Identified research gaps in the literature of employee engagement: a study of the military context

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Abstract

As far as the sovereignty of any country is concerned, military is very important, as same as for the corporate world, employee engagement is equally important for the military world. The aim of this study is to unearth some research gaps in the area in the military context. The findings of systematic literature review on employee engagement in the military context has revealed six major research gaps. The unavailability of theoretical and empirical evidence indicating a possible relationship between military organizational culture and employee engagement in the Sri Lankan military context, and perhaps in the international military contexts is the first of many research gaps found. Moreover, absence of theoretical and empirical evidence that examines the link between military virtues and employee engagement in the Sri Lankan military context and may be in the international military contexts, and the lack of empirical evidence related to the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement in the Sri Lankan military context are also major research gaps. A similar insufficiency is observed in terms of empirical evidence in terms of a conceptual framework of military organizational culture, military virtues, authentic leadership and extensive training that make a significant impact on employee engagement in the Sri Lankan military context and perhaps in the international military context. As far as the employee

engagement as a mediating variable for organizational culture and job performance as well as for military virtues and job performance is concerned, in the Sri Lankan military context and maybe in the international military contexts, no theoretical and empirical evidence are found.

Key words

Employee engagement, research gaps, military context

Introduction

As Saks and Gruman [2014] mention, although a large number of studies have been published on employee engagement, ambiguities still exist in terms of employee engagement, for the frenzy or the passion of research have not paid adequate attention to the meaning, theory and measurement of employee engagement. A study conducted by Iddagoda et al., [2016], a group of Sri Lankan researchers, reveals that employee engagement is an infrequently understood concept, even though it is a popular term in the management circles. Gallup [2013] provided the status of employee engagement in the global arena and reported that Northern America (i.e. the United States of America and Canada) has the highest percentage of employee engagement, which is 29%. In the South Asian region, employee engagement is at a low standard with only 10% of engaged employees; 61% is not-engaged and 29% are actively disengaged. Similarly, in 2017 Gallup's report revealed 31% of employee engagement in Northern America, which is the world's highest employee engagement rate recorded. In South Asia, it is 14% and in Sri Lanka it is 38% [Gallup, 2017]. It is essential to know the employee engagement levels in relation to sector as well as designation, in order to depict a clear picture on employee engagement. In order to meet this requirement, identifying the drivers of employee engagement in specific sectors and specific employee designation categories is essential. In the military context, a cadet who is not fully engaged will find it impossible to complete the training and make an achievement or at least a graduate marching in the parade.

Iddagoda and Opatha [2017] have identified seven research gaps in the literature of employee engagement. Findings on employee engagement and perceived financial performance by Iddagoda and Gunawardana [2017] are some examples bridging those identified research gaps. Later Iddagoda and Opatha [2020] in their study bridged five research gaps identified by Iddagoda and Opatha in 2017. Dharmasiri and Jayawardana [2021] has done an empirical study on employee engagement related to Sri Lankan industrial sector. The suggested qualities of an engaged employee include often being innovative, having low absenteeism, high retention, being a good

team player and, according to AON in 2018, being the employee that "go an extra mile" to achieve the organizational goals. Engaged employees frequently "speak positively" about the organization and intends to "stay" with the particular organization for a considerable period of time. Iddagoda et al. [2020] state that when serving as military personnel, doing one's duty is a fundamental aspect. Iddagoda et al. [2020] further state that National security, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and diplomatic relations are the conventional roles of the Army, Navy and Air Force. This paper addresses an introduction to employee engagement, research gaps in employee engagement in the military context and direction to future research implications.

1. Method

An integrative and systematic literature review can provide comprehensive and refreshing perspectives on topics that may include inconsistencies or contradictions in the extant literature, and thus this research adopted a systematic literature review as the primary methodological approach [Wood et al., 2020]. According to Wood et al. [2020] and Dewasiri et al. [2018], and Moher et al. [2009], a systematic and clear literature review, considering (a) where the articles were discovered (i.e., databases), (b) when the search was implemented, (c) who undertook the search, (d) how the articles were found, (e) how many articles were identified and the final number of articles selected, and (f) why the articles were ultimately included/excluded needs to be considered. Exploring the scholarly works started in January 2021, books and databases such as Sage, Taylor and Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, Springerlink, Emerald and ScienceDirect were found to be rich literature sources. Journals published in the Sri Lankan Universities were also examined since the primary aim of the article was to unearth research gaps of employee engagement in both local (Sri Lankan) and international contexts. Relevant literature published from 1990 to 2021 was studied in detail, using a desk research. Researchers of this study started reviewing articles from 1990 because Andrew and Sofian [2012]; Guest [2014]; Iddagoda et al. [2016] mentioned that Kahn is the first researcher who has written a scholarly work on employee engagement.

