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**JOB HOPPING AND TURNOVER INTENTIONS: AN EMPIRICAL  
STUDY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Retaining employees has become a major challenge for IT firms in India. Job hopping has become a common phenomenon these days. Due to increased opportunities in the labor market, people find it easier now to change jobs. Engaging individuals at work has become quite essential for their retention at workplace. Employee engagement helps in decreasing employees' deviant behavior at workplace and keeps them motivated to contribute more towards organization.*

*Research purpose: The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between Job Hopping and Turnover Intentions and explore the mediating effect of Employee Engagement, if any, on the same.*

*Research design: The present study was done on a sample of 210 employees belonging to IT/ITES companies in Delhi/NCR region. Variables in the study were assessed using three validated Instruments Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Linear regression analysis.*

*Findings: The results showed that job hopping attitude contributed statistically significantly to high turnover intention and low employee engagement. Employee engagement found to be negatively correlated with turnover intentions. Employee engagement fully mediated the relationship between job hopping attitude and turnover intention.*

*Practical implications: Good HR practices should be developed, because it helps in increasing employee engagement. High employment engagement in turn leads to lower turnover intentions and increases affective commitment among employees.*

*Key Words: Job hopping attitude, Turnover intentions, Employee engagement.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Employee turnover is inevitable. The term ‘turnover’ means that employees’ permanent leaving or discontinuation of employment relationship of an employee with the organization. It has become a major challenge especially for the IT/ITES sector in India. Despite of slowdown, there are ample job opportunities and a huge demand of skilled professionals resulting in effortless job switching. In 2012, attrition in the banking, financial and insurance sectors was 30%, in IT services 28%, retail and consumer goods 16%, retail store-level 30%, healthcare 10% and hi-tech 14%. Intent to leave is a more complex phenomenon as compared to the actual turnover and has received attention by many researchers. Managers and researchers consider turnover a problem because of costs associated with it (Lucas et al., 1987 and Soon et al., 2005). Scholars commonly view turnover and its proxy, turnover intentions as the form of withdrawal (Price, 2001). However, there is a distinction between turnover and turnover. The term ‘turnover’ represents the actual turnover behavior, the movement of the employees’ to other organizations (Price, 2001), while the terms ‘turnover intention’ represent the employees’ behavioral intention which is employees’ perceived probability of leaving the current organization (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Employee turnover remains as a persistent problem for the organization. When the high performing employees leave, it leads to detrimental effects on the existing employees in the department and the organization as whole. Intent to leave is even more dangerous for the organizations, as it ends the affective commitment of the employees which in turn undermines the efficiency and productivity of the organization. Moreover, in some occasions, it threatens the organization’s long term survival (Brereton, Beach, & Cliff, 2003). This study, therefore, focuses on the relationship between job hopping attitude and turnover intention instead of the actual turnover of IT professionals.

According to the previous researches few factors leading to high turnover intentions in the organizations are job dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, workplace stress, increased work hours, lack of employee friendly policy etc. All of these factors are by-products of the organizational working environment. However, the work environment alone is not responsible for the high turnover rates in the organizations. Few behavioral aspects also contribute towards high turnover intentions or actual turnover in the organizations.

Ghiselli (1974) notes that some workers have the natural internal impulse to move from one job to another for sometimes no apparent or rational reason, that is irrespective of whether they have better alternative job offers or not. The author describes this hobo syndrome behaviour as, "...the periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place" (p. 81). This type of attitude is quoted as job hopping attitude. These days staying in a particular organization for long is considered as a sign of incompetency. If employees have not changed their jobs for some time, they come under some social pressure from their co-workers to do so soon. This is resultant of vast options available in the market.

Within this context, the HR Managers in India need to focus on generating employee-friendly policies, competitive work environment resulting in more job-satisfied and engaged workforce. Highly engaged workforce is less likely to think about leaving the organization. The increasing employee turnover has increased the popularity of the engagement exponentially in the organizations.

