

Examining the relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement of automobile sector employees in Chennai

A. Jenifer Arokia Selvi and B. Aiswarya

Loyola Institute of Business Administration, Loyola College Campus, Chennai, India

Received 19 March 2022
Revised 9 April 2022
Accepted 9 April 2022

Abstract

Purpose – The study aimed to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement among employees of automobile sectors in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India, and also to find out various demographic factors of subordinates who are able to engage vigorously, meaningfully and committedly on their work through their emotional intelligence.

Design/methodology/approach – A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted, and 184 employees were recruited through random sampling to take part in the study. A Google Forms questionnaire consisting of the demographic questionnaire Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) was constructed and sent via e-mail to the employees, and the data were collected; after the data cleaning process, it was analysed through SPSS Version 20 using independent *t*-test, ANOVA and Pearson's correlation.

Findings – The results showed that educational qualification and income significantly influenced work engagement in all dimensions, while gender, designation and work experience partially influenced work engagement. It showed a strong correlation between work engagement and emotional intelligence.

Research limitations/implications – This study assessed a small number of employees due to which the external validity reduces, and it assessed only the interplay between different dimensions of work engagement and emotional intelligence but not linked with any other mediating factors. The final sample size of the present study was relatively small due to the time constraint; hence, the study yielded less accurate results. Some linking variables, such as job security, motivation, knowledge management and transformational leadership, can be added to find out the association of emotional intelligence and work engagement and to understand how the factors influence each other.

Practical implications – For every output in the organisation, the work engagement or performance, there is an emotion behind each and every individual. The person cannot put his/her whole effort at work and concentrate without his/her self-awareness and management; at the same time, socialising is also very important to maintain good relationships at work; without these influences, one cannot have engagement in his/her work, which ultimately leads to job satisfaction. It improves the strong attitude and behaviour that intend to be engaged at work.

Social implications – This study would benefit in focusing more on rewards and recognition, empowering employees and building a bond between the organisation and employees in a strategic manner. The management can utilise the employee's engagement and make various financial outcomes, such as profitability and growth, increasing the share value and the turnover of the productivity. It improves the communication between business leaders and the organisation that benefits the business practices to be more effective which leads to a positive social change. Employee engagement strategies could fill the gap between employees' job involvement and the productive outcome. On the whole, employees' work engagement makes them to invest themselves wholeheartedly into cognitively, physically and emotionally on the job.



Originality/value – Work engagement and emotional intelligence, as well as their dimensions, illustrate a clear relationship and are also shown to be predictive of each other in the workplace.

Keywords Absorption, Emotional intelligence, Self-awareness, Work engagement

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

With the advent of positive organisational psychology, more focus is on constructs of well-being and performance among employees, such as work engagement (Di Fabio, 2017; Mills *et al.*, 2013). Work engagement is presented as a state of mind focused on work, marked by the absorption, dedication and vigour of employees (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Higher work engagement has been related to objective task performance (Yongxing *et al.*, 2017) and psychological well-being (Shuck and Reio, 2014). Moreover, research has shown work engagement to be predictive of trait emotional intelligence, as highly engaged employees were more inclined to implement affect traits (Jackson, 2014). Similarly, a positive relationship between the emotional intelligence and work engagement has also been reported (Bartlett, 2015) (see Tables 1–4).

According to Peter Salovey and John Mayer, emotional intelligence corresponds to the ability of an individual to monitor and understand their own emotions and that of others and to distinguish and label different emotions and use this emotional information to direct actions and thoughts (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). In the workplace, emotional intelligence is posited to be a major predictor of job satisfaction (Suleman *et al.*, 2018), with higher levels being associated with enhanced productivity, efficiency, commitment and motivation (Desti and Shanthi, 2015). Higher emotional intelligence is also posited to be associated with more work engagement and job satisfaction (Yan *et al.*, 2018). As an aspect of emotional intelligence, well-being was found to have a significant relationship with the work engagement of employees, while emotionality had a negative relationship with work engagement (Arora *et al.*, 2012).

Research has inferred a positive relationship between work engagement and emotional intelligence, thereby suggesting that if individuals can monitor and comprehend their

Demographic details		N (184)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	96	52.2
	Female	88	47.8
Educational qualification	Under-graduate	60	32.7
	Post-graduate	116	63.0
	Others	8	4.3
Designation	Junior/worker level	56	30.4
	Middle level	88	47.8
	Chief and executive level	40	21.7
Work experience	Less than 1 year	36	19.6
	1–3 years	26	14.1
	3–6 years	32	17.4
	6–10 years	56	30.4
	Above 10 years	34	18.5
Income	>200,000	26	14.1
	200,000 > 400,000	34	18.5
	400,000 > 600,000	44	23.9
	600,000 and 800,000	48	26.1
	Above 800,000	16	8.7

Table 1.
Demographic details of
participants

Table 2.
Comparison between
dimensions of work
engagement and
demographic details