Iddagoda et al. (2016) and Guest [2014] believe that there is a common threat between the labels of employee engagement i.e. employee engagement, work engagement, job engagement and personal engagement. Agreeing to them, the researchers of this article also searched these keywords. 161 articles were generated in English language, using these keywords for further study in the process of unearthing the research gaps in the literature of employee engagement. Researchers focused on

the relationships between employee engagement with its antecedents as well as employee engagement with its consequences. During this endeavour 58 article were selected and reviewed in-order to unearth the research gaps. PRISMA model used for systematic literature review is depicted under Figure 1.
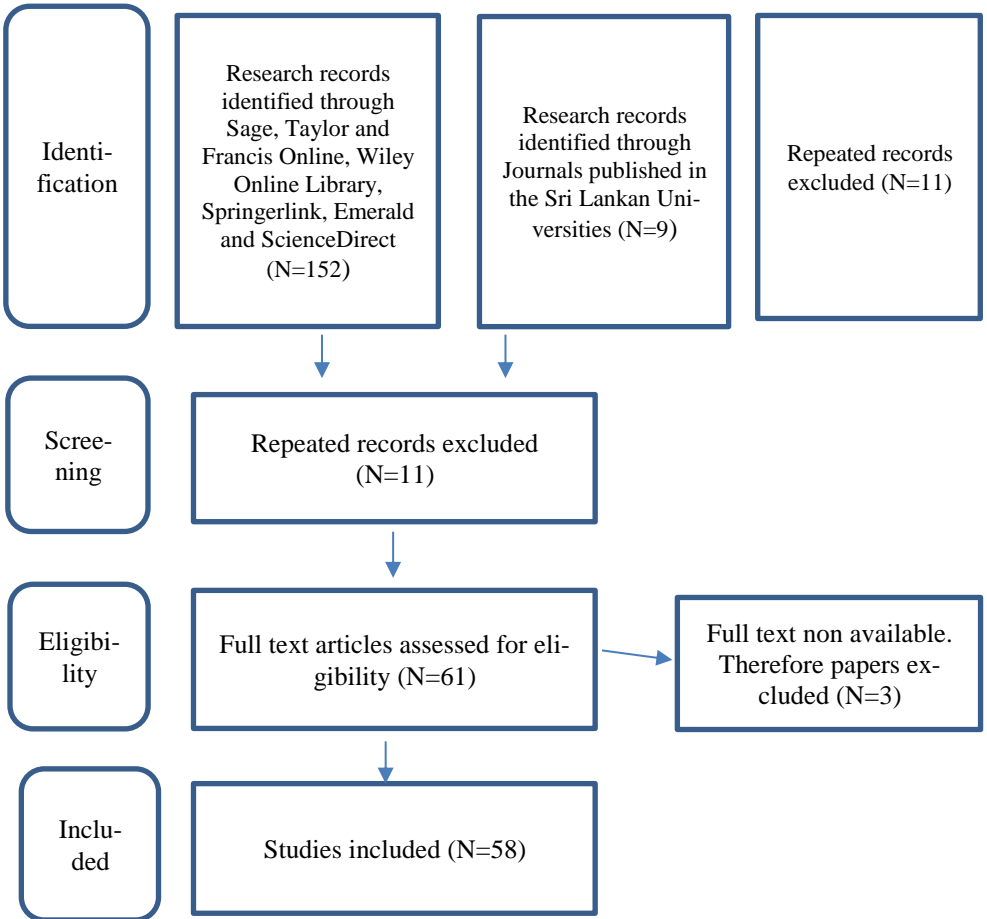

Fig. 1. PRISMA model for the study

Source: adapted from [Moher et al., 2009].

2. Literature review – research results

According to Andrew and Sofian [2012] and Iddagoda et al., [2016], Kahn [1990] is found to be the first researcher who conducted scholarly work on employee engagement. According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Dharmasiri [2010] contends that employee engagement captures the essence of employees' head, hands and heart involvement in work, and that employee engagement refers to the psychological state of the employee (e.g. employee's identification with the organization), disposition of the employee (e.g. employee's positive feeling towards the organization) and performance (e.g. employee's level of discretionary effort).In summation, the definition of Dharmasiri [2010] encompasses cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling) and behavioural (acting) dimensions of an employee as the fundamental elements of employee engagement. However, Iddagoda et al., [2016] view that employee engagement is a combination of attitude as well as behaviour, which is similar to Saks' view that is that employee engagement is a distinct and a unique construct with cognitive, emotional and behavioural components linked with individual role performance. Iddagoda et al., [2016] define employee engagement as the extent to which an employee gets involved in the job and the organization cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally.

