The comparative analysis of employee engagement measures: a theoretical perspective

Neha Gupta*
Department of Management,
Birla Institute of Technology,
Mesra, Ranchi, Jharkhand 835215, India
Email: nehasuman_2006@yahoo.co.in
*Corresponding author

Vandna Sharma
Department of Management,
Birla Institute of Technology,
A-7, Sector 1, Noida 201301
Uttar Pradesh, India
Email: vandna_sh@rediffmail.com

Abstract: Employee engagement has been a popular and prevalent idea among business professionals, where as in the scholastic writing; it remains a topic of debate. This study lay out to understand the contending measures of employee engagement keeping in mind the end goal to give a more profound comprehension of its theoretical framework, measures and their dimensions. The current paper tries to analyse the academic path of engagement and investigates the overlapping of different dimensions of the engagement scales and identification of uniqueness of each scale to come across the ‘one definition and one measurement approach’ for engagement construct. An integrative review and relational analysis was performed throughout the wide spread database in scholarly field. The findings of the study state that despite of the overlapping between the measurements of employee engagement, there are some vital contrasts between these scales. The research contributes to existing body of knowledge in the area of engagement by investigating the multiple conceptualisations and estimations of employee engagement which provide better comprehension of the construct. Implications are taken into the consideration for further enquiry into the engagement procedure. Overall the study opens a new door in the engagement research by considering all models of measurement under one roof.

Keywords: employee engagement; engagement; engagement scale; engagement measurement; conceptualisation.


Biographical notes: Neha Gupta is a Research Scholar in the Department of Management, BIT Mesra, Ranchi, India. She has been awarded with Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) of University Grants Commission. She is working in the area of human resource management practices and employee
Vandna Sharma is an Associate Professor in Management Department of BIT Mesra, Ranchi-Noida campus with PhD degree from GGS Indraprastha University, India on Knowledge Management and has 16 years of teaching and research experience, supervising seven research scholars with 30 publications include two books and 28 research papers (two award winning papers including awarded silver medal in 2008 for her Research paper on SEZs) in areas like potential management, knowledge management, e-governance, industry university interface in India, and role of SEZ in international and national refereed journals like Emerald, Inderscience Publications etc.

This paper is a revised and expanded version of a paper entitled ‘A Comparative Analysis of Employee Engagement Measurement Scales’ presented at the ‘4th Biennial Indian Academy of Management Conference’, IIM Lucknow Noida Campus, NCR, India, 11–13 December 2015.

1 Introduction

Employee engagement simply represents the psychological status of employees towards their organisation and reflects in the employee behaviour in the form of energy, enthusiasm, dedication, loyalty and attachment with their work. There are plethora of definitions present in the academic and practitioner fields but there is no uniformity among them. The crux of all the definitions includes energy, involvement, attention, commitment, vigour, dedication and attachment with the work, organisation and colleagues. The overlapping of engagement with other similar constructs like commitment, satisfaction and involvement creates confusion in the conceptualisation of engagement. Despite of this, it is the most researched concept due to its linkage with overall organisation performance in terms of high earning per share, profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction, low absenteeism, sales growth (Harter et al., 2002; Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008; Richman, 2006). However, some researchers also reported that employee engagement is now at declining stage and most of the organisations are battling with the problem of disengagement (Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006). Considering the importance of the concept, it is not astonishing that there are various approaches available to measure engagement, but there is lack of consistency and clarity regarding its parameters to measure it in these divergent approaches. Most of these measures are commercial in nature (Macey and Schneider, 2008) and only few measures are discussed and published in the scholarly literatures. The engagement scale, namely, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), given by Schaufeli et al. (2002), is the most popular and widely used scale used to measure engagement (Sonnenstag, 2003; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). The other engagement measures published in scholarly journals include – JES scale, developed by Rich et al. (2010); Rothbard scale, developed by Rothbard (2001) that emphasises absorption and attention; Saks (2006) engagement measures that emphasise job and organisation engagement; and ISA engagement scale, developed by Soane et al. (2012) that focuses on intellectual, social and affective engagements. The credit for the popularity of the term engagement commercially goes to Gallup which makes it accessible worldwide with the help of Q12 measures. While the measures
included in Q12 resemble in some ways, we accept that there are some significant differences existing to deal with conceptualising and measuring engagements that are imperative for researchers to think carefully about it. These distinctions have made an absence of clarity in regards to the idea of engagement. Luthans et al. (2007) recommended developing another construct that should have both theoretical and practical utility and sound enough to be reasonable significant for both academicians and professionals. The aim of this study is to perform the comparative analysis of these five popular and widely used scales and assess the psychometric properties of these engagement scales to make recommendations for the most fitting conceptualisation and measurement of the construct in future examinations. The expectation is to suggest theoretical as well as practical recommendations for future research in the area of engagement as it is very important to understand the different facets of engagement like antecedents, consequences, factors or drivers and human resource policies responsible to boost up the engagement level (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006). Sonnentag (2011, p.31) called to explore the domains of vigour, dedication, absorption, attention etc. against Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation of engagement to systematically analyse the results from these diversified concepts. In the following sections, we have depicted the different theoretical models of engagement, its dimensions, the similarities and dissimilarities between these measures which have showed up in the literatures. At last, we tried to list out all the similarities and dissimilarities that will help out to make a new measurement tool for future study.

2 Motivation of the study

The buzzword ‘employee engagement’ has generated much attention to researchers, practitioners, academicians and also in the industries. Every organisation is interested to engage their employees; however before development of such engagement strategies, it is essential to measure the engagement level among employees. The concept of engagement has been researched for more than 20 years, yielding numerous theoretical frameworks, conceptualisations and operationalisation, which, in turn, leads to several ambiguities and confusions. Researchers continue to call for studies in comparing various conceptualisations of engagement to clarify and unify it in the academics and practitioner’s world (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006). As there is no agreement on unified conceptualisation of engagement, this study is an attempt to explore various approaches to measure this construct throughout the literatures. The study tries to investigate the commonalities and differences that exist in the different employee engagement measures, that comprises of factors and their associated items so that future recommendations can be made for engagement research.

