Original article

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE FLEXIBILITY ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: The corporate world is renowned for its structured, scheduled workplace setting, which can pose challenges for workers to succeed. Companies that provide a flexible and positive environment tend to have better staff engagement. Therefore, this study aims to test the relationship between the four dimensions of HR (human resource) flexibility (Resource flexibility in HR practices, and employee skill behavior, and coordination flexibility in HR practices and employee skill behavior) with employee engagement. The proposed study gathered 267 responses from IT (information technology) employees and data were analyzed using AMOS v22 software. Findings revealed employee engagement has a strong positive relationship with the four dimensions of human resource flexibility which account for 92% of the variance, except a negligible correlation discovered between employee engagement and coordination flexibility in human resource practices. the findings of this study act as a strategic tool for HR practitioners to design their organization environment in such a way that fosters employee engagement.

Keywords: Flexibility HRM; Employee engagement; Coordination flexibility in HR practices; Employee skill behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

Workplaces today are much more complicated and unpredictable than they were in the past. The rivalry in the international business environment has grown significantly since the economic policy in 1991. The need to meet deadlines and fulfill the expectations of peers, coworkers, the organization, and family have become a daily reality. Because of the many challenges posed by global business, today's workplace requires more drive, talent, and multi-skilled workers with specialized aptitudes in order to thrive and survive. The idea of flexibility has given workers autonomy towards their work, and behave in ways that advance organizational objectives. Due to the shifting economic environment, modernization, and fierce competition, digital transformation, and worst pandemic (COVID-19) companies now face a great deal of uncertainty (, which has a detrimental effect on the engagement of employees (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2021; Chaudhary et al., 2012; Sekhar et al., 2016; Winasis et al., 2020). One of the key aspects of corporate flexibility is human resource (HR) flexibility, which focuses on tailoring employee characteristics (like expertise, abilities, and attitudes) to shifting environmental circumstances and improving organizational performance (Abu-Nahel et al., 2020; Beltrán-Martín et al., 2008; Do et al., 2016; Ngo & Loi, 2008; Sabuhari et al., 2020; Sekhar et al., 2018). Studies indicated that it is essential to engage the workforce in this dynamic climate by offering them a variety of human resource practices, and there should be flexibility in the workplace to increase

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employee engagement (Bal & De Lange, 2015).

Employee engagement is described by Kahn (1990) as a dynamic, motivating, and rewarding concept that represents a variety of investments of physical, affective, and cognitive resources in the workplace. The HR manager must give their staff flexibility so that they feel a sense of ownership over the company they work for in order to keep them engaged in this dynamic environment. Their involvement in organizational goals and work satisfaction may be accomplished through flexibility as an HR practice. Resource flexibility and coordination flexibility are the two main aspects of the multifaceted concept of HR flexibility. Former defines how frequently a company's resources can be put to various uses and environments. It involves resource flexibility in employee behavior and skill that enables people to adapt to shifting job responsibilities as well as resource flexibility in human resources practices that support developing and rewarding such skill and behavioral flexibility (Way et al., 2015; Wright & Snell, 1998). While later defines as alluding to a company's capacity to quickly acquire and apply resources in order to realize its strategic objectives. Flexibility in employee skills and behaviors is one element of coordination (CFESB), while flexibility in HR practices (i.e., adapting HR practices or CFHR) is another (i.e., assigning individuals with skill flexibility to different job positions). Past studies have empirically linked HRM practices to firm success (Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995). To the best of our understanding, there is no evidence that there is a connection between HR flexibility and employee-level outcomes i.e., engagement. Additionally, this research conducted a survey of software company employees, which has not previously been done in India. The bulk of the research was conducted in developed countries (Ngo & Loi, 2008).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A company's flexibility is measured by its capacity to meet a 321 wide variety of demands from a market that is rapidly evolving. It indicates the firm's dynamic ability to act or respond to the organization's shifting competitive market (Bishwas, 2015). HR flexibility is generally regarded as including a variety of components, according to Wright and Snell (1998). Employees who work for an organization with high employee skill flexibility can have a wide range of abilities. A business's ability to evolve with the times when its workforce possesses a variety of abilities (Chakravarthy, 1982). Consequently, human resource (HR) flexibility allows a business to react to market fluctuations, be proactive, and actively engage in chaotic systems. A study of Indian IT firms' national and international markets showed that firm performance was more strongly correlated with skill flexibility (Sekhar et al., 2016). A company should recruit employees who are more suited to the dynamic environment. HR practices that place a strong emphasis on HR adaptability may result in a diverse set of skills like knowledge sharing, and job rescheduling which may inspire teammates to create their tasks and team jobs in a flexible manner (Tuan, 2019). The focus of HR flexibility is on the multidimensional nature of the workforce as demonstrated by the shifting nature of their psychological domains, such as their knowledge, conduct, and growth. It speaks of the capacity to grow (regrow), organize, install, and reconfigure HR systems that will manage HRs with skills that improve the company's overall ability to compete on the premise of innovation and market responsiveness. Organizations with flexible HR systems can quickly adapt to new environmental opportunities (Youndt et al., 1996).