Iddagoda and Opatha [2017] have identified seven research gaps in the literature of employee engagement. Iddagoda and Opatha [2017] present a conceptual framework which includes employee engagement, High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs), personal character, leadership, work life balance, employee job performance and organizational financial performance. In their study they presented key studies on employee engagement which is depicted under Table 2. The studies of Walden et al., [2017] on Millennial Generation (N = 539) in the United States indicate that the employee's commitment to the organization strengthens and the likelihood of leaving the organization decreases when employees are engaged in their work. According to Walden et al., [2017], removing obstacles to internal information flow and provide ongoing feedback to employees in terms of individual and organizational issues contributes to maintain engagement. When it comes to "the commitment to the organization", the researchers' view is that, it should be the loyalty to the organization, for according to Iddagoda et al., [2016], although employee engagement is a unique concept, similarities with other work related attitudes such as organizational commitment can be observed.

Studies by Ro and Lee [2017] centred on hotel call centre employees, emphasizes that job engagement is significantly lower as such employees' intend to leave the job. Smith and Langford [2011] and Richman [2006] argue that employee engagement leads to high level of retention; Langford [2009], cited in Smith and Langford [2011], state that absenteeism and employee turnover drops as a result of employee engagement. Similarly, it has been discovered that productivity, customer satisfaction, organizational goal attainment and profitability increases when an organization consists of engaged employees. Richman [2006], referring to recent studies, highlights how high employee engagement result in increased higher productivity and lower turnover at the employee level, as well as increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, profitability and shareholder value are at the organizational levels.

As Kang and Sung [2019] suggest, employees' high perceptions of organizational justice affect job engagement. Under the concept of "C" called "Credibility", Seijts and Crim [2006] suggest how leaders should make considerable attempts to maintain a company's reputation and demonstrate high ethical standards. According to Tuckey et al., [2018], mindfulness in the workplace and the established importance of work engagement remain key areas that have received significant attention. The study of Tuckey et al., [2018] provide new insights into naturalistic variations in state mindfulness and state work engagement, revealing only weak support for their mutual relationships throughout the workday. Gallup [2013] points out how engaged employees carry the potential of creating new customers, without deviating from their original scope of their jobs. Hence, researchers can maintain the fact that mindfulness is essential, to some extent, to become an engaged employee.

Developing a pool of enthusiastic and energetic workers have now been the main focus of organizations [Perera and Kailasapathy, 2011; De Silva and Gamage, 2015]. High-performance Work Practices (HPWPs) brings competitive advantages, hence it has drawn a lot of attention in the business world [Arachchige and Robertson, 2015]. Rana's [2015] conceptual model, which is a result of a theoretical groundwork, analyses the relationship between employee engagement and High Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs). The study of Arefin et al., [2019], using a sample of 287 employees in a large manufacturing organization, highlighted that perceived high performance work systems and psychological empowerment positively influenced job engagement. The study further revealed that the influence of high-performance work systems on job engagement is highly mediated by the psychological empowerment. It is evident that commercial bank private sector lending plays a dynamic role to enrich the economic growth of a country [Dewasiri and Kumarasinghe, 2014; Muthusamy et al., 2018]. Bulińska-Stangrecka et al., [2021] conducted a study

on perceived leadership support in fostering employee engagement in Sri Lankan and Polish banking sector.

Tab. 1. Key studies on employee engagement

Author	Year	Description
Kahn	1990	The study illustrates the nature of personal engagement and disengagement Discusses and illustrates three psychological conditions in order to find and influence their behaviour The three psychological conditions are namely Meaningfulness Safety Availability
Rothbard	2001	The study develops a model of employee engagement in multiple roles of work and family The study examines both the depleting and enriching processes linking with employee engagement
Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker	2002	Define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind
May, Gilson and Harter	2004	Explore the determinants and mediating effects of three psychological conditions namely, meaningfulness, safety and availability on employees' engagement
Salanova, Agut and Peiro´	2005	When employees are engaged, they are more likely to put energy into interactions with clients
Saks	2006	Employee engagement mediated the relationships between the antecedents of employee engagement and the work related attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviour etc.
Joo and Mclean	2006	A conceptual model is suggested of the relationships among business strategy, engaged employees, HR practices and financial performance
Little and Little	2006	Identified measurement issues regarding Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA)
Mauno, Kinnunen and Ruokolainen	2007	The study investigates the experience of employee engagement and its antecedents among Finnish health care employees Employee engagement, especially vigour and dedication, was relatively frequently experienced among the participants and its average level did not change across the follow-up period
Bakker and Demerouti	2008	Employee engagement is a state including vigour, dedication and absorption Engaged employees are creative, productive and willing to go an extra mile in order to achieve the organizational goals

