

A Study on Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance in Chennai's IT Sector through Work Engagement

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Abstract—This study investigates the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on job performance among Information Technology (IT) professionals in Chennai, with a particular focus on the mediating role of work engagement. EI, which encompasses self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in shaping workplace outcomes. Yet, its direct and indirect effects on employee performance within the highly dynamic IT sector remain insufficiently explored. The research adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing a structured questionnaire distributed among IT professionals from diverse organizations in Chennai. Data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as correlation, regression, and mediation analysis to evaluate the interrelationships among the constructs. The results demonstrate that EI has a significant positive effect on job performance, both directly and through the mediating influence of work engagement. Specifically, professionals with higher EI exhibit greater engagement, motivation, and resilience, leading to enhanced performance outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of fostering EI competencies through targeted training and integrating strategies that strengthen work engagement within organizational settings. The study contributes empirical evidence from the Indian IT context, offering practical implications for managers and policymakers aiming to enhance employee productivity and organizational effectiveness, while also highlighting avenues for future cross-industry and cross-cultural research.

Index Terms—Emotional Intelligence (EI), Job Performance, Work Engagement, Employee Productivity, Organizational Effectiveness

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of the Information Technology (IT) sector has transformed the global economy, with India emerging as one of the leading hubs of IT services and solutions. Chennai, in particular, has

become a prominent destination for IT companies due to its skilled workforce, robust infrastructure, and thriving business ecosystem. In this competitive environment, organizations continually seek ways to enhance employee performance, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. While technical expertise and cognitive skills remain vital, increasing attention is being directed toward psychological and behavioral attributes that drive sustainable performance. Among these, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has gained significant prominence as a predictor of workplace success.

Emotional Intelligence refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. It encompasses dimensions such as self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills. High levels of EI enable employees to handle workplace pressures, build stronger interpersonal relationships, and make balanced decisions, all of which contribute to improved job performance. In the context of IT professionals—who often operate under tight deadlines, high client expectations, and rapid technological changes—EI plays a crucial role in managing stress, maintaining collaboration, and sustaining productivity.

At the same time, job performance remains a critical outcome variable for organizations. It reflects the effectiveness with which employees carry out their responsibilities and contribute to achieving organizational goals. Performance in the IT sector extends beyond technical outputs; it also involves teamwork, adaptability, communication, and problem-solving abilities. Previous studies have shown that employees with strong emotional competencies often demonstrate superior job

performance, yet the mechanisms through which EI translates into performance outcomes require deeper exploration.

One such mechanism is work engagement, a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's tasks. Engaged employees exhibit higher energy, commitment, and involvement in their roles, leading to improved performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. Work engagement acts as a bridge between emotional capacities and performance outcomes, as emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to stay motivated, resilient, and focused, thereby enhancing their job effectiveness.

Despite the growing global interest in EI, research in the Indian IT context, particularly in Chennai, remains relatively limited. Given the city's prominence as an IT hub, understanding how EI impacts job performance through the mediating role of work engagement is both timely and essential. Such insights can guide organizations in designing interventions to develop emotional competencies, enhance engagement, and ultimately boost productivity.

The present study aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the relationship between EI and job performance among IT professionals in Chennai, while assessing the mediating influence of work engagement. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To evaluate the direct relationship between Emotional Intelligence and job performance.
2. To analyze the role of work engagement as a mediator between Emotional Intelligence and job performance.
3. To provide practical recommendations for IT organizations to foster emotional skills and engagement in the workplace.

By addressing these objectives, this study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on EI and job performance by testing mediation effects in an Indian IT context. Practically, it offers actionable insights for managers and policymakers to develop emotionally intelligent and engaged employees, thereby strengthening organizational effectiveness in a highly competitive sector.

II. RELATED WORK

Research on Emotional Intelligence (EI), job performance, and work engagement has received considerable attention in organizational behavior and psychology literature. Scholars have long emphasized that technical skills alone are insufficient to ensure long-term employee success, especially in knowledge-intensive sectors such as Information Technology (IT). Instead, emotional and social competencies are increasingly recognized as critical determinants of performance and well-being in the workplace.

A. Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

The concept of EI, popularized by Goleman (1995), highlights the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills in professional success. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between EI and job performance. Employees with higher EI tend to manage stress better, resolve conflicts effectively, and collaborate productively, which in turn enhances performance outcomes. In the IT sector, where professionals often face high-pressure environments and demanding clients, EI provides a psychological buffer that improves focus, decision-making, and interpersonal effectiveness.

