

Factors Affecting Employee Organizational Engagement in the Indian Context

Pratibha Maan & Dinesh Kumar Srivastava

The present study proposes employee benefits, work environment, and employee development as the determinants of employee organizational engagement and hypothesizes that there is a positive association between them. We collected primary data using an online survey from Indian working professionals and the data was analyzed in SPSS by employing significant statistical tests such as reliability, correlation, and multiple regression for hypotheses testing. The findings depict that except employee benefits, work environment and employee development show positive linkages with employee organizational engagement. The study depicts that more than the benefits employees seek healthy work environments and advanced development programs to be engaged in the organization for a longer time.

Pratibha Maan (E-mail: Pratibha.Maan.2017@nitie.ac.in) is Ph.D. Research Scholar (Fellow) & **Dinesh Kumar Srivastava** (E-mail: Srivastava@nitie.ac.in) is Professor, Department of Organizational Behavior & Human Resource Management, National Institute of Industrial Engineering (NITIE), Powai, Mumbai 400087

Introduction

In the prevailing competitive environments, the constant challenges for the organizational scholars and industry experts are to engage employees and make them feel satisfied at the workplace, as an engaged workforce maximizes the organizational success by putting forth their knowledge and skills to the best of their competencies. Loehr (2005) mentions: that “it is the ratio of engaged to disengaged workers that drives the financial outcomes and impacts profitable growth”. Therefore, if the employees are engaged and committed to their respective jobs, they deliver higher productivity, through which organizations gain a competitive edge (Haque et al., 2021). Needless to mention engaged employees prove to be resourceful for the companies, however, it is a laborious task, as a report by Gallup highlights that 51 percent of employees feel “disengaged” in the workplace, whereas 13 percent are “actively disengaged”, i.e., those who feel miser-

able and spread negativity to their colleagues (White, 2022). These data points themselves are the startling signals for the industry managers who want to retain their employees for longer times. Studies also report that ambitious employees are more likely to be demanding at workplaces and if their needs remain unmet, they might leave the organizations (Hirschi & Spurk, 2021). Moreover, the challenges are further exacerbated when the ambitious employees feel disengaged and show low performances leading to sharp declines in their overall organizational commitment. Furthermore, managers opine that engaging employees at work are burdensome due to unconcealable barriers to the process of employee engagement such as employees feeling not being valued and rewarded for their contributions, lack of involvement in decision-making, inadequate resource support, lesser knowledge about companies' mission and goals, generational differences, etc., (Bhowal & Saini, 2019). Thus, the management personnel finds themselves constantly modernizing the best engagement strategies to extract the best from their employees' knowledge and skills and to retain them for longer times. To achieve this, the management exercises and focuses on providing many employee benefits such as paid leaves, work-from-home, health and life insurance, parental leaves, etc., but largely remains ineffective in their endeavors (Banerjee & Yadav, 2016). The present study, therefore, addresses this constraint by arguing that employees do not only seek benefits but rather aspire for more. We, therefore, propose that, along with the employee benefits, a healthy work

environment and adequate investment in the development of employees from their employers would enhance employees' organizational engagement.

We collected data from Indian working professionals, and later the data was analyzed by employing statistically significant tests. The study substantiates that, more than providing benefits to the employees, the management should rather focus on building a healthy work environment and investing in employees' overall development to motivate and retain them. Also, the study can be generalized to the younger generation as the sample is largely inclined toward the younger generational employees more than the older ones.

Employee Benefits & Employee Organizational Engagement

Employee benefits were introduced during the twentieth century, when employers started paying extra benefits apart from direct compensation, such as health/ life insurance, parental leaves, paid leaves, etc. to their employees (Dulebohn, 2009; Balkin & Werner, 2022). Research indicates that employers provide benefits to employees to motivate and inspire them which further promotes their job satisfaction, worker loyalty, and engagement (Klonoski, 2016; Reissova et al., 2019). Also, employees who feel appropriately redressed, through their reimbursement or additional day off, indicate a superior engagement level.

Further, studies show employee benefits such as flexible working arrange-

ments (FWAs) depict positive linkages with employee engagement and more dominantly with overall employee well-being (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). If the company employees are engaged, it is most likely to bear maximum outcomes in terms of financial and other aspects. Therefore, it is the fundamental account of the human resource personnel to make employees feel engaged both physically and psychologically to create proficiency for the organization (Sudjiwanati & Pinastikasari, 2020).

Employers are advised to form long-term benefits strategies to retain employees.

