Factors Influencing Employee Engagement in E-Business

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Abstract:

With the rapid growth of the e-business sector, employee engagement has become essential for organizational success, customer satisfaction, and corporate reputation. This study aims to examine the impact of demographic variables on employee engagement and explore how salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement among employees in China's e-business sector. A quantitative analysis was conducted using data collected from 400 e-business employees. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage, and inferential statistics, such as independent sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, LSD post-hoc analysis, and multiple linear regression, were applied at a 0.05 significance level. The results show that gender, age, educational background, and work department do not significantly affect employee engagement. However, monthly income does lead to differences in engagement levels. Furthermore, salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and CSR were found to significantly influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement, with salary fairness having the strongest impact on cognitive and overall engagement. In contrast, CSR had the greatest effect on affective and behavioral engagement. Detailed recommendations are provided to enhance employee engagement in the e-business sector.

Keywords: E-business; salary fairness; employee innovation behavior; corporate social responsibility; employee engagement.

Introduction

Employee engagement is of paramount significance for success and sustained growth. In the current business landscape, especially within e-business, employee engagement influences an organization's performance and shapes customer experiences and corporate reputation. E-businesses are typically in highly competitive markets, where success hinges on employee innovation, commitment, and active participation. Therefore, comprehending the factors that affect employee engagement in e-business is paramount. Past research has underscored the positive correlation between employee engagement and an organization's profitability, customer satisfaction, and employee retention. However, the unique nature of e-business may lead to some distinctive influencing factors. For instance, e-business often requires employees to possess innovative capabilities to adapt to rapidly changing market demands. Additionally, employees' work in e-business may involve online interactions with customers and partners, impacting their affective and behavioral engagement.

Over the past decade, China's e-business industry has experienced unprecedented explosive growth, quickly becoming one of the largest e-business markets in the world. According to data from the China E-commerce Research Center, China's e-commerce transaction volume reached 40 trillion yuan in 2023, accounting for over 50% of the global e-commerce market. This remarkable growth is mainly attributed to the widespread internet adoption, the extensive use of mobile payment tools, and significant improvements in modern logistics and distribution systems. China's major e-business platforms include Alibaba, JD.com, Pinduoduo, and Suning.com. These platforms are not merely venues for product transactions; they also provide various services, such as financial services, cloud computing, and big data analytics, forming a complex ecosystem. For example, Alibaba offers payment solutions through its subsidiary Alipay and cloud computing services through Alibaba Cloud; JD.com not only holds a significant position in the e-business sector but has also made substantial investments in fintech and logistics technology.

Within these e-business platforms, employee engagement is crucial in enhancing service quality, innovation capability, and customer satisfaction. Highly engaged employees typically exhibit higher job satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and better job performance, which translates into increased productivity, reduced employee turnover, enhanced customer satisfaction, and driving innovation. Therefore, understanding and improving employee engagement is essential for a company's internal management and external competitiveness. Factors influencing employee engagement include the work environment, compensation and benefits, and career development opportunities. Key elements such as a comfortable workspace, a friendly team atmosphere, competitive compensation, comprehensive benefits, transparent career development paths, and training opportunities are essential for employee engagement. By providing these supports, companies can attract and retain high-quality employees and enhance their work motivation and satisfaction, thereby laying a solid foundation for the sustained development of the e-commerce industry. (Erisman, P. 2017).

Hence, this study explores the factors influencing employee engagement in e-business platforms. The study focuses on salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and corporate social responsibility to understand how they affect employees' cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. By delving into these factors, we can provide targeted management recommendations to enhance employee engagement on e-commerce platforms, strengthening an organization's competitiveness and sustainability.

Hence, this study explores the factors influencing employee engagement on e-commerce business platforms. This study focuses on factors such as salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and corporate social responsibility to understand how those factors affect employees' cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. By delving into these factors, recommendations can be provided to enhance employee engagement on Chinese e-business, thereby strengthening business competitiveness and sustainability.

