

Article

The Nexus between Employee Engagement and Performance Management Processes—Fruška Gora National Park (Serbia) Case Study

Aleksandra Vujko ^{1,*}, Darko Vuković ^{2,3}, Dunja Demirović Bajrami ^{2,4}, Olga Zečević Stanojević ¹ and Leposava Zečević ¹

¹ Faculty of European Business and Marketing in Belgrade, European University, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

² Geographical Institute “Jovan Cvijić” Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

³ Department of Economics and Industrial Engineering, Perm National Research Polytechnic University, 614990 Perm, Russia

⁴ Institute of Sports, Tourism and Service, South Ural State University, 454080 Chelyabinsk, Russia

* Correspondence: aleksandravujko@yahoo.com

Abstract: This study examines the nexus between employee engagement and the performance management process using the example of Fruška Gora National Park, Serbia. The main scientific problem is to refocus awareness on performance management systems and to investigate methods to upgrade employee engagement. The paper starts with the main hypothesis that employee engagement is a main factor for increasing employee efficiency. The practical tasks of this study are to define the relationship between employee engagement and performance management processes, and to find out what creates employee engagement. Since national parks have a lot of specifics as an organization, we proposed that their employee engagement is much more pronounced. The research was carried out on 103 employees of the Fruška Gora National Park, Serbia. Our findings indicate that employee engagement is directly proportional to the feeling of belonging to the company; further, if employees feel that a superior appreciates their work and effort, this will also increase employee engagement. Finally, a successful performance management process will positively impact employee engagement.

Keywords: human resource management; employee engagement; performance management; Fruška Gora National Park; Serbia



Citation: Vujko, A.; Vuković, D.; Demirović Bajrami, D.; Zečević Stanojević, O.; Zečević, L. The Nexus between Employee Engagement and Performance Management Processes—Fruška Gora National Park (Serbia) Case Study. *Sustainability* **2022**, *14*, 11489. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141811489>

Academic Editors:

Evangelos Grigoroudis and
Alessandro Silvestri

Received: 15 June 2022

Accepted: 3 September 2022

Published: 14 September 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Motives are the driving factor behind every individual's activity. Motivation has mostly been interpreted as actions leading to excitement about activities in order to accomplish personal aims. Baron [1] defined motivation as an accrual of various processes with their direct influence on our behavior to realize some certain goal. In today's environment, it is a dynamic process that clearly generates and engirdles a beneficial direct impact on a task.

Bearing in mind that the goal of each business entity is to accomplish greater results, we arrive at the notion of the performance management process. According to Cardy [2], performance assessment is the main part of performance management, providing the complete procedure that encompasses all organizational practices, strategies, and policies. This process interrelates to generate employee output. Its multidimensional viewpoint characterizes a quality perspective to strategic human resources management. According to Delery and Doty [3] and Gruman and Saks [4], this process, which is an integral part of human resource activities, is required to realize organizational objectives.

When it comes to business organization, the best output is achieved by having the most-loyal employees, which can only be accomplished by motivating the employees. Modern businesses focus on two things: how to motivate employees and how to make

them satisfied, with the aim of more efficient and effective business. This leads to the notion of engagement. It goes above job satisfaction, and it is not simply motivation. According to Kahn [5] and Bedarkar and Pandita [6], engagement implies psychologically appearances while absorbing and executing an organizational role. These authors also claim that people who are psychologically present feel more and are also careful, integrated, cohesive, and focused in the performance of their roles.

Even more, authors have emphasized that engagement encourages people to instantaneously express their desires and to entirely satisfy the requirements for their role [6,7]. Thus, when workpeople are engaged, they keep themselves within the function they are performing. In other words, engagement involves putting a lot of energy into one's work [8,9], which ensures a nexus among employee engagement and organizational performance management processes [6,10,11]. In the case of engaged workpeople becoming physically involved in their duties, they are cognitively attentive, and heatedly connected to other employees in kind who express their character (e.g., impressions, values, feelings, ideas, etc.). Hence, employee engagement and organizational performance management processes are a subject of interest for managers in companies all over the world, as they are seen as a crucial part of defining the scope of organizational productivity.

Our research began with the main Hypothesis H0:

H0. *Employee engagement concerning the performance management process is a primary element of employee efficiency.*

Significant interest has been given to the relation between employee engagement and performance management processes. Some studies have indicated that employee engagement primarily ensues higher employee performance, which later leads to greater performance management processes [6,12]. According to Harter et al. [13], there is a nexus between engagement of employees and their productivity, which, ultimately, leads to increased likelihood of performance management processes. These authors used met analysis of 3 companies with 7393 business units to test their hypothesis. For testing our hypothesis H0, it was helpful to respond to an important question: *How can employees be stimulated to engage at the workplace and become more productive?* Keeping employees engaged and motivated is the essence of each organization's achievement. Unluckily, there is no particular research for motivating employees, because various people are motivated by unique things at different moments. In accordance with this, the main scientific problem is to refocus observation of performance management systems and to investigate methods to enhance employee engagement in the case of Fruška Gora National Park, Serbia. The purpose is to identify the nexus and the interaction between employee engagement and the performance management process.

