

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Common methods and outcomes of employee engagement: a systematic literature review towards identifying gaps in research

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**Abstract:** As global surveys reported, employee engagement is currently in crisis. Hence, this study aimed to discover (1) common methods and outcomes of employee engagement and (2) research gaps relating to employee engagement. The study employed the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. Publications selected for this review were based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, as it is recommended for SLRs. The review included two 260 studies published in Scopus from 2008 to 2021. The studies were analysed through bibliometric analysis for reviewing purposes and achieving the two objectives. Findings indicate different methods and outcomes of employee engagement.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement; PRISMA; systematic literature review.

## INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a psychological presence in organisational roles (Kahn, 1990). It induces employees to be energetic, passionate and involved mentally, physically, and emotionally (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) toward achieving the organisation's expectations (Saks, 2006a ; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Hence, engaged employees can always go the extra mile for the sake of their organization (Turner, 2020). They do not work just for payment or the next promotion but for the organisation's goals (Kruse, 2012). This concept has been of significant interest as it is directly associated with organisational success through higher financial performance, productivity, sales, and customer satisfaction (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rana *et al.*, 2014; Saks, 2006a). Moreover, employee engagement predicts employee outcomes such as well-being through greater life satisfaction and retention (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shimazu *et al.*, 2012; Rana *et al.*, 2014).

According to a Gallup report, employee engagement is in crisis, with barely 20 per cent of people worldwide engaged in their jobs (Gallup, 2021). It signifies that they have mentally and emotionally left the job while remaining physically present (Turner, 2020). It can significantly hurt organisations by negatively impacting productivity and financial performance (Purcell, 2014). Thus, employee disengagement can be costly to an employer (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017), as most employees are paid and receive benefits while their energy is spent elsewhere (Pech & Slade, 2006).

Similarly, employee disengagement can create some potential dangers for employees as well. No learning opportunities received (Allam, 2017), health problems such as more headaches, stomach problems (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006; Allam, 2017), and higher stress/burnout (Buys & Rothmann, 2010), are some examples. Besides, higher conflict among peers and supervisors and low life satisfaction (Shimazu *et al.*, 2012) are other potential problems created for employees. Moreover, evidence suggests that disengagement causes a higher rate of accidents and safety problems since employees' low concentration of hazardous elements at work ignores defects in machines, tools, and equipment. Thus, employee engagement has emerged as one of the organisation's most significant challenges today (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Hence, employers and researchers are interested in improving engagement (Rana *et al.*, 2014; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2008).

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In such a background, there is a scholarly thought and practical implication that Human Resource Management practices can drive employee engagement (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; Guest, 1997; 2011; Turner, 2020). Because engagement is a positive psychological state and fundamentally a motivational construct (Turner, 2020) that can be boosted through all the HRM practices (Albrecht *et al.*, 2015; Garibaldo & Rebecchi, 2018; Guest, 2014). This idea has been explored further through various studies found in the literature. Empirical studies are among the several types of research. They are regarded as high quality since they adhere to uniform protocols and employ rigorous scientific techniques to support their conclusions (Okoli & Schabram, 2010). Thus, empirical research is advised to be included in systematic literature reviews since they should adhere to more rigorous scientific methods (Tranfield *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, the results of the Systematic Literature Reviews (SLRs) can guarantee enough methodological consistency (Okoli & Schabram, 2010) and internal validity (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006), which is a gauge of how well a study is done (its structure) and how precisely its conclusions represent the examined subjects. Thus, for these reasons, we covered empirical studies on employee engagement in this review.

The reviews of the literature on employee engagement have covered many different topics. The factors (Wollard & Shuck, 2011; Megha, 2016; Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019; Kwon & Kim, 2020), resources (Lee *et al.*, 2020), transformational leadership (Chin *et al.*, 2019), and human resource development (Shuck & Wollard, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2017) affect employee engagement in one way or another. They also go into emerging perspectives (Shuck, 2011), a positive organisational behaviour perspective (Jeung, 2011), definitions, approaches (Megha, 2016), meaning, measurements (Ababneh & Macky, 2015), and customer engagement (Chandni & Rahman, 2020). Identifying gaps (Borah & Barua, 2018), employee engagement management in Covid-19 (Andrić *et al.*, 2023), and outcomes (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2020), such as well-being and organisational performance (Guest, 2014), innovative behaviour (Kwon & Kim, 2020), and employee performance (Motyka, 2018; Satata, 2021) of employee engagement have also been covered. However, there are gaps of these reviews regarding the methods and outcomes of employee engagement. This assessment covers relevant studies from 2000-2021.

The aggregation, interpretation, explanation, and integration of existing research (Rousseau *et al.*, 2008) or a synthesis of all studies are essential to identify the way forward to employee engagement (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). Overall, empirical knowledge about employee engagement needs updating with the latest findings as the socio-technical environment is continuously evolving (Andrić *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, employee engagement literature must be updated to show how methods and outcomes may contribute to better employee engagement. The findings may help identify future research directions, as which will be detailed in the Conclusion section.

Thus, in this paper, by adopting a systematic literature review methodology and Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, we focused on reviewing the empirical research on which areas of employee engagement have been addressed. Thus, the research questions addressed here were; (1) what are the common methods and outcomes of employee engagement? (2) what are research gaps relating to employee engagement? In order to achieve these objectives, we included the 260 empirical studies published during the 2008–2021-year period. The following sections outline the methodology, findings, discussion, conclusion, and implications for future research.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted based on SLR methodology. As the PRISMA guidelines are recommended for SLRs (Liberati *et al.*, 2009), we adopted them for this study. Specifically, the PRISMA has three steps for article selection presented by a flow diagram. It includes identification, screening, and selection.

The identification stage involves determining the search terms, search criteria, databases, and data extraction method. Thus, the current study's search term was Employee Engagement. The search criteria were "Employee Engagement" OR "Work Engagement." We typed them into the Scopus database. The initial search results were limited to the 2008 -2021 period.

