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## Employee Engagement in Public Sector Undertakings in Karnataka

*Govindaraju B V<sup>1</sup>, Dr. V. Babu<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, University of Mysore

<sup>2</sup>Professor and Research Guide, SJB College of Management Studies, Bangalore

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### ABSTRACT:

Employee engagement is a critical factor influencing the performance and effectiveness of organizations, particularly in the public sector. This abstract explores the current state of employee engagement in public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka, highlighting its significance, challenges, and potential strategies for improvement. In Karnataka, PSUs such as HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) and BEML (Bharat Earth Movers Limited) BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited) are important to the state's economic landscape. However, these organizations face challenges related to employee morale, job satisfaction, and retention. Factors such as bureaucratic culture, limited recognition, and a lack of professional development opportunities give to low engagement levels among employees. This study focuses the importance of fostering a positive work environment through effective leadership, open communication, and recognition programs. By implementing strategies that promote professional growth, work-life balance, and employee involvement in decision-making, PSUs can enhance engagement levels. The findings underscore that a more engaged workforce not only improves productivity and job satisfaction but also contributes to better service delivery and organizational performance in the public sector. finally, priority given to employee engagement is essential for the long-term success of public sector undertakings in Karnataka.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), Karnataka, Work Environment, Leadership and Recognition, Organizational Performance

### Introduction

Employee engagement refers to the emotional commitment and involvement of employees in their work and organization. In the context of public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka, employee engagement plays a crucial role in enhancing productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance. The study of employee engagement in public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka is critical for understanding the dynamics of workforce productivity and organizational performance in the state's most vital industries, such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), and Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML). These organizations play a pivotal role in Karnataka's economy and are integral to India's industrial landscape, but they also face several challenges that impact employee engagement, which is linked directly to job satisfaction, productivity, and retention. In Karnataka's public sector, factors such as bureaucratic culture, inadequate recognition, limited career advancement opportunities, and a lack of professional development contribute to low engagement levels among employees. Public sector organizations are often seen as rigid, hierarchical institutions where employee voices may go unheard, and this environment hampers motivation, leading to reduced enthusiasm and overall organizational inefficiency. Moreover, employees in PSUs are often underperforming in areas like morale, which directly impacts the quality-of-service delivery and the effectiveness of the workforce. Research has shown that public sector organizations must shift from traditional, top-down management styles to more inclusive approaches that foster open communication, employee recognition, and participation in decision-making. For example, the development of effective leadership styles is paramount to improving employee engagement, as it directly influences employees' sense of purpose and commitment to the organization. Programs that emphasize leadership development, communication strategies, and team-building can significantly improve workplace morale and job satisfaction. Engagement strategies tailored to address the unique challenges of PSUs, such as work-life balance initiatives, career progression frameworks, and regular feedback mechanisms, have been suggested as potential solutions for creating a positive organizational culture. Public sector organizations that recognize the importance of employee well-being through effective reward systems and professional growth opportunities experience higher levels of employee retention and motivation, ultimately contributing to their success in fulfilling public service goals. Furthermore, by aligning organizational objectives with the aspirations of employees, PSUs can create a more cohesive workforce that is committed not only to individual success but to the broader goals of the public sector. For instance, HAL, which has been at the forefront of aerospace innovation in India, has the potential to benefit greatly from strategic initiatives aimed at improving employee engagement. In contrast, organizations like BHEL and BEML have struggled with maintaining employee satisfaction due to long-standing issues related to job security, recognition, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Therefore, addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, where leadership development, transparency in communication, and empowerment of employees become central strategies. One illustrative case of effective employee engagement comes from the successful implementation of government schemes in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Karnataka,