The practical tasks of this study were:

- (a) to define the relationship between employee engagement and performance management processes by considering employee motivations to understand how each individual likes to be managed;
- (b) to find out what creates employee engagement. Since national parks have a lot of specifics as an organization, we propose that in this case employee engagement is much more pronounced.

The business years 2020 and 2021 were defined by a pandemic that caused both limited business opportunities in all segments of business as well as the opportunity to plan activities for improving business processes [14]. It is necessary to point out that the consequences of the pandemic were felt in many businesses, including NP. In 2021, due to all the factors mentioned above, a portion of business activities was slowed down.

The object of this research is to spotlight the contribution to employee engagement based on performance management processes.

We used a survey to collect data for this research, whereby 103 questionnaires were analyzed. The paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, Khan's model [5] is used. Participants were asked some questions (in relation to their personal experiences—they were

giving specific answers). The second seeks to define which instruments contribute and to what extent to higher employee engagement. We conclude that a sense of belonging to the organization, assessment of employee efforts, etc., significantly impact employee engagement.

2. Literature Review

Recent studies express performance evaluation as the measurement of business process performance, and define this as Performance Management [15,16]. According to Bacal [17] and Awan et al. [16], Performance Management is management to attain the best outcome for the organization and its employees by understanding, financing, and handling the performance of teams according to a decided context of scheduled goals. The organization should use this process in the analysis of results, because in this way, they can collect information on required improvements. Bacal [17] has studied performance management and recognized it as a type of network that works within a much bigger network. Such a network can be recognized as a set of specific elements that work together in similar or interdependent ways to achieve a specific goal. Performance management can also be described as an operation that intends to upgrade the potential and expectations of employees to develop an enterprise while increasing its work cycle. Banks and May [18] found that traditional performance management assessment is suitable for stable jobs that are easily discernible with procedural workflows. This is opposite the current situation, as much fewer jobs at present are stationary [19]. Armstrong [20] indicated that specific performance management involves: defining goals in relation to responsibilities and accountabilities; aligning the personal goals of employees with organizational goals; setting goals with expectations; providing opportunities to employees (as individuals) to develop professionally and to recognize their strength in the organization; identifying the skills the organization needs and how employees should behave; and last, selecting procedures to develop the performance of specific employees or groups to enhance organizational performance [19].

Current economic practices influence organizations to improve results by expanding their awareness of performance management [21]. According to Cardy [2], the most important aspect of organizational efficiency lies in performance management. Based on reviews by Gruman and Saks [4], this process is the weakest link in human resource management and should therefore be a highest priority for managers. Yet, according to the same authors, this is the lowest ranked topic in employee satisfaction surveys. Even more, less than a third of employees consider that their organization performance management process can support them to improve output [4,22]. Buchner [21] claims that existing trends that organizations need to monitor and implement focus mostly on systems of organization performance management and strategies to improve employee performance. Employee engagement was recognized as a relative variable, with rising attention as a crucial factor of performance management [23].

Some other authors have identified employee engagement as fulfillment, dedication, and voluntary effort [24]. According to Bakker and Demerouti [25], performance management and customer relationship management strategies must be linked in an efficient and direct manner to the concepts of employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction. In this way, the organization will improve its results and future business opportunities. Likewise, managers obtain an interest in the application of different programs to motivate employees on higher levels of engagement and satisfaction. Other parts of the literature argue that the realization of organizational objectives should be related to both non-task and task-related performance. Such organization and goals lead to higher levels of employment [26]. Theorists are still looking for way to promote engagement that characterizes important but unverified progress in performance management studies [27]. Furthermore, as structure is a decisive feature related to employee behavior [4,28], and a positive attitude towards organizational trends is necessary. Significant among the previous literature are scholars concerned with issues of constructive organizational performance [29] and organizational culture [4,30].

Kahn [5] and Macey et al. [23] indicated that employee engagement has two dimensions (state and behavioral), and there is a nexus between them. For example, the condition of engagement leads to engagement behaviors, which are precisely associated with performance outcomes. Several models and theories suggest how to increase employee engagement. Mone and London [31] believe it is necessary to evaluate performance management processes in order to encourage employee engagement. This will lead to increased levels of performance. According to Cimbaljević et al. [32], most scholars agree that employee engagement is an up-to-date phenomenon for which the component that generates engagement might vary.

