

From Capability to Commitment: Exploring the Evolving Dynamics of IT Workforce

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ABSTRACT

Introduction - The purpose of this research is to evaluate the levels of competence and job commitment among IT professionals in Kerala and to find out if there is a positive connection between the two.

Methods - A quantitative and descriptive research design is proposed, with 525 participants selected using simple random sampling and structured questionnaires. Four hundred ten responses were received. The reliability and validity of the constructs were assessed through "confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling utilizing SPSS and SmartPLS 4 for data analysis. These methods were employed to test the hypothesis.

Results - Affective commitment was the most important aspect, and the findings showed a reasonable amount of overall commitment together with a reasonably high degree of competence. A high degree of competence positively affects the dedication of IT workers in Kerala, according to the study.

Conclusion - The study's findings can organisations foster a work culture that promotes collaboration, communication, and interpersonal relationships to enhance employee competence and commitment.

Keywords: Competence, Job Commitment, IT Professionals, Kerala, Hypothesis Testing

INTRODUCTION

Human resources management has evolved to a more comprehensive and strategic recognizing the value of human resources in organisational success and competitive advantage (B. E. Becker & Huselid, 2006). This shift is particularly evident in the knowledge- based information Technology sector, where companies invest heavily in human resources rather than technology and infrastructure (Rao & Varghese, 2009). Software companies in India are confronted with

challenges such as talent scarcity, employee turnover, and the need for skill development. in organisations are investing in initiatives to cultivate a high- performance work culture, create an appealing workplace, and provide training and career prospects for their employees. The aim is to create a dynamic work environment that encourages continuous learning and offers opportunities for employees to apply the latest technological advances (Garavan et al., 2002). With an anticipated revenue of \$254 billion for the fiscal year 2024, showing a growth rate of 3.8%,the IT industry makes a substantial contribution to the country's economic development, marking a rise of more than \$9 billion compared to the previous year (NASSCOM, 2024).

Hiring competent employees and developing their skills to match job requirements are crucial for sustainable growth and effective performance in the India n IT industry (Salman et al., 2020). A new wave of personnel is needed with technological proficiency, adaptability, and comprehensive competencies in all aspects of operations to deliver exceptional goods and services and foster customer trust and satisfaction (Mishra & Singhal, 2022).Organisations aim to enhance the skills of their employees to address the scarcity of skilled human resources and ensure efficient functioning. (Uraon, 2018).Committed employees are inclined to remain organisation, exert maximum effort for its benefit, and believe in its principles and objectives (Dixit & Bhati, 2012; Arifin et al., 2019). Trust and support for organization are crucial for every individual, and low levels of employee commitment can negatively impact both organizational performance (Zen et al., 2024).Therefore, India n IT companies have been addressing attrition and employee commitment as a business issue rather than a mere human resource management concern (Sue Cantrell, 2024).

Although the effect of employee job commitment has been the subject of several studies, the connection between the two in India's information technology sector has been mostly overlooked. Using a theoretical framework, this research investigates how competence of employees impact job commitment in India n IT businesses. After generating hypotheses within the theoretical framework, they are tested using SmartPLS 4 (Figure 1).The results are compared to earlier studies and the implications and conclusions are presented.

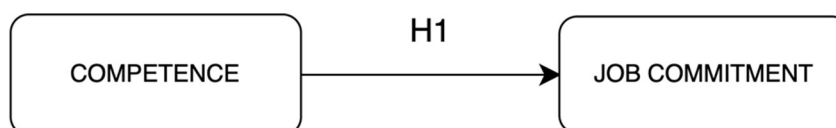


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Source: Author's Own Compilation

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Competence

Researchers and academicians recognize the importance of employee competencies, which are widely considered to be the primary factor influencing employee performance (Sanghi,