The study focuses on understanding the various factors that shape employee engagement in e-business environments, with a specific emphasis on the role of demographic variables and internal organizational factors. The research is driven by two primary questions. First, it seeks to determine how demographic variables such as gender, age, educational background, monthly income, and department of work impact employee engagement in e-businesses. Second, it examines the extent to which internal factors, including salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of employee engagement. The objectives of the research align with these questions, aiming to investigate how individual characteristics affect employee engagement, and to explore how internal factors shape various dimensions of engagement. To address these objectives, the study proposes several hypotheses, including that demographic differences significantly affect employee engagement (H1), and that internal factors, such as salary fairness, employee innovation, and CSR, have a substantial influence on cognitive (H2), affective (H3), behavioral (H4), and overall employee engagement (H5) in e-businesses.

The following research framework is designed to provide a structured approach, offering insights into how both demographic and internal factors interact to shape employee engagement within the e-business sector.

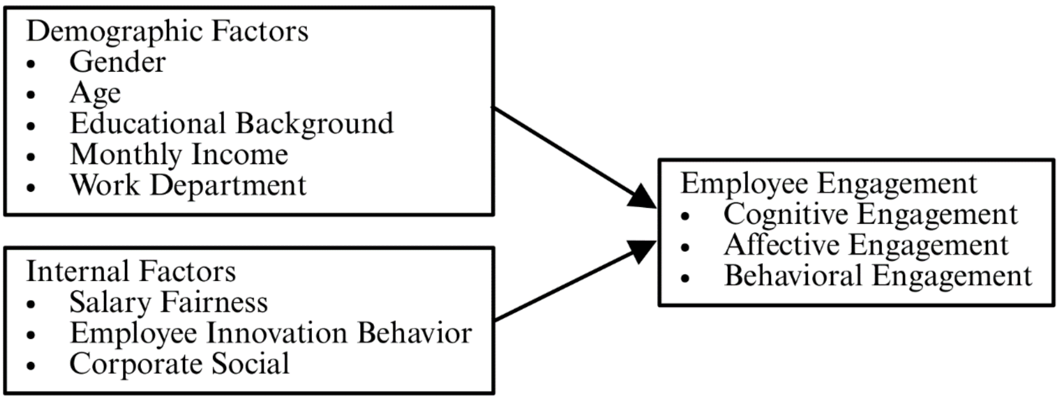

Figure 1. Research Framework

This study aims to assess the demographic factors that affect employee engagement in E-business and examine the influence of salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and corporate social responsibility on cognitive, affective, behavioral, and employee engagement in E-business. The conceptual framework was developed based on employee engagement, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. The demographic factors include gender, age, educational background, monthly income, and work department. Data were collected from employees who work in e-business in China. The sample size was 400, calculated using Cochran's formula. The questionnaires were distributed online using an internet platform, Questionnaire Star (a link to the questionnaire was sent to the target group through social media platforms such as WeChat and QQ, and respondents could directly click on the link to answer the questionnaire). The convenience sampling method was conducted to collect data. To ensure the quality and confidence of the questionnaires, the content validity test using Item Object Consistency (IOC) by 3 experts in the human resource field. The reliability test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) for salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, corporate social responsibility, cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and behavioral engagement was 0.933, 0.875, 0.931, 0.928, 0.914, and 0.945. The reliability coefficients were greater than 0.7, indicating the questionnaire has good reliability. Statistics used to analyze data were independent sample t-test, One-way ANOVA, and Multiple linear regression at the statistically significant level of 0.05.

Result and Discussion

Employee Engagement Definition

In recent years, various organizations have increasingly focused on employee engagement levels because these levels significantly impact employee job performance. The importance of engagement to employees lies in the fact that work is a significant part of their lives and substantially influences their well-being. Clack, L. (2021) pointed out that work affects an individual's quality of life and physical and mental health. Most people rely on work to make a living, making work more of a responsibility than a choice. However, while we cannot choose whether to work, we can choose how to work. Thus, individuals' feelings and work experiences vary greatly; some see work as monotonous and merely a way to pass the time, while others see it as a means of self-realization (Zhang, 2019).

