



## FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN ITES COMPANIES

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### ABSTRACT

**E**mployee engagement in service industry based on information technology is crucial for its growth. However, there is a huge attrition and loss of knowledge in ITES companies in India. This study focuses on various factors that influence employee engagement in ITES companies. The literature survey extensively searched for the factors influencing the employee engagement in the context of ITES companies. The variables are identified as Job Content, Peer Co operations, Career Growth, Performance Review and Development, Leadership Style, Mentoring and Coaching, Working Environment, Rewards and Recognition, Organizational culture and climate and Compensation. Through this study, the extent of impact of these variables on employee engagement is tested. A survey by using questionnaire is engaged for data collection. The results of data analysis using regression showed that Organisational culture and climate, peer cooperation, Job Content, Mentoring and coaching, leadership style, work environment and compensation has influence on employee engagement and varies it to a major extent. The results are discussed and implications of the study are provided.

**KEYWORDS:** Employee engagement, ITES companies, organisational factors, Stepwise regression

### INTRODUCTION

Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology enabled services (ITes) industry has gained importance due to its huge contribution to Indian economy. India has also become a destination for Research and Development because of its English speaking and analytical skills. Knowledge based industry requires sustenance of its competitive advantage through committed employees working with the organisation for a longer tenure. However, India faces the highest attrition rates as on 2013 edging to topping the World chart of attrition with around 14% employee turnover which was higher than the global average (Biswas, 2013). IT and

ITes companies are battling to reduce their attrition levels through retention strategies and employee engagement. Retaining employees becomes an important need for the company to reduce the turnover cost, loss of crucial knowledge, Interruption of task, sentiments among employees and continued efficiency.

Employee engagement is considered as one of the strategies for retention. An engaged employee is enthusiastic, committed, fascinated and inspired by his/her work. They have strong emotional bond with the organization and care about its future. They are loyal, productive, ethical, accountable and dependable. Engaged

employees require less supervision. They set their own targets and meet the expectations. They are able to set their tasks above their normal duty and responsibilities and work ahead of requirements.

Reasons for low engagement and turnover are different among the organisations. IT and ITeS companies have an influx of young workers and high use of technology at their workplace. The entire environment for the employees is different compared to other industry sectors. However, a benchmarked engagement survey typically doesn't address the issues in such organisations. In this context this study is proposed to study the turnover problems in an ITeS company that is involved in innovation and Business process management, and is one of the world's leading global supplier of technology and services, offering end-to-end Engineering, IT and Business Solutions. This study looks at various organizational factors of employee engagement. This company has over 15,000 associates providing solutions for businesses in areas of engineering services, IT services and business services with focus industries being automotive, industrial technology, consumer goods and building technology.

The organization is known for providing a workplace, which is fun filled, knowledge in depth, opportunities, and encourages employees with more facilities, provide equivalent opportunities, good working environment, provide real designing challenge to work on. However, the organization has a problem in deployment of resources where hardcore mechanical engineer given software coding jobs, cross cultural challenges even with employees coming from various regions within India, and proper grievance addressing mechanism. Therefore, there is a need to understand how the various employee engagement and retention factors will have an influence in the context of innovative company.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Frank et al. (2004, p. 13) define retention as "... the effort by an employer to keep desirable workers in order to meet business objectives". The directive for companies in this time of "war for talent" is to reduce turnover in favour of the retention of talented employees. Previous research has identified several factors relating to employee retention, situated on both organisational and employee levels. On the organisational side, factors influencing retention appear to be the existence of challenging and meaningful work, opportunities for advancement, empowerment, responsibility, managerial integrity and quality and new opportunities/challenges (Birt et al., 2004).

Gibson (2006) based on Kahn (1990) defines employee engagement as "a heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for his or her organization, that influences him or her to exert greater discretionary effort to his or her work". Gallup Consulting (2008) describes employee engagement as "the extent to which employees are psychologically connected to something or someone in the organisation" (p. 11). High levels of employee engagement are associated with high levels of organizational performance (Soladati, 2007). Hytter (2007) demonstrated that workplace factors such as rewards, leadership style, career opportunities, training and development of skills, physical working conditions, and work-life balance, have an indirect influence on retention.