Both the literature and practice have shown that employee engagement is most often used to promote success and competitiveness of the organization. For example, Schaufeli and Salanova [11] argued that every modern (or current) organization is under numerous challenges, and engagement is the key to success. Macey et al. [23], on the other hand, state that employee engagement can be used as a strategy for greater competitiveness of the organization. Several theorists have identified engagement as a crucial factor for individual opinions, manners, and performance, and also organizational and financial performance, maintenance, productivity, and even stockholder returns [6,33,34].

Similarly, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes [13] linked employee engagement to enthusiasm for work, and employee satisfaction as involvement. In some previous studies [4,8–10,35], the authors analyzed engagement through the professional feelings of employees and their efficiency. Namely, these authors stated that employees are energetic when performing personal activities that fulfill them. This process of engagement is the opposite pole of combustion, and encompasses involvement, energy, and efficacy [36,37]. Previously, Kahn [7] studied engagement as a personal phenomenon and found that engagement entails a process in which people are employed and work both physically and emotionally in their roles, keeping in mind their different cognitive characteristics. Even more, this process helps employees fulfill their roles in the organization. Further, Kahn [7] emphasizes three psychological characteristics that link engagement to employee contract logic. The first characteristic is psychological meaningfulness—employees accept contracts that have clearly visible benefits. The second is psychological security, related to protective guarantees. The last one is psychological availability, associated with believing the organization possesses the resources to honor their commitments.

Schaufeli et al. [38] likewise see engagement as the theoretical opposite of “physical or mental collapse”, also known as “burnout”. These authors argue that the concepts are autonomous states with opposite structures requiring measurement with distinct instruments. In the same study, engagement is analyzed as a positive emotion characterized by dedication to work, greater efficiency, and greater enthusiasm. Rothbard [39] also considers assimilation a crucial part of engagement, but further gives importance to attention as another important factor. According to Schaufeli and Salanova [11] and Gruman and Saks [4], the engagement process is close to Csikszentmihalyi’s [40] “flow”, bearing in mind the great commitment and assimilation in the work role of employees. Schaufeli and Salanova [11] indicated that engaged staff are forcefully and essentially linked to their work efforts. Their further analysis of Csikszentmihalyi [40] states that “flow” is a more complex phenomenon that includes various experiences gained outside of work commitments. From the other side, engagement is a stubborn work state. According to Rousseau [41] and Gruman and Saks [4], employees in the organization have constant implicit but also explicit expectations from the organization itself, related to their different goals. Rousseau [41] claims that these expectations refer to a number of internal targets, contracts, and relationships of employees and employers, taking into account their mutual obligations.

Everyday changes in workplaces (such as the growing share of knowledgeable employees out of the total number of employees) make it difficult for managers to guide and evaluate performance [42,43]. In relation to this claim, Pulakos, Mueller-Hanson and O’Leary [44] found that in knowledge-dominated economies, it is challenging to operate and set goals for employees. As a solution to this problem, the authors state that current

performance management processes must be organized in innovative economies and environments where there are conditions for hiring workers with knowledge in order to increase employee efficiency and better contribute to the performance of the organization. In other words, contemporary performance management is as related to the environmental management process in which performance appears as it is about managing performance [45,46]. Some other authors, such as Fletcher and Perry [42], highlight that quality of job performance is very variable and depends on emotional intelligence. These authors argue that emotional intelligence strongly influences the dynamic and multidimensional being of performance. This theory is supported by Gruman and Saks [4], who also add the importance of the distinction between goals and contextual performance. Pulakos et al. [44] noted that performance should be linked to the concepts of versatility, Tierney and Farmer [47] to inventiveness, and Bateman and Crant [48] and Grant and Ashford [49] to leadership. Lastly, these represent the results associated with employee engagement [22,50].

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Case Study

Fruška Gora is a mountain located in the northern part of Serbia, in the province of Vojvodina. This mountain is part of the vast Pannonian Plain, covering 24.3% of the Republic of Serbia, with a total surface area of 21,500 km² [51]. One of the geographical characteristics of this mountain is that it is only eighty kilometers wide in the West–East direction. Secondly, this is a very low mountain, with the highest peak named Crveni Čot (539 m). Fruška Gora is a mountain with a unique benefit for the development of different tourism features [52], such as sport and recreational tourism [53,54]. This mountain is also a national park, declared in 1961 with the goals of providing long-lasting protection and development of its value and natural beauty.