B. Work Engagement as a Mediator

Work engagement, conceptualized by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), is defined as a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Research suggests that EI fosters work engagement by enabling employees to maintain optimism, regulate emotions during challenging tasks, and derive intrinsic satisfaction from their roles. Engaged employees are more likely to exert discretionary effort, display persistence, and adapt to organizational changes—all of which contribute to enhanced job performance. Thus, work engagement has been identified as a key mediating variable linking EI to performance outcomes.

C. Empirical Evidence

Previous empirical studies across various industries provide support for the mediating role of engagement. For example, employees with high EI are reported to experience greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which foster higher levels of engagement and subsequent performance. Studies conducted in banking, healthcare, and

education sectors have consistently confirmed this pattern. However, empirical evidence from the IT sector, particularly in the Indian context, remains limited. Chennai, as a growing IT hub, presents a unique setting where high workloads, cultural diversity, and technological demands create fertile ground for examining these dynamics.

D. Research Gaps

Although prior research establishes strong links among EI, engagement, and performance, most studies have been conducted in Western or non-IT contexts. Few have explored the specific challenges faced by IT professionals in emerging economies such as India. Additionally, while some studies confirm the mediating role of work engagement, findings are not always consistent, highlighting the need for context-specific investigations. This gap provides the rationale for the present study, which empirically examines the interplay between EI, work engagement, and job performance among IT professionals in Chennai.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and job performance, with work engagement as a mediating variable. A **cross-sectional** survey method was employed, as it allows for the collection of data from a large group of respondents within a limited time frame and is appropriate for testing hypothesized relationships using statistical analysis.

B. Population and Sample

The target population consisted of Information Technology (IT) professionals employed in various organizations in Chennai, India. The city was selected due to its prominence as a major IT hub, hosting a large number of multinational corporations and domestic firms. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants represented different roles, departments, and experience levels within the IT sector. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 250 valid responses were retained for analysis, yielding a satisfactory response rate.

C. Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, divided into four sections:

- Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, education, designation, years of experience).
- Section B: Emotional Intelligence, measured using a standardized EI scale covering self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.
- Section C: Work Engagement, measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which assesses vigor, dedication, and absorption.
- Section D: Job Performance, assessed using a self-reported performance scale covering task performance, contextual performance, and adaptability.

All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), which is widely used in organizational research.

D. Reliability and Validity

To ensure data quality, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of IT professionals. Cronbach's alpha values were computed for each construct, all exceeding the threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability. Content validity was established by consulting academic experts and practitioners in human resource management and organizational psychology.

E. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS/SmartPLS statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine associations between EI, work engagement, and job performance. Regression and mediation analyses were carried out following the procedures of Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrapping methods to test the mediating role of work engagement.

F. Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained, and data were used strictly for academic purposes.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

The study was designed as a quantitative research investigation to examine the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on Job Performance, with Work Engagement as a mediating variable among IT professionals in Chennai. The implementation process involved the following steps:

A. Population and Sample:

The target population comprised IT professionals working in various organizations across Chennai. Using stratified random sampling, participants were selected to ensure representation across job roles, experience levels, and organizational hierarchies. A total of 250 respondents participated in the study.

B. Data Collection Instruments:

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, divided into three sections:

- **Emotional Intelligence:** Assessed using a validated EI scale covering self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.
- **Work Engagement:** Measured with a standardized scale capturing vigor, dedication, and absorption.
- **Job Performance:** Evaluated through self-reported performance indicators and supervisor ratings.

Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5).

C. Procedure:

The questionnaire was distributed electronically via email and professional networks. Participants were briefed about the study's purpose, assured of confidentiality, and instructed on how to complete the survey.

D. Data Analysis:

Data cleaning and preprocessing were performed to remove incomplete responses. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS, employing techniques such as:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** To summarize demographic characteristics and variable distributions.
- **Correlation Analysis:** To examine relationships between EI, Work Engagement, and Job Performance.
- **Structural Equation Modeling (SEM):** To test the hypothesized mediating effect of Work Engagement on the relationship between EI and Job Performance.

E. Ethical Considerations:

Participants' consent was obtained before participation. The study-maintained confidentiality and anonymity, ensuring that responses were used solely for research purposes.