Author	Year	Description
Macey and Schneider	2008	Offer propositions about psychological state engagement, behavioural engagement and trait engagement Offer propositions regarding the effects of job attributes and leadership as main effects on state and behavioural engagement and as the moderators of the relationships among the three facets of engagement Engagement is a combination of psychological and behavioural components
Maslach and Leiter	2008	Employee engagement is the opposite of burnout
Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli	2009	There is a link between job resources, employee engagement and financial performance
Sahoo and Sahu	2009	Comparing high employee engagement to low employee engagement in companies over a three year period, during which the financial differences were substantial
Dharmasiri	2010	Employee engagement captures the essence of employees' head, hands and heart involvement in work
Rich, LePine and Crawford	2010	Employee engagement mediates the relationship of two job performance dimensions namely task performance and organizational citizenship behaviour
Shankar and Bhatnagar	2010	The proposed model focuses on work-life balance construct and its relationship with other variables such as employee engagement, employee's turnover intention and emotional consonance/dissonance
Gruman and Saks	2011	Present a model of engagement management and job performance Engagement management model has more focus on employee engagement than traditional performance management model
Shuck, Rocco and Albornoz	2011	Three themes emerged, namely, relationship development attachment to co-workers workplace climate and opportunities for learning Leadership plays a key role on employee engagement
Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter	2011	Key themes of the study are: (1) theory and measurement of engagement (2) state and task engagement (3) climate for engagement versus collective engagement (4) the dark side of engagement (5) where job crafting may go wrong (6) moderators of the employee engagement and performance relationship
Christian, Garza and Slaughter	2011	Employee engagement leads to job performance
Cole, Walter, Bedeian and O'Boyle	2012	Used meta-analytical techniques to assess job burnout and employee engagement

Author	Year	Description
		Findings suggest that doubts about the functional distinctiveness of the dimensions underlying employee engagement and burnout cannot be dismissed as pure assumption
Shuck and Herd	2012	A conceptual relationship has been drawn between leadership behaviour and the development of employee engagement
Alfes, Shantz, Truss and Soane	2013	Positive behavioural outcomes, as a consequence of employee engagement, mainly depend on employees' relationship with their immediate boss and on the organizational climate
Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes and Delbridge	2013	Employee engagement may consist of the mechanism through which HRM practices impact on employee job performance and organizational performance
Witemeyer Ellen and Straub	2013	No consistence approach for measuring employee engagement
Anitha	2014	Employee engagement has a significant impact on employee job performance
Guest	2014	A differentiation is highlighted between employee engagement with its concern to improve employee well-being and organizational performance
Zhang, Avery Bergsteiner and More	2014	Most researchers focus on leaders and ignore the influence of follower characteristics when conducting research on leadership or employee engagement Employee characteristics of need for achievement, equity, sensitivity and need for clarity moderate the relationship between four leadership paradigms and employee engagement
Wickramasinghe and Perera	2014	Organizational citizenship behaviour mediates the relationship between perceived organization support and quality performance, as well as employee engagement and quality performance
Saks and Gruman	2014	Validity of the most popular measurement of employee engagement lacks agreement Making basic conclusions about the antecedents and the consequences of employee engagement is difficult because of a number of research limitations and unanswered questions
Karanges, Johnston, Beatson and Lings	2015	Internal communication has a significant part to play in developing and maintaining optimal employee engagement
Keating and Heslin	2015	Mind sets potentially influence employees' engagement in several ways; specifically, through enthusiasm for development, effort, focus of attention, understanding the reasons for setbacks and interpersonal interactions

Author	Year	Description
Rana	2015	Presents a conceptual model for the relationships between employee engagement and High Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs) HIWPs consist of four main attributes: (1) power – involve employees in decision making process (2) information – share information among employees (3) reward – employees are rewarded and give recognition for their strong performance and (4) knowledge - training and development A study of theoretical groundwork for an empirical test for future research

Source: Iddagoda and Opatha [2017].

Iddagoda and Opatha [2017] have conducted their research using literature from 1990 to 2015. In addition, key studies on employee engagement are included in Table 2.