Demographic details	N (184)	Vigour			Dedication			Absorption			Work engagement total		
		M ± STD	t/f	p	M ± STD	t/f	p	M ± STD	t/f	p	M ± STD	t/f	p
Gender													
Male	96	19.10 ± 2.646	0.332 ^{NS}	0.740	20.92 ± 1.799	1.408 ^{NS}	0.161	20.62 ± 2.058	2.292*	0.023	60.65 ± 4.784	1.721 ^{NS}	0.087
Female	88	18.98 ± 2.532			20.43 ± 2.733			19.84 ± 2.573			59.25 ± 6.077		
Educational qualification													
Under-graduate	60	18.43 ± 2.280	4.835**	0.009	20.17 ± 2.631	5.552**	0.005	19.50 ± 3.034	6.347**	0.002	58.10 ± 5.979	9.896**	0.000
Post-graduate	116	19.47 ± 2.565			21.07 ± 1.854			20.71 ± 1.730			61.24 ± 4.395		
Others	8	17.50 ± 3.742			19.00 ± 3.928			19.23 ± 2.765			55.75 ± 9.301		
Designation													
Junior/Worker level	56	18.43 ± 2.607	11.178**	0.000	20.57 ± 2.448	2.978 ^{NS}	0.053	19.61 ± 2.755	7.001**	0.001	58.61 ± 5.805	11.791**	0.000
Middle level	88	18.70 ± 2.325			20.41 ± 2.060			20.16 ± 2.133			59.27 ± 4.680		
Chief/Executive level	40	20.65 ± 2.507			21.45 ± 2.470			21.35 ± 1.762			63.45 ± 5.277		
Work experience													
less than 1 year	36	18.78 ± 2.474	2.900*	0.023	20.39 ± 2.464	1.645 ^{NS}	0.165	18.67 ± 2.619	8.637**	0.000	57.83 ± 5.974	4.512**	0.002
1-3 years	26	17.92 ± 2.785			20.00 ± 2.828			20.69 ± 2.950			58.62 ± 7.228		
3-6 years	32	19.06 ± 2.422			21.37 ± 1.561			20.38 ± 2.091			60.81 ± 4.269		
6-10 years	56	19.07 ± 2.365			20.61 ± 2.006			20.14 ± 1.542			59.82 ± 3.833		
Above 10 years	34	20.12 ± 2.761			21.00 ± 2.605			21.65 ± 1.905			62.76 ± 5.630		
Income													
>200,000	26	16.85 ± 1.826	5.890**	0.000	19.08 ± 2.979	4.640**	0.001	18.08 ± 2.979	8.872**	0.000	54.00 ± 5.628	11.423**	0.000
200,000 > 400,000	34	18.82 ± 3.252			20.47 ± 2.873			20.41 ± 2.560			59.71 ± 6.909		
400,000 > 600,000	44	19.23 ± 2.361			21.18 ± 1.715			20.36 ± 1.686			60.77 ± 3.582		
600,000 and 800,000	48	19.71 ± 2.250			20.83 ± 1.693			20.63 ± 1.645			61.17 ± 3.975		
Above 800,000	16	19.37 ± 2.872			21.50 ± 1.713			21.73 ± 2.295			62.63 ± 5.068		

Note(s): *Significant at $p < 0.05$; **Significant at $p < 0.01$; NS - Not Significant

