

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: ROLE OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS IN TELECOM SECTOR

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Abstract:

In today's highly sensitive people-oriented state of working, organizations worldwide are facing cut throat competition to acquire most engaged and contributing employees for their businesses. Nowadays, the concept of employee engagement is holding its imperative importance in business world due to its attitudinal reflex with employee work and performance. Demographics are the important factors considered in most human resource and management decisions because they persuade work behavior and productivity of the employees to a considerable extent. This study was conducted amongst 612 employees of four selected private telecom companies in India. The purpose of the study was to assess the engagement level of employees and the extent to which demographic variables (age, gender, designation and tenure) under study contributed to their engagement levels. The primary data was collected through online survey questionnaire. Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) was used to measure employee engagement. Statistical analysis was based on ANOVA, Post hoc analysis and correlational analysis measures to test the hypotheses. Results indicate significant differences in engagement scores for three demographic variables under study -age, designation and tenure except gender. Employees working at higher level of organizational hierarchy had higher engagement levels based on its all three dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption).

Key words: Employee Engagement, Telecom, Demographics, Age, Gender, Designation, Tenure

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's time every organization- small or large, national or international employ workforce from varied culture and ethnicity by promoting work force diversity. Such workforce diversity gives rise to different form of confronting concerns. Now it becomes a great challenge to assess different demographic characteristics that persuade the engagement levels of employees. In an organization there are numerous issues that can affect engagement levels of employees, some identified other hidden. At times the probable reasons for dissimilarity in employee engagement may not be organizational policies, structure and strategies implementation by leader, rather certain demographic characteristics will be responsible for differences in employee engagement levels and its experiences. Demographic characteristics have an effect on engagement level of employees (Robinson, 2015). Past researches has recognized that aspects related with demographic features, job demands and workplace critically affects the employee engagement levels (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Kahn, 1990).

The challenge of making employees engaged in their workplace is rising high nowadays. It is rising as a contemporary issue to be managed at initial and considerable manner for organizational excellence (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Pech & Slade, 2006, Shamila, 2013, Singh, 2016). Thus, creating a huge concern for its acceptance as critical human resource function According to the work of Kahn (1990) engagement is explained as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles" (p. 694). The association of employees with the organization in physical, cognitive and emotional manner led their bond with the organization. As engagement shows seemingly similar conceptual basis with existing constructs of organizational commitment and job involvement, past studies indicate that engagement is a distinct and vital construct with its due importance in business actions. (Hallberg & Schaufeli, 2006). The workforce of the organization belongs to varied socio-demographic background that reflects different needs, wants, expectations, and perceived benefits to be fulfilled. The organization need to assess such expectations and drive to accomplish the same for drawing employee commitment, dedication, and engagement towards their organization. As individuals differ differently in their individual and demographic details, Balain & Sparrow (2009) suggested the significance of demographic elements for identifying different attitudes of employees. Thus, nowadays demographic shifts are creating a diverse, multigenerational workforce for embedding large variety of skill, knowledge, and experience. Demographic profile of employees are the essential factors taken into consideration in most human resource and management decisions as they control work behaviour and productivity level of the employees. It is so because the organizations are aware of the distinct benefits that engaged employees can contribute to their workplace such as reduced attrition, higher productivity, lessen absenteeism, higher dedication and commitment, increased morale, improved returns for shareholders and better financial performance (Baumruk, 2004). Accordingly, organizations need employees with a passion to put effort and have an endeavor to take organization to its highest position

Past studies reflects that individuals personal characteristics, working place issues affects the work engagement of employees (Brown, 1996; Kahn, 1990, in Kirkpatrick, 2007) as well as the work characteristics counting job status and job demands also affect engagement of employees. (Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007). Various authors (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002;

Kahn 1990, Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004; Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010; Saks, 2006, Vance, 2006) have explained employee engagement as a “positive state” of employee attitude, motivation and association with their work, organization and values. They suggested that employee engagement have imperative association with certain outcome variables like organizational citizenship behaviors, employee productivity and employee overall work performance.

Every organization strive to provide most supportive and inclusive organizational environment where employees begin to contribute their best possible output to the organization in the form of increased productivity, high performance, increased commitment and dedication for their work and associated organization. Thus, such engrossed employees show engagement to their work and their organization along with involvement towards overall organizational excellence and success. However, despite of endowing many resources to gain engagement, many organizations fail to develop preferred state of engagement among their employees. This situation poses great challenge and hardship for developing engaged employee in the organization. Various organizational shifts put significant strain on employee attitude towards organizational goodwill. These rising employee dynamics put employee expectations on high that govern their perceived association and engagement towards organization. The employers are also in charge to heal the expectations of employees for their emotional and physical connections due to the fact that employee engagement at work directs higher workplace performance leading to overall organizational growth. Employees have dissimilar expectations that are exhibited by a combination of economic pressures, business reactions and demographic shifts (Aon Hewitt, 2014).

An engaged employee is a reward for the employer as they have instrumental indications in establishing a more positive and contented working environment for their counter employees as well as organization. Highly engaged employees are appraised as epitome for other staff that facilitate in developing the appropriate working environment and culture that improves the engagement level of other employees. This is for the reason that engagement is referred as an individual-level constructs that have an initial effect on individual-level outcomes and subsequently to organizational outcome.