where a positive correlation between employee engagement and organizational performance was observed (Hiremath et al., 2024). The strategies applied in these SMEs, such as fostering a sense of ownership and implementing performance-based incentives, have also been suggested for PSUs. By adopting similar models, PSUs in Karnataka can expect to see a measurable improvement in employee morale and organizational outcomes. A pivotal aspect of enhancing employee engagement in PSUs lies in improving job satisfaction, as research shows that when employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to be engaged and less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere (Singh et al., 2023). Moreover, organizations that invest in employee development through training, career growth opportunities, and a balanced work environment enjoy a more dedicated and high-performing workforce, which is crucial for achieving their long-term goals. Additionally, promoting employee involvement in decision-making can foster a sense of ownership and belonging, which further strengthens their engagement levels. To conclude, employee engagement is not merely a buzzword but a fundamental aspect that determines the operational success of PSUs in Karnataka. By focusing on leadership, communication, recognition, and professional growth opportunities, public sector organizations can overcome their existing challenges and build a motivated, high-performing workforce. The findings from this study underline that public sector undertakings should prioritize employee engagement as a strategic initiative to improve not only internal dynamics but also their contribution to the state's economic and industrial development.

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## Research Background:

Employee engagement has gained significant attention as a vital component of organizational success, particularly within the public sector. In Karnataka, public sector undertakings (PSUs) are crucial to economic development and social welfare, providing essential services and infrastructure. Employee engagement has emerged as a pivotal element in organizational effectiveness, particularly in the public sector, where the focus extends beyond profitability to service delivery and socio-economic impact. Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka, such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), play a crucial role in driving the state's economic development. Despite their significance, these organizations face persistent challenges in maintaining high levels of employee engagement. Historically, PSUs have operated within a framework characterized by bureaucratic culture, hierarchical structures, and a strong focus on procedural compliance. While these aspects have ensured accountability and governance, they have also contributed to issues like low employee morale, job dissatisfaction, and high turnover rates. Factors such as limited opportunities for professional growth, inadequate recognition programs, and a lack of participatory decision-making exacerbate these challenges, leading to disengagement among employees. Conceptually, employee engagement is defined as the emotional commitment and enthusiasm employees exhibit towards their organization and its goals. High levels of engagement are associated with improved productivity, innovation, and overall organizational performance. In the context of Karnataka's PSUs, engagement directly influences service delivery, operational efficiency, and the ability to attract and retain skilled talent in a competitive labor market. A positive work environment characterized by effective leadership, open communication, recognition, and opportunities for professional growth is critical to addressing these challenges. Studies indicate that organizations prioritizing engagement strategies experience not only improved employee satisfaction but also enhanced organizational outcomes. For PSUs, these outcomes extend to better public service delivery, economic contributions, and alignment with national development goals. Given the conceptual nature of this study, it seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical insights and practical implications by emphasizing the role of leadership, recognition, and employee-centric policies in fostering engagement. By examining the interplay between organizational culture, engagement strategies, and outcomes, this paper underscores the importance of rethinking engagement practices in Karnataka's PSUs as a pathway to their sustained success and growth.

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## Public Sector Significance: Public Sector undertakings

Some key significations of the public sector are

1. **Service Provision:** The public sector is responsible for providing essential services such as healthcare, education, transportation, and public safety, ensuring that basic needs are met for all citizens.
2. **Economic Stability:** By regulating markets and providing stability, the public sector can mitigate economic fluctuations and promote sustainable growth.
3. **Job Creation:** Public sector undertakings are significant employers, providing stable jobs and contributing to the livelihood of many individuals and families.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** The public sector invests in critical infrastructure projects, such as roads, bridges, and utilities, which are fundamental for economic development and quality of life.
5. **Social Welfare:** The public sector implements programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive support and access to resources.

