Work Engagement in Relation to Emotional Intelligence and Personality

Anub Geo Kurian¹, Harold Andrew Patrick²

¹Learning and Development, QuEST Global Engineering Services, Bangalore
²Professor & Dean – Academics, CMS Business School, Jain (Deemed-to-be University)

Abstract- When employees are engaged at work, they feel a connection and a sense of belonging with the company. They believe that the work they’re doing is significant, and therefore work hard to promote a culture that reduces turnover rates and improve employee retention. Work engagement is a crucial element for increased productivity and its contributing factors are a matter of study. The purpose of this study is to find the underlying relationship of Personality and Emotional Intelligence with various dimensions of work engagement.

The study also helps to identify in depth which all dimensions of Personality and work engagement has relation to work engagement across the IT and ITES sector in India. 250 entry level engineers from large and mid-sized IT companies across India were administered three standard instruments online over a period of 10 months. It was found that Emotional Intelligence and Personality significantly influenced work engagement, but not all dimensions. The results and implications of this study can help companies focus on specific Personality traits when hiring for entry level jobs to ensure better levels of work engagement. The study shows that only specific dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Personality significantly influence work engagement at the entry level jobs, and also offers some suggestions on how organizations can use these dimensions while formulating initiatives and strategies for their workforce.

Keywords- Big 5 model, Work Engagement, Personality, Emotional Intelligence, Information Technology

I. INTRODUCTION

In today’s modern economies, IT and ITES sectors perform as substantial role in contributing a major share of the developed economies and thereby becoming an inevitable part of growth. The IT sector as a whole is the largest employer across the globe. In India, the information technology sector has shown a tremendous increase in its contribution to India’s GDP from 1.2% in the year 1998 to about 7.5% in the year 2015. Especially in India, with the growth and expansion of industries such as banking, education, and telecommunications, the sector remains the key player as it aggregated revenues above US$150 billion in 2016 and continues growing by over 13%. The contribution from the IT sector is massive, and therefore it is important to make sure that we know the drivers of Work Engagement of employees in order to ensure productivity at work.

In all these sectors, the most utilized resource is Human Capital, making it imperative for organizations to ensure employee well-being. Unleashing the potential that the IT and ITES sector hold, this paper investigates the influence and relationship of Work Engagement with Emotional Intelligence and Personality. Though several researches have been conducted in the area of burnout and its influence on employee turnover, few have been done in the domain of positive psychology and Work Engagement. As India is the treasure trove of the world’s IT and ITES works, the topic is very relevant in the present scenario. The study brings out the dependence and influence of the dimensions of Personality types and Emotional Intelligence on an employee’s Work Engagement.

1.1 Work Engagement

Work Engagement is “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption”, according to Netherland scientist Wilmar Schaufeli. Engagement, as the word suggests, is nothing but the involvement and presence psychologically in the areas of work and work related activities. Employees are cognitively and emotionally engaged when they are aware of what is expected of them, are provided with all that they need to work, realize that they are part of something significant with co-workers, have opportunities to make an impact, are recognized for their accomplishments in their work, and have space to improve and develop (Kahn, 1990, 1992).

Different people have given different interpretations for Work Engagement. According to Khan (1990), attention and absorption in a role are two components in Work Engagement. Attention means being immersed in a role. Attention and absorption differ in meaning. Attention devoted to a role can be considered as an invisible, material resource that a person can allocate in multiple ways, whereas absorption implies intrinsic motivation in a role.

