The Role and Influence of Organization Support to Improve Employee Experience Platforms (EXP): Thrive, Not Just Survive

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Abstract

Employee Experience Platforms (EXPs) are increasingly implemented across organizational settings to enhance internal communication, engagement, and well-being. However, despite their growing adoption, sustained employee engagement with these platforms often remains suboptimal—largely due to deficiencies in organizational support (OS). Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study investigates the nature and impact of organizational support mechanisms that facilitate reciprocal employee engagement with EXPs, conceptualized as exchanges of intangible workplace resources. Drawing upon a qualitative, triangulated research design, data were collected through 26 semi-structured interviews alongside a longitudinal content analysis of 157 employee-submitted comments. Thematic analysis identified four critical forms of organizational support that significantly shaped employee interactions with the platform: timely responsiveness to employee inquiries, provision of constructive and meaningful feedback, formal recognition and rewards for participation, and the communication of tangible outcomes resulting from platform engagement. This research advances theoretical understanding of reciprocity within digital employee experience ecosystems, offering a human-centric perspective on how support structures embedded in HR practices influence platform utilization. By employing a rigorous multi-method qualitative approach, the study contributes to methodological robustness in EXP research and delivers actionable insights for HR professionals seeking to optimize employee engagement through targeted, evidence-based support strategies.

Keywords: Employee Experience Platforms, Organization Support, Feedback, Social Exchange Theory, Rewards and Recognition, Triangulation, Qualitative, Thematic Analysis.

Introduction

Employee Experience Platforms (EXP) is a relatively new HR social networking application that is attracting growing interest among organizations for employees to use (Kauschinger et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022; Yousaf et al., 2022; Wang, 2022; van Zoonen et al., 2022). EXP is a form of internal organizational social media that is only restrictedly used by employees. EXPs have been introduced by organizations in the workplace for different purposes, such as enhancing performance (e.g. Chatterjee et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022), engagement (e.g. Korzynski, 2015; Chin et al., 2015), and knowledge sharing/transfer (Chatterjee et al., 2023). However, initial research suggests that organizations are struggling to engage employees to use EXP (Cummings, 2017; Chin *et al.,* 2015). The role of employees in the EXP is pivotal as it is completely reliant on their participation, which means that employees should be core (Chin *et al.,* 2015). It is not only essential that EXP fits the task, but also that it is acceptable and usable by employees (Mäntymäki and Riemer, 2016; Sangwan *et al.,* 2009).

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The role of organization support for the types of EXP that are created and designed by employers seems to be more important than for outsourced EXP because of the employer's full involvement and control (Bennett, 2012; Turban et al., 2011; Paroutis and Al Saleh, 2009; Brzozowski, 2009; Cook, 2008). Therefore, based on employees' reactions and experiences of using employer-owned EXP, employers may be able to make EXP an engaging application, especially if the purpose is linked with employee-related issues. Support would imply a wider set of factors than just those related to the system itself. By reviewing the literature, several types of support have emerged that require further examination to determine the extent of their significance for engagement with EXP. The types of support that emerged from the analysis and which are discussed below are attention and feedback in EXP and employee rewards and recognition in EXP. All of these can be taken as forms of support that employees expect from their employer.

Several studies have highlighted the importance of feedback and attention in EXP (e.g., Brzozowski et al., 2009; Leonardi et al., 2013, Turban et al., 2011). The nature of EXP seems to support and facilitate feedback and attention-giving because it is based on UGC which supports reciprocity (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Treem and Leonardi, 2012). One advantage of EXP is that it has features that support the provision of immediate feedback (Leonardi et al., 2013) because of their synchronicity. However, the aforementioned studies focused on outsourced EXPs, while the current research focuses on EXPs created and designed by employers, which are different.

Rewards and recognition are additional types of support that employees may expect for scaffolding EXP use. Reward mechanisms are noted as facilitating effective EXP use in employees (Turban et al., 2011). The acknowledgment of active employees on the EXP platform is a further task that may need to be undertaken by organizations. If an active employee finds that their message on EXP shows management interaction, they may feel rewarded and motivated to continue interacting with the platform. More specifically, if an active employee sharing valuable information/ideas is recognised publicly on the EXP platform, the employee will feel obligated and motivated to return the favour by continuously and increasingly participating in the EXP (Treem and Leonardi, 2016). Through the theoretical lens of SET, it could be argued that engagement at work exists as a series of interactions between two parties, the employee and the employer, who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence within a system like EXP (Cropanzano and Greenberg, 1997; Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

Paroutis and Al Saleh (2009) found that a lack of organisation support in recognising and rewarding active users is a major factor in reducing participation within EXP. This is in alignment with McAfee's (2006) point of view that clear communication is important as the adoption of EXP technologies is not done automatically and is greatly dependent on the actions and decisions taken by the organisation. McAfee (2006) further found that encouragement and stimulation from organisation is needed to generate benefits of usage. The greatest levels of adoption are reported where tools are integrated into existing user workflows, and where there are informal incentives such as recognition by peers and online status recognition (rather than financial reward) (Rooksby et al., 2009). However, these studies focus on public social networking, not EXP and they focus on managerial issues, while the current research focuses on employees and social perspectives since there is presently a lack of empirical work in this direction.

Some studies have emphasised the importance of recognition in EXP (e.g. Treem and Leonardi, 2012; Leroy et al., 2013). Lack of employee recognition in EXP discouraged continued

participation in EXP (Treem and Leonardi, 2012). As the organisation is responsible for recognising employees, recognition is a type of organisation support that employees may expect to receive in EXP. Otherwise, a lack of employee recognition becomes a serious threat to the use of EXPs (Leroy et al., 2013). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence about the extent of the role of recognition and rewards on engagement with EXP, which this research seeks to remedy.

The aforementioned forms of support may all have a direct impact on engaging employees with EXP. Several knowledge gaps have emerged from the literature review on support and require further investigation in relation to employees and their engagement with EXP. All of the forms of support explored fall within EXP contexts, in particular, contexts of EXPs designed and created by employers. These important sub-factors of support do need more exploration. As the present research is theory-driven, this theoretical lens of SET serves as a vehicle to identify the Organization Support resources in the social technology application, EXP, and the impact on employee engagement with EXP. SET is explored and critically evaluated in the following section.

