Journal of Commerce & Accounting Research
10 (1) 2021, 25-32
http://publishingindia.com/jcar/

Submitted: 27 June, 2020
Accepted: 16 December, 2020

WORK ENGAGEMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS: A STUDY AMONG UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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Abstract *Despite the growing relevance of employee engagement since 1990's, organizations still struggle to keep the employees engaged. High level of engagement results into multiple enriching effects on organizations. Previous studies have highlighted the significance of both personal and organizational resources in engaging employees. This paper aims to determine the level of work engagement of university teachers in India and to examine whether demographic factors influence work engagement. Demographic factors included gender, age, years of experience, designation, employment status, educational qualification, and marital status. Data collected from 282 university teachers were statistically analyzed. The finding of the study revealed the above-average level of engagement among university teachers. Results showed that the work engagement level differed significantly with age, employment status, designation, and marital status. However, no significant difference in work engagement was found based on gender, educational qualifications, and years of experience. The study contributes to the scant literature on work engagement and its relationship with demographic variables in a non-western setting.*

Keywords: *Work Engagement, Demographic Factors, Teachers, ANOVA, India*

INTRODUCTION

The effective utilization of human resources is the need of the hour in this rapidly changing nature of work. The effective utilization of human capital can bring sustainable and competitive advantage to the organization. An important way in which such utilization of human resources could be done is by engaging them (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). As a concept, work engagement highlights the increasing trend towards positive psychology where the focus is now to study the positive aspects of employees, i.e. well-being, human strength, optimal functioning, flow as compared to negative states, i.e. burnout, weaknesses (Bakker et al., 2008). Such a surge in interest can be attributed to the positive psychology movement started by Martin E.P. Seligman (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Kahn (1990) conceptualized the first work on employee engagement, and, since then, many authors have contributed to the literature on employee engagement. Numerous researches have highlighted the blooming interest in the concept of employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011; Christian et al., 2011; Saks, 2019).

Researchers have shown several positive consequences of engaged employees including in-role job performance (Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker & Bal, 2010), organizational citizenship behavior (Roberson & Strickland, 2010; Ariani, 2013), innovative work behavior (Agarwal et al., 2012; Agarwal, 2014), lower turnover (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), job satisfaction (Saks, 2006), organizational commitment (Hakanen et al., 2006), etc. Studies have also examined the factors predicting work engagement mainly job, organizational and personal factors (Hakanen et al., 2006; Saks, 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Bakker et al., 2008; Crawford et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2013). However, little efforts have been made to study the impact of demographic factors on the work engagement level of employees. Therefore, this study attempted to the impact of individual differences in the profile of employees on work engagement.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Work Engagement

Employee engagement is a buzzword that has received considerable attention since 1990s among both practitioners as well as academicians. The origin of the literature on work engagement started from the work of Khan (1990). He conceptualized the concept of personal engagement and disengagement using the grounded theory approach by understanding the perceptions, behavior, and experiences of employees. Khan (1990, p. 694) defined employee engagement as "harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work role; in engagement, people

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employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance" and, since then, many authors have added to the literature on employee engagement.

Maslach and Leiter (1997) conceptualized engagement as a positive antithesis of burnout and stated that engagement and burnout are the opposite endpoints of a single consortium. This implies that an individual who scores high on engagement shall be low on burnout and vice versa. Therefore, engagement is characterized according to three dimensions, i.e. energy, involvement, and efficacy, which are direct opposites of the three dimensions of burnout, i.e. exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy, respectively.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) provided a new version of engagement in terms of work engagement. They redefined the engagement-burnout consortium proposed by Maslach and Leiter (1997). Sachufeli et al. (2002) disregarded the view that engagement and burnout are the opposite ends of the same consortium. They stated that engagement and burnout are two distinct constructs, negatively related to each other. They defined work engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (p. 74). Whereby, "Vigor" means a high level of energy and resilience while working and the ability to overcome the difficulty. "Dedication" is characterized by a sense of inspiration, enthusiasm, pride, significance, and challenge. It includes both cognitive and affective dimensions. "Absorption" refers to being fully concentrated and focused on one's work, whereby the time passes quickly and one finds it difficult to detach from the work.