The dimensions of employee engagement

Previous research on employee engagement has mainly focused on job engagement while neglecting organizational engagement. However, organizational engagement, as a work attitude, can directly impact performance more than related concepts like organizational commitment and identification. Individual investment in an organization's behavior, cognition, and emotions, like job engagement, can influence employee performance. Saks (2019) was the first to distinguish between job and organizational engagement in the context of employee engagement. It conducted empirical research to analyze their impact on antecedent and outcome variables. Saks's research validated the model distinguishing between job and organizational engagement, demonstrating that job engagement is influenced by factors such as job characteristics and organizational support and, in turn, affects organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover. Organizational engagement, like job engagement, is influenced by these antecedent variables and affects most outcome variables.

Employee Engagement Theory

Engagement is classified into 3 categories: social, affective, and intellectual (Singh & Sant, 2023). Intellectual involvement comprises carefully examining the task and how to better it; affective engagement entails being pleased with one's work; and social engagement entails actively finding opportunities to convey work-related improvements with co-workers. Both research and theory support the importance of effective engagement (Jiang & Shen, 2023). Cognitive engagement refers to the cognitive resources an individual invests in their work, such as focus, concentration, and engrossment. By maintaining this cognitive focus, individuals can better accomplish their tasks, improving efficiency and quality. Mendoza-Silva (2020) identifies "absorption" as a representative variable for measuring cognitive engagement, emphasizing the state of being highly focused and immersed in work. Affective engagement pertains to the emotional resources an individual invests in their job, such as enthusiasm, joy, and positive emotions. Russell and Barrett (1999) introduce the concept of "core affect" as a representative variable for affective engagement, highlighting the fundamental emotional responses experienced by individuals in their work. Affective engagement can enhance work motivation and job satisfaction, thereby improving performance. Behavioral engagement refers to the physical resources an individual invests in their work, such as the intensity and density of energy expended. Brown and Leigh (1996) developed the concept of "work intensity" as a representative variable for behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement reflects individuals' physical effort and energy in their tasks, directly impacting efficiency and task completion.

The relationship between CSR and employee engagement in E-business

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a crucial element in modern business practices, influencing various aspects of organizational performance. In the context of e-business companies, CSR plays a significant role in shaping employee engagement. This research examines how CSR initiatives impact employee engagement levels, affecting overall company performance and success. CSR refers to a company's commitment to ethical practices and contributions to economic development while improving the quality of life of its workforce, their families, the local community, and society. For e-business companies, CSR can include sustainable business practices, ethical sourcing, community engagement, and environmental initiatives. Employees are increasingly valuing CSR as a core component of their work environment.

According to Glavas (2016), employees who perceive their company as socially responsible are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement. This is because CSR aligns with their values, providing them a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their work. CSR initiatives create a positive work environment, a significant driver of employee engagement. When companies invest in CSR, they demonstrate a commitment to ethical behavior and social welfare, fostering employee trust and loyalty (Brammer, Millington, & Rayton, 2007). This positive perception can increase job satisfaction and motivation, as employees feel proud to be associated with a responsible organization. CSR activities focusing on employee well-being, such as fair wages, health benefits, and professional development opportunities, directly impact employee morale.

Kim et al. (2010) indicate that employees who benefit from their company's CSR policies are likelier to stay with the company longer, reducing turnover rates and fostering a stable workforce. For e-business companies, retaining experienced employees is crucial for maintaining continuity and expertise in a rapidly evolving industry. E-business companies that engage in community and environmental initiatives can significantly enhance employee engagement. Erisman (2017) described that employees participating in company-sponsored volunteer programs and environmental projects report higher engagement and job satisfaction. These activities allow employees to make meaningful contributions beyond regular job duties, enhancing their overall work experience. Amazon has implemented various CSR initiatives aimed at sustainability and community support. These initiatives include reducing carbon emissions, promoting renewable energy, and supporting local communities through charitable donations and volunteer programs. As Kordab et al. (2020) noted, these efforts have improved Amazon's public image and boosted employee engagement by fostering a culture of responsibility and community involvement. Alibaba's commitment to CSR is evident in its environmental sustainability projects and philanthropic efforts. The company's programs focus on reducing environmental impact, supporting education, and promoting social welfare. These initiatives have increased employee engagement, aligning employees with Alibaba's mission to create positive social change (Zhang, 2019).

