

# Work Engagement: An Age-Driven Exploration

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**Abstract-** The study examined the relationship between age and work engagement among 50 working individuals using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17). The study aimed to explore whether there is a significant relationship in work engagement based on age of the working individuals. To test this hypothesis, Karl Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was employed as the statistical method. The results showed that there is no significant relationship between age and work engagement. This suggests that age alone may not be a robust predictor of work engagement. The study emphasizes the need for further exploration, considering additional variables and the complex interplay between age, individual characteristics, and organizational factors for better understanding of work engagement dynamics in diverse age groups.

**Keywords-** Absorption, Age, Dedication, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17), Vigor, Work engagement

## I. INTRODUCTION

Work engagement is a critical factor in the Indian workforce, influencing employee performance, job satisfaction, and organizational success. Work engagement is defined as a positive mind set characterized by vigour, absorption, and dedication. Vigour can be described as the willingness to put forth effort in one's work, persistence in the face of difficulties, mental resilience, and high energy levels while at work. Dedication refers to a high level of work engagement and identification with one's job. The final dimension, engagement or absorption, refers to being fully consecrated and engrossed in one's work, in which time passes quickly and the individual has difficulty detaching from the task.

The concept has been expanded to include job engagement, work engagement, organizational engagement, and cognitive engagement. India's workforce, particularly in the IT sector, is diverse and comes from various generations. Managing individuals with diverse personal histories, educational backgrounds, and professional experiences is challenging due to their differences in attitudes, working styles, expectations, and values. Employers must address the issues and pressures that arise within collaborative teams in

the workforce with diverse age group and provide opportunities for growth.

Generational differences also affect psychological well-being, with age, emotional development, education, and extraversion having a positive correlation with psychological health.

Organizational commitment is reflected in an employee's willingness to stay on the job because they identify with the organization's values and objectives. Understanding the link between age and work engagement becomes critical in the rapidly changing professional landscape of modern India, where a diverse workforce navigates the opportunities and challenges of the digital age.

Theories concerning employee engagement at work are discussed.

### *i. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model: 2007*

Authors: Arnold B. Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti

The JD-R model proposes that every job has specific demands and resources. Job demands require energy and can lead to burnout, while job resources contribute to motivation and work engagement. It emphasizes the need to balance demands and resources for optimal well-being and performance.

### *ii. Self-Determination Theory (SDT): 1985*

Authors: Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan

SDT posits that individuals have intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, leading to higher levels of engagement, performance, and well-being.

### *iii. Social Exchange Theory: 1964*

Authors: Peter M. Blau

Rooted in the concept of reciprocity, Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage more when they perceive a fair exchange between their efforts and the rewards or recognition they receive from the organization. Positive exchanges contribute to increased work engagement.

### *iv. Job Characteristics Model: 1975*

Authors: J. Richard Hackman and Greg R. Oldham

This model identifies core job characteristics, including skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and

feedback. Jobs high in these characteristics are more likely to lead to greater work engagement and satisfaction.

v. *Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (CATS): 2006*

Authors: Urs M. Nater and James P. McCarty

CATS suggests that stress can enhance cognitive function and performance when individuals are highly engaged in their tasks. Moderate levels of stress may contribute to optimal performance and engagement.

vi. *Organizational Support Theory: 1986*

Authors: Robert Eisenberger, Peter J. Fasolo, and Davis. M. Davis

This theory focuses on the perceived organizational support employees receive. The more employees feel supported by their organization, the more likely they are to engage in their work, go beyond their formal job roles, and contribute positively.

vii. *Strengths-Based Approaches: 2001*

Authors: Donald O. Clifton and Marcus Buckingham

The strengths-based perspective emphasizes identifying and leveraging individuals' strengths and positive qualities. Focusing on employees' strengths can enhance their engagement, job satisfaction, and overall performance.