3 Research methods

This study adopted a systematic review method and research synthesis with the help of guidelines framed by Briner and Denyer (2012). The advantage of this approach is “systematic and replicable, giving confidence to the users it informs regarding the status of present knowledge on a given question” (Rousseau et al., 2008, p.500). The study tries to incorporate five steps of Briner and Denyer (2012) – planning, searching, assessing
materials against concurred qualification criteria, investigating and synthesising the information, and reporting. Research synthesis is considered as a successful way to distinguish the story supporting desperate collection of proof by giving analysts the adaptability to create topics that convey soundness to that information (Popay et al., 2006; Briner and Denyer, 2012). It is well known that much discussed topic of engagement still has lack of clarity in theoretical definition and its measurement. Therefore, systematic review approach has been adopted to synthesise all the information and evidences that give an establishment to progress the information in this field. Systematic review and research synthesis approach narrates the collection of studies, its different aspects and tries to establish a picture or map that depicts the complete background of that particular problem so that implications of the research evidence can be integrated with decision making for researchers and practitioners. The steps followed for this review method include – firstly, selection of studies considering specific criteria for inclusion in review; choosing analytical framework to assess the emergent data; and finally using data extraction technique to uncover the data points for making a representation in the graphical form.

3.1 Selection criteria

An initial screening of term ‘engagement’ produced more than 50,000 results from the diverse sources by using open search engine. Then a relevant search term was developed to refine and filter the data base. The most representative data base in psychology and business fields namely, Academic Search Elite – EBSCO Host, Proquest, PsycInfo, ABI/Inform, ASTD’s Training and Development research were selected for data collection. The keywords used for the search include combination of terms like employee engagement, job engagement, organisation engagement, work engagement, personal engagement, engagement and its concepts written in English language. The search is restricted to the publications after the year 1990 as it is known that first conceptualisation of engagement was given by Kahn (1990). The initial search produced more than 5000 results containing the term employee engagement, there after only those articles were selected those are related with its conceptualisation, theoretical background and measures or scales. Initially, only abstracts were reviewed in order to analyse the relevancy of articles which restricted the number to 3047. Furthermore, 2400 items were rejected on the basis of duplicate case, relevancy, language and being non peer reviewed articles. The remaining 647 items were considered for data extraction again using the quality and relevance criteria in order to lessen the selection bias (Briner and Denyer, 2012). On the basis of quality and relevance, finally 241 items were selected for review. To synthesise the data, characteristics of each study and operationalisation of the variables were studied. Of the selected items, thirty were conceptual, four were meta-analysis and rest of them were empirical in nature but for comparison empirical studies were considered majorly.

3.2 Content analysis

Content analysis was performed to scrutinise and recognise the variables, their conceptual background that scattered throughout the literatures. It is used to identify the concept, its dimensions embedded within text and draw out the conclusion by quantifying and analysing the meaning, presence and relationship of such concepts within text or set
of texts (Palmquist et al., 1997). This technique was used to recognise and analyse different measures and dimensions of employee engagement and their comparison. To conduct the content analysis, a classification framework was used to categorise the selected items based on the research objectives. These categories were consists of (a) theoretical background (b) definition and conceptual issues of the construct and (c) measurement issues. This classification framework is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1  Classification framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical background</td>
<td>Underpinning different theoretical perspectives and its purpose</td>
<td>Determining range of theories used for engagement and difference with other psychological constructs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitional and conceptual issues</td>
<td>Different approaches to define the construct and conceptual framing</td>
<td>Investigating consistency or variation in definition given by researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurement and methodological issues</td>
<td>Different measurement techniques and range of dimensions</td>
<td>Examining the uniformity or variations in specified measurement tools and analysing similarities and dissimilarities among their dimensions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Definitions of employee engagement

Kahn’s (1990) ethnographic study is considered as the origin of much discussed concept of engagement. Kahn framework of engagement was founded on the Maslow (1954) need and motives (Alderfer, 1972). There is always debate among academicians and practitioners regarding the issues of conceptualisation and measurement of employee engagement. Shuck and Wollard (2010) distinguished four approaches that have used distinct engagement measures, first being, Kahn’s (1990) Need Satisfying approach involving physical, cognitive and emotional engagements which was empirically examined by May et al. (2004) that found all psychological status to be positively related to construct of engagement; the second approach was Maslach et al. (2001) Burnout Inventory approach involving vigour, dedication and absorption; the third approach was Satisfaction Engagement approach (Harter et al., 2002) with Gallup’s Q12 measures; and the last one was Saks’s (2006) multidimensional approach of employee engagement involving job engagement and organisation engagement. The UWES work engagement measure is considered as opposite or positive antithesis of burnout (Maslach and Leiter, 1997; Maslach et al., 2001). Engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption) and burnout (cynicism, exhaustion and inefficacy) differ in terms of their three dimensions. Employee engagement was defined by Kahn (1990, p.694) as “the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” termed as personal engagement. Kahn discussed the three facets of engagement in hierarchical manner, the physical engagement, the cognitive engagement and the emotional engagement reflecting more profound level of engagement. Rothbard (2001, p.656) characterised engagements with another stead that engagement is a psychological
construct combined with two dominant contributors namely attention and absorption. Attention refers to the intellectual accessibility and quantity of time consumed in contemplating the employment part endowed, while absorption implied immersed in the work-role and could be depicted as the intensity of one’s concentration on the part of role. May et al. (2004) defined engagement as how people employ and expand themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance. May et al. (2004) extended Kahn’s ethnographic study and empirically examined the three dimensions of engagement (physical, cognitive and emotional). Later on, Rich et al. (2010) tries to fill the gap of Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation of engagement and develop a measure called job engagement scale (JES) which also assess Kahn’s dimensions of engagement. The most popular concept of ‘work engagement’ was propounded by Schaufeli et al. (2002). They refined the engagement burnout continuum propounded by Maslach and Leiter (1997, p.74) and defines engagement as a “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption”. Saks (2006) was the first to propose a meaningful difference between job engagement and organisation engagement and tries to measure the various antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. Saks (2006, p.602) defines job engagement as “distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that is associated with individual role performance.” Furthermore, he also added that how engagement is distinct from other similar constructs like organisational citizenship behaviour, organisational commitment and job involvement.