The screening of articles has two sub-steps: screening and eligibility checking. It excludes the articles that do not meet the inclusion criteria (Meline, 2006). The inclusion criteria for the study were the empirical studies published in "Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)" listed "Academic journals" in "English" on "Employee Engagement" or "Work Engagement" during the "2008-2021" period. As the "ABDC" listed articles are treated as more comprehensive (Mura & Pahlevan Sharif, 2015), they were selected for the review. PRISMA proposes two criteria for screening the articles: report characteristics and study characteristics. The year of publication, publication type (e.g., research notes, editors' comments, books, book chapters, book reviews, conference proceedings, and unpublished data), and publication language include report characteristics. We used it for screening the articles. That was done through automation with the limiting options of the database and manually. The study characteristics include population, methodology, methods, design, and context. The assessment of study characteristics is generally known as assessing the methodological reporting (Meline, 2006). It can be used for eligibility checking. It was done manually by the authors.

Then, the authors must ensure that each article meets all inclusion criteria in that manual assessment. A minimum acceptable level for each article can be set (Meline, 2006). Thus, studies that meet the minimum acceptable level are included in the review, while those that do not achieve the minimum acceptable level are excluded (Meline, 2006; Priyashantha & Dilhani, 2022). The reasons may be "incomplete or ambiguous methods," "reviewers seek further information from the original study authors," and "important information is not available." Accordingly, we set the minimum acceptable level as "the empirical studies that employed quantitative techniques." We independently assessed each article against the criteria, and disagreements (if any) were resolved through discussion and consensus. The reasons for the exclusion will be explained in the section.

We used the bibliometric analysis using the Biblioshiny and VOSviewer for the data analysis. The bibliometric analysis uses mathematical approaches to examine scientific approaches in research (Aparicio *et al.*, 2019; Paule-Vianez *et al.*, 2020). It provides two types of analysis (1) evaluation, performance, and scientific productivity, and (2) scientific maps (Cobo *et al.*, 2012). In that, the "annual article publications," "average citations received," "most relevant sources articles published," and "country-wise article publications" were generated and analyzed to introduce the profile of the article set selected for the review. The first three outputs were generated from Biblioshiny of R, and the final output was generated from the VOSviewer.

Scientific maps help analyse scientific investigation's structure, evolution, and key players (Aparicio *et al.*, 2019). Among the various units of analysis used, one common is the keyword. The keywords of a research article denote its primary content. Using the keywords, different bibliometric networks are created (Callon *et al.*, 1983). Usually, the co-occurrence relationship of the keywords is used to accomplish this task. When two keywords appear in a document together, this is known as a co-occurrence relationship (Aparicio *et al.*, 2019; Priyashantha, Dahanayake, & Maduwanthi, 2022). The VOSviewer provides a map called "keyword co-occurrence network visualisation," showing how the keywords are related. VOSviewer generates a network in a two-dimensional space using association strength normalisation by default. That network locates strongly associated nodes together, while weakly related nodes are spread out (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). These near-together nodes are

known as clusters and may represent a common theme. Moreover, different colours denote the clusters. Since one of our objectives was to find the common methods and outcomes of employee engagement, this keyword co-occurrence analysis was utilised.

The density visualisation map obtained from the keyword co-occurrence analysis is another procedure followed. It was used to accomplish the study's second objective; to identify areas lacking empirical evidence relating to employee engagement. The density of keywords at each place in the item density visualisation map is shown by colour, according to the VOSviewer manual (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). By default, the colour range from blue to green to red. The bigger the number of nodes in a position's local region and the higher its weights, the closer its colour is to red. The fewer nodes in a point's immediate vicinity and the lower the weights, on the other hand, the closer the point's hue is to blue. To do this, we looked for keywords that fell into the blue or green categories.

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## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Article selection

Once the search criteria were coded in the database, the initial results generated were 8125 articles. Through automation, using the default limiting options of the database, we screened them to 834 articles. They were downloaded as an MS Excel sheet. Then, the authors manually screened the articles based on the articles published in ABDC-listed journals and the publication type (a characteristic of the report). 116 ABDC quality-listed journal articles (9-A\*, 32-A, 32-B, and 43-C ranked) were included. Non-ABDC journal articles and qualitative reviews, concept papers, viewpoints, qualitative case studies, qualitative studies, and irrelevant articles were excluded. Then, 276 articles were retained for eligibility checking. At this stage, full articles were assessed against their methodological quality. In our assessment, we found articles on "case study method," "qualitative analysis," "methodology not clear," and "important methodological information not available". They were excluded, and finally, 260 articles were retained for review. This entire article selection process is shown in Figure 1. Then, the MS Excel sheet was modified to fit the bibliographic analysis requirements.