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## Statement of the Research Problem

Employee engagement critical factor in the success and the performance of public sector undertaking in Karnataka (PSUs) engaged employees are likely to be productive, committed and satisfied with their work, ultimately contributing to the organization to the effectiveness. However, despised its importance, there is a preassing need to exam in the position of employee engagement practices within Karnatak's (PSUs) and identify areas such as

Communication Gaps, Impact of Bureaucratic Culture, Low Employee Engagement Levels, Team Dynamics and Collaboration ext. and their improvements. The public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka, such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), play a pivotal role in the state's economic development and service delivery; however, these organizations face persistent challenges in employee engagement, characterized by low morale, job dissatisfaction, and retention issues, stemming from bureaucratic culture, limited recognition programs, and inadequate professional development opportunities, which negatively impact organizational productivity, innovation, and service quality, necessitating a comprehensive investigation into the current state of employee engagement, its underlying challenges, and the development of actionable strategies to foster a motivated, satisfied, and high-performing workforce within Karnataka's PSUs.

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### Review of relevant literature related to the study

Employee engagement, a cornerstone for organizational success, particularly in public sector undertakings (PSUs), has been the subject of extensive research and discourse globally and within India. Literature emphasizes that engaged employees demonstrate higher productivity, innovation, and organizational loyalty, which are critical for the socio-economic impact of PSUs. In Karnataka, where PSUs like Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL) are economic mainstays, addressing the challenges of employee engagement is pivotal to their sustained performance. Govindaraju (2023) underscores that Karnataka's PSUs are grappling with bureaucratic rigidity, inadequate recognition mechanisms, and limited professional growth opportunities, which collectively hinder engagement. His work highlights the necessity for leadership-driven initiatives that promote open communication, equitable recognition, and professional development to foster a culture of engagement. Similarly, Pages and Ahsan (2007) in their analysis of labor laws in India reveal how regulatory environments, particularly job security and contract labor laws, indirectly affect employee engagement by influencing organizational flexibility and morale. The theoretical framework for employee engagement often draws from Kahn's (1990) definition of engagement as an employee's psychological investment in their roles. In the context of Karnataka's PSUs, this concept translates into actionable strategies aimed at overcoming specific regional and organizational challenges. According to Maclean, Jagannathan, and Sarvi (2012), skills development and inclusive policies are indispensable for fostering engagement, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors like aerospace and heavy machinery, which dominate Karnataka's PSU landscape. Further, studies like those of Grandvoinet et al. (2015) shed light on the broader socio-political and organizational context impacting engagement. Their framework of social accountability emphasizes the importance of participatory governance in driving employee engagement, which is particularly relevant to PSUs operating under the public sector's inherent bureaucratic constraints. The role of recognition and reward systems is another focal point in the literature. For instance, Gatti et al. (2018) highlight that mandatory corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in India have a dual effect—they enhance public accountability while indirectly boosting employee morale through community-oriented projects. Such insights align with Karnataka's PSUs, where CSR is increasingly integrated into employee engagement strategies. Illustrations from Karnataka's PSUs further validate the literature. HAL's implementation of leadership development programs and BEML's focus on career progression pathways have been instrumental in mitigating disengagement. However, empirical studies reveal gaps in these approaches, particularly in aligning organizational objectives with employee aspirations. Notably, comparative studies like those of Bala Subrahmanya (2017) on Bangalore's entrepreneurial ecosystem offer indirect insights into fostering engagement through innovation-driven environments. Though primarily focused on startups, these findings can be extrapolated to PSUs by emphasizing intrapreneurship and skill diversification. In summary, the literature converges on the imperative of addressing bureaucratic inertia, enhancing professional development, and fostering participatory decision-making to bolster engagement in Karnataka's PSUs. The synthesis of empirical evidence and theoretical insights underscores that an engaged workforce is not just a driver of organizational success but a cornerstone for the socio-economic development of the region.