Work Engagement is divided into three dimensions, namely vigour, dedication and absorption. The factor called burnout is different from Work Engagement. Schaufeli (2002) and his co-researchers (2002) concluded that dimensions of burnout and engagement are completely different and showed a negative correlation between them. Since they were found different, Schaufeli explained the Work Engagement as a ‘positive, fulfilling work-related
state of mind that is characterized by dimensions vigour, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). The factor Vigour mainly deals with the intensity or readiness to devote effort into work with high energy levels. Its the nature of being positively adhered to a job irrespective of the difficulty level. Dedication, as the word suggests, is the mental attitude, strong adherence or identification with one’s work and carries qualities and feelings of positivity like enthusiasm and inspiration along with driving factors like pride, and challenge. The third dimension of Work Engagement, Absorption, is about “how the time goes” when a person is involved at work. This includes the involvement one has with his work. For example, several people say“I don’t know how the time flies when I am working”, indicating that it is a sort of difficulty faced when a person tries to disconnect oneself from work since he is absorbed and immersed.

Employee engagement is a commonly used term in the HR domain, and is entirely different from Work Engagement. However, if a company has high levels of employee engagement activities, it can result in better engagement at work. Mayet and Lindblomet have explained that the burnout and engagement relationship is inverse, implying that if we can reduce burnout within a system, we can improve engagement at work (Mayet et al., 2004; Lindblomet al., 2006).

1.2 Emotional Intelligence
Emotional Intelligence, widely known as Emotional quotient (EQ), is the ability of individuals to identify their own and other people’s emotions, and to differentiate among dissimilar feelings and process them accordingly. It helps to navigate social complexities, make personal decisions, adapt to the environment and thereby achieve positive results. Micheal Beldoch was the first one to use this dimension. However, it was mostly unfamiliar to the public until Daniel Goleman, a psychologist, an author and a science journalist wrote the book by that title and caught the attention of the public, researchers and media. Since then, Goleman's 1995 theory of EI has been censured within the scientific community.

Daniel Goleman was a pioneer in the domain of Emotional Intelligence, and his interpretation is more commonly preferred than others. There are two models which followed his model - Ability EI and Trait EI, but these were still a mixed model of Goleman’s. Vasily Petrides was the author and developer of trait EI. “Standing in the shoes of others”, was the traditional Emotional Intelligence definition used across the world, and the quality becomes a hygiene factor in all leadership roles. It was nothing but the ability to understand others and their emotions. Indeed, it is an informational process which will help in creating a better social environment.

One basic misunderstanding in this era is with EI and general Intelligence. The studies on people with better mental health have found a positive correlation with EI-Emotional Intelligence. They also have a greater drive towards workplace issues and possess less inter-employee problems as they are more understanding. For example, studies have proven that those employees with qualities of superior performance and positivity were accounted about 7% by the factor-Emotional Intelligence. This was stated by Daniel Goleman who also stated that EI mattered twice as much as factors like technical expertise and Intelligence.

1.3 Personality
Personality of a person is an attitude towards the world around him. We judge the personality of a person based on the way he behaves towards others. In terms of proper research, it’s characterised into 5 dimensions. That was how the Five Factor model was created. This widely examined theory suggests five broad dimensions used by some psychologists to describe the human Personality and psyche. In the big 5 model, the five factors have been defined as Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

At least four sets of researchers have worked on this problem independently for decades and have identified more or less the same five factors: The initial model was presented by Ernest Tuples and Raymond Christal. These researchers have used apparently different methods in unravelling five different traits. Though the names and definitions are somewhat different, the five factors are almost same.

Usually, there are a number of questions and dimensions on the Big-Five Personality model and its analysis. Therefore, it always requires greater time and effort. If we want to study the relationship of personality with some other factors, the questionnaire becomes longer. Thus, when we have constraints like time and number of questions, the best way to move ahead is with a bridged form of questionnaire. To help with this problem, a scale called the TIPi scale was developed by Gosling. This scale consisted of 10 questions, with two measuring one personality dimension. In this study, the TIPi scale was used. The tool possesses high reliability and convergence with the most used Big 5 measures in self, observer, and peer reports. It also displays good patterns of external correlations predicted. In order to make the survey more feasible and taking into consideration that we already have two other different instruments, we have used the short version of big five dimension scale – TIPi scale.
II. NEED AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY
The human capital resource in IT organizations is very important as they are central to the whole system and service. Employees are primarily responsible for providing a sustainable competitive advantage in the sector which is driven majorly by their engagement at work. Hence stands the importance of hiring and other talent acquisition processes. The right fit should be hired at the right measure, or else the consequences are toxic and influences employee’s Vigour, Dedication and Absorption. So, when an employee invests his time at work, he demands basic requirements to be satisfied. Individuals want to be engaged at work as this gives them satisfaction and self-actualization. However, this can only be made possible by hiring them for the proper role/requirement. This research tries to check the relationship existence of Emotional Intelligence and Personality with Work Engagement.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Though several studies have been conducted in the fields of Emotional Intelligence, Personality and Work Engagement, no combined study to look into both these aspects has taken place. They have been studied separately and thus the literature review helps us in understanding how EI and Work Engagement are related and in the same manner, how Personality and Work Engagement are related.