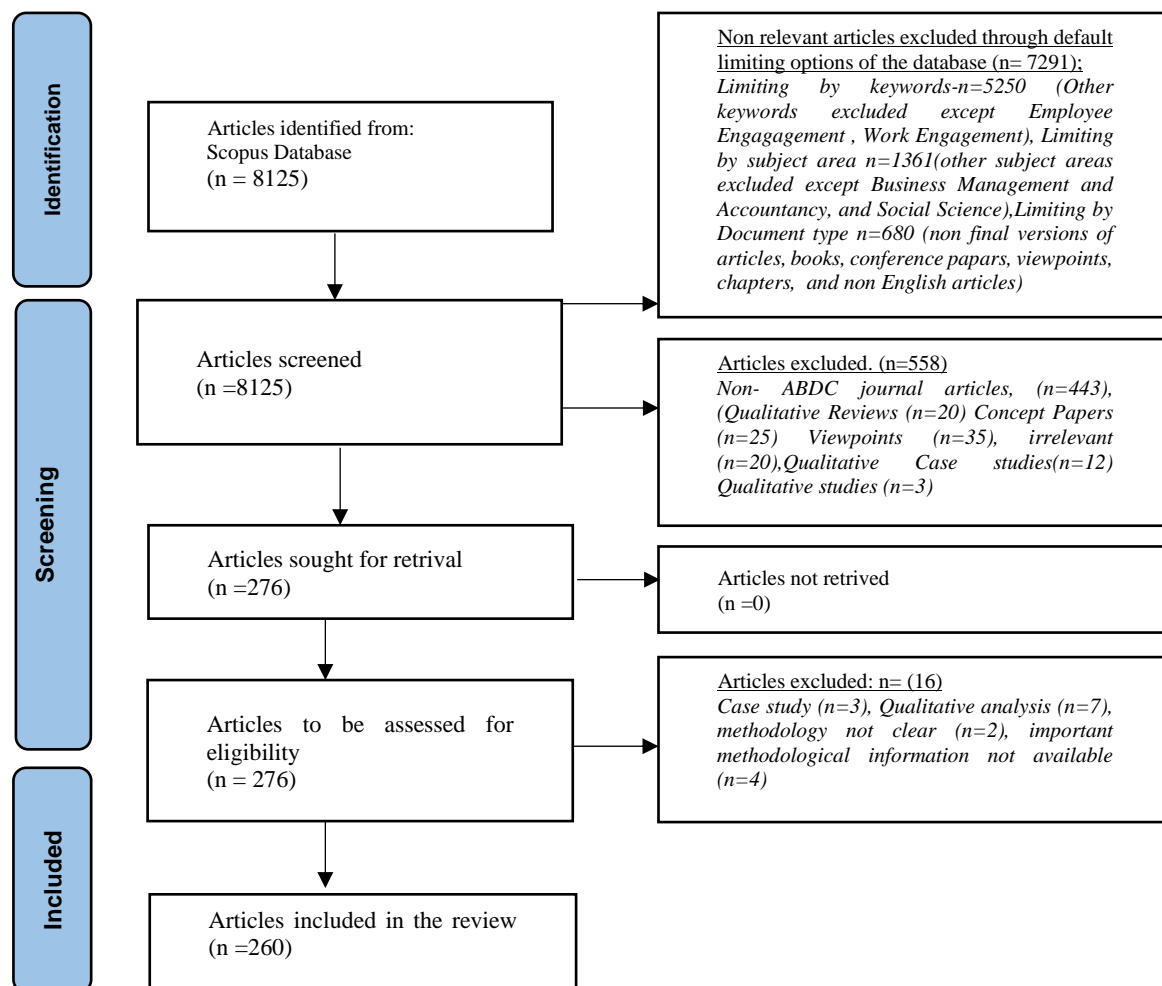


Figure 1: PRISMA 2020 flow diagram  
Source: Authors' construct (2023)

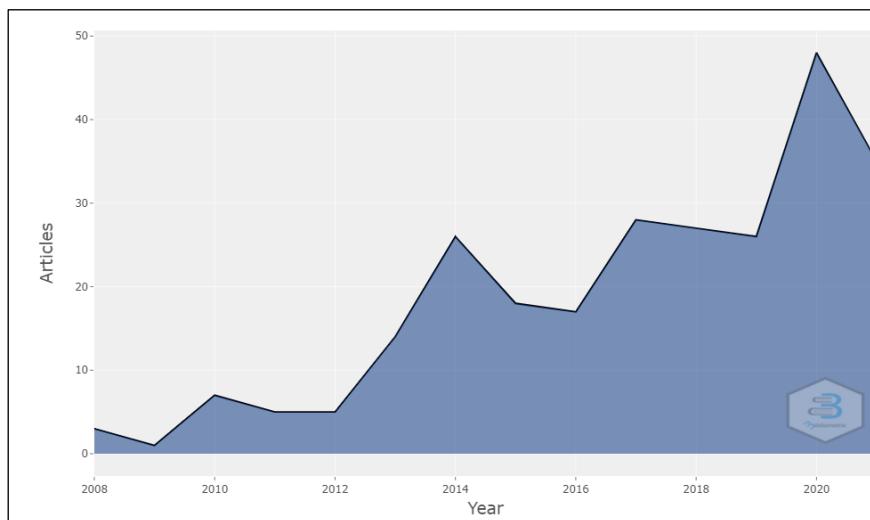
### Article characteristics

Although the 2000-2021 period was considered for the study, articles were found from 2008. The articles were ABDC ranked, and the ranking system started in 2008. Thus, the review included 260 articles published in 116 journals from 57 countries. There was a total of 16778 references included. This basic information about the articles included in the review is shown in Table 1. Year-wise article production is shown in Figure 2. It reveals that the number of articles published has increased during the period. The figure shows that the highest number of articles were produced in 2020. Figure 3 shows the most relevant sources of the articles. It summarises the 20 journals that have published more than four articles on employee engagement. Accordingly, the International Journal of Human Resource Management (14 articles), Journal of Managerial Psychology (10 articles), Human Resource Development Quarterly, Personnel Review, and Public Relations Review (seven articles each) reported having the highest number of publications. Besides those, Figure 4 shows the highest 25 countries that have produced more than four articles out of 57 countries. It summarises how each country is interdependent with the others. In particular, the node in the map denotes the number of occurrences. Thus, Figure 4 reveals that USA, India, and China have made the highest number of publications, first, second and third. Moreover, Figures 2 and 5 clearly show the increasing publications and popularity (in terms of citations) of employee engagement research during the period.