Research highlights that if employees are satisfied with the overall employee benefits programs and policies, their dedication toward organizational engagement becomes superior (Malhotra et al., 2007). Further, the previous studies assert that among other constructs such as personality and job satisfaction, reward and benefits given to the employees had substantial direct effects on organizational engagement (Widodo & Damayanti, 2020). Similarly, Daniel (2019) has coined that when employees are compensated fairly and justifiably, they perform better. In addition, Miarkolaei (2014) have found that employee members who felt content with the given pay, direction, benefits, and associates become much more attached to the organization which gives a boost to their organizational engagement. Moreover, the employer's role is significant in not only providing the required benefits

but also observing and understanding that employees seek stable and assured benefits programs, therefore, employers are advised to form long-term benefits strategies to retain employees (Galanaki, 2019).

Furthermore, employers should recognize that employee benefits are necessary not only because these are regulated by laws but also because employees reciprocate based on the benefits provided to them. This "give-and-take" equation between employers and employees could be understood by "Social exchange theory" (SET), i.e., "to explain the motivation behind the exchange of attitudes and behaviors between individuals" (Blau, 1968). This theory explains that employees expect their employers to provide them for their labor, and based on the treatment they get, they further reciprocate (Anitha, 2014; Xiu et al., 2019).

H1: Employee benefits will influence employee organizational engagement positively.

Work Environment & Employee Organizational Engagement

The literature depicts that it is the environment of an organization that largely determines the degree to which employees feel involved in organizational functioning. If the work environment exhibits such qualities where employees have a feeling of being valued, the chances of them becoming more engaged are heightened (Bhappu & Schultze, 2018; Babu et al., 2020). Positive and

strong workspaces assist its employees by delivering healthy working relationships, taking inputs from employees in decision-making processes that in turn give them a feeling of inclusion, and giving them sufficient learning prospects for their growth and development (Parent & Lovelace, 2018; Bija, 2020; Sudjiwanati & Pinastikasari, 2020). Hanaysha, (2016) mentions that work culture demonstrates a positive and significant association with organizational commitment. Similarly, Pitaloka & Sofia, (2014) reported that in a healthy work environment, employees' job satisfaction increases which positively impacts their organizational commitment. The importance of establishing a healthy and profound workspace is critical which showcases the healthy relationships between employers and other colleagues resulting in maximizing employees' organizational commitment (Giffords, 2009; Ahakwa et al., 2021).

H2: The work environment will influence employee organizational engagement positively.

Employee Development & Employee Organizational Engagement

Employee development is a mechanism through which their aspirations are aligned with the organizational goals and pursuits so that it could lead to better organizational effectiveness and performance. Studies show that organizations that have invested in the career development of their employees have witnessed successes as employees felt more engaged and thus contributed more (Ali

et al., 2019; Veriyanti & Nurhayati, 2022). Further, if employers create the proper training programs to enrich employees' careers, then they feel more engaged and are motivated to set forth their best endeavors for the organization (Nasidi, 2020). The career development programs are not only for the employees but essential for the organizational survival too, as these help in training and upgrading the workforce to deliver better for the organizations that operate in a threatened and aggressive environment. Therefore, to attract, motivate and retain their employees organizations should focus on their career development (Hendrawan & Pogo, 2021).

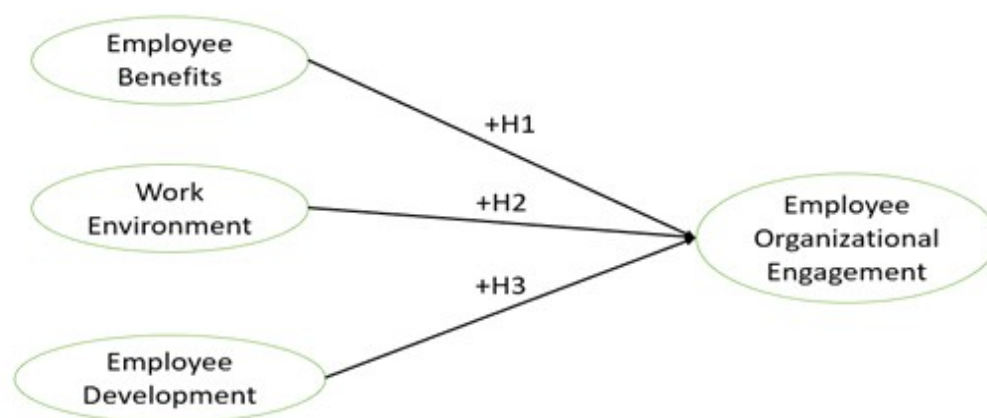
To attract, motivate and retain their employees organizations should focus on their career development.

Furthermore, literature reports that employee career development and job satisfaction share a positive effect with organizational commitment (Rahayu, 2019). Studies report that if employers invest carefully in their employees' development it has a direct impact on reducing the employees' turnover intention as it enhances the job satisfaction of the employees. Also, career development was found to be highly positively associated with employee organizational commitment (Dewi & Nurhayati, 2021). Widyastuti, (2019) reveals that among other variables such as compensation, employee development showed the highest positive relationship with organizational

engagement. The proposed conceptual model depicting all hypotheses has been shown in Fig. 1.