1.1 Meaning and Definition of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is identified as “a multifarious and vibrant process that illustrates each person's distinctive, personal association with work” (Litten, Vaughan, & Wildermuth, 2011).

Kahn (1990, 1992) is credited for the pioneer work in the concept of engagement. According to his study employees tend to differ along a scale with respect to the degree to which they consider themselves to be able to put across their preferred selves in their work role. The individuals who can identify additional accommodating circumstances for their real expression are likely to be engaged whereas who observe less encouraging situations are likely to be disengaged, that ultimately lead towards restraining of one's effort and eventually, withdrawal.

The core work of Kahn (1990, 1992) on employee engagement is based on three psychological conditions: meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability. Meaningfulness being referred as the “intrinsic value employees attach to performance in the work role”. It is influenced by the tasks employees perform and the roles they fill (May et al, 2004). Psychological safety connotes as “sense of whether one perceives the freedom to be authentic in the work role”. Lastly, Availability relates to “employees' beliefs regarding whether they possess the physical, cognitive, and emotional resources” required to endow themselves completely in their work roles. It is decided mainly by individuals' perceptions related to quantity and quality of accessible resources and the amount of involvement in activities out of the work (May et al., 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These three described conditions together decide the conditions of employees been engaged, more engaged or disengaged (Kahn, 1990).

The global consultancy firm Aon Hewitt (2014) states that engaged employees speak positively about their organization (Say), want to be a part of their organization (Stay) and desire to go above and beyond in their job (Strive). According to International Survey Research (2003) employee engagement is the “practice by which a firm enhances the commitment and contribution of its human resources to achieve greater business outcomes”. The International Survey Research (2003) determined that employee engagement “is a combination of an employee's cognitive, behavioral and affective dedication to his or her organization”.

Harter et al., (2002) in their expression identify employee engagement as “the individual's involvement and satisfaction as well as enthusiasm for work”. Employee engagement is thus “the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his or her organization and its values”.

The present study build upon the view of engagement presented by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez- Roma, and Bakker (2002) who conceptualize engagement as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”.

Vigor is characterized by “high levels of energy and mental resilience while working”. Dedication indicates “a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge”. The final dimension of engagement, absorption, refers to “degree of concentration and engrossment in one's work”. With the viewpoint of Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova (2006) work engagement is “not a momentary and specific state, rather it refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective- cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behavior”.

An engaged employee is a reward for the employer as they have instrumental indications in establishing a more positive and contented working environment for their counter employees as well as organization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Gender

In many studies, gender differentiation of the employee is identified as an important paradigm of individual difference. Many studies were established on relationship between gender and employee engagement. However, previous studies depict contradictory outcomes from different authors on the association between gender and work engagement. There are past and recent literatures that

report no differentiation in engagement levels of men and women, while few reporting high engagement levels of women and vice-versa. However, in the majority of studies, significant differences were not found in the work engagement levels based on respondents gender. Schaufeli, et al., (2006) in their study on cross nationals conducted for scale validation accounted weak and indefinite relationship based on gender and work engagement due to lack of practical significance. Studies by many authors viz., Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017), Coetzee and Rothmann (2005), Hakeem and Gulzar (2015), Jaupi and Llaci (2015), Mahboubi, Ghahramani, Mohammadi, Amani, Mousavi, Moradi, Akbarzadeh, Kazemi (2015), Mostert and Rothmann (2006), Persson (2010), Reissová, Šimsová, and Hášová (2017), Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004), Swaminathan and Ananth (2009), Yadav (2016), Yildirim (2008) was not able to establish any statistical significant association between gender and work engagement. In a similar way, Drake (2012) found gender to be not associated with either employee engagement measures (job engagement and work engagement). In the recent year Tshilongamulenzhe & Takawira (2015) study on 154 South African University employees also found no connection between gender and all three sub scales of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption). Although, the studies of Maslach and Leiter (2008) and Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) identified employee engagement levels to be related with the gender of the employees.

Basikin (2007) also didn't recognized any statistical differences in the levels of work engagement of male and female secondary school teaching staff in Indonesia. Hence, on the basis of gender as criteria to assess their engagement levels males and females were found not to differ considerably (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Mani, 2011; Mishra, Kapse & Bavad, 2013; Sharma, Goel, & Sengupta, 2017). The results of study by Tshilongamulenzhe & Takawira (2015) also suggested no statistically significant mean differences in the work engagement level of male and female employees on its three subscales (vigor, dedication and absorption). Conversely, the studies of few authors (Balain & Sparrow, 2009; Robinson, Hooker, & Hayday, 2007) recognized engagement levels of employees to differ significantly based on respondent gender.

Besides, there are studies where women gained top scores in engagement levels than men (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007; CIPD, 2006; Gulzar & Teli, 2018; Mauno, Kinnunen, Makikangas, & Natti, 2005; Rothbard, 2001; Shukla, Adhikari & Singh, 2015, Srivastava, 2012). Further, Kong (2009) outlined that male employees showcase higher scores over female on two dimensions of engagement as vigor and absorption whereas female employees have high scores on the dimension of dedication than male. Coetzee and de Villiers (2010) observed differentiation in the engagement levels of male and female employees. More to the point, female employees showed their high scores of engagement on the three dimensions of engagement (absorption, dedication, and total engagement) than their male workmates. In recent times, the results of the study by Marcus and Gopinath (2017) conducted on IT professional and Madan and Srivastava (2015) performed on private bank employees commonly recommended that the individuals' gender does not affect levels of employee engagement levels. Likewise Tshilongamulenzhe & Takawira (2015) also adds to the similar results where gender was found not to predict variance in the scores of engagement based on three subscales (vigor, dedication and absorption) for measuring work engagement between male and female employees.