Saks (2006) provided a multidimensional model to study employee engagement and highlighted the multiple roles that people have to perform in the organization. He defined engagement as "a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance" (p. 602). Shuck et al. (2017, p. 269) systematically examined the engagement literature and redefine it as a "positive, active, work-related psychological state operationalized by maintenance, intensity, a direction of cognitive, emotional and behavioral energy."

In this study, work engagement conceptualization of engagement has been used as proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). This formulation is well conceptualized and widely accepted in the literature. Existing work on engagement largely draws from a resource perspective, wherein the majority of the studies have emphasized the job, organizational and personal resources on work engagement. Many antecedents of employee engagement have been studied in the literature including job characteristics (Saks, 2006), co-worker and supervisor support (May et al., 2004; Hakanen et al., 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), opportunities for professional development (Bakker & Bal, 2010), reward and recognition (Saks, 2006), personal factors such as; hope, self-efficacy, and optimism (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). However, emphasis on the role of demographic differences in the engagement level of employees has been less. As a result, the relationship between demographic factors and work engagement has been muddy and needed further attention.

Work Engagement and Demographic Factors

Workforce diversity is an indispensable part of every organization today. People belonging to different demographic groups have different needs and wants. To manage such a diverse workforce, organizations must treat each employee differently and traditional one-size-fits-all approach shall not work. Previous studies have shown a significant difference in the engagement level of employees with different demographics such as age, gender, educational qualification, tenure, etc.

Studies on gender differences provided inconsistent and inconclusive findings. Many studies found no significant difference in the engagement level of employees based on gender (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Chaudhary and Rangnekar., 2017; Coetzee and Rothmann., 2005; Sharma et al., 2017). Schaufeli et al. (2006), in their scale-validation study from among a sample of 10 different countries, found a very weak and vague relationship between engagement and gender. They found that engagement level does not differ with respect to gender among Australian, Canadian, and French sample.

Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) conducted a study among 404 business-level executives in India and found no significant difference in the engagement level of employees based on gender.

One of the reasons for such findings as pointed out by Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) is due to the difference in the cultural environment and economic development of India. While some studies found that the engagement level of female employees tends to be higher than their male counterparts (Avery et al., 2007; Rothbard, 2001). While some studies suggested that the engagement level of female employees tends to be higher than their male counterparts (Avery et al., 2007; Rothbard, 2001), few studies have shown that female employees display a higher level of exhaustion, and therefore, are at a higher risk of developing stress and burnout due to both home, and work responsibility. As a result, female employees report a low level of engagement than male (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2006).

With respect to age, Chaudhary and Rangnekar's (2017) study showed that engagement level differs significantly across age, and young employees show less engagement than employees who are old. The reason pointed out in the study is that the employees who are young, i.e. below 25 years are more likely to shift jobs and give importance to opportunities for growth and development than to stability. Wissing and Van Eeden (2002) from a sample of two universities in South Africa found that the level of psychological well-being is higher in older employees than younger employees.

Maslach et al. (2001) found that the level of burnout among young employees tends to be higher than those who are in the age group of the late 30s and 40s because they are more likely to quit their job. Haley et al. (2013) pointed out that young employees are more likely to experience burnout due to a lack of coping skills in dealing with workplace situations that comes with experience. Other studies that showed a significant difference in the engagement level of employees based on the age of employees include Mostert and Rothmann (2006), Coetzee and de Villiers (2010), James et al. (2007). Whereas, few studies found no significant relationship between work engagement and age (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Sharma & Rajput, 2017).

Studies that have shown no effect of education qualification on the engagement level of employees include studies of Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017), Sharma and Rajput (2017), and Avery et al. (2007). While Garg (2014), among studies of diverse industries in India, found a negative relationship between educational qualification and employee engagement. Regarding the relationship between the designation of employees and employee engagement, Avery et al. (2007), Vanam (2009), and Xu, and Cooper-Thomas (2011) studies found a positive association between the designation of employees and level of employee engagement.

Towers Perrin (2003) also found the engagement level of a senior executive is higher than any other group. A possible reason as stated is that senior executive possesses those job resources that enable them to stay more engaged in terms of autonomy, challenge, information access, growth opportunities, and authority. Coetzee and Villiers (2010) conducted the study among employees working in financial institutions in South Africa and found that permanently employed employees have a higher level of engagement than those in a temporary contract position. They mentioned that permanent employees have a greater sense of job security, job resources, and efficacy in dealing with the challenges posed by the workplace.