3.2. Data Sources

Fruška Gora National Park was founded on 10 February 1961 as an area of special value, and the public company “National Park Fruška Gora” was founded according to the Law on National Parks (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia”, No. 39/93) with the purpose of business management of the national park. This public company has 161 employees, and the head of the company is the director. The director of the public company is appointed by the founder (the Republic of Serbia) for a period of four years based on open competition conducted in accordance with the law. Founding of the public company was entered in the register of Commercial Court in Novi Sad, registry entry No. 1-714, court decision No. 7107/93, from 8 July 1993, and was entered in the Register of Business Entities in the Business Register Agency by decision No. BD 1270/2005 on 13 May 2005. The assessed physical range of activities of public company “National Park Fruška Gora” was achieved in 2021, with 35,380 m³ of wood pulp cut and exported, 35,531 m³ of wood pulp sold (supplies from previous years and production from 2021), and 117,14 hectares of meadows were mowed and maintained; also, activities were conducted to protect, maintain, and improve forests; the national park was visited by a smaller number of visitors than in previous years (the dawn on May Day was not included, and the traditional marathon of Fruška Gora was postponed and had a modest number of participants, and activities dealing with promotion and popularization of protected areas were held, but on a smaller scale due to well-known problems connected to epidemics). Business income for the period from 1 January 2021 until 31 December 2021 was approximately EUR 3,861,423.

The study included 103 participants, who were employees in the national park. The survey was conducted between January and March 2020.

3.3. Methodology

This paper has two parts. In the first part, we use Khan’s model [7]. As an author with enormous significance in the employee engagement movement, we use his definition of employee engagement as a multilayered construct. In accordance with his analysis, we

started with the research statement that the more we give ourselves to a role, the more our performance will be stimulating and comfortable.

Kahn [7] proposed that three psychological features can be used as a precursor to individual engagement: mental and perceptual meaningfulness, rational safety, and psychological availability. Participants were asked specific questions and gave specific answers based on their personal experiences.

According to Khan [7], mental and perceptual meaningfulness refers to an individual's understanding of the relevance of their role. Khan [7] said that this is connected to the motivation to attract and the observation that someone is obtaining a return on investment of one's "self-in-role". Mental and perceptual meaningfulness is realized when employees sense useful, valuable, hardworking, and personal self-recognition. The three pillars proposed by Khan [7] present meaningfulness with assignment characteristics, role in the organization characteristics, and work interchanges. With this in mind, the respondents were asked: What makes you feel useful, valuable, and recognized?

Rational safety means that personnel feel safe doing quality work without fear of losing career, self-image, rank, etc. This process is related to dependable, foreseeable social conditions that have clear frontiers of suitable behavior within which employees perceive it safe to risk self-expression. Kahn [7] noted that there are four pillars that influence psychological safety: norms, group and intergroup dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and management methods. With this in mind, the respondents were asked: How safe do you feel in expressing personal opinions?

Psychological availability relates to personal perception of how open one is to engaging oneself. Kahn [7] indicated that four disturbances influence psychological availability: exhaustion of physical energy, exhaustion of emotional energy, lack of confidence, and outside lives. In this regard, the respondents were questioned: What gives you a clear boundary inside of which you feel safe?

Regarding the second part of the paper, certain mechanisms for increasing employee engagement are introduced, i.e., we defined how and to what extent these mechanisms increase employee engagement. The mechanisms are: relationships between work and work performance, initiative, and innovativeness. Respondents were asked to circle certain values that were given to them in advance on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not meet) to 5 (fully meets). The data were evaluated with the following values: min., max., mean, std. deviation, and variance. As the concluding outcome was calculated based on the mean score of all criteria, this was a guide to an appropriate mechanism for engagement, i.e., assessment of employee engagement.

We set certain sub-hypotheses:

H1. *If employees feel that they belong to the company, i.e., that they are its integral part, then this will have a positive influence on employee engagement. Employee engagement will be directly proportional to the feeling of belonging to the company.*

H2. *The feeling that a superior appreciates employee work and effort increases employee engagement.*

H3. *If goals are clearly set inside the company, employees will feel more secure, and therefore they will be more engaged.*

H4. *The successful performance management process has a positive impact on employee engagement.*

4. Results and Discussion

Business excellence is synonymous with quality, i.e., business longevity, and all this comes with the uniqueness and recognition on the market that a company seeks. It is a fact that a human, i.e., a human resource, is the first step or the cornerstone of this process. If an employee is satisfied with his job, it is clear that he will be properly engaged and will give his maximum. Further, in this case, job satisfaction, i.e., employee dissatisfaction, is an indicator of the overall situation in a company.

In this paper, it can be seen that there were two supporting factors that affected employee engagement at work. The first factor is shown in Table 1 and Attachments 1, 2, and 3 (using Khan’s method), specifically: a rewards and recognition system. The recognition system and rewarding can be recognized as important tools that management can employ to guide employee motivation in required directions. Such models can provide systems to motivate people to be loyal to their organization with adequate motivation and efficiency of performance at the highest level in the organization [55].

Table 1. Mechanisms for employee engagement.