The literature survey extensively searched for the factors influencing the employee engagement in varying contexts. Mehta, Kurbetti, & Dhankhar, (2014) reviewed the findings of research papers of various authors to derive the factors that impact employee commitment and retention in a work environment. They examined the following factors: career development opportunities, effective talent management strategies, recruitment, on boarding and orientation, investment in training and development, compensation and benefits, work life balance, culture of the organisation, leadership, communication, image of the company, autonomy and empowerment, Gallup audits, personal causes, role of HR head and supervisors, work related policies and flexi time, performance appraisals and career growth and development opportunities.

Various studies have found that compensation, job characteristics, training, career opportunities, work-life balance, corporate culture and communication, work environment, job design, promotions, employee recognition, rewards and compensation as important practices dealing with employee turnover and are common across all industries (Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2014; Moncarz, Zhao, & Kay, 2009 ). Gibson (2006) listed around eight drivers of employee engagement (1) Trust and integrity, (2) Nature of the job, (3) Alignment between employee performance and company performance (4) Career growth opportunities (5) Pride in the company, (6) Co-workers or team members, (7) Employee development, (8) Relationship with manager. Walker (2001) also identified seven factors which can encourage retention-compensation and appreciation of the work performed; the provision of challenging work; opportunities to learn; positive relationships with colleagues; recognition of capabilities and performance contributions; good work-

life balance; and good communication within the organization. Echols (2007) states that, when combined with selective promotion and salary action, the learning and development process is a strong retention activity.

The fact that effective training, and opportunities to learn and develop enhance employee retention, is also confirmed by other researchers such as Arnold (2005), Herman (2005) and Hiltrop (1999). It can therefore be concluded that learning and development can be considered as important retention-enhancing strategies. Research has also shown that, as long as employees feel that they are learning and growing, they will be less inclined to leave. On the other hand, once employees feel they are no longer growing, they begin to look externally for new job opportunities (Rodriguez, 2008). This makes development and learning critical for attracting and retaining employees, because “[. . .] talented people are inclined to leave if they feel they are not growing and stretching” (Michaels et al., 2001, p. 14). This body of research underpins surely the main ideas of organisational learning, stressing the importance of individual development in order for organisations to learn as a whole (Argyris, 2001; Gijbels and Spaenhoven, 2011; Peck et al., 2009). There are, however, also factors at the employee level which affect the retention of employees. In previous research the role of certain employee variables such as age, seniority and level of education was investigated. However, results for these variables were rather inconclusive. In one study it was found that older people are more likely to remain working in an organisation, thus age has a positive influence on retention (Christiaensen et al., 2009), in other studies seniority was identified as having a positive influence on retention (Kyndt et al., 2009; Van Hamme, 2009). Only age and seniority are highly correlated, which means that, for now, a clear conclusion cannot be drawn. However, in the research by Gunz and Gunz (2007) work experience and tenure were found to have a positive influence on retention. Also, with regard to the level of education, results are not aligned. In some studies there is a significant negative relationship found between the level of education and retention (Christiaensen et al., 2009; Kyndt et al., 2009), but in other research (Abrams et al., 2008; Van Hamme, 2009), no such relation was found.

The findings of an exploratory study reflect the employee-retention practices of a employers and shed light on the relationship between specific organizational initiatives and employees’ service commitments to their employers. Identification of organizational initiatives utilized by 90 percent of the employees was made. Such

programs, policies and practices as providing guiding principles, open door policies, and caring, fun and autonomous work environments where employees can experience upward mobility were found to be popular, as well as appropriately defined and communicated customer quality-assurance goals and employee compensation and benefits systems. The more widely accepted initiatives fall under five of our study-defined organizational domains are (1) corporate culture and communication; (2) work environment and job design; (3) hires and promotions; (4) customer centeredness; and (5) employee recognition, rewards and compensation.