Studies on the relationship between marital status and engagement level of employees are limited. Shukla et al. (2015) surveyed the employees of e-commerce company in India and showed that married employees tend to be more engaged than unmarried employees. However, Sharma et al. (2017) from among a sample of 303 employees working in Indian IT organizations found no significant difference in the engagement level of married and unmarried employees.

Regarding the relationship between years of experience and work engagement, Xu and Copper-Thomas (2011) from among a sample of employees working in an insurance company in New Zealand found no relationship. Sharma and Rajput (2017a) among a study of employees working in the IT sector in India also found no significant difference in the engagement level of employees based on tenure. Whereas, some studies have found an inverse relationship (Brim, 2002; Robinson et al., 2004). Brim (2002) study from among a database of 1.4 million employees in 66 countries found an inverse relationship between tenure and engagement level of employees. Robinson et al. (2004) also reported that overall engagement is highest among the employees in the first year of their employment and keeps on decreasing as tenure increases. As the tenure of employees in the organization increases, there are more opportunities for the employees to experience contract breach and disappointments that in turn reduces their satisfaction and engagement level (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). A review of the literature highlights the vague and diverse results regarding the impact of the demographic variable on the engagement level of employees.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the literature review, the study aims to examine the relationship between demographic factors and work engagement among university teachers in India. Considering this, the present study aims to examine the following research questions:

- What is the level of work engagement among university teachers in India?
- Is there any difference in the work engagement level of teachers based on different demographic groups such as; gender, educational qualification, designation, employment status, marital status, age, years of experience?

METHOD

Measures

To measure work engagement, the shorter version of the Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) consisting of 9-items is used against the original 17-items UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This scale consist of three subscales, i.e. Vigor-3 items (Cronbach's alpha: 0.737), dedication-3 items (Cronbach's

alpha: 0.731), and absorption-3 items (Cronbach's alpha: 0.643). Chronbach's alpha for the overall scale was 0.830. All the items of UWES were measured on a 5-point Likert scale wherein 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. At the time of data collection, the meaning of all the three dimensions of engagement was explained to the respondents with the help of examples and respondents query on any of the question of UWES was answered and clarified.

The reason for using the shorter version of UWES is that many studies have reported the better fit of UWES-9 as compared to UWES-17 (Nerstad et al., 2010; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013, Sharma & Rajput, 2017b). Further, this study selected the scientifically driven scale that has been widely used in academic literature and excluded the consultancy's firm measure of engagement (such as, Gallup workplace audit). As there are little claims regarding the validity and reliability of practitioners measure and no psychometric data is available for their measure (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Harter et al. (2002) stated that Gallup Q12 measures the employee's perceptions of work conditions instead of measuring the engagement itself. Practitioners' measure of engagement is more directed towards assessing the workplace conditions rather than measuring the dimensions of engagement itself (Christian et al., 2011).

In academic literature, some measures of engagement have been found in addition to UWES namely, May et al. (2004) model of personal engagement, measuring engagement based on three dimensions, i.e. emotional, cognitive and physical; Saks's (2006) model of engagement that classified engagement into the job and organizational engagement. In the literature, UWES is the most widely used measure of engagement as it has proved to have consistent factorial structure across both nations and various occupational groups and its score also remains relatively stable across time (Schaufeli & Bakker., 2010). Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) reported that 83% of PsycINFO uses the UWES questionnaire.

Sample

Data for the present study were collected through a survey method by administering a questionnaire. Data were collected from teachers teaching in various affiliated undergraduate colleges of the University of Delhi, India. The University of Delhi is one of the largest universities in India with 86 academic departments, 90 colleges, with 13 more institutes spread all over the city. National Institutional Ranking Framework ranked the University of Delhi on 14th rank overall and 7th among universities in India in the year 2018 (National Institutional Ranking Framework, 2018). For data collection, clusters were made based on various zones of the University of Delhi, i.e. North, South, West, and Daula Kuan zone. Efforts were made to collect an approximately equal number of data from each zone. A Google form of the questionnaire was created and mailed to all the faculty members whose email IDs could be obtained from the website of their respective colleges. In the case of certain colleges, no details of teachers were available on their websites, so a hard copy of the questionnaire was given directly to teachers by the researcher. The cover letter was also attached to the questionnaire to explain the objectives of the study and assuring the confidentiality to respondents.

