

Human Resources Management In Context

Lecture Title :-
Employee Relations and Engagement



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Masters in
Human Resources Management

Learning Objectives

- Assess strategies to enhance employee engagement
- Understand the link between employee relations and engagement
- Identify the different industrial relations systems
- Understand the main theoretical frameworks around employee relations and engagement



Group discussion

What is the difference between
Employee Relations and Employee
Engagement?



Definitions

“Employee relations refers to the policies, practices, and systems that influence the relationship between the employer and the employee, both individually and collectively”
(Armstrong & Taylor, 2023)

“Employee engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption”
(Schaufeli et al., 2002).



Group discussion

- What drives your engagement?
- In your experience, do good employee relations always mean high engagement? Why or why not?

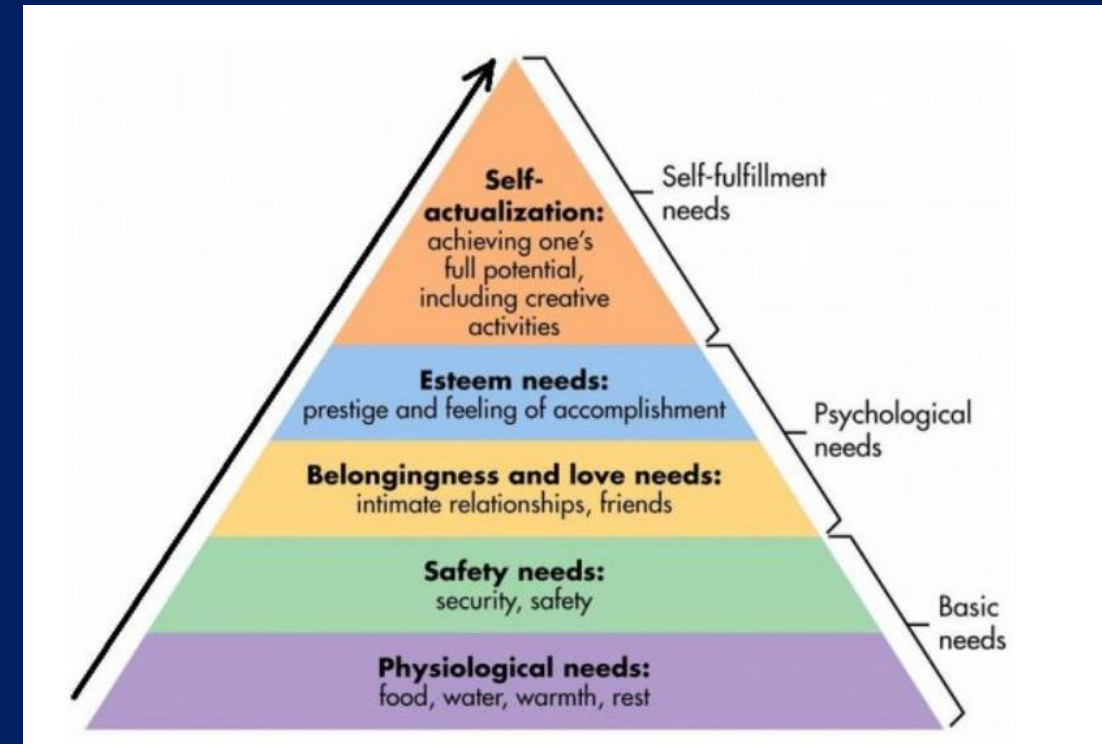


Theoretical Frameworks

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

According to this theory, motivation stems from an endeavor to meet these five essential needs: bodily, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization (fulfilment). The more these demands are met, the more motivated an employee is.

Without satisfying these needs, a person can't be fully engaged or happy in their role.



Theoretical Frameworks

Kahn's Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement (1990)

This theory posits that individuals choose to personally engage or disengage based on whether specific psychological needs are met in the work environment.