2.2 Age

Schaufeli, et al. (2006) conducted their research in 10 different countries based on 14,521 employees to measure employee engagement based on employee age criteria. The result reported weak positive correlation between employee age and work engagement for the whole sample that lacked practical significance with correlations in all samples (.15 or less). Persson (2010) suggested that the older age of employee drive high engagement levels based on positive coefficients observed between employee age and their level of work engagement. Drake (2012) also added to the same line of result by finding low to moderate correlation between age of employee and the measures of employee engagement. In addition, James, Swanberg and McKechnie (2007), Maslach and Leiter (2008) and Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) also summarize significant connection between employee age and the engagement scores. Moreover, Mahboubi et al. (2015) considered 387 hospitals' staff in their study and its result revealed a significant relationship between work engagement and age group.

On the other hand, the findings of few researchers (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014; Basikin, 2007; Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Hakeem & Gulzar, 2015; Mani, 2011; Swaminathan & Ananth, 2009) proposes that differences were not observed in the work engagement levels of employees based on their different age groups. The research conducted by Jaupi and Llaci (2015) on banking sector identified demographic characteristic; employee's age to significantly affect employee engagement. Marcus and Gopinath (2017) conducted study on employees from IT companies and outlined that age of the employees have an effect on engagement scores of the employees. However, Madan and Srivastava (2015) outline no impact of age on employee engagement levels and elucidate that differences in the age groups of employees did not drive differences in level of employee engagement.

Mostert and Rothmann (2006) conducted their study on 1,794 respondents as sample that stated weak correlation between age and employee work engagement where age explained a small proportion of difference in two constructs (vigor and dedication) of work engagement. Hence, work engagement minutely increases with age. Further, Coetzee and de Villiers (2010) highlighted that employee from different categories age groups differ extensively with respect to a single dimension (i.e., absorption) of work engagement. The level of absorption among employees was significantly higher in employees from the age group 26–40 and above 40, than the employees in lower age group (age < 25 years).

Sharma et al. (2017) found noteworthy differences in the three dimensions of work engagement (viz., vigor, dedication and absorption) between the age measured in the respective age group (less than 28 years) and (between 28 and 32). The results stated that the employees aged 28 years and more account higher degree of work engagement than such aged less than 28 years of age. Moreover, significant differences were not observed between the age group of less than 28 years and more than 32 years of age as well as between the age group of (between 28 and 32) and more than 32 years except the dimension absorption, similarly Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) study on 404 business executives (333 men and 71 women) considered age of employees into three distinctive age groups: less than 25 years, between 25–40 years, and above 40 years. The results showed significant differences in the measure of engagement among executives in different age groups where executives within age group of 25–40 years reflected high degree

of absorption in their work than the executives aged below 25 years. They explained the fact that workforce below 25 years of age are highly susceptible to job change and emphasize prospects for ones growth and development superior than permanence. On the dissimilar note, study conducted among 901 UK employees by Avery et al. (2007) , stated that engagement and employee age depicted inverse association , i.e., as the age of employee increases engagement level decreases, that is,. Older employees have lower engagement levels than the younger employees.

In addition, Robinson et al (2007) explained that levels of employee engagement likely to be high in their younger age (age < 20 years) and also increases towards attaining old age. The oldest age group of employees (age >60 years) also showed heightened levels, but in the middle –age group (30-39 years) engagement levels remained constant. Employees' generational cohort or group also indicates differences in the extent of work engagement (Hlongwane & Ledimo, 2015).

2.3 Years of Work Experience

Maslach and Leiter (2008) and Mohapatra and Sharma (2010) regarded employee engagement to be linked with demographic variable years of employee work experience. However, the results of Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) did not supported tenure as an important factor for differences in employee engagement as well as Madan and Srivastava (2015) not regarded employees' years of experience as an important variable to predict engagement level of employees' .But recently Mahboubi et al. (2015) in their study recognized work engagement having significant relationship with work experience of employees.

Few authors in the past (Buckingham, 2001; Robinson et al., 2004), outlined converse association between the time spent by an employee in the organization and his/ her engagement levels. With an increase in years of employee work experience, the level of employee engagement decreases. Additionally, Avery et al. (2007) explained that such employees having longer tenure (measured on three basis: organizational tenure, tenure with manager, and positional tenure) in terms of positional tenure have lower engagement scores than those with shorter positional tenure. Balain and Sparrow (2009) suggested differences in the employee engagement levels as a result of longevity of their work experience with their organisation. Jaupi and Llaci (2015) also found significant association of years of experience as well as years of experience with the organization with the engagement levels of employees. The results of the study conducted by Coetzee and Rothmann (2005) among employees of a higher educational institution explained that in comparison of employees having < 5 years of work experience and employees having < 10 years of experience, the employees with lesser years of work experience gained significantly higher level on vigor dimension of engagement.