Demographic details	N (184)	Self-awareness			Emotion regulation			Self-motivation			Social skills			Emotional receptivity			El total		
		M ± STD	df	p	M ± STD	df	p	M ± STD	df	p	M ± STD	df	p	M ± STD	df	p	M ± STD	df	p
Gender																			
Male	96	20.56 ± 2.171	0.397 ^{NS}	0.692	28.79 ± 2.894	3.620 ^{**}	0.000	20.73 ± 2.130	1.851 ^{NS}	0.066	28.35 ± 3.467	0.157 ^{NS}	0.876	4.23 ± 0.624	-0.216 ^{NS}	0.829	102.67 ± 7.774	1.92 ^{NS}	0.056
Female	88	20.41 ± 2.974			26.93 ± 4.025			20.11 ± 2.380			28.27 ± 3.584			4.25 ± 0.682			98.98 ± 10.786		
Educational qualification																			
Student, higher secondary, under-graduate	60	19.87 ± 3.207	2.66 ^{NS}	0.072	27.33 ± 3.785	1.40 ^{NS}	0.248	20.40 ± 2.308	2.45 ^{NS}	0.089	28.20 ± 3.246	0.957 ^{NS}	0.388	4.27 ± 0.686	0.085 ^{NS}	0.919	100.07 ± 10.970	1.65 ^{NS}	0.193
Post-graduate	116	20.78 ± 2.151			28.24 ± 3.569			20.57 ± 2.277			26.48 ± 3.540			4.22 ± 0.647			102.29 ± 8.469		
BTech, M. Phil, Ph. D.	8	21.00 ± 2.507			27.25 ± 1.581			18.75 ± 0.886			28.75 ± 4.979			4.25 ± 0.463			98.00 ± 8.912		
Designation																			
Junior/Worker level	56	20.11 ± 2.909	4.54 ^{NS}	0.012	27.79 ± 3.394	0.128 ^{NS}	0.880	20.79 ± 1.796	1.54 ^{NS}	0.216	27.86 ± 3.233	5.452 ^{**}	0.005	4.32 ± 0.716	7.150 ^{**}	0.001	100.86 ± 8.650	3.348 [*]	0.037
Middle level	88	20.25 ± 2.271			27.86 ± 3.126			20.14 ± 2.469			27.89 ± 3.557			4.07 ± 0.583			100.20 ± 9.743		
Chief/Executive level	40	21.59 ± 2.511			28.15 ± 4.742			20.60 ± 2.362			29.90 ± 3.418			4.50 ± 0.599			104.70 ± 9.121		
Work experience																			
Less than 1 year	36	20.44 ± 2.709	0.786 ^{NS}	0.535	27.83 ± 3.645	0.991 ^{NS}	0.414	20.39 ± 2.296	2.803 [*]	0.027	28.50 ± 3.047	2.15 ^{NS}	0.076	4.44 ± 0.695	2.26 ^{NS}	0.064	101.61 ± 11.074	1.97 ^{NS}	0.100
1-3 years	26	20.15 ± 4.135			26.85 ± 4.057			20.15 ± 2.649			27.54 ± 4.383			4.15 ± 0.784			98.85 ± 12.276		
3-6 years	32	20.31 ± 2.023			27.94 ± 2.723			21.44 ± 1.722			28.50 ± 2.640			4.25 ± 0.568			102.44 ± 5.747		
6-10 years	56	20.36 ± 1.667			27.93 ± 2.696			19.86 ± 2.235			27.64 ± 3.650			4.07 ± 0.599			98.86 ± 7.903		
Above 10 years	34	21.18 ± 2.657			28.71 ± 4.945			20.71 ± 2.195			29.65 ± 3.481			4.35 ± 0.597			104.59 ± 9.522		
Income																			
>200,000	26	18.38 ± 3.453	5.301 ^{**}	0.000	26.00 ± 4.436	4.209 ^{**}	0.003	19.54 ± 2.518	3.877 ^{**}	0.005	25.92 ± 3.110	4.720 ^{**}	0.001	3.99 ± 0.845	2.20 ^{NS}	0.071	93.77 ± 11.867	6.741 ^{**}	0.000
200,000 > 400,000	34	20.94 ± 2.348			28.71 ± 3.205			21.29 ± 2.277			27.71 ± 3.436			4.32 ± 0.691			103.00 ± 10.669		
400,000 > 600,000	44	20.50 ± 2.130			27.73 ± 2.944			20.36 ± 2.253			28.27 ± 2.481			4.18 ± 0.495			101.05 ± 7.486		
600,000 and above	48	20.46 ± 2.000			27.58 ± 3.935			20.04 ± 1.989			29.00 ± 2.260			4.33 ± 0.650			101.42 ± 7.471		
Above 800,000	16	21.25 ± 2.720			30.25 ± 2.620			21.62 ± 2.125			29.87 ± 3.324			4.13 ± 0.619			107.13 ± 5.227		

Note(s): *Significant at $p < 0.05$; **Significant at $p < 0.01$; NS - Not Significant

Table 3. Comparison between dimensions of emotional intelligence and demographic details

emotions, they can also be more engaged (Shukla *et al.*, 2013). Both emotional intelligence and work engagement have their own distinct dimensions with unique interplays, as the social awareness and self-management dimension of emotional intelligence have shown a relationship with employee physical engagement, with self-management also decreasing perception of pressure at work. However, the self-awareness dimension of emotional intelligence is associated with cognitive engagement of employees (Karamustafa and Kunday, 2018).

Based on the existing literature positing the importance and interplay of emotional intelligence and work engagement among employees in the workplace, the present study aimed to assess the relationship between emotional and work engagement among employees in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India. This study will also compare the work engagement and emotional intelligence among employees with respect to demographic details.

Methodology

Research design

The present study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design and was conducted among automobile sector employees in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Random sampling was used to recruit the sample of factory employees of automobile sectors working in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Tools used

Demographic questionnaire. A self-developed demographic questionnaire collected information regarding gender, educational qualification, designation, work experience and income.

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), consists of 17 items and assesses work engagement in terms of three subscales: vigour, dedication and absorption. There are six items for vigour, five for dedication and six for absorption.

Scoring: Items are scored on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from Never (0) to Always (6). For the present study, the scoring was slightly altered to a five-point Likert scale from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). Also, only 15 items (5 items for each subscale) were used for the present study; items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 17 were included.

Psychometric properties: Cronbach's alpha ranges between 0.80 and 0.60.

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) (Mehta and Singh, 2013). The Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS), consists of 69 items and assesses emotional intelligence in terms of six dimensions, self-awareness, self-motivation, emotion regulation, social awareness, social skills and emotional receptivity. The first three dimensions correspond to personal competence, and the last three dimensions correspond to social competence.

	Self-awareness	Emotion regulation	Self-motivation	Social skills	Emotional receptivity	Emotional intelligence total
Vigour	0.324**	0.130	0.094	0.382**	0.345**	0.328**
Dedication	0.343**	0.259**	0.280**	0.223**	0.262**	0.362**
Absorption	0.502**	0.449**	0.395**	0.295**	0.290**	0.535**
Work engagement total	0.513**	0.363**	0.331**	0.401**	0.398**	0.536**

Note(s): **Significant at $p < 0.01$

Table 4.
Intercorrelation between dimensions of work engagement and emotional intelligence

Scoring: Items are scored on a five-point Likert scale from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5). In the present study, only 20 items were used corresponding to self-awareness, emotion regulation, self-motivation, social skills, and emotional receptivity dimensions.

Psychometric properties: The reliability coefficients for self-awareness, self-motivation, emotion regulation, social awareness, social skills and emotional receptivity are 0.91, 0.78, 0.83, 0.78, 0.89 and 0.86, respectively.

