

Employee Engagement and Organisational Commitment among It Sector Employees in Kerala



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Employee engagement is a measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization that profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work. Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantages including higher productivity and lower employee turnover. Main purpose of this study is to determine the level of employee engagement by demographic variables and to study its relationship with organisational commitment among select IT sector employees in Kerala. The current study reinforces previous literature, followed by findings, limitations and conclusions.

Keywords: Employee engagement, Organisational commitment

1. Introduction

Indian IT/ITES industry has been witnessing mammoth changes and unparallel growth since its inception. Job hopping, attrition and retention are the major challenges faced by HR professionals in this industry. Having engaged employees has become crucial in present business scenario where organisations look to their employees to take initiatives, bring innovations and optimum solutions to their current needs. Employee Engagement is an emerging topic being studied with differing conceptualizations and has become an important issue as employee turnover rises. This study is an attempt made to examine the relationship of employee engagement with organisational commitment of IT (Information & technology) sector employees in select organisations in Kerala.

In today's highly aggressive structure, organizations can attain unexceptionable levels of performance only when the workforce reveals tenacious commitment towards their errands through higher productivity, self motivation and loyalty. Every organization wants to acquire beneficial features over others and employee engagement is the pre-eminent tool for it. The greater an employee's engagement, the more likely he or she is to "go the extra mile" and deliver excellent on-the-job performance. In addition, engaged employees may be more likely to commit to staying with their current organization. Clearly, engagement and commitment can potentially translate into valuable business results for an organization (Vance, 2006). This study has brought to fore the variations in the level of engagement and commitment based on demographic variables. Thus, by studying employee engagement and organisational commitment together in Indian context, this paper makes a significant contribution to the existing academic literature.

Objectives of the Study

- To ascertain the extent to which employee engagement relates to organizational commitment among select IT companies in Kerala.
- To determine the level of employee engagement by demographic variables (age, work experience and gender).
- To measure the levels of employee engagement experienced by employees in the selected IT organizations in Kerala

Statement of the Problem

Employee engagement is the energy, passion or fire that employees have towards their work and the employer. The challenges today is not just retaining talented people but fully engaged them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work performance. It is not surprising that organizations of all sizes and types have invested substantially in policies and practices that foster engagement and commitment in their workforces. Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantages including higher productivity and lower employee turnover. Understanding the challenges of employee engagement enables the organisations to strategize on how to solve engagement and commitment problems to guarantee continued existence in this competitive environment.

2. Literature Review

Kahn's conceptual work is the first foundation for the development of theoretical framework of employee engagement. Employee engagement is a multidimensional concept (Kahn, 1990). According to Kahn (1990) in employee engagement

people expressed and engaged emotionally, cognitively and physically. The cognitive part of employee engagement is concerned with the thinking of employees about their organization, leaders and working conditions. The emotional part of engagement of employee is related to the feeling of employees about the factors stated above, and employees' attitude towards their leaders and organizations.

According to Scarlett Surveys (2001) employee engagement is a measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization that profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work. Employee engagement, as a work-related state of mind, can be characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour means high levels of energy and mental resilience on the job, persistence in the face of difficulties and a willingness to invest effort in one's work. Dedication refers to a sense of inspiration, pride, significance, enthusiasm and challenge at work. Absorption is being happy, fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one's work so that time passes quickly, with difficulty detaching from work (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004)

Hewitt (2005) describes engagement as the measure of an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success. Clearly, engagement and commitment can potentially translate into valuable business results for an organization. To help reap the benefits of an engaged, committed workforce at any organization, there is need to provide guidelines for understanding and measuring employee engagement, and for designing and implementing effective engagement initiatives. As observed, everyday human resource practices such as recruitment, training, performance management and workforce surveys can provide powerful levers for enhancing engagement (Vance, 2006).

