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Impact of Work Engagement on Affective Commitment of Young Employees (Zillennials) Working in Select Service Sector.

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Abstract

Zillennials, a micro generation between millennials and generation Z, are tech-savvy and want meaningful careers that bring into line with their interests and values. They prioritize their career goals and ambitions over mere financial stability.

The current study examined the Impact of Work Engagement on Affective Commitment of Zillennials, Young Employees. The main purpose of the current study was to investigate whether Vigor, Dedication and Absorption: dimensions of work engagement affect affective commitment of young employees. The study was being conducted by sending questionnaires to young employees and collecting data from 190 employees working in different banks, start-ups and other service sector.

Purpose: The main purpose of the current study was to investigate the impact of work engagement on affective commitment of young employees in service sector.

Research gap: Although the results of prior studies provide evidence of examining the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment but there seems to be a lack of research aimed at investigating the impact of Work Engagement on Affective Commitment of Zillennials who are perceived to be more open to job-hopping or pursuing non-linear career paths

Results of PLS-4 indicated that proposed structural model was found to be fit. Positive and significant correlation was found between vigor, dedication and absorption and affective commitment and path analysis indicated that work engagement produced the significant impact on affective commitment of Zillennials.

Key words: Vigor, Dedication and Absorption, work engagement, affective commitment.

Introduction:

Employee's Work engagement and Affective commitment are considered as important aspects to improve the effectiveness of an organization. In this digital era, young employees prefer to do that work which provides them opportunity to use their technical knowledge. Current study targeted Zillennials who born in the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s and fall between Millennials (born roughly between1981-1996) and Generation Z (born roughly 1997-2012). These young employees generally are in the age group of 22-32 years and are in the initial phases of their careers and have never known a world without the internet. They're tech-savvy with high levels of digital literacy and bring valuable technology and data skills that banks, start-ups and other service organizations need to succeed in an era of digital disruption.

With the rapid advancement of information technology, integration of technology is increased into our everyday life. This integration helps companies to improve efficiency, increase productivity, enhance the quality of products and services, production flexibility, workplace safety, and strengthen competitiveness (Makka, 2023). In this digital era businesses requires to develop talent that possesses creativity, adaptability, and innovation in order to stay competitive. Besides technological advancements, the psychological attachment of employees with their works is essential. Today, organizations need employees who are psychologically engaged with their work, exhibit a strong willingness to perform their roles effectively, and are proactive and dedicated to maintaining high-performance quality standards. In nut-shell, they require individuals who have a deep attachment to their work. (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). The competitive labor market forces organizations to develop effective approaches to deal with the issue of low employee retention, one of the ways is to strengthen employees' affective commitment towards organization.

Affective commitment describes the emotional connection between employees and their organization. Key indicators of this commitment include a sense of belonging, feelings of warmth, happiness, and overall job satisfaction.

Employee work engagement and affective commitment are key factors that impact employee retention in the service industry. Work engagement is a critical factor in enhancing organizational effectiveness (Phipps, 2013). Dicke et. al. (2007) opined that employees with

high work engagement are likely to display positive behaviors at workplace and ensure that the company achieve its goals successfully. Work engagement refers to a positive mindset and emotional state that individuals experience in relation to their work. It is characterized by three key elements: vigor, which involves high levels of energy and mental resilience; dedication, reflecting a strong sense of purpose and commitment; and absorption, where individuals are fully absorbed and focused on their tasks (Schaufeli et al., 2006). When employees are engaged in their work, they are motivated to chase more ambitious goals and achieve success. This engagement leads them to find greater enjoyment in their tasks, which in turn translates into more effective actions (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). A participatory approach that uses the full potential of employees to enhance their commitment towards achieving organizational goals is often referred to as work engagement. Robbins (2003).