Similarly, Kong (2009) stated that employees having work experience of years 0~5 score high on all the three measurements of job engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) than engagement level of employees with 6~10 years of work experience. Sharma et al. (2017) based their study from Indian IT industry and summarize significant variation in the engagement levels of employees with distinctive work experience duration. Considerable dissimilarity was found in overall work engagement and vigor dimension between the work experience group classified as of less than 2 years and 2 to 9 years and on dimension dedication and absorption differences were seen in the experience group of less than 2 years and more than 9 years. Thus, employees with 2 to 9 years of work experience were found with higher levels of work engagement and vigor .However, employees having work experience of more than 9 years showed higher levels of dedication and absorption.

Conversely, an earlier study by Allen, Poteet, and Russell, (1998) also found that those workers who spent longer tenure in their job have higher engagement and others with shorter positional tenure show lower engagement levels. Similar results were also true for other parameters of tenure viz; organizational tenure, tenure with one's manager in their study. Swaminathan and Ananth (2009) observed significant impact of years of employee work experience on their engagement levels. Employees with more than 20 years of experience showed higher employee engagement scores succeeded by employees with 16 to 20 years of work experience. On the other hand employees having lesser work experience (years of experience < 6 years) also demonstrated positive employee engagement. Moreover, Basikin (2007) and Xu and Cooper-Thomas (2011) study explained no significant relationship between duration of employee's work experience in the organization and their engagement levels. Recently, Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) stated insignificant differences in the engagement level of workers based upon the distinctive (group) measure of employee's years of association with their organization.

According to Robinson et al. (2007) engagement levels of employee have a tendency to start on with high level, and steadily after some years of service turn down to a low point, and then for a second time engagement increases with a longer service tenure (tenure > 15 years). Adding more, Robinson et al. (2007) also recommended that level of employee engagement does vary with the employee's length of service with their organization counting upon the variety of experiences endowed by the organization. The engagement levels of new recruits reach at its peak in the first six months of their job. Thus, organizations extend and intensify the engagement of these employees during this "honeymoon" period (Robison, 2015).

2.4 Designation in Organizational Hierarchy

Few authors in the past (Business World, 2008; Kahn, 1990; Robinson et al., 2004; Xu & Cooper-Thomas, 2011) have identified positive correlation between level of employee position in organization hierarchy and employee work engagement. They concisely contributed that the employees at higher positions drive the business in a considerable and meaningful manner with the privilege of authority and vote power. This provides them with the opportunity to express themselves and present higher level of engagement with their work and organization. Vanam (2009) recognized positive relationship between designation in organizational hierarchy and job engagement and also reported that with the higher level of employees' designation in their organization employees will draw higher work engagement levels. Results of the study by Basikin (2007) indicated that the engagement level among the junior

secondary school staff was found high on overall work engagement together with its component vigor, dedication, and absorption. In recent year, Chaudhary and Rangnekar (2017) study supported the view of employee position in organizational hierarchy at different levels (lower, middle, and senior) having substantial effect on employee work engagement. Thus, senior business executives showed higher level of engagement than their junior level employees. Moreover, executives at junior and senior levels differ significantly on two dimensions of engagement (vigor and absorption) in contrast to dedication score that was not found to differ notably among executives at different levels. Similarly, according to the study by Shukla et al. (2015) the engagement level of senior employees were also found to be high than lower level staff employees. Persson (2010) identified positive correlation between employee status and work engagement levels, recommending higher status links with higher level of work engagement.

Avery et al. (2007) in their study outlined that executives and supervisors of top rank scored high on their work engagement levels than employees of lower rank. Moreover, Robinson et al. (2007) recognized that engagement levels of employees were high at senior positions gained by managers and lowest among back end staff that has lower level positions. Blessing White (2008) as a consultancy, recognized difference in employee engagement levels across their hierarchical status in the organization , affirming the top management to be highly engaged than staff at lower level. Generally, managers and professional member of staff exhibit high engagement levels than their work mates in assisting roles (Scottish executive, 2007).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In the light of area of the research in human resource management, the study was undertaken to have an in-depth perspective to measure employee engagement based on demographic characteristics of the employees. The primary objective of the study was to analyze the effect of selected demographic parameters on level of employee engagement

1. To assess the level of employee engagement in the selected telecom companies.
2. To study the effect of gender of the employees on the level of employee engagement.
3. To study the effect employee's age on the level of employee engagement.
4. To study the effect of employee's years of work experience on the level of employee engagement.
5. To study the effect of employee's position in the organizational hierarchy on the level of employee engagement.

4. HYPOTHESES

H₀1: Gender has no influence on employee engagement dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption).

H₀2: Age has no influence on employee engagement dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption).

H₀3: Employee's years of work experience has no influence on employee engagement dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption).

H₀4: Employee's designation in the organizational hierarchy has no influence on dimensions of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, absorption).

5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of collecting data questionnaires were distributed personally as well as through mails to the employees working in different functional departments of the selected four (4) private telecom organizations. The data was collected from the respective hub offices of the companies i.e., Delhi-NCR, Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai. The questionnaires were sent randomly as web based embedded link on the basis of data base (email ids) provided by the respective companies .The employees were invited to participate voluntarily in the study. The study considers a sample of 624 employees from four companies (i.e., 156 employees from each selected telecom company). 612 responses were usable post elimination of incomplete and non received questionnaires. The response rate for the study was 90% from the respondents providing complete information as desired The questionnaire consists of two sections, and the first section the questionnaire includes items based upon the standardized questionnaire developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, (2006) popularly known as the Utrecht Work Engagement Survey Scale (UWES-9) and the second section contains the demographic details of the respondents.