Theoretical Underpinning of Social Exchange Theory

The main criticism of EXP's managerial and technological studies is the lack of a theoretical lens based on a particular social theory (such as Haddud *et al.,* 2016; Chin *et al.,* 2015; Leftheriotis and Giannakos, 2014). EXP is a 'social' application based entirely on social interactions (Chin *et al.,* 2015). In the research, Social Exchange Theory (SET) is an overarching theory which found valuable because it magnifies the importance of reciprocity of exchanging resources between organizations and employees in EXP. So, when employees receive expected resources from their organization through EXP, employees feel more obliged to repay the employer with greater engagement and more effective system use. This research is theory-driven where the theoretical lens of SET serves as a vehicle.

Through the theoretical lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET), these types of Organisation Support are treated as resources of exchange in EXP. These key OS resources/factors in the context of EXP are considered employee resources that may impact their engagement with EXP. In SET, reciprocity is based on exchanging resources, so these two key factors/resources are what employees need or expect to be exchanged by employers to engage employees with EXP. Once employees receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their employers they feel obliged to respond by repaying the employer (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

In SET, organisation support is the organisation's contribution that creates a positive reciprocity dynamic with employees, as employees tend to perform better when reciprocating resources and favourable treatment (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Outside the EXP context, organisation support is defined as a type of support where employees believe that their employer values their contributions, cares about their well-being and meets social and emotional needs (Eisenberger et al., 1986). The role of organisation support in engagement has been studied many times before; it was developed by Eisenberger and Rhoades' (2001) as organisation support theory. According to the theory of organisation support, persons form general beliefs about the extent to which the employer values their contributions and supports their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). However, the role of organisation support and its types have not been examined in the EXP context, which the present study focuses on.

From an SET perspective, the norm of reciprocity suggests that employees who perceive that their employer provides them with greater support feel morally obliged to return the contribution to their employer (Dulac et al., 2008). This might be the same with EXP, as the employer is the creator and manager thereof. However, such studies are managerial studies not focusing on employees' issues, and, most fundamentally, are not within the EXP context nor address engagement with EXP. In addition, these studies use a single quantitative method: the survey. The current research addresses these theoretical and methodological gaps as it identifies the EXP reciprocity resources that the employer is responsible for and uses two qualitative triangulation methods.

As recognised in the previous section, employers' feedback and attention in EXP to employees is a resource that employees may expect to receive as regards their posted messages/questions on an EXP platform. In SET, the employer's feedback and attention to EXP to employees is one of the socioemotional resources that employers may need to exchange with employees to engage them with EXP through participation. However, Majchrzak and colleagues (2013) have stated that there is a need for empirical studies examining the effect of attention on engagement with EXP in the workplace (Majchrzak *et al.,* 2013). For example, employers may not pay full attention and may not provide the expected meaningful and immediate feedback. Yardi *et al.,* (2009) found that, through EXP, employees experience a lack of feedback and perceived management support. However, Yardi *et al.,* (2009) did not examine whether it impacted the engagement of employees with EXP. As a result, feedback and attention might well impact engaging employees with EXP. For example, if an employer does not provide efficient and immediate feedback, the employee may feel (emotionally) that their message was not valued, and might become disengaged with EXP. Moreover, feedback and attention may impact employees' trust, which is explored in the following section.

Recognition is a type of support that emerged as a factor/resource that organisations may need to provide employees with. EXP requires the recognising and rewarding of active participants to encourage them to continuously contribute. The employer may need to have a mechanism for recognising active participants in EXP. In SET, rewards and recognition in EXP can be socioemotional or economic resources (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) that employees may expect to receive in EXP and which may impact their engagement with EXP by repaying it through participation. Some studies have emphasised the importance of recognition in EXP (e.g. Treem and Leonardi, 2012; Leroy et al., 2013). Lack of employee recognition in EXP discouraged continued participation in EXP (Treem and Leonardi, 2012). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence about the extent of the role of recognition and rewards on engagement with EXP, which this research seeks to remedy.

From the analysis of relevant literature, the aforementioned types/resources of organisation support have emerged. However, because the present research adopts qualitative methods, it allows other resources to emerge from the analysis of findings. There is a notable dearth of knowledge about identifying and examining the types/sources/factors organisation supports within the EXP context and with a focus on employees' perspectives. This study addresses this major gap by examining and evaluating the organisation support types within the EXP context based on employees' reactions, experiences, and expectations.

From the analysis of the literature, several concepts/factors/types of organisation support have emerged as gaps. The types of organisation support essential for success are: feedback and attention, and recognition and rewards. However, as the present study uses qualitative methods,

other resources/types of organisation support will, if apparent, be allowed to emerge from the analysis of results.

In this research, SET assists in explaining the role and influence of OS's factors/resources on employees to use EXP. The current research is theory-driven and uses SET as a theoretical foundation in advance to inform the research questions and assist in generating the data. To address the aforementioned gaps, the following research questions are formulated to address them:

RQ1. To what extent does the role of Organization Support affect employees' use of the EXP?

RQ2. What do employees need and expect from their organization to do in EXP?

RQ3. How do the types/resources of Organization Support in the EXP context affect employees' use of EXP?

The present study uses a qualitative method, namely, semi-structured interviews, to serve the purpose of the study. This qualitative method not only promotes closer investigation of the pre-determined factors but also allows unknown other factors to emerge from the data analysis, which the theoretical lens of SET assists in generating and explaining. More details about the used methods and the participants are discussed later in the methodology section.

Qualitative Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to address the developed research questions. There is a *qualitative methodological gap* in the relevant literature. Reflecting on the developed research questions that emerged from knowledge gaps, the way answering these questions could be obtained whether through qualitative and/or quantitative methods. However, from the analysis of the relevant research, most of them adopt a quantitative approach (e.g. Chatterjee et al., 2023; Zhou, 2022; Haddud *et al.,* 2016; Korzynski, 2015). Therefore, there is a lack of empirical studies using qualitative methodology about the OS's role in influencing employees' use of EXP and its impact on the engagement of users. Moreover, there is little knowledge about this introduced social application in the workplace (EXP). Therefore, this research addresses this methodological gap by using a qualitative approach to answer the research questions. For this study, a qualitative approach is not only appropriate but also needed.