**Table 1:** Preliminary information of articles included for the review

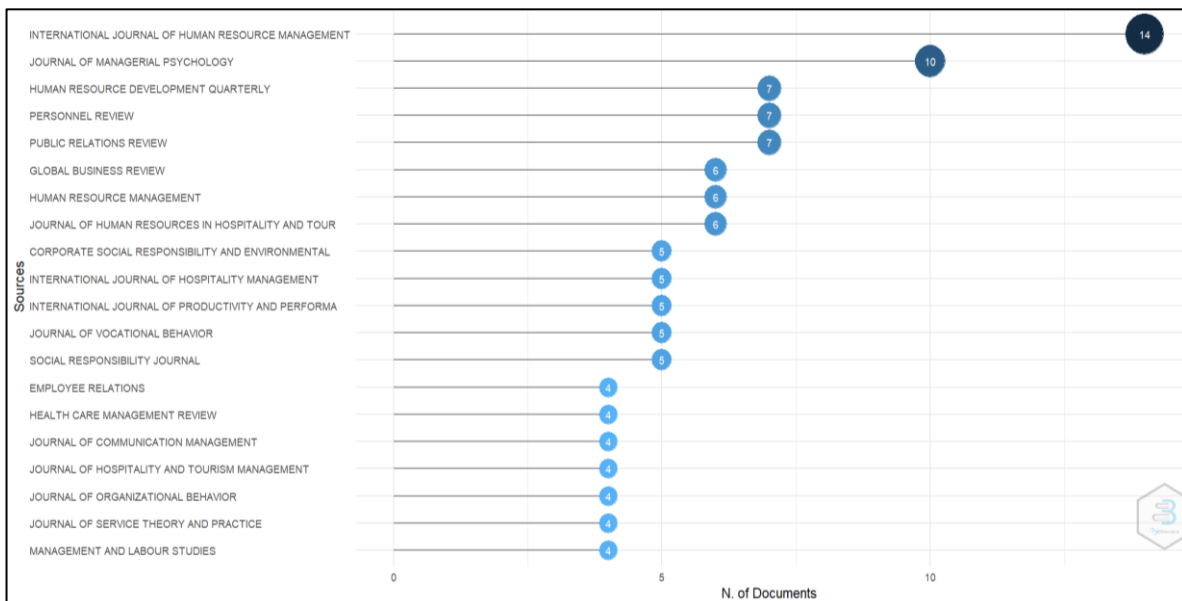
Description	Results
Time	2008:2021
Sources (Academic Journals)	116
Journal Articles	260
Countries	57
Average Years from Publication	3.86
Average Citations Per Document	28.89
Average Citations Per Year Per Doc	4.839
References	16778

Source: Authors' construct (2023)



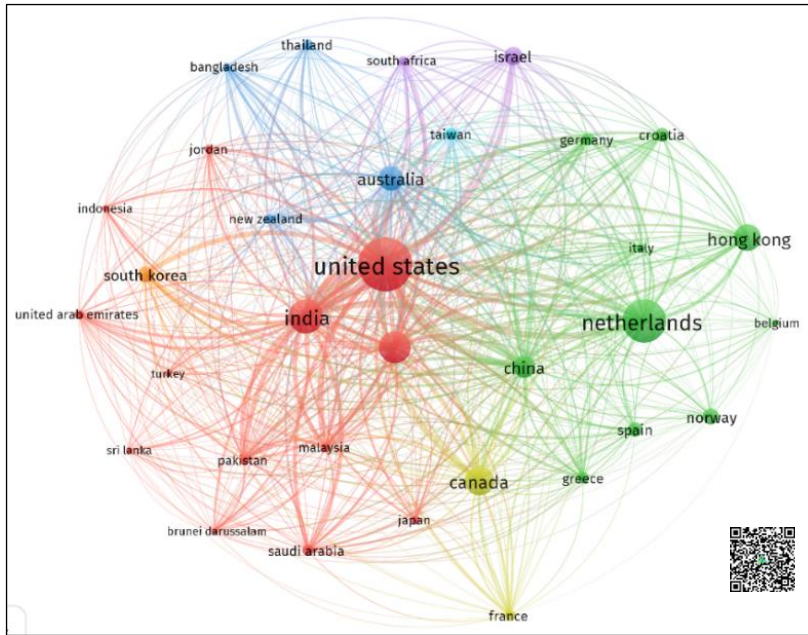
**Figure 2:** Year-wise article publication

Source: Review data (2023)

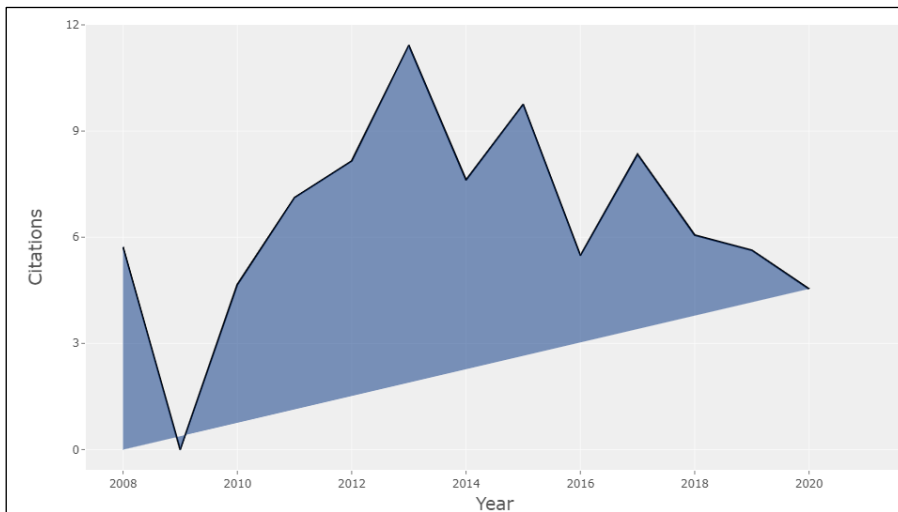


**Figure 3:** Most relevant sources and articles published

Source: Review data (2023)



**Figure 4:** Country-wise article publications.  
Source: Review data (2023)



**Figure 5:** Average citations received  
Source: Review data (2023)

## Results of studies

This section outlines the results and findings of this review. As specified in the methodology, the keyword co-occurrence network analysis of VOSviewer was used. Thus, if a particular keyword highly occurs, the area denoted by that keyword has been commonly researched. Therefore, the keyword co-occurrence analysis is ideal for finding (1) common methods and outcomes of employee engagement and (2) the areas where empirical research lacks employee engagement.

