

UDK: 331.108:005.95/.96

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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION, VOICE, PARTICIPATION AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Abstract: Employee engagement is a key factor influencing organizational effectiveness, labour productivity and long-term business success. This paper applies a systematic literature review to analyse how internal communication, employee voice, participation in decision-making and grievance procedures shape engagement. The review follows the PRISMA approach: searches in Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight and Google Scholar returned 412 records, and 38 sources were retained for the final analysis; legal sources were retrieved from the national database lex.uz. According to Gallup, the share of engaged employees worldwide declined from a peak of 23% in 2022 to 20% in 2025, while low engagement costs the world economy an estimated USD 10 trillion a year, or about 9% of global GDP. The paper also examines the provisions of the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on 28 October 2022 and in force since 30 April 2023 — protection of labour rights, labour dispute commissions and judicial procedure — as the institutional layer of engagement. The study proposes a conceptual model linking the four practices to engagement outcomes.

Keywords: *employee engagement, internal communication, employee voice, employee participation, grievance procedures, Labour Code, hybrid work, organizational effectiveness.*

XODIMLAR JALB ETILGANLIGI VA TASHKILOT SAMARADORLIGI: KOMMUNIKATSIYA, XODIMLAR OVOZI, ISHTIROK HAMDA MEHNAT NIZOLARINI KO'RIB CHIQISH TARTIB-TAOMILLARINING O'RNI

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Annotatsiya: Xodimlar jalb etilganligi tashkilot samaradorligi, mehnat unumdorligi va uzoq muddatli muvaffaqiyatga ta'sir ko'rsatuvchi asosiy omillardan biri hisoblanadi. Mazkur maqolada ichki kommunikatsiya, xodimlar ovozi, qarorlar qabul qilishda ishtirok va mehnat nizolarini ko'rib chiqish tartib-taomillarining jalb etilganlikka ta'siri tizimli adabiyotlar sharhi metodi asosida tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot PRISMA yondashuvi bo'yicha o'tkazilgan: Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight va Google Scholar bazalarida qidiruv amalga oshirilib, dastlab 412 ta yozuv aniqlangan, skrining bosqichlaridan so'ng 38 ta manba yakuniy tahlilga kiritilgan; huquqiy manbalar lex.uz milliy bazasidan olingan. Gallup ma'lumotlariga ko'ra, jahon bo'yicha jalb etilgan xodimlar ulushi 2022-yildagi eng yuqori 23 foizdan 2025-yilda 20 foizga tushgan, past jalb etilganlik esa jahon iqtisodiyotiga yiliga 10 trillion AQSh dollari zarar keltirmoqda. Maqolada O'zbekiston Respublikasi Mehnat kodeksi normalari jalb etilganlikning institutsional qatlami sifatida tahlil qilinadi.

Kalit so'zlar: *xodimlar jalb etilganligi, ichki kommunikatsiya, xodimlar ovozi, xodimlar ishtiroki, mehnat nizolarini ko'rib chiqish tartib-taomillari, Mehnat kodeksi, gibrid ish rejimi, tashkilot samaradorligi.*

ВОВЛЕЧЕННОСТЬ СОТРУДНИКОВ И ОРГАНИЗАЦИОННАЯ ЭФФЕКТИВНОСТЬ: РОЛЬ КОММУНИКАЦИИ, ГОЛОСА СОТРУДНИКОВ, УЧАСТИЯ И ПРОЦЕДУР РАССМОТРЕНИЯ ТРУДОВЫХ СПОРОВ

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Аннотация: Вовлеченность сотрудников является одним из ключевых факторов, влияющих на организационную эффективность, производительность труда и долгосрочный успех организации. В статье методом систематического обзора литературы анализируется влияние внутренней коммуникации, голоса сотрудников, участия в принятии решений и процедур рассмотрения трудовых споров на вовлеченность. Исследование проведено по подходу PRISMA: поиск в базах Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight и Google Scholar дал 412 записей, в итоговый анализ включены 38 источников. По данным Gallup, доля вовлеченных сотрудников в мире снизилась с 23% в 2022 году до 20% в 2025 году, а потери мировой экономики оцениваются в 10 трлн долларов США в год. Отдельно анализируются нормы Трудового кодекса Республики Узбекистан как институционального слоя вовлеченности.