Procedure

- (1) Employees were briefed about the study, and their informed consent was collected.
- (2) Employees were given instructions on how to fill out the questionnaires.
- (3) A Google Forms questionnaire, consisting of the demographic questionnaire, UWES and EIS, was then sent to the employees.
- (4) The responses were collected, and the data were studied using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 20 software.

Statistical analyses

Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS Version 23 software. Frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation, as well as independent “*t*” test, one-way analysis of variance and Pearson’s correlation coefficient, were performed.

Ethics

To adhere to ethical guidelines, the researcher informed the employees about the study and collected their informed consent. Employees were made aware of their right to withdraw at any point of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were also maintained.

Results

There were 184 employees who responded to the Google Forms questionnaire; out of which, 96 were male, and 88 were females. Most of the employees had completed their post-graduation (63.0%) and were middle-level employees (47.8%). More employees had 6–10 years of experience ($n = 32$), but only 8.7% earned above eight lakhs per annum (LPA).

Work engagement

While the results of the independent “*t*” test showed no significant difference between the vigour $t(182) = 0.332, p = 0.740$, dedication $t(182) = 1.408, p = 0.161$ and total work engagement score $t(182) = 1.721, p = 0.087$ and gender, there was a significant difference in absorption $t(182) = 2.292, p = 0.023$. Although the results were not statistically significant in dimensions except absorption, males scored higher in all dimensions of work engagement. With respect to education qualification, all dimensions of work engagement demonstrated a significant difference $F(181) = 9.896, p = 0.000$, with post-graduate scoring higher. Chief and executive level also scored higher in all dimensions of work engagement $F(181) = 11.791, p = 0.000$, but it did not reach statistical significance in the dedication dimension $F(181) = 2.978, p = 0.053$. In addition, there was no significant difference between years of experience and dedication $F(179) = 1.645, p = 1.65$, but those with more than ten years of experience scored higher in vigour ($M = 20.12, SD = 2.761$) and absorption ($M = 21.65, SD = 1.905$). All dimensions of work engagement were statistically significant with respect to total income $F(179) = 11.423, p = 0.000$.

Emotional intelligence

According to Daniel Goleman Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as “the area of cognitive ability that facilitates interpersonal behavior”. Although males had a higher EI total score ($M = 102.67$, $SD = 7.774$), it did not reach statistical significance $t(182) = 1.92$, $p = 0.056$. However, there was a significant difference in emotion regulation between males and females $t(182) = 3.620$, $p = 0.000$, with males scoring higher ($M = 28.79$, $SD = 2.894$). All dimensions of emotional intelligence showed were not statistically significant with respect to educational qualification $F(181) = 1.65$, $p = 0.193$. In terms of designation, there was no significant difference in self-awareness, emotion regulation and self-motivation dimensions, but a significant difference was evident in social skills $F(181) = 5.452$, $p = 0.005$, emotional receptivity $F(181) = 7.150$, $p = 0.001$ and EI total scores $F(181) = 3.348$, $p = 0.037$. Chief and executive levels had a higher total EI score ($M = 104.70$, $SD = 9.121$). For work experience, only self-motivation demonstrates statistical significance $F(179) = 2.803$, $p = 0.027$. Specific to income level, all dimensions except emotional receptivity reached statistical significance. The total EI score was higher for those earning more than 8 LPA ($M = 107.13$, $SD = 5.227$) and was lowest for those earning less than 2 LPA ($M = 93.7$, $SD = 11.867$).

A strong correlation was evident between work engagement and emotional intelligence with the total scores of ($r = 0.536$, $p > 0.01$), absorption and emotional intelligence total ($r = 0.535$, $p > 0.01$), work engagement total and self-awareness ($r = 0.512$, $p > 0.01$) and absorption and self-awareness ($r = 0.502$, $p > 0.01$). A moderate correlation was evident between vigour and self-awareness ($r = 0.324$, $p > 0.01$), social skills ($r = 0.382$, $p > 0.01$), emotional receptivity ($r = 0.345$, $p > 0.01$) and total emotional intelligence ($r = 0.328$, $p > 0.01$), as well as between dedication and emotional intelligence total ($r = 0.362$, $p > 0.01$), absorption and emotion regulation ($r = 0.449$, $p > 0.01$), self-motivation ($r = 0.395$, $p > 0.01$), work engagement total and emotion regulation ($r = 0.363$, $p > 0.01$), self-motivation ($r = 0.331$, $p > 0.01$), social skills ($r = 0.401$, $p > 0.01$) and emotional receptivity ($r = 0.398$, $p > 0.01$).

Gender and work engagement

In the present study, the absorption dimension of work engagement was significantly higher among males than females. Even though vigour and dedication based on gender did not reach statistical significance, males consistently scored more than females. This finding is partially in line with a study by Tshilongamulenzhe and Takawira (2015) who also showed no significant gender differences in terms of work engagement levels. This is supported by Marcus and Gopinath (2017) who showed no significant difference in work engagement based on gender. The higher work engagement scores of males could be attributed to the gendered concept of it being of ease for men to show their work engagement when compared to women (Banihani et al., 2013). There may be gender disparities of work engagement across different sectors, as in the academic field, female academicians show higher work engagement scores than males (Guizar and Teli, 2018), but in the information technology (IT) industry, males demonstrate more work engagement (Sharma et al., 2017). As human resource (HR) professionals were considered in the present study, it is possible that males in this position show more work engagement than females.