### The common methods of promoting and outcomes of employee engagement

Using the VOSviewer software, we got 18 keywords at the five occurrences. They are shown in Table 2, indicating that employee engagement and work engagement have been frequently investigated. Other than that, the keywords shown in Table 2 represent the highly occurred keywords indicating that they have gained the attention of the researchers during the period. Hence, they are the most common areas for employee engagement research.

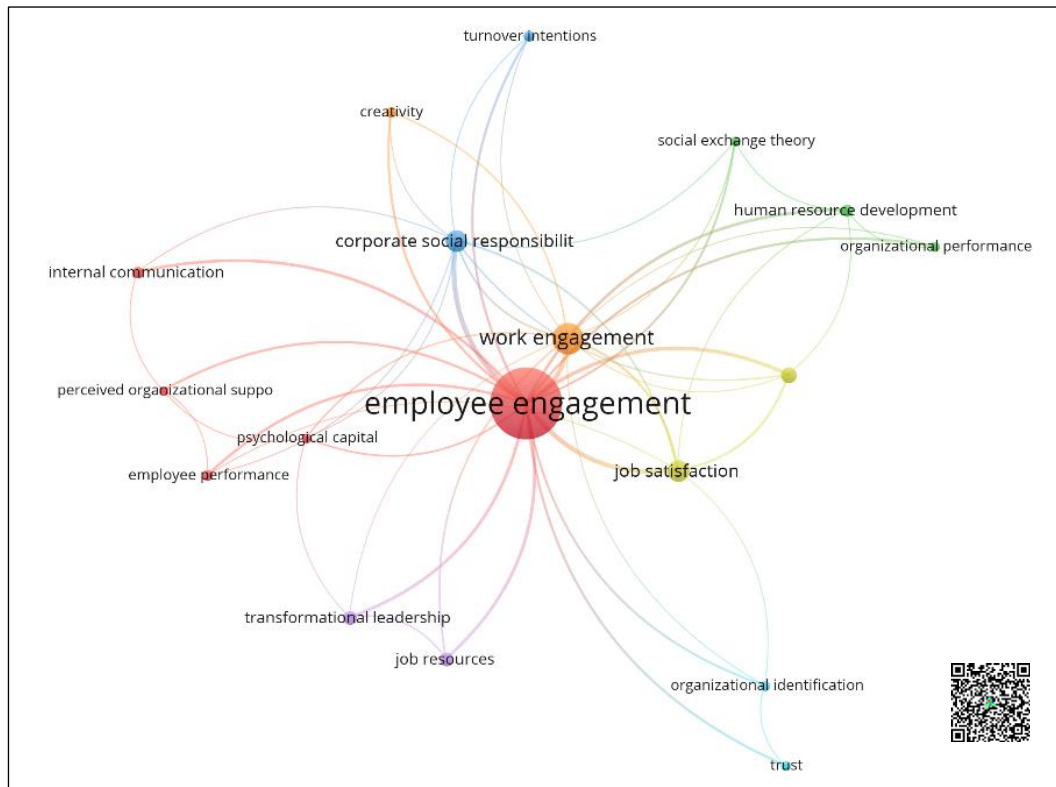
**Table 2:** Top ten keywords that have the highest number of occurrences

Keyword	Occurrences
Employee engagement	225
Work engagement	40
Corporate social responsibility	21
Job satisfaction	17
Organizational commitment	12
Job resources	9
Transformational leadership	9
Human resource development	7
Internal communication	7
Employee performance	6
Creativity	6
Turnover intentions	6
Organizational performance	5
Perceived organizational support	5
Psychological capital	5
Organizational identification	5
Social exchange theory	5
Trust	5

Source: Authors' construct (2023)

Moreover, Figure 6 shows the network visualisation map for keyword co-occurrence generated by VOSviewer. It shows the keyword by nodes connecting each keyword. The nodes' size in the map denotes the number of occurrences. Thus, the higher the number of occurrences, the larger the node's size. Accordingly, the highest occurrences were reported as "employee engagement" and "work engagement." The rest of the keywords are denoted in nodes depending on the frequency of their occurrences. Hence the size of the circle in the map further confirms the information in Table 2. The circles in the map in Figure 6 are in four clusters: red, green, blue, yellow, purple, light blue, and orange. These clusters indicate that employee engagement research varied by different areas of investigation. Thus, each cluster includes keywords likely to represent a common theme. They include "support, communication, and psychological capital", "opportunities for learning and development", "social exchange and organisational performance", "CSR activities and employee retention", "job-related positive attitudes", "job resources and transformational leadership style", "sense of belongingness and trust", and "opportunities for creativity". These common themes and areas under which investigations are discussed in detail.





**Figure 6:** Network visualisation map for keyword co-occurrences  
Source: Review data (2023)

**Table 3:** Keywords categorisation into clusters

Cluster	Keywords
Red (6 Keywords)	Employee engagement, internal communication, perceived organisational support, psychological capital, employee performance
Green (4 Keywords)	Human resource development, organisational performance, social exchange theory,
Blue (2 Keywords)	Corporate social responsibility, turnover intentions
Yellow (2 Keywords)	Job satisfaction, organisational commitment
Purple (2 Keywords)	Job resources, transformational leadership
Light Blue (2 Keywords)	organisational identification, trust
Orange (2 Keywords)	Creativity, work engagement

Source: Review data (2023)

**Support, communication, and psychological capital (Red cluster)**

Perceived organisational support determines employee engagement (Nazir & Islam, 2017; Bentley *et al.*, 2019; Sihag, 2021). Moreover, the influence of perceived organisational support on organisational culture impacts employee engagement (Brunetto *et al.*, 2014).

Internal communication, such as upward communication (Ruck *et al.*, 2017), symmetrical communication (Kang & Sung, 2017), and internal CSR communication (Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018), determine employee engagement. Similarly, internal communication satisfaction (Karanges *et al.*, 2015; Tkalac Verčič & Pološki Vokić, 2017; Tkalac Verčič, 2021) determines employee engagement.

Psychological capital refers to employees’ psychological resource capabilities (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, positive mindset, and resilience) as a determinant of employee engagement (Li *et al.*, 2018; Chen & Peng, 2021;

Sihag, 2021). Moreover, an organisation's psychological capital influences perceived organisational support (fairness and supervisor support), resulting in employee engagement (Sihag, 2021).

