according to a hypothetico-deductive approach.

In most of the religions there is guidance that explains the duties and responsibilities of employers and employees, which helps enhancing employee engagement. Piyaratana (2013) states that in Buddhism "Sigalowada sutta" explains the responsibilities and duties of employers and workers while necessitating a better relationship between the two. There are bible scriptures that can be related to increasing employee engagement.

Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive. -Titus Ch.2:9-10.

According to this Bible scripture the employees should always do their best possible work and be trustworthy. According to Gallup (2013) the contribution of engaged employees is immense, in building an organization and maintaining its good standards because they are enthusiastic and committed to work. Their commitment and enthusiasm can be considered as pleasing the master as stated in bible verse of Titus Ch.2:9-10.

Harter et al., (2002) mention that an employee needs to be engaged strongly in his/her work, and requires a considerable amount of enthusiasm at work. Hewitt (2012) points out that there are three employee engagement outcomes, namely, say, stay and strive. "Strive" means that employees exert extra effort and engage in behavior that contributes to business success. Cook (2008) points out that employee engagement is characterized by employees being committed to the organization, believing in what it stands for and being prepared to go above and beyond what is expected of them to deliver outstanding services to the customer. According to Cook (2008) employee engagement can be summed up by how positively the employee considers the organization and whether the employee has positive relationships with customers, colleagues and stakeholders in order to achieve organizational goals.

Gap 3: There are no theoretical arguments which indicate linkage or relationship between employee engagement and personal character. It reveals that the impact of the personal character on employee engagement has neither been theoretically argued nor empirically tested.

Opatha (2010) identifies personal character as a person's moral attributes. Opatha (2010) states that nature of character, that has virtues to the utmost level and has no existence of vices, can be called the highest level of the good personal character. Generally good habits are known as virtues and bad habits are known as vices.

Table 1.1 lists some of the important studies carried out by other researchers. It clearly shows the literature gap between personal character and employee engagement. We argue that an employee with high level of personal character will exhibit high level of employee engagement and vice versa. Personal character is a person related factor that is expected to have a significant impact on employee engagement. According to Opatha & Teong (2014) it has generally been observed that a person with good character is able to perform at any situation in an acceptable way and contribute significantly to develop his/her organization and country.

Gap 4: It reveals that the impact of the High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs) on employee engagement has not been empirically tested in the Sri Lankan context and may be in the international context.

Kroon et al., (2013) state that HPWPs are human resource management practices aimed at stimulating employee and organizational performance. Ashton & Sung (2002) point out that HPWPs have been combined to create a

working environment to develop the personality of the employee and to increase the organizational productivity. Appelbaum et al., (2011) state that HPWPs enhances the motivation and commitment of employees, create an organizational and labor-management environment in which employee engagement in relation to problem solving and performance improvement is encouraged and supported. But Appelbaum et al., (2011) in their article do not provide empirical evidence about the relationship between employee engagement and HPWPs. Conceptual model of Rana (2015) theorizes the relationships between employee engagement and high involvement work practices (HIWPs) as elaborated in Table 1.1. The study of Rana (2015) is a theoretical groundwork for an empirical test for future research.

A summary of the important studies carried out by other researchers has been given in Table 1.1. It reveals an empirical gap between HPWPs and employee engagement in the Sri Lankan context. In other words the relationship between HPWPs and employee engagement has not been empirically tested yet.

Gap 5: There is no empirical evidence on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational financial performance in the Sri Lankan context.

Huselid (1995) reveals that it is evident that there is a relationship between individual human resource management (HRM) practices and the organizational performance. Saks (2006) points out that there is a great deal of interest in employee engagement throughout the world. According to Saks (2006), the reason is employee engagement resulting in organizational success and organizational financial performance; for instance, total shareholder return. Sahoo & Sahu (2009) further emphasize the connection between the level of employee engagement in the organization and the overall financial and operational performance of the organization. Sahoo & Sahu (2009) further state that when the level of employee engagement is high, more productivity, lower turnover, fewer absenteeism, long-term affiliation to the organization, job satisfaction, team spirit, better customer service, higher level of motivation, higher work morale, loyalty and commitment to organization and high level of energy and enthusiasm are noted. According to Sahoo & Sahu (2009), many examples of increased organizational financial performance through better employee engagement are cited by ISR research firm. Citing the ISR report 2005 by ISR research firm and comparing organizations with high employee engagement to organizations with low employee engagement over a period of three years Sahoo & Sahu (2009) mention that, substantial financial differences have been identified.

It is discernible that there is no empirical evidence on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational financial performance in the Sri Lankan context. Although scholars emphasize the importance of the relationship between organizational financial performance and employee engagement, the association has not yet been empirically tested.

Gap 6: There is no empirical evidence on employee job performance as an intervening variable for employee engagement and organizational financial performance.

Motowidlo (2003) defined job performance as the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time. Anitha (2014) mentions that in order to perform the work or the job excellently, engaged employees carry out their job much more than expected. Anitha (2014) also found that employee engagement has a significant impact on employee job performance. It is possible to theorize that employee engagement leads to employee job performance, and then employee job performance leads to organizational financial performance. According to Harter et al., (2002), business units in the top quartile on employee engagement had, on average, from $80,000 to $120,000 higher monthly revenue or sales (and for one organization, the difference was more than $300,000).