H3: Employee development will influence employee organizational engagement positively.

Fig. 1 Proposed Conceptual Model



Sample & Data Collection

The present study has adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive studies report (who, what, when, and where) the topic under observation (Hardy, 2001) and are employed to gather information about the prevailing conditions (Salaria, 2012). The study used the convenience sampling method. A Self-administered survey questionnaire, between January and March 2022, was sent to Indian working professionals who worked in different sectors and major cities like Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Mumbai. A total of 152 responses were received, out of which 147 could be used for analysis purposes as the rest were inconsistent. Based on gender classification, 70.7 percent were male respondents and 29.3 percent were female respondents. The maximum number of participants

(86.9 percent) belonged to the age group ranging from 24 to 28 years. The highest number of respondents (71.5 percent) had an experience of 1 - 3 years. Also, 79.6 percent of respondents belonged to the private sector, and 20.4 percent belonged to the public sector. The data collection was done online, a survey link was sent to potential respondents, who filled in the form and submitted it through the link. The survey consisted of self-report, Likert-style questions.

Employee Benefits

Employee benefits were measured with the scale developed by Balkin and Griffeth (1993), the scale contains Likert-style questions varying from 1 ("very dissatisfied") to 5 ("very satisfied"). The scale items were related to the "employer's contribution to retirement", "the quality of the retirement plan", and so on.

Work Environment

The work environment was measured through the scale developed by Sander et al. (2019), the scale contains Likert-style questions varying from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). Items were, e.g., “Allows me to feel a sense of belonging to the organization”.

Employee Development

The support for employee development was determined with the scale developed by Maurer et al. (2003). The scale contains Likert-style questions ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items were, e.g., “our company places much value on employee learning and development activities”.

Employee Organizational Engagement

The construct of employee engagement was measured with the scale adopted by Saks (2006) and Lee et al. (2014) by incorporating two sub-dimensions i.e., ‘organizational’, e.g., “Being a member of this company is very captivating”, and ‘job engagement’, e.g., “I throw myself into my job”. The scale

contains Likert-style questions varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis & Results

The fitness of data was accessed through descriptive statistics; reliability, and bivariate correlations, and hypothesis testing was done using regression analysis. The data were analyzed using SPSS (v21) software. For reliability purposes, Nunnally (1967) has suggested Cronbach’s alpha value $\alpha > 0.7$ should be the minimum threshold for a construct. In the present study, all the scales are reliable, showing internal inconsistency in the items. Further, the employed correlation shows positive and significant relationships between the antecedents and descendent variables of the study. Employee benefits as an independent variable have a positive but low association with employee organizational engagement ($r = .286$; $p < 0.05$). The work environment as an antecedent has a positive and high relationship with Employee organizational engagement ($r = .585$; $p < 0.05$). Further, employee development as an antecedent has a positive and high relationship with employee organizational engagement ($r = .639$; $p < 0.05$) (Table 1).

Table 1 Reliabilities & Correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Employee Benefits	4.93	1.12	(0.71)			
Work Environment	4.88	1.10	.525*	(0.79)		
Employee Development	4.50	1.17	.464*	.589*	(0.84)	
Employee Organizational Engagement	4.59	1.09	.286*	.585*	.639*	(0.85)

Notes. (N=147), Scale alpha reliabilities are given on the diagonal (in parentheses); all correlations are significant at * $p < 0.05$.

Hypotheses Testing

The study has employed the regression technique to investigate the extent of predictability of independent variables on dependent variables i.e. if the independent variables have some effect on the dependent variables. We ran a regression model by taking employee organizational engagement as the dependent variable, and employee benefits, work environment, and employee development as the independent variables. The

result of the model explained ($R^2 = .48$) 48 percent of the variance and that the independent variables, work environment ($B = .366, p = .000$) and employee development ($B = .447, p = .000$) could predict the outcome variable i.e., employee organizational engagement up to 48 percent. However, employee benefits as an antecedent could not contribute to predicting employee organizational engagement ($B = -.128, p = .070$). The overall model was also significant, $F(3, 143) = 45.239, p = .000$ (Table 2).