An Empirical Study on the Impact of Work Engagement of employees with regard to Emotional Intelligence published in a business and management international journal by author K. Ravichandran supported a similar research model in which a null hypothesis was rejected and proved alternate hypothesis of a correlation analysis. This implied a significant association of linearity between Work Engagement and the levels of Emotional Intelligence. The data value was about 0.377 (Pearson co-efficient), which implied a significant positive correlation.

Many more studies were conducted in the same domain. Another researcher named D.M. Scott Thor was experienced in the field of Emotional Intelligence. His study was in process improvement, where he studied the relationship between Work Engagement and Emotional Intelligence. This study also supported that Work Engagement is driven by Emotional Intelligence, which implies that an increase in Emotional Intelligence can result in higher Work Engagement.

Another area of prime consideration for a factor such as Work Engagement was nurses, where they need such continuous positivity at work in order to perform with delight. Work Engagement among a community of Nurses was studied and it was found that Emotional Intelligence had a strong mediating role on nurses’ Work Engagement. The study strongly proved that EI was a very strong predictor of Work Engagement and has significantly contributed a value of about 43%. This research has currently adhered and aligned to almost the same value as in the study conducted across nurses. There were so many other studies as well which collectively strengthened this relationship. As per big five model, the dimensions under study were Neuroticism, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, Extraversion and Conscientiousness. The personality traits and its relationship with job engagement were studied, and the results were almost similar to a research done by Ozur Ongore. A significant relationship was established and indicated among dimensions of Personality and Work Engagement. Only the factor, Neuroticism had a negative relationship. However, all other factors had a positive relation towards Work Engagement.

Among all the 5 dimensions, Openness to experience was the strongest predictor followed by others and was proven significant. Researcher Wilson C. has done similar research across social scientists. The study was a relationship exploration study between engagement and EI. A very favourable positive correlation was established significantly with a coefficient value of 0.292, which was almost strong enough to drive the variable of Work Engagement.

Many of the studies done in and around Emotional Intelligence were theoretical. Therefore, a study conducted by researcher Defoe on Emotional Intelligence’s practical implications was very evident, especially for the purpose of workforce related parameters. In this study, Emotional Intelligence as a trait also had a very strong correlation, and was found as the strongest and most significant predictor of engagement. It also regards Openness to experience as the second best predictor followed by Emotional stability.

Some studies were done on surface level on personality as a whole, but some researches were studying all five dimensions and Emotional Intelligence in detail. Such a study done by Akhtar., Lara., Dimitrious., and Tomas was called The Engage-able Personality. This research outcome was significant, and it showed that statistically, all dimensions of Personality were valid predictors of Work Engagement. Another study showed a correlation r value of (.r < .50), a modest positive value to Work Engagement. Another study conducted in the year 1991 has shed more light on this topic. The factor Openness to Experience, which constituted factors such as dedication and originality towards work, was found the most influential of all dimensions. Such kinds of people are not just open, but also are curious and have better imagination levels at work. Multiple regression was conducted across all dimensions and a strong significant correlation value was found. Also 4.840 (p < 0.01), a partial multiple regression analysis proved and substantiated the same.
IV. PROPOSED MODEL

There arises a gap in the literature and therefore the researcher intends to find answers to the following research questions:

- Does an employees’ Emotional Intelligence have any relationship with Work Engagement?
- Does an employees’ Personality has any relationship with Work Engagement?
- How does Emotional Intelligence or Personality drive Work Engagement?