2007). White (1959) initially identified competencies as an individual's capacity to interact effectively with its environment. According to McClelland (1973) and Klemm (1980), these competencies are crucial for achieving success and excelling in specific job roles or situations. Boyatzis (1982) posited that employee competencies involve personality traits, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and self-concept, which enhance job performance and expertise. The Iceberg model of competence, developed by Spencer L. & Spencer S. (1993), gained popularity globally. Strategically placing employees based on competence enhances job satisfaction, performance, and commitment towards organisation (Rantesalu et al., 2016). Certain studies investigated the associations between employee competencies, HRD interventions, organisational performance in different industries (Osei & Ackah, 2015; Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Potnuru & Sahoo, 2016). Competent employees exhibit creativity and innovation in managing work challenges to attain exceptional performance levels (Tan, 2018).

Competencies are categorised as personal and organisational, with personal competencies stemming from employee organisational competencies rooted in a company's systems and structures (D. Turner and M. Crawford, 1994). Siriwaiprapan (2004) proposed a model for employee competence development that encompasses five domains: self, social, team, organisational competence. Emotional and social competencies of employees impact performance and productivity, as stated by Ramo et al. (2009). According to Don Hellriegel (2011), the seven key competencies that have a significant impact on individual, organisational effectiveness are employee's ethical competency, self-competency, diversity competencies, cross-cultural competency, communication competency, team competency, and change competency. Puteh (2016) argued that top managers in Malaysian service-based industries must possess functional, communicative, cognitive, and leadership competencies to excel in their roles, regardless of their position. Among the four competencies, functional and communicative competencies were found to be more crucial than the other two competencies. Additionally, Elbaz et al. (2018) investigated the connection between nepotism, employee competencies (self-competence, team competence, cross-cultural competence and organisational performance in the Egyptian tourism sector. The four competencies identified as critical are self, team, social, and communication competencies (Hellriegel, 2011; Ramo et al., 2009).

Job Commitment

Recently, researchers in business management and organisational behaviour have focused their attention on job commitment. The concept of job commitment was initially introduced by H.S. Becker (1960), where commitment arises from the accumulation of investments that an individual make in an organisation, such as time, effort, and resources, which would be lost or deemed worthless if they were to leave. The three-dimensional job commitment was introduced by Allen & Meyer (1990), who defined affective commitment as an emotional attachment to the job, involving feelings of identification and engagement (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Continuance commitment refers to employees' dedication towards organisation due to the costs associated with leaving, such as benefits, pension plans, and status (Allen & Meyer, 1990), while normative commitment is the sense of obligation employees have to stay with organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Job commitment research has been more focused on Western countries, with studies in India being more recent (Bhatnagar, 2007). Early Indian studies examined the impact of human resource practices and organisational climate, and psychological empowerment on commitment (Jha, 2011; Neelam et al., 2015; Pathak & Srivastava, 2017; Purang, 2008). Singh (2007) aimed to predict commitment in India's automotive industry, while Dixit & Bhati (2012) explored its relationship with sustained productivity in the Indian Automobile industry. Nazir and Islam (2017) studied the Indian higher education sector's relationship organisational support, employee engagement, performance, and affective commitment. Uraon and Gupta (2020) discovered that emotional commitment is the intermediary between the psychological environment and task and contextual performance. An abundance of research has looked at the Indian IT sector, with a particular emphasis on how job commitment is. The first study conducted in India by Paul & Anantharaman (2004) found that favourable work environments, career development opportunities, performance-oriented evaluations, and extensive training have a positive correlation with commitment among software professionals. Indian IT executives and managers showed a more significant job commitment from in-group collectivism and performance orientation. (Messner, 2013). A number of studies have explored the relationship organisational commitment and various factors, including employee performance, job satisfaction, psychological contract, and intention to stay (Gujral & Singh, 2022; Mohapatra et al., 2019; Pathak & Srivastava, 2017; Pradhan & Pradhan, 2015; Uraon, 2018). Bhalerao & Kumar (2016) found a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and job commitment among IT professionals. Some studies have also explored the connection between demographic variables, such as gender and commitment (Jena & Jena, 2017; Messner, 2017). Nevertheless, in the software business, the exact nature of the connection between commitment and employee competence is not yet fully understood.