Employee engagement results from employee engagement (Carter *et al.*, 2018). The different factors, work-family conflict (Kengatharan & Kunatilakam, 2020), job crafting (Tims *et al.*, 2015), and CSR activity participation, result in increased meaningfulness and a sense of purpose (Nazir *et al.*, 2021), determine the employee engagement that in turn results in increased job performance (Nazir *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, the effect of the leader-member relationship on higher job resources becomes an antecedent to employee engagement resulting in higher job performance (Breevaart *et al.*, 2015).

### ***Opportunities for learning and development, social exchange, and organisational performance (Green cluster)***

Human resource development (HRD) is a determinant of employee engagement. Notably, meaningful work in HRD practices (Fairlie, 2011), support for HRD activities (Shuck *et al.*, 2011), and development of HR practices (training opportunities, career development opportunities, and developmental performance appraisal) (Kura *et al.*, 2019), training and development (Presbitero, 2017; Soliman & Wahba, 2019) or training satisfaction (Memon *et al.*, 2021) are the determinants of employee engagement. Moreover, organisational commitment through training and development determines employee engagement (Aktar & Pangil, 2018).

Organisational performance results from employee engagement (Payambarpour & Hooi, 2015; Schneider *et al.*, 2018; Soliman & Wahba, 2019; Ahmed *et al.*, 2020; Sabu & Manoj, 2020).

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is not a determinant or an outcome of employee engagement. It has been used to describe employee engagement. The theory postulates that employees have high commitments and engagements when given more resources (Kahn, 1990). Thus, the theory has underpinned the positive relationship between job resources and employee engagement ("Miracle" Qi, Ellinger, & Franke, 2018; Mohanty & Arunprasad, 2021).

### ***CSR activities and employee retention (Blue cluster)***

Allowing employees to participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities results in meaningfulness, compassion, and satisfaction, which helps increase employee engagement (Lu *et al.*, 2020; Nazir *et al.*, 2021). Thus, employees' perception of employer CSR activities is a factor of employee engagement (Chaudhary, 2017; Duthler & Dhanesh, 2018; Farrukh *et al.*, 2020; Park *et al.*, 2018; Rupp *et al.*, 2018; Smith & Langford, 2011; Tsourvakas & Yfantidou, 2018; Wang, Hu *et al.*, 2020). The engagement, in turn, results in reduced turnover intentions (Memon *et al.*, 2021; Sandhya & Sulphrey, 2020; Wang, Hu *et al.*, 2020). It concludes that CSR activities are an excellent retention strategy for employees through high levels of employee engagement.

### ***Job-related positive attitudes (Yellow cluster)***

Job satisfaction determines employee engagement (Delina & Samuel, 2020; Hameduddin & Lee, 2021; Lee & Ok, 2016; Loor-Zambrano *et al.*, 2020; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015). Contrarily, it is an outcome of employee engagement (Lee *et al.*, 2014; Karanika-Murray *et al.*, 2015; Almeida *et al.*, 2016; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2017; Tsourvakas & Yfantidou, 2018; Moletsane *et al.*, 2019; Pradhan & Gupta, 2021).

Organisational commitment is also a determinant of employee engagement. It refers to employees' commitment to their job (Aktar & Pangil, 2018; Nienaber & Martins, 2020; Agarwal *et al.*, 2021). Notably, two commitment types, affective commitment (Shuck *et al.*, 2011; Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014; Gyensare *et al.*, 2015; Kaur *et al.*, 2020; Einwiller *et al.*, 2021), an employee's emotional attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991), and continuance commitments (Ibrahim & Al Falasi, 2014), an employee's strong desire to retain as a member of the organisation (Turkyilmaz *et al.*, 2011), are the determinants of employee engagement.

Affective commitment and normative commitment, indicating an employee's emotional attachment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and strong bond with the organisation (P. Ghosh *et al.*, 2016), reflective of employee engagement (Albrecht & Marty, 2020); P. Ghosh *et al.*, 2016; Gyensare *et al.*, 2017; K. Jiang *et al.*, 2015; Jones *et al.*, 2008; Kloutsiniotis & Mihail, 2017; Lee & Ok, 2016; Nazir & Islam, 2017; Vigoda-Gadot *et al.*, 2013; Yalabik *et al.*, 2015).

### ***Job resources and transformational leadership style (Purple cluster)***

The job resources are posited in the Job Demands Resource (JD-R) model. It provides the background for understanding the determinants and outcomes of work engagement (Bellamkonda *et al.*, 2021). Accordingly, In some studies, training, employee participation, line manager support (Huo and Boxall, 2018), financial rewards, learning opportunities, decision authority, supervisor/co-worker support, and organisational support ("Miracle" Qi *et al.*, 2018) in general, and performance feedback (Sarti, 2014) as job resources determine the employee engagement (Sarti, 2014; Huo & Boxall, 2018). In other studies, goal clarity, trust in management (Bellamkonda *et al.*, 2021), skill utilisation, job feedback, supervisor support (Albrecht & Marty, 2020), job autonomy, employee development opportunities (Breevaart *et al.*, 2015; Albrecht & Marty, 2020) social support (Breevaart *et al.*, 2015) as job resources also determine the employee engagement. Staffing standardisation, work variety, and empowerment.

Instead, the high job demands are the stressors to reduce employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). To support this, the downsizing effects on employees cause reduced employee engagement. In such a case, employee engagement increases by providing more job resources, such as supervisor support and development opportunities (Dlouhy & Casper, 2021). Further, challenging job demands, hindrance job demands (Tadić *et al.*, 2015; Rai, 2018) lower employee engagement moderated by the provision of job resources (Tadić *et al.*, 2015; Rai, 2018; Balwant *et al.*, 2019).

Besides, the lower job demands as reduced Work-Family Conflict (Bellamkonda *et al.*, 2021) and leader-member exchange relationship quality (Agarwal *et al.*, 2012), determine employee engagement.