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### Research Gap Regarding Employee Engagement in Public Sector Undertakings in Karnataka

Identifying research gaps is crucial step in conducting a study on employee engagement in public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka these research gaps represent areas where the existing literature is limited. Here some potential research gaps in this context are

1. **Limited Regional Studies:** While there is extensive research on employee engagement in the private sector and other regions, specific studies focusing on PSUs in Karnataka are scarce. This lack of localized research limits the understanding of unique cultural and organizational dynamics in the region.
2. **Contextual Factors:** Existing studies often do not adequately consider the specific contextual factors influencing employee engagement in Karnataka's PSUs, such as local governance structures, socio-economic conditions, and regional workforce characteristics.
3. **Impact of Bureaucracy:** There is a need for more in-depth analysis of how the bureaucratic culture inherent in PSUs affects employee engagement. Most research tends to generalize the effects without exploring the nuances within Karnataka's specific context.
4. **Employee Voice and Feedback Mechanisms:** The role of employee voice and feedback systems in fostering engagement has been underexplored. Research that examines how employees perceive and utilize feedback channels in PSUs can provide valuable insights.
5. **Interrelationship of Factors:** Studies often focus on isolated factors influencing employee engagement (such as recognition or work-life balance) without exploring how these factors interrelate and collectively impact engagement levels.

Identifying and address this research gap can contribute to more compressive undertaking of employee engagement in Karnataka's (PSUs) and guide the development of more effective engagement strategies related to the unique challenges and opportunities in the region.

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## Research Methodology adopted for the purpose of study:

To effectively study employee engagement in public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka, a comprehensive research methodology will be employed. This methodology will combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather in-depth insights and robust data. Below is an outline of the proposed research methodology:

### 1. Research Design

- **Mixed Methods Approach:** This study will utilize a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research to provide a holistic understanding of employee engagement in PSUs.

### 2. Sampling

- **Population:** Employees of selected PSUs in Karnataka, such as HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) and BEML (Bharat Earth Movers Limited).
- **Sample Size:** A sample size of approximately 200-300 employees will be targeted to ensure representativeness.
- **Sampling Technique:**
  - **Stratified Sampling:** This technique will be used to ensure representation from various departments, job levels, and demographic groups within the PSUs.

### 3. Data Collection Methods

- **Quantitative Data Collection:**
  - **Surveys/Questionnaires:** Structured questionnaires will be developed to measure employee engagement levels. The questionnaire will include validated scales for measuring engagement, such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), along with questions on factors influencing engagement (e.g., recognition, communication, work-life balance).
  - **Distribution:** Surveys will be distributed online and in-person to ensure higher response rates.
- **Qualitative Data Collection:**
  - **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of employees to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding engagement. These interviews will explore themes such as leadership effectiveness, recognition, and professional development.
  - **Focus Groups:** Focus group discussions will be organized to gather diverse perspectives and facilitate discussion on engagement-related topics among employees from various departments.

### 4. Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Analysis:**
  - **Descriptive Statistics:** Data from surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize engagement levels and identify trends.
  - **Inferential Statistics:** Techniques such as correlation and regression analysis will be employed to examine the relationships between engagement levels and various influencing factors.
- **Qualitative Analysis:**
  - **Thematic Analysis:** Data from interviews and focus groups will be transcribed and analyzed thematically to identify common patterns and insights related to employee engagement.

### 5. Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent:** Participants will be informed about the study's purpose, and their consent will be obtained before participation.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants' identities will be kept confidential, and data will be anonymized to ensure privacy.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Participants will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

### 6. Limitations

- The research may face limitations such as response bias, as employees may provide socially desirable answers. Additionally, the study may be constrained by time and resource availability.

In summary, employee engagement is closely tied to organization performance in (PSUs) in Karnataka, engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to productivity, efficiency, and service quality. They can also (PSUs) achieve their mission of serving the public and align with government policies and mandates. Therefore, fostering a culture employee engagement is essential for the overall success and effectiveness of public sector undertakings in the region

### **Major objectives related to the study**

1. To assess the prevailing levels of employee engagement in key public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as HAL, BEML, and BHEL in Karnataka.
2. To examine the factors contributing to low employee morale, job dissatisfaction, and retention issues, such as bureaucratic culture, lack of recognition, and limited professional development opportunities.
3. To explore how leadership styles, open communication, and recognition programs influence employee engagement and workplace dynamics.
4. To propose actionable strategies that foster professional growth, promote work-life balance, and encourage employee involvement in decision-making processes.
5. To demonstrate how improved employee engagement can lead to enhanced productivity, job satisfaction, and service delivery in Karnataka's public sector undertakings.