The Gallup Organization found critical links between employee engagement, business growth and profitability. Gallup (2013) points out that, actively disengaged employees are emotionally disconnected from their organizations. They are less productive, create more absenteeism, try to undo what their co-workers do, drive customers away, actively showing their negativity about the organization and also they may actually be working against the interests of their employer. Active disengagement, as Gallup (2013) states, is a huge draw-off on economies all over the world. For instance, Gallup's (2013) report estimates, that for the United States, active disengagement costs from US$450 billion to $550 billion per year. And the figure ranges from €112 billion to €138 billion per year in Germany (US$151 billion to $186 billion). Actively disengaged employees, in the United Kingdom, cost the country a sum between £52 billion and £70 billion (US$83 billion and $112 billion) per year.

There is little research about the link between employee engagement and employee job performance, as well as the link between employee engagement and organizational financial performance. But it is evident that there is no empirical evidence about the mediating effect of employee job performance on the relationship between employee engagement and organizational financial performance.

Gap 7: There is no empirical evidence about religiosity, high performance work practices (HPWPs), personal character, leadership and work life balance that significantly affect employee engagement in a nomological network in the Sri Lankan context as well as in the international context.

Macey & Schneider (2008) present a nomological network. Their nomological network describes about psychological state engagement, behavioral engagement and trait engagement. As per the studies carried out by other researchers given in Table 1.1 it reveals that no study was carried out to investigate whether religiosity, high performance work practices (HPWPs), personal character, leadership and work life balance significantly affect employee engagement in a nomological network in the Sri Lankan context as well as in the international context. It is interesting to know empirically the percentage of variability of employee engagement that will be explained by these five variables jointly.

As far as the gaps identified above are concerned, it is possible to classify them as theoretical gaps and empirical gaps. Gaps numbered 1, 2 and 3 are mainly theoretical gaps while gaps numbered 4, 5, 6 and 7 are empirical ones. Based on the identified gaps a nomological network or theoretical framework was developed and it is given in Figure 1. There are eight variables in this nomological network namely religiosity, HPWPs, personal character, leadership, work life balance, employee engagement, employee job performance and organizational financial performance. It is expected that this nomological network is attempted to be tested empirically in a future study using hypothetico deductive approach.

6. Future Implications

Seven research gaps that were identified, will be needed to be filled systematically and scientifically in order to necessitate future studies which will contribute to the existing body of knowledge of dynamics and consequences of the construct of employee engagement. The nomological network with eight variables is also to be tested in a future research that is to be carried out by us. Between the two types of research strategies, namely, quantitative and qualitative (Saunders et al., 2007; Bryman & Bell, 2013), the expected study will be based on the quantitative research methodology.

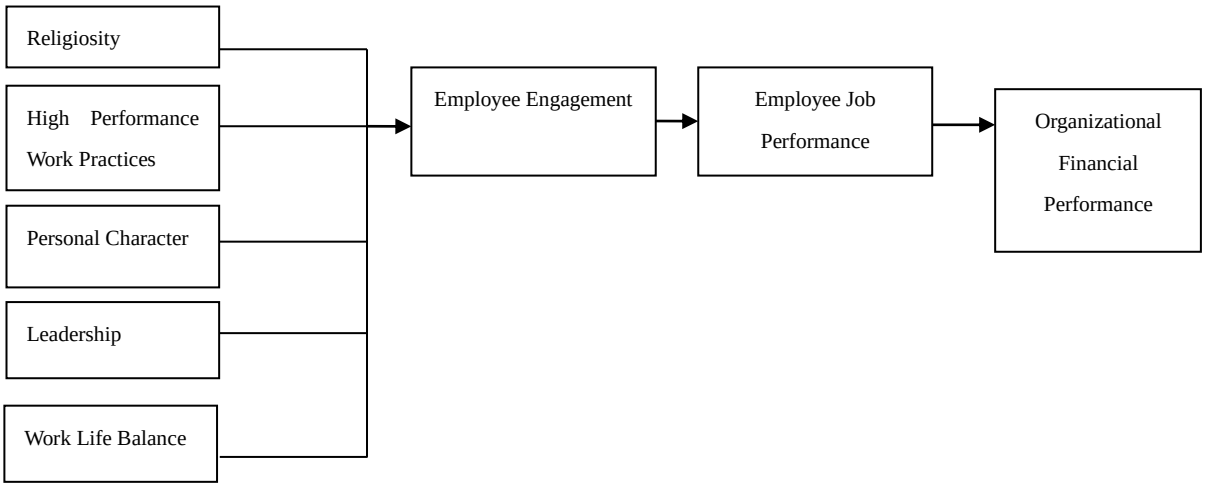

Figure 1. Nomological Network

7. Conclusion

In Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior literature, employee engagement is, with no doubt, an interesting and critical construct. The main attempt was to explore important gaps in the literature of the construct of employee engagement, which, in terms of desk research, reveals seven gaps as specified above. Concerning the gaps identified above, they can be classified as theoretical gaps and empirical gaps. Gaps numbered 1, 2 and 3 are mainly theoretical gaps, whereas gaps numbered 4, 5, 6 and 7 are empirical gaps. Based on the identified gaps, a nomological network or theoretical framework with eight variables namely religiosity, HPWPs, personal character, leadership, work life balance, employee engagement, employee job performance and organizational financial performance was developed. Hence, this research paper contains valuable implications and potential for future research.

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