Educational qualification and work engagement

Post-graduate employees scored higher in work engagement consistently across all dimensions, while the group belongs to others had scored less. This could be attributed to the smaller number of employees in the latter group. The findings of the undergraduate employees in this present study, were scored lower. Research has shown that people who are from higher levels of education will be able to predict work engagement in the IT industry (Sharma et al., 2017). Similarly, highly qualified individuals were also more engaged in their

work across all scales and were in higher positions (Munir *et al.*, 2015). It is possible that more educated employees acquire more knowledge from their courses because of which they are more involved in their work.

Designation and work engagement

Chief/Executive/Senior level employees consistently scored higher than middle of junior/worker level employees in all dimensions of work engagement except dedication, where junior/worker level employees scored higher than middle level employees. Generally, higher level employees are inclined to be more involved in the mission of the organisation, thus possibly stimulating more engagement. Research has supported this finding by showing chief/executive level employees to be more engaged, while worker/junior and middle level employees are similarly engaged (Rana and Chopra, 2019). This finding has also been supported by other studies (Chaudhary and Rangnekar, 2017; Scholarworks and Vanam, 2009; Xu and Thomas, 2011).

Work experience and work engagement

Employees working for more than ten years scored higher in work engagement than those with few years of experience, even though it did not reach statistical significance in the dedication dimension. Years of experience construct was found to significantly influence engagement among employees, with engagement gradually rising with more years of experience. More experienced employees may have greater expertise, involvement and interaction in their organisation, thus resulting in more work engagement. This may also be because employees with more years of experience have a firm understanding of their roles and responsibility because of which they are driven by a need to achieve and be recognised (Rana and Chopra, 2019). This finding is in line with other studies (Balain and Sparrow, 2009; Jaupi and Llaci, 2015), but is also contradicted by research stating that more work experience relates to lower engagement among employees (Avery *et al.*, 2007; Robinson *et al.*, 2004).

Income and work engagement

Employees earning more than 8 LPA scored more in all dimensions of work engagement except vigour as those earning 6–8 LPA scored slightly higher for this dimension alone. However, a rise in income was related to higher work engagement. This could be because employees earning more have more experience, are in higher positions and feel the responsibility of reciprocating their involvement for their income. Employees earning less than two lakhs per annum had the lowest work engagement scores, possibly due to feeling underpaid. Income and work engagement may be positively related as individuals feel the need to only input the amount of engagement they feel is measurable to their pay scale. According to research, financial rewards did not account for variations in work engagement among employees (Kulikowski and Sedlak, 2020), but another study showed a positive relationship between performance-related pay and outcomes of well-being as employees consider their work as being traded in for a rise in pay (Ogbonnaya *et al.*, 2017). There were a limited number of studies assessing the relationship between income and work engagement.

Gender and EI

Regardless of males generally scoring higher in the dimensions of emotional intelligence, it only reached statistical significance for the emotion regulation dimension. A study by Khalili (2011) confirmed this finding and showed males scoring higher in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management dimensions than females. This finding contradicts with existing studies, which reveal females to have higher emotional intelligence levels than males (Dhani and Sharma, 2017). Even though a study by Winschel and Didona (2014) showed no significant gender difference in work

engagement, females scored higher than males. Similar to this, [Pooja and Kumar \(2016\)](#) demonstrated females to score higher than males in emotional intelligence. It is evident that there are variations in gender disparities regarding emotional intelligence among employees.

Educational qualification and EI

The present study found no significant difference in terms of emotional intelligence and educational qualification. This may be because there was an unequal distribution of employees in groups of qualification. Nonetheless, research has shown emotional intelligence to be higher among employees with a non-technical education background than those with technical educational backgrounds. This has been attributed to non-technical individuals being exposed to a wide range of individuals both within and out of the organisation ([Pooja and Kumar, 2016](#)). Employees holding non-professional degrees had higher scores in a few EI dimensions, which could be due to the nature of job carried out by them ([Anand and Udayasuriyan, 2010](#)).

Designation and EI

Based on designation, chief/executive level employees scored higher in social skills and emotional receptivity, as well as in overall emotional intelligence. They also scored higher in other dimensions, including self-awareness and emotion regulation; however, it did not reach statistical significance. It is possible that chief/executive level employees are in positions that require their interaction in the midst of adversities, and with a wide range of people, due to which their emotional intelligence is relatively higher. However, research shows that employee designation does not influence their emotional intelligence ([Ealias and George, 2012](#)). Research regarding designation and EI was relatively limited compared to other demographic variables assessed in the present study.

Work experience and EI

In terms of work experience, there was only a significant difference in the self-motivation dimension, with those having 3–6 years of experience scoring higher. Other dimensions and the total EI score were not significant. There was no consistent trend in years of experience and emotional intelligence. A study by [Ealias and George \(2012\)](#) however showed work experience to influence emotional intelligence. In support of this finding is a study by [Nivedita \(2018\)](#) who showed a positive relationship between work experience and emotional intelligence. Additionally, emotional intelligence and emotional stability are reported to be unrelated to work experience ([Singh, 2019](#)). [Abraham \(2004\)](#) posited that emotional intelligence rises with work experience as individuals gain maturity with the number of years they work.