The two triangulated qualitative methods that will be used in this study are semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The two qualitative methods are '*equal and parallel*' which can be viewed as exact equivalents to serve the aim of the study by addressing the research questions. To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first research about EXP in the workplace that adopts the qualitative triangulation methods, in particular interviews and documentary analysis. The document analysis method contains first-hand employee and EXP team comments for two years. The total number of comments is 157. There are 23 semi-structured interviews conducted with managers and employees.

There are several reasons for using these two triangulation methods in this research. The first reason for using the two triangulation methods is to improve objectivity on the limitations of qualitative methodology is low objectivity. As a result, the best way to improve objectivity is to triangulate across multiple fallible perspectives. Secondly, triangulation methods in this research offer rich data to answer the research questions sufficiently. Triangulation is often used in research as a way of cross-examining results from one form of data collection with another. For example, the document contains employees' 157 comments over two years, and 26

interviews cover most of the employees' issues with the EXP. For this research, the data triangulation can help create greater confidence in the overall results of the research (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006).

Thirdly, the two triangulated qualitative methods decrease the researcher's bias (Denzin, 1978). Multiple qualitative methods are employed to the collecting of data as a means of minimizing the common method bias and limitations inherent in each method (Denzin, 1978). For example, unlike semi-structured interviews, the document analysis method contains 157 comments written first-hand by employees with no involvement by the researcher, which consequently, decreases the bias. Fourthly, two approaches tend to be available for data collection in research studies: longitudinal and cross-sectional research—this research uses both. This research, through having data from the document that provides reactions accumulative of employees' experiences of using EXP covered two years long, typically fits the description of longitudinal research. For example, the document analysis covers two years and the semi-structured interview covers three months. For this research, both cross-sectional and longitudinal provide rich accounts of the participants' accumulative experience.

The semi-structured interview is a method used to collect data by using a series of questions typically designed to address the research questions. It was acknowledged that there was a need to explore deeply into understanding the Organization Support role in EXP and how it affects employees' use of EXP. Semi-structured interviews provide the flexibility to probe further when the participants express something of importance to them. The interview questions were short, simple, clear, and direct.

Interviewees agreed to be interviewed in the workplace in a one-to-one setting, based on their choice of day, time, and exact place (rooms). All interviewees had agreed to the use of an audio recording device in advance before being utilized in the data collection. All of the recordings were subsequently transcribed by the researcher. All of the interviewees are full-time employees working at the company. In addition, all interviews were in English and all interviewees were fluent which helps to avoid any risks of any mistranslation. Finally, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in a single period of three months.

The second method that this study used was documents that were obtained from the EXP platform containing interactions and discussions between employees and the company. The received document contains only unbridged first-hand computerized typewritten by employees. All documents contained unabridged text, which was unaltered by the researcher.

For this research, thematic analysis was undertaken to analyze the two data sources because it offered some flexibility in the approach when analyzing qualitative data. Thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Most importantly and relatedly, as this research is theory-driven, the SET lens plays a fundamental role in analyzing data. The coding technique of thematic analysis depends on whether the themes are more 'theory-driven' (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this research, themes have been analyzed, interpreted, and identified, driven/guided by theory, SET, namely: the reciprocity process and resources of OS in EXP.

All of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, ensuring that there were no errors and that the data was accurate. The interviews' transcriptions and documents were used equally weighted and parallel. The researcher read the transcription several times to determine that they

were free from any mistakes or other possible errors as well as to ensure that they were in keeping with the research aims (Creswell and Clark, 2007; WeIman *et al.,* 2005).

For this research, the process of analyzing the qualitative data involved: preparation of data; familiarisation with data; generating initial codes; collating similar codes into pre-existing or emerging themes; re-reading and reviewing themes that related to the research questions; and refining themes. This process was done through creative engagement with the data and following intuition (Wicks, 2017; Saldaña, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Manually, the analysis of interviews was completed through the use of thematic analysis by starting with coding key factors. Through the identified themes, the data will be allowed to capture an explanation of possible reality through evidence, which ultimately helps address the research questions sufficiently, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Through the coding process of thematic analysis, the entire data set is used to explore meaningful, frequent, and relevant patterns that emerge (Boyatzis, 1998). A similar approach was applied to the document.

To analyse the document, thematic analysis was found to be the most appropriate method to use as well. As mentioned before, the document contains 157 comments which are remarkably large data to organize, manage, and analyse. However, thematic analysis helps to ease this problem. This method of analysis minimally organizes, describes, and analyses the data set in rich detail. The coding process in the document started by looking for the pre-existing themes. The researcher's reasons for using a coding of thematic analysis are: that it creates a space of flexibility, identified factors can be applied to this process, it saves time and effort, and it is well-suited to large data sets. As a result, it allows the researcher to expand the range of study by coding and analysing the data.

Finding Analysis

From the overall analysis of findings, the role of organisation support for EXP is significant and critical, mainly because the organisation is the creator, controller, and manager of the platform. It has been found from the general analysis of current research that most of the factors that contribute to engagement with EXP are those based on organisation support.

"The company is the owner of [EXP] and I'm a user. I'm looking to see what results in this" (EXP User, Interview #3)

This section presents several key resources (factors) that emerged from the analysis of literature, namely: feedback and attention in EXP and rewards and recognition in EXP. The results of these factors will be presented and analysed separately based on the employees' experiences and reactions to EXP. Furthermore, the significance of these factors will be evaluated altogether to recognise the most and least significant factors that contribute to engagement with EXP.

Feedback and Attention in EXP

Providing feedback and paying attention to employees in EXP is the organisation's responsibility—this is something employees expect to receive to engage them with EXP. However, the data analysis has revealed that there is a lack of feedback provision and attention to employees in EXP, which ultimately impacts engagement with EXP. In addition, the feedback and attention by the employer reflect how EXP is controlled and managed. It has been found that engagement with EXP requires providing immediate and efficient written feedback through the EXP platform.