2.1 Resource flexibility

Resource flexibility in HR practices (RFHR) such as hiring, providing continuous development opportunities, competitive and fair rewards, job redesign, and flex hours can boost older employees' job performance and increase engagement among younger employees (Bal et al., 2013). Adapting to today's complicated and uncertain work environments is difficult for software companies to engage their personnel, as flexibility in HR practices allows workers to do work better and increase their capacity for learning and retain them for the long run. Flexible attributes foster traits like collaboration, cohesion, and empathy among

the workers in contrast to conventional human resource practices. On the other hand, resource flexibility in employee skill behavior (RFESB) defines two aspects, employee skill flexibility, and employee skill behavior. Former defines the variety of multiple uses upon which worker talents may be put" and "how employees with diverse competencies can be swiftly reconfigured. To put it another way, a business is said to have a high degree of employee skill flexibility if its staff members possess a diverse set of skills and are capable of performing a variety of work activities on demand (Wright & Snell, 1998). While, later defines the degree to which people have a set of innovative frameworks that can be altered to suit shifting conditions, rather than simply adhering to predetermined procedures, employees who can implement these behavioral scripts appropriately under a variety of circumstances increase the company's efficiency (LePine et al., 2000; Neuman & Wright, 1999; Wright & Snell, 1998). Through practices including job redesign, succession planning, and project-based work assignments, a company may develop skill flexibility and might change their behavior toward their working style. All of these produce wide skill arrangements unique to the company that is difficult to duplicate. This indicates that workers are more inclined to display their engagement towards their work as well as organizations. On the basis of prior work, the two dimensions of resource flexibility i.e, RFHR, and RFESB both have a positive influence over engagement, therefore this study framed hypothesis.

H1a: there is a positive influence of RFHR on employee engagement

H1b: there is a positive influence of RFESB on employee engagement

2.2 Coordination flexibility

The company's capacity to quickly obtain and utilize the resources quickly enough to achieve the firm's specific objectives is referred to as coordination flexibility (Sanchez & Heene, 1997). CFHR is defined as "how fast the practices can be resynthesized, redesigned, and reassigned" (Wright & Snell, 1998). As a result, this aspect of HR flexibility refers to the company's ability to quickly and successfully employ alternative HR practices. If a company's development program allows employees to gain broad abilities that are relevant to a range of alternative job duties, it may demonstrate RFHR, while CFHR would entail the creation and execution of development plans to meet fresh or unforeseen skill requirements. Coordination flexibility in employee skills refers to “how employees with specific abilities can be reassigned swiftly in the value chain” and involves how well the business can employ and utilize regular employees (Wright & Snell, 1998). Contrarily, flexibility in employee behaviors measures how easily an organization can recruit and dispatch regular employees or gig workers who have the potential to adapt to changes in their work activities. Reskilling gaining more importance in the IT sector with the greater adoption of new technology. The IT sector is welcoming freelance work and remote working, enabling workers to work from any location. Companies can access a worldwide pool of talent and hire people with unique skills for either immediate or ongoing assignments. Companies offer training courses, webinars, and online resources to aid staff in adapting and learning new skills in step with market expectations. An employee's ability to grow professionally and maintain relevance in the ever-changing IT sector is made possible by this flexibility, and exhibit engagement towards their work (Ugargol & Patrick, 2018). Based on prior work, employees who quickly behave and modify their skills as per the market fluctuations, reflect engagement towards their work, therefore the present study proposed the hypothesis