Attachment 1. What makes you feel worthwhile and valuable?	Frequency	Valid Percent
a. The feeling that an important job is done makes me feel significant.	12	11.7
b. Delegating more rights and responsibilities for conducting the whole job gives me the feeling of more liberty.	13	12.6
c. I take part in decision-making processes.	20	19.4
d. I am informed about everything that is happening in the National Park; I have access to all data and have regular communication with the director and supervisory board.	14	13.6
e. Here we work in a team; you can feel a team spirit.	8	7.8
f. There is a system of cash bonuses depending on engagement.	11	10.7
g. The salary and requirements differ.	12	11.7
h. There is a system of wages for management positions.	13	12.6
Total	103	100
Attachment 2. How safe do you feel to express personal opinions?	Frequency	Valid Percent
i. There are group incentives that refer to all employees.	18	17.5
j. There are types of rewards that are available to all employees.	21	20.4
k. This is a safe place to express one’s opinion.	17	16.5
l. Good relationships are made here. Managers influence these.	12	11.7
m. When recruiting is in question, only quality professionals are employed here, and it is not only the directors’ decision.	17	16.5
n. Here we invest in education and training and create surroundings for applying knowledge and skills.	18	17.5
Total	103	100
Attachment 3. What gives you a clear boundary inside of which you feel safe?	Frequency	Valid Percent
o. Here there is an employee self-assessment of performance, based on which wage bonuses are given.	21	20.4
p. Awards are given regularly, as well as punishments.	9	8.7
q. There is a system of strict control of everything that is done.	16	15.5
r. All work results are important.	19	18.4
s. Development goals are set.	14	13.6
t. Employees take part in sharing the profit.	13	12.6
u. Certain clauses define ways of giving awards.	11	10.7
Total	103	100

Rizwan and Ali [56] precisely analyzed this factor of recognition and rewards. Based on their analysis, managers in the organization must also spend informal time with employees (in terms of conversations) in order to identify and reward employees. For example, managers may spend time with employees during a combined dinner, with conversation about their families, life, or other things that can informally bring employees closer to management [55]. Second, the authors also believed that the mere existence of recognition and awards brings a positive atmosphere in the organization, affects a favorable work environment, and motivate employees. However, financial rewards are not the most motivating factor. Perry and Lois [57] proved this in their study. Based on analysis of survey data, Perry and Lois [57] believed that monetary awards are not only a motive for employees, but in some cases, they are also demotivating or negatively impact employees.

The second factor is shown in Table 1 and is named “effective communication channels”. This factor differs from rewards and recognition. It can be recognized as the

motivational factor that affects greater engagement of employees in the organization. Organizational communication channels must be effective and used in order to enhance employee motivation in the organization. The model provides better understanding of employees. According to Mahazril et al. [58], managers and leaders can encourage motivation by providing appropriate information in communications with their employees and focusing them on the right viewpoint. It is also important to have a positive perception in an organization's communications, with the aims of both encouraging employee understanding of work and uplifting motivation levels among current employees [57].

Open communication affects greater employee loyalty and motivation. In that way, employees feel valued in the organization and will not have the desire to change the organization [58]. The responses to the first question confirmed that if employees feel that they belong to the company, i.e., that they are its integral part, it positively influences employee engagement. Employee engagement is directly proportional to the feeling of belonging to the company. Thus, Hypothesis H1 is accepted. The respondents indicated that taking part in decision-making processes (19.4%) was the most valuable for them.

The responses to the second question showed that if employees feel that a superior appreciates their work and effort it increases employee engagement, supporting Hypothesis H2. Awards available to all employees were marked as the most significant mechanism in this group (20.4%). Giving rewards is a powerful means to initiate competition, and when we are talking about work, every sort of positive competition is welcomed because it influences productivity at work. When we are talking about a National Park, this is especially seen in the tourism sector, where employee creativity is the most visible.

The responses to the third question point to the fact that if goals are clearly set inside the company, the employees feel more secure, and therefore they will be more engaged, supporting Hypothesis H3. Giving wage bonuses based on employee self-assessment of performance (20.4%) and showing that all work results are important (18.4%) describe clear boundaries in which employees will feel safe. The possibility of unpredictable situations is one of the main characteristics of business inside National Parks. On the other hand, weekly work self-assessments can help in reaching better insight into an individual's work performance, so they should be performed regularly.

In the second part of our research, certain mechanisms for increasing employee engagement were introduced, i.e., we defined how and to what extent these mechanisms may increase employee engagement. Questionnaires to assess certain mechanisms for increasing engagement were given to the employees. The results presented in Table 2 indicate that the National Park's employees met the criteria, and that the mean score for their engagement was four, which is acceptable. The provision of proposals for improving the quality of work was the worst-rated measure (3.647), while the best-rated were "respect of working hours", "relationship with colleagues in a team", and "teamwork". The presented results indicated that a successful performance management process has a positive impact on employee engagement, supporting Hypothesis H4.