5 Evolution of employee engagement

The engagement wave begins with the academic work of Kahn (1990, 1992) known as personal engagement, which is validated by May et al. (2004) with three psychological attributes, namely, meaningfulness, safety and availability. The qualitative research on this psychological construct made Kahn the academic parent of engagement movement. The practitioner interest begins with the book First Break all the Rules, published by Gallup’s Buckingham and Coffman (1999). It initiates the second wave of engagement with surge of practitioners’ work such as Hewitt Associates (2004), CIPD (2010), Institute for Employment Studies (2004), Development Dimensions International (2005) and the most important GWA, namely, Gallup Workplace Audit (Harter et al., 2002) popularly known as Q12 Employee Engagement (12 items measure). Harter et al. (2002) covered a range of elements in GWA, which all together termed as employee engagement. The third wave witnessed the surge of academic interest in engagement which appears as opposite of job burnout in literatures. In 1997, Maslach and Leiter hypothesised three factors of engagement as opposite to three factors of burnout. But in 2002, Schaufeli et al. debated that burnout and engagement are distinct constructs and suggested that employee experiencing low burnout may have high engagement. Schaufeli et al. (2002) developed three factors structure UWES (vigour, dedication and absorption) which is considered as the most validated and accepted concept and is better known as work engagement worldwide. The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) has extended this particular line of research. Saks (2006) extended the concept with inclusion of job engagement and organisation engagement. In 2010, Rich et al. further explored the concept of Kahn’s engagement and came up with a new measure of engagement, known as JES (Job Engagement Scale). The continuous research of more
than 20 years on engagement has evidenced its dynamic nature and fluctuations. Table 2 tries to summarise all the typologies, its gradual development and the theoretical approaches associated with engagement.

6 Practitioners view on employee engagement

The term engagement is apparently very appealing for organisations because of professional bodies and consulting groups who advocate and promote it. The reason of success of engagement movement lies in its association with positive outcomes such as productivity, profitability, health and safety, less turnover, less absenteeism and willing to engage in discretionary efforts (Fleming and Asplund, 2007; Harter et al., 2002; Wagner and Harter, 2006). The practitioner’s viewpoint stressed on the usability of construct and its practical outcomes, such as less turnover intention, commitment, performance, customer satisfaction etc., while the academic approach emphasises on defining and validating this attitudinal or behavioural concept. The Institute for Employment Studies (2004) has defined engagement as employee positive attitude towards the organisation. The Gallup research claimed that engagement develops a micro culture focussing the individual view on engagement. The Corporate Leadership Council (2004), Charted Institute of Personnel Development (2010), Towers Perrin (2003, 2007) and Development Dimension International (2005) as well as other consulting firms followed Gallup’s viewpoint that engagement is profit driven behaviour although there is some variation on conceptualisation or definitions. In 2006, SHRM marked the entry of professional bodies in discussion of engagement and its conceptualisation. But the core idea remains the same as engagement is an individual choice taken by an employee for his or her own particular reasons (Harter et al., 2002; Wagner and Harter, 2006) and those reasons should be better figured out from the perspective of an individual and the team separately.

7 Framework of different measures of employee engagement

Albeit there have been numerous studies that measure and develop the ‘engagement’ scales, but operational definitions are not consistent throughout the literatures. In order to characterise engagement, the literatures have been investigated in this study to discover the shared traits among the different measures of engagement. Since the larger part of studies that, we explored, are based on Kahn’s conceptualisation (May et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2010; Rothbard, 2001; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002), we utilised their works as a foundation of framework for the current study. The features of Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation of engagement are of particular interest because it helps in operationalising the definition due to its linkage with ‘performance of work tasks’ rather than attitude of an employee towards the job or organisation (Maslach et al., 2001). Therefore, the measure Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA; Harter et al., 2002) does not fit in this conceptualisation on the grounds that it alludes work condition not the work undertaking.

The two major scales, namely, May et al. (2004) psychological scale and Rich et al. (2010) JES scale originated from Kahn’s conceptualisation. The various engagement scales have been discussed in the following sections.
7.1 Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES)

The UWES scale is considered to be the most popular and the most widely used scale with 17 items, propounded by Schaufeli et al. (2002). The UWES scale originally roots out from the burnout conceptualisation (Maslach et al., 1997) and its three dimensions (vigour, dedication and absorption) that are considered as opposite to the three burnout dimensions (cynicism, exhaustion and inefficacy). But Schaufeli et al. (2002) have debated on it and came out with the conclusion that engagement is not exact opposite of burnout. They refined the three factors structure of engagement, namely, vigour (6 items), dedication (5 items) and absorption (6 items). “Vigour characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, inspiration and challenge. And the final one absorption refers to being fully concentrated and engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p.74). The third and last dimension absorption differentiates engagement from the burnout concept. This perspective views engagement not as a flashing and particular state, but rather as ‘a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour’ (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p.74). Schaufeli et al. (2006), later, shortened this 17 items scale to 9 items (shortened version) to reduce the problem of long questionnaire. The construct validity and internal consistency of the UWES (9 Items) was good but the model fit appeared after confirmatory factor analysis was lower than UWES (17 Items) in the fit indices. The 9 items measure does not have much empirical support and worse fit as compared to 17 items measure. Despite the number of limitations in respect of its dimensionality, three factors conceptualisation of UWES (17 Items) has more strong support as compared to other scales.

7.2 Shirom-Melamed vigour measure (SMVM)

Shirom (2003) introduced a similar construct to engagement termed as ‘Vigour’ conceptually similar to one of the construct of engagement. Shirom (2003) debated on the leading UWES model and pointed out that only vigour dimension of engagement is the only non-confounded construct and raised the question on the relationship of engagement with other constructs like job involvement, psychological presence etc. In an attempt to overcome this problem, Shirom develop a new measure with three factors, namely, physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive vividness, termed as Shirom Melamed Vigour Measure (SMVM). It reflects Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation of physical, emotional and cognitive engagement and pretested for its construct validity. Later on, Shirom (2011) confessed that both vigour and engagement are almost similar constructs specifically the vigour component of UWES mentioned the two aspects, individual’s motivation and resiliency. He battles that individuals can encounter energy paying little respect to their resiliency, a minute difference between the two constructs. Bakker et al. (2011, p.75) advocated that engagement is a “combination of capability to work (energy, vigour) and willingness to work (involvement, dedication)”. The vigour construct matches with the ‘capability to work’ which illustrates the overlapping of engagement with the vigour construct.
7.3 Britt’s uni-dimensional scale

Another approach towards defining engagement proposed by Britt (1999), as feeling in charge of and focused on one’s work execution such that one’s occupation execution really matters to the person. Britt suggested engagement as one factor construct and measured it in the same way. Britt methodologies express that engagement is a motivational state made by convictions of individual’s responsibility and caring which has no contrary with UWES and SMVM conceptualisations of engagement. Britt (1999) focuses on physical effort, vigour, attention, dedication and absorption as results of engagement, instead of contributing towards measurements of the construct. Britt (1999) also debated on the positive and negative consequences of the engagement which was neglected by Shirom and Schaufeli. Both UWES and SMVM scales measurement are based on the Kahn’s conceptualisation, but Britt one-dimensional conceptualisation differs from them because it emphasis on the individual’s feeling to become responsible for better performance and dedicated to their work. “All three approaches to engagement involve a measure of how into the job a person is, each refers to employee affect as it relates to one’s work, and all are in agreement that engagement is best conceptualised and measured as a relatively transitory state, as opposed to a more enduring trait” (Weilfald et al., 2011, p.5).