Competence and Job Commitment

Competence is the key to effective job performance and increased efficiency. Organisations must not only focus on developing competent employees, but also those who are committed. A study by Rantesalu et al. (2016) found that employees' knowledge, skills, experience, and attitude significantly affect commitment, with personal traits or self-competence having a significant effect on affective commitment (Izzati et al., 2015). However, the findings of Srikaningsih & Setyadi (2015) differ, as they concluded that lecturers' competence, motivation and organisation culture only partially commitment. Research indicates that career identity, career involvement, and career investment enhance job competence and strengthen professional commitment among employees (Noor et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). Studies show a positive relationship between employee competence and commitment, and its dimensions of affective, normative, and continuance commitment, which influences employee productivity (Lotunani et al., 2014; Ayu et al., 2018; Anwar & Aima, 2019; Hasanah & Mujanah, 2020; Rachman, 2021; Maming, 2022; Kurniawan, 2022; Sutarman, 2022). However, HR competences did not improve emotional, normative, or continuous employee commitment. This may be due to employees perceiving these competencies as less important for their commitment (Nila Sari et al., 2023).

Khoreva et al. (2017) and Haryanti et al. (2020) emphasised the importance of talent and competency management in enhancing individual performance and job commitment. Stamouli & Gerbeth (2021) conducted a cross-sectional survey of healthcare professionals in Germany,

revealing that emotional competence played a moderating role in the relationship between job satisfaction and commitment to the job. Katawneh & Osman (2014) found that certain core competencies, such as administrative roles and functions and self-development, significantly impact job commitment of staff at Mutah University in Jordan. However, Nabila & Ambad (2012) claimed that expertise alone does not influence commitment. Instead, giving workers the flexibility and chance to choose how they work and participate in decision-making empowers and commits them to their company.

Competence and job commitment have been the primary foci of human resource management studies in India. A study by Sonia et al. (2016) found that behavioral, research, and managerial competencies have a strong influence on organisational commitment, while academic competencies do not affect commitment levels for school teachers. Naim and Lenka, (2018) emphasized the importance of competency development in evoking affective commitment in Generation Y employees, leading to an intention to stay. However, there is a lack of research on the connection between various types of competencies, such as self, social, communication, and team competence and commitment among IT professionals, except for studies that explore competence dimensions like knowledge, skill, and work attitudes (Vijh et al., 2022). This research intends to fill the gap by investigating how IT professionals' competence and commitment are related. Social Exchange theory suggests that developing positive social connections will enhance job commitment and employee performance due to their abilities and job characteristics (Cook, 2015).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To determine the level of competence and job commitment among IT Professionals in Kerala.
To assess the effect of competence on job commitment among IT professionals.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H1: Competence has significant and positive effect on job commitment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design, Sampling and Data Collection

The research utilised a descriptive and quantitative approach to examine the relationships between constructs among IT professionals in Kerala's technology hubs: Technopark, Infopark, and Cyberpark. A total of 525 IT professionals, including software programmers, developers, engineers, team leaders, and project managers with qualifications in computer science, engineering, or related fields, were given a structured questionnaire. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula (E. Slovin, 1960), and simple random sampling was implemented. Structural equation modeling (J. Hair et al., 2022) was performed on 410 usable responses, incorporating secondary data from reports, magazines, journals and organisational records. As shown in Table 1, the sample comprised 229 male (55.9%) and 181 female (44.1%)

participants..