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9 scale) consists of (9 items) in three sub-scales (Vigor, Absorption, Dedication) each measuring three items in respective subscales It is based upon 5 point Likert scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.897$) ranging from 1-5 (where 1= strongly disagree 2= disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree) Analysis of data was done through SPSS software. The data analysis procedure included methods of mean weighted scores to evaluate employee's engagement level and further statistical methods including ANOVA, Post hoc analysis and correlational analysis, were used to test various hypotheses.

Primary data was collected with the help of structured questionnaires whereas secondary data was collected through published sources on concerned literature such as websites, journals and magazines, reference books.

5.1 Scales of Measures

Work engagement (WE) was measured using standardized scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). The scale consists of three subscales; absorption (e.g., "I am immersed in my work", "When I am working, I forget everything else around me"), vigor (e.g., "At my job I feel strong and vigorous", "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work"), and dedication (e.g., "My job inspires me", "I am enthusiastic about my job"). The reliability scores of three subscales were as follows; vigor (three items; Cronbach's alpha: 0. 921), dedication (three items; Cronbach's alpha: 0. 830), and absorption (three items; Cronbach's alpha: 0.

886). The Cronbach’s alpha for the overall scale was found to be Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.897$. All the 9 items were rated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1- 5(1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Disagree).

Demographics: The demographic categories under study included gender, age of the employee, years of employee work experience, employee position in organizational hierarchy.

5.2 Data Analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of statistical software SPSS 20. Descriptive and inferential statistics methods were used to analyze the data. Statistical techniques including T-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), post hoc tests, and correlation analysis were used to draw results.

5.3 Statistical analysis

To explore the effect of demographic variables on the level of engagement the statistical measures selected for this research study were grounded on their applicability to the descriptive nature of the research issues .The analysis of the data was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved the distribution of sample demographic variables based on frequency and percentage distribution. At the second stage of data analysis, Pearson correlation coefficient method was used to specify the means, standard deviations and intercorrelation between the variables under study. For the purpose of statistical significance, the alpha value was set at a 95% confidence interval level ($p = 0.05$). Finally, the third stage involved the representation of demographic characteristic groups based on appropriate statistics to draw results and test hypothesis .Independent-samples t-test was applied to recognize the difference in gender category. ANOVA test was applied to test the significant differences between the various characteristics involving age, years of work experience and designation of employees.

6. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the description of respondents on the basis of gender, age group, years of work experience and designation of employee in the organization. Table 1 provides the description of the respondents based on frequency and percentage values. It shows that total number of respondents were 612. Among them 391 (63.9%) respondents were male and 221 (36.1%) respondents were female. In addition, 338 (55.2%) respondents were associated with their organizations in the age group of 26-35 years. However, large differences were not observed between the employees that belong to age group below 25 years (136) and 36-45 years (119).Employees under age group 46-55 years counted less with 19 employees. The hierarchical positions of the employees under study were categorized into three levels, viz, 361 (59%) employees at lower level, 188 (30.7%) employees at middle level and 63 (10.3%) employees at top level. Considering the demographic criteria of employee’s years of work experience in the organization 273 (44.6%) employees were associated with their organizations from 1 to 3 years, and 163 (26.6%) employees were linked with their organization from 3 to 5 years. Further, 106 (17.3 %) employees were having work experience of less than 1 year and 63 (10.3%) employees having 5 to 10 years of work experience. The employees with work experience of 10 years and above were 7 (1.1%) thus representing the lowest percentage in the organizations.

Table 1.Description of demographic variables

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	391	63.9	Below 25	136	22.2
Female	221	36.1	26-35	338	55.2
Total	612	100	36-45	119	19.4
			46-55	19	3.1
			Total	612	100
<i>Designation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Years of Work Experience</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Lower	361	59	Less than 1 year	106	17.3
Middle	188	30.7	1 year to less than 3 years	273	44.6
Upper	63	10.3	3 years to less than 5 years	163	26.6
Total	612	100	5 years to less than 10 years	63	10.3
			More than 10 years	7	1.1
			Total	612	100

Source: Authors’ own.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlation for Work Engagement

S.no	Study Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	Work engagement	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
1	Work Engagement	3.8	0.675	1			
2	Vigor	3.51	0.915	0.851	1	0.528	0.523
3	Dedication	4.23	0.7	0.793	0.528	1	0.504
4	Absorption	3.65	0.839	0.825	0.523	0.504	1

Source: Authors’ own.

Note: ** Correlation is significant at .01 level (two-tailed).

Table 2 presents the mean, standard deviation, and inter-correlations values among overall work engagement and its three dimensions (vigor, dedication, and absorption) under the study. Inter-correlations scores among work engagement and its three dimensions were differing from moderate to high level values.