In the analysis of the document, the majority of commenters were requesting feedback or at the very least, an update about the status of their escalated contributions. The majority of respondents stressed the lack of feedback they received from the EXP team. Not all employees expect immediate actions or tangible outcomes from management based on their comments, however, they do at least expect feedback about the status of their requests. One commenter has stated: "*I would like to be notified of progress in some issue please let me know whom to contact in HR to find out about implementations of solutions to the issues that you posted in the [EXP]."* (Employee EXP comment).

Due to a lack of feedback, the majority of employees start to feel that no one is even paying attention and reading their comments. *"I'm not even sure anybody reads those comments.*" (EXP User, Interview). Once employees have this impression, the use of EXP will decrease. Another comment on the platform stated:

"In fact, I did not receive an acknowledgement whether my suggested topic was even read or not." (Employee EXP comment).

Employees have stated that effective communication through feedback is a factor that plays a critical role in engaging with EXP. This is because employees will feel that their comments are valuable and accountable, which will encourage them to keep using the EXP. Employees feel that they contribute to the EXP by making some good comments; they, in return, expect the EXP Team to value their contributions and at least respond to them, a user interviewee stated. As stated by an EXP team leader, 95 per cent of comments are posted by employees at entry and middle-level positions. The failure of managers to provide feedback makes this proportion of employees at entry and middle-level positions start to feel that they are ignored and not respected. Because the majority of commenters were in entry and middle-level positions, it indicates a lack of top management participation in using EXP. This lack of participation by managers has been questioned by several employees, and it has been identified as a factor that impacts their engagement with EXP.

Thus, the issue here is not the functionality of EXP, but the lack of proper management behind the platform. From the employees' perspective, if a commenter receives feedback, it means that the EXP team is paying attention by reading and responding to the commenter. EXP team members have stated that they read all comments, but sometimes they do not have an answer due to their limited knowledge. Commenters, however, are not aware of this and do not know if the EXP team has read their comments because there is no physical evidence to prove that they have. Therefore, commenters feel (emotionally) that no one is paying attention to their comments. The lack of attention and feedback in EXP results in cognitive and emotional consequences, which leads to future behavioural disengagement with EXP. As several employees have stated, EXP is an excellent tool, but not managed and utilised correctly. A story shared by an employee is below.

"[EXP] is an excellent tool opportunity, that is being wasted. The company taking the first step to reach out to their employees. Then they fail to follow through with any of the other steps that would go with this … employees' comments should result in some response or interest from the company. Employees need a minimum response. Every employee who responded in [EXP], stating that HR has heard your concerns and looked at your suggestions, we're going to work on these things. This will show that the company did hear some suggestions and understand that employees are having concerns and receive a minimal level of response … The minimum

response you could provide is an e-mail to every badge number who logged in to that, stating, we heard you, thanking you for coming over and responding." (EXP User, Interview #25)

As expressed by the EXP team leader, the maximum number of participations by a single user in total was only five. Taking the four years of the platform's existence into account, this is a very low number, reflecting the lack of positive interactions with EXP. There are several reasons for this low employee participation rate, one of them is the lack of attention and provision of feedback. Providing feedback about the status of employees' contributions is crucial to keep them engaged with EXP because users would at least feel emotionally that the EXP team was working on their concerns/suggestions, as an employee stated. From the document analysis, it appears that the majority of users feel they have been ignored. This creates a bad experience (cognitively) for employees due to the lack of attention and feedback. EXP involves exchanging resources that employees expect to receive in EXP, and one of them is feedback and attention. Further theoretical analysis will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

"I think after posting all these nice ideas by employees in [EXP], we need to know how the company is reacting to this feedback! We have seen several posts with thousands of comments, with no obvious results in our reports analysing these inputs. I hope we can find an answer to this question." (Employee EXP comment #3671).

"Announce something maybe you're working on it, but there is no announcement section for example, based on inputs for X, Y, or Z topic, we're working on this project to enhance something or we're introducing something new. So each topic should have a reference in the future, did they consider it with further action? So this review is not there so it creates that black hole experience for users." (EXP User, Interview #21)

The "*black hole*" phrase has been used by several employees. The majority of the participants believe that their comments go into a black hole. This belief (cognitive) is a result of the EXP team's inability to provide feedback. When an employee sends a comment asking about something, they at least want to feel that their message has been received, otherwise, they will feel that it goes to a black hole. Not only does this phenomenon lead to a bad EXP experience but it can also trigger bigger issues, like distrusting EXP, which will be analysed later in this chapter under employees' trust in EXP section.

"I had better things to do with my time than throw comments into black holes." (EXP User, Interview #7)

This issue of paying attention can be solved easily by sending, at the very least, an auto-response message to assure the employee that his/her message has been submitted and received, as suggested by an interviewee. However, the company's EXP does not provide a receipt for comments received by the team. The negative experience of using EXP is that users feel and believe that they have wasted their time on the platform, which contributes negatively to engagement with EXP. Many participants expressed these feelings:

"There is no incentive to take time off of my job, to go and participate in [EXP], that we get no feedback on. That they get no feedback on, that I get no feedback on. So there is no benefit for employees to do that. The only thing that I would be concerned about, is a concern, is that if I say something negative, and they get a response, then the management comes down on me, why are you causing trouble? But if I say something positive, they don't hear about it. There is no feedback" (EXP User, Interview #14)

On the employer's side, the analysis of the document shows that the EXP Team has responded to some users, assuring them that their contributions were valuable as stated "*Thank you for your comment. The [EXP] Team reads all suggestions as they are all valuable.*" (EXP Team comment). However, the ratio of responses from the EXP team compared to the number of questions submitted by commenters is very low. It has been found that only acknowledgement 29 messages in total were posted by the EXP team. Most importantly, the content of the feedback was general in nature and did not clearly and sufficiently answer the commenters' questions. Employees expected full, detailed, specific feedback, not generic responses. To provide effective feedback, the EXP team needs to answer each question clearly, as mentioned by an employee.

