



## Measuring the Relationship between Job Resources and Employee Engagement: A Study of Generation Y Employees

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### Abstract

*Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are either/or: Functional in achieving work goals, Reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, Stimulate personal growth, learning, and development. In literature there is a long list of job resources available primarily at three levels such as task, interpersonal & organizational. Some of the key resources are social support, performance feedback, and autonomy. As per SET (social exchange theory) when individuals receive economic and socio emotional resources from their organization, they feel obliged to respond in kind and repay the organization. The present paper is based on the same premise in which firstly some of the job resources are recognized from literature review whose perceptual availability is measured from Generation Y employees working in Indian technology firms. Secondly job resources led engagement is measured to ascertain their worth in keeping the Gen Y employees committed and involved. The tools utilized is regression analysis and the software used is SPSS.*

**Keywords:** Job resources, engagement, Gen Y, Social Exchange

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### Introduction

There is a constant endeavor from organizations to effectively engage and retain their 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The workforce of today is known by a generation called Millennials whose birth year ranges from 1980 to 2000. India as a country being second populated country host a quarter of this new generation, largest in the world. The working proportion of this generation work in different sector and industry in India and one of the sector ie. IT sector which is the focus sector in this paper caters to 60-70 percent of this professional workforce. Organizations has certain things to offer for ex. Meaningful job characteristics, social support, innovative HRD practices to their employees to keep them motivated and engaged in their work. Such things or offerings may be called as job resources which are available at different levels of organization depending upon the size and nature of the organization. It is believed that job resources fosters employee engagement which leads to positive organizational outcomes. The rationale of the paper is determine which among the taken job resources has the potential to engage generation Y employees that could result in fall of their turnover intentions.

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## Literature Review

In 1990 Kahn (1990, p. 694) introduced the concept of employee engagement, giving his now famous definition quoted in the introduction, namely, “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Kahn added that three psychological engagement conditions are necessary for an employee to be rightly engaged: meaningfulness (work elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process, and organisational norms) and availability (individual distractions).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) define work engagement as “the psychological state that accompanies the behavioural investment of personal energy” (p. 22). It depicts that an engaged employee is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organisation, feels passionately about its goals and is committed to live by its values.

According to Gallup (2002) there are three types of people: engaged employees, not engaged employees, and actively disengaged employees. Engaged employees are builders who consistently strive to give excellence within their roles. Not engaged employees focus on the tasks spelled out to them rather than the goals of the organisation. They do what they are told to do. Actively disengaged employees are dangerous individuals who not only do not perform well but also demotivate the performer in the organisation.

Academicians became interested in the concept to a large extent only from 2006 (Welch, 2011) when a number of studies extended the concept of employee engagement to job engagement, work engagement, and organisation engagement. Saks (2006) used Khan’s (1990) definition and developed the construct including job and organisation engagement. According to Saks the antecedents of employee engagement were job characteristics, perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition, procedural justice and distributive justice. On the other hand, the consequences of engagement were job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit and organisational citizenship behaviour. Numerous studies suggest that the presence of higher levels of employee engagement significantly reduces turnover intention (Maslach et al., 2001; Saks, 2006).

Six management functions (job resources) emerged in order of importance as critical determinants of executive’s engagement according to Joshi and Sodhi (2011), namely, job content (autonomy, challenging opportunities for learning), compensation/monetary benefits (attractive salary vis-a-vis qualifications and responsibility, adequate compensation for the work and intra-organisation parity), Supervisor support (approachability of top management, their values and ethical conduct, equality in treatment, respecting the views of subordinates, providing an environment of working together), coworker support, scope for advancement and career growth (well-designed policy, adequate opportunities for career growth and advancement, clearly laid down career growth paths; implementation of the promotion policy in a fair and transparent manner, help to the employees in achieving growth) and team orientation/team work (importance, cooperation in inter- and intra-department teams).

The present study focuses in detail on the following determinants of employee engagement so as to model it comprehensively.

## Job Characteristics

Jobs that are high on the core job characteristics provide individuals with the room and incentive to bring more of themselves into their work or to be more engaged (Kahn, 1992). May et al. (2004) found that job enrichment was positively related to meaningfulness and meaningfulness

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mediated the relationship between job enrichment and engagement. This is based on Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model and in particular, the five core job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback).