On the basis of data analysis, descriptive statistics method depicted a mean score of 3.80 as employee’s overall work engagement level. It indicated an above average level of work engagement among employees of telecom companies. It can also be observed from the results, employees from telecom sector displayed a little higher level of dedication when compared to other two dimensions of engagement, both at near to similar levels. Thus, employees exhibit almost the same level of vigor and absorption in comparison to dedication.

Table 3(a): Differences in Work Engagement based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Work Engagement	Male	391	3.822	.687	.0347
	Female	221	3.761	.653	.0439
Vigor	Male	391	3.531	.945	.0478
	Female	221	3.478	.861	.0579
Dedication	Male	391	4.269	.724	.0366
	Female	221	4.184	.653	.0439
Absorption	Male	391	3.666	.854	.0432
	Female	221	3.621	.814	.0548

Source: Authors’ own.

With regard to hypothesis 1, Table 3(a) represents the statistical test to examine the hypothesis concerning variation in work engagement levels based on gender considering two categories as male and female with analysis based on independent sample t-test. The mean work engagement scores for male (M =3.82, SD = 0.687) were found to be little higher than that for female (M = 3.76, SD = 0.653) and thus exhibit no significant differences in work engagement of employees based on employee age. A further investigation of the scores gained by male and female employees in showed that male employees score higher over female on the dimension of vigor, dedication and absorption.

Table 3(b): Influence of Gender on Work Engagement

S.no	Variables	Work Engagement		Vigor		Dedication		Absorption	
		t-value	Sig	t-value	Sig	t-value	Sig	t-value	Sig
1.	Gender	1.076	.282	.687	.492	1.450	.148	.640	.522

Source: Authors’ own.

Based on Levene's test for equality of variances and t-test for equality of means Table 3 (b) confirms gender of respondents shows no impact on overall work engagement as well as on its respective dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption) as the p value is more than 0.05 . With regard to hypothesis 2, Table 4 depicts the results of One-way ANOVA test that was conducted to examine employee age as a feature in determining their work engagement levels. The employees were divided into three categories of age: below 25, 26 to 35 years, 36-45 years and 46-55 years. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .005$ level in scores of employee engagement among four age groups. On the basis of test, significant differences were found in vigor [F (3, 608) = 12.298, $p = 0.000$] dedication [F (3, 608) = 14.710, $p = 0.000$] and absorption [F (3, 608) = 16.445, $p = 0.000$] levels of employees in differing age groups. The overall work engagement score has gained the highest value [F (3, 608) = 20.353, $p = 0.000$]. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score of overall work engagement was highest in age group of 46-55 years (M = 4.57, SD = 0.319) subsequently by 36-45 years (M = 4.06, SD = 0.730). Similarly, employees in the age group 45-55 years were found to have high vigor, dedication and absorption than the respective age groups: below 25, 26-35, and 36-45 indicating significant differences in mean scores. Employees from all age groups: below 25, 26 to 35 years, 36-45 years and 46-55 years were found to be highly dedicated in their work .Hence , the engagement level of employees tend to increase with growing age. In terms of hypothesis 3, to observe the association of years of work experience with engagement levels of employees Table 4 indicates the data analyzed by one –way ANOVA. The respondents were divided into five categories: less than 1 year, 1 to3 years, 3 to 5 years, 5 to10 years and more than 10 years. As observed, significant differences were established in work engagement levels of employees with different years of work experience in the organization. Statistically significant difference was observed at the $p < .005$ level in work engagement count among different categories of employee’s years of work experience.

Based upon test results, significant differences were found among vigor [F(4, 607) = 8.246, $p = 0.000$] dedication [F(3, 608) = 6.472, $p = 0.000$]and absorption [F(4, 607) = 5.269, $p = 0.000$] dimensions of measuring employee engagement in different groups of employee years of work experience. On the basis of Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test the work engagement mean score for the group considering more than 10 years of work experience (M = 4.38, SD = 0.470) was significantly higher from 5 to10 years of experience (M = 4.21, SD = 0.636) and other categories of work experience. However, no statistically significant difference was observed in mean scores among three different categories representing different years of employee work experience (less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 5 years). Employees score high on all the dimensions of work engagement i.e., vigor, dedication

and absorption from their rising years of work experience ranging from 5 years to more than 10 years. Dedication was high among employees of all categories of work experience.

Table 4: Influence of Age, Years of experience and Designation on Work Engagement

S.no	Variables	Work Engagement			Vigor		Dedication		Absorption	
		df	F-value	Sig	F-value	Sig	F-value	Sig	F-value	Sig
1.	Age	3,608	20.353	.000	12.298	.000	14.710	.000	16.445	.000
2.	Years	4,607	9.158	.000	8.246	.000	6.472	.000	5.269	.000
3.	Designation	2,609	48.20	.000	43.197	.000	32.811	.000	38.688	.000

Source: Authors' own.

In consideration of hypothesis 4, a one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was performed to identify the influence of employee's position in organizational hierarchy on employee work engagement. The levels of employee designation were categorized in three groups i.e.: Lower, Middle and Senior levels. The results summarized in Table 4 indicate significant influence of employee designation in organizational structure on their engagement levels $F(2, 609) = 48.20$, at .000 level of significance. Table 3, depicts significant differences in all engagement dimensions; vigor [$F(2, 609) = 43.197$, $p = 0.000$] dedication [$F(2, 609) = 32.811$, $p = 0.000$] and absorption [$F(2, 609) = 38.688$, $p = 0.000$]. Further, post hoc analysis (Turkey HSD test) confirms significant differences in engagement levels of employees.