Tab. 2. Key studies on employee engagement from 2016 to 2021

Author	Year	Description
Jiony, Tanakinjal, Gom and Siganul	2015	Organizational culture is a driver of employee engagement
Whitten	2016	Level of work engagement is only slightly influenced by mentoring
Iddagoda, Opatha and Gunawardana	2016	Although employee engagement is a unique concept, it is somewhat linked to job involvement and work involvement As the term "employee" related to living beings, 'employee engagement' is more suitable term Employee engagement consists of attitude and behaviour All the labels such as job engagement, organizational engagement, work engagement, personal engagement and employee engagement have a common link between them
Exploring Employee Engagement: A Monograph, Colombo: Postgraduate Institute of Management	2017	Identified employee engagement level from six sectors of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) including Polymer, Banking, Insurance and Finance sectors Sample size 12 000 Unit of analysis is executive and non-executive employees
Iddagoda and Opatha	2017	Seven research gaps identified that include the unavailability of theoretical and empirical evidence

Author	Year	Description
		Gap1: On solving the existing confusion of the concept of employee engagement in literature
		Gap 2: Which highlights the relationship between employee engagement and religiosity. The impact of the religiosity on employee engagement has neither been theoretically argued nor empirically tested in Sri Lankan and international contexts
		Gap 3: On theoretical arguments on the relationship between employee engagement and personal character. The impact of the personal character on employee engagement not been theoretically argued or empirically tested
		Gap 4: Which indicate the linkage between employee engagement and High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs). The impact of the HPWPs on employee engagement has not empirically tested in the Sri Lankan and international context
		Gap 5: How religiosity, High Performance Work Practices (HPWPs), personal character, leadership and work life balance affect employee engagement in a nomological network in Sri Lankan as well as international contexts
		Gap 6: On the relationship between employee engagement and organizational financial performance in the Sri Lankan context
		Gap 7: On employee job performance as an intervening variable for employee engagement and perceived financial performance
Knight, Patterson, Dawson and Brown	2017	-In order to increase work engagement, the participatory action team intervention is to be conducted in the healthcare sector - A conceptual framework with the variables such as social support, influence in decision making, job demands, autonomy competence relatedness and work engagement is presented
Petchsawang and McLean	2017	-Statistically significant relationship is observed between mindfulness and meditation and workplace spirituality and work engagement -The relationship between meditation and work engagement is completely mediated by workplace spirituality
Ro and Lee	2017	-Address the significance of employee job engagement in terms of turnover intentions -Hotel call centre employees' intentions to leave the job is significantly lowered by engagement
Iddagoda and Gunawardana	2017	-Positive relationship between employee engagement and perceived financial performance identified
Walden, Jung and Westerman	2017	The relationship between job engagement and two key components of Employee-Organization Relationships (EOR) is explored Sample from the Millennial Generation (N = 539) in the United States-Employee's commitment to the organization is strengthened when they are engaged in their work. And also the tendency of them leaving the organization decreases

Author	Year	Description
		-Five constructs are presented under the conceptual framework; information flow, information adequacy, interaction supportiveness, job engagement and organizational commitment
Tuckey, Sonnentag and Bryan	2018	- Bring in new insights on naturalistic variations in state mindfulness and state work engagement -Mindfulness and work engagement are independent states which carry the potential to underpin beneficial outcomes
Kura, Shamsudin, Umrani and Salleh	2019	-In terms of mediating the relationship between human resource development practices and counterproductive work behaviour, employee engagement plays a main role
Kang and Sung	2019	Employees' high perceptions of organizational justice affect job engagement Conceptual framework includes procedural justice, interactive justice, employee organization relationship, employee job engagement and turnover intension
Arefin, Alam, Islam and Rahaman	2019	Job engagement is positively affected by high performance work systems and psychological empowerment
Pastor Álvarez, Molero Alonso, Bardera Mora and Moriano León	2019	Investigated relationship of authentic leadership with work engagement and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) Sample of 225 Spanish military troops
Iddagoda and Opatha	2020	A sample of 272 executives and managers in the Sri Lankan listed companies Dynamics of employee engagement, namely, HPWPs, religiosity, personal character, leadership, and work–life balance, are significantly and positively related to employee engagement
George Omuudu and Francis	2020	Significant and positive relationship between: financial rewards and employee engagement career development support and employee engagement
Deepa	2020	Employee is more engage when there are distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational justices
Sandhya and Sulphey	2020	Significant relationship between turnover intentions, employee engagement, psychological contract and psychological empowerment
Basit	2020	-Studied about phenomenon of political skill and employee engagement in organizations Sample consists of 188 employees Found a positive relationship between the constructs
Dharmasiri and Jayawardana	2021	Tested and validated a scale of employee engagement Empirical study related to industrial sector Sri Lanka

Author	Year	Description
Bulińska-Stan-grecka, Bagień-ska and Idda-goda	2021	Role of perceived leadership support in fostering employee engagement Mediating role of social media and the links between perceived leadership support and employee engagement Empirical study of 167 respondents form the Sri Lankan and Polish banking sector
Svensson, Jeong, Shuck and Otto	2021	Relationships between employee engagement and psychological wellbeing, turnover intentions, organizational performance and innovative work behaviour Empirical study of the role of employee engagement in sport for development

Source: own elaboration.