Descriptive statistics

The analysis results in Table 1 reveal that the sample is fairly balanced in gender, comprising 189 males (47.3%) and 211 females (52.8%). Regarding age distribution, most respondents were aged 26 to 35, the largest group at 43.0%. Meanwhile, the participants' education levels vary, with a significant portion having undergraduate degrees (53.8%). For monthly income, the result reveals that the largest proportion of respondents earn between 5,001 and 7,000 yuan monthly (45.3%). Lastly, the department in which respondents work, most of them work in the production department, constituting the largest group at 26.3%, followed by the sales department at 22.8%.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the demographic factor

Variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	189	47.3
	Female	211	52.8
	Total	400	100.0
Age	18-25 years old	37	9.3
	26-35 years old	172	43.0
	36-45 years old	98	24.5
	46-55 years old	62	15.5
	More than 55 years old	31	7.8
	Total	400	100.0
Educational Level	Diploma	79	19.8
	Undergraduate	215	53.8
	Postgraduate	77	19.3
	Others	29	7.3
	Total	400	100.0

Variables	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly Income	Less than or equal to 3000 yuan	44	11.0
	3001-5000 yuan	98	24.5

	5001-7000 yuan	181	45.3
	More than 7000 yuan	77	19.3
	Total	400	100.0
	Sales department	91	22.8
Work department	Financial department	54	13.5
	Human resource department	61	15.3
	Research and development department	66	16.5
	Production department	105	26.3
	Others	23	5.8
	Total	400	100.0

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics of the respondents' opinions on independent factors, including salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and CSR. The results reveal that the respondents' opinions on those variables were neutral. Salary fairness was ranked top, followed by CSR and employee innovation behavior. Overall, while employees generally have a neutral view of these factors, there is potential for improvement in each area to boost overall employee satisfaction and engagement.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for independent variables

Independent Factors	Opinion Level: Frequency(Percent)								
	1	2	3	4	5	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Rank	Meaning
Salary fairness	8 2.0%	220 55.0%	72 18.0%	84 21.0%	16 4.0%	2.70	0.955	1	Neutral
Employee innovation behavior	52 13.0%	159 39.8%	88 22.0%	85 21.3%	16 4.0%	2.64	1.077	3	Neutral
Corporate Social Responsibility	24 6.0%	190 47.5%	85 21.3%	84 21.0%	17 4.3%	2.70	1.004	2	Neutral

Table 3 reveals that employees generally perceive their engagement levels as "neutral." Cognitive engagement, which involves employees' mental investment in their work, has a mean score of 2.63 with a standard deviation of 1.002. This suggests that while employees moderately engage cognitively, there is a reasonably consistent response distribution. Cognitive engagement ranks third among the evaluated aspects, highlighting its significant role in employee engagement. Affective engagement, which refers to the emotional attachment employees feel toward their work, has a mean score of 2.71 and a standard deviation of 0.986. This indicates a neutral level of affective engagement, with slightly more variation in responses than cognitive engagement. Affective engagement ranks second, suggesting that fostering emotional connections with work could be an area for improvement.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for employee engagement

Employee Engagement	Level of Opinion Frequency and Percent					Mean	SD	Meaning	Rank
	1	2	3	4	5				

Cognitive	27 6.8%	205 51.3%	71 17.8%	82 20.5%	15 3.8%	2.63	1.002	Neutral	3
Affective	19 4.8%	195 48.8%	84 21.0%	86 21.5%	16 4.0%	2.71	0.986	Neutral	2
Behavioral	8 2.0%	193 48.3%	87 21.8%	95 23.8%	17 4.3%	2.80	0.966	Neutral	1
Overview of Employee Engagement	2 0.5%	167 41.8%	167 41.8%	49 12.3%	15 3.8%	2.77	0.812	Neutral	

Inferential Statistics

The independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to test hypothesis 1: the difference in demographic factors, including gender, age, educational background, monthly income, and department work, affect employees' engagement in e-business differently. According to the results in Table 9, gender, age, educational background, and work department have no significant effect on employee engagement in e-business. However, the difference in monthly income significantly affects employee engagement in e-business at the statistically significant level of 0.05. The pairwise mean comparison of each group is shown in Table 5. Therefore, the study shows that monthly income plays a significant role in affecting employee engagement in e-business. In contrast, gender, age, educational background, and work department did not significantly affect this study.