For overall engagement level, senior level managers ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.280$) were found to be highly engaged in comparison to other employee designation categories. Same is the case with all the measures of engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption). The overall engagement score for lower-level employees ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.632$) and middle level employees ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.675$) differ significantly from senior level employees. Dedication scores differ significantly among employees of different designations. The significant differences in all dimensions of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) were found at different levels of employee designation. Results confirm significant differences in the vigor and absorption dimension of work engagement of employees shown at lower and senior level as well as between middle and senior levels. However, significant differences were not found in the vigor and absorption levels of executives between lower and middle levels.

7. DISCUSSION

The results of the present study shows that except gender all other demographic characteristics (age, years of employee work experience, designation) were found to significantly affect the scores of employee work engagement. The overall engagement scores of telecom employees were above average in the sector depicting their willingness and discretionary efforts to continue with their organization for the future period. However, considering the dimensions of work engagement, employees exhibit little high level of dedication in contrast to two other dimensions of engagement. The result of current study with regard to gender affecting work engagement does not find significant relationship between them. The result of current study with regard to gender affecting work engagement does not find significant relationship between them. The results of our study are in support to previous researches carry out by many authors (Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Chaudhary & Rangnekar, 2017; Drake, 2012; Hakeem & Gulzar, 2015; Jaupi & Llaci, 2015; Mahboubi et al., 2015; Mostert & Rothmann, 2006; Persson, 2010; Reissová et al., 2017; Robinson et al., 2004; Swaminathan & Ananth, 2009; Yadav, 2016; Yildirim, 2008).

Further, in this study mean work engagement scores for men and women were found to be similar with each other. This finding is dissimilar with the previous findings of Kong (2009) explaining that women have lower engagement level than men, and also, in contrast to few researches stating that level of women engagement was high than the engagement level of men (Avery et al., 2007; Coetzee & de Villiers, 2010; Mauno et al., 2005; Rothbard, 2001; Shukla et al., 2015; Srivastava, 2012). Moreover, this study also observed men and women having similar scores on three measures of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption), which is in disparity with the study of Coetzee & de Villiers (2010) where the engagement scores of female employees were significantly higher on total engagement, dedication and absorption than male member of staff. The reason for no difference in this study can be attributed to the serious concern of organizations towards their human resources apart from their gender differentiation. Organizations are concerned and highly sensitive about sex discrimination, harassment, bullying, safety, privacy rights, etc. at employee workplace. High performing organizations tend to perform in a socially responsible manner with work practices considering gender equality, social justice, code of conduct and human dignity. Moreover, the ability of women to manage work-life interface and personal life characteristics might have resulted in their higher engagement levels much as equivalent to male engagement levels.

Further, considering employee age to impact their engagement level, the study adds to the pool of existing literature (Jaupi & Llaci, 2015; Marcus & Gopinath, 2017) by suggesting significant effect of employee age on their work engagement levels. Although, Mostert and Rothmann (2006) concluded a small variance in work engagement level due to employee age.

The findings of present study predict significant differences in vigor, dedication, absorption and overall engagement scores of employees from differing age categories. Such result is in fit with the previous studies by Chaudhary & Rangnekar (2017) and Coetzee & de Villiers (2010) and Sharma et al. (2017). Adding to this, the result is completely relatable to the result of study by Sharma et al. (2017) where difference was observed in all the three measures of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption) of varying age groups. However, in the study of Chaudhary & Rangnekar (2017) and Coetzee & de Villiers (2010) differences were observed in single dimension (absorption) among employees of different age groups. Thus, employees from different age groups

show differing variations in their engagement levels along with different dimensions. Additionally, employees with their increasing age show possibly higher levels in their engagement. Hence, aging workforce's engagement in the workplace was higher than among their younger counterparts due to the probable reason of having much knowledge and their higher experience with professionalism in workplace. The older employees show higher levels of engagement as they have aligned well with career goals and /or they have the best job situations or they find their work fulfilling and meaningful. However, previous researches also stated that as employees get older and are heading towards retirement, they are less probably to search for new employment at another company.

The findings of present study also indicate significant differences on employee engagement levels with varying years' of work experience. The results are similar with the findings of previous studies reporting similar association among different years of employee work experience and levels of work engagement (Avery et al., 2007; Balain & Sparrow, 2009; Buckingham, 2001; Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Jaupi & Llaci, 2015; Robinson et al., 2004). However, this study is in disparity with the studies of Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) and Madan and Srivastava (2015) regarding employees' years of work experience as a significant variable to predict employee engagement.

The outcome of this study is in complete likeness of the studies by few authors (Allen et al., 1998; Sharma et al., 2017; Swaminathan & Ananth, 2009) where employees having greater years of work experience score high on their engagement levels. The differences were observed in differing work experience group along with one or more dimensions of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption). The positive employee experiences related with all the interactions with their employer, work processes, role identification, task meaning and purpose, work environment and relationships promote greater engagement level. The results our study is in contrast with the findings suggested by Kong (2009) stating the employees with lesser number of work experience score high on all the three elements of work engagement (vigor, dedication and absorption).