The transformational leadership style (Popli & Rizvi, 2015, 2017; Breevaart *et al.*, 2016; Gyensare *et al.*, 2017; Edelbroek *et al.*, 2019) is another determinant of employee engagement. It associates with different outcome variables such as psychological capital (Li *et al.*, 2020), job resources -(job control, access to information, supervisor support, innovative climate, work climate) (Balwant *et al.*, 2019), person-job fit (Bui *et al.*, 2017), job satisfaction (Myrden & Kelloway, 2015), autonomy and social support (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014) which in turn consequent in employee engagement.

### ***Sense of belongingness and trust (Light blue cluster)***

Organisational identification refers to employees' sense of belongingness in the organisation. It determines employee engagement (He *et al.*, 2014; Karanika-Murray *et al.*, 2015; Men *et al.*, 2020) through psychological empowerment (Srivastava & Singh, 2020). Instead, the organisational citizenship behaviour and turnover intention as outcomes of employee engagement are moderated by the organisational identifications.

The employees' trust, specifically the trust in senior management (Malinen *et al.*, 2013; Holland *et al.*, 2017), supervisors *et al.*, 2017; Mohanty & Arunprasad, 2021), co-workers (Mohanty & Arunprasad, 2021), or the organisation as a whole (Srivastava & Madan, 2016; Mohanty & Arunprasad, 2021) is a determinant for the employee engagement. Instead, trust in employers results from employee engagement (Jiang & Luo, 2018). Moreover, trust in organisations also moderates the fairness-employee engagement relationship (Abbas & Wu,

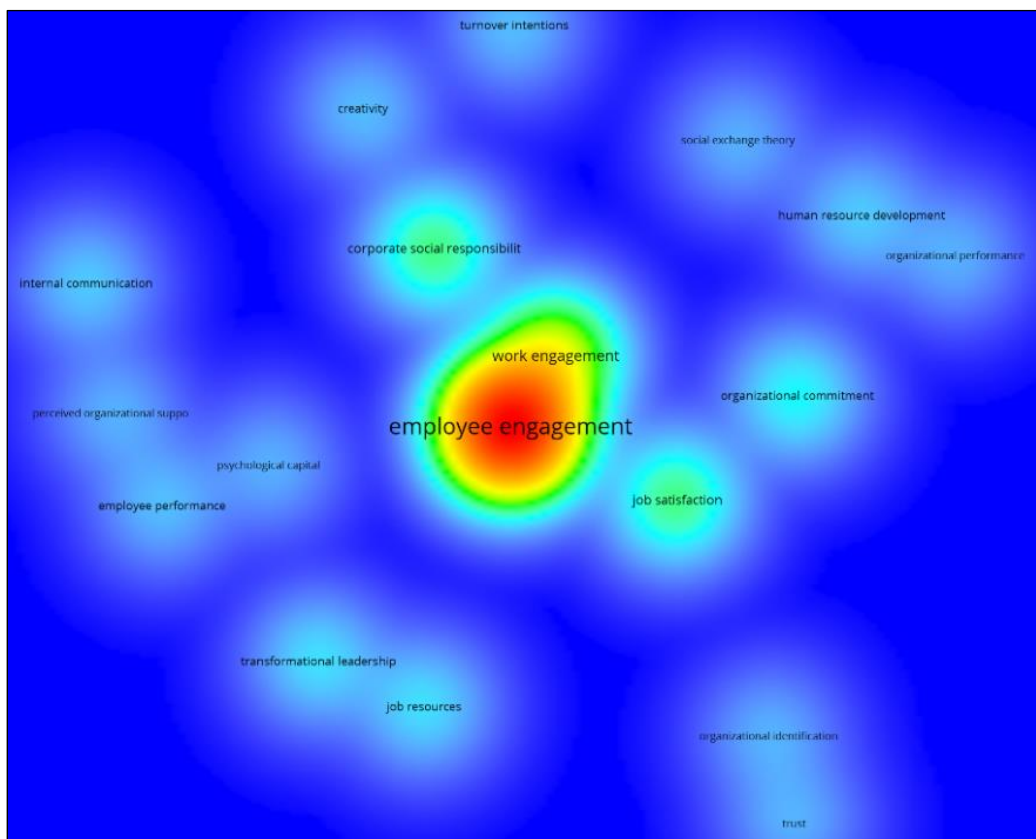
2018) and the employee engagement- organisation citizenship behaviour relationship (Srivastava & Madan, 2016).

**Opportunities for creativity (Orange cluster)**

Creativity determines employee engagement (Ghosh et al., 2020). Instead, it has been tested as an outcome of employee engagement. (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Demerouti et al., 2015; Islam & Tariq, 2018; Chaudhary & Akhouri, 2019; Mansoor et al., 2021).

**Areas where empirical research lacks employee engagement**

This section addresses the second objective of the study. We used the density visualisation map derived from the keyword co-occurrence network visualisation to find areas where empirical research lacks employee engagement. The VOSviewer manual highlights that the nodes in the density visualisation map are displayed in red background when there is more research on that area. However, as Figure 8 shows, most keywords are denoted in the green background, indicating that they have been investigated in a few studies. Thus, even with the keywords with more than five occurrences reported, the employee engagement determinants and outcomes can be treated as insufficient for established knowledge. Therefore, the findings highlighted under the different themes above need further research.



**Figure 8:** Density visualisation of keyword co-occurrence  
Source: Review data (2023)

**Reporting biases**

The PRISMA guidelines demanded that biases due to missing studies’ results be assessed and reported. This task did not receive a systematic assessment. Instead, we used systematic and objective software techniques to avoid biases in reporting the results.

