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**Rajesh Kumar Nigah**

Research Scholar, Department  
of Commerce, University of  
Delhi, Delhi, India

**Anil Kumar Singh**

Professor, Sri Aurobindo  
College (E), University of  
Delhi, Delhi, India

# Impact of employee engagement on turnover intention in the context of hospitality industry

**Rajesh Kumar Nigah and Anil Kumar Singh**

### Abstract

The current study is conducted to investigate the perception of employee engagement and its impact on turnover intention, in the hospitality industry in the Northern region of India. The three drivers of employee engagement have been used viz., Cognitive Engagement, Behavioural Engagement, and Emotional engagement to find out their effect on the turnover intentions of employees. The hospitality frontline employees are chosen as participants in the study working in different segments of the hospitality industry including hotels/lodging, restaurants, events, and retail. The study found a significant impact of employee engagement on the turnover intentions of people at work in the hospitality sector. Also, there is negative impact of Cognitive Engagement, Behavioural Engagement and Emotional on their willingness to shift their jobs.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, turnover intentions, hospitality industry

### Introduction

The gradual withdrawal of COVID-19 restrictions provides a new ray of hope worldwide to the hospitality industry after being hit hardest by the pandemic. Domestic tourism becomes a shock absorber by partially covering up the losses caused by a fall in International tourism by more than 50% as estimated by UNWTO (2020) [45].

The tourism and hospitality industry is gaining global significance in the current times due to job creation as well as social, economic, and environmental impacts (Neto, 2003) [32]. Manpower has an imperative role in the success of hotels (How) and the cost of human resource development is quite high in the hotel industry (Hrou & Mohamed, 2014) [22]. Unlike other industries, it is difficult to replace human resources with technology in the hospitality sector. Human interaction is unavoidable to create an everlasting customer service experience from the first point of contact to final service deliveries. To gain competitive advantages, hospitality practitioners focus on the development and enactment of human resource practices and involvements that affect the working situations of the people at work (Otoo & Mishra, 2018) [33]. From another perspective, the researchers argue on the part of employees themselves to cope with their work surroundings proactively (Bakker, 2017) [6].

In a highly competitive business environment retention of talent and expertise is most important which is possible only through employee engagement (Glen, 2006) [19]. Engaged employees possess high levels of energy, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, 2017) [6]. Also, work-engaged personnel possesses a richness of “resources” which they can utilize in their efforts (Demerouti *et al.*, 2015). They are dedicated to their work, immersed in their job profiles, and obstinate whenever tested with challenges and hindrances (Arora *et al.*, 2015) [4]. Many studies conducted in past have proved that engagement results in crucial organizational results, together with originality and novelty, user satisfaction, favourable financial results, reduced illness, and non-attendance (Bakker *et al.*, 2014) [7], (Dubey *et al.*, 2021) [15].

Turnover intentions of the employees have been raised as a major issue for organizations around the globe and have become a critical viewpoint in the hospitality industry (Park & Min, 2020) [34]. A higher rate of turnover disrupts the business operations as well as results in higher costs to the recruiters such as training and recruitment cost, personnel replacement cost, and the loss of expert people at work (Lopes Morrison, 2005) [28], (Dewanto & Wardhani, 2018) [14].

### Correspondence

**Rajesh Kumar Nigah**

Research Scholar, Department  
of Commerce, University of  
Delhi, Delhi, India

The voluntary turnover increases the workload of existing employees thereby they feel stressed and de-motivated despite being adequately remunerated.

Organisations in the hospitality industry have started focussing on reducing turnover intentions (Abdirad & Krishnan, 2022) <sup>[1]</sup> and stresses the development of employee-oriented practices and interventions. One of the reasons for increasing turnover is work pressure (Yousaf *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[44]</sup> which results in a lower level of employee engagement at their work.

### Review of Literature

Past studies acknowledge that employee engagement is vital to business success and could be used as a tool to achieve strategic goals.

Employee engagement is a state where employees are cognitively, emotionally, and behavioural inclined to achieve the firm's outcomes (Shuck and Wollard, 2010) <sup>[40]</sup>. The working environment should be created in such a way that could influence the work conditions that equalize job demands and job resources. In the past literature, it has been mentioned that employee engagement is a multi-dimensional concept with rational, affective, and behavioural elements. According to the report, “[t]he emotional factors tie to people’s personal satisfaction and sense of inspiration and affirmation they get from their work and from being part of their organization” (Berry & Morris, N.D. 2008) <sup>[9]</sup>.