7.4 May’s psychological scale

May et al. (2004) added measures of engagement to mirror the three segments of Kahn’s (1990) meaning of engagement (cognitive, emotional and physical). The principal component analysis on 24 items of the scale does not segregate these three dimensions and results in poor reliability. Therefore, 13 items scale came in place with good reliability (.77) and same dimensions, physical (5 items), emotional (4 items) and cognitive (4 items). The only published and known work on this scale is by Avey et al. (2008); used only the emotional dimension for their study of psychological capital. The measure did not stand against the other measures because there is no clear distinction between the three dimensions of engagement. Due to lack of evidences, this measure was unable to get the recognition as a popular and widely accepted measure.

7.5 Saks’s multi-dimensional scale

Saks (2006) was the first person who makes the distinction between the two constructs - job engagement and organisation engagement and tries to quantify a mixed bag of antecedents and outcome of employee engagement. Saks contributes to theory specifically on the foundation of Social Exchange Theory (SET). A fundamental percept of SET is that a relationship develops over time into faithful, trusting and shared duties as long as both groups bonded by certain ‘rules of exchange’ (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This is steady with Robinson et al. (2004) view that engagement is a two way relationship between employer and employee. Saks (2006) conceptualisation reflects Kahn’s (1990) and Rothbard’s (2001) presence in their studies specifically in the individuals presence in performing organisational duties. The two most prevailing parts for most employees of the organisation are work role and their part as an individual of an organisation. Thus Saks (2006) model unequivocally recognises this with both the constructs job engagement and organisation engagement. But there is lack of empirical
support for this model and only six items of job engagement construct have been taken for comparison due to their relevance for the study.

7.6 Job engagement scale (JES)

Rich et al. (2010) created and published a measure named as Job Engagement Scale (JES) in line with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation. Items of this scale are primarily based upon the three dimensions of Kahn’s (1990) concept i.e. physical, cognitive and emotional engagement. The physical engagement dimension reflects the ‘work intensity’ measure proposed by Brown and Leigh (1996, p.362), defined as ‘energy exerted per unit of time’. To quantify the emotional engagement, Russell and Barrett’s (1999) work on ‘core affect’ comprised of two parameters known as pleasantness and activation. And at last, for the cognitive part of engagement, Rothbard’s (2001) measure of engagement had been considered for scale construction incorporating the two dimensions, attention and absorption. Shuck et al. (2013) suggested that the work of Rich and his colleagues have done the finest operationalisation of Kahn’s conceptualisation of engagement. The JES scale is very new in this area, thus there is lack of empirical evidence in the reservoir of literatures. In fact, Rich et al.’s conceptualisation focuses on multidimensional motivational aspect of engagement rather than as an attitude (Harter et al., 2002) or concerned with well-being (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

7.7 ISA engagement scale

Human Resource Development (HRD) researchers are turning out to be progressively intrigued in hypothetical models that clarify how human resource practices can enhance worker engagement and organisation performance (Shuck et al., 2011). Recent research in engagement has shown that it has range of outputs like organisational citizenship behaviour (Rich et al., 2010), turnover intention (Hallberg and Schaufeli, 2006), productivity and profitability (Harter et al., 2002) which arises interest for HRD scholars in this area. Soane et al. (2012, p.531) suggested that “employee engagement is a latent construct; where by the high order factor of engagement underlies the facet” that has three conditions for the engagement status focus, activation and positive affect. The cognitive measure of engagement has long history of research (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010) termed as cognitive engagement (Kahn, 1990) and dedication (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Soane et al. (2012, p.532) termed it as ‘intellectual engagement’ and defined as ‘the extent to which one is intellectually absorbed in work’. The engagement theory normally clarifies the role of affect therefore Soane et al. referred the second dimension of engagement as ‘affective engagement’ defined as ‘the degree to which one encounters a condition of positive influence relating to one’s work part’. But the one dimension which distinguishes this measure with others is ‘social engagement’. The importance of the social connection to engagement has been recognised by different researchers (Kahn, 1990; Shuck and Wollard, 2010) and has been connected with HRD from framework point of view (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Therefore, Soane et al. (2012) include it as third dimension and defined as ‘the degree to which one is socially associated with the workplace and shares common values with their colleagues’. All the three facets, namely, intellectual, affective and social engagement require three states of activation, focus and positive affect. In the area of HRD, affective engagement is more concerned with
positive results identified with speculation and enriching personal resources (Fredrickson, 2001), intellectual is related with performance and other outcomes like creativity or innovation (Krauss et al., 2005) and lastly, social engagement is specifically applicable for the organisational changes following compelling social procedures that are crucial to positive results of progress (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). This scale is very new in this field, and so we did not find any support for this study but for HRD practitioners, it could act as comprehensive measure to assess engagement in connection to HRD interventions.

7.8 Competitive analysis of engagement scales

We have discussed the conceptualisation of each measure and the theory behind it. In this section, we tried to investigate the actual similarities and the distinctions with each other with the help of comparative and relational analysis of the dimensions and items in relation with these measures.

The important engagement conceptualisations and their measurements are summarised in Table 2. There are four important conceptualisations – Kahn’s need satisfaction, Schaufeli’s burnout, Harter’s job satisfaction and Saks multidimensional (Shuck and Wollard, 2010).