Zillennials: a micro generation, are adaptable and comfortable with hybrid models of employment blending millennial ambition with Gen Z's gig economy mindset. This study is important for two reasons. *First*, it adds to the existing literature by exploring the relationship between Vigor, Dedication, Absorption and affective commitment and the impact of work engagement on affective commitment. *Second*, a lot of studies provide evidence of examining the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment of millennials but there seems to be a lack of research aimed at investigating the impact Work Engagement on Affective Commitment of Zillennials. They are often characterized by their high level enthusiasm, flexibility, adaptability, and ready to learn and grow within the banking and other service industries. They believe in continuous learning to refine and upskill not only their current skills but ready to learn newer one and generally seeking jobs that offer opportunities for growth and development.

Work Engagement:

Over the period, Work engagement is recognized as an important factor that influences employee performance, well-being, and whole organizational effectiveness. Fundamentally it is a positive experience which reflects an employee's emotional and cognitive investment in their work.

Key dimensions of work engagement:

Vigor:

Engaged employees show not only high levels of energy but mental resilience also. Vigor is characterized by high enthusiasm and ready to put both physical and mental efforts.

Mental resilience refers to the ability to come back from setbacks and failures. Engaged employees are more likely to persist even in the difficult situations and try to find solutions rather than giving up.

Dedication:

This dimension encompasses a sense of significance, pride, and challenge in one's work.. Engaged employees find themselves deep connected with their work with a sense of commitment.

Absorption:

This dimension defines a state of being fully absorbed and remain focused on work activities. When individuals are absorbed, they show high level of work involvement and deep concentration in their work.

Literature Review:

Both affective commitment and worker engagement are vital for the growth and development of an organization. Affective commitment refers to the emotional bond an employee has with their organization, while employee engagement pertains to the level of effort and contribution an employee makes toward achieving the organization's objectives. Jaros et. al. (1993) concluded that employees with a strong emotional commitment are more likely to exert greater effort in completing organizational tasks and actively channel their energy toward enhancing the organization's success.

Allen and Meyer (1996), explained organizational commitment as a psychological state with three key dimensions, affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Among these, affective commitment has the most significant influence on organizational behavior for several reasons. Mainly, affective commitment is defined by a deeper emotional involvement compared to continuance and normative commitment. Next, it offers greater reliability and is regarded as the most crucial explanatory factor in understanding organizational dynamics (Rashad & Rosari, 2020). Lastly, affective commitment accounts for a greater amount of variance in various aspects of organizational behavior than the other two types of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996). (Schaufeli, 2002) opined "Work engagement as an important concept in organizational psychology at work with three components namely vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor reflects a person's enthusiasm for working long hours with a high energy level when arriving at the workplace (Gera et al., 2019), and dedication refers to a strong sense of importance, passion, and pride in their work (Oksanen, 2019).

Additionally, absorption involves deep concentration and being fully occupied in one's tasks, means complete focus and enjoyment in executing their tasks, Durairaj et al., (2019)".

Work Engagement and Affective Commitment

Employees who are highly engaged exhibit elevated energy, commitment, passion, and involvement in their work, making it difficult for them to detach from their responsibilities. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). In line with this (Toth et al., 2021) came with similar findings that engaged employees have a strong connection to their work, showcasing deep urge, active involvement, and firm commitment to their responsibilities. There is a strong positive correlation between organizational commitment and work engagement, indicating that employees who are committed to their organization tend to be more engaged in their work, and vice versa. (Trofimov et. al. 2017). Further, (Abualigah et al., 2024) opined that this profound connection to work extends beyond simple physical participation, incorporating emotional aspects and a broad sense of commitment. Faisaluddin et.al (2024) found that work engagement serves as a partial mediator in the relationship between meaningful work and affective commitment to change.

To remain competitive, organizations must attract individuals with special talents who can inspire and empower their colleagues to reach their full potential. It is also essential to foster a strong psychological attachment of employees with their work. . Today's workplaces demand employees who are not only psychologically engaged but also demonstrate a strong commitment to their roles, exhibit proactivity, and uphold high-performance standards. In essence, organizations thrive when they cultivate a workforce that is deeply connected to their work and dedicated to achieving excellence (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). A recent Deloitte survey (2022) revealed that 24% of millennial employees left their organization within two years, while 32% indicated they would consider leaving even without another job offer. Additionally, only 38% expressed a desire to stay with their employer for more than five years. (Charaba, 2022; Heinz, 2022), implied that millennials may exhibit lower levels of commitment to organizations and are more likely to change jobs. Employee turnover can incur significant costs, both financially and in terms of workplace morale.