A study has given the dual perspective of the incorporation of well-being and commitment-based engagement of people at work and also termed it as full engagement (Robertson & Cooper, 2010) <sup>[36]</sup>. Another study conducted among the employees of hotels in China it was found that professional identity is most important for the success of employee engagement at the workplace and it could have a negative effect on employee turnover (Wang *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[43]</sup>.

The various outcomes of research around the globe, have found that staff is fronting the lack of employee engagement at their workplace in many sectors. (Alzayed & Murshid, 2017) <sup>[3]</sup> found that as the level of employee engagement decreases, the workers’ intention to leave the organization also increases Alzayed & Murshid, 2017) <sup>[3]</sup>. Employee stress was found to be connected to advanced turnover intentions and downgrading performance that eventually have an adverse effect on structural productivity (Jensen *et al.*, 2013) <sup>[23]</sup>. Moreover, a lower level of employee engagement leads to negative employee outcomes such as emotional and physical health issues (Robertson & Cooper, 2010) <sup>[36]</sup> (Naiemaha *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[31]</sup> directed a study on the employees of the hospitality industry in Malaysia and the results found that employee engagement has a negative influence on workers’ turnover intention.

Employee well-being is also important for the sustainability of employee engagement in organizations (Robertson & Cooper, 2010) <sup>[36]</sup> which in turn result in sustainable benefits at both the individual level and organisational level. Employee engagement has proved to be significant to their performance at the workplace in terms of the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional role of the employees in their work (Bulinska-Stangrecka & Iddagoda, 2020) <sup>[11]</sup>. The three drivers of employee engagement in global virtual teams are derived from the Job Demands-Resources theory (Shaik & Makhecha, 2019) <sup>[38]</sup>.

Cognitive engagement emerges through the appraisal of the workplace climate and assigned tasks to the employees. It enhances when the work is meaningful and safe and there is a sufficiency of resources for best task performance (Kahn, 1990) <sup>[25]</sup>.

Positive cognitive engagement triggers emotional engagement among the workforce. Positive emotional engagement gets reflected when the employees, wholeheartedly, is willing to apply their personal resources such as knowledge, pride, and trust for task completion. Behaviour engagement is about the widening of one’s personal resources for task completion. It can be manifested when an employee is doing hard work and putting in extra effort for task completion.

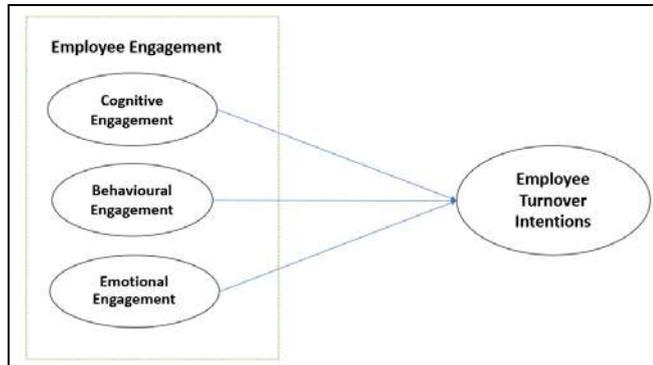
(Chandani *et al.*, 2016) <sup>[12]</sup> highlighted the factor affecting employee engagement at both micro and macro levels. At the micro level, they could be the employees’ individual attributes related to the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional components of the employee. The behavioural engagement of employees can be described as the ability to adapt to every kind of working condition proactively with all due efforts and persistence (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014) <sup>[10]</sup>. Such type of behavioural engagement is constituted with the vigour and enthusiasm to tackle all challenges while engaging in the work that can reduce turnover intent (Guest, 2014) <sup>[20]</sup>. Behavioural engagement is proved to be an important component of employee engagement at work (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014) <sup>[8]</sup>. Furthermore, employees with harmonious passion can work more efficiently for the organisation, such kind of involvement of an employee at work is termed as cognitive engagement (Ho *et al.*, 2011) <sup>[21]</sup>. The cognitive engagement of employees is proven to have a positive relationship with work performance and work engagement and decreases turnover intention among them (Luthans & Peterson, 2002) <sup>[29]</sup>. The emotional engagement of an employee deals with the emotional consonance/dissonance at work and create willingness among employees to stay/shift from their current job (Shankar & Bhatnagar, 2010) <sup>[39]</sup>. Positive emotional engagement is found to be a significant negative effect on the turnover intention of people at work (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014) <sup>[16]</sup>. In many organisations the lack of emotional engagement affects the intention to leave the current job and move to other workplaces (Alias *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[2]</sup>.