Ключевые слова: вовлеченность сотрудников, внутренняя коммуникация, голос сотрудников, участие сотрудников, процедуры рассмотрения трудовых споров, Трудовой кодекс, гибридный режим работы, организационная эффективность.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations increasingly recognize the employee as a valuable resource and as the principal driver of success. In today's competitive environment, the achievement of organizational goals depends not only on financial or technological resources but also on the ability to retain a committed and engaged workforce. Employee engagement has attracted considerable attention because of its influence on productivity, motivation, staff retention and organizational outcomes.

The scale of the problem is reflected in statistical data. According to Gallup, the share of engaged employees worldwide fell from a peak of 23 per cent in 2022 to 21 per cent in 2024 and to 20 per cent in 2025; this is the first time since observations began in 2009 that a decline has been recorded in two consecutive years. Low engagement costs the world economy approximately USD 10 trillion a year, or about 9 per cent of global GDP. Engagement among managers fell particularly sharply, from 27 per cent in 2024 to 22 per cent in 2025, so that the historical managerial advantage has effectively disappeared [1].

The theoretical foundation of the concept was laid by W. Kahn, who demonstrated that three psychological conditions — meaningfulness of work, psychological safety and availability of resources — are required for an employee to express the self fully in a work role [2]. A. Saks defined engagement as a set of behaviours arising from a motivational state and distinguished job engagement from organization engagement [3].

Among the organizational practices that shape engagement, internal communication, employee voice, participation in decision-making and grievance procedures occupy a central place. Open communication increases transparency; voice and participation allow the employee to express an opinion and to contribute ideas; grievance procedures secure fairness and trust.

In the Uzbek context the issue acquires an additional legal dimension. The Labour Code adopted on 28 October 2022 and in force since 30 April 2023 is roughly 2.5 times larger than its predecessor and contains close to 600 articles. Its Section VII is devoted entirely to the protection of employees' labour rights and to the resolution of labour disputes, while Section II regulates the institution of social partnership in the sphere of labour [4]. In national scholarship these provisions are usually examined from a purely legal standpoint, and their connection with employee engagement has hardly been analysed at all.

On this basis, the principal research question is formulated as follows: through which mechanisms do internal communication, employee voice, participation in decision-making and grievance procedures affect employee engagement, and to what extent can these mechanisms

operate under the current legal conditions of Uzbekistan? The question is divided into three subsidiary questions. First, which channels of influence for the four practices have been identified in research published in the last five years? Second, how have hybrid and remote work arrangements altered these channels? Third, for which practice do the provisions of the Labour Code of Uzbekistan create an institutional basis, and in which respect do they leave a gap?

The aim of the study is to synthesise the existing scholarly literature by means of the systematic review method, to develop a conceptual model linking the four practices to engagement and organizational outcomes, and to connect that model to the legal context of Uzbekistan. The following tasks were set in order to achieve this aim: to clarify the theoretical foundations of the concept of engagement; to systematise research published in 2020–2026 on the four practices; to assess the changes that hybrid work has introduced into the channels of influence; to analyse the relevant provisions of the Labour Code; and to develop the conceptual model and formulate practical recommendations.

The scholarly novelty of the study lies in two respects. First, four practices that have previously been studied separately are combined in a single conceptual model and the channels of influence between them are identified. Second, the provisions of national labour legislation are incorporated into the model as an institutional layer; this approach is not found in the models presented in the international literature, where the legal environment is normally treated as a fixed external context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of engagement. D. Avery, P. McCay and D. Wilson showed that the losses incurred by companies as a result of low engagement amount to approximately USD 300 billion a year [5]. S. Mani and M. Mishra demonstrated that engaged employees affect both the financial indicators of an organization (revenue, profitability) and its non-financial ones (lower absenteeism and lower staff turnover) [6]. U. Bindl and S. Parker analysed the relationship between a positive psychological state and proactive behaviour at work and showed that an employee's understanding of organizational goals and values increases engagement and the sense of belonging [7].

The post-pandemic period and hybrid work. S. Pass and M. Ridgway analysed the effect of enforced remote work on engagement and showed that traditional engagement instruments lose their force under this arrangement [8]. N. Choudhary and S. Jain synthesised the antecedents of engagement among remote workers through a systematic review [9]. H. Kim, J. Waight, X. Xu and S. Yoon analysed 36 peer-reviewed articles and established that in hybrid and remote settings leadership style has become the principal determinant of engagement [10]. G. Boccoli, L. Gastaldi and M. Corso demonstrated that the supervisor's digital communication skills act as a moderator in the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement [11]. R. Nagori and N. Lawton examined hybrid work design from the standpoint of improving engagement and well-being [12].