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Age	20 to 25 years	168	41
	26 to 30 years	159	38.8
	31 to 35 years	42	10.2
	36 to 40 years	29	7.1
	Above 40 years	12	2.9
Gender	Male	229	55.9
	Female	181	44.1
Educational Qualification	Graduate	178	43.4
	Post Graduate	169	41.2
	Professional	59	14.4
	Others	4	1

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Measures

The study employed validated scales from scholarly sources to assess constructs through a three-part questionnaire. The initial section gathered demographic data. The second part evaluated employee competence across four dimensions: self-competence, measured using Tafarodi & Swann's (1995) scale; team competence, assessed with Eby & Dobbins' (1997) scale; communication competence, gauged by Wiemann's (1977) scale; and social competence, adapted from Anderson-Butcher et al. (2008) and Anderson-Butcher et al. (2016). The final section measured three aspects of commitment. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The affective, normative, and continuance commitment dimensions were evaluated using scales

developed by Allen & Meyer (1990) and Meyer & Allen (1991).

RESULTS

Data Analysis

Demographic variables and levels of employee competence and job commitment was analysed using "IBM SPSS". Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a popular method for visually representing and confirming statistical relationships, applicable to both experimental and non-experimental datasets (Dash & Paul, 2021; Schuberth et al., 2023). To test hypotheses, the research employed "Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)" with SmartPLS 4 (J. Hair et al., 2022). The process involved two stages: a measurement model to assess Composite Reliability (CR) and Convergent Validity (CV), followed by a structural model to evaluate path coefficients, coefficients of determination, and effect sizes (Joseph Franklin Hair, 2017; C. M. Ringle et al., 2020).

Level of Employee Competence

Overall employee competence level was determined by evaluating the four competence constructs: self, team, communication, and social. The average score for social competence was 4.24, for team competence it was 4.03, and for communication competence it was 3.93. At 3.90, self-competence was the worst of the bunch. Employee competence among IT professionals was reasonably strong, as shown by an aggregate mean score for emotional intelligence that was somewhat over 4.

Table 2. Level of Employee Competence :Overall Mean Scores

Components	N	Mean
Self-Competence	410	3.90
Team Competence	410	4.03
Communication Competence	410	3.93
Social Competence	410	4.24
Employee Competence	410	4.03

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Level of Job Commitment

Meyer and Allen (1991) presented a three-dimensional model that this research uses to analyze commitment on three levels: emotional, continuance, and normative. Employees in the information

technology sector had a moderate job commitment (3.38), calculated as the mean of the three commitment components, 3.43 for emotional, 3.35 for normative, and 3.35 for continuance commitment respectively.

Table 3: Job Commitment: Overall Mean Scores

Components	N	Mean
Affective Commitment	410	3.43
Continuance Commitment	410	3.35
Normative Commitment	410	3.35
Job Commitment	410	3.38

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Measurement Model

Evaluating the measurement model is essential to determine the suitability of latent variables by examining construct reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2011). The reliability of each construct and component is demonstrated by "Cronbach's α and Composite Reliability (CR)" values surpassing the 0.70 threshold, with ranges of 0.758 to 0.919 and 0.842 to 0.939 respectively, indicating strong reliability (F. Hair Jr. et al., 2014; J. F. Hair et al., 2011; Joseph Franklin Hair, 2017). Moreover, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each component fall between 0.571 and 0.757, exceeding the recommended 0.50 threshold (J. Hair et al., 2021). Table 4 illustrates that the outer loadings of variables in each component also surpass 0.70. Table 5 further confirms the validity and reliability of organisational commitment and employee competence as higher-order constructs. These findings collectively establish a robust foundation for the entire study through the measurement model.