## DISCUSSION

The results of each article and synthesising those results were done in the section on “the common methods of promoting and outcomes of employee engagement”. The section outlined the determinants and outcomes of employee engagement. Since the first objective concerns the common methods for employee engagement, we can treat all the determinants as the common methods of promoting employee engagement. In section “areas where empirical research lacks employee engagement”, it was stated that those common methods and outcomes highlighted in section “the common methods of promoting and outcomes of employee engagement” were insufficient for established knowledge in the empirical research landscape. Moreover, concerning outcomes highlighted in section “the common methods of promoting and outcomes of employee engagement”, a few outcomes, such as employee performance, organisational performance, retention, job satisfaction, employer trust, and innovation, have been studied. There could be a lot more than that to be investigated empirically. If more outcomes could be found, that would help justify the importance of employee engagement.

Concerning themes, the first three themes, (1) organisational support, communication, psychological capital, (2) opportunities for learning and development, social exchange, (3) CSR activities implementation, clearly address the Job Demand Resource (JDR) theory, resource-based view, and the social exchange theory (SET). Moreover, the following four themes, (4) the development of job-related positive attitudes, (5) providing more job-related resources and use of a transformational leadership style, (6) making sense of belongingness and trust in employees, and (7) making opportunities for creativity, also represent the JDR, resource-based view, and the SET. The JDR (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the resource-based view (Wernerfelt, 1984), and the SET (Emerson, 1976) address the fact that giving employees resources can make them more interested in their jobs. Thus, that results in employee engagement. It reveals that the themes found have a solid theoretical foundation.

Also, research on employee engagement points to strategic HRM and disruptive HRM in the fourth industrial revolution (Lee *et al.*, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2018; Turner, 2020; Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2022; Priyashantha, 2023) as ways to improve employee engagement (Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2022b).

However, we did not find a study relating to those areas. Moreover, as highlighted by the JDR, modern technologies can act as job resources or reduce job demands leading to employee engagement (Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2022b). These indicate that there are still more untapped areas for employee engagement.

Despite these, society has evolved through different generations. The different generational types and employee engagement were not found in the current study. Specifically, the Z generation is coming to the labour force; the methods used to engage the X and Y generations may not fit the Z generation. Instead, we are in modern family structures where gender stereotypes have been changed (Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2022a). The social role theory postulates that new gender roles of both men and women result in employee engagement (Goffman, 1961; Biddle, 1986; Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2022b). Even though the argument was old and quite timely relevant, knowledge gaps available in empirical research.

Also, employee engagement is purely a psychological area subject to the possibility of changing the cognitive status of employees since the socio-technical environments are multifarious. Thus, the antecedents and outcomes possibly vary from time to time. Therefore, targeting all the areas prevalent in the literature for more research will help to update the knowledge on determinants and outcomes.

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## CONCLUSION

It is reported that employee engagement is currently in a crisis. The current study aimed to find; the (1) methods and outcomes scholars have empirically identified and (2) areas where empirical research lacks employee engagement. The methods of employee engagement will help find the solutions to that crisis. The articles

published during the 2008-2021 period were considered and retrieved from the Scopus database for the data set. We used the systematic literature review as the methodology, and PRISMA guidelines were followed in selecting the articles and reporting the findings.

We found seven themes relating to methods and outcomes of employee engagement empirically investigated. They include (1) organisational support, communication, psychological capital, (2) opportunities for learning and development, social exchange, (3) CSR activities implementation, (4) development of job-related positive attitudes, (5) providing more job-related resources, and use of transformational leadership style, (6) making sense of belongingness and trust in employees and (7) making opportunities for creativity. From these themes, several common methods to get employees engaged were found. Some of them are the initiatives for human resource development, perceived organisational support, organisational culture, internal communication, and psychological capital. Employee engagement can also be increased through corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, job-related positive attitudes (such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment), job resources, a transformational leadership style, a sense of belonging, trust, and opportunities for creativity.

Moreover, the outcomes of employee engagement include increased employee and organisational performance, affective and normative commitment, employee retention, job satisfaction, trust toward employers, and creativity.

### **Implications for theory practicality and future research**

Concerning the findings' implication to theory, theories such as JDR, resource-based view, and Social Exchange Theory (SET) can be validated through these findings. The hypotheses can be developed for the relationships between the found themes and employee engagement as the relationships were derived from empirical findings. The seven themes include new knowledge, getting employees involved, and adding to the body of knowledge. The methods and outcomes derived from the seven themes can also be used to make a conceptual model. A hypothesis can be made for each method and the outcome of employee engagement as they were derived from empirical investigations. Thus, the conceptual model can be tested in the real world, and the areas representing the keywords clustered in each theme (section on 'the common methods of promoting and outcomes of employee engagement') can be used to create measurement tools for each theme.

All empirical investigations conducted between 2008 and 2021 have been compiled into seven themes that drive employee engagement, allowing for a more straightforward practical application of the findings. Thus, practitioners can use them to engage employees more in their work. These findings may be more helpful in reducing the employee engagement crisis reported by Gallup (2021).

As Figure 8 shows, there is little research on its methods and outcomes, although much research is available on employee engagement or work engagement. Therefore, the findings highlighted under the different themes in (section on 'the common methods of promoting and outcomes of employee engagement') need further research. Specifically, the methods and the outcomes highlighted in this research need to be further researched for established knowledge of those methods and outcomes. Moreover, other outcomes of employee engagement to the organisation and the employee must be targeted to research.

The literature states that different areas, such as strategic HRM and disruptive HRM in the fourth industrial revolution (Lee *et al.*, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2018; Turner, 2020), can enhance employee engagement. Thus, strategic HRM factors and more modern technological resources like disruptive HRM-related factors influencing employee engagement must be researched (Priyashantha, De Alwis, and Welmilla, 2022b).

Despite these, society has evolved through different generations. Generational influences on employee engagement need future research. The knowledge of employee engagement in modern family structures, like

changes in gender stereotypes (Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2020; Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2021a; 2021b) and how they affect employee engagement (Priyashantha, De Alwis and Welmilla, 2022) can be researched. Also, employee engagement is purely a psychological area subject to the possibility of changing the cognitive status of employees since the socio-technical environments are multifarious. Therefore, the antecedents and outcomes possibly vary from time to time; hence, more research is needed on the subject we investigated.

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