Table 4. Summary results of the differences in demographic factors affect the employee's engagement in e-business differently

Demographic factors	Result Employee's engagement	
Gender	-	t(398) = 0.124, p = 0.901
Age	-	F(4,395) = 1.539, p = 0.190
Educational background	-	F(3,396) = 0.906, p = 0.438
Monthly Income		F(3,396) = 3.618, p = 0.013*
Work department	-	F(5,394) = 2.078, p = 0.067

Post hoc analysis using LSD was conducted to explore pairwise differences further, as shown in Table 5. The results indicated that the monthly income group "<= 3,000" and group "3,001-5,000 RMB" showed a significant difference in mean test scores (p = 0.002), while monthly income group "<= 3,000" versus group "5,001-7,000 RMB" (p = 0.046) and monthly income group "<= 3,000RMB" versus group ">7,000 RMB" (p = .010) and the other groups the difference of mean values did not reach the significance level.

Table 5. The pairwise comparison of the different monthly income group that affects employees' engagement in e-business

	Mean Difference (I-J) Group J
Monthly income	

	Mean	<=3,000 RMB	3,001-5,000 RMB	5,001-7,000 RMB	>7,000 RMB
Group I			3.05 2.38	2.65	2.47
<= 3,000RMB	3.05	-	.668 (0.002*)	.399 (0.046*)	.578 (0.010*)
3,001-5,000 RMB	2.38		-	-0.269 (0.072)	-0.090 (.619)
5,001-7,000 RMB	2.65			-	.179 (.269)
> 7,000 RMB	2.47				-

Table 6 demonstrates the multiple linear regression analysis results to evaluate the influence of internal factors, including salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and CSR, on cognitive, affective, behavioral, and employee engagement. These results indicate that salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and CSR have a positive relationship with employee engagement, cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement with a multiple correlation (R) of 0.679, 0.562, 0.589, and 0.579 and able to predict the value of the analysis equation equal to 45.70%, 31.10%, 34.20%, and 33.0% accordingly.

Table 6: The analysis results of internal factors influence employees' engagement and all variables

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate
Cognitive engagement	0.562	0.316	0.311	0.832
Affective engagement	0.589	0.347	0.342	0.800
Behavioral engagement	0.579	0.335	0.330	0.790
Employees' engagement	0.679	0.461	0.457	0.598

Predictors: (Constant), salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, CSR

Table 7 shows the prediction equation for the influence of internal factors on employee engagement and all variables towards employees in E-business. The results suggest that as perceptions of salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and CSR increase, so does employees' engagement in e-business. Among the three variables, salary fairness has a higher influence on cognitive and employee engagement, while CSR has a higher influence on effective and behavioral engagement.

Table 7. Summary of forecasting equations

Hypotheses	Forecasting Equations
H_2: Internal factors influence cognitive engagement in e-business.	$Y_1 = 0.802 + 0.340X_1 + 0.181X_2 + 0.161X_3$
H_3: Internal influence affective engagement in e-business.	$Y_2 = 0.829 + 0.234X_3 + .219 X_2 + .250X_1$

H_4: Internal factors influence behavioral engagement in e-business.	$Y_3 = 0.997 + 0.306X_3 + 0.227X_1 + 0.138X_2$
H_5: Internal factors influence employees' engagement in e-business.	$Y_T = 0.975 + 0.282X_1 + 0.221X_3 + 0.166X_2$