Empirical studies reveal that there is a negative relation between employee engagement and the turnover intent of employees in many organisations (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014) <sup>[16]</sup>. The intention of turnover is originated from the dissatisfaction of people with their job profiles as well as the working conditions (Tetteh *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[42]</sup>. In addition, a lack of employee engagement leads people to look for new jobs (Alzayed & Murshid, 2017) <sup>[3]</sup>. Cognitively disengaged people want to move from one place to another to look for new jobs (Azharudeen & Arulrajah, 2018) <sup>[5]</sup>. In hospitality sector organisations, studies have been conducted in various countries to highlight the importance of employee engagement in reducing the turnover intentions of people at work, but there is a dearth of studies in the Indian context. This study made an attempt to investigate the role of employee engagement in retaining the staff in the hotels of India through understanding the impact of employee engagement on their turnover intentions.

On the basis of the above-mentioned views, the following hypothesis statements are postulated:

H1: Cognitive Engagement of employees has a significant positive influence on their Turnover Intentions.  
 H2: Behavioral Engagement of employees has a significant positive influence on their Turnover Intentions.  
 H3: Emotional Engagement of employees has a significant positive influence on their Turnover Intentions.

**Conceptual diagram**



**Research Methodology**

The participants chosen for the study are among the frontline employees of hospitality sector of northern region of India on the basis of simple random sampling. The participants were working in the different segments of the hospitality industry including hotels/lodging, restaurants, events, and retail. A questionnaire from past literature is adopted to obtain the study’s objective and the variables are adapted from the scale of (Meyer & Allen, 1984) [30]. The questions are divided into two sections, each with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "Strongly disagree" and 5 representing "Strongly agree". The first section has six questions regarding the population's demographic (age, education, gender and organization) and personal characteristics, while the second section contains questions about independent and dependent variables. Total of 209 employees took part in the study. Multiple Regression analysis technique is used for analyzing the data. Reliability Analysis: The reliability analysis of the scale has been carried out using Cronbach’s alpha value on SPSS (Version 22.0) shown in table 1. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for Employee Engagement with 9 items is 0.831 and for Turnover Intentions is 0.879 with 6 items. Which is greater than the threshold value 0.70 (Feldt, 1980) [17], (Rasli et al., 2012) [35].

**Table 1:** Reliability Check of the variables

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Employee Engagement	9	0.831
Cognitive Engagement	3	0.776
Behavioral Engagement	3	0.765
Emotional Engagement	3	0.821
Turnover Intentions	6	0.879

**Results and Analysis**

The details of the demography of the respondents under study are shown in table 2. Out of 209 participants taken as respondents in the study, 14 percent of employees are of age

less than 30 years, 59 percent are under the age category of 31-40 years and the rest of the 27 percent employees are between the ranges of 40-50 years. Among them 22 percent of employees are done with high school, 65 percent are done with undergraduate or diploma courses and 13 percent are post-graduates. Out of the total participants, 64 percent are males and 36 percent are females. The participants in the sample are the frontline hospitality employees from the Hotels/Lodging, Restaurants, Events, and Retail. 23 percent of employees are from Hotels/Lodging, 41 percent are from restaurants, 27 percent are from events, and 9 percent are from the retail segment of the hospitality industry.

**Table 2:** Demographic Details

	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Less than 30 years	29	14
	31 - 40 years	123	59
	40-50 years	57	27
Education Level	High School	45	22
	Undergraduate/Diploma	136	65
	Post-graduate	28	13
Gender	Male	133	64
	Female	76	36
Organisation	Hotels/Lodging	49	23
	Restaurants	85	41
	Events	57	27
	Retail	18	9
Total		209	100

Multiple linear regression tests have been used to investigate the role of Cognitive Engagement, Behavioral Engagement, and Emotional Engagement on the Turnover Intentions of employees.