The research revolved around the relationship study of Work Engagement with its dependence on Emotional Intelligence and Personality. Such a combined study was a research area that requires attention and one that has not been explored much in the Indian IT sector industry. The research proposes a framework that suggests that Work Engagement which comprises three factors (Vigour, Dedication, Absorption), Emotional Intelligence which comprises four factors (SEA: Self Emotions Appraisal, OEA: Others Emotion Appraisal, ROE: Regulation of Emotions, UOE: Use of Emotions) and Personality with regard to Big 5 Personality Model.

Sample Size: 300 survey forms were circulated among the employees in the IT sector; quality responses received were 250. The response rate was at 83%.

V. ANALYSIS

The response data was tested for reliability with Cronbach’s alpha value. The reliability for Work Engagement dimensions was 0.906 (17 items), for Emotional Intelligence was 0.858 (16 items) and for Big Five Personality dimensions was 0.538 (10 items). The data was analysed for skewness and kurtosis, and the data perfectly falls within the standard range.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the research was to find the relation between the different dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Personality and the dependent variable - Work Engagement. Each of the two independent variables was analysed under two different hypotheses - Hypothesis 1 for finding the relationship between EI and Work Engagement, and hypothesis 2 for finding the relationship between Personality and Work Engagement.

Hypothesis 1: Emotional Intelligence does not influence Work Engagement.

Post the data analysis, it was found that a relationship exists between Emotional Intelligence and Work Engagement. Further analysis with a regression test clearly reveals the exact number of factors that significantly influence Work Engagement. The regression data below indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted - ‘Emotional Intelligence does influence Work Engagement’.

Of the four factors, only one - “Use of Emotions” - has a significant influence on Work Engagement (with significant value less than .05). Also, it can be inferred from the table that among all the factors, “Self Emotion Appraisal” has the least influence on Work Engagement and ironically, this is a factor that most companies mandate for all positions, including entry level ones. Even the test coefficients have shown the same degree of predictive capacity with respect to study conducted by Defoe (2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.920</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>-.079</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>-.453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OEA</td>
<td>.237</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>1.347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This regression reinforces that the independent variable “Use of Emotions” has a predictive capability of about 17.9% on dependent variable Work Engagement. As found, the other three variables don’t have any significant influence and hence an employee’s engagement at work is not fully dependent on all dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, and only on “Use of Emotions”

Hypothesis 2: Big 5 Personality dimensions does not influence Work Engagement

Now for the second hypothesis testing for Personality and Work Engagement, a similar regression test was conducted and the relationship between the two variables was established. The test showed that only two of the five dimensions of Personality—Extraversion and Openness to Experience—have a significant influence on Work Engagement. Both of them were proved with dependence with significant values less than 0.05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.550</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>5.910</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>-.009</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness To Experience</td>
<td>.205</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis ‘Big 5 Personality dimensions does influence Work Engagement’ is accepted. The dependability of Personality and Work Engagement is found to be significant, but among the five Personality dimensions, only Extraversion (15%) and Openness to Experience (23%) has a significant and positive influence on Work Engagement. The factors like Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional stability have no significant influence on Work Engagement. The results from the analysis align with the previous studies and research, and are also congruent with the literature review. Thus, the Personality dimensions Extraversion and Openness to experience propel Work Engagement significantly.

### VII. IMPLICATIONS

The most used words by HR are “hire for attitude and train for skills”. According to recruiters, factors of Emotional Intelligence and Personality contribute significantly to a person’s behaviour and attitude. Owing to this theory, more often than not, skilled and efficient people are overlooked or rejected as they do not display all the dimensions of an ideal Personality or Emotional Intelligence scale. According to the latest studies for jobs at a lower level, technical competencies are more important than behavioural ones. This is because technical knowledge and skills are also an integral part of work output. The research conducted has proven that only two dimensions of Personality—Extraversion and Openness to Experience, and one dimension of Emotional Intelligence—Use of Emotions have significant influence on Work Engagement.