Research Gap 1: No theoretical and empirical evidence which indicate the relationship between military organizational culture and employee engagement are found in the Sri Lankan military context and perhaps in the international military context.

According to George and Jones [2005] organizational culture consist of values, beliefs and norms, which are shared by the employees of a particular organization. According to Opatha [2015], organizational culture is a particular recognizable arrangement which consists of the basic assumptions considered as valid/values, which new employees are required to learn as a way of perceiving, thinking and feeling. Dandeker and Gow [2007] state that although the culture of the military context is unique, there are similarities between armed services and civilian enterprises; giving importance to teamwork, leadership and loyalty to the organization are the most significant entities. The researchers view is that organizations in the field of healthcare, religion and education, are fundamentally driven by values rather than gaining profit; a quality conspicuous in the military organizational culture. Classic and general military values include sacrificing life and subordination of self to the group, which makes the military culture outstand from the business organizational cultures [Breslin, 2000; Dandeker and Gow, 2007]. According to Nekoranec and Reváyová [2014] the types of weapons, technology used, history and traditions of the unit, they create a unique and specific organizational culture within the armed forces.

Three employee engagement outcomes have been suggested by AON [2012]; say, stay and strive. "Say" means that the engaged employees talk positively about their organization when they move with the society. "Stay" means that the engaged employees' retention level is high. "Strive" refers to employees' exert extra effort and engaged behaviour that contributes to business success. As Sahoo and Sahu

[2009] highlight, the higher the level of employee engagement is, the higher the employee exerts productivity, long-term affiliation to the organization, team spirit, higher work morale and loyalty gets. Cook [2008] highlights that employee engagement is characterized depending on the employees' commitment to the organization, belief in what it stands for and preparations to exceed what is expected of them, in order to deliver outstanding services to the customer. Jiony et al., [2105] identified that organizational culture is a driver of employee engagement. In the study of Jiony et al., [2105] the unit of analysis is full-time executive level employees in selected 5-star hotels located in Sabah, Malaysia. Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate certain important studies of employee engagement, emphasizing the literature gap between military organizational culture and employee engagement. The argument made by the researchers is that high level of military organizational culture leads to high level of employee engagement.

Research Gap 2: There is no theoretical and empirical evidence which discuss the relationship between military virtues and employee engagement in the Sri Lankan military context and possibly in the international military context.

The origin of 'virtue' is from the Latin word virtus, which means 'strength' or 'skill' [Nowakowski, 2015]. McCullough and Snyder [2000] as cited in Shryack et al., [2010], identifyies a virtue as ''any psychological process that enables a person to think and act so as to benefit him or herself and society''. Opatha [2010] states that a virtue is similar to a good habit, and the views of Opatha [2010] are similar to that of McCullough and Snyder [2000]; that a virtue is a good attribute which is useful for one self and others. According to Opatha [2010] virtues are universally accepted moral principles that do not vary according to race, nationality, religion, culture or any other classification. He states that values may not be universally accepted beliefs or ideals, and may vary according to race, nationality, religion, culture or any other classification.

Opatha [2010] provides a set of virtues namely honesty, patience, gratitude, humility, respect, benevolence, tolerance, self-discipline, caring and loyalty. Shryack et al., [2010], presented a set of virtues; namely, wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. Their set of virtues was originally adapted by Steger et al., [2007] from Peterson and Seligman [2004]. As far as the importance of virtues in the military context is concerned, the view of Olsthoorn [2014] is that, in this specific case "the military and civilian chain of command had built a 'bad barrel' in which a bunch of good soldiers became transformed into 'bad apples'". According to Olsthoorn [2014], courage, loyalty and respect are virtues associated with the military. Similarly, Robinson 2007, as cited in Olsthoorn [2014], identifies that courage, discipline, loyalty and obedience fall under traditional military virtues.

An engaged employee, as Bevan et al. [1997] in Armstrong [2009] state, is someone "who is aware of the business context, and works closely with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization". They emphasize the concept of "working closely with colleagues to improve performance", which is an indication that the engaged employees are loyal to and good team players in the organizational level. Being a team player involves respecting the diversity among the team members, for people have different viewpoints, nationalities and religions etc. According to AON [2013], an engaged employee paints a positive picture about the organization in the presence of co-workers and customers; a fine example of the virtue of loyalty of an engaged employee. The researcher argues that high level of employee engagement has influenced the degree of military virtues. Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the existing theoretical and empirical gap between military virtues and employee engagement.

Research Gap 3: There is no empirical evidence that indicates a relationship between employee engagement and authentic leadership in the Sri Lankan military context.