The identified five core job characteristics are:

- Skill variety: This refers to application of different skills, abilities and range of knowledge by the employees to perform tasks in a job (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).
- Task identity: Task identity is "the degree to which a job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work: doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome" (Lunenborg, 2011, p. 2).
- Task significance: It refers to the impact one's job can put on others life i.e. how important is the task. Tasks can be significant for the immediate organization known as its internal significance and can also be important for one's relatives, friends, and neighbours known as its external significance.
- Autonomy: It refers to the degree of freedom extended to employees to take decisions on what goal to achieve and how to achieve (Molleman, 2000). Task autonomy is studied at individual level as it could bring changes to psychological phenomena like attitudes and behaviour (Langfred&Moye, 2004).
- Feedback: It is the information passed to the employees related to their job performance. It is ideally given by supervisors but can also be fetched from various other sources as well.

#### **Extrinsic Rewards**

Compensation or remuneration is an indispensable attribute to employee engagement that motivates an employee to achieve more and hence focus more on work and personal development. It involves both financial and non-financial rewards.

Armstrong (2002, p. 62) stated that "financial incentives and rewards can motivate. People need money and therefore want money. It can motivate but it is not the only motivator. It has been suggested by Wallace & Szilagyi (1982) that money can serve the following reward functions.

- It can act as a goal that people generally strive for although to different degrees.
- It can act as an instrument that provides valued outcomes.
- It can be a symbol that indicates the recipient's value to the organization.
- It can act as a general reinforce because it is associated with valued rewards so often that it takes reward value itself".

Non - monetary extrinsic rewards also play a pivotal role in motivating employees to achieve work goals. They also play a crucial role in employee retention. Non - monetary benefits are available in form of organization safeguarding workforce diversity, working towards inclusion, adopting work-life balance and extending opportunities for career growth.

A study by Saks (2006) revealed that recognition and rewards are significant antecedents of employee engagement. They noticed that when employees receive rewards and recognition from their organisation, they will feel obliged to respond with higher levels of engagement. Kahn (1990) observes that employee's level of engagement is a function of their perceptions of the benefits they receive. Therefore irrespective of the quantity or type of reward, it is the employee's perception of the same that determines his/her content and thereby one's engagement in the job.

## **Supervisor Support**

An important aspect of safety stems from the amount of care and support employees' perceive to be provided by their organization as well as their direct supervisor. In fact, Kahn (1990) found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships as well as supportive management promoted psychological safety.

Major work under social support is done by House (1981) where support is classified according to sources (colleagues or supervisor) and support types, (instrumental, emotional, informational, and appraisal support) (House, 1981). Research also clarifies that the types of support are unique and mutually exclusive and doesn't seem like to overlap each other (Barling, MacEwen & Pratt., 1988; Himle & Jayaratne, 1991). General supervisor support focuses on support for personal effectiveness at work. Supervisor support comes in form of understanding employee's needs and wants, giving them genuine responses and confidence to raise their problems and help in resolving work related issues (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When it comes to measuring the effects of supervisor support, it is found that their support can lead to many positive outcomes like employees may become more committed and with reduced burnout, they show less intentions to quit (Kalliah & Beck, 2001). Similarly Munn, Barber & Fritz (1996) and Hatton & Emerson (1998) found that supervisor support leads to job satisfaction and reduced intention to quit. PSS is likely to be an important predictor of employee engagement. In fact, a lack of support from supervisors has been found to be an especially important factor linked to burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

## **HRD**

Training and career development is another important dimension which is to be considered in the process of engaging employees since it helps the employees to concentrate on a focused work dimension. Training improves service accuracy and thereby impacts service performance and employee engagement (Paradise, 2008). Alderfer (1972) even suggested that when an organisation offers employees a chance to grow, it is equivalent to rewarding people. Scholars such as Shuck et al (2010) and Schaufeli & Salanova (2010) held that learning opportunities positively affect the development of employee engagement. Individual employees feel the need to keep updating their knowledge, skills, and abilities to remain employable in the competitive labor market (Salanova, Schaufeli, Xanthopoulou, & Bakker, 2010). Therefore it seems that engaging employees is not an onerous task provided they are offered opportunities to develop themselves on a continuous basis (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2010). It is also examined that involvement of employees in task can be attained by offering them learning opportunities designed for their upliftment (Shuck & Rocco, 2014).