This experimental setup ensures reliability, validity, and generalizability of findings while providing insights into the interplay between Emotional Intelligence, Work Engagement, and Job Performance among IT professionals in Chennai.

V. RESULTS

The data collected from 250 IT professionals in Chennai were analyzed to examine the relationships between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Work Engagement, and Job Performance. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

A. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Emotional Intelligence	3.82	0.45	2.0	5.0
Work Engagement	3.65	0.50	1.8	5.0
Job Performance	3.78	0.48	2.0	5.0

The results indicate moderate to high levels of EI, Work Engagement, and Job Performance among participants.

B. Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3
1. Emotional Intelligence	1		
2. Work Engagement	0.62**	1	
3. Job Performance	0.58**	0.64**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$.

- Emotional Intelligence is positively correlated with both Work Engagement ($r = 0.62$) and Job Performance ($r = 0.58$).
- Work Engagement is positively correlated with Job Performance ($r = 0.64$).

C. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

- The SEM analysis confirmed the mediating role of Work Engagement between Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance.
- Model fit indices:
 - $\chi^2/df = 1.95$ (acceptable fit)
 - CFI = 0.96
 - TLI = 0.95
 - RMSEA = 0.045
- The indirect effect of EI on Job Performance via Work Engagement was significant ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$), indicating partial mediation.
- Direct effect of EI on Job Performance remained significant but reduced, confirming that Work Engagement partially mediates the relationship.

D. Summary of Findings

1. Emotional Intelligence positively influences Job Performance among IT professionals.
2. Work Engagement significantly mediates the EI–Job Performance relationship.
3. Employees with higher EI are more engaged in their work, leading to improved performance outcomes.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the interplay between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Work Engagement, and Job Performance among IT professionals in Chennai.

B. Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance

The results indicate a positive relationship between EI and Job Performance, suggesting that employees who possess higher emotional awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills tend to perform better in their roles. This aligns with prior research indicating that emotionally intelligent individuals can manage workplace stress effectively, communicate better, and collaborate efficiently, all of which enhance overall performance.

C. Role of Work Engagement

Work Engagement was found to partially mediate the relationship between EI and Job Performance. This

implies that emotionally intelligent employees are more likely to be engaged in their work—demonstrating vigor, dedication, and absorption—which in turn leads to improved job outcomes. The mediation highlights the mechanism through which EI translates into performance, emphasizing the importance of fostering engagement strategies within IT organizations.

D. Implications for IT Professionals and Organizations

The study underscores the practical importance of EI training programs and engagement-enhancing initiatives in IT workplaces. Organizations can leverage these findings by:

- Implementing EI development workshops to enhance self-awareness, empathy, and social skills.
- Encouraging practices that increase work engagement, such as meaningful tasks, recognition programs, and opportunities for professional growth.
- Recognizing that enhancing work engagement can amplify the positive effects of EI on performance.

E. Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be noted:

- Data were collected via self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce bias.
- The cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality.
- The study focused on IT professionals in Chennai, which may limit generalizability to other regions or industries.

Future research could adopt longitudinal designs or multi-source performance assessments to validate and extend these findings. Additionally, exploring other potential mediators (e.g., organizational commitment or job satisfaction) may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the EI–performance relationship.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study explored the influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on Job Performance among IT professionals in Chennai, with a focus on the

mediating role of Work Engagement. The key findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Emotional Intelligence positively impacts Job Performance. Employees with higher EI demonstrated better self-regulation, interpersonal skills, and motivation, leading to improved workplace performance.
2. Work Engagement partially mediates the EI–Job Performance relationship. Engaged employees—those demonstrating vigor, dedication, and absorption—translated their emotional competencies into higher performance.
3. Practical Implications: Organizations can enhance performance by developing EI through training programs and fostering work engagement via recognition, meaningful tasks, and growth opportunities.

A. Contributions:

- Provided empirical evidence supporting the role of EI in enhancing performance in Chennai's IT sector.
- Highlighted Work Engagement as a key mechanism linking EI and Job Performance, offering actionable insights for HR practices.
- Extended research in the Indian IT context, adding to cross-cultural perspectives on emotional intelligence and work behavior.

B. Future Work:

- Conduct longitudinal studies to establish causal relationships between EI, Work Engagement, and Job Performance.
- Explore additional mediating or moderating factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, or stress management.
- Expand the research across different cities, industries, and cultural settings to improve generalizability.

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