5. Conclusions

There is a dependency between organization and employees to accomplish the best results. Because of this, such a process is continuous in employee engagement, and it should be integrated in the performance management process of the organization. This continuous process in employee engagement concerns knowledge, learning, progress, and activities.

The main contributions and conclusions of this research are emphasized:

- In order to achieve long-term trust in the organization, employee commitment is very important, because it helps employees build this trust. In other words, the organization must constantly take into account the happiness of employees and their well-being as one of the most important priorities of successful organizations. In this way, the organization will satisfy its customers and achieve good results. Individual commitment to the organization's major functions is the most significant factor of employee engagement.
- Innovations in an organization, learning new skills, and supporting employees with innovative proposals enables the engagement of employees to work more efficiently and to be motivated in the organization. Here, we emphasize the empowerment of employees, which strongly influences the building of trust, self-confidence, greater creativity, and motivation of employees. If employees make more decisions, they become more engaged and there is a greater chance of having a successful business. Support from leadership is considered a component of psychological safety that leads to employee engagement. Although many believe that employee dissatisfaction with salaries or rewards is the main reason for less engagement, the facts have shown otherwise. For most employees, how they are valued by senior managers and whether they are considered as the company's highly valuable resource are more important. Therefore, the management in the organization should constantly meet their needs and expectations. Employees are more engaged if they know that the employer appreciates their opinion, and if they fully understand what is expected from them and know how their work contributes to the company's results.
- If employees believe in what they are doing and that it will bring results to a clearly set company goal, employee engagement will be visible. This means that clear company goals positively influence employee engagement. For example, we can point out how to help employees be the best example of an organization's representative through effective reflection of products and services. Employees will be committed to the ethics and standards of the organization and will have a greater sense of engagement if they fully understand the values of their company. The accomplished performance management process will have an encouraging influence on employee engagement; that is, meeting the company's goals is much easier when the engaged employee is highly motivated and performs his tasks with greater passion. We can conclude that employee engagement is a positive approach to managing an organization. Since performance management is a very significant trend in the organizational sciences literature, employee engagement has become the center of the performance management process and has replaced the standard performance management process to achieve greater efficiency. Lastly, our study can encourage future research to discover other factors for engagement with possible considerable and significant consequences.

The findings of our study verified the main hypothesis that employee engagement within the performance management process is a primary item for employee efficiency. Engaged employees have a need for flexible jobs that enable a balanced life during and after working hours. Likewise, employees want management that will approach them through respect, building mutual trust, enabling them to make their own decisions, allowing them to have access to the highest level of management, and working with full inspiration. Besides, engaged employees also want to manage others, to have access and participate in important projects, and to work in an open-communication environment that supports individual development. Employee ideas need to be recognized by the organization and rewarded with financial incentives and career advancement incentives. Thus, employee engagement