Table 4 :Reliability and Convergent Validity of Constructs

Constructs	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	VIF
Self-Competence	0.845	0.795	0.867	0.62	2.4

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Team Competence	0.903	0.914	0.931	0.66	3215
Social Competence	0.896	0.919	0.939	0.757	2819
Communication Competence	0.858	0.825	0.874	0.583	2542
Affective Commitment	0.899	0.882	0.913	0.679	2115
Normative Commitment	0.876	0.758	0.842	0.571	2064
Continuance Commitment	0.863	0.842	0.891	0.672	2196

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Table 5: Reliability of Higher Order Constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Job Commitment	0.855	0.911
Competence	0.899	0.929

Source: Author's Own Compilation

The statistical technique of discriminant validity assesses the uniqueness of constructs using an empirical benchmark (Hair, 2017). Researchers employ HTMT ratio, cross-loadings, and Fornell-Larcker criteria to determine discriminant validity (Hair Jr, 2020). A diagonal matrix was used to analyse variable relationships through the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion. The square roots of AVEs in each construct surpassing those in corresponding rows indicated discriminant validity among variables (Hair et al., 2022) (Table 6). With an HTMT value below 0.90, the distinctiveness of organisational commitment and employee competence as separate constructs was confirmed (Henseler et al., 2015) (Table 7). Examination of construct cross-loadings (Table 8) revealed strong loading of each item to its corresponding dimension, offering additional support for discriminant validity (Barclay et al., 1995; Chin, 1998).

Table 6: Discriminant Validity -Fornell-Larcker

	Organisational Commitment	Employee Competence
Job Commitment	0.879	
Competence	0.388	0.876

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Table 7: Discriminant Validity – Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

Competence → Job Commitment 0.43

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Table 8: Discriminant Validity- Cross Loadings

	Job Commitment	Competence
Self-Competence	0.323	0.845
Team Competence	0.337	0.903
Communication Competence	0.299	0.858
Social Competence	0.388	0.896
Affective Commitment	0.899	0.39
Continuance Commitment	0.863	0.274
Normative Commitment	0.876	0.341

Source: Author's Own Compilation

Structural Model

To assess the structural model, the research employed various fit indices, including R², F², Q², and VIF. As suggested by Hu and Bentler (1998), an SRMR value below 0.10 indicates a good fit, and in this instance, it was 0.064. Additional metrics such as d_{ULS}, d_G, χ^2 , squared Euclidean distance, and a normalized fit index (NFI) yielded values of 0.114, 0.081, 516.192, and 0.874 respectively, further supporting the validity of both the measurement and structural models.

Table 9: Model Fit Indicators

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.064	0.064
d _{ULS}	0.114	0.114
d _G	0.081	0.081
Chi-square	516.192	516.192
NFI	0.874	0.874

Source: Author's Own Compilation

The R^2 value of 0.15 suggests a moderate statistical connection between employee competence and organizational commitment (Table 10). Cohen (1988) states that R^2 values exceeding 0.13 indicate a moderate relationship between constructs. The calculated relative effect sizes (f^2) demonstrate that employee competence moderately influences organizational commitment (Cohen, 1988). A Q^2 value of 0.145, being greater than zero, indicates the presence of predictive relevance for organizational commitment. To eliminate potential multicollinearity, the study's theoretical model variables underwent a variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis. The VIF values in this research, ranging from 2.064 to 3.215 (Table 4) and exceeding 1, indicate no bias issues in this scientific endeavor (Schuberth et al., 2023).

The research hypotheses were evaluated using the Bootstrap resampling method. This technique produced satisfactory outcomes with 5000 resamples, allowing for the estimation of direct paths and standard errors (Ringle, 2005). The assessment revealed a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.388$, $t = 7.512$, $p < 0.001$) between organizational commitment and employee competence. These findings are supported by Figure 2 and Table 10.

Table 10: Path Coefficients for Direct Effects

Hypothesis		Beta Coeffi ent	Standard deviation	T statistics	P value s
COMPETENCE COMMITMENT ORGANIZATIONAL	->	0.388	0.052	7.512	0.00
COMMITMENT ORGANIZATIONAL		$R^2 = 0.15$			
COMMIMENT		$Q^2 = 0.145$			
COMPETENCE -> COMMITMENT		$F^2 = 0.177$			

Source: Author’s Own Compilation.