The working patterns of Millennials and Zillennials show similarities but also notable differences. These variations are due to their unique interactions with technology, workplace norms, and economic realities. Zillennials are open to job-hopping and side gigs. To retain this young talent company should provide them platform to use their technical skills which make their jobs interesting that ultimately enhances the feelings of self-regard, identity and gives meaning to their lives. It is crucial for banks and other service organizations to retain this generation of skilled and critical talent otherwise they may seek employment elsewhere. Halbesleben & Wheeler (2008) opined that highly engaged employees may find it very difficult to get separated from their current job responsibilities due to deep emotional and cognitive connection to their work.

The previous literature led to the development of the following hypotheses.

H1: There is a significantly positive correlation between Work Engagement and affective commitment of Zillennials.
H2 (a): There is a significantly positive impact of Vigor on affective commitment of zillennials.
H2 (b): There is a significantly positive impact of Dedication on affective commitment of Zillennials.
H2 (c): There is a significantly positive impact of Absorption on affective commitment of Zillennials.

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach to test hypotheses, examine relationships between variables, and provide statistical explanations. The goal is to gain an understanding by measuring and analyzing data statistically.

The quantitative approach is chosen to ensure objectivity and accuracy in the research findings, allowing for the identification of patterns and trends through statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2015).

The study included Zillennial employees, defined as "in-between" generation, and are individuals born at the end of the Millennial and Generation Z buddies, irrespective of gender, who are currently employed in banks, hotels or start-up companies with a minimum of six months or more of work experience in their current position.

Measures

To test the assumed hypotheses, a survey questionnaire was employed to gather primary data from 190 employees working in the banks, start-ups, and hospitality service industry in Indore and its surrounding areas. Participants were selected randomly. Standardized measures were found from related literature and validated through numerous studies. The questionnaire consisted of three sections, with the first section focusing on the demographic attributes of the employees.

In the second section, Work engagement was assessed using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), which evaluates three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. This scale employed a seven-point Likert format, with response options ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always)

Finally, in the third part of the questionnaire, Affective Commitment was measured using a seven-item scale adapted from Meyer and Allen's (1997), three-component model of organizational commitment..

Data Analysis and Results:

The current study utilized Smart PLS-4 software, where data is analyzed with partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). It goes through two-phase analysis, measurement model and structural model assessment respectively. Measurement model assess good factor loading, composite reliability, discriminant validity and convergent validity. Structural model evaluates path coefficient and tests their significance.

Measurement Model:

A measurement model emphasizes the extent to which observed variables (indicators) correctly represent or measure latent constructs (unobserved variables). A four-factor measurement model is evaluated by examining its factor loadings, reliability, and validity to confirm that the indicators represent the intended latent constructs effectively.

Outer loadings:

Factor loading indicates the correlation or relationship between an observed variable (indicator) and a latent variable (factor). Generally, an item with factor loading of 0.7 or higher is considered as strong, and loadings between 0.5 and 0.7 are considered acceptable.
In the current study, table-1 shows that all items of affective commitment, absorption, dedication and vigor met the recommended factor loadings between 0.5 - 0.7, so no items were removed.