**Table 2** Engagement conceptualisations and their measurements scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kahn (1990, 1992)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Maslach et al. (1997)</td>
<td>Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Satisfaction approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Multidimensional approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Measurement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The engagement dimensions comparison among employee engagement scales are presented in Table 3.
Table 3: Engagement dimensions comparison among employee engagement scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dimension</th>
<th>UWES Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002)</th>
<th>May Scale (May et al., 2004)</th>
<th>Rothbard Scale (Rothbard, 2001)</th>
<th>Saks Scale (Saks, 2006)</th>
<th>JES Scale (Rich et al., 2010)</th>
<th>ISA Engagement Scale (Soane et al., 2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vigour</td>
<td>Physical Engagement (looks identical, but some overlap)</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>Organisation Engagement (Some overlap)</td>
<td>Physical Engagement (Similar)</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>Emotional Engagement (looks identical, but some overlap)</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>Emotional Engagement (Similar)</td>
<td>Affective Engagement (Similar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorption</td>
<td>Cognitive Engagement (looks identical, but some overlap)</td>
<td>Attention and Absorption (similar)</td>
<td>Job Engagement (Similar)</td>
<td>Cognitive Engagement (Similar, partly draws from Rothbard’s)</td>
<td>Intellectual Engagement (similar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWES Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002)</td>
<td>May Scale (May et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Rothbard Scale (Rothbard, 2001)</td>
<td>Saks Scale (Saks, 2006)</td>
<td>JES Scale (Rich et al., 2010)</td>
<td>ISA Engagement Scale (Soane et al., 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my work, I feel bursting with energy. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>I exert a lot of energy performing my job.</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>Being a member of this organisation is very captivating.</td>
<td>I work with intensity on my job.</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my job, I feel strong and vigorous. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>I stay until the job is done.</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organisation.</td>
<td>I exert my full effort to my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>I avoid working overtime whenever possible. (r)</td>
<td>I am really not into the “goings-on” in this organisation (R).</td>
<td>I devote a lot of energy to my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can continue working for very long periods at a time.</td>
<td>I take work home to do.</td>
<td>Being a member of this organisation make me come “alive.”</td>
<td>I try my hardest to perform well on my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.</td>
<td>I avoid working too hard. (r)</td>
<td>Being a member of this organisation is exhilarating for me.</td>
<td>I strive as hard as I can to complete my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I am highly engaged in this organisation.</td>
<td>I exert a lot of energy on my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5

Statements comparison among employee engagement scales with respect to dedication engagement dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UWES Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002)</th>
<th>May Scale (May et al., 2004)</th>
<th>Rothbard Scale (Rothbard, 2001)</th>
<th>Saks Scale (Saks, 2006)</th>
<th>JES Scale (Rich et al., 2010)</th>
<th>ISA Engagement Scale (Sarne et al., 2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.</td>
<td>I really put my heart into my job.</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>Not measured</td>
<td>I am enthusiastic in my job.</td>
<td>I feel positive about my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am enthusiastic about my job. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>I get excited when I perform well on my job.</td>
<td>I feel energetic at my job. (Overlap with Vigour).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I feel energetic in my work. (Overlap with Vigour).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job inspires me. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>I often feel emotionally detached from my job. (r) (Overlap with Absorption)</td>
<td>I am interested in my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I am enthusiastic in my work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud of the work that I do. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>My own feelings are affected by how well I perform my job.</td>
<td>I am proud of my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To me, my job is challenging.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWES Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002)</td>
<td>May Scale (May et al., 2004)</td>
<td>Rothbard Scale (Rothbard, 2001)</td>
<td>Saks Scale (Saks, 2006)</td>
<td>JES Scale (Rich et al., 2010)</td>
<td>ISA Engagement Scale (Soane et al., 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time flies when I am working.</td>
<td>Performing my job is so absorbing that I forget about everything else.</td>
<td>When I am working, I often lose track of time.</td>
<td>I really “throw” myself into my job.</td>
<td>At work, my mind is focused on my job.</td>
<td>I focus hard on my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am working, I forget everything else around me.</td>
<td>I often think about other things when performing my job. (r)</td>
<td>I often get carried away by what I am working on.</td>
<td>Sometimes I am so into my job that I lose track of time.</td>
<td>At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job.</td>
<td>I concentrate on my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy when I am working intensely. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>I am rarely distracted when performing my job.</td>
<td>When I am working, I am completely engrossed by my work.</td>
<td>This job is all consuming; I am totally into it.</td>
<td>At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my job.</td>
<td>I pay a lot of attention to my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am immersed in my work. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>Time passes quickly when I perform my job.</td>
<td>When I am working, I am totally absorbed by it.</td>
<td>My mind often wanders and I think of other things when doing my job (R).</td>
<td>At work, I am absorbed by my job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get carried away when I am working. (UWES-9)</td>
<td>Nothing can distract me when I am working. (R)</td>
<td>I am highly engaged in this job.</td>
<td>At work, I concentrate on my job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to detach myself from my job.</td>
<td>I spend a lot of time thinking about my work.</td>
<td>At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job.</td>
<td>I focus a great deal of attention on my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I concentrate a lot on my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I pay a lot of attention to my work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The comparative analysis of employee engagement measures

The statement (items) comparison among employee engagement scales with respect to vigour, dedication and absorption engagement dimensions are presented in Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 respectively. These comparisons clearly indicate that there is the problem of overlapping of items in these dimensions of compared instruments. For example, the items of vigour, dedication and absorption have overlapping with physical, cognitive and behavioural dimension of JES (Rich et al., 2010) and May psychological scale (May et al., 2004). In the similar manner, Rothbard’s both attention and absorption dimensions have similarity only with the absorption (similar with intellectual and cognitive engagement).

The above discussed conceptualisations were considered for the study because these are available publicly and mentioned as the measure of engagement construct in the academic literatures. Further, each one had theoretically and empirically supported findings for the conceptualisation and the measures. As it is known that UWES is the most commonly used and popular scale, therefore all the comparisons has been conducted with reference to this measure. Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Shirom (2003) measures, inspired by Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation, had tried to touch base all the three components viz., physical, emotional and cognitive engagement, particularly, with Schaufeli’s engagement dimensions – vigour, dedication and absorption while Shirom’s dimensions – physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness termed as ‘Vigour’ which is one of the dimension of UWES measure. Britt’s (1999) one-dimensional approach of engagement did not comply with Kahn’s theory and focuses on individual’s sentiments of obligation regarding execution and commitment to their employment and as such. Wefald et al. (2011) conducted a side by side comparison of these three scales and found no support for both multi and one-dimensional structure while SMVM multidimensional has good support and uni-dimensional structure of Britt’s measure was confirmed. The UWES measure has strong connection with work outcomes at the point when controlling for job satisfaction and affective commitment and not able to predict turnover intention. Two segments of the Shirom measure maintain their predictive validity. The Schaufeli measure has problems of overlapping with job satisfaction and organisational commitment while vigour measure has not much correlation with job satisfaction and commitment which evidenced the presence of some variance between these constructs. The relative weights investigation uncovers that Shirom’s measure may be better in predicting the outcome of job satisfaction and affective commitment then its ability to predict turnover intentions.