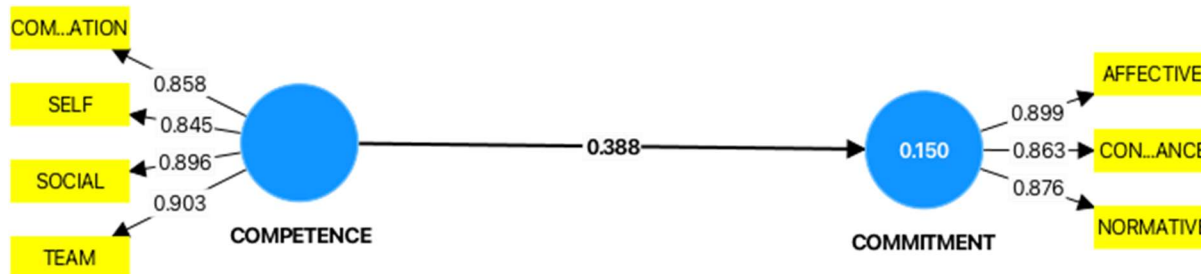


Figure 2 : Results of the theoretical model

Source: Author's Own Compilation

DISCUSSION

The results provide light on the levels of competence, organisational commitment, and the correlation between the two among IT workers in Kerala. The results showed that staff competence was good overall, with social competence coming in first and then team and communication competence. In contrast, self-competence received the lowest score. These results indicate that IT professionals in Kerala possess strong interpersonal and teamwork skills, which are crucial for collaborative work environments. According to the research, employees' levels of commitment to their organisations were moderate, with emotional commitment being the strongest and normative and continuance commitment following closely behind. This suggests that IT employees have an acceptable level of emotional attachment and loyalty to their companies, but there is still room for improvement, particularly in relation to perceived duties and the cost aspect. The positive effect of employee competence on organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.388$, $t = 7.512$, $p < 0.001$) was found to be substantial, which is consistent with previous research (Anwar & Aima, 2019; Halim et al., 2019; Rachman, 2021; Rantesalu et al., 2016; Stamouli & Gerbeth, 2021). This positive association indicates that as employees become more competent, their commitment to the organisation increases, possibly due to higher job satisfaction and a sense of value within the company.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between IT workers' competency and their level of organisational commitment in Kerala. The research reveals that most IT employees in Kerala believe they are competent, particularly when working in collaborative settings. However, their self-competence is somewhat lacking, indicating the need for targeted development. The study highlights the importance of fostering workers' emotional connection and perceived worth to the organisation, since affective commitment is the main factor that drives moderate organisational commitment. Furthermore, investing in the development of employees' competences may substantially boost commitment, since there is a strong association between organisational commitment and competence. This relationship underscores the significance of competence development in creating a dedicated and enthusiastic team.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

By giving empirical support of the link between employee competency and organisational commitment, the research produced substantial theoretical and practical advances. This was especially true in the Indian IT industry. Since IT experts in Kerala are low in self-competence, the findings suggest that businesses should put resources into training and development programmes that boost competence across the board. To achieve this, workshops, opportunities for continuous learning, and personal development goals can be implemented. Additionally, establishing a work culture that values collaboration, clear communication, and interpersonal relationships can improve employee competence and organisational commitment. Employers may cultivate a sense of emotional investment in their employees via relational and emotional methods. These strategies include team-building activities, employee recognition programmes, and chances for professional growth. Lastly, periodic competency assessments can help organisations identify weaknesses and potential growth areas, enabling them to tailor training programs to the unique needs of employees and promote ongoing skill development.

The study acknowledges its limitations and provides directions for future research. Further studies may explore additional dimensions of employee competence, consider other variables such as emotional, leadership, cultural, and work competence, and examine the relationship in different contexts and countries. Employee competence and organisational commitment are two sides of the same coin. Future studies may look at how variables like work-life balance, leadership styles, company culture, and work satisfaction affect this connection.

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