This study intends to provide important insights regarding the two variables—the age of the working population and their level of work engagement through a methodical survey approach.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research titled "Factors Influencing Work Engagement Practices and its Effect on Turnover Intention with Reference to IT Sector Chennai," in 2017 was conducted by Sandhya K., the study aimed to explore the factors affecting work engagement and its impact on turnover intention within Tier 3 IT companies in Chennai, India. Employing a descriptive research design, the investigation utilized a purposive judgmental sampling method, distributing 816 questionnaires to IT employees and obtaining 526 responses. The research focused on understanding the significance of factors contributing to employee engagement and their effect on turnover intention across different generational groups. The study's conclusion highlighted the identified relationship between factors influencing work engagement and its effects on turnover intention, providing a causal model for assessing the importance of these factors across various generations. The findings contribute valuable insights into work engagement practices within the IT sector, emphasizing their implications for reducing turnover intention

and enhancing employee commitment in Tier 3 companies in Chennai.

A study was conducted by Varnika, A. on the topic Resilience and Work Engagement among Employees in 2022 to examine the relationship between resilience and work engagement among employees. The research is conducted with the intention of contributing to human resource development and enhances work life balance. Closed-ended questionnaires were presented to a variety of female and male employees who work in any private or public organization at any position. A sample of 100 employees was collected. The participants were instructed to respond to the items on the basis of their feelings of vigor and dedication. The sample age scale was between 25-55 years old. The sample consisted of 50 males and 50 females. Data was collected by the survey method; questionnaires were distributed. Resilience at Work scale (RAW) and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) utilized to measure resilience and work engagement respectively. As per the findings, male employees scored higher in terms of resilience as compared to female employees. Additionally, male employees scored higher in work engagement whereas, female employees scored lower.

Research titled "Predictors of Employee Silence and Its Impact on Work Engagement," in 2023 was conducted by Sharu P John, the study focused on 344 college teachers from aided, government, and self-financing arts and science colleges in Kerala, with an age range between 25 and 60. The instruments utilized included the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma & Bakker, 2002), Job Behaviour Index, and an Employee Silence Scale developed by the investigator and the supervising teacher. Employing regression analysis, the study identified assertiveness, perceived organizational support, implicit voice theories, interactive justice, self-confidence, perceived organizational politics, and psychological safety as significant predictors of employee silence. The statistical analysis involved regression, ANOVA, Scheffe's test, and correlation. Notably, self-confidence, interactive justice, and perceived organizational support emerged as predictors with a substantial impact on work engagement. The research highlighted the prevalence of employee silence among college teachers in Kerala and underscored the importance of addressing specific predictors to enhance work engagement. The findings contribute valuable insights for educational institutions aiming to foster a communicative and engaged work environment among their faculty members.

## III. METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

### Research Question

Does age factor influence the work engagement of the working individuals?

### Objective

To determine whether there is any clearly noticeable relationship between the work engagement of the working individuals with respect to age.

### Sample

The study focuses on individuals who are in various age group (18 years and above) working across different sectors. The sample consist of 50 working individuals selected by simple random sampling without any gender bias.

### Tool Description

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) is a widely used questionnaire designed to measure work engagement. The 17-item version of the scale, known as the UWES-17 which was developed by Wilmar Schaufeli, Arnold Bakker, and Marisa Salanova was used. It has three dimensions vigor (6 items), dedication (5 items) and absorption (6 items) based on a 6-point Likert scale with multiple choice responses that are based on a range. The choices of responses are – never, almost never, rarely, sometimes, often, very often and always.

### Scoring

The respondent is provided with six alternatives to give their responses ranging from “never” to “always” based on the questions in UWES-17 Scale. The responses are arranged in such a way that the scoring system for the three dimensions (Vigor, Dedication & Absorption) items remains the same (i.e) 0,1,2,3,4,5,6 whether the items are positive or negative. The summated score of all the seventeen items provides the total work engagement of an individual. A high score on this scale indicates high work engagement while low score shows low work engagement.