According to Truss et al., [2014], leaders possess the ability to inspire employees, which result in enhancements of employee job performance. Seijts and Crim [2006] explain the duties of corporate leaders for the purpose of strengthening employee engagement, through their 10Cs of employee engagement; i.e. connect, career, clarity, convey, congratulate, contribute, control, collaborate, credibility and confidence. As Macey and Schneider [2008] state, leadership makes an important contribution in employee engagement. A positive link between leadership and employee engagement is discussed by Xu and Thomas [2010]; Christian et al. [2011].

Valsania et al., [2016] defined authentic leadership as a pattern of behaviour that inspires and promotes positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate to achieve performance beyond expectations. Pastor Álvarez et al. [2019] investigated the relationship of authentic leadership with employee engagement and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB) in the Spanish military context. They found that soldier's identification with the leader is not worthy in a lower level neither for soldier's employee engagement nor OCB. However, regardless of the fact that many researchers study about the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the empirical gap between leadership and employee engagement in the Sri Lankan military context.

Research Gap 4: There is no empirical evidence related to military organizational culture, military virtues, authentic leadership and extensive training that significantly affect employee engagement in a conceptual framework/nomological network

in the Sri Lankan military context and may be possibly in the international military context.

The general components of the main characteristics of any organization include values, beliefs, symbols and norms [George and Jones, 2005; Opatha, 2015], which is the same in the military organizational culture as well. Virtues are considered crucial for individual, personal and societal development, and Olsthoorn [2014] emphasizes courage, loyalty and respect as military virtues. Researchers such as Seijts and Crim [2006]; Macey and Schneider [2008]; Xu and Thomas [2010]; Christian et al. [2011] came up with the argument that a relationship do exist between the two constructs of leadership and employee engagement. Pastor Álvarez et al. [2019] examined about the relationship between authentic leadership with employee engagement. Rana [2015] states that there is a link between High Performance Work Practice (HPWP) and employee engagement. Extensive training is a High Performance Work Practice (HPWP) [Iddagoda and Opatha, 2018; Birdi et al., 2008; Pfeffer 1999], and as Pfeffer [1999] suggests, extensive training means giving the employee a comprehensive training, with a broad perspective and an intention of enhancing a wide range of skills, rather to simply complete a restricted job. As Anitha [2014] suggests, employee engagement leads to job performance.

The conceptual framework presented by Macey and Schneider [2008] introduces trait engagement, psychological state engagement and behavioural engagement. Iddagoda and Opatha, Sri Lankan researchers [2017], brings to light another conceptual framework, consisting of variables such as, HPWPs, religiosity, personal character, leadership, work life balance, employee engagement, employee job performance and organizational financial performance. The conceptual framework of Knight, et al. [2017] consists of variables such as social support, influence in decision making, job demands, autonomy competence relatedness and work engagement. Kang and Sung [2019] builds up a conceptual framework consisting of procedural justice, interactive justice, employee organization relationship, employee job engagement and turnover intension. The conceptual framework presented by Walden et al. [2017] emphasizes on a conceptual framework presented with five constructs; information flow, information adequacy, interaction supportiveness, job engagement and organizational commitment. Although the studies of Macey and Schneider [2008], Iddagoda and Opatha [2017], Knight, et al. [2017], Walden et al., [2017] and Kang and Sung [2019] focus on the conceptual frameworks in their studies, a clear empirical gap on military organizational culture, military virtues, authentic leadership and extensive training and their impact on employee engagement is observed, in terms of both Sri Lankan and international military contexts.
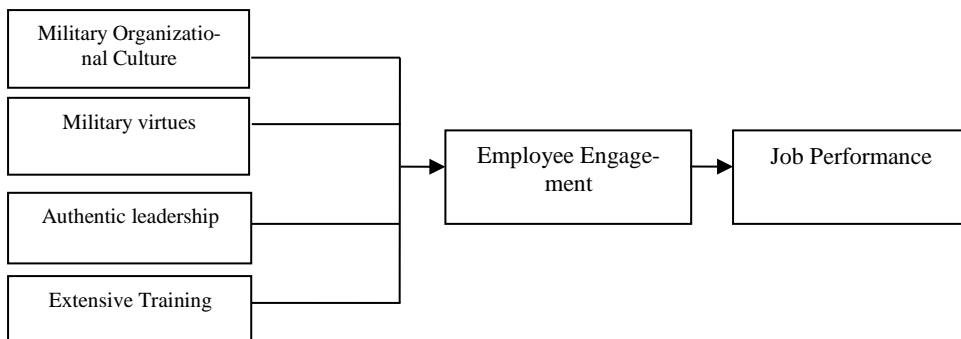
Fig. 2. Conceptual framework/nomological network

Source: own elaboration.