However, only two of these highly utilized employee-retention initiatives (corporate culture and communication; hires and promotions) were determined to have significant influence on the retention of either management or non-management personnel, or both as in the case with hires and promotions. Furthermore, organizations with effective and well communicated organizational mission, goals and direction and appropriate reward systems in place were found to experience lower turnover of non-management employees. Conversely, initiatives impacting turnover differ from influencers of tenure, appropriate corporate culture fit and having the necessary skills to perform well in a specific job may not be able to survive a work environment that perhaps has limited or no organizational direction and appropriately structured reward systems for employees meeting organizational goals and objectives. Thus, some organizations that have a well tenured workforce in general may still experience high employee turnover due to the churning of a small percentage of ongoing newly hired workers. These findings provide empirical evidence to earlier propositions regarding the importance of effective hiring practices on the long-term employment status of employees (Baird, 2006; Boles et al., 1995; Hendrick, 2006; Pizam and Ellis, 1999) and support Milman (2002, 2003) and Milman and Ricci’s (2004) findings which revealed that working conditions impact employee retention.

The question remains as to whether engagement is a unique concept or merely a repackaging of other constructs. Different researchers have defined engagement both attitudinally and behaviourally. Narrowing down to the ITES sector, the variables are identified as Job Content, Peer Co operations, Career Growth, Performance Review and Development, Leadership Style, Mentoring and Coaching, Working Environment, Rewards and Recognition, Organizational culture and climate and Compensation.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research takes a cross sectional descriptive approach. The unit of analysis of the study is the employees of the selected organization. Descriptive studies can be used to test the association between the factors and therefore considered as a causal study with hypothesis testing. Since the study is dealing with the employee engagement and the organizational factors influencing the employees, the unit of analysis of the study will be the employees of the organization selected for the study. There are about 15,000 employees working in the organization.

The following research question led to the study.

“What are the factors that influence the employee engagement?”

The following objectives were framed for the study:

- ✧ To identify the factors that influences the employee engagement
- ✧ To identify the employee engagement level
- ✧ To explore the perceived level of importance of the factors that influences the level of employee engagement

Therefore, the population for the study is all the employees working in the organization identified for the study.

List of employees from each level of the organisation is used as the sampling framework from which the sample for the study will be picked. The sample size for the study is determined using the Cochran sample size formula with finite population correction. By assuming  $Z=1.96$ ,  $e = 0.05$ ,  $P=0.5$  and for a population of 15,000, the sample size is calculated as 375. However, considering around 9 to 10 levels of management structure, the sample size from each level will become smaller if only 375 samples are considered. Therefore, a sample size of 10% of the population is considered for the study, which will make around 1500 samples. A random sampling method is used for picking the sample. The list of employees from various levels of management is pooled and using their employee ID, random numbers are generated and the respondents are then approached for data collection.

In most of the business studies, questionnaire is the instrument for measurement and the data collection is done by the survey. In designing the questionnaire, first the concepts are defined in the context of the study. Further, the standard items are sourced from the literature. A tentative item pool is this created and is validated at different stages before using it for the final

survey. Items for each concept are sourced from the following: Job Content (Moncarz, Zhao, Kay, 2009) - 9 items, Peer Co operations (Palmer and Gignac (2012) - 7 items, Career Growth (Weer, 2006) - 9 items, Performance Review and Development, Working Environment, Rewards and Recognition, Compensation (Hornsby et al., 2002; Montes et al., 2003; Rogg et al., 2001; Schwepker, 2001) with 8 items each, Leadership Style (Palmer and Gignac (2012) - 10 items, Mentoring and Coaching (Moncarz, Zhao, Kay, 2009) - 7 items, Organizational culture and climate Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy, Baert, 2011: Moncarz, Zhao, Kay, 2009) - 10 items, and Employee Engagement (Gallup Study) - 12 items.