### Operational definition

*Work engagement:* “Engagement’ is a work-related state of mind that is positive, absorbed, fulfilled, and vigorous and is dedicated towards work”. (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004)

*Vigor:* “Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

*Dedication:* “Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

*Absorption:* “Absorption, is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly, and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

### Procedure

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale -17 (UWES - 17) developed by Wilmar Schaufeli, Arnold Bakker, and Marisa Salanova was used to measure the work engagement of individuals. The sample population was given the 17-statement questionnaire which was circulated to the working individuals via Google Forms. The purpose of the study was briefly explained to the respondents. It was assured that their responses will be kept confidential. They were requested to read the instructions carefully and clear doubts if any. The respondents were asked to shed all the inhibitors and respond freely as they could. No item should be omitted and there is nothing right or wrong about the statements. There is no time limit for the scale. The submitted responses through the forms were then analyzed.

### Research design

Ex post facto research design was employed to identify the relationship between age of the working individuals and work engagement through survey research method. It is a non-experimental research design that investigates the relationship among variables and their strength without any control or manipulation by the researcher. The data is collected through online mode with an informed consent.

### Null Hypothesis

H<sub>0</sub>: There will be no significant difference in the age and the work engagement of the individuals who are working

### Variables

*Independent variable:* Age of working individuals.

*Dependent variable:* Work engagement

### Analysis

Karl Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient is calculated to assess the degree and direction of

relationship between age of the working individuals and work engagement. Test for normality and descriptive statistics were also calculated.

**III. RESULTS**

**Table 1**

*Normality test – Kolmogorov –Smirnov & Shapiro -Wilk tests*

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Work engagement	.082	50	.200*	.975	50	.365
Age	.243	50	.000	.758	50	.000

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

*Interpretation*

Shapiro-Wilk test results will be taken into consideration if the sample size is small (less than or equal to 30). Kolmogorov-Smirnov test values will be taken into consideration if the sample size is large (above 50). Both the tests are taken because the sample size exactly 50. It is sufficient to observe normality for the dependent variable, which is work engagement. The table indicates that the significance value for the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests (.200 and .365, respectively) is greater than 0.05.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive statistics for Work Engagement and Age of the Working Individuals*

Variables	Mean	Std.Deviation	N
Age	28.08	9.905	50
Work Engagement	69.74	14.836	50

*Interpretation*

From the above table it can be inferred that the sample population consisted 50 (N=50) working individuals with a mean of Age of the individuals as 28.08(M=28.08) and standard deviation as 9.905(SD=9.905). The mean of Work Engagement of the sample as 69.74 (M=69.74) and standard deviation as 14.836 (SD=14.836) for the data collected.

**Table 3**

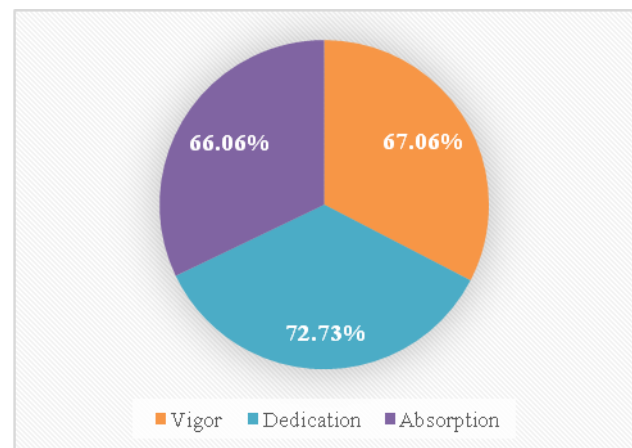
*Pearson’s product moment correlation between Work Engagement and Age of the working individuals*

Age	Pearson Correlation	.217
Work engagement	Significance (2-tailed)	.130
	N	50

*Interpretation*

In Table 2, significance value of .130, which is higher than the 2-tailed significance level of 0.05, shows that there is no significant correlation between working age and work engagement. Since the correlation is higher than the significance level, it is not required to determine the limit of the correlation value (r =.217).