However, as mentioned earlier, the EXP team is not necessarily aware of this process. An HR Advisor admitted that there is a lack of provision of effective feedback stating that *"the feedback is a one-way street"* (HR Advisor, Interview #12), thus, contradicting their stated aims. In the interview conducted with an EXP team member, he stated that they are a very small team and sometimes they cannot respond to all questions that are posted by employees on the EXP platform. He added, that we sometimes have a limited knowledge to answer employees' questions in EXP. From the analysis of comments, the team were trying to respond to some of the employees' questions, however, the number of queries was disproportionate to the size of the EXP team.

The lack of feedback provided to users does not only come from the EXP team but also from the top management. As the EXP Team leader stated, most of the selected ideas that reach top management are either in process for years or rejected without any justification. The EXP team cannot answer employees' questions when top management does not respond to suggestions, even though they are required to do so. The analysis confirms that there is a lack of organisation support in providing feedback. According to the EXP manager, team leader, and members, the committee comprising EXP members and HR advisors read and evaluate on a monthly basis, after closing the topic to employee comments. The EXP team is responsible for creating and presenting an executive summary to the management on a monthly basis. The executive summary contains analysis and decisions made about the comments, which have been escalated to top management. However, according to the Head of HR, the executive summary is not shared with employees on the platform. Therefore, employees are not aware of this. For employees, not sharing the summary with employees on EXP reflects a lack of attention and feedback because it is not evident.

"Company should cascade this summary through email to all employees." (EXP employee comment)

"Maybe support is there, but it is not evident, cascaded down to announcing it." (EXP User, Interview #21)

"What did we get out from all this chatting at [EXP]? now and then [EXP] team bug us with a discussion topic, which is great if somehow the employee's input is taken into account or their views are later summed up unbiasedly and sent to all." (EXP employee comment #2757)

Rewards and Recognition in EXP

As identified in the literature and presented in the conceptual model, rewards and recognition in EXP have an emotional impact on engagement with EXP that employees expect to receive from the platform in order to participate in EXP. As mentioned, the engagement with EXP consists of three components, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. Rewards and recognition in EXP can

result in positive emotions among employees towards EXP and their future interactions in EXP. Rewards and recognition in EXP can be financial or non-financial. Rewards and recognition in EXP could be reciprocated/provided by employers to employees in EXP to keep the process of engagement active to use EXP. As EXP was created for engagement, employees expect to be encouraged by the employer to share their ideas, issues, and concerns.

The company's EXP platform has no rewards nor recognition mechanism, as stated by the EXP Team Leader and members. However, from the document analysis, several encouraging messages were posted by the EXP Team. Among more than 5300 comments in total, the number of encouraging messages and messages of recognition posted was only 20. This number is extremely small compared to the total number of employees' comments. Thus, it is evident that there is a lack of recognition messages to active users. Most importantly, the EXP team messages on the platform were found to be general and not specific enough for an active user. The following four messages are examples:

"Thank you everyone for your valuable comments. We are reading and analysing them." (EXP Team comment)

"Thank you all for your participation! [EXP] Team is working on reviewing and uploading all suggestions and recommendations." (EXP Team comment)

"Thank you all for your participation and sharing your experiences. We would like to hear more from you. Let's Talk…." (EXP Team comment)

"Greetings All, Thank you for your participation. Your comments are adding value and enriching the discussion." (EXP Team comment)

"Thank you for your comment. The [EXP] Team reads all suggestions as they are all valuable." (EXP Team comment)

Additionally, the absence of a mechanism in recognising commenters in EXP has been noted through document analysis. A number of posted comments by the EXP Team were not based on a clear method of recognising comments. The content of these messages of recognition posted by the EXP Team is agreeing and thanking some users for a certain position they take. These messages were taking a part or a side of the conversation by agreeing and disagreeing with commenters not recognizing active users. There is an absence of a suitable mechanism for thanking the active users for their participation. The EXP Team are responsible for controlling the discussion by providing healthy communication. However, it has been noted in the document analysis that the EXP Team left a few messages not recognising active users, but took part in the conversation by agreeing and then disagreeing with others. As stated by the employee, this is an interference and it may cause conflict among others. Taking part in a discussion on the platform by agreeing and disagreeing causes an unhealthy environment among users, which shows there is a lack of awareness of the EXP's team responsibilities which, therefore, reflects the lack of moderating and managing the EXP.

"Agree with you [employee name]. Stay Connected...[EXP] Team." (EXP Team, Comments)

"We totally agree with [user name]. [EXP] Team" (EXP Team, Comments)

From the interviews conducted with employees and the EXP Team, both stated that there are no auto-recognition messages sent to commenters after participation. Few employees have stated that receiving a 'thank you' auto message gives an indicator that their messages have been sent

and received. However, it will not have a big impact on their decision to participate in the future. The auto messages can be achieved easily in coordination with IT people, as the auto messages do not cost anything or require any effort from the EXP Team, an employee stated. However, the organisation did not take that step yet.

The overall analysis shows the employees' demand for the reward or appreciation in EXP is low compared to other factors. This is because most of the employees expect a tangible outcome based on their contribution to EXP, rather than just recognising them and rewarding them. The result and analysis of tangible outcomes in EXP will be demonstrated in-depth under the tangible outcomes of the EXP sub-section.

"I would like to move from the 'thank you's to be honest, one, two three thank you's are very nice, I would continue to use it, but then I'm going to ask what's behind the thank you?" (EXP User, Interivew#19)

However, a minority of employees have stressed the importance of recognition, appreciation, and reward for active users. The importance comes from the impact that recognition could have. Only two interviewed employees have stopped using EXP because there are no recognition or rewards. For some employees, recognising active users is evidence that the employer values and counts their contributions as important. The analysis of the document of comments posted by users and the EXP Team, as mentioned, shows there are a few posted comments encouraging employee participation. Few employees believe (cognitively) that recognition has a significant impact on their decision to use EXP (engagement with EXP). They believe their participation is contingent on them receiving recognition and rewards, which shows that the interaction in EXP is interdependent and based on exchanging "expected" resources.