The IT and ITES sector can use this analysis constructively to maintain and improve the set culture of the engaged workforce. Now that we know the factors that drive Work Engagement and also know the measure by which they drive it, strategizing initiatives in the areas ranging from hiring to retirement based on such statistical data driven information will become easier and will also help in designing and providing effective training to employees. It helps employees become acceptable, socially networked, be aligned with the traits of the current engaged workforce and also drives performance. Apart from hiring, this research and its results can be used post hiring to improve work.
engagement. If we empower employees and help them understand and learn “how to use emotions (UOE)” better, it being a significant driver of Work Engagement, this can aid in boosting Work Engagement. Personality and Emotional Traits have a major stake in human interactions and thus must be kept in mind when as driving factors while planning activities for employees. In the IT sector, these dimensions with all their constituent factors are critical to ensure a healthy climate in an organisation. The direct application of the research and its results is in Recruitment – if interviewers are able to frame their screening questions based on these significant dependant variables – they can be more confident that the employees recruited will be more engaged at work, thus leading to less fatigue in system.

VIII. CONCLUSION
This research was done across IT sector employees to explore the relationship of employees’ Personality and Emotional Intelligence and their Work Engagement. The sample taken was the employees in entry level engineering jobs in mid-sized and large IT firms. This study reinstates and supports the literature and past studies, and satisfies the statistical predictive values of variables. The research output shows that although both Emotional Intelligence and Personality has an influence on Work Engagement, not all their constituent dimensions have a significant influence on the same. Only a few dimensions had significant influence (Sign. < 0.05) on the dependant variable Work Engagement.

Among the Personality dimensions, “Extraversion” and “Openness to Experience” have a significant influence on Work Engagement, and among the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, only “Use of Emotions” has a significant influence on Work Engagement. Organizations should have a planned and calculated check on their employees’ Emotional Intelligence level and their Personality traits during the hiring process. This will help ensure better levels of Work Engagement among employees leading to a more positive culture in the organization. Referring to the table above, we can infer that for entry level engineering jobs, only specific dimensions of Personality and Emotional Intelligence have a significant impact on an employee’s work engagement. Thus, instead of looking for all dimensions in one employee, it will be better if employees are measured on the necessary/significant dimensions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Coefficients - Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Stability</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Openness To Experience</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>Self Emotion Appraisal</td>
<td>0.651</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others Emotion Appraisal</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of Emotion</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regulation of Emotions</td>
<td>0.326</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Often we hear the project or delivery team saying that employees are good in terms of behaviour, but not technically sound. The reason for this gap is can be attributed to the theory that the HR function gives more importance to employees’ behaviour and attitude as compared to their technical knowledge. The flaw is that it’s not always about attitude, especially for entry level engineering jobs. Technical skills play an equal or a more important role - the work the entry level engineers do matters greatly in measuring their performance, significantly more than their ability to display high Emotional Intelligence or all five Personality traits (with reference to the Big 5 Model). There are many other specific factors, apart from EI and Personality traits, which influence and impact Work Engagement - employees feel engaged and find a purpose for their work if they are doing work aligned and oriented to their own attributes.

The leaders of organizations in the IT and ITES sector should focus on creating value and implementing strategies for their workforce keeping in mind these influential dimensions (Extraversion, Openness to Experience and Use of Emotions). Ensuring a highly engaged work force will help improve the overall organizational performance and effectiveness, both being driving factors of growth in today’s fast paced world. Thus, it is imperative that everyone understands the drivers of Work Engagement and consciously works towards using these drivers while formulate strategies for employee related practices in the organization – from hiring to retirement.

IX. REFERENCES