Income and EI

Specific to income and emotional intelligence, those earning above 8 LPA scored higher across all dimensions except emotional receptivity. A rise in income generally marked an increase in emotional intelligence. A probable reason for this is that employees earning more are in higher positions with increased experience, due to which the demands of their job necessitate the active implementation of their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was found to have a positive and significant influence on salary levels ([Rode et al., 2017](#)). Employees with higher emotional intelligence are observed to have higher salaries ([Sanchez-Gomez et al., 2021](#)). Generally, as emotional intelligence improves, so does one's salary ([Bradberry and Tasler, 2014](#)).

Relationship between work engagement and EI

In the present study, a strong correlation was found between total work engagement and emotional intelligence scores, as well as between absorption and emotional intelligence total, work engagement total and self-awareness and absorption and self-awareness. A moderate correlation was evident between vigour and self-awareness, social skills, emotional receptivity and total emotional intelligence, as well as between dedication and emotional intelligence total, absorption and emotion regulation, self-motivation, and work engagement total and emotion regulation, self-motivation, social skills and emotional receptivity. Research shows only the emotion regulation dimension of emotional intelligence to be associated with work engagement and satisfaction in life and work (Mérida-López and Extremera, 2020). Furthermore, emotionality demonstrates a negative relationship with engagement among employees, while well-being had a positive relationship with work engagement (Arora *et al.*, 2012). Another study showed a positive relationship between engagement and emotional intelligence, except the well-being dimension, even though the finding did not attain statistical significance (Shukla *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, emotional intelligence and perceived job-person suitability was found to have a strong positive influence on the well-being of employees (Akanni *et al.*, 2020). Emotional intelligence has been related to work engagement and a creative personality, with emotional intelligence even predicting work engagement of employees (Bartlett, 2015). There were a limited number of studies comparing the correlation between different dimensions of work engagement and emotional intelligence.

Discussion

The present study aimed to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and work engagement among the employees of automobile sectors in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, South India, and to compare work engagement and emotional intelligence among employees with respect to demographic details. Findings showed that educational qualification and income significantly influenced work engagement in all dimensions, while gender, designation, work experience and work experience partially influenced work engagement. Emotional intelligence was partially influenced by gender, educational qualification, designation, work experience and income. A strong correlation was evident between work engagement and emotional intelligence total scores, absorption and emotional intelligence total, work engagement total and self-awareness, and absorption and self-awareness.

Implications

For every output in the organisation, the work engagement or performance, there is an emotion behind each and every individual. The person cannot put his whole effort at work and concentrate without his self-awareness and management; at the same time, socialising is also very important to maintain good relationships at work; without these influences, one cannot have engagement in his/her work, which leads to ultimately job satisfaction. It improves the strong attitude and behaviour that intend to be engaged at work.

This study would benefit in focusing more on rewards and recognition, empowering employees and building a bond between the organisation and employees in a strategic manner. The management can utilise the employee's engagement and make sustainable profitability. It improves the communication between business leaders and the organisation and could benefit from contributing to improved business practices and positive social change. Developed employee engagement strategies could close the gap between employee motivation, and well-developed optimal job performance can be incorporated for the employee needs.

Limitations and future direction

This study assessed a small number of employees due to which the external validity reduces, and it assessed only the interplay between different dimensions of work engagement and emotional intelligence. The final sample size of the present study was relatively small due to the time constraint; hence, the sample yielded less accurate results. We can also add some linking variables, such as job security, motivation, knowledge management and transformational leadership, to find out the association of emotional intelligence and work engagement and to understand how the factors influence each other.

Future studies can include more employees from different industries, like FMCG, hotel and hospital, and also assess the interplay between different dimensions of work engagement and emotional intelligence to confirm these findings. Also, variables such as job satisfaction, performance, equality, motivation, knowledge management and well-being can be studied along with emotional intelligence and work engagement to understand how the factors influence each other.

Conclusion

The relationship of emotional intelligence gives more managerial implications for the organisation for their sustainability through their engaged employees. Even theories on the employee's self-emotional patterns can be developed in the future studies. Work engagement and emotional intelligence, as well as their individual dimensions, illustrated a picture of their relationship. This study gives importance and value to the employee's needs and emotions. Whatever skill employees might possess, if their emotional level is down, it affects the brain as well as its connectivity with the other physical work and so they have disengagement at work, and it ultimately affects the productivity at the end. Therefore, the emotions should be stable for every individual at the workplace for strong job involvement, engagement and the task performance.

This asserts the importance of understanding the underlying factors which facilitates the relationship in order to manifest the entitlement of employees' work engagement without any deviations, with that organisations also gain the benefits. However, future research considering variables such as well-being, equality, motivation, knowledge management, job satisfaction and performance are required to comprehensively understand the influence of the relationship between work engagement and emotional intelligence. Also, future studies are required to confirm the findings regarding the relationship between dimensions of work engagement and emotional intelligence with different factors among other industries, such as hospital, bank, textile etc. We hope this research contributes in better understanding the employees' work engagement with the prediction of emotional intelligence and the best productive outcomes.