**Percentage analysis of the three dimensions in UWES-17 scale: Vigor, Dedication, Absorption**



The percentage obtained for the three dimensions among the sample of 50 individuals working can be observed in the pie chart above. It can be implied that, in comparison to the others, the dedication factor was fairly high (72.73%). The high percentage of dedication indicates that a significant portion of the sample values their work and is committed to performing their duties diligently. This could imply that the individuals are likely to be reliable, motivated, and willing to invest time and effort into their job responsibilities. While dedication is essential for maintaining productivity and achieving goals in the workplace, it's also important to consider the balance between dedication, vigor (energy and enthusiasm), and absorption (engagement and concentration).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The study found that there is no correlation between work engagement and age, suggesting age doesn't significantly influence engagement levels. Different industries may have varying demands and expectations, which can dilute the overall correlation between age and work engagement. The relationship between age and work engagement could be influenced by the career trajectory of individuals. Some may experience early burnout, while others might find increased engagement as they progress in their careers. Factors like economic conditions, societal expectations, and cultural norms can also impact engagement levels across different age groups. A more nuanced analysis of career stages could reveal variations in engagement levels.

Hence, there is no significant relationship between age and the work engagement of the individuals who are working. Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted.

#### V. LIMITATION

- i. The participants were predominantly from specific region – Chennai, the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of working individuals in India could be compromised.
- ii. Failing to account for generational differences within age groups could be a limitation.
- iii. Cross-sectional design provides a snapshot of the relationship between work engagement and age at a specific point in time. A longitudinal design would be more appropriate for capturing changes in work engagement over individuals' careers and aging processes.
- iv. Other relevant variables that could influence work engagement, such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, career stages, or external factors like economic conditions and societal expectations.
- v. Since the data was collected through Google Forms, the responses could be biased.
- vi. Individuals with knowledge in the English language could only take part in the study and hence the sample may not be representative of the general population.
- vii. Analyzing the years of experience would be an additional source of information; perhaps it will reveal the connection between age and work engagement at work.

Due to the above stated limitation the findings of this study may not generalized onto a larger population.

#### APPENDIX

##### Work & Well-being Survey (UWES)

*The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.*

<b>Scores</b>	
Never	0
Almost never (A few times a year or less)	1
Rarely (Once a month or less)	2
Sometimes (A few times a month)	3
Often (Once a week)	4
Very often (A few times a week)	5
Always (Everyday)	6

1. \_\_\_ At my work, I feel bursting with energy\* (VI1)
2. \_\_\_ I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose (DE1)
3. \_\_\_ Time flies when I'm working (AB1)
4. \_\_\_ At my job, I feel strong and vigorous (VI2)\*
5. \_\_\_ I am enthusiastic about my job (DE2)\*
6. \_\_\_ When I am working, I forget everything else around me (AB2)
7. \_\_\_ My job inspires me (DE3)\*
8. \_\_\_ When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work (VI3)\*
9. \_\_\_ I feel happy when I am working intensely (AB3)\*
10. \_\_\_ I am proud on the work that I do (DE4)\*
11. \_\_\_ I am immersed in my work (AB4)\*
12. \_\_\_ I can continue working for very long periods at a time (VI4)
13. \_\_\_ To me, my job is challenging (DE5)
14. \_\_\_ I get carried away when I'm working (AB5)\*
15. \_\_\_ At my job, I am very resilient, mentally (VI5)
16. \_\_\_ It is difficult to detach myself from my job (AB6)
17. \_\_\_ At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well (VI6)

\* Shortened version (UWES-9); VI= vigor; DE = dedication; AB = absorption  
© Schaufeli & Bakker (2003).

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