X_1 = Saraly fairness, X_2 = employee innovation behavior, X_3 = CSR

The findings demonstrate that no significant difference between males and females affects employees' engagement differently in e-business, which does not comply with Hanggarawati and Kismono (2022). As mentioned by Eagly & Wood (2016), from the traditional perceptions related to social roles based on gender, males are expected to take a more active role in the domain of work while females are in the household domain. However, Zhang & Li (2020) described that in recent years, the Chinese government has launched various initiatives to promote women's employment and entrepreneurship. These efforts aimed to reduce gender gaps in economic participation and empower women economically. The findings of this study can be explained by the fact that, with the efforts to reduce the gender gap and the high competition in e-business in China, males and females are under pressure to work at the same level. Therefore, there was no significant difference in employee engagement. In practical terms, this means that, within the scope of this study, gender does not play a significant role in influencing employee engagement levels. Organizations can reasonably expect similar engagement levels from both male and female employees.

When investigating the impact of age groups on employee engagement, the analysis revealed that the differences in age groups did not exhibit significant differences in employee engagement. This may be caused by the fact that the age grouping in the questionnaire was not distributed according to age group generation; therefore, the results cannot clearly show employee engagement. As described by Hanggarawati and Kismono (2022), younger generations may experience more stress or burnout. As a result, the younger generation would have less work engagement than the older generation. Age grouping in this research is mainly in Generation Y, and this generation's characteristics are valued work-life balance, confidence, tech-savviness, and results orientation. The disadvantages of this group are a lack of patience and frequent job changes, which affect employee engagement. This finding is particularly important for organizations that tailor engagement strategies to specific age demographics. It may indicate that younger employees have unique needs or preferences regarding engagement initiatives.

The study explored whether education background and work department affect employee engagement. However, all p-values related to education backgrounds and work department were greater than 0.05, signifying no statistically significant differences in engagement based on educational attainment and work department. This implies that an employee's level of education and work department do not appear to be a determining factor in their engagement level within the context of this study.

The finding demonstrates that the difference in monthly income affects employees' engagement differently, which complies with the variable "salary fairness" has a positively significant influence on employees' engagement, which is supported by varieties of research such as Meng & Wu (2015) that the procedural fairness of merit pay has positive effects on employees' relationships with job engagement. Paul and Criado (2020) mention that all dimensions of salary satisfaction are significantly positively affected by job engagement. Baqir et al. (2020) mention that compensation procedural fairness and employee engagement have significant effects on employee performance.

This research demonstrated that salary fairness, employee innovation behavior, and CSR influence employees' engagement. However, salary fairness has the highest influence on cognitive and employee engagement. In contrast, CSR appears to be the highest influence of affective and behavioral engagement in the E-business sector. Employee engagement is one of the organizational assets that employees have high loyalty to, thus providing an agile way of working (Alayón, 2022). Employee engagement significantly impacts employee performance (Ahmad, 2021), and good employee performance will benefit e-business. Businesses should pay attention to salary or compensation fairness to support employee engagement. Even though Generation Y prefers changing jobs, they also focus on innovations and forms of technology.

Conclusion

This study reveals that gender, age, educational background, and work department do not significantly impact employee engagement in China's e-business sector. While previous research suggested that gender and age might play a role, this study shows that both male and female employees, as well as different age groups, exhibit similar levels of engagement. However, monthly income was found to significantly affect engagement, with salary fairness emerging as a key driver. Employees who perceive their salaries as fair tend to have higher levels of cognitive and overall engagement. Additionally, internal factors such as employee innovation behavior and corporate social responsibility (CSR) play a crucial role in shaping employee engagement. Salary fairness was shown to have the strongest impact on cognitive and overall engagement, while CSR had the highest influence on affective and behavioral engagement, indicating that non-financial factors are essential for fostering deeper emotional and behavioral connections with employees. These findings suggest that to improve employee engagement, e-businesses should focus on ensuring salary fairness, promoting innovation, and strengthening their CSR initiatives. Moreover, engagement strategies should be adapted to meet the specific needs of different demographic groups, particularly in terms of generational preferences. This comprehensive approach will help sustain high levels of engagement and contribute to better organizational performance.

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