References

- Abraham, R. (2004), "Emotional competence as antecedent to performance: a contingency framework", *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, Vol. 130 No. 2, pp. 117-145, doi: [10.3200/MONO.130.2.117-145](https://doi.org/10.3200/MONO.130.2.117-145).
- Anand, R. and Udayasuriyan, G. (2010), "Emotional intelligence and its relationship with leadership practices", *International Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 5 No. 2, doi: [10.5539/ijbm.v5n2p65](https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v5n2p65).
- Ananni, A.A., Kareem, D.B. and Oduaran, C.A. (2020), "The relationship between emotional intelligence and employee wellbeing through perceived person-job fit among university academic staff: a structural equation modelling approach", *Cogent Psychology*, Vol. 7 No. 1, 1869376, doi: [10.1080/23311908.2020.1869376](https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1869376).

- Arora, R., Adhikari, B. and Shetty, D. (2012), "Exploring the relationship between employee engagement and emotional intelligence", *SSRN Electronic Journal*, March 2, doi: [10.2139/ssrn.2572514](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2572514).
- Avery, D.R., McKay, P.F. and Wilson, D.C. (2007), "Engaging the aging workforce: the relationship between perceived age similarity, satisfaction with coworkers, and employee engagement", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92 No. 6, pp. 1542-1556, doi: [10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1542](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1542).
- Balain, S. and Sparrow, P. (2009), "The impact of employee engagement on job performance and organisational commitment in the Egyptian automobile sector", available at: <http://www.sciepub.com/reference/136803> (accessed 11 May 2021).
- Banihani, M., Lewis, P. and Syed, J. (2013), "Is work engagement gendered?", *Gender in Management*, Vol. 28, pp. 400-423, doi: [10.1108/GM-01-2013-0005](https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-01-2013-0005).
- Bartlett, S. (2015), *The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Work Engagement, Creativity and Demographic Variables*, Doctoral Dissertation.
- Bradberry, T. and Tasler, N. (2014), "Increasing your salary with emotional intelligence", available at: <https://www.talentsmarteq.com/articles/Increasing-Your-Salary-with-Emotional-Intelligence-983916766-p-1.html> (accessed 11 May 2021).
- Chaudhary, R. and Rangnekar, S. (2017), "Socio-demographic factors, contextual factors, and work engagement: evidence from India", *Emerging Economy Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 1-18, doi: [10.1177/2394901517696646](https://doi.org/10.1177/2394901517696646).
- Desti, K. and Shanthi, R. (2015), "A study on emotional intelligence at work place", *European Journal of Business and Management*, Vol. 7, pp. 147-154.
- Dhani, P. and Sharma, T. (2017), "Effect of emotional intelligence on job performance of IT employees: a gender study", *Procedia Computer Science*, Vol. 122, pp. 180-185, doi: [10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.358](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.358).
- Di Fabio, A. (2017), "Positive healthy organizations: promoting well-being, meaningfulness, and sustainability in organizations", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 8, November, doi: [10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01938](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01938).
- Ealias, A. and George, J. (2012), "Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction: a correlational study", available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256019752_Emotional_Intelligence_and_Job_Satisfaction_A_Correlational_Study (accessed 11 May 2021).
- Guizar, S. and Teli, M.R. (2018), "Gender and work engagement: a study of academic staff in higher education", *Arabian Journal of Business and Bar A Management Review*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 1-3.
- Jackson, L. (2014), "The work engagement and job performance relationship: exploring the mediating effect of trait emotional intelligence", Masters thesis, doi: [10.31979/etd.3kz9-sguw](https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.3kz9-sguw).
- Jaupi, F. and Llaci, S. (2015), "The impact of communication satisfaction and demographic variables on employee engagement", *Journal of Service Science and Management*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 191-200, doi: [10.4236/jssm.2015.82021](https://doi.org/10.4236/jssm.2015.82021).
- Karamustafa, E.Y. and Kunday, O. (2018), "The relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement with the moderating role of gender", *International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 586-603.
- Khalili, A. (2011), "Gender differences in emotional intelligence among employees of small and medium enterprise: an empirical study", *Journal of International Management Studies*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 184-193.
- Kulikowski, K. and Sedlak, P. (2020), "Can you buy work engagement? The relationship between pay, fringe benefits, financial bonuses and work engagement", *Current Psychology*, Vol. 39 No. 1, pp. 343-353, doi: [10.1007/s12144-017-9768-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-017-9768-4).
- Marcus, A. and Gopinath, N.M. (2017), "Impact of the demographic variables on the employee engagement - an analysis", *ICTACT Journal on Management Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 502-510, doi: [10.21917/ijms.2017.0068](https://doi.org/10.21917/ijms.2017.0068).