Table: 1, outer loadings

	AC-	Ab-	De-	Vi-
AC-1	0.746			
AC-2	0.834			
AC-3	0.780			
AC-4	0.793			
AC-5	0.770			
AC-6	0.809			
AC-7	0.769			
Ab-1		0.845		
Ab-2		0.853		
Ab-3		0.736		
Ab-4		0.815		
Ab-5		0.794		
Ab-6		0.707		
De-1			0.836	
De-2			0.711	
De-3			0.866	
De-4			0.820	
De-5			0.803	
Vi-1				0.838
Vi-2				0.724
Vi-3				0.828
Vi-4				0.781
Vi-5				0.843
Vi-6				0.677

Reliability Analysis:

Reliability analysis evaluates the consistency and stability of a measurement model. Higher the values of Cronbach's Alpha greater the reliability. The results of both Cronbach's alpha and Composite reliability of affective commitment, absorption, dedication and vigor is over the recommended value of 0.7 and is reasonable enough to conclude that the scales are reliable and presented in Table-2

Table-2, Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
AC-	0.897	0.898
Ab-	0.881	0.887
De-	0.867	0.876
Vi-	0.873	0.881

Construct Validity:

Construct validity refers to the degree to which a test, measurement tool, or instrument accurately assesses the theoretical construct it is designed to measure.

Convergent Validity:

This type of validity assesses whether a measurement tool shows a correlation with other measures that assess the same or similar construct.

Table: 3, Construct Convergent Validity

	Average variance extracted (AVE)
AC-	0.618
Ab-	0.630
De-	0.654
Vi-	0.615

It can be seen from table-3 that, AVE values of research variables were found to be greater than 0.5 which provides empirical support for the convergent validity of the measurement model.

Discriminant validity:

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct or latent variable is truly distinct from other constructs within a measurement model. It means that a construct does not overlap with other constructs.

Fornell-Larcker criterion:

Fornell-Larcker Criterion assess discriminant validity where the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct should be greater than correlations between the construct with other constructs.

See Table 4: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	AC-	Ab-	De-	Vi-
AC-	***0.786***	0.722	0.738	0.740
Ab-	0.722	***0.794***	0.765	0.749
De-	0.738	0.765	***0.809***	0.709
Vi-	0.740	0.749	0.709	***0.784***

Table 4 shows that the variance explained by a construct (Value on the diagonal of the correlation matrix) is greater than the variance it shares with other constructs, thereby supporting discriminant validity.

Cross Loadings:

Items should show stronger loadings on their intended construct compared to other constructs.

Table 5, cross loadings

	AC-	Ab-	De-	Vi-
AC-1	0.746	0.597	0.651	0.641
AC-2	0.834	0.735	0.731	0.733
AC-3	0.780	0.699	0.620	0.715
AC-4	0.793	0.708	0.703	0.625
AC-5	0.770	0.664	0.674	0.658
AC-6	0.809	0.715	0.806	0.771
AC-7	0.769	0.715	0.632	0.675
Ab-1	0.795	0.845	0.762	0.765
Ab-2	0.760	0.853	0.761	0.720
Ab-3	0.604	0.736	0.599	0.557
Ab-4	0.769	0.815	0.632	0.675
Ab-5	0.670	0.794	0.674	0.658
Ab-6	0.670	0.707	0.683	0.648
De-1	0.709	0.715	0.836	0.771
De-2	0.587	0.539	0.711	0.602

De-3	0.795	0.797	0.866	0.767
De-4	0.780	0.714	0.820	0.715
De-5	0.793	0.708	0.803	0.725
Vi-1	0.757	0.677	0.776	0.838
Vi-2	0.634	0.595	0.650	0.724
Vi-3	0.777	0.735	0.762	0.828
Vi-4	0.746	0.597	0.651	0.781
Vi-5	0.734	0.735	0.731	0.843
Vi-6	0.652	0.646	0.603	0.677