Saks (2006) argues that "Commitment is a state of being in which an individual becomes bound by his actions and beliefs that sustain his activities and his own involvement. Mowday et al defined commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Mowday et al (1982) definition suggests that commitment is a multidimensional construct consisting of what are commonly described as affective commitment, effort commitment and continuance commitment. Employee commitment is critical to the success of any organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) stated that a committed employee is one who will stay with the organization through thick and thin, attend work regularly, put in a full day and may be more, protect company assets and who shares company goals.

3. Research Methodology

Research participants (N=51) was selected based on a convenient sampling process. Data was collected from 70 employees working in IT sector organisations in Kerala irrespective of their current position .The study analysed the 51 responses out of 70 responses collected, which were useful and complete and the rest 19 unfilled were left out.A three section online questionnaire was used for data collection. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of 4 items inquiring about demographic characteristics of respondents such as employees' gender, tenure of office, current position in the organization. The second section consisted of questions related to organisational commitment of the respondents using Allen and Meyer's (1990) instrument. The last section in Employee engagement was assessed with a 17 item version of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Pearson product-moment correlation and Independent t-test were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data collected

4. Measures

Organizational Commitment

Allen and Meyer's (1990) instrument was used with their permission to measure the three dimensions of organizational commitment namely, affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. The three-component commitment scale was viewed as the prevailing conceptualization of organizational commitment (Bergman, 2006). The affective commitment scale consists of eight items. Each subject was asked to indicate the extent to which he/she agree with statements, such as 'I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization' and 'I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it'. The continuance commitment scale consists of eight items. Each subject was asked to indicate the extent to which he/she agree with statements such as 'It would not be too costly for me to leave my organization now' and 'I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization'. The normative commitment scale consists of eight items. Each subject was asked to indicate the extent to which he/she agree with statements such as 'One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organizations that I believe that loyalty is important and therefore, feel a sense of moral obligation to remain'.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was assessed with a Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) and is aimed at measuring the participants' work engagement. The 17-item UWES assesses three underlying dimensions of employee engagement: vigour, dedication, and absorption. The instrument consists of 17 items and is scored on a 7-point frequency scale, ranging from 'never' (0) to 'always' (6). A typical item for Vigour is 'At my work I feel bursting with energy'. A typical item for Dedication is 'I am enthusiastic about my job'. A typical item for Absorption is 'I feel happy when I am working intensely'. A high score indicates high levels of engagement. Each subject was requested to indicate the extent to which he/she agreed with statements in the scale.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** There will be a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and affective commitment.
- **H2:** There will be a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and continuance commitment.
- **H3:** There will be a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and normative commitment..

Relationship between Employee Engagement and Commitment

If employee is highly engaged, then it leads to employee commitment. In this context it is assumed that the relationship between engagement and commitment is very high. The following analysis shows the results that were obtained after administering the questionnaire .The results shown in the following tables represents values of correlation between engagement and three types of organisational commitment.

5. Analysis and Results**Hypotheses Testing**

The first hypothesis (H1) sought to investigate the extent to which employee engagement is related with affective commitment. This hypothesis was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient.

Summary of the results are presented in Table 1 below

Table 1 Correlations

		AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	1	.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	51	51
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.407**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	51	51
		NORMATIVE COMMITMENT	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
NORMATIVE COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	1	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	51	51
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.438**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	51	51

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Source: Primary Data

From Table 1 above, there is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and affective commitment [$r=0.407$, $p<0.05$].

The second hypothesis (H2) sought to investigate the extent to which employee engagement is related with continuance commitment. This hypothesis was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. Summary of the results are presented in Table 2 below

Table 2 Correlations

		CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	1	.308*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.028
	N	51	51
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.308*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	
	N	51	51

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Primary Data

From Table 2 above, there is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and affective commitment [$r=0.308, p<0.05$].