Table 2 Results of Regression Analysis

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
(Constant)	1.430	.342		.000
EB	-.128	.070	-.132	.070
WE	.366	.078	.371	.000 ^a
ED	.447	.070	.482	.000 ^a
R^2		.487		
F		45.239		

Notes. Dependent variable: Employee organizational engagement

Independent variables: EB= Employee Benefits; WC=Work Environment; ED= Employee Development; ^a $p < 0.05$

Discussion & Managerial Implications

The business environments have become intense and organizational scholars are seeking new ways and possibilities to survive in the market before any competitors take over them. Needless to say, companies plan out their functional activities including manufacturing, financial, human resource, and marketing strategies meticulously to be a leader in their respective market segments as it is the human resource of any firm that acts as the 'heart and soul' of an organization as they provide a competitive edge to

any organization. Therefore, it becomes imperative for managers to keep their employees motivated, engaged, and committed to the organization. The present study aimed to propose that employee benefits, work environment, and employee development would act as the drivers of employee organizational engagement. To our surprise, the study results show that employee benefits have no sig-

The study results show that employee benefits have no significant association with employee organizational engagement.

nificant association with employee organizational engagement. Therefore, we failed to accept H1. The existing literature report mixed findings, in some cases, the justifiable level of benefits available to the employees are treated as the first steppingstone in their engagement practices (Coffman, 2000). Whereas literature also reports that once the basic pay and other benefits are fulfilled the employees are no more concerned about these and they jump to the next highest level of aspirations. Employees start seeking a feeling of being valued and contributing toward more meaningful work, these findings are also in line with “Herzberg’s two-factor theory”, where a lack of basic benefits given to the employees causes dissatisfaction, but its presence does not lead to satisfaction even (Siruri & Cheche, 2021).

Work environment and employee development both share a positive and significant association with employee organizational engagement.

The study also reports that work environment and employee development both share a positive and significant association with employee organizational engagement therefore, supporting H2 and H3. These findings stand in line with the existing narrative as a healthy and strong work environment determines the employees’ engagement level (Khuong & Le Vu, 2014; Ushakov & Shatila, 2021). Furthermore, employee development has emerged as the driver of employee organizational engagement as

mentioned by Markos & Sridevi, (2010), that the best engagement drivers are “non-financial in nature” such as “help people learn and grow”, “empowerment”, etc. The managers are, therefore, advised to craft their engagement policies cautiously and to emphasize motivating factors like opportunities for advancement, personal growth, performance, and achievement, and other job-related responsibilities rather than focusing solely on hygiene factors such as salary, the working condition, the physical working space, etc. (Nickerson, 2021).

Furthermore, the study sample size mostly includes younger employees (24-28 years of age). Research shows that these younger employees demand more meaningful work and career advancement opportunities in comparison to older employees who often sought basic pay and other perks (Bhowal & Saini, 2019). Therefore, managers are suggested to pay adequate attention to these emerging generational differences and shape policies accordingly.

Conclusions & Limitations

Managers recruit the best talents to be part of their organizations so that they perform to the best of the organizational needs and demands. No doubt that these best talents execute tasks more efficiently. However, “the better performer they are, the harder it is to manage them” in terms of motivating and engaging and offering extensive satisfaction to them. As it is said, “it is the best employees who create more

trouble for managers than the average ones”, as they realize their worth quite well and its importance for the organization they are working with. Thus, it becomes a managerial role to seek the factors that engage these employees positively. To do so, the present study has proposed a hypothetical model showing that employee benefits, work environment, and employee development could act as the drivers of employee organizational engagement. Thereafter, the study data were analyzed using the regression method and the results reported that except for employee benefits; work environment and employee development both exhibited a positive association with employee organizational engagement.

Moving forward, we acknowledge that the study also holds some limitations, and advise future scholars to work on the same if it is in alignment with their research interests. Firstly, the study only analyzed three drivers of employee organizational engagement i.e., employee benefits, work environment, and employee development. We accept that there could be other factors that could act as employee organizational engagement drivers such as the “individual employee personality”, as the results and consequences we bear are often a reflection of how one perceives things and other circumstances. Therefore, it could be an exciting field to explore. Secondly, as the study is conducted in the Indian context based on a non probability sampling method i.e., convenience sampling, that too with a smaller sample size, therefore, generalizability issues surface. Fu-

ture studies are suggested to work on larger data samples to enrich the field. Lastly, future scholars could extend this study by investigating multi-generational employees (GenX, GenY, and GenZ) and execute a comparative study based on their engagement strategies requirements, as literature has some signals that these might differ based on the generational association of an employee. This could provide augmented contribution and information to the academia and concerned managers respectively.

As we move and enter new ways of doing business, where virtual environments have become the “new normal” to execute daily tasks, team meetings, and many more. The challenges for employers are escalated as employee engagement has become a tougher task in these virtual environments. It would again be exciting to explore if Indian corporates are ready enough for such disruptions i.e., shifting operations in virtual mode, except for IT/ITes firms, and if the old age managers possess the competency to engage new-age employees in these newer times?

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