within the performance management process should meet the expectations of employees with the highest satisfaction. Then, the productivity and results of the organization will be much higher.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, A.V. and L.Z.; methodology, D.V. and D.D.B.; software, O.Z.S.; validation, A.V. and D.V.; formal analysis, D.D.B.; investigation, O.Z.S.; resources, A.V.; writing—original draft preparation, A.V.; writing—review and editing, D.V. and D.D.B.; visualization, L.Z.; supervision, O.Z.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study did not require ethical approval.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The aggregated data analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Baron, R.A. *Behaviour in Organisations*; Allyn & Bacon, Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 1983.
2. Cardy, R.L. *Performance Management: Concepts, Skills, and Exercises*; M. E. Sharpe: Armonk, NY, USA, 2004.
3. Delery, J.E.; Doty, D.H. Modes of theorizing in strategic human resources management: Test of universalistic, contingency, and configurational performance predictions. *Acad. Manag. J.* **1996**, *39*, 802–835. [[CrossRef](#)]
4. Gruman, J.A.; Saks, A.M. Performance management and employee engagement. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* **2011**, *21*, 123–136. [[CrossRef](#)]
5. Kahn, W.A. To be full there: Psychological presence at work. *Hum. Relat.* **1992**, *45*, 321–349. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Bedarkar, M.; Pandita, D. A study on the drivers of employee engagement impacting employee performance. *Procedia Soc.* **2014**, *133*, 106–115. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Kahn, W.A. Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Acad. Manag. J.* **1990**, *33*, 692–724.
8. Demerouti, E.; Bakker, A.B.; Nachreiner, F.; Schaufeli, W.B. The job demands–resources model of burnout. *J. Appl. Psychol.* **2001**, *86*, 499–512. [[CrossRef](#)]
9. Bakker, A.B.; Demerouti, E.; Verbeke, W. Using the job demands–resources model to predict burnout and performance. *Hum. Resour. Manag.* **2004**, *43*, 83–104. [[CrossRef](#)]
10. Schaufeli, W.B.; Bakker, A.B. Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *J. Organ. Behav.* **2004**, *25*, 293–315. [[CrossRef](#)]
11. Schaufeli, W.; Salanova, M. Work engagement: An emerging psychological concept and its implications for organizations. In *Managing Social and Ethical Issues in Organizations*; Gilliland, S.W., Steiner, D.D., Skarlicki, D.P., Eds.; Information Age Publishing: Greenwich, UK, 2007; pp. 135–177.
12. Cook, S. *The Essential Guide to Employee Engagement*; Kogan Page: London, UK, 2012.
13. Harter, J.K.; Schmidt, F.L.; Hayes, T.L. Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *J. Appl. Psychol.* **2002**, *87*, 268–279. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Meramveliotakis, G.; Manioudis, M. Sustainable Development, COVID-19 and Small Business in Greece: Small Is Not Beautiful. *Adm. Sci.* **2021**, *11*, 90. [[CrossRef](#)]
15. Sujova, A.; Rajnoha, R.; Merková, M. Business process performance management principles used in Slovak enterprises. *Procedia Soc.* **2014**, *109*, 276–280. [[CrossRef](#)]
16. Awan, H.S.; Habib, N.; Akhtar, C.S.; Naveed, S. Effectiveness of performance management system for employee performance through engagement. *SAGE Open* **2020**, *10*, 1–15. [[CrossRef](#)]
17. Bacal, R. *Performance Management*; McGraw-Hill: London, UK, 1999.
18. Banks, C.G.; May, K.E. Performance management: The real glue in organizations. In *Evolving Practices in Human Resource Management*; Kraut, A.I., Korman, A.K., Eds.; Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, USA, 1999; pp. 118–145.
19. Singh, P. Job analysis for a changing world. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* **2008**, *18*, 87–99.
20. Armstrong, M. *Performance management: Key Strategies and Practical Guidelines*, 2nd ed.; Kogan Page: London, UK, 2000.
21. Buchner, T.W. Performance management theory: A look from the performer’s perspective with implications for HRD. *Hum. Resour. Dev. Int.* **2007**, *10*, 59–73. [[CrossRef](#)]
22. Alarcon, G.M.; Edwards, J.E. The relationship of engagement, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. *Stress Health* **2011**, *27*, 294–298. [[CrossRef](#)]