May et al. (2004) theoretically grounding of Kahn concept (1990, 1992), who defines engagement as “the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (1990, p.694). May et al.’s conceptualisation is based on the Kahn’s three components – physical, cognitive and emotional engagement. Viljevac et al. (2012) try to investigate the two models (UWES and May psychological instrument) on the assumption that dimensions of both scales are inter-correlated with each other particularly vigour with physical, dedication with emotional and absorption with cognitive and found that UWES absorption and May et al.’s (2004) cognitive dimensions were emphatically related and weak support for a relationship between dedication (UWES) and emotional dimension (May et al., 2004) and has no evidence for a relationship between the UWES vigour and May et al.’s physical measurements. The analysis of both the measures has some evidence of discriminant validity like both measures demonstrated confirmation of separation from organisational commitment;
UWES additionally demonstrated some confirmation of separation from job involvement and intent to stay (Viljevac et al., 2012). After analysing the psychometric properties of UWES and May scales, we found that UWES may perform better than May psychological scale but there is always problem of overlapping with the other constructs specifically with the job satisfaction. The other engagement scales mentioned in scholastic articles is Rothbard’s (2001) two-dimensional scale that concentrates on attention and absorption, which are similar to the third dimension of UWES scale i.e. absorption. Attention alludes to intellectual availability and the measure of time one spends in contemplating a part (Gardner et al., 1989). Absorption indicates being engaged in a role and alludes to the force of one’s attention on a part (Goffman, 1961; Kahn, 1990). Rothbard also pointed out that apart from some differences; attention and absorption were interrelated with each other because both constructs have their origin in motivational constructs. And later on, Schaufeli et al. (2002) worked out on these dimensions and termed it as absorption and found similarity with Rothbard’s measure. The other significant contributions in this area include research works carried out by Saks (2006) who differentiate the engagement term with job and organisation engagement and the findings recommend that there is a remarkable difference between these two constructs. Job engagement has similarity with the absorption dimension of UWES while organisation engagement appeared as a new dimension although having some superimposed characteristics with the vigour dimension of UWES. Between the job and organisation engagement, organisation engagement emerged as the much significant predictor of outcomes like organisational commitment, job satisfaction and organisation citizenship behaviour.

Rich et al. (2010) extended the work of May et al. (2004) while both have grounded from Kahn’s conceptualisation and developed a new measure termed as JES scale. It has same components which May possesses – physical, cognitive and emotional. In fact the introductory focus of UWES is examining the stress related outcome (Maslach and Leiter, 1997); it has as of late been utilised to analyse the relationship between employee engagement and efficacy (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007) and other behavioural outcomes (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008). JES scale is based on Kahn’s conceptualisation and has not any relationship with stress and related outcomes. JES includes affect factor while UWES referred as affective – cognitive status (Schaufeli et al, 2006) which indicates very little evidence of affect being considered as part of the engagement definition. Comprehensively, the ideas of physical, emotional and cognitive engagement are parallel to the three facets behaviour, affect and cognition respectively. As both the scales have different theoretical background therefore the items included are different enough to fit in a single construct. For instance, UWES ranges from every day to A few times a year or less while JES ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The different responding style will capture a different idea which creates more ambiguity in the exploration of engagement construct that it is an attitude or opinion. Drake (2012) found that vigour of the UWES measure and physical component of the JES were strongly related but there is less correlation found between the other components of both measures. Despite of the similarities between these two scales, JES is strong enough to capture the psychometric properties rather than UWES (Rich et al., 2010). The other need based instrument, ISA Engagement scale, was created to incorporate a social or interpersonal relationship measurement mirroring the researchers conviction that, as per Kahn (2007), individuals need constructive connections at work with a specific end goal to be achieved (Soane et al., 2012). The foundation of ISA engagement scale is present in Kahn’s conceptualisation
The comparative analysis of employee engagement measures

of three facets – a defined work role (way of personal achievement and performance); activation refers to two responses cognitive and affective (Fiske and Maddi, 1961); and positive affect play significant role in goal attainment and motivation theory (Judge and Illies, 2002). Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) also supported the role of activation and affect in engagement theory which indicates that similarity of UWES items with ISA items. The cognitive aspect of engagement is the most researched phenomenon in engagement (Kahn 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; May et al., 2004; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). Schaufeli et al. (2002) termed as dedication while Soane et al. (2012) used this term as intellectual engagement. The part of affect in engagement also has long history (Kahn 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; May et al., 2004; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010). Soane et al. (2012) referred as ‘affective engagement’ and last dimension which differentiate it with other scale is ‘social engagement’ because no study had been operationalised this dimension. In the usefulness analysis (Darlington, 1968) performed by Soane et al. (2012) compare the widely accepted UWES against the ISA. The purpose of the usefulness analysis is to investigate the variation of $R^2$ related with a specific variable while controlling for different variables. The outcome of this analysis demonstrates that ISA measure is valuable well beyond the UWES measure. Stoeber et al. (2013) expanded the work of Soane et al. (2012) by comparing these two engagement scales in relation with job satisfaction, organisational commitment and workaholism. Comparing the total score of both the scales, the results suggested that job satisfaction has positive relationship with both measures while only ISA’s total score has in relation with organisational commitment and only the total score of UWES measure predicted workaholism, at the point when the aggregate scores were entered at the same time in the regression. Anthony-Mcmann (2014) explored the two scales JES and ISA and suggests that both the measures are not similar in nature because their dimensions measured the different part of engagement such as both the measures (JES and ISA) of employee engagement would prove diverse associations with the variables of work environment stress and burnout. While few of their dimensions are much similar with each other, and we can see the reflections of these similarities in the present and past research associated with these measures of employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010; Soane et al., 2012; Shuck et al., 2012). The review of scale reveals that the cognitive dimension of Rich’s scale (6 items) has conceptual similarities with the intellectual dimension (3 items) of Soane’s scale. Additionally, Rich’s emotional dimension and ISA’s affective dimension likewise show theoretical and empirical resemblance. Apart from these similarities, the findings of present study suggests that the two resting dimensions, namely, physical engagement from the Rich Scale and social engagement from the ISA Scale clarified the noteworthy contrasts in connection when the engagement is measured with all dimensions (Anthony-Mcmann, 2014). From the above discussions, it is clear that different measures of engagement originate from the two dominant conceptualisation i.e. Kahn’s need satisfaction approach and Maslach’s burnout approach. There might be overlapping of some dimensions with each other but there are some specific characteristics associated with each of the scale that make it individually complete and indifferent from other scales.
8 Discussions and implications of study

The purpose of this narrative review was to assemble all the data related with engagement measures under one umbrella. We found that continuous study and exploration of employee engagement enhances the volatility of the term due to presence of multiple conceptualisation and operationalisation (Shuck et al., 2012). Researchers are engaged in exploring detailed nomological network of the different measures scattered throughout in the database (Shuck et al., 2014). Therefore one of the significant contributions of the current study in the academic literatures is that it provides explanation of the distinctions in the way employee engagement is measured and how these distinctions may affect organisational HR strategies. However a correlation of the considerable number of scales distributed and freely accessible has not yet been endeavoured.