"Back on your question, having received nothing, I had zero incentive to continue with their system." (EXP User, Interview #4)

There is a consensus among employees and the EXP Team about the absence of a recognition and rewards mechanism, which leads to some suggestions for solving issues in the future. This would have clear written and announced criteria for the users to be recognised or rewarded. The quantity of posted comments makes EXP active—however, the quality of employees' comments is required to increase the value of EXP by making it a more attractive application. The role of the EXP team in recognising employees has to be clear, as taking part in a conversation with aggression and disagreement is not the way recognition should be handled. Employees' role in recognising users is preferably by using the rating and voting features for the most acceptable idea. For example, the highest number of ratings received about certain comments needs to be recognised. Employees' involvement in recognising colleagues based on their comments' rating is another method, which involves votes, as stated by an employee.

The EXP Team Leader and members have shared some future ideas about the rewards; they have planned to use some tangible rewards like vouchers and coffee. This type of reward is tangible but not necessarily financial. This is one of the resources that some employees expect to receive to make them feel (emotionally) that their contributions to EXP are valued by the employer, which therefore, leads to participation (behaviourally) in EXP. Therefore, they will engage with EXP more actively. However, to achieve that, the organisation's support is needed to authorise such a scheme by providing the funds to do that. There is no indication that this will be achieved as the team started up the top management, but nothing has changed. For example, the functionality issues on the platform have been highlighted for years but nothing has been done

to improve it for four years. Employees have clear demands about the functionality problems, but nothing has been changed.

"Like small gift vouchers or coffee" (EXP Team Leader, Interview #5)

"I would offer the person who [EXP] the most, free coffee for maybe like give them a voucher for five free cups of coffee. I want to reward these users, these people who comment and who always visit." (EXP Team member, Interview #13)

"They were thinking about offering coupons, like gift coupons." (EXP Team member, Interview #20)

The EXP Team believes that rewarding would help employees remain engaged with EXP. It is a process that the organisation needs to exchange this resource, recognition and reward, with employees to keep the engagement with EXP. The EXP Team Leader has responded about the impact of recognising and rewarding an employee by stating

"Yes, I think it won't have a huge impact, because we'll reward people on a one-to-one basis, but it will encourage those people to come back and there might be some word-of-mouth momentum in there as well." (EXP Team Leader, Interview #18)

In summary, the overall analysis shows that the rewards and recognition in EXP are not at the top of employees' list of priorities that significantly impact their engagement with EXP, but it would be nice to have it. For example, employees expect feedback and tangible action outcomes based on their contributions to EXP as they consider it to be an essential factor in keeping them using EXP. Despite the limited impact of rewards and recognition to engage them with EXP, the analysis confirmed there is a lack of organisation support in recognising and rewarding users. The EXP Team has shared some suggestions for that. However, for example, without the support from the organisation to release the funding, it would not happen. Additionally, the analysis shows that there is a misunderstanding which reflects a misalignment about how the recognition should be provided to users on the platform as they are taking notice of only part of a conversation and thank certain users because the team agrees with him/her. This misalignment issue happened because there is no written recognition mechanism for how to recognise employees. A number of employees have suggested resolving the recognition issue by improving EXP functionality in providing rating and voting features to recognise active commenters. One of the recognitions can be achieved as a result of the involvement of, and support from, the leadership in EXP.

Discussion

The overall analysis of the findings confirmed that EXP is not a type of technology that can be implemented and then left to work on its own, which is consistent with Turban *et al.,* (2011). EXP requires regular evaluation and improvement to ensure its effectiveness, which is the employer's responsibility. Several organisational support types/factors emerged from the literature analysis, these included feedback and attention to EXP and rewards and recognition in EXP. Furthermore, due to the present study's adoption of qualitative methods, one additional type of organisation support emerged from the analysis of the findings: tangible outcomes of EXP. Unlike managerialists and technologists, these employee-related factors are identified and investigated based on employee reactions and experiences of using EXP in the workplace. The second and third research questions were developed to investigate these types/factors and find the most effective types/factors that contribute to engagement with EXP. The evaluation was

based on three operationalised social components of engagement with EXP: cognition, emotion and behaviour. Before interpreting and discussing the significance of results on factors and their impact on engagement with EXP, it is important to discuss how organisational support as a main key factor has been studied in relation to engagement and EXP.

Results from both strands provide support to the SET by indicating that employees who have perceived support from employers are more likely to reciprocate with greater levels of engagement. Looking at this topic through the lens of the SET, the types of organisation support being considered are resources that employees expect to receive in EXP. Foa and Foa's (1974, 1980) resource theory offered six types of exchange resources: love, status, information, money, goods and services. However, about work settings, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) have collapsed Foa and Foa's (1974, 1980) resources in the workplace into two levels: economic and socioemotional outcomes. Nonetheless, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) and Saks (2006) were limited in their identification of any other SET resources. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) stated: *"It would also be useful to consider the types of resources that are exchanged in different types of relationships"* (p.880). The analysis of the findings revealed a new resource of SET in the EXP content – tangible outcomes - which will be discussed below.

The three components of engagement with EXP - cognitive, emotional and behavioural - assist in investigating organisation support types/resources and their impact on social interactions in EXP (engagement with EXP). When one party provides expected resources to another, which are considered valued and beneficial resources, an obligation is then generated to return a resource that is equally beneficial and valued (Mitchell *et al.,* 2012). This mutual exchange made through a series of interactions strengthens the quality of the relationship between the two parties and this subsequently produces productive and beneficial relationships (Blau, 1964). Within the EXP context, this research found that this can be achieved, but under two conditions: first, providing the expected resources; and second, the speed/effectiveness of the reciprocity process in exchanging these resources.

The organisation support results have been grouped based on their significance to engagement with EXP. For example, based on the analysis of the overall findings, the organisation support types/factors that were found to be the most significant are EXP feedback and attention, tangible outcomes of EXP. These types/factors considered to have some significance on engagement with EXP are EXP rewards/recognition. The following sub-sections theoretically interpret and discuss the significance of these resources/factors on employees' engagement with EXP in light of the relevant literature, starting with EXP feedback and attention.