### **Problem Statement**

Considering the aforesaid discussion, the researcher has decided to study the mediating role of employee engagement on the job hopping attitude and turnover intentions in the IT/ITES sector.

What is the relationship between job hopping behavior and intent to leave? Or, what can be done to increase employee's commitment or to engage the workforce? Answers to these queries certainly have great relevance to the individual who may be thinking to quit his or her current organization, and for managers experiencing high turnover within the organization.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The purpose of this literature review is to revisit the past researches and collect the real information concerning to turnover intentions, work life conflicts, and stress experienced by marketing executives. Organizations of all types are giving increased attention to diagnose the turnover intentions in order to reduce actual employee turnover. Organizations must focus on its policies, procedures and structure in order to provide congenial work environment to its employees and increase their commitment towards the organization. This study is first of its kind so researcher was not able to locate much paper showing the mediating effect of employee engagement on job hopping attitude and turnover intentions relationship.

### **Job Hopping**

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The definition of job hopping behaviour varies from one country to another [Khatri et al. (1999)]. From the previous researches being done two types of job hopping behaviors have been identified. The first is when individuals because of their strong personal desire for fun change their jobs. The second type describes a turnover culture that is motivated by some social support. “The turnover culture, is a shared value among peers in the same organization who dares each other to leave for other jobs or organizations” Abelson (1993). Such culture makes job hopping an acceptable social work behavior. In Japan, the term “freeters,” was coined during the bubble economy of the 1980s. They consist of high school leavers and fresh graduates (aged between 15 to 34 years old) who choose not to have regular full – time employment (Kondo, 2007). Such job hoppers like the mobility and freedom to be able to frequently change their jobs because they do know what exactly they want to do with their lives and career.

According to Chew (1996), the job hoppers tend to find alternative employments before quitting their jobs but sometimes they leave even before securing any alternative appointment. For job hoppers money is not always the reason why some highly educated employees, especially those with stable jobs job hop. They do so because of the available opportunities in the job market and sometimes just for change.

### **Turnover Intentions**

According to Mobley (1977), turnover intention is described as the cognitive process of thinking, planning, and desiring to leave a job. To know employees turnover intentions is rather more difficult, than the actual turnover in the organizations. Knowing turnover intent in advance can help organizations take preventive measures and discourage the employee from leaving. Otherwise, employer can do nothing except to bear the expenses of selecting and training new hires (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). A turnover intention is a mental decision prevailing between an individual’s approach with reference to a job to continue or leave the job (Jacobs and Roodt, 2007).

“Turnover is an important issue for management, particularly in the prevailing labour market conditions. The turnover intent is found to be positively associated with the actual turnover.

Employee turnover is not always because of external opportunities, sometimes it is because of unhealthy work-environment and practices. Employee turnover, is not only a concern to the human resource department but also to the organizational due to its adverse effects on the organizational performance.

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It is undoubtedly unfortunate and costly when employees leave organization willingly or voluntarily. Much attention has been paid to the employee turnover issue, particularly the voluntary nature of turnover (Ton & Huckman, 2008). Turnover intention is considered important in the turnover literature. In many studies, turnover intention has been viewed as the best predictor of actual turnover (Herrbach, Mignonac, & Gatignon, 2004; Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003; Griffeth et al. 2000; Tett & Meyer, 1993).

### **Employee Engagement**

The employee engagement refers to employees' personal satisfaction and sense of belongingness they get from their work and from being part of their organisation. It is believed that personal pride and passion motivate employees to offer discretionary effort. Kahn (1990) is regarded as the scholar who first applied the concept of engagement at work. In his words, "the more employees feel they are able to express their preferred selves at work, the more they will invest in their work role and their organization".

Healthy work practices, transparent policies, Job enrichment, career advancement opportunities, rewards and recognition of employees are few of the factors leading to high employee engagement. However, employees' perception of self, others and the job in general also decide the engagement or disengagement levels of employees.