The timing for the survey is phased out covering each department. Respondents are identified by simple random sampling. 1500 random numbers are generated based on the employee id. After identifying the respondents against the randomly selected employee ID, the instrument was given requesting them to complete the survey. Due to various reasons, like absence, denial and work load only 823 responses could be collected. Around nine responses were found to have a major part of the questionnaire not complete due to interruption. Another 27 responses were found to have a few questions to larger portion like a complete section of the questionnaire being unanswered. Rejecting the incomplete responses a final tally of 787 responses were found suitable for data analysis. The data is edited, coded and converted in to digital format. Data was collected during August 2015 to February 2016. A descriptive statistics explain the level of each variable. A cross tabulation is also used to describe the variable against another variable. Further, regression analysis is done to test the influence.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the demography characteristics. There are 563 (71.5) male respondents and 224 (28.5) female respondents. Majority of the respondents are male. The number of respondents below 25 Yrs are 120 (15.2) respondents and from 25-30 Yrs are 341 (43.3) respondents There are 276 (35.1) respondents from 30-40 Yrs and 50 (6.4) respondents from 40-50 Yrs. Majority of the respondents are 25-30 Yrs. On the marital status of the respondents there are 385 (48.9) married respondents and 402 (51.1) unmarried respondents. Majority of the respondents are unmarried.

**Table No 1: Demographic Details**

Demographic Factors	Description	Number of respondents	Percent
Gender	Male	563	71.5
	Female	224	28.5
Age (Years)	Below 25	120	15.2
	25-30	341	43.3
	30-40	276	35.1
	40-50	50	6.4
Experience (Years)	Less than 1 year	131	16.6
	1 to 3	204	25.9
	3 to 5	211	26.8
	5 to 10	202	25.7
	10 to 15	27	3.4
	15 to 20	9	1.1
	Above 20	3	0.4
Education	UG Engineering	406	51.6
	PG Engineering	140	17.8
	MSC	27	3.4
	MCA	45	5.7
	MBA	154	19.6
	M.com.	3	.4
	M.Phil.	3	.4
	MA	3	.4
Marital Status	Married	385	48.9
	Unmarried	402	51.1

On the education of the respondents there are 406 (51.6) with UG Engineering and 140 (17.8) respondents with PG Engineering. In addition, there are 27 (3.4) respondents with MSC and there are 45 (5.7) respondents with MCA. There are 154 (19.6) respondents with MBA, 3 (0.4) respondents each with M.Com, M.Phil and MA. Majority of the respondents are with UG Engineering. On the experience of the respondents, there are 131 (16.6) respondents with less than 1 Yr and 204 (25.9) respondents with 1 to 3 Yrs. There are 211 (26.8)

respondents with 3 to 5 Yrs and 202 (25.7) respondents with 5 to 10 Yrs and 27 (3.4) respondents with 10 to 15 Yrs. There are 9 (1.1) respondents with 15 to 20 Yrs and 3 (0.4) respondents with above 20 Yrs. Majority of the respondents have an experience of 3 to 5 Yrs.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the various factors measured. The mean value Compensation, Career growth, Rewards and Recognitions is found to be 2.817, 2.945 and 2.982 respectively, which are less than 3 on a 5 point likert scale.

**Table No: 2 Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Job Content (JC)	787	3.359	.726	0.904	9
Peers Cooperation (PC)	787	3.402	.796	0.908	7
Career Growth (CG)	787	2.945	.765	0.913	9
Performance Review and Development (PRD)	787	3.122	.820	0.921	8
Leadership Style (LS)	787	3.207	.945	0.958	10
Mentoring and Coaching (MC)	787	3.136	.770	0.898	7
Working Environment (WE)	787	3.325	.804	0.921	8
Rewards and Recognitions (RR)	787	2.982	.777	0.908	8
Organizational Culture and Climate (OCC)	787	3.053	.725	0.888	10
Compensation (C)	787	2.817	.823	0.882	6
Employee Engagement (EE)	787	3.302	.779	0.928	12

This shows that these three factors are perceived to be less. All other factors are above 3 on a 5 point Likert scale indicates more respondents favouring these factors on employee engagement in the organization. The standard deviation of all the factors varies from 0.725 to

.945 indicating not much variation. The cronbach alpha of all the factors are above 0.882, which are above the threshold level of 0.7 and confirms that the all the measures are reliable.

Further a stepwise regression is done to find the factors that impact the employee engagement. Table 3 presents the R-square values and its significance for each model. R-square value represents the proportion of

variance accounted for in the dependent variable by the predictor variables. In stepwise regression one variable is included into the model and retained if found significant and in each stage the insignificant variable is removed.