Internal communication. K. Ruck and M. Welch identified the effectiveness of internal communication as a principal indicator of organizational performance [13]. A. Mazzei, A. Butera and L. Quaratino distinguished two basic types of employee communication — corporate communication, and communication oriented towards engagement and voice — and found that the most favoured formats are departmental meetings and informal encounters with management [14]. R. Daft and R. Lengel argued in their information richness theory that face-to-face interaction is the most effective channel for complex communication, because it permits the use of natural language, non-verbal cues and immediate feedback [15]. G. Cameron and T. McCollum identified team meetings, group problem-solving sessions and management briefings as the most effective ways of strengthening relations with employees [16].

Employee voice. E. Morrison, taking stock of a decade of research, established that voice and silence are independent constructs governed by different factors [17]. X. Huang, A. Wilkinson and M. Barry introduced the notion of contextual voice efficacy and modelled the interaction between formal and informal voice mechanisms [18]. S. Mohammad, N. Nazir and S. Mufti carried out a systematic review of voice research and synthesised its links with organizational outcomes

[19]. M. Parke and co-authors introduced the concept of strategic silence and showed that remaining silent for a time may in some circumstances increase the value of an opinion expressed later [20]. In earlier research, S. Jenkins and R. Delbridge interpreted voice as a soft approach to management [21]; R. Lucas, B. Lupton and H. Mathieson defined voice as the employee's opportunity to participate in decision-making and to state an opinion [22]; J. Emelilifeonwu and R. Valk described it as a framework for effective cooperation between employer and employee [23]. D. Robinson, S. Perryman and S. Hayday found that employees whose voice is heard display higher performance and greater trust [24], while R. Bogosian assessed voice as an instrument of problem-solving and innovation [25].

Employee participation. G. Strauss defined participation as the employee's acquisition of control over the work process and involvement in decision-making [26]. K. Miller and P. Monge showed in a meta-analysis that the employee's deeper knowledge of the work process makes a substantial contribution to sound decision-making [27]. M. Uma systematised three elements and four forms of participation [28]. D. Gallie distinguished three types of participation — autonomy, semi-autonomous team work and consultative participation [29]; A. Kalleberg and S. Vaisey found that autonomy improves the quality of work [30], and P. Butler and co-authors found that semi-autonomous participation develops commitment and performance [31]. S. Fleetwood and A. Hesketh emphasised that under consultative participation the final decision remains with management [32]. A. Akkerman, R. Sluiter and G. Jansen compared direct and indirect participation; under indirect participation employee interests are expressed through a trade union [33]. D. Levine saw the principal purpose of the trade union as improving employee welfare through collective bargaining [34].

Resolution of labour disputes. R. Britton defined a dispute as any disagreement between employer and employee concerning the express or implied terms of the employment contract [35]. R. Freeman and R. Medoff assessed grievance procedures as a means of protecting the employee's rights and of using an upward communication channel [36]. S. Hunter identified the most frequent grounds of grievance — unfair treatment, breach of contractual terms and damage to reputation — together with criteria for assessing disciplinary sanctions [37]. J. Ojasalo and L. Tahtinen found that in organizations where engagement practices are successful, commitment and job satisfaction are high and staff turnover is low [38].

The literature review reveals two gaps. First, the four practices have most often been studied separately, and studies combining them in a single conceptual model are few. Second, almost all existing research relates to the British, United States and European Union contexts, and the legal conditions of transition economies, and of Uzbekistan in particular, have not been taken into account.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design. The study applies the systematic literature review method, carried out in accordance with the four-stage structure of the PRISMA guidelines — identification, screening, eligibility assessment and inclusion. For the legal part of the study, the legal-dogmatic and comparative-legal methods were additionally used.

Databases. The search was conducted in four databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight and Google Scholar. Normative materials were obtained from the National Database of Legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan (lex.uz). Statistical data were drawn from the annual State of the Global Workplace report published by Gallup.