After collecting the data through both online and offline responses, it was coded to store and import in SPSS 20. Data editing was done by checking the errors, omissions, discrepancies, and missing values, and this was done by computing the frequency distribution of each question in the questionnaire in SPSS. While checking for individual cases, case screening was done, where missing values and unengaged responses were checked. Initially, 288 responses were received; out of these 11 responses had missing data. Among 11 incomplete responses, 6 were unengaged responses as these respondents did not answer more than 10% of the questions in the questionnaire. So, these 6 unengaged responses were eliminated (Hair et al., 2010). The rest of the missing values in 5 responses were filled with the series mean score method in SPSS to facilitate data analysis (Little & Rubin, 1989).

After data cleaning, a final sample of 282 complete responses was retained. Out of 282 responses, 181 were female respondents (i.e. 64%) and the remaining 101 were male respondents (i.e. 36%). According to the designation of respondents, 243 were assistant professors, 39 were associate professors. According to the employment status of respondents, 189 were contractual/ adhoc and 93 were permanent faculty. Based on educational qualification, 176 were postgraduates, 95 were doctorates, and 11 were post-doctorates. Based on age, 125 respondents were below the age of 30 years, 128 were in the age group of 31-50 years, and 29 were in the age group of above 50 years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the study, data analysis was done using Descriptive statistics, Independent sample T-test, Analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Post-hoc test. These analyses were done using statistical software SPSS20.

To examine the work engagement level among university teachers, descriptive statistics were calculated. Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and inter-correlation among work engagement and its three dimensions, i.e. vigor, dedication, and absorption. Results of descriptive statistics show the mean score of 4.34 for overall work engagement, which indicates a high level of work engagement among respondents i.e. above the average. University teachers

displayed a slightly higher level of dedication as compared to the other two dimensions of engagement. Inter-correlation between the dimensions of work engagement varied from moderate to high.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations for Work Engagement

Sr. No.	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4
1.	Work engagement	4.34	0.58	1			
2.	Vigor	4.11	0.74	0.862*	1		
3.	Dedication	4.50	0.61	0.919*	0.679*	1	
4.	Absorption	4.34	0.67	0.859*	0.606*	0.705*	1

Note: * Correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed).
Source: Author's own

To examine whether the level of work engagement varied with gender, study responses were classified into two groups, i.e. male and female; the analysis was done using independent sample T-test. Although mean of work engagement was found to be slightly higher for male teachers (Mean = 4.36, Std deviation = 0.58) than female teachers (Mean = 4.33, Std deviation = 0.59), study results (Table 2) indicate no significant difference in the engagement level of male and female teachers.

To examine whether the work engagement level differs across employees based on educational qualifications, respondents were divided into two groups; respondents with a doctoral degree and respondents without a doctoral degree. The overall mean of engagement score was found to be higher for employees with a doctoral degree (Mean = 4.411, Std deviation = 0.534) than employees without a doctoral degree (Mean = 4.302, Std deviation = 0.615). However, independent sample T-test results, as shown in Table 2. Reveal no significant difference in the overall work engagement [t(280) = 1.503, P = 0.134] of employees with different educational qualifications.

Further to examine whether engagement level differs with the designation of employees, two groups of respondents were created, i.e. Assistant professor and Associate professor. Results of independent sample t-test as shown in Table 2 indicate a significant difference in the overall engagement level of two groups at 0.05 level of significance [t(280) = 2.508, P = 0.13]. The work engagement level of Associate professor (Mean = 4.560, Std deviation =0. 479) was found to be higher than that of Assistant professors (Mean = 4.308, Std deviation = 0. 596). A possible reason for such results is that employees who are at a higher level in the organization have more autonomy, more say in decision-making, have more access to organizational information, which makes their work more interesting. Thus, employees at a higher position in organizations experience meaningfulness and display a higher level of engagement (Kahn, 1990).

Table 2: Impact of Gender, Education Qualification, Designation, Employment Status and Marital Status on Work engagement

Work Engagement			
Sr. No.	**Variables**	**T-Value**	**Significance**
1.	Gender	0.337	0.736
2.	Educational Qualification	1.503	0.134
3.	Designation	2.508	0.013*
4.	Employment status	2.436	0.015*
5.	Marital status	2.841	0.005*

Note: Significant at *P<0.05

To answer whether the engagement level varies based on the employment status of employees, respondents were divided into two groups, i.e. Adhoc teachers and Permanent teachers. As shown in Table 2, results of independent sample t-test revealed a significant difference in the engagement level of teachers based on employment status at 0.05 level of significance [t(280) = 2.436, P = 0.015].