The third hypothesis (H3) sought to investigate the extent to which employee engagement is related with normative commitment. This hypothesis was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. Summary of the results are presented in Table 3 below

Table 3 Correlations

		NORMATIVE COMMITMENT	EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
NORMATIVE COMMITMENT	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	51	51
	Pearson Correlation	.438**	1
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	51	51

From Table 3 above, there is a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and affective commitment [$r=0.438, p<0.05$]. From the Correlations table, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient (r) equals 0.438, indicating a strong relationship, as concluded earlier. $p < 0.05$. Thus, engaged employees are likely to be committed to the organizations. These result confirms the findings of previous studies of the social exchange theory (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003).

Table 4 Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Employee Engagement	Male	29	4.5822	1.27297	.23638
	Female	22	4.4315	1.18612	.25288

Source: Primary Data

Table 4.1 Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Employee Engagement	Equal variances assumed	.136	.714	.431	49	.668	.15067	.34960	-.55187	.85321
	Equal variances not assumed			.435	46.885	.665	.15067	.34616	-.54576	.84710

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 and Table 4.1 show the summary of Independent Samples T Test, mean and standard deviation of gender and employee engagement variables. It reveals that the gender of employees has no significance on their engagement level in IT organizations in Kerala. [$since F=.136, Sig.=which is not less than 0.05$].

One-way ANOVA on employee engagement by age and work experience of employees

ANOVA

Table 5 Employee Engagement and Age

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	17.386	2	8.693	7.217	.002
Within Groups	57.815	48	1.204		
Total	75.201	50			

Source: Primary Data

The one-way ANOVA was carried out on employee engagement by age and work experience. From the above Table .5 age of the employees have significance on the level of employee engagement ($since p=.002, p<0.05$). And work experience of employees has no significance on employee engagement ($since p=.179$ which is not <0.05)

The demographics for the sample and descriptive statistics are shown below.

Table 6 Employee engagement and Work Experience

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.412	4	2.353	1.645	.179
Within Groups	65.789	46	1.430		
Total	75.201	50			

Source: Primary Data

The one-way ANOVA was carried out on employee engagement by age and work experience. From the above Table .5 age of the employees have significance on the level of employee engagement (*since p=.002, p<0.05*). And work experience of employees has no significance on employee engagement (since p=.179 which is not <0.05)

The demographics for the sample and descriptive statistics are shown below.

Table 7

RESPONDENTS		TOTAL	MEAN AGE	MEAN TENURE
GENDER				
MALE	FEMALE	51	1.22	2.71
29	22			

Source: Primary Data

The role of demographic variables will be examined to ascertain whether or not these are correlated with employee engagement..A person’s gender and work experience is found to have no influence on his level of engagement, while age group is positively and significantly correlated with engagement.

Table 8

AGE GROUP	MEAN				
	N	Employee Engagement	Affective Commitment	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment
20-30 YEARS	42	4.5061		3.1220	3.2377
30-40 YEARS	7	5.3109	3.0625 3.3929	3.1964	3.3393
ABOVE 40 YEARS	2	1.9706	2.5625 3.0882	1.9375	2.0000
Total	51	4.5172		3.0858	3.2031

Source: Primary Data

From Table 8 above, the employees of age group 30-40 years have higher levels of engagement and organisational commitment than employees of other age groups.

Table 9

WORK EXPERIENCE	MEAN				
	N	Employee Engagement	Affective Commitment	Continuance commitment	Normative commitment
LESS THAN 1 YEAR	11	3.9091		3.1932	3.3929
1 - 2 YEARS	12	4.4862	2.9886 3.0000	3.0833	3.1667
2- 3 YEARS	15	5.0282	3.2500	3.2000	3.2190
3 - 4 YEARS	7	4.7731	3.2321		
MORE THAN 4 YEARS	6	4.1176	2.8750	3.2321 2.4375	3.3036 2.7708
Total	51	4.5172	3.0882	3.0858	3.2031

Source: Primary Data

Even though work experience has no significance on employee engagement ;the mean score(M=5.0282) of engagement level indicates persons with 2-3 years of experience have high levels of engagement this may be because of the reason that most of the respondents belongs to this category; while the commitment levels vary with the work experience. The mean score of affective commitment(M=3.25) is high for 2-3 years experienced people, while for continuance commitment mean score (M=3.2321)is high for 3-4 years experienced persons and for normative commitment mean score(3.3929) is high for persons with less than one year of experience.