Keywords and search formula. The following English-language keywords were combined by means of Boolean operators: ("employee engagement" OR "work engagement") AND ("internal communication" OR "employee voice" OR "employee participation" OR "grievance procedure" OR "hybrid work"). Additional searches were carried out in Uzbek and Russian using the queries "xodimlar jalb etilganligi", "mehnat nizolari" and "вовлечённость персонала".

Time frame. No time restriction was applied to the classic sources providing the theoretical foundation (the earliest source dates from 1984), whereas empirical research was restricted to the

period 2020–2026. This two-layer approach follows from the need to capture the changes that occurred after the shift to hybrid work.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria: articles published in peer-reviewed journals; texts in English, Uzbek or Russian; availability of the full text; direct treatment of engagement or of at least one of the four practices. Exclusion criteria: conference abstracts without a full text; blog and promotional material that has not undergone academic review; publications related to the topic only indirectly; duplicate records.

The results of the screening are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Stages of source screening

Stage	Action	Criterion applied	Number of sources
1	Initial search in the databases	Keywords and Boolean formula	412
2	Removal of duplicate records	Identical DOI or title	268
3	Screening by title and abstract	Direct relevance to the topic	96
4	Full-text eligibility assessment	Methodological adequacy, language, availability of full text	51
5	Included in the final analysis	Compliance with all inclusion criteria	38

Method of analysis. The included sources were processed by means of content analysis. Coding was carried out under four a priori categories: communication, voice, participation and dispute resolution. For each source the author, year, research method, sample and principal finding were recorded. In the legal part, the provisions of the Labour Code of Uzbekistan were compared with the corresponding institutions in international practice.

Limitations of the study. First, no original survey or experiment was conducted, so the conclusions rest on secondary data. Second, because peer-reviewed empirical studies measuring engagement in Uzbek organizations are very few, the national context is covered mainly through the analysis of normative instruments. Third, since only sources in English, Uzbek and Russian were included, research published in other languages is not covered.

RESULTS

First finding: the dynamics of engagement levels. The global indicator shows a downward trend: 23 per cent in 2022, 21 per cent in 2024 and 20 per cent in 2025. This means that only one employee in five is fully engaged in their work. Engagement among managers fell over two years from 27 per cent to 22 per cent, so that the gap between managers and other employees has disappeared [1]. This finding matters because leadership has been identified as the principal determinant of engagement in hybrid work settings [10, 11].

Second finding: the mechanism of the communication channel. The analysis of the sources confirms two directions of communication: downward communication informs the employee, while upward communication conveys the employee's opinion to management. Channel richness is decisive: for the most complex matters face-to-face interaction is more effective, because it provides non-verbal cues and immediate feedback [15]. Empirical research shows that employees prefer departmental meetings and informal encounters with management [14]; team meetings, group problem-solving sessions and management briefings likewise produce strong results [16]. Under hybrid arrangements this channel has moved to digital media, and the supervisor's digital communication skills have become an independent moderating factor [11].

Third finding: the separation of voice and silence. The analysis shows that a conceptual shift has taken place in recent years. Whereas silence was previously interpreted as the absence of voice, current research treats the two as independent constructs: an employee may speak up on some matters while remaining silent on others [17]. In addition, the concept of strategic silence has been

introduced: deliberately remaining silent for a time increases the value of an opinion expressed subsequently [20]. Voice mechanisms are divided into formal ones (commissions, trade unions, surveys) and informal ones (direct interaction, internal digital platforms), and their effectiveness is interdependent [18].

Fourth finding: the types and levels of participation. Participation falls into three types: autonomy, in which the employee designs and performs the work process independently; semi-autonomous team work; and consultative participation [29]. Six levels of participation are distinguished: direct; informational; consultative; administrative; decision-making; and representative. Its forms are limited to collective bargaining, works councils, joint management boards and employee ownership of the enterprise [28]. Autonomy improves the quality of work [30], semi-autonomous participation strengthens commitment and performance [31], and under consultative participation the final decision remains with management [32].