An employee who is truly engaged with the organization will be intrinsically motivated with high job involvement or job satisfaction (Rich et al., 2010). The engaged employees tend to use their physical, cognitive, and emotional capacities fully when they work and are likely to stay in the organization for a longer period of time as compared to the disengaged employees.

### **Job Hopping attitude, Employee Engagement and Turnover Intentions**

Recent studies have found a strong link between employee engagement and retention. In a survey conducted on 300 thousand employed personnel, about 20% found to be disengaged; and approximately 88% of those classified as disengaged with their work (about 53,000 employees) reported intentions to leave their current organization (Towers Perrin, 2008). This creates a need for studying the relationship between employee engagement and turnover intentions and the impact of employee engagement on employee attitudes, most notably intentions to remain with one's organization.

Highly engaged employees have affective commitment towards their organization and they seek to contribute and excel at their job. It represents an employee's willingness and ability to

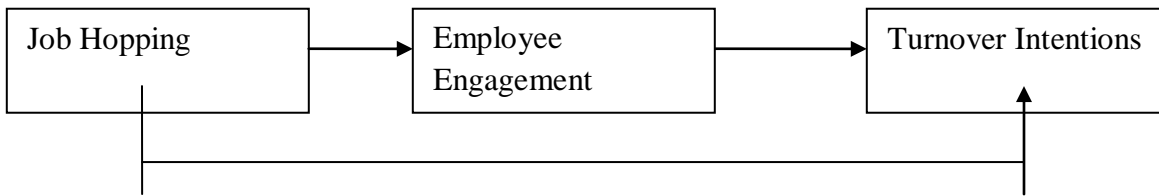
contribute to company success (Towers Perrin, 2008). And when job involvement is high employee normally becomes a passive jobseeker. Highly engaged workforce doesn't get much time to think about leaving the job. Till the time psychological contract remains intact, the employee will feel attached and engaged with the organization leading to lower turnover intentions. The link between employee engagement and intentions to remain with one's organization is logical. The existing literature makes it important to study the relationship between the job hopping attitude, turnover intentions and employee engagement.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the job hopping attitude of employees of IT/ITES sector.
2. To study the turnover intentions in same population.
3. To determine whether employee engagement mediates the relationship between job hopping attitude (independent variable) and turnover intentions (dependent variable).

## METHODOLOGY

### Foundation for Research Framework



After a thorough literature review above framework has been created. The research article is based on the proposed framework. Job hopping has been used as an independent variable for the research purpose. Employee engagement has been used as a mediating variable which mediated the link between Job Hopping and Turnover Intentions.

### Hypothesis Generation

In context with the theoretical framework, following hypothesis has been generated.

- H1: Job hopping attitude leads to high turnover intentions.
- H2: Job hopping attitude leads to lower level of employee engagement.
- H3: High level of employee engagement leads to low level of turnover intentions.
- H4: The relationship between job hopping attitude and turnover intentions gets mediated by employee engagement.

### Population

The universe for this research work consists of IT/ITES companies in Delhi/NCR region.

### Sampling

Sample of 250 employees were taken, out of which 40 questionnaires were rejected. Thus, the analysis was done on the sample of 210 employees. Simple random sampling has been utilized in order to avoid any biasness.

### Research Instruments

The measures used in this study were borrowed from their original source and adapted from Indian work setting.

**Turnover Intentions scale:** Intentions to leave were measured using 3-items scale of Meyer et. Al. (1993). Turnover Intentions was found to be significant on factor analysis ( $\alpha=.92$ ).

**Employee Engagement Scale:** The questionnaire used to assess the employee engagement is a replication of the Gallup Q12® workplace audit. The Gallup Q12® workplace audit has proven to be a valid measurement instrument of employee engagement (Harter et al, 2009). The questionnaire used was that developed by the Gallup Organization over a period of decades (Forbringer, 2001; Harter et al, 2009). The quantitative data sought by the questionnaire is ranked on a five-point scale where 1 represents ‘Strongly agree’ and 5 represents ‘Strongly disagree’.