H1c: CFHR has a positive influence on employee engagement

H1d: CFESB has a positive influence on employee engagement

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample and procedure

Responses were collected from middle-level employees of software companies in Delhi NCR. A questionnaire link was mailed to around 400 respondents and out of 267 completed questionnaires were received. In our sample size, 51.7% were male and the rest were female and the majority of participants were from rom 20-30 age category.

3.2 Measurement of variable

The researcher used a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=7" to respond to the items for measuring variables.

3.3.1 HR flexibility: This article used a scale for HR flexibility developed and validated by Way et al. (2015), which has sub-dimensions namely, RFHR, RFESB, CFHR, and CFESB.

3.3.2 Employee engagement: A recent study was done by Kwon and Kim (2020) have identified 34 empirical studies that have measured engagement which was developed by (Schaufeli et al., 2002). This study also used the same scale for measuring employee engagement.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

In the first step, check the reliability and validity of the model (measurement), then go for testing the relationship between independent and dependent variables (structural) in AMOS software (Chin, 1998). The composite reliability (CR) of all the constructs ranges from.92 to.96, indicating good reliability (Hair et al., 2012). The average variance extracted (AVE) values in the range of.76 to.90, which fits the general rule that the AVE values should be above .50, according to the findings (see Table 1) (Hair et al., 2012). Discriminant validity defines how multiple variables are distinguished from each other (Duarte & Amaro, 2018). Table 1 Depicting reliability and validity results which are shown below:

Table 1: Measurement results

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	CFHR	RFHR	RFESB	CFESB
CFHR	0.920	0.794	0.599	0.925	**0.891**			
RFHR	0.941	0.763	0.496	0.945	0.632	**0.873**		
RFESB	0.944	0.849	0.582	0.962	0.751	0.704	**0.921**	
CFESB	0.967	0.908	0.599	0.968	0.774	0.675	0.763	**0.953**

Source: Author's s own compilation

Table 2 shows RFHR has the highest mean (6.07) among all and all were positively correlated with engagement (value lies from 0.449 to 0.691). HR flexibility is positively correlated with employee engagement. Employee engagement' sub factors (VIG, DED, ABS) also positively correlated with each other (value lies from 0.605-0.663). Briefly stated, the correlation analysis initially supported our hypotheses.

Table 2: Correlation metrix

Indicators	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 RFHR	6.0787	1.21913	1						
2 RFESB	5.5543	1.61491	0.704	1					
3 CFHR	5.7069	1.51078	0.632	0.751	1				
4 CFESB	5.8302	1.39619	0.675	0.763	0.774	1			
5 VIG	5.4897	1.57657	0.449	0.535	0.526	0.54	1		
6 DED	5.9747	1.31363	0.611	0.691	0.625	0.671	0.605	1	
7 ABS	5.4806	1.58204	0.576	0.686	0.632	0.604	0.663	.638	1

Source: AMOS output

The four dimensions of HR flexibility were first evaluated which results are shown in figure 2 below. The covariance matrix was examined using the maximum likelihood method. The standard chi-square, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were performed. A GFI (goodness-of-fit index) should be greater than 0.90 and an RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) of less than 0.08 indicate that the model is well-fit to the data. the non-normed fit index (NNFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and comparative fit index (CFI) were examined (Rigdon, 1996). The initial model showed not much adequate fit to the data because of cross-loadings:

CMIN/DF =7.604, CFI (comparative fit index) = .863, NFI (non-normed fit index) = .846, IFI (incremental fit index) = .864, GFI=.747 and RMR=.177. After deleting a few items such as CFHR4, RFESB4. The modified results were as CMIN/DF=3.604, GFI=.877, AGFI=.818, NFI=.943, IFI=.958, CFI=.958 AND RMSEA=.099, RMR=0.89.