Employee designation in the organizational hierarchy is also noted to influence the scores of employee work engagement. Differences within the overall work engagement score and its three dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption) were significantly observed at different hierarchical job levels. On the basis of analysis senior level employees scored high on vigor, dedication, absorption and overall engagement scores.

However, employees at lower, middle and upper level of hierarchical positions showed high degree of dedication. The vigor, dedication, absorption and overall engagement of employees at lower and middle level of position in organization showed not much significant differences between them, though significant differences were found with employees at upper level. The results of the study are similar with the research of few authors (Avery et al., 2007, Blessing White, 2008; Chaudhary and Rangnekar, 2017; Persson, 2010; Robinson et al., 2007; Shukla et al., 2015) reporting employees holding top positions at the organizational hierarchy have high level of work engagement. This was due to the reason explained in past researches that employees at higher positions hold more authority and voice for management decisions. Additionally, the employees' experience of holding attractive job titles at higher positions with strong sense of purpose, right of exercising control over different position levels, strong leadership execution may promote high degree of employee engagement. Such privilege provides them value for their decisions and hence makes them highly engaged. Similarly, few previous studies are also in congruence with the results where employee position and work engagement showed significant association. (Basikin, 2007; Business World, 2008; Kahn, 1990; Robinson et al., 2004; Xu & Cooper-Thomas, 2011)

8. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Even though in many past studies, whilst considering the influence of varied demographic characteristic variables on employee engagement reported an uneven and mixed results with different organizational and geographical contexts. The results of current study in telecom sector of India presents demographic variables (age, designation, position of employee) except gender as significant predictors of the employee work engagement. The level of employee engagement with regard to male and female was not different in the organizations. However, significant consideration need to be given to employees of different age group employees, designation, and years of work experience with their organization. Strategies for the improvement of engagement can be designed uniformly for males and females, however few differentiations in design and implement strategies may be deemed for employees with different age, level of designation and years of work experience to enhance the engagement level of employees. Thus, the basic demographic portfolios of employees in the organization were found to affect the drive of engagement among workforce. The individual differences on varied demographic characteristics cause differences in the engagement level of employees that raise its consideration as a driver for proper assessment and management of employee engagement levels. Organizations will strive hard to achieve increased levels of engagement in their employees considering their demographic characteristics at large.

9. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study provides insight into the notion that the demographic characteristics affect the work engagement level of employees. In any organization, employees from different demographic, culture, work design and organizational background pose a great threat to manage them effectively. The diverse workforce requires aptly designed and implemented strategies for maintaining and developing their engagement levels by the employer. Thus, employers considers the importance of varied and engaged work force for gaining improved business results viz., increased productivity, satisfaction, commitment, lower attrition and absenteeism. As 'one size does not fit all' same is true when concern hold high on engaging and developing employees. The organizations shall design different interventions and strategies on the basis of differentiation in demographic characteristics towards employee engagement. The organizations shall place strategic priorities and flexible approach for engagement level of their diverse workforce. The findings of the research specify differences in employee's age, years of employee's work experience and position in the organizational hierarchy, except gender that proposes different strategies to be designed while planning engagement interventions

for the employees of the organization. With the result of this study, the HR managers, leaders and practitioners will be supported to formulate and employ suitable engagement boosting strategies for their workforce, based on the requirement of such differentiating categories of employees.

10. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The current study considered specific demographic profile characteristics viz., age, gender, years of experience and position (based on their relevance) of employees to evaluate distinction in their engagement levels. Though, additional variables of prime importance viz; educational qualification, income, form of organization were not selected in our study. Besides these employee personal and work related factors, there are several other job features, organizational specifics and attitudinal traits that can manipulate the employee engagement levels. Certain particularities related with location of the organization, nature of business, standardization of regulatory framework, market fluctuations, office setting, organizational design and structure, plan and policies by management to manage human resource may cause rise to such differences. As for the future, it would be enriched to include these variables in the study to assess their influence on employee engagement levels in Telecom companies. In addition, a relative study could be assumed between employees of Public and Private sector telecom companies as well as consolidated and/ or newly evolved telecom company that may provide a better insight of demographic variables and employee engagement relationship. Additionally, research may also be undertaken to identify the reasons for higher and lower levels of employee engagement.

11. CONCLUSION

The broad conclusion of the study append to the existing literature on employee engagement by signifying that levels of employee work engagement are influenced by many demographic characteristics such as age, years of employee work experience, and employee designation in organizational hierarchy. These variables are fundamental in understanding the work engagement level of employees. The outcome of the analysis summarizes higher than average level of work engagement amongst employees of selected telecom companies.

The results of the research represent significant differences in the level of employees work engagement based on various demographic criteria, like employee age, years of work experience, and employee position in the organizational hierarchy. However, the gender of employees has not shown any difference in engagement level of employees. The present results also show differences in the level employee engagement among employees, existing primarily on the dedication dimension of employee engagement.

To conclude, with an increasing age, years of work experience and level of designation among employees the engagement level of employees also increases. In the recent past telecom sector of India has underwent a huge wave of disruption due to various forms of disorganization and business environment dynamism. Due to the pressure imposed by these forces organizations observe many forms of dejection by employees in form of attrition, low productivity and efficiency that eventually direct the organizations to put an extra effort to improve, recover and renew the engagement level of their employees by giving due consideration to demographic and certain organizational factors.

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