**Job Hopping Attitude:** Khatri et. al.’s (1999) job hopping measure was adopted and two examples of the items were, “To me, switching job is kind of a fun,” and “I switch job because my colleagues do so.”

### Research Findings

**Table 1: Reliability Coefficient of Instruments**

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach $\alpha$
Job Hopping Attitude	3	.90
Turnover Intentions	3	.92
Employee Engagement	12	.96

As seen from Table-1, the instruments used in the study were reliable with coefficients ranging from 0.90 to 0.96, which exceeded the minimum acceptance level of 0.70 (Nunnaly, 1978).

### Regression Results

Linear regression was carried out for the testing of the hypothesis involved in the research. For testing of mediation effect, Baron and Kenny (1986) test was being applied.

The following are the four conditions for establishing mediation : ( 1) The independent variable significantly affect the dependent variable; (2) The independent variable significantly affect the mediator; (3) The mediator significantly affect the dependent variable; (4) The effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable shrinks upon the addition of the mediator to the model. If the independent variable does not affect the dependent variable upon regressing the dependent variable on both the independent variable and on the mediator, then full mediation is established. If otherwise, the test supports partial mediation.

**H1:** Job hopping attitude leads to high turnover intentions.

**Table 2: Results regression analysis**

*(Job hopping attitude & Turnover Intentions)*

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Job hopping attitude	.916	.872	.871
	Beta	F	P value
Job hopping attitude	.916	985.782	0.000

*Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions*

In table 2 shows that, there is positive and significant correlation between job hopping attitude and intentions to leave (  $r = .916, p < .05$ ). The coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> is .872 which means that 87.2% variation in turnover intentions is due to job hopping attitude. The p value is  $< 0.05$  resulting in the acceptance of hypothesis 1.

**H2:** Job hopping attitude leads to lower level of employee engagement.

**Table 3: Results regression analysis**

*(Job hopping attitude & Employee Engagement)*

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Job hopping attitude	-.890	.806	.805
	Beta	F	P value
Job hopping attitude	-.890	668.290	0.000

*Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement*

Table 3 shows that, job hopping attitude is negatively and significantly related to employee engagement (  $r = -.890, p < .05$ ). The coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> is .806 which means that 80.6% variation in employee engagement is due to job hopping attitude. The p value is 0.000 i.e.  $< 0.05$  resulting in the acceptance of hypothesis 1.

**H3:** High level of employee engagement leads to low level of turnover intentions.



**Table 4: Results regression analysis***(Employee Engagement & Turnover Intentions)*

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Employee Engagement	-.923	.852	.851
	Beta	F	P value
Employee Engagement	-.923	871.181	0.000

*Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions*

In table 4, r is -.923 that is representing a strong and negative correlation between employee engagement and turnover intentions. R<sup>2</sup> is .852 (p<.05) which signifies that 85.2% of variation in turnover intentions is caused by employee engagement. This results in acceptance of third hypothesis.

**H4:** The relationship between job hopping attitude and turnover intentions gets mediated by employee engagement.

**Table 5: Results regression analysis***(Employee Engagement & Job hopping attitude as controlled variables)*

	r	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Employee Engagement Job Hopping Attitude	.939	.902	.900
	Beta	F	P value
Employee Engagement Job Hopping Attitude	.526	713.241	0.000

*Dependent Variable: Turnover Intentions*

In table 5, employee engagement Job hopping attitude were treated as controlled variables to check the mediation effect. This was evident from the results of regression that there is a strong mediation effect of employee engagement on the relation between job hopping attitude and turnover intentions (r=.939, p<.05). This approves our fourth hypothesis.

## DISCUSSION

The current study was an attempt by the researcher to see the relationship, if any, between job hopping attitude and turnover intent and to explore the mediating effect of engagement on the same. While this study was simple study, yet there were several interesting results which reinforce the notion that employee engagement is an important construct for employee retention.