23. Macey, W.H.; Schneider, B.; Barbera, K.M.; Young, S.A. *Employee Engagement: Tools for Analysis, Practice, and Competitive Advantage*; Wiley Blackwell: Malden, WA, USA, 2009.
24. Fine, S.; Horowitz, I.; Weigler, H.; Basis, L. Is good character good enough? The effects of situational variables on the relationship between integrity and counterproductive work behaviours. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* **2010**, *20*, 73–84.
25. Bakker, A.B.; Demerouti, E. Towards a model of work engagement. *Career Dev. Int.* **2008**, *13*, 209–223. [[CrossRef](#)]
26. Turnley, W.H.; Bolino, M.C.; Lester, S.W.; Bloodgood, J.M. The impact of psychological contract fulfilment on the performance of in-role and organizational citizenship behaviours. *J. Manag.* **2003**, *29*, 187–206.
27. Sparrow, P. Performance management in the U.K. In *Performance Management Systems: A Global Perspective*; Varma, A., Budhwar, P.S., De Nisi, A., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2008; pp. 131–146.
28. Seligman, M.E.P.; Csikszentmihalyi, M. Positive psychology: An introduction. *Am. Psychol.* **2000**, *55*, 5–14. [[CrossRef](#)]
29. Luthans, F. The need for and meaning of positive organizational behavior. *J. Organ. Behav.* **2002**, *23*, 695–706. [[CrossRef](#)]
30. Cameron, K.S.; Caza, A. Contribution to the discipline of positive organizational scholarship. *Am. Behav. Sci.* **2004**, *47*, 731–739. [[CrossRef](#)]
31. Mone, E.M.; London, M. *Employee Engagement through Effective Performance Management: A Practical Guide for Managers*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2010.
32. Cimbalević, M.; Nedeljković Knežević, M.; Demirović Bajrami, D.; Dunjić, M.; El Bilali, H.; Rančić Demir, M. How do job-related constructs determine employee turnover? Serbian hotels example. *J. Geogr. Inst. Jovan Cvijic SASA* **2020**, *70*, 129–143. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Bates, S. Getting engaged. *HR Mag.* **2004**, *49*, 44–51.
34. Richman, A. Everyone wants an engaged workforce how can you create it? *Workspan* **2006**, *49*, 36–39.
35. Anitha, J. Determinants of employee engagement and their impact on employee performance. *Int. J. Product. Perform. Manag.* **2014**, *63*, 308–323.
36. Maslach, C.; Schaufeli, W.B.; Leiter, M.P. Job burnout. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* **2001**, *52*, 397–422. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Idris, M.A.; Dollard, M.F.; Tuckey, M.R. Psychosocial safety climate as a management tool for employee engagement and performance: A multilevel analysis. *Int. J. Stress Manag.* **2015**, *22*, 183–206. [[CrossRef](#)]
38. Schaufeli, W.B.; Salanova, M.; Gonzalez-Roma, V.; Bakker, A.B. The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *J. Happiness Stud.* **2002**, *3*, 71–92. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Rothbard, N.P. Enriching or depleting? The dynamics of engagement in work and family roles. *Adm. Sci. Q.* **2001**, *46*, 655–684. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Csikszentmihalyi, M. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*; Harper & Row: New York, NY, USA, 1990.
41. Rousseau, D.M. New hire perceptions of their own and their employer's obligations: A study of psychological contracts. *J. Organ. Behav.* **1990**, *11*, 389–400. [[CrossRef](#)]
42. Fletcher, C.; Perry, E.L. Performance appraisal and feedback: A consideration of national culture and a review of contemporary research and future trends. In *Handbook of Industrial, Work, and Organizational Psychology*; Anderson, N., Ones, D.S., Sinangil, H.K., Viswesvaran, C., Eds.; Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA, 2001; pp. 127–144.
43. Mone, E.; Eisinger, C.; Guggenheim, K.; Price, B.; Stine, C. Performance management at the wheel: Driving employee engagement in organizations. *J. Bus. Psychol.* **2011**, *26*, 205–212. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Pulakos, E.D.; Mueller-Hanson, R.A.; O'Leary, R.S. Performance management in the United States. In *Performance Management Systems: A Global Perspective*; Varma, A., Budhwar, P.S., De Nisi, A., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2008; pp. 97–114.
45. Dobbins, G.H.; Cardy, R.L.; Fecteau, J.D.; Miller, J.M. Implications of situational constraints on performance evaluation and performance management. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* **1993**, *3*, 105–128. [[CrossRef](#)]
46. Jones, T.W. Performance management in a changing context: Monsanto pioneers a competency-based, developmental approach. *Hum. Resour. Manag.* **1995**, *34*, 425–442. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Tierney, P.; Farmer, S.M. Creative self-efficacy: Its potential antecedents and relationship to creative performance. *Acad. Manag. J.* **2002**, *45*, 1137–1138.
48. Bateman, T.S.; Crant, J.M. The proactive component of organizational behavior: A measure and correlates. *J. Organ. Behav.* **1993**, *14*, 103–118. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Grant, A.M.; Ashford, S.J. The dynamics of proactivity at work. *Res. Organ. Behav.* **2008**, *28*, 3–34. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Tseng, S.; Levy, P.E. A multilevel leadership process framework of performance management. *Hum. Resour. Manag. Rev.* **2018**, *29*, 100668.
51. Petrović, M.; Vujko, A.; Gajić, T.; Vuković, D.; Radovanović, M.; Jovanović, J.; Vuković, N. Tourism as an approach to sustainable rural development in post-socialist countries: A comparative study of Serbia and Slovenia. *Sustainability* **2018**, *10*, 54. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Vujko, A.; Penić, M.; Gajić, T. The condition of the rural hospitality enterprises in rural tourism of Serbia. *Rev. Fac. Agron.* **2018**, *117*, 53–60.
53. Vujko, A.; Plavša, J. Evaluation of National Park Fruška Gora (Serbia) for sport and recreational tourism. *Acta Geogr. Slov.* **2014**, *54*, 321–334. [[CrossRef](#)]
54. Penić, M.; Dragosavac, M.; Vujko, A.; Besermenji, S. Impact of active tourism on economic development—The Fruška Gora National park (North Serbia). *Geogr. Pannonica* **2016**, *20*, 181–190. [[CrossRef](#)]

55. Jojić Glavonjić, T.; Kokotović Kanazir, V.; Ljakoska, M. Local population analysis in the function of the protected area sustainable development. *J. Geogr. Inst. Jovan Cvijic SASA* **2021**, *71*, 265–281. [[CrossRef](#)]
56. Rizwan, Q.D.; Ali, U. Impact of reward and recognition on job satisfaction and motivation: An empirical study from Pakistan. *Int. J. Bus. Manag.* **2010**, *5*, 159–167.
57. Perry, J.L.; Lois, R.W. The motivational bases of public service. *Public Adm. Rev.* **1990**, *50*, 367–373. [[CrossRef](#)]
58. Mahazril, A.Y.; Zuraini, Y.; Hafizah, H.A.K.; Adnan, A.; Zaherawati, Z.; Nazni, N.; Badrul, A.M. Work motivation among Malaysian public servants. *Asian Soc. Sci.* **2012**, *8*, 238–242.