The work engagement level of Permanent teachers (Mean = 4. 463, Std deviation = 0. 545) was found to be higher than of ad-hoc teachers (Mean = 4. 284, Std deviation = 0. 599). A possible reason for such results could be the lack of job security and other benefits, such as medical benefits, leaves, lower pay, etc., that are there with Adhoc teachers working in the university. Previous researches have shown that job insecurity act as a job demand that is negatively related to employee engagement (Stander & Rothmann, 2010). Further, to examine the impact of marital status on the engagement level of employees, respondents were divided into two groups, i.e. married and unmarried. Results of the t-test as shown in Table 2 indicate a statistically significant difference [t(280) = 2.841, P = 0.005] at 0.05 level of significance. Employees who are married (Mean = 4. 419, Std deviation = 0. 571) were found to be more engaged than those who are unmarried (Mean = 4. 217, Std deviation = 0. 594). A possible reason for such results could be that

married employees have more responsibility than those who are single, and therefore, they are less likely to leave the organization. Persistence with the organization brings a sense of belonging, connection, and commitment with the organization improves interpersonal relations with time and leads to the feeling of engagement. Therefore, an employee who is settled in both personal and professional life is likely to be more engaged than those who are single.

Table 3: Impact of Age and Years of Experience on Work Engagement

Work Engagement			
Sr. No	**Variables**	**F-Value**	**Significance**
1.	Age	6.348	0.002*
2.	Years of experience	1.996	0.138

Note: Significant at *P<0.05

To examine the significant difference in the engagement level of employees based on age, employees were grouped into three age groups: "Below 30", "31-50", and "51 and above."

To analyze this relationship, one-way ANOVA was used. Table 3 indicates a significant difference in the engagement level of employees based on age [F (2,279) = 6.348, P = 0.002] at 0.05 level of significance. Post-hoc test by using the turkey method showed a significant difference in the overall mean level of work engagement score in the age group of below 30 (Mean = 4.254, Std deviation= 0.609) and 51 and above (Mean = 4.584, Std deviation=0.424). Also, a significant difference in engagement level was found in the age group of 31-50 (Mean = 4.322, Std deviation = 0.424) and 51 and above (Mean = 4.584, Std deviation = 0.424). Whereas, no significant difference in engagement level was found in the age group of 30 and 31-50.

Finally, to examine whether engagement level differs based on years of experience of employees, three groups of respondents were formed, i.e. experience "upto 5," "above 5 upto 15," and "above 15" years. As shown in Table 3, the result of one-way ANOVA showed no significant difference in engagement level based on years of experience [F (2,279) = 1.996, P = .138] at 0.05 level of significance. Robinson et al. (2004) highlighted that the engagement level of employees based on tenure depends on the kind of experience provided by the organization.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

There are some limitations to this study. First, the study was conducted among the public higher education colleges of University in Delhi and NCR region of India. Second, data for the study were collected using self-reports; so, results may partly be influenced by common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Future research should replicate the findings of this study for other types of universities, as well as among employees of different occupational groups in India to generalize the findings. Future studies should include other demographic variables such as income, nature of organization, religion, culture, generational difference, etc. Future studies should also try to probe more into finding the specific reasons for the difference in the engagement level of employees based on age, designation, employment status, and marital status by doing a qualitative study.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate the above-average level of work engagement among university teachers, indicating that the university is able to create an engaging and enriching environment for the teachers. Finding also suggests that the engagement level of employees differs significantly based on demographic factors such as age, designation, employment status, and marital status. While no significant difference was found based on gender, years of experience, and educational qualification.

The study provides an in-depth and adequate explanation of the differences and summarizes the diverse, contradictory, and clustered findings on the relationship between demographic factors and work engagement. Results indicate that "one-size-fits-all" approach to engage diverse workforce shall not work and different strategies to engage employees need to be framed mindful of differences concerning age, designation, employment status, and marital status of employees such that diverse needs and aspirations of employees could be catered in a better way.

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