Results derived in table 2 shows that, there is positive and significant correlation between job hopping attitude and intentions to leave. A person with job hopping attitude is habitual of

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changing jobs frequently. Inability to change jobs results in feeling of anxiety, lack of competitiveness and social pressure among job hoppers. Such people after a short tenure with any organization become active job seekers and leave their job soon.

A negative relationship between job hopping attitude and employee engagement implies that the people with job hopping attitude are less engaged with their work and organization as a whole. The prime focus of job hoppers is changing jobs frequently and due to which they are not able to generate commitment towards their work and the organization. Effective work-environment and policies can keep employees engaged in their work and feel committed towards the organization. Further, there was found a strong and negative correlation between employee engagement and turnover intentions. The result supported past findings when employees perceive that their organizations support them, they reciprocate by remaining loyal and by contributing positively back to the employers (Eisenberger et. al., 2002). Employees who experience higher levels of engagement are expected to be less inclined to leave the organization. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) report that a lower tendency to leave exist among engaged employees (compared to disengaged employees).

The fourth hypothesis proposing that employee engagement will mediate the relation between job hopping attitude and turnover intentions was also supported. The results supported the post findings that participation in HRD practices and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement were negatively related to turnover intent (Twyford, Devon, Reio, Thomas G., Shuck, Angie, 2014). Also, Maslach & Leiter ( 2008), in their study found that the participants who reported intentions to leave the organization in the next few years indicated that they may still benefit from enhanced promotion opportunities, more interesting and purposeful work, more engineering work, and greater responsibility. Macey & Schneider (2008) in their work found that the employees again rated an engagement factor, challenging and compelling work, as the strongest influence on their intentions to remain with the organization. The fundamental component of employee engagement is desire to be part of competitive world and perform challenging and meaningful work in the organization. Job hoppers have a likelihood of having low employee engagement but it can be increased by increasing their self-determination (through satisfaction of their needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness) (Ryan & Deci, 2001) and establishing psychological safety (May et al., 2001).

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One's intention to leave is the immediate precursor of actual turnover, therefore, organizations need to be able to retain good, motivated, and committed managers. (Simons and Enzs,1992).

### **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although the present study made some significant contributions, some of the limitations must be kept in mind. First, the present study examined the employees' turnover intention, not the actual turnover. Thus, future research should focus on the actual turnover of employees. Another limitation of the present study is that the study was conducted in IT/ITES companies located in Delhi/NCR only. The sample used in this study and the majority of its kind is not representative of all the sectors. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the results of the study, and findings cannot be applied to other sectors. Third, job hopping attitude is a behavioral dimension and information regarding same cannot be simply collected through a questionnaire. It needs deep observation also otherwise information can be biased. Another limitation is the analysis did not get into the gender differences and geographical area. Future studies can address both the gender and specialization issues.

### **Significance of the study and Scope for further research**

Developing and retaining engaged workforce is vital for every organization as it brings success even in adverse and volatile business environment. The findings of this study are of indeed significance for the IT/ITES companies. IT companies are facing major challenge of employee retention.

The results of the present study focus the importance of examining the role of employees' job hopping attitude in predicting their turnover intention. In addition, the study has also examined the mediating role of employee engagement in understanding turnover behavior especially in the context of IT Industry. The findings of this study have contributed to new information to the body of knowledge in HRM.

Since most of the previous studies were done on HRM practices and turnover intentions, the results of the present study added a new dimension to it i.e. job hopping attitude. The management should try to follow good and ethical HR practices in order to keep workforce engaged and to reduce turnover intention. The research work will provide a guideline to the managers in developing employee-friendly policies and to generate person-job fit in the organization to keep workforce motivated and committed towards their work and organization as

a whole. For managers, identifying turnover intention is of more value and is like being proactive in the organization, as the employee has not left the organization yet. The findings of the present study will help managers broaden their horizons for what motivates an employee to be at work and what not. In fact, managers need to be aware that employee perceptions of the organizational and supervisory support impacts their job hopping attitude on turnover intentions, and therefore they need to focus more on the employee engagement programs to increase the commitment level of employees and reduce the turnover intent.

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