**Table No: 3 Regression Analyses**

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	ANOVA	
				F	P
OCC	.759	.577	.576	1068.964	.000
OCC, PC	.843	.710	.709	959.606	.000
OCC, PC, JC	.857	.735	.734	724.652	.000
OCC, PC, JC, MC	.863	.745	.744	572.377	.000
OCC, PC, JC, MC, LS	.868	.753	.751	475.921	.000
OCC, PC, JC, MC, LS, WE	.871	.758	.756	407.333	.000
OCC, PC, JC, MC, LS, WE, C	.872	.760	.757	351.480	.000

The results show that the model with Organisational Culture and Climate, Peer Cooperation, Job Content, Mentoring and Coaching, Leadership Style, Work Environment & Compensation has the highest R-square value of 0.760. For the model, table 3 also shows that the computed F statistic with an observed significance level of less than 0.001. The computed F statistic values for all the

models shows that there is relationship between dependent and independent variables. This means that 76.0% of variance of employee engagement is explained by these factors. Career Growth, Performance Review and Development, Mentoring and Coaching, and Rewards and Recognitions are found to have no significant influence on employee engagement

**Table No 4: Regression Coefficients**

Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement								
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Correlations		
						Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	-.101	.074		-1.359	.174			
OCC	.198	.036	.184	5.451	.000	.759	.192	.096
PC	.332	.025	.339	13.190	.000	.757	.427	.232
JC	.137	.028	.127	4.802	.000	.677	.170	.084
MC	.106	.028	.105	3.821	.000	.703	.136	.067
LS	.110	.022	.133	4.962	.000	.681	.175	.087
WE	.120	.030	.123	4.005	.000	.728	.142	.070
C	.046	.021	.048	2.172	.030	.485	.078	.038

The coefficients table 4 shows that the unstandardised and standardized regression coefficients for the model with the highest R-square value as found in table 3. Peer cooperation is found to have the highest influence on the employee engagement (B=0.332 t=13.190) followed by organisation culture and climate (B=0.198, t=5.451). Compensation was found have the lowest impact (0.046, t=2.172).

## DISCUSSION

This research has contributed to the empirical examination of the factors that influence the employee engagement in ITES companies. The findings of the study shows that peer co-operations has a major influence on employee engagement. Cooperation in organisational functions and in teams is crucial in the success of any projects. Yet it is a difficult goal to achieve. However, peer pressure has been found to better promote cooperation.

Peer to peer interaction and support has been found to provide better attitude and faster learning. This reveals the managers that to have a better innovation culture, peer pressure and cooperation need to be encouraged. The study also recommend the managers that organisational culture and climate, job content, work environment, leadership style, mentoring and coaching, compensation has influence on the employee engagement. Therefore, managers need to build a good work environment, organisational culture and climate with priority. Job content also matters in employee engagement. Proper job analysis and job description need to be provided to the employees for a better engagement. Mentoring and coaching is also an important aspect that the managers need to look for a closer method of imparting new skills or attitude among new generation employees. These factors can vary the employee engagement by 76% percent. This

shows that the factors can create majority of the employee engagement. The outcome of the study has contribution to the practice as well.

As the study is a descriptive study and being carried out in the context of one organisation, the study has a few limitations that need to be taken for consideration in inferring the results. Caution is required also required in applying the findings of the study to practice. The first limitation of the study is generalisability of the findings of the study to the particular industry. Considering the size of the organisation and the sample size obtained for the study, the findings of the study has rigour in terms of the empirical support. Institute for Work & health (2006) discussed about two aspects of generalizability, first one is generalizing to a larger population and the next is generalizing to a theory. This study can be considered under the second type of generalizing. The concepts of the study are well established and are being tested in a specific context.

## CONCLUSION

Service based organisations are employee oriented and quality of the services depends on the employees' whole hearted involvement. Therefore, employee engagement is an important factor in innovation based service organisations. To manage the employee engagement, it is necessary to identify the important factors that impact them. This study was proposed for the same and a descriptive study was designed. Data was collected from 787 respondents through a survey using structured questionnaire. The study found the important factors that influence employee engagement. Peer cooperation, mentoring and coaching were found to be a factor that influences employee engagement. The study findings provided contribution to knowledge and practice. Limitations and future directions of the research are also provided.

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