## **Objectives of the study**

To measure the availability of resources in the jobs perceived by generation Y employees.

To examine the relationship between job resources and engagement of generation Y employees.

## **Hypotheses of the study**

Job Characteristics is positively related to Job Engagement

Rewards and Recognition is positively related to Job Engagement

Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS) is positively related to Job Engagement

HRD practices is positively related to Job Engagement.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Participants included 164 employees working in a variety of jobs in Indian IT organizations. The profile of participants is that most of them are in their late 20s or early 30s because the study has targeted Gen Y working professionals. The criteria adopted to select respondents rests upon their birth years which 1980 -2000 is considered. Standardized questionnaire was utilized to collect the primary data and responses were elicited using both online and offline mode. Mode of sampling was convenience. Demographic information was also collected which primarily include data on gender, highest educational qualification, designation, stream and other related information. Participants indicated their response on a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Variables taken for the study consists of *job characteristics, rewards, perceived supervisor support, HRD practices and engagement*. Out of the selected variables first four are independent variables and last is dependent variable. Purpose is measure the effect of all IVs on engagement and to measure the effect of different aspects of job on engagement, regression analysis is conducted to ascertain the value of  $r$  and  $r^2$  and the value of  $p$  to accept or reject the hypotheses.

### Results

First of all descriptive analysis of the data is performed which is shown in Table 1. Secondly In order to test the hypotheses for the antecedents of employee engagement, multiple regression analyses were conducted in which the measure of engagement was regressed simultaneously on all four of the antecedent variables. As shown in Table 2, 3 & 4, the results indicate that the antecedent variables explained a significant amount of the variance in job engagement ( $R^2=0.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). With respect to the study hypotheses, both supervisor support ( $0.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and HRD practices ( $0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were significant predictors of job engagement. These results provide support for H3 and H4.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Joball	164	3.7793	.72047
extrinsicall	164	3.9167	.65389
Supvall	164	3.7134	.76041
HRDall	164	3.8136	.69471
ENGall	164	3.8092	.59510
Valid N (listwise)	164		

**Table 2: Regression Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.771 <sup>a</sup>	.594	.584	.38372

a. Predictors: (Constant), HRDall, joball, Supvall, extrinsicall

b. Dependent Variable: ENGall

**Table 3: Anova Results**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	34.314	4	8.579	58.263	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	23.411	159	.147		
Total	57.726	163			

a. Dependent Variable: ENGal

b. Predictors: (Constant), HRDall, joball, Supvall, extrinsicall

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.395	.218		6.386	.000
	joball	-.086	.045	-.104	-1.914	.057
	extrinsicall	-.016	.063	-.018	-.263	.793
	Supvall	.211	.054	.270	3.930	.000
	HRDall	.529	.062	.618	8.582	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ENGal

## Conclusion

Results show that variables such as supervisor support and innovative HRD practices are more effective to woo the young workforce. Factors like job characteristics and extrinsic rewards despite being available to the youth are not able to engage the workforce. With the results, one can also interpret the motivations of this generation of employees. Generation Y in this study has shown more strong relationship of supervisor support and HRD practices to their engagement. It means that this workforce while on job require a conducive and supportive leadership that is readily available and is there to listen to their queries whilst boosting their confidence. The next big thing is the innovative HRD practices that is stealing the limelight with a high engagement potential among the Generation Y employees. Many organizations are coming with out of the box practices like reverse mentoring, sharing the leaves among the employees, child care & maternity leaves and more. In the present study also HRD practices finds a significant portion of engaging them. Organization should also keep on doing a resource audit in order to find out what things or what offerings are getting redundant andalso acknowledge the needs of the emerging workforce in order to keep the balance going whilst keeping the organization running successfully.

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