Feedback and Attention in EXP

Feedback and attention in EXP is a type of organisational support that has emerged from the literature analysis. Compared to other organisation support types/factors, it has been found that the feedback and attention factor has a significant impact on engagement with EXP. For example, the majority of employees believe that there is a lack of feedback and attention, which ultimately stops them from participating in EXP (engagement with EXP).

The majority of employees require immediate and meaningful written feedback through the EXP platform. From the analysis of the findings, not all employees expected immediate tangible outcomes based on their contributions to EXP, but they did at least expect attention and feedback to their questions and raised concerns in EXP. Employees expected up-to-date, effective, meaningful and sufficient feedback based on their EXP contributions. In EXP, despite the

employer's small number of reassuring messages, employees believed that the content of the employer's messages was general and did not contain specific answers or clear up-to-date information. They therefore not only felt they lacked clear and meaningful feedback, but also attention. From the analysis of the document, it was found that the number of employer responses was very low compared to the number of employee questions. Due to the fact that most employee questions were not answered by the employer, employees perceived this as a lack of attention being paid to employee concerns. Employees believe that employers ignore their messages. It was found that this was occurring due to a lack of support from the organization in EXP. The organization's behaviour of ignoring employees' messages and not providing sufficient feedback reflects and confirms the lack of support in managing and controlling the EXP. As a result, this impacted employees' social interactions in EXP. In SET, the lack of providing expected resources demonstrates a lack of reciprocity.

Looking at it from the perspective of the SET, feedback and attention is a socioemotional resource. The analysis of the present research is consistent with Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) who suggest that one of the resources that employees need for reciprocity is socioemotional. Employees are more willing to reciprocate or exchange their engagement for resources that are provided by their employer (Saks, 2006). Based on the analysis of results, feedback and attention in EXP is a socioemotional resource that employees expect to receive, which ultimately contributes to their engagement with EXP. The results of the current research have found that feedback and attention have a cognitive and emotional impact on social interactions in EXPs. If they are provided with meaningful and continuous feedback and attention in EXP, employees feel obliged to repay this through participation in EXP. Unlike SET, the JD-R model ultimately focuses on the managerial aspect, because it associates the resources with jobs rather than employee-related resources that affect relations, such as engagement with EXP.

In contrast to other studies, several technological studies have examined the role of attention and feedback in EXP and found it to contribute to participation in EXP (such as Brzozowski *et al.,* 2009; Yardi, 2009; Leonardi, 2013; Paroutis and Al Saleh, 2009). Despite very broad and partial agreement with these studies' results, there are a number of fundamental differences between this work's findings and the present research. For example, these technologists focused on tools that assist in the provision of electronic feedback rather than meaningful feedback. Unlike technologists, the present study focuses on attention and feedback to employees' questions from the employer in EXP (not EXP itself as a technology tool). For example, electronic feedback might not provide the meaningful and complete feedback that employees expect. For example, Brzozowski *et al.,* (2009) found that feedback in EXP encourages employees to continue contributing to EXP (Brzozowski *et al.,* 2009). However, Brzozowski *et al.,* (2009) did not investigate the impact of feedback and attention on employees' social interactions (engagement with EXP).

The study provides a new result as the analysis revealed that feedback and attention have some significance in contributing to engagement with EXP. The analysis confirmed that there is a lack of organisational support in providing sufficient and clear feedback and attention. Attention comprises indicating that the comments have been received, while feedback involves a meaningful and detailed answer. Due to the employer's lack of attention and insufficient feedback, employees are cognitively and emotionally affected, which, therefore, impacts social interactions (participation in EXP).

Rewards and Recognition in EXP

This study found that employee rewards and recognition from the employer in EXP have a limited impact on engagement with EXP. Recognition in EXP refers to the employer publicly thanking and praising employees for their contributions to the platform. Rewards in EXP refers to offering incentives to employees in EXP for their active participation in EXP. This section focuses on discussing the extent of recognising and rewarding employees in EXP by employers, and, most importantly, the impact of this on engagement with EXP.

Looking at it from the perspective of the SET, as recognised in the literature, rewards and recognition in EXP are socioemotional and economic resources that employees may expect to receive from employers in EXP. The analysis reveals that the company's EXP does not have an EXP reward or recognition mechanism, as stated by the EXP team leader and members. Based on the document analysis, the EXP team has posted some encouraging messages; however, in response to more than 5,300 comments in total, the number of encouraging and acknowledging messages amounts to only 20. This number is extremely small compared to the total number of employee comments. It is thus evident that there is a lack of acknowledgement of active users. Despite this, based on employee reactions, further analysis found a limited impact on engagement with EXP.

Some studies have emphasised the importance of recognition in EXP (e.g. Treem and Leonardi, 2012; Leroy *et al.,* 2013). For example, if active employees using the EXP are recognised in the platform by the employer, employees will believe (cognitively) and feel (emotionally) that their contributions are valued and taken into account by the employer. Therefore, they will become engaged with EXPs through interactions. However, the analysis and interpretation of findings confirm that there is very limited recognition and reward of employees in the EXP by the employer. Nevertheless, compared to other factors, further analysis suggested that rewards and recognition in EXP have a limited impact on engagement. For example, the majority of employees believed it would be nice to receive recognition and rewards from the employer in EXP, but it would not impact their future participation in EXP.

In terms of SET, when employees are recognised and receive rewards from their employer, they will feel obliged to respond with engagement (Saks, 2006). In comparison to other factors, despite the lack of recognition and rewards, the analysis found that this has some impact on engagement with EXP. However, the examination of the significance of this factor was based on employees' reactions and experiences in comparison to other factors, which considered employees' demands, expectations and experiences of using EXP in the workplace.

Some managerial studies have emphasised the importance of recognition in EXP (e.g. Treem and Leonardi, 2012; Leroy, 2013). For example, the findings of this work are inconsistent with Treem and Leonardi (2012) who found that a lack of employee recognition in EXP discourages continued participation and Paroutis and Al Saleh (2009) found a lack of organisational recognition and rewarding active users to be a major factor that may reduce employee participation in EXP. Another study found a lack of employee recognition to be a serious threat to the use of EXP (Leroy, 2013). However, notably, these studies are managerial/organisation studies that focus on rewards and recognition in EXP for job-related issues.