Then, the fitted regression model was:

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + e$$

Y = Turnover Intentions index of employees

Whereas

X<sub>1</sub> - Score on Cognitive Engagement.

X<sub>2</sub> - Score on Behavioural Engagement.

X<sub>3</sub> - Score on Emotional Engagement.

b<sub>1</sub>, b<sub>2</sub>, and b<sub>3</sub> are the regression coefficients of the independent variables.

a - Intercept and.

e - Error term.

**Table 3:** Regression Model

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the estimate
1	-.75 <sup>a</sup>	0.57	0.48	0.56

A Predictor: (Constant), Cognitive Engagement, Behavioral Engagement, Emotional Engagement

**Table 4:** Anova

Model	Sum of Square	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	82.88	3	27.63	89.13	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	63.63	205	0.31		
	Total	146.51	208			

<sup>A</sup> Dependent Variable: Employees Turnover Intentions.

<sup>B</sup> Predictor: (Constant), Cognitive Engagement, Behavioural Engagement, Emotional Engagement.

**Table 5:** Coefficients

Regression Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	B		
(Constant)	.59	.168		3.511	.001
Behavioural Engagement	-.50	.10	-.210	-5.065	.000
Cognitive Engagement	-.27	.027	-.344	-9.79	.000
Emotional Engagement	-.29	.031	-.304	-9.35	.000

<sup>A</sup> Dependent Variable: Employees Turnover Intentions

As shown in the results of the regression model, R is -0.75 denotes the multiple correlation coefficient with a range lies between -1 and +1. It means the Turnover Intentions of employees have a negative relationship with the 'Behavioural Engagement,' 'Emotional Engagement' and 'Cognitive Engagement' dimensions of Employee Engagement. Since the R square value is 0.57, which implies 57 percent of the variation of existing data in Turnover Intentions (TI) of employees is enhanced by the 'Behavioural Engagement,' 'Emotional Engagement' and 'Cognitive Engagement' dimensions of Employee Engagement. Thus, hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are rejected, implying that there is a negative significant influence of dimensions of TI viz., Cognitive Engagement, Behavioural Engagement, and Emotional Engagement on the turnover intentions of employees.

The findings of the study indicated that Behavioural Engagement (b=-0.50) has the most influential negative effect on the Turnover Intentions of employees compared to the other dimensions. Emotional Engagement (b = -0.29) is the second most influential dimension of EE on the Turnover Intentions of employees. The cognitive Engagement dimension of Employee Engagement has the least negative effect (b = -0.27) on the turnover intentions of employees. Therefore, hospitality organisations need to focus on these dimensions to retain employees and reduce their job turnover intentions.

### Managerial Implications and Recommendations

The study will provide guidance to the HR managers to handle the work engagement level of people because of employee resignations, the cost associated with hiring and training new ones would be higher (Saks, 2006) <sup>[37]</sup>. Managers can assign tasks based on the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural capabilities of the employees to reduce the burden of work (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998) <sup>[41]</sup> (Jordan, N.D.). Declining performance, a reduced amount of engagement, depressing obligations, and role conflicts could be the likely gauges that personnel might be facing some kind of work pressure in the working environment (Firth *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[18]</sup>. The concept of establishing a culture of employee encouragement in every field along with the sharing of learning outcomes and most importantly utilizing past experiences, lessons, and learning can also be implemented in the hospitality industry (Lin & Lee, 2006). The results of the present study are advantageous for the managers/administrators to manage the people at work so that they cannot reflect their disliking for the organization and attract towards other job openings. Employee engagement can be improved by providing employees with flexible work schedules for their well-being so that they can perform their assigned duties effectively (Lee & Hong, 2011) <sup>[26]</sup>. It has been observed that if adequate training is provided to the staff in relation to dealing with challenging work situations could help them to handle them efficiently.

### Limitations and future scope

The present study has emphasized the effect of employee engagement on the turnover intentions of the people working in the hospitality industry. Thus, future studies could be conducted in other industries using similar variables. Also, the study is confined to the northern region of India so the future study could focus on the other parts of the country. There are some statistical limitations in the study. Thus, in future, the study could be extended for structural equation modelling after collecting adequate data.

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