### ***Prevailing levels of employee engagement in key public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as HAL, BEML, and BHEL in Karnataka:***

The existing state of employee engagement here in some of the major PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings) such as HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited), BEML (Bharat Earth Movers Limited) and BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited) is a product of myriad factors comprising of organizational policies, cultural dynamics, and leadership styles, as HAL exemplifies with its focus on development of employee skill set through leadership programs aligned to the aerospace sector, bringing in a sense of purpose among the technical and managerial employees to contribute to successful outcomes; meanwhile BEML is trying to make a shift on the employee engagement front through initiatives like participative decision making, workshops and leadership development programs aimed at merging the aspirations of the employees with the organizational goals, yet facing the same issues related to bureaucratic rigidity, lack of upward mobility, and lack of recognition; BHEL too despite implementing community engagement strategies through CSR initiatives to develop a better work culture still finds it tough to change its hierarchical structure, limited systems of upward feedback; in the wider context though these PSUs do compliment the story of better productivity, innovation, and service delivery capabilities still the literature point to the clear gaps on achieving optimal levels of engagement calling for comprehensive strategies addressing access to open communication channels, ineffective leadership development due to nonavailability of leadership posts, and lack of professional growth opportunities to break out of the middle management and to close the underlying rift which Kar (2016), in his analysis of Bengaluru the city which carries the technology development in India on its shoulders with plenty of eggs in the basket, explains in the academic subtext of economic growth though its generally understood that management of workforce development is not an easy feat but once achieved will provide industrial sector its right share of the cake without employees formulating endowments to the outside world instead of serving the nation and contributing to the economic growth as is the dual representation of the PSUs, both being an economic driver and centers for skill enhancement, much like the fatal as well as eternal question of how meaningful strength can, to its purpose or service delivery; the study indicates the need of alignment to help drive better economic mobility and stability, thus corroborating to growth of work.

### **Factors contributing to low employee morale, job dissatisfaction, and retention issues, such as bureaucratic culture, lack of recognition, and limited professional development opportunities:**

The long-standing issues behind the low morale, job dissatisfaction and poor retention of employees in PSUs in Karnataka like HAL, BEML and BHEL can be traced back to the bureaucratic culture that dominates these organizations, which creates an inflexible hierarchy that hinders innovation, leaving employees feeling undervalued and powerless when it comes to decision-making processes, which is further compounded by the lack of a robust recognition system that fails to adequately reward employees for their contributions to the organizations, resulting in low motivation and productivity levels, as the absence of professional development opportunities also further fuels this situation as it limits their ability to grow and advance in their careers through skill development, hence driving talented employees away who would rather seek better opportunities in the private or multinational enterprises, as indicated by the turnover rates of HAL's technical workforce and BEML's managerial cadre that highlight systemic issues in their employee engagement strategies; the challenges also include an ineffective feedback mechanism that prevents employees from voicing their concerns or even providing suggestions for improvements, while a permanent disconnect between the organizational goals and employee aspirations remains especially dominant among the mid-career professionals who experience stagnation of roles that do not match with their emerging skill sets, corroborated by some pieces of research that show that tackling these critical issues in engagement is key to retaining a motivated workforce, and suggests initiatives like participative leadership styles, strong mentorship programs and performance-based incentives to help rectify the problem, which is in line with findings from similar organizations that conducted recognition programs to improve morale, as shown in the study of Kumar and

Ramesh (2023) that outlines the need to also have organizational policies that are aligned with employee expectations to build a culture of inclusiveness and consider growth, while as evident in the literature review a lack of career progression prospects lead to frustration amongst employees which leads to attrition as they seek for better pastures in private organizations or MNCs.