Furthermore, engagement is found to have several distinct definitions from academicians’ point of view (Kahn, 1990; Rothbard, 2001; May et al., 2004; Rich et al., 2010; Shuck et al., 2012) as well as from practitioners’ point of view (Gallup, 2002; Hewitt Associates, 2004; Development Dimensions International, 2005; CIPD, 2010). Based on exploration and comparison of various theoretical frameworks, it is found that there is presence of conceptual issues related with this construct, which reveal the cause of multiple definitions as summarised below:

- The available definitions do not clarify whether engagement is an attitudinal phenomenon or behavioural phenomenon. Most of authors mixed both things in their definitions; e.g., Robinson et al. (2004) definition includes ‘individual’s involvement and satisfaction as well as enthusiasm for work’, which is an attitudinal phenomenon whereas ‘working longer hours, speaking positively about the organisation’ represents behavioural aspect.

- The present definitions are unable to explain whether engagement is an individual level phenomenon or group level phenomenon or combination of both. In literatures, the classification of engaged employees have been done at individual level where as performance, well-being and satisfaction are measured at group level.

- The third issue, which invoke various definitions, is for not providing clarity on relationship of engagement with well-known and related concepts such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction, job involvement and organisational citizenship behaviour.

- The final problem lies in its measurement issue which obscure the true meaning of this concept. The differences in the nomological validity of the constructs resulted in differences in the mechanisms by which it is measured and operationalised.

The study found that these measurement issues, related with engagement, are always a bone of contention among researchers and practitioners. According to Gupta and Sharma (2016, p.51S), “There is no single defined approach towards the measurement of employee engagement and the organisations are interested to use their own items and tools to measure it”. The study also compared various measures and found ambiguities among these measures. The meta analytic review suggested possible multicollinearity among three factors structure of UWES scale (Christian et al., 2011). Researchers also supported for one factor structure of engagement. Despite several limitations, UWES
The comparative analysis of employee engagement measures

three factors structure was found to be the most explicit one to measure engagement, as it has received abundant empirical supports and accepted by both communities of academicians and practitioners. Specifically the internal consistency and factorial validity of three sub-scales (vigour, dedication and absorption) of UWES measure was evidenced. In addition, predictive validity of UWES measure is more as compared to other scales.

It is worldwide fact that the engagement field is dominated by Utrecht group of school as 86% of studies have used UWES measure (Bailey et al., 2015) but study found that despite its prevalence, there is still presence of uncertainty regarding its reliability, validity and transferability across various industries, occupational group and national context (Wefald et al., 2011). Research also found that other factor structure of engagement such as May’s psychological scale (2004), JES (Rich et al., 2010) and ISA (Soane et al., 2012) provides better theoretical framework but lacks necessary empirical support to validate these structures. Therefore, the study suggests that reliability and validity of various engagement measures should investigate in different context to analyse their psychometric properties in relation to different antecedents and outcomes.

The findings proposed that there are two important concepts present behind the engagement measures – Kahn’s need based approach and Maslach’s burnout approach and there is always debate regarding which approach is superior to measure it. In addition to this, the study also presents the basic idea behind both major concepts, analysis of the measurement, their dimensions and their characteristics; and relation with individual and organisational outcomes. ‘Stress’ is the key word behind burnout concept and ‘need’, behind Kahn’s concept. The past study reveals that measures based on need based approach such as May’s psychological measure perform better with all the standard comparative indexes and the one-dimensional Britt’s measure was affirmed against the most popular instrument UWES (Wefald et al., 2011). But there is very less empirical support present to back up other measures against UWES’s both version, long (17 items) and short (9 items) scales. This study firmly proposes that, paying little heed to conceptualisation, much attention should be given in the area particularly to the meaning of the construct that can be disclosed by investigating the different dimensions of engagement measure. In this regard, future study can be done by considering the relation of engagement with workplace stress and the need based employment in organisation by considering the different measure alternatively. Previous research also criticised the engagement construct due to its overlapping with job satisfaction and other similar constructs (Macey and Schneider, 2008). This study also reveals that even similarly conceptualised measures of employee engagement do not measure the same aspects of engagement in those conceptualised measures.

Based on the comparisons of different specified measures, three important factors were extracted, as found in almost all conceptualisations. Cognition was found as the most important factor of engagement, related with individual state of mind or depicts intellectual status that influences employee perception towards assigned duty, management practices and organisational environment (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Soane et al., 2012). The second important extracted factor is positive emotions or affective attachment shown by an employee and plays important role in experiencing engagement. Various conceptualisation of engagement described that engaged employees with positive emotions show enthusiasm, pride, passion, energy and involvement towards their job. Schaufeli et al. (2002) termed it as ‘dedication’ and Soane et al. (2012) called it as ‘affective engagement’. The third extracted factor is activation or physical presence of
employees in their job. Schaufeli et al. (2002) and Shirom (2003) acknowledged this as ‘Vigour’ where as May et al. (2004) and Rich et al. (2010) termed it as ‘physical engagement’. Furthermore, various researchers have discussed about the behavioural aspect (discretionary effort, proactive behaviour, citizenship behaviour, pro-social behaviour) of engagement and proposed as key dimension of engagement structure but do not include items to assess the engagement behaviour. Schaufeli (2014) and Shuck et al. (2016) also stated that behavioural component of engagement, in line with organisational goal, should be part of operational definition of engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) also conceptualised engagement as trait, state and behavioural form but behavioural part is neglected in almost all measures. Thus, future study can incorporate these components to measure behavioural aspect of engagement construct along with the three extracted factors.