As reciprocity in SET is based on exchanging a number of expected resources, rewards and recognition comprise socioemotional and economic resources that employees expect to receive. For example, outside the EXP context, Saks (2006), adopting SET, suggested that employees

engage themselves at work to the extent that they receive rewards and recognition. Mone and London (2009) further stated that recognition and rewards are critical to engagement. However, the results of this work found that employees appreciate receiving rewards and recognition in EXP, but this will not have a significant impact on their engagement with EXP. Employees expect and demand tangible outcomes to emerge from their ideas and suggestions posted on the EXP platform, which is different from recognition messages and monetary rewards in EXP. As a result, tangible outcomes were found to be the most effective resource for employees that contributes to their engagement with EXP. In contrast, some employees believed that providing recognition and rewards in EXP without tangible outcomes would not significantly engage them emotionally, cognitively, or behaviourally with EXP.

The findings of the present research are also inconsistent with technological studies, such as Rooksby *et al.,* (2009) and Paroutis and Al Saleh (2009). For example, Paroutis and Al Saleh (2009) found that the lack of organisational support in recognising and rewarding active users is a major factor that reduces participation in EXP. However, technology studies, focus on the technological aspect and treat employees in the workplace as users. They consider improving technical tools that help with recognition in EXP, rather than addressing the impact on employee use and social engagement with EXP. Unlike Paroutis and Al Saleh (2009) and Rooksby et al.'s (2009) studies, this present work found that rewards and recognition in EXP have a limited impact on engagement with EXP. These authors also did not examine the impact of rewards and recognition on engagement. This research is one of few studies that have examined rewards and recognition's impact on employees' engagement with EXP from an employee's perspective. The analysis of the results found that it is very limited in providing recognition and rewards in EXP, but the majority of employees believe this resource has a limited impact on their social interactions in EXP (engagement with EXP).

Research Contributions and Limitations

To date, the issue of engaging employees with such a new social application, EXP, in the workplace is still under-researched. To the researcher's knowledge, this research is the first study that identifies and investigates the types of OS in EXP. Based on the overall findings analysis, the organisation support types/factors that were found to be the most significant are EXP feedback and attention, and tangible outcomes of EXP. The types/factors considered to have some significance on engagement with EXP are EXP rewards and recognition.

As the present research is theory-driven, this theoretical lens of SET serves as a vehicle to identify the Organization Support resources in the social technology application, EXP, and the impact on employees' engagement with EXP. The findings of this study have both a theoretical and applicative value to employees' use of EXP in the workplace. As SET is one of the most influential theories in HR, this research adopts Social Exchange Theory to be examined in a new context, EXP in the workplace. This research makes theoretical contributions. The first theoretical contribution of this research is in understanding the reciprocity process (black box) in the EXP between two parties, organizations and employees in EXP. The results found that the process of reciprocity in EXP needs to be facilitated and supported by organizations for the effective use of EXP by employees. Second, the results of this research have revealed how transactions/interactions in the EXP are generated between organizations and employees. The results have confirmed that the employees' interactions in the EXP are interdependent and contingent - not dependent, nor independent. Interdependence means the employees' participation in the EXP is contingent on the actions of the organization. In other words, to make

employees use EXP, organizations should provide certain types/resources based on employees' needs and expectations.

Third, the analysis of this research has uncovered a new, a new resource of SET in the EXP context, namely: tangible outcomes. Tangible outcomes of EXP are one of the factors that emerged from data that participants have repeatedly expressed in response to a question about employees' expectations from their employer to reciprocate/exchange with them in EXP. This type of resource advances the SET's resources, namely tangible outcomes (goods and services), in addition to socioemotional resources.

Methodologically speaking, this research used two qualitative triangulated methods: document analysis and semi-structured interviews, to address the research questions. The first methodological original contribution is that the two methods used in the present research combined longitudinal and cross-sectional designs. The document analysis method covered years (longitudinal) which helped to address the research questions. Semi-structured interviews (cross-sectional) were conducted over three months. These two approaches tend to be available for data collection in research studies: longitudinal and cross-sectional research, but this research uses both.

Second, the novelty and uniqueness of using a new source of data, document analysis. The obtained document for this research was unused and unseen. It was an original document that provided very significant findings. The value of this resource is its relevance to the context of this research. The document analysis involved an internal document that contains 157 first-hand comments by employees and an EXP team which were posted on an EXP platform over two years. Additionally, twenty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees who experienced using the EXP. These triangulated methods provide close and in-depth investigation over time.

The discussion of the practical implications of this research has led to a set of recommendations for HR practitioners, managers, and companies. First, this research contributes to HR practitioners and employers by addressing the importance of organisational support. For example, for successful use of EXP, organizations should pay attention to employees' questions in EXP providing immediate and meaningful feedback in EXP, and rewarding and recognising active EXP participants. Moreover, tangible outcomes of EXP are one of the factors that emerged from data that participants have repeatedly expressed in response to a question about employees' expectations from their employer to reciprocate/exchange with them in EXP. A tangible outcome from EXP is based on employees' contribution to EXP, which is one of the resources that most participants have demanded and it significantly impacts their engagement with EXP.

To make clear the contributions to literature and organizations that this research concerns, it is important to clarify what this research has not covered. The limitation of this research is that the empirical result cannot be generalized because it used a single case study based on one single organization. However, theoretical results can be generalized. EXPs can be different from organization to organization depending on several factors, such as the type of EXP, type of the industry, and the size of the company.

Funding Statement

Declarations

Ethical Approval

The ethical approval was obtained from the affiliated university's deanship of scientific research.

Informed Consent

Before the research survey questionnaire, the participants received a consent form, having read and understood the research's purpose. The consent form included the author's contact details for inquiries about the study and withdrawal from participation. Moreover, the questionnaire survey tool does not state the participants' information would remain confidential and used solely for the study.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Availability of Data

Data are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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