#### **How leadership styles, open communication, and recognition programs influence employee engagement and workplace dynamics:**

In Karnataka's public sector undertakings (PSUs)—Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL) the way leaders behave, the way they communicate, and reward programs all play key roles in how engaged employees are at work and how they work with each other (Sharma & Gupta, 2023) and while transformational leadership styles provide workers with a shared vision and a sense of direction, as these leaders have an understanding of employee needs and want to cater to their aspirations through empathy and tailored attention, along with a focus on innovation skills, which make them well-suited to combat the chronic hierarchical and bureaucratic structures that define PSUs, open communication cultivates an environment that is transparent and inclusive, where employees feel valued and empowered to voice out their viewpoints, concerns, and feedback without interruption, thereby increasing trust and collaboration across groups, whereas recognition programs, which reward and appreciate employees for their contributions, become a critical motivator and driving factor for engagement, as they reinforce positive behaviour and provide a sense of pride and belonging to the workers (Sharma & Gupta, 2023) by rewarding positive actions through awards and accolades, as further demonstrated through HAL's employee awards system, which has shown to achieve productivity and morale gains, and enabling workers in BEML to take part in decision-making processes, allowing them to shape their aims with the enterprise's objectives, thereby decreasing turnover, increasing loyalty as proven that these three variables instruments amplify job satisfaction and reduce workplace conflicts.

#### **Actionable strategies that foster professional growth, promote work-life balance, and encourage employee involvement in decision-making processes:**

To address these issues, strategic actions are required that drives workplace engagement in PSUs in Karnataka, for instance, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), if continuous learning programmes, professional training modules for skill development and the ability to design their career progression journey escape them, along with tailored mentoring systems that bridge the gaps between junior and senior employees to build an environment of push-pull for knowledge transfer, collaborative and collaborative growth will arise from it, besides, policies encouraging a conducive work-life balance in the organisation through flexible work hours, telecommuting options and wellness programmes that address both physical and mental health requirements which have been instrumental in enhancing the quality of life, as recently the hybrid work was successfully linked to creating a large-scale transformational change during the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly reducing employee stress and increasing productivity in organisations across sectors, furthermore it is vital to approach employee involvement by seeing to it that participatory leaders ensure that employees participate in the decision-making process of the organisation by creating avenues for suggestion committees and town halls so that they can voice their opinions and positively impact the strategy of the organisation on which - positive improvements can be anticipated as after BEML started the participative forums, employee efforts have shown that they are in alignment with the corporate goals and have helped to improve operational efficiency as well and recognition programmes helps retain them by rewarding both monetary and non-monetary aspects through awards and public acknowledgement contributes significantly for every employee by enhancing their morale, which indirectly brings a healthy environment of appreciation and value for their contribution towards the organisation; the operationalization of this can be further strengthened by commitment by all leaders and their drive towards engaging employees as per (Govindaraju, 2023) and (Shen et al.). (2013), which supports flexible systems that connect employee development to organisational priorities as a way to sustain both growth and satisfaction.

#### **Demonstrate how improved employee engagement can lead to enhanced productivity, job satisfaction, and service delivery in Karnataka's public sector undertakings:**

Improved employee engagement significantly contributes to enhanced productivity, job satisfaction, and service delivery in Karnataka's public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL) by fostering a motivated and committed workforce that aligns its efforts with organizational objectives, as engagement initiatives like skill development programs empower employees with the necessary competencies to perform their roles effectively, leading to increased operational efficiency and innovation, as evidenced by HAL's leadership-driven technical training modules that have streamlined aerospace production processes and reduced project timelines, while participative decision-making mechanisms, such as BEML's employee councils, ensure that workers have a voice in shaping workplace policies, which enhances morale and creates a sense of ownership, directly correlating with higher levels of job satisfaction; furthermore, recognition programs implemented in these organizations acknowledge and reward employees' contributions, reinforcing positive behaviors and fostering a culture of appreciation that drives retention and reduces absenteeism, while comprehensive wellness and work-life balance policies mitigate stress and burnout, thereby ensuring consistent service delivery, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic when adaptive engagement strategies helped maintain operational continuity in PSUs; in addition, research by Govindaraju (2023) highlights that engaged employees are more likely to contribute innovative solutions to organizational challenges, which translates into better service outcomes for clients and stakeholders, emphasizing that a sustained focus on engagement, supported by leadership commitment and data-driven evaluations, can lead to transformative improvements in PSU performance metrics.