In addition, results also showed that during item wise comparisons of UWES scale, May’s psychological scale, Rothbard scale, JES scale, ISA scale and Saks’s multidimensional scale; various items of these scales were loaded on other factors of the scales, e.g., some of the items of absorption (Rothbard scale) were loaded on dedication factor (UWES scale). The findings indicate inter-correlation between the items of different constructs of these scales and for this, psychometric properties of the various scales have been assessed and it has been found that most of the studies prefer one factor structure as compared to multiple factors structure. Schaufeli et al. (2006) demonstrated that the short version scale (UWES-9) has better psychometric properties as compared to original version. The reason is that it is one factor structure and there is no inter-correlation between the three components of the measure. Therefore, we argued that future research can be carried out comparing one factor structure or multi factors structure interchangeably to decide better fit.

During analysis it was found that the positive social inter-relationship, suggested by Kahn (1990), as important aspect of engagement but not much attention has been given to this component. Soane et al. (2012) only considered this factor as part of engagement measure and named it as ‘social engagement’. The presence of this factor improves the resiliency and mitigates the negative effect of burnout on employees (Soane et al., 2012). The study also suggests that if the HRD practitioners are interested to know the level of engagement, the decision to choose the engagement instrument becomes critical. In this regard, this study is helpful to better understand the choice of instrument. For instance, if any organisation shows concerned to know the effect of job stress on emotional or affective part of engagement, then either burnout oriented measure or emotional or affective measures from May scale, Rich scale or ISA scale may be suitable. In the same way, if organisation is interested to know the role of interpersonal relationships or social networking in the workplace, the social dimension of ISA scale may be sufficient to capture it.

From the above discussions, it is clear that for organisation development, the determination of employee engagement estimation instruments ought to additionally be considered in the connection of what the association is considering as far as working environment intercessions (Shuck, 2011). For example, Rich scale focuses on meaningfulness in job, psychological safety and resource availability to get engaged in the workforce while ISA scale emphasises on stress and social connectedness. This implies that stress and burnout affect engagement; efforts should be taken to create a positive and trusting environment in workplace against these negative effects. The
researchers are continuously involved in confirming the uniqueness of engagement in
relation with other constructs like job satisfaction, commitment, involvement (Shuck et
al., 2014) and relation of these constructs with different engagement measures is another
interesting area for future research. HRD practitioners are more interested in particular
measurement for the specific sector, context and country and this study can contribute in
identifying that particular instrument. To the degree that this study adds to the insightful
writing by clarifying a percentage of the distinctions in how work engagement is
measured and how those distinctions may affect organisational HRD endeavours. It also
helps for researchers and practitioners who are looking to operationalise this construct.
Further, the study proposes that contradictions about the distinctions in the
operationalisation of employee engagement are less vital than assisting the aggregate
seeing about the distinctions in order to illuminate experts about the utilisation of the best
instrument(s) to coordinate their organisational goals.

9 Limitations of study

Although the study tries to capture almost all the available engagement measures based
on the present and past studies to provide a better understanding of engagement construct
which is the area of large interest in the organisational and occupational psychology, but
the study has some limitations that need to be addressed in future research. The main
limitation of the study is not considering the practitioner approach of measuring
employee engagement. The widespread Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) popularly
known as Q12 (Harter et al., 2002) based on the need-satisfaction approach and IES
engagement instrument (Robinson et al., 2004), the two widely used instrument in
business community, are not included in this study due to the proprietary issues of these
measures and lack of validity of the measures. The second limitation is that the paper is
not empirically tested as the comparative assessment of these measures with data is very
difficult. Future research can extend to examine the majority of the distributed estimation
instruments (and their measurements) and analyses their connections to variables (e.g.
stress, OCB) and to specific antecedents and consequences that would promote the
aggregate comprehension of employee engagement. To prove the proposed linkages,
longitudinal and experimental study is imperative to understand the nomological
relationship of the construct. And, finally, the study is focussed on the commonality and
the differences of the measures so the antecedents and consequences part is neglected.
Future study can be carried out with the relationship of various variables by considering
different measures. Despite of these limitations, this study strongly supports
theoretical contribution for the investigation of engagement conceptualisation and their
measurements.

10 Conclusions

Overall, the findings suggest that there is a difference in the nomological structure of
engagement construct and also presence of differences in the way it is quantified and
operationalised (Christian et al., 2011; Shuck, 2011; Shuck et al., 2013; Viljevac et al.,
2012). UWES is found to be the most validated measure but still there is confusion
regarding its reliability, validity and its theoretical framework, as there exist two versions of this scale – UWES (17 items) and UWES (9 items). As it is known that concept of engagement is grounded in Kahn’s ethnographic study but the burnout is not categorised in the same continuum. Considering these two conceptualisations, there are six popular measures (non-commercials) published in the academic literatures – UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002), SMVM (Shirom, 2003), May Scale (May et al., 2004), Saks Scale (Saks, 2006), Rich Scale (Rich et al., 2010), and ISA Scale (Soane et al., 2012). Except the UWES and SMVM scales, which spotted engagement as antipode to burnout, others are based on Kahn’s need-satisfaction structural framework which indicates that Kahn’s approach has strong framework but having less empirical support. The comparative analysis provided two important insights. First, the three common factors, incorporated by almost all measures in different ways were intellectual status of an employee (cognitive component), positive emotion (affective component) and physical strength or energy but again lead to confusion about other dimensions. For example, social engagement is considered as an important component to be engaged but included only in ISA measure.

The study also suggested ambiguity in structure of engagement; whether it is uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional. The findings potentially suggested that multi-dimensional structure is better fit with data but most studies have preferred one factor structure to estimate this measure. It can be reasonably inferred from above findings that measurement instrument based on different theoretical framework have different predictive validity and have different utility. Thus it is researcher and practitioners choice regarding selection of instrument in order to match their objectives. But it is also important to handle the issue of multiple conceptualisations to derive the usefulness and meaningfulness of this construct. We hope that this study is moving one step towards ‘one definition and one measurement’ approach that is utmost requirement of this popular construct. In nutshell, the present study extends the comparison of all existing instrument by clarifying the theoretical concept behind each operationalisation; reveals the dimensions and sub-dimensions of each measure and what they are actually measuring; converge with the finding that selection of instrument should be intentional according to goals or objectives; and provides a better understanding about commonalities and dissimilarities between different measures from which scholarly world will definitely be benefitted and devote more research work towards the development and validation of uniform engagement measure.

References


The comparative analysis of employee engagement measures