1. Psychological Meaningfulness - “Do I feel that what I do at work matters?”
2. Psychological Safety - “Can I be myself without fear of negative consequences?”
3. Psychological Availability - “Do I have the physical, emotional, and cognitive resources to engage right now?”



Theoretical Frameworks

Kahn's Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement (1990)

Psychological Condition	Effect When Present (Engagement)	Effect When Absent (Disengagement)
Meaningfulness “My work matters and has purpose”	Employees feel valued, see impact, and are motivated to contribute fully.	Work feels pointless or dull; employees detach or do the bare minimum.
Safety “I can be myself without fear”.	Employees speak up, take risks, and express ideas freely.	Fear of judgment or punishment causes people to hide or hold back.
Availability “I have the energy and capacity to engage”	Employees are mentally and emotionally ready to be present at work.	Overload, stress, or personal strain leads to withdrawal or burnout.

Theoretical Frameworks

The AMO Model

The AMO Model posits that three key factors influence employee performance and engagement:

$$\text{Performance} = \text{Ability} \times \text{Motivation} \times \text{Opportunity}$$

Employees are most likely to perform well and engage deeply when they:

- Can do the job (have the right skills and knowledge)
- Want to do the job (are motivated and committed)
- Are allowed to do the job (have the chance to participate and contribute)

This model is widely used to design HR practices, shape organizational culture, and inform leadership strategies.



Theoretical Frameworks

The Psychological Contract Theory

This theory is based on unwritten, implicit set of mutual expectations between an employer and an employee. These include beliefs about:

Key Components of the Psychological Contract

Component	Description
Mutual beliefs	Informal expectations on both sides
Reciprocal obligations	“If I do this, you’ll do that.”
Perception-based	Not necessarily discussed or agreed upon
Dynamic	Evolves over time through experience and communication

The Psychological Contract Theory

Types of psychological contracts :-

Type	Description	Typical Outcome
Transactional	Short-term, monetized, low emotional involvement (e.g., gig work)	Focus on tangible rewards; low loyalty
Relational	Long-term, socio-emotional, loyalty-based (e.g., traditional careers)	Higher engagement, but vulnerable to breach
Balanced	Mix of both – career development + fair pay	Sustainable engagement and mutual value

The Psychological Contract Theory

Under psychological contract engagement is rooted in perceived fairness, trust, and alignment. When employees feel that promises (implicit or explicit) are kept, they are more emotionally invested and more likely to be productive and collaborative.

Example of employee and employer expectations

Employee expects	Employer expects
Fair pay and job security	Loyalty and performance
Career growth	Commitment and flexibility
Respect and support	Initiative and accountability



The Psychological Contract Theory

Under psychological contract there will be a breach in contract when one party perceives the other has failed to meet expectations regardless of actual intent.

Possible causes of Psychological Contract Breach

Cause	Example
Poor communication	Promises made during recruitment not followed through
Organizational change	Restructuring leads to job insecurity
Inconsistent leadership	One manager supports development, another does not
Unmet career expectations	Promised promotions don't materialize



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Group Exercise

Mapping the Engagement Experience

Refer to the worksheet provided.

Discuss scenario and answer questions with reference to the different theoretical frameworks.

30 mins



Strategic Initiatives to Drive Employee Engagement



Effective Leadership & Clear Communication –
Builds trust, clarifies expectations and aligns goals



Employee Voice & Participation –
Improves autonomy, ownership and meaningfulness



Recognition & Reward Systems –
Reinforces desired behaviours, builds esteem and motivation



Learning & Development Opportunities –
Promotes growth, mastery and career fulfilment



Health, Well Being & Work Life Balance –
Supports psychological availability and overall satisfaction

Who's Sinking Your Boat?



Employee Engagement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4nwoZ02AJM&list=PLsUdhQHCK0gbnxp4cGsAezLlxP1CSbAt4&index=1>





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