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## Discussion related to the study

The discussion related to employee engagement in public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka focuses on understanding the mechanisms through which engagement influences organizational performance, job satisfaction, and service delivery, emphasizing that employee engagement acts as a catalyst for fostering a motivated workforce that aligns their individual goals with the organizational mission, particularly in PSUs such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), where the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of these organizations poses unique challenges to sustaining high engagement levels, with issues such as limited professional growth opportunities and lack of recognition contributing to employee dissatisfaction and attrition, yet the implementation of targeted strategies like participative leadership, comprehensive training programs, and recognition mechanisms have shown promising results in bridging these gaps, as seen in HAL's leadership development initiatives that enhance technical and managerial competencies among its workforce, and BEML's participative decision-making forums that foster a sense of ownership among employees, while service delivery improvements have been documented through employee-driven innovation projects in BHEL, illustrating how engaged employees contribute to organizational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction, supported by research findings such as Govindaraju's (2023) exploration of engagement practices in Karnataka's PSUs, which highlights that organizations with higher engagement levels report significant gains in productivity and workforce morale, and Pages and Ahsan's (2007) analysis of labor regulations underscores the need for adaptable organizational policies to cultivate an engaged and resilient workforce in the public sector, with practical examples demonstrating that fostering professional growth through upskilling opportunities and promoting work-life balance via flexible policies are instrumental in enhancing engagement, further supported by the role of leadership in driving change, as illustrated in studies on transformational leadership styles that emphasize empathy, vision, and inclusivity, creating a work environment where employees feel valued and empowered, ultimately ensuring that PSUs not only retain talent but also achieve operational excellence and deliver quality public services in line with stakeholder expectations.

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## Managerial implications related to the study

Managerial implications of this study point towards PSUs in Karnataka namely, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL) to create a culture of inclusion and empowerment through leadership styles that entail participative styles to allow effective participation of employees in decision making processes which lead to a sense of ownership and morale towards organizational goals, implemented structured recognition programs that ensure employees feel valued to enhance overall morale and retention rates, as demonstrated by BEML's performance-based reward system which has enhanced productivity; in addition, managerial strategy must focus on professional development to make possible continuous excellence through learning and mentorship programs where organisational objectives can align with local and organisational improvement of their own professional skills, as seen during HAL's leadership development initiative which is evidence to be steering managerial development towards objectives while also suggesting how work-life balance policies must be matched with employee needs, with flexible work arrangements and wellness programs to decrease the physical and mental health issues created by higher strain jobs especially during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic where adaptive engagement measures led to continued operations in PSUs, with research by Subrahmanya (2017) stating that in the era of need for an entrepreneurial approach to the management in the public sector, organization must develop a sense of innovation and adaptability, while Maclean et al. also support that innovative behaviours of employees can impact the PSUs' business and for management to support sustainable development and employee commitment. According to Maclean et al. (2012), custom-made initiatives for competence development play a key role in bridging the competency gap in the workforce, hence, portraying that engaged workforce results in improved efficiency and effectiveness as well as optimum performance which subsequently leads to improved service delivery and satisfied public.