3. Towards to the Research Gaps 5 and Gap 6

According to the systems theory, as Wright and Snell [1991] points out, skills and abilities are treated as inputs from the environment. The systems theory explains that the inputs lead to process and then the output. Military virtues i.e. courage, loyalty and respect, being maintained in a person to a greater degree is an ability. Although the organizational culture consists of beliefs, values and norms, Breslin, 2000; Dandeker and Gow [2007], explains that typical military values include sacrifice and subordination of the self to the group, which makes the military culture different and outstanding. As possessing these values is a skill, military virtues and military organizational culture turns out to be the inputs. Iddagoda et al. [2016] portrays employee engagement as a combination of behaviour and attitude, whereas Bevan et al. [1997] is of the view that it is a behaviour. As behaviour consists of certain activities, employee engagement is the process. Anitha [2014] establishes that job performance is a consequence of employee engagement and thus the output is job performance and employee job performance is a crucial factor even in the military context [Prasanga and Gamage, 2013]. The evidences of Table 1 and Table 2 clearly show the research gaps 5 and 6, which is are explained below.

Research Gap 5: No theoretical and empirical evidence on employee engagement as a mediating variable for organizational culture and job performance is found in the Sri Lankan and may be in the international military contexts.
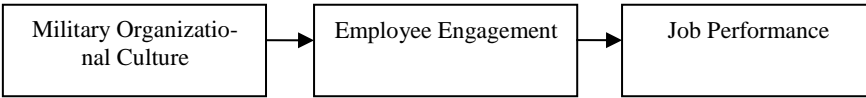
Military Organizatio- nal Culture	→	Employee Engagement	→	Job Performance

Fig. 3. Mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between military organizational culture and job performance

Source: own elaboration.

Research Gap 6: No theoretical and empirical evidence on employee engagement as a mediating variable for military virtues and job performance is found in the Sri Lankan and may be in the international military contexts.
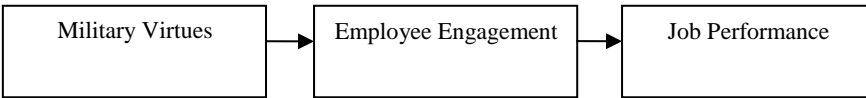
Military Virtues	→	Employee Engagement	→	Job Performance

Fig. 4. Mediating effect of employee engagement on the relationship between military virtues and job performance

Source: own elaboration.

4. Future studies

The six research gaps identified are to be filled using a quantitative study centred around the Sri Lanka Air Force. The six research gaps identified and especially the conceptual framework can be tested in the Sri Lankan Army and Navy contexts; the conceptual framework can be tested in the military context in other countries as well.

Conclusion

Six research gaps in the military context were identified in the literature survey; the research gap 1, 2, 5 and 6 are of both theoretical and empirical significance and research gap 3 and 4 are empirical gaps and are of empirical significance. A conceptual framework consisting of six constructs, i.e. employee engagement, military virtues, military organizational culture, authentic leadership, extensive training and job performance, were developed as a part of this study. Identified gaps need to be researched in in the future.

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Zidentyfikowane luki badawcze w literaturze dotyczącej zaangażowania pracowników: studium kontekstu wojskowego

Streszczenie

Zaangażowanie pracowników jest równie ważne w kontekście biznesowym jak i wojskowym. Celem opracowania jest odkrycie niektórych luk badawczych w tym obszarze w kontekście wojskowym. Wyniki systematycznego przeglądu literatury na temat zaangażowania pracowników w kontekście wojskowym ujawniły sześć głównych luk badawczych. Niedostępność dowodów teoretycznych i empirycznych w kontekście wojskowym wskazuje na możliwy związek między wojskową kulturą organizacyjną a zaangażowaniem pracowników, cnotami wojskowymi a zaangażowaniem pracowników, autentycznym przywództwem i zaangażowaniem pracowników. Ponadto niedoskonałość obserwuje się w zakresie dowodów empirycznych w zakresie koncepcyjnych ram wojskowej kultury organizacyjnej, cnót wojskowych, autentycznego przywództwa i rozległego szkolenia, które mają znaczący wpływ na

zaangażowanie pracowników w kontekście wojskowym Sri Lanki i być może w międzynarodowym kontekście wojskowym. Zaangażowanie pracowników jako zmienna pośrednicząca w kulturze organizacyjnej i wykonywaniu pracy, a także w cnotach wojskowych i wydajności pracy w kontekście wojskowym również nie zostały potwierdzone empirycznie.

Słowa kluczowe

zaangażowanie pracowników, luki badawcze, kontekst wojskowy