Fifth finding: the institutional basis of dispute resolution. In the international literature, grievance procedures perform two functions: protection of rights, and the opening of an upward communication channel [36]. In the conditions of Uzbekistan these functions are directly secured in normative form. Section VII of the Labour Code is devoted to the protection of employees' labour rights: Article 528 provides that obstruction of the exercise of the right to protection is not permitted, Article 529 sets out the principal means of protection, and Article 530 establishes the institution of self-protection of the employee's rights. Individual labour disputes are examined at two stages. The first stage is the labour dispute commission: Article 547 governs the formation of the commission, Article 548 its powers, Article 549 the procedure for filing an application, Article 554 the time limit for application, Article 555 the decision of the commission, and Article 556 the procedure for appealing against the decision and transferring the case to court. The second stage is judicial procedure: Article 558 defines the range of disputes examined directly by a court, Articles 559 and 560 govern the right to apply to a court and the applicable time limits, Article 562 exempts employees from court costs, and Article 565 provides for compensation of moral damage. Section II of the Code regulates the institution of social partnership and creates a system for coordinating the interests of employees, employers and the State [4].

Sixth finding: the conceptual model. On the basis of the findings set out above, a model was developed linking the four practices to engagement and organizational outcomes. In the model the four practices are treated as independent variables, the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of engagement as mediating variables, and organizational outcomes as dependent variables. The supervisor's digital communication skills, psychological safety and the work arrangement (office, hybrid, remote) are identified as moderating factors. The institutional layer — the provisions of the Labour Code and social partnership — constitutes the legal foundation of the model. The model is presented in Figure 1.

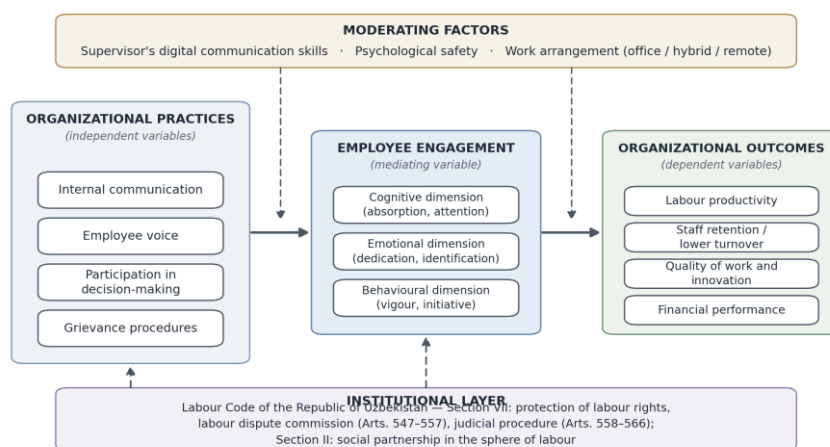


Figure 1. Conceptual model of employee engagement

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of the analysis of sources [1–38].

Seventh finding: a summary of the principal studies reviewed. The most frequently cited part of the body of sources included in the final analysis is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the principal studies reviewed

Author (year)	Focus	Method	Principal finding
Kahn (1990) [2]	Engagement theory	Qualitative study	Three psychological conditions of engagement: meaningfulness, safety, availability of resources
Daft, Lengel (1984) [15]	Communication	Theoretical model	For complex matters the face-to-face channel is the most effective
Miller, Monge (1986) [27]	Participation	Meta-analysis	Participation increases satisfaction and productivity
Robinson et al. (2004) [24]	Voice	Survey	Employees whose voice is heard show higher performance and trust
Saks (2006) [3]	Engagement	Survey, regression	Job engagement and organization engagement distinguished
Gallie (2013) [29]	Participation	Comparative analysis	The three types of participation affect job quality differently
Mazzei et al. (2019) [14]	Communication	Empirical study	Most favoured channels: departmental and informal meetings
Mani, Mishra (2021) [6]	Engagement	Conceptual analysis	Engagement affects both financial and non-financial outcomes
Pass, Ridgway (2022) [8]	Remote work	Analytical review	Enforced remote work altered the instruments of engagement
Parke et al. (2022) [20]	Voice and silence	Experiment	Strategic silence increases the value of voice
Morrison (2023) [17]	Voice and silence	Systematic review	Voice and silence are independent constructs
Huang et al. (2024) [18]	Voice	Theoretical model	Formal and informal voice mechanisms are interdependent
Boccoli et al. (2024) [11]	Leadership	Survey, moderation analysis	Digital communication skill acts as a moderating factor
Choudhary, Jain (2025) [9]	Remote work	Systematic review	Antecedents of engagement among remote workers classified
Kim et al. (2025) [10]	Leadership	Review of 36 articles	Leadership is the principal determinant in hybrid settings
Gallup (2026) [1]	Statistics	Global survey	Engagement at 20% in 2025; losses of USD 10 trillion

DISCUSSION

The findings obtained coincide with existing research on a number of points and diverge from it on others. Whereas earlier work explained engagement mainly through direct interaction at the workplace [15, 16], recent research on hybrid arrangements shows that the channel of this relationship has changed: the reduction of direct interaction has turned the supervisor's digital

communication skills into an independent factor [11]. The classic theory of channel richness is therefore not refuted but transferred to the digital environment.