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## Conclusion

The study of employee engagement in the context of public sector undertakings (PSUs) in the state of Karnataka provides a new perspective on the importance of creating high levels of engagement among its employees as being both strategically indispensable and a transformational driver for organizational effectiveness, given that engagement contributes to productivity, innovation, job satisfaction and organizational service delivery in organizations such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), with the analytical findings communicating the need for addressing systemic challenges like bureaucratic rigidity, less professional growth opportunities and lack of recognition systems that is crucial for rendering a mettlesome workforce and resilience at the organizational level, as seen quantitatively in HAL taking a leadership-driven approach in bridging skill gaps and enhancing operational efficiency whilst BEML initiated platform for participative employee involvement aligns well with their organizational goals and serves to illustrate the impact of inclusive decision-making on boosting the morale of its employees whilst qualitative evidence points to how wellness policies and measures such as maintaining work-life balance model that significantly mitigated the stress level imposed by constant work exposure, highly visible in the hybrid work model adopted during pandemic times, which besides sustaining employee satisfaction, also preserved uninterrupted operational continuity; the conclusion drawn was that a multi-dimensional approach encapsulating leadership commitment, structured recognition programs and robust training modules can change the perception of employee engagement from being a reactive practice to being converted into a proactive strategy, underscoring that the slope of its tangible benefits extend beyond internal organizational metrics to broader socio-economic contributions as PSUs are instrumental in Karnataka's economic development assay, as the majority of the engaged workforce is better positioned to innovate, adapt to challenges, and deliver services effectively, further enriching public trust and stakeholder satisfaction, as evidenced by the CSR-driven initiatives taken by BHEL that not only

encapsulated internal morale but also nurtured community relations, emphasizing that sustained focus on engagement is to be critically evaluated at regular intervals, including the involvement of feedback mechanisms and adaptive policies responsive to fluctuating workforce dynamics ultimately reflecting that prioritization of employee engagement serves as the cornerstone of long-term fortunes for Karnataka's PSUs, wherein the consistency of employee-centric practices integrated within its organizational culture can prove to be a strategic lever for excellence in both public service and organizational advancement.

### Scope for further research and limitations of the study

The scope for further research and limitations of the study on employee engagement in public sector undertakings (PSUs) in Karnataka lies in the recognition that while this research provides foundational insights into engagement practices within organizations such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML), and Bharat Heavy Electrical Limited (BHEL), there is significant potential to expand the scope to include comparative analyses with private sector enterprises and other state-owned enterprises in different regions of India to identify unique factors influencing engagement in diverse operational contexts, as this study primarily focuses on Karnataka's PSUs and may not fully capture variations in organizational culture, leadership styles, and workforce demographics in other regions, which could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the systemic and contextual challenges impacting engagement across the public sector; furthermore, limitations such as the reliance on secondary data and qualitative feedback from a limited set of organizational practices restrict the generalizability of the findings, necessitating more robust quantitative analyses and longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impacts of engagement initiatives on organizational performance, employee retention, and service delivery, while another area for further research includes exploring the role of technology in enhancing engagement, particularly in the context of digital transformation and remote work adoption, as recent experiences with hybrid work models have shown promising results in addressing work-life balance challenges in PSUs like HAL, yet the technological readiness and digital literacy of the workforce remain underexplored dimensions; additionally, the intersection of employee engagement with organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies represents an under-researched area, with significant implications for understanding how engagement strategies can be tailored to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, including women and underrepresented groups in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as aerospace and heavy engineering, as highlighted in anecdotal evidence from BEML's efforts to increase female participation in leadership roles, which suggests that customized engagement practices can yield more inclusive and equitable outcomes; the study also faces limitations in addressing external factors such as policy changes, economic shifts, and global market dynamics that influence engagement indirectly but significantly, offering opportunities for future research to investigate how external pressures and global trends impact employee motivation and organizational adaptability in PSUs, while another limitation is the lack of focus on intergenerational workforce dynamics and the differing engagement preferences of younger versus older employees, which could yield insights into how PSUs can evolve their practices to retain talent across all age groups, thereby ensuring sustained productivity and innovation, ultimately suggesting that a deeper understanding of these complex factors through expanded research can inform the design of more effective, data-driven engagement frameworks that align organizational objectives with employee aspirations, fostering a culture of innovation, inclusivity, and excellence within Karnataka's public sector undertakings.

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