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics of Organisational Commitment

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT DIMENSIONS	Mean	Std. Deviation
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	3.0882	.42960
CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT	3.0858	.56926
NORMATIVE COMMITMENT	3.2031	.56222
AVERAGE	3.1257	.52036

Source: Primary Data

Table 10 shows the mean and standard deviations for the three organizational commitment dimensions under study which are affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. The table indicates that normative commitment is the highest among employees (mean= 3.20, std. Deviation= 0.5622) followed by the affective commitment (mean= 3.09, std. deviation= 0.4296). The lowest type of organizational commitment among the employees is affective commitment (mean= 3.08, std. deviation= 0.56926). On average, employees have moderate commitment within the IT sector in Kerala (mean= 3.12, std. deviation= 0.52036).

The descriptive analysis of data is presented in Table 11. Employee Engagement has been measured in three dimensions viz.: vigour, dedication and absorption.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT DIMENSIONS	Mean	Std. Deviation
VIGOUR	4.2503	1.22631
DEDICATION	4.8745	1.43441
ABSORPTION	4.4804	1.28524
AVERAGE	4.5354	1.3153

Source: Primary Data

Table 11 shows the mean and standard deviations for the three employee engagement dimensions under study which are vigour, dedication and absorption. The above table indicates that dedication is the highest (mean=4.8745, std. deviation=1.43441) among employees who are engaged, followed by absorption (mean=4.4804, std. deviation=1.28524). The lowest type of employee engagement among the employees is vigour (mean=4.2503, std. deviation= 1.22631).On average, employees have high levels of engagement within the IT sector in Kerala (mean= 4.5354, std. deviation=1.3153).

6. Discussion

The study adopted a survey method to study employee work engagement and organizational commitment. The responses to this study were made up 72.8% of respondents comprising of the senior management, middle management and juniors. 56.86% of the respondents were male with 43.14% the respondents being female. The hypothesis that there will be a positive significant relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative) was supported by the analysis. This finding implies that employees who are given the necessary resources by their organizations to perform their tasks effectively tend to respond favourably to the organizations they are committed to. This finding is consistent with results from a study conducted by Saks (2006) when he established that engagement of employees mediated the relationships between the antecedents and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to quit the job, and organizational citizenship behavior. The One-way ANOVA analysis is used to determine the any significant and insignificant difference among the means of two or more independent groups. Table 5 and table 6 shows one – way ANOVA analysis results of variance of demographic variables with work engagement. Results described that all demographic variables do not show the significant variation with work engagement. Descriptive analysis of the dimensions of employee engagement and organisational commitment in IT sector was indicated in table 8 and table7. The Value of mean and SD describe that majority of the employees are properly engaged in their work and moderately committed. The findings of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between employee engagement and organisational commitment.

7. Limitations

The research was limited to IT sector employees in Kerala only. The employees of this dynamic industry are ambitious and look out for better opportunities always. For future consideration this study can be extended to larger sample in order to identify other factors which affect performance of IT employees and if data is also collected from the other sector. In this regard, replicating this study in different settings would be worthwhile to establish the validity and generalizing of the present findings across different contexts. The relative contribution of different psychological climate dimensions in determining employee engagement and commitment should also be investigated because this may provide more specific information about employee perceptions of the organizational environment and how that perceptions increase their engagement and commitment.

8. Conclusion

We can conclude that the importance of employee engagement in the organizational setting is undeniable. Prudent practices of engaging employees should be implemented in the organizations in order to enhance their commitment to the organization. The findings of this study imply that employee engagement is positively correlated to affective, continuance and normative commitment. Employees are the assets of any organization and organizations should adopt impeccable measures to engage their key performers to build a committed work force.

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