The findings on voice confirm a conceptual shift. The absence of voice was previously interpreted as a sign of passivity or of satisfaction; current research regards silence as an independent and sometimes rational strategy [17, 20]. This has a practical consequence for organizations: a low number of complaints in a survey does not signify a high level of engagement. It is therefore more accurate to measure the effectiveness of voice channels not by the number of grievances but by the employee's readiness to express an opinion and by the level of psychological safety.

The downward trend in the global statistics supports this conclusion. The fall in engagement from 23 per cent to 20 per cent, and in the managerial indicator from 27 per cent to 22 per cent [1], shows that what matters is not the form of organizational practices but their substance: engagement is falling even in organizations that possess formal communication and voice channels.

The analysis of the Uzbek context leads to two conclusions. First, the Labour Code has created a complete institutional chain for the resolution of labour disputes, from self-protection by the employee (Article 530) through the commission stage (Articles 547–557) to judicial procedure (Articles 558–566). This is the legally entrenched form of the formal voice mechanism described in the international literature [36]. Second, the provisions of the Code regulate in detail the stage that follows the emergence of a dispute, whereas the stage preceding it — the everyday channels of voice and participation — is left largely to the discretionary policy of the employer. The institution of social partnership (Section II) fills this gap in part, but it operates at the collective level and cannot substitute for the everyday voice of the individual employee.

Accordingly, the theoretical contribution of the study consists in combining the four practices in a single model and adding an institutional layer to it. In the models found in the international literature the legal environment is normally treated as an external context; in the model proposed here it is brought inside as the direct foundation of the dispute-resolution practice. The practical contribution consists in clarifying, for organizations in Uzbekistan, the boundary between the legally mandatory minimum and the discretionary practices through which engagement can be raised.

The practical significance of the findings for higher education and the service sector in Uzbekistan deserves separate emphasis. In these sectors the work process is project-based and collective in character, and the employee's knowledge and initiative bear directly on the result. For this reason the autonomy and consultative forms of participation [29, 32] are more suitable for such organizations than for manufacturing enterprises. Furthermore, communication between administrative and academic staff is often conducted through the formal circulation of documents; although this channel is adequate for transmitting information, it is insufficient for discussing complex matters [15]. Regular departmental meetings and informal encounters with management fill precisely this gap [14, 16].

The limitations of the study define the scope of its conclusions. The shortage of national empirical data confines the conclusions relating to Uzbekistan to the framework of normative analysis. Three directions are therefore proposed for future research: measuring engagement in Uzbek organizations using a standardised scale; analysing the actual statistics on the operation of labour dispute commissions; and studying empirically the effect of hybrid work arrangements in local organizations.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that employee engagement is formed through four organizational practices — internal communication, employee voice, participation in decision-making and grievance procedures. These practices act upon the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of engagement and are reflected in organizational outcomes such as labour productivity, staff turnover and the quality of work.

The global statistics confirm the urgency of the problem: the share of engaged employees fell from 23 per cent in 2022 to 20 per cent in 2025, and low engagement costs the world economy USD 10 trillion a year. These indicators show that the existence of formal practices is not sufficient and that their actual quality is decisive.

In the conditions of Uzbekistan the Labour Code has created a complete legal chain for the resolution of disputes, yet the everyday channels of voice and participation that precede a dispute remain dependent on the discretionary policy of the employer. It is precisely this gap that constitutes the principal reserve for raising engagement in national organizations.

Recommendations: to formalise everyday voice channels within organizations (regular surveys, informal meetings with management, internal digital platforms); to measure engagement using a standardised scale at least once a year; to establish labour dispute commissions as genuinely operating bodies in accordance with the requirements of Article 547 of the Labour Code; to train the heads of units working under hybrid arrangements in digital communication skills; to assess the effectiveness of voice channels by the level of psychological safety rather than by the number of grievances; and to complement social partnership mechanisms with individual voice channels.

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