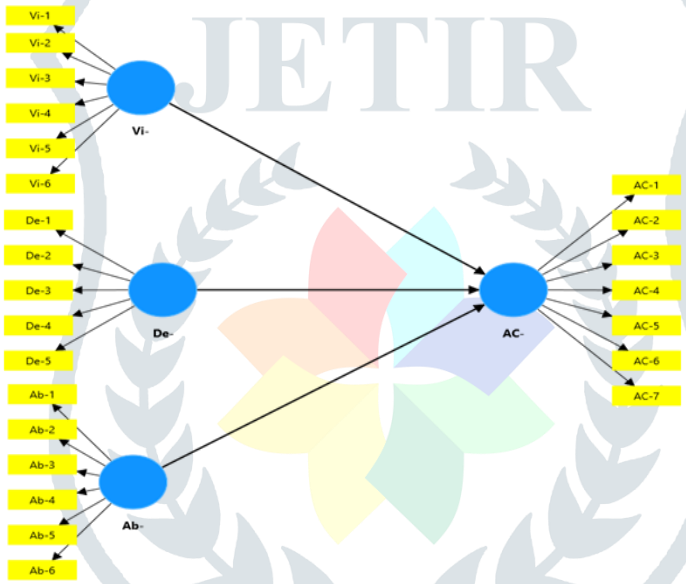
Table 5 shows that each item is more closely associated with the construct it is meant to measure, thus supporting both construct validity and discriminant validity.

Structural Model Assessment:

Once the Measurement model is assessed the next step is to evaluate the structural path to study path coefficients and relationship amongst research constructs and their statistical significance.

A structural model was proposed where vigor, dedication and absorption, were taken as exogenous variables and affective commitment as an endogenous variable. Further, path coefficient analysis in PLS-4 was done to study the impact of work engagement on affective commitment of zillennials.

Fig. 1: Proposed Structural Model



Results:

Hypothesis Testing:

H1: There is a significantly positive correlation between Work Engagement and affective commitment of Zillennials

Hypothesis 1 evaluates whether work engagement i.e (a) vigor **(**b) dedication (c) absorption significantly and positively correlated with affective commitment. As shown in table-6, coefficient results are significant and thus H1 was supported.

Table: 6, Correlation

	AC-	Ab-	De-	Vi-
AC-	1.000			
Ab-	0.922	1.000		
De-	0.938	0.865	1.000	
Vi-	0.940	0.849	0.889	1.000

Path Coefficient:

In structural Equation Modelling, path coefficient is an important tool for hypothesis testing. It provides basis to understand the strength of relationship between independent and dependent variables. Further, Path Coefficient helps the researcher to accept or reject each hypothesis based on the statistical evidence.

Hypothesis 2 (a), (b), (c) proposed that there is a significantly positive impact of Vigor, Dedication and Absorption on affective commitment of Zillennials

Structural Model is presented in Fig. 1 and results are presented in table-7.

Table: 7, Path Coefficient

Path Coefficient Analysis Results							
Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta Coefficient	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Results
H2 (a)	Vi- -> AC-	0.385	0.384	0.034	11.320	0.000	✓
H2 (b)	De- -> AC-	0.319	0.320	0.038	8.514	0.000	✓
H2 (c)	Ab- -> AC-	0.319	0.320	0.023	13.934	0.000	✓

Note: B= Beta Coefficient, T=t statistics, p=Probability value (p<0.001), AC- Affective Commitment, Vi- Vigor, De- Dedication, Ab- Absorption

H2 (a) evaluates whether Vigor, a dimension of work engagement significantly and positively impact affective commitment of Zillennials. The result reveals that vigor has significant and positive impact on affective commitment (B=0.385, t=11.320, p=0.000). Hence H2 (a) was supported. (Table-7)

H2 (b) evaluates whether dedication, a dimension of work engagement significantly and positively impact affective commitment of Zillennials. The result reveals that Dedication has significant and positive impact on affective commitment (B=0.319, t=8.514, p=0.000). Hence H2 (b) was supported. (Table-7)

H2 (c) evaluates whether Absorption, a dimension of work engagement significantly and positively impact affective commitment of Zillennials. The result reveals that Absorption has significant and positive impact on affective commitment (B=0.319, t=13.934, p=0.000). Hence H2 (c) was supported. (Table-7)

Discussion:

In this sub-section of study, researcher discussed the current findings with the reported findings of other studies in order to draw significant conclusion. As Work Engagement and Affective Commitment are two inseparable constructs. In the beginning, the study examined the correlation between vigor, dedication, absorption and affective commitment. Further, it studied the impact of vigor, dedication and absorption on affective commitment. Large number of researchers studied relationship between Work Engagement and Affective Commitment of millennials and gen Z. The current study intended to examine the impact of Vigor, Dedication and Absorption on affective commitment of micro-generation of Zillennials because there seems to be a lack of research. Overall the results of the study indicated that work engagement produced the significant impact on affective commitment of employees working in select working sector.