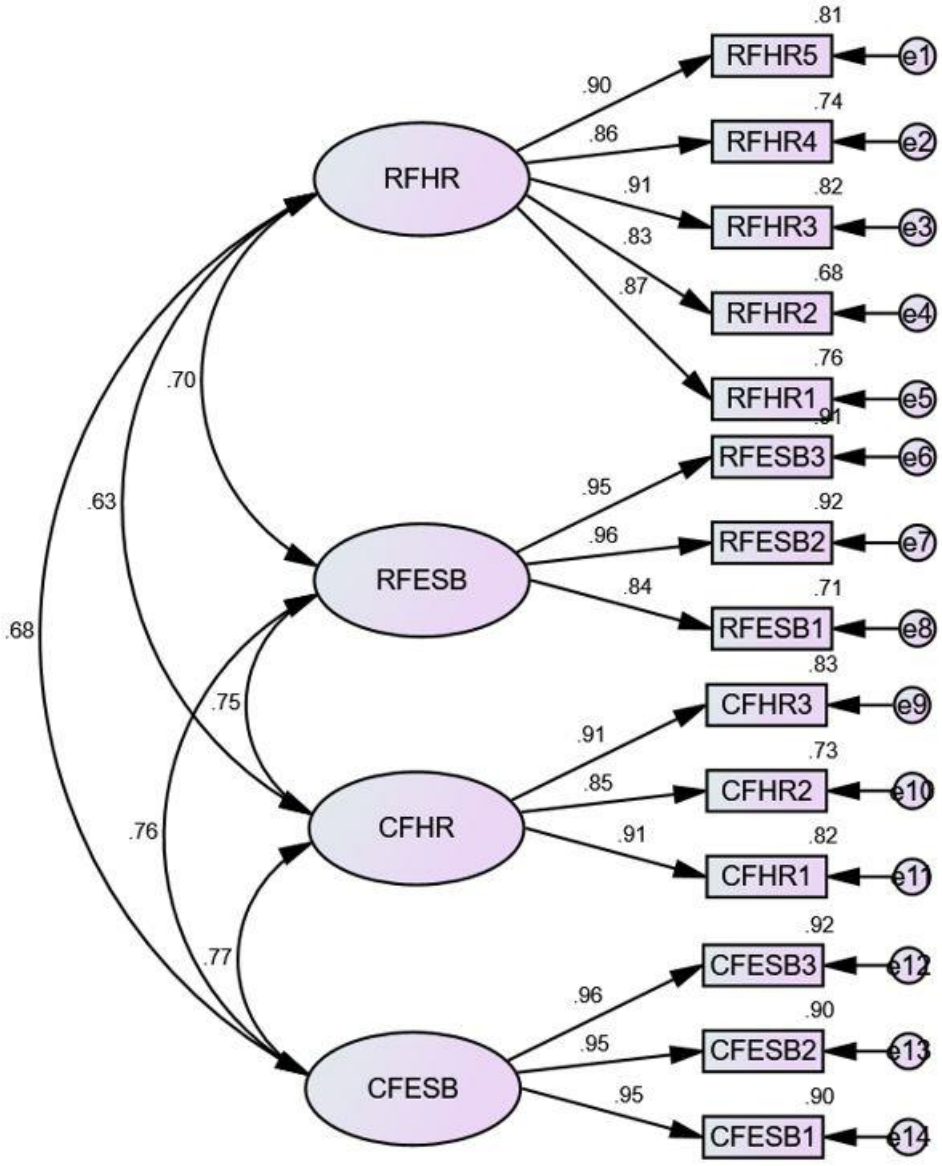

Figure 1: Confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS

Testing of hypothesis: A

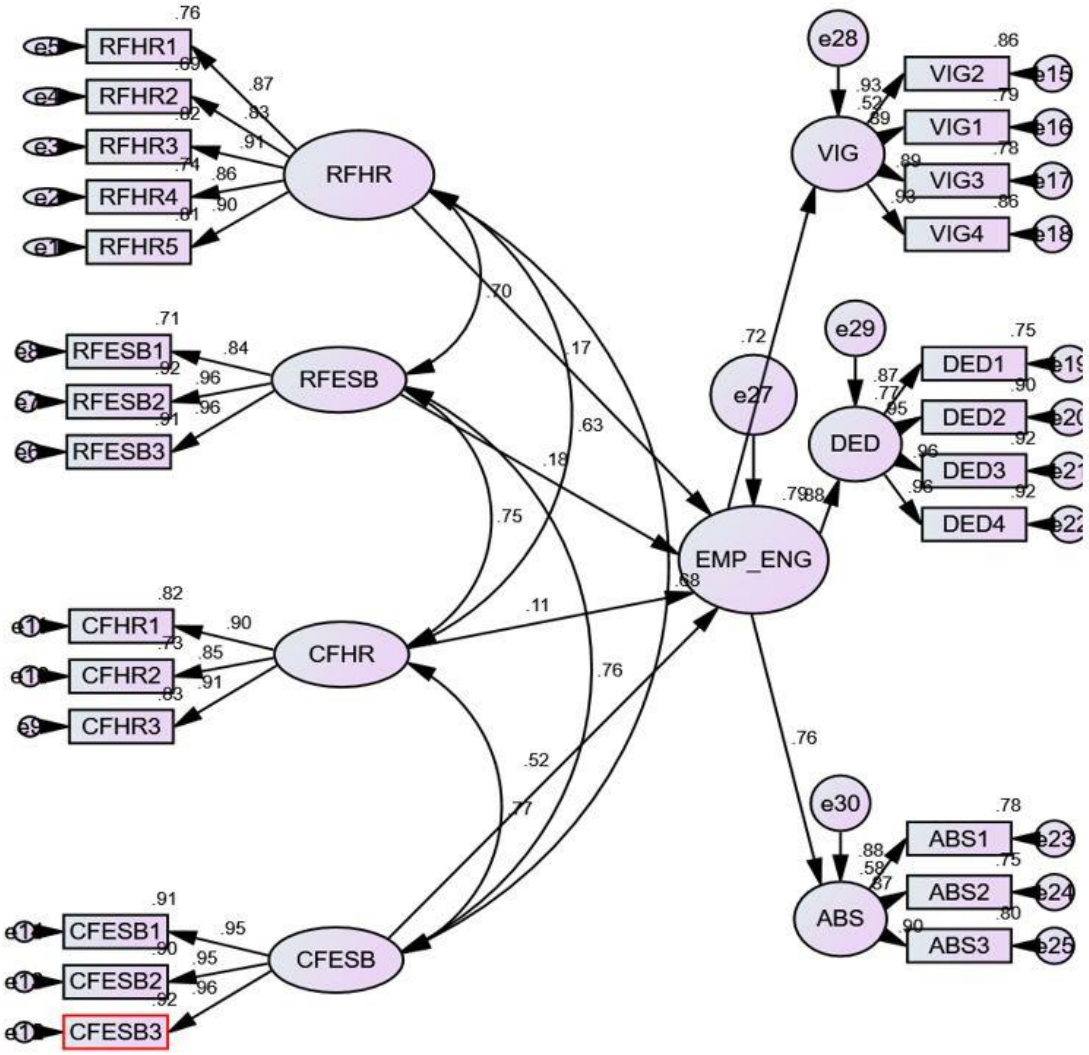

Figure2: Relationship of factors of HR flexibility with employee engagement

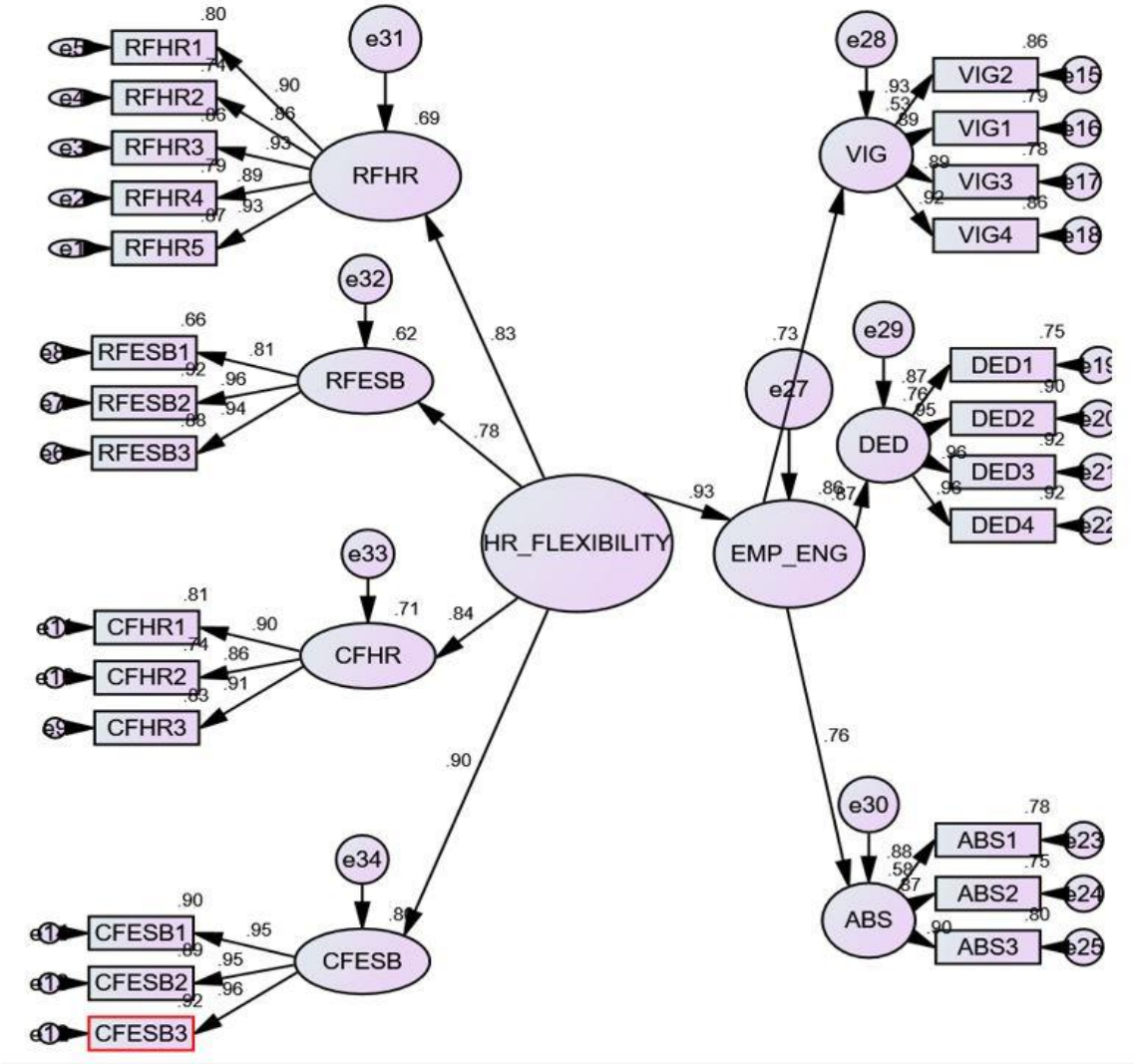

Figure 3: Depicting the direct relationship of HR flexibility with employee engagement

Table 3: Hypothesized results

Hypothesized Path	Beta	S.E	C.R	P-Value	Significance level	Results
HR_Flexibility--→EE	0.926	0.041	19.156	0.000*	Significant	Accepted
RFHR-→EMP_ENG	.169	0.056	2.649	0.008*	Significant	Accepted
RFESB->EMP_ENG	.183	0.045	2.356	0.018*	Significant	Accepted
CFHR->EMP_ENG	.108	0.54	1.387	.166	Not Significant	Rejected
CFESB->EMP_ENG	.518	0.58	6.566	0.000*	Significant	Accepted

*Source: AMOS results, * significant at 1percent level, note: CR= critical region, S.E = standard error*