- Mérida-López, S. and Extremera, N. (2020), "The interplay of emotional intelligence abilities and work engagement on job and life satisfaction: which emotional abilities matter most for secondary-school teachers?", *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 11, doi: [10.3389/fpsyg.2020.563634](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.563634).
- Mehtha, S. and Singh, M.N. (2013), "Development of the emotional intelligence scale", *International Journal of Management and Information Technology*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 1252-1264, doi: [10.24297/ijmit.v8i1.689](https://doi.org/10.24297/ijmit.v8i1.689).
- Mills, M.J., Fleck, C.R. and Kozikowski, A. (2013), "Positive psychology at work: a conceptual review, state-of-practice assessment, and a look ahead", *Journal of Positive Psychology*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 153-164, doi: [10.1080/17439760.2013.776622](https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2013.776622).
- Munir, F., Houdmont, J., Clemes, S., Wilson, K., Kerr, R. and Addley, K. (2015), "Work engagement and its association with occupational sitting time: results from the Stormont study Environmental and occupational health", *BMC Public Health*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 1-12, doi: [10.1186/s12889-015-1427-9](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1427-9).
- Nivedita, G. (2018), *The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Work Experience in IT Industry*.
- Ogbonnaya, C., Daniels, K. and Nielsen, K. (2017), "Does contingent pay encourage positive employee attitudes and intensify work?", *Human Resource Management Journal*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 94-112, doi: [10.1111/1748-8583.12130](https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12130).
- Pooja, P. and Kumar, P. (2016), "Demographic variables and its effect on emotional intelligence: a study on Indian service sector employees", *Annals of Neurosciences*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 18-24, doi: [10.1159/000443552](https://doi.org/10.1159/000443552).
- Rana, S. and Chopra, P. (2019), *Developing and Sustaining Employee Engagement*, IGI Global, doi: [10.4018/978-1-5225-7799-7.ch009](https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7799-7.ch009).
- Robinson, D., Perryman, S. and Hayday, S. (2004), "The drivers of employee engagement", available at: www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=447.
- Rode, J.C., Arthaud-Day, M., Ramaswami, A. and Howes, S. (2017), "A time-lagged study of emotional intelligence and salary", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol. 101, pp. 77-89, doi: [10.1016/j.jvb.2017.05.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.05.001).
- Salovey, P. and Mayer, J.D. (1990), "Emotional intelligence", *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 185-211, doi: [10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG](https://doi.org/10.2190/DUGG-P24E-52WK-6CDG).
- Sanchez-Gomez, M., Bresó, E. and Giorgi, G. (2021), "Could emotional intelligence ability predict salary? A cross-sectional study in a multioccupational sample", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 1-10, doi: [10.3390/ijerph18031322](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18031322).
- Schaufeli, W. and Bakker, A. (2004), *UWES Utrecht Work Engagement Scale Preliminary Manual*.
- Schaufeli, W., Salanova, M., González-romá, V. and Bakker, A. (2002), "The measurement of engagement and burnout: a two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 71-92, doi: [10.1023/A:1015630930326](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015630930326).
- Scholarworks, S. and Vanam, S. (2009), "Job engagement: examining the relationship with situational and personal factors". doi: [10.31979/etd.87b9-v6tc](https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.87b9-v6tc).
- Sharma, A., Goel, A. and Sengupta, S. (2017), "How does work engagement vary with employee demography?: Revelations from the Indian IT industry", *Procedia Computer Science*, Elsevier B.V, Vol. 122, pp. 146-153, doi: [10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.353](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.353).
- Shuck, B. and Reio, T.G. (2014), "Employee engagement and well-being: a moderation model and implications for practice", *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 43-58, doi: [10.1177/1548051813494240](https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051813494240).
- Shukla, S., Mohsin, F. and Singh, V. (2013), "Relationship between emotional intelligence and employee engagement: a study of leading printing press in NCR", available at: https://www.academia.edu/22040201/Relationship_between_Emotional_Intelligence_and_Employee_Engagement_A_Study_of_Leading_Printing_Press_in_NCR

-
- Singh, A.K. (2019), "Emotional stability, age and work experience: an analytical study", *Pacific Business Review International*, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331647274_Emotional_Stability_Age_and_Work_Experience_An_Analytical_StudyPacific_Business_Review_International2017_Vol_106_pp103-106
- Suleman, Q., Hussain, I., Shehzad, S., Syed, M.A. and Raja, S.A. (2018), "Relationship between perceived occupational stress and psychological well-being among secondary school heads in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan", *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 13 No. 12, doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0208143](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0208143).
- Tshilongamulenzhe, M.C. and Takawira, N. (2015), "Examining the gender influence on employees' work engagement within a South African University", *Risk Governance and Control: Financial Markets and Institutions*, Vol. 5 No. 2CONT1, pp. 110-119, doi: [10.22495/rgcv5i2c1art5](https://doi.org/10.22495/rgcv5i2c1art5).
- Winschel, D.N. and Didona, T. (2014), "Gender, EI and organizational commitment: does EI mean loyal employees?", *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Vol. 5 No. 4, 1 April 2015, ISSN 2250-3153.
- Xu, J. and Thomas, H.C. (2011), "How can leaders achieve high employee engagement", *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 399-416, doi: [10.1108/01437731111134661](https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731111134661).
- Yan, X., Yang, K., Su, J., Luo, Z. and Wen, Z. (2018), "Mediating role of emotional intelligence on the associations between core self-evaluations and job satisfaction, work engagement as indices of work-related well-being", *Current Psychology*, Vol. 37 No. 3, pp. 552-558, doi: [10.1007/s12144-016-9531-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-016-9531-2).
- Yongxing, G., Hongfei, D., Baoguo, X. and Lei, M. (2017), "Work engagement and job performance: the moderating role of perceived organizational support", Vol. 33, pp. 708-713, doi: [10.6018/analesps.33.3.238571](https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.33.3.238571).

Corresponding author

A. Jenifer Arokia Selvi can be contacted at: jeny.1214@gmail.com

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com