The relationship between work engagement and affective commitment has been widely studied in organizational behavior literature. Though there is a broad consensus in the literature about the positive relationship between work engagement and affective commitment, the correlation is not always consistent across different backgrounds, situations, populations, and organizations. For instance Alshaabani et al. (2021) studied foreign employees in the Hungarian private service and found weaker (0.26) correlation between work engagement and affective commitment, whereas, Ko. et. al. (2022) found a moderate level of correlation (0.58) similarly Fukuzaki et al. (2021) produced a moderate correlation value of 0.59. In line with this, Istiqomah and Riani (2021) found work engagement–affective commitment correlation of 0.75 in the hospitality industry. The, current study found a strong correlation (0.89) between work engagement and affective commitment of Zillennials in select service sector. It may mean that engaged employees who feel a strong emotional connection to their organization are likely to continue their membership with the organization which is attributed to the affective commitment of their workforce.

Daniel Lie1 et. al. (2023) confirmed that Work Engagement influenced Affective Commitment significantly. (Makikangas et al., 2022) reported that work engagement significantly affect affective commitment and supposed to be one of the best predictors of various organizational behavior. The current study revealed that vigor, dedication and absorption produced significant impact on affective commitment of the employees in select service sector. This may mean that when tech-savvy Zillennials find meaningful careers with development opportunity find their work fulfilling and enjoyable and develop a strong emotional bond with their workplace. These findings are supported by the findings of Weiss and Zacher (2022) who found that engaged employees exhibit both physical as well as mental involvement in their work which significantly increases their connection to the tasks they perform.

Conclusion

This study examined impact of work engagement on affective commitment of young employees (Zillennials) working in select service sector. The data collected from 190 Zillennials reveals several fey findings. Vigor, dedication and absorption significantly and positively correlated with affective commitment. Young Zillennials employees who are highly involved in their work are more likely to value clear pathways for growth and advancement in the organization and strengthens their affective commitment. Moreover, outcomes of Path-Coefficient showed that vigor produced more significant impact on affective commitment as compared to dedication and absorption. The PLS-4 results revealed that 38% of the variance in affective commitment can be attributed to vigor. It may mean that

when Zillennials exhibit high level of physical and mental efforts are more likely to foster their emotional attachment to the organization. Although dedication and absorption are important dimensions of employee engagement, it is the vigor that seems to drive a stronger connection to affective commitment. Finally, the study concluded that when these young employees find clear opportunity for growth and advancement they feel high levels of vigor and dedication in their work. This, in turn, leads to greater absorption in their tasks and a stronger affective commitment to the organization.

Limitations of the Research

The current study has certain limitations attached with it. The first limitation is related to the size and scope of sample studied. A sample of 190 young employees from selected banks, start-ups, and other service sector organizations is not considered as large enough to generalize the findings of the study. A larger and more diverse sample across different industries and regions could be more appropriate which may facilitate in validating the findings. Second, data captured at a single point in time. A longitudinal study might give deeper understandings into how work engagement influences affective commitment over time. Third, current study is undertaken with one dependent and one independent variable and focuses on vigor, dedication, and absorption, future research could integrate other organizational and personal factors, such as stress, leadership style, workplace culture, performance and job security which may also influence affective commitment.

Implications

Findings from this study have some important and practical implications.

- The study has revealed that work engagement significantly impacts affective commitment, so organization should focus on employee retention by fostering a work environment that promotes vigor, dedication, and absorption. This could be achieved only when employees are provided with meaningful work assignments, recognition programs, and opportunities for skill development
- Organizations should design work engagement strategies to fulfil career expectations of Zillennials such as flexible work arrangements, clear career paths, continuous coaching and mentorship programs for growth.
- Organizations should create positive and supportive work culture where these young employees feel appreciated, enthused, and linked to the organization's goals.

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