5. DISCUSSION

This research paper offers a two-fold theoretical framework by extending research in the field of HR flexibility and employee engagement. As we know, retaining the best talent has become too complex for HR managers in software companies. The research advances our knowledge of HR flexibility in a number of ways. Our study integrates HRM research and considers underpinning theories like resource-based view theories and ability, motivation, and opportunities theories. This study hypothesized that dimensions of HR flexibility have a positive link with engagement. Except for the hypothesis (H1c) which is insignificant with employee engagement. This study's findings are consistent with the findings by Bhattacharya et al. (2005), and revealed a positive link with firm performance. Overall statistics reveal that HR flexibility has a greater influence on employee engagement and explains around 92 percent. H1a represents (beta=0.169, p<0.008) significant at a five percent level of significance and indicates that resource flexibility in HR practice has a significant contribution to employee behavior. When there are several facilities are provided to employees at their workplace at the demand of the current situation and employers are quickly respond to changes and adapt the things which are required to accomplish a task that would engage the employees more. H1b (beta=0.183, p<0.018) signifies that resource flexibility in employee skill and behavior also a has great contribution to employee engagement. This indicates that almost all of the employees of software companies are flexible in their behavior. They are ready to learn and adapt to new things behavior and ready to work on new technology. H1c (beta=0.108 p<0.166) shows insignificant relation to employee engagement. This indicates that employees are not happy with the implementation plan of the organization's staffing procedure that is not implemented well. Different compensation structure is not adapted well. H1d (beta=51.8, p<0.000) has the greatest contribution among all dimensions and states that companies can quickly assign or reassign new jobs or different job positions to their employees

5.1 Practical implications

This research model on the HR flexibility–employee engagement relationship in software companies provides insights to HR practitioners and describes that creating more flexible activities can bring the engagement level up of employees of software companies. Companies should hire workers with flexible skills and behaviors to improve resource flexibility who can adjust to changing positions. Continuous development opportunities should be given to workers with a set of versatile talents that they can apply under a variety of demand scenarios. (Bhattacharya et al., 2005). Companies should enable employees to go beyond their positions and communicate to management what additional responsibilities they want to adopt for themselves to improve coordinated flexibility in employee's behaviors. firms should increase CFHR by allocating or upgrading people to new jobs as soon as they are prepared or self-trained in new knowledge and abilities. Employee incentive to proactively increase their understanding is sustained by the timely application of new information and skills, contributing to the organization's resource flexibility. Organizations should enable employees to go above their responsibilities and express to manager's different roles they want to adopt for themselves and their team based on their new resources to improve coordination flexibility in employee actions (e.g., knowledge, abilities, and values). Employees are therefore compelled to share their knowledge and collaborate with their co-workers to create team jobs that will help them achieve their goals. Engagement of employees has become crucial nowadays to attain organizational goals efficiently and therefore flexibility in resources and HR practices led to engagement in the organization.

6. CONCLUSION

Even though the impact of workplace flexibility on EE is frequently discussed, these claims are rarely backed up by empirical data, particularly when looking at the Indian context. In this research, a sample of IT workers in Delhi, NCR were examined to determine the impact of a different dimension of HR

flexibility on engagement. The study found that overall there is a strong impact of HR flexibility over engagement. The findings revealed that employees are more engaged in their work if they have flexibility at their workplace. This paper adds significantly to the body of knowledge on engagement by placing flexibility options and engagement in the Indian IT sector. This study recognizes the inherent limitations that exist. First, the cross-sectional data prevents us from drawing conclusions about causality. Second, due to the purposive research design, the study's findings cannot be applied to all organizations. Third, we are unable to remark on how HR flexibility affects employees at various points in their careers or on any changes that may become apparent over time. Future studies could look at how having flexibility affects other aspects such as job satisfaction, and work-life balance, and see whether this varies across the demographic variables. Future research is encouraged to build on this study's results and incorporate HR flexibility into fresh theories and conceptual frameworks for human resource management. These results about the use of flexibility options may help guide future research and provide data for policy-level decision-making.

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