

IMPACT OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ON RETENTION IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY-IT SECTOR IN THE NEW NORMAL

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Abstract

Learning and Development is one of the most significant concerns for the professionals engaged in human resource management. It is always worth having investments in employees to help them stand at the highest level of their performance. If employees are empowered to work better, automatically the organization will reap its objectives. Workplace learning and development benefits employees with good satisfaction in their job ultimately resulting in an increased rate of retention. The opportunity for professional growth through L&D is an important factor for upskilling the employees that makes sense that they are supported which makes them hang around. COVID-19 resulted in higher job stress that was hedged by problems closely allied with life and death. Thus, the post-pandemic created a crisis in the enticing, appointing, and retaining of employees. Innovative measures for skills acquisition, emotional stability, and new methods of learning and working smoothed the way for better performance and productivity resulting in retention. The present study was aimed at investigating the role of L&D resulting in the retention of employees. A sample of 502 data was collected from employees working in IT companies through a systematic questionnaire. The collected data were analyzed meticulously using SPSS version 25, and AMOS 23. The statistical tools used comprised t-test, ONE-WAY ANOVA, and SEM. The results proved the significance of L&D in augmenting the rate of retention in IT companies in the new normal.

Key Words: Learning and Development, Retention, Pandemic Crisis, Skills acquisition.

Introduction

Learning and Development (L&D) in the new normal has altered the outlook of all aspects of work relevant today with exciting challenges. Newer and creative modes of workplace learning have to be maintained for navigation throughout the present change. It is an exciting opportunity for organizations to explore new devices and approaches to make L&D relevant and engaging. The pandemic has vastly acclimatized virtual collaboration in the IT sector. This helped the continuation of business processes in organizations by accelerating their knowledge, skills, and performance seamlessly. Organizations focused on channelizing L&D have motivated, educated, and enhanced their employee performance and productivity which inevitably lead to retention. The impact of the efforts made by most organizations has witnessed an upsurge in the employee's active participation in the new approaches.

The L&D strategies keep the workforce motivated and engaged throughout. Now, is the absolute time for constant learning, mending, and embracing the change. Such initiatives prove to be pragmatic in advancing a career graph even in the unrivaled times.

Significance

In the new normal of a fast-paced and ever-evolving world, sharpening the skills and abilities of employees through L&D plays a great role. And making them capable of handling their emotions in the present post-pandemic situation pinpoints the need for innovative and hybrid L&D programs. Facilitating L&D programs for employees within the organization can ensure preparedness for the post-pandemic future. Keeping in mind the need for continuous learning, organizations must embrace digitalization and build a culture of digital learning for survival in the new normal. L&D has already moved from classroom learning to the new norm of virtual platforms. The digital transformation efforts of easy pace, the flexibility of choice, relaxed space for learning, and opportunity for repetitive learning have opened the door for employees to retain. It generates acquaintanceship and is highly helpful in delivering insightful experiences in learning.

Review of Literature

The backbone of any organization is the employees and their existence can be replaced by no other factor. Retention of employees is an imperative topic that every organization takes into consideration. To maintain healthy output by the employee, organizations meet the target of innovative L&D strategies ((Bisht, C & Thapliyal, 2016). In the present scenario of digitalization and virtual learning, updating employees' skills and knowledge has become more critical than ever before for both the employees as well as the organizations (Khalil & Hasim,2019). Organizations that provide continuous learning and skills development initiatives can maintain their competitive advantage and are more probable in satisfying and retaining their treasured workforce (Presbitero et.al 2016). L&D motivates employees to become efficient, reactive, engaged, and productive. Proper L&D initiatives can upgrade the potential of the employees to enhance their skills and knowledge and that ultimately results in improved performance and productivity (Dhanya&Peashanth,2019).It is the series of learning activities that leads to the acquisition of skills and potentials improving the employee performance. L&D helps an organization to improve the quality of its goods and services even in a time of swift competition by improving the employee's technical skills (Hawaja&Naeem,2013). For the retention of Generation Z with organizational performances and employee development, organizations must practice reverse mentoring, democratize learning, and entrepreneurship as the main modification for the development of the employees (Hasaranga Dilshan, 2021). Learning is a key point of retention, as the output of learning. The retention effect of learning diminishes if the employees do not value learning as an important factor for their skill preparedness and success in their career (Daniel D., & Zwick, T, 2020). Research suggests that the strategies for retention that successfully satisfies the needs of the organization and the employees enhance the ability of both effectively in the unending organizational change (Sinha. C, 2012). Organizations that provided financial assistance during the time of the dreaded pandemic crisis, were able to retain their employees (Elsafty et.al, 2020). L&D is considered one of the main human resource development programs for the retention of employees. Lack of proper L&D has resulted in a high rate of employee turnover (A-sharafi. H, 2018). Organizations providing learning and job security are significant determinants of retaining employees within the organization. Therefore, learning is positively correlated to retention (Eldama et.al, 2015). L&D as well as the supervisor's support has a significant role in connection with the retention of employees. Also, it is the work environment that

moderates the relationship between L&D, supervisors’ support, and retention (Bibi, P Ahmed et.al, 2018)

Research Objectives

- To study the role of learning and development in refining the skills and knowledge of employees in the IT sector.
- To examine whether L&D has any role in helping the workforce to become stable in handling their emotions and channeling them on the right path.
- To investigate the significance of L&D in employee retention in the new normal.
- To explore the importance of L&D in enhancing employee performance and productivity.

Hypothesis

- (i) There is no significant difference between gender concerning L&D and the other variables of L&D.
- (ii) There are no significant differences among Age groups concerning L&D and other factors on employees in IT companies.
- (iii) There is a significant relationship between L&D and the retention of employees.

Research Methodology

The research design of this study is descriptive in nature. The universe of this study discusses the employees of IT companies working in Thiruvananthapuram city. The sample data was collected through a well-constructed questionnaire. The impact of L&D on employees’ retention was measured using a 14-item tool which was characterized into two segments A and B. The first segment A comprised 5 items regarding the demography of the respondents like sex, age, educational qualification, income, and years of experience. The second segment B comprised 8 items associated with the concepts of the subject. A Five points Likert scale (Strongly Agree-5, Agree-4, Neutral-3, Disagree-2, Strongly Disagree- 1) was used for the response. Among the distributed questionnaires only 502 questionnaires were authentic for the study. The present work is probable to be added to the prevailing research on the impact of L&D in enhancing employee retention.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table1: Classification based on demography

Personal Factors		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 – 25 years	111	22.1
	26 - 30 years	169	33.7
	31 – 35 years	81	16.1
	Above 35 years	141	28.1
Gender	Male	280	55.8
	Female	222	44.2

Educational Qualification	Bachelor Degree	226	45.0
	Master's Degree	190	37.8
	Professional Degree	68	13.5
	Others	18	3.6
Years of Experience	1 – 5 years	236	47.0
	6 – 10 years	113	22.5
	11 – 20 years	118	23.5
	Above 20 years	35	7.0
Income	Less than 30,000	118	23.5
	31,000 – 60,000	154	30.7
	61,000 – 90,000	80	15.9
	More than 90,000	150	29.9

The above table demonstrates that 111 (22.1 %) of the employees come under the age group of 18-25 years, 169 (33.7%) belong to 26- 30 years, 81 (16.1%) belong to 31-35 years, and 141 (28.1%) belong to above 35 years. 280(55.8%) of the sample respondents are male and 222 (44.2%) are female. 226 (45.0%) of the sample respondents have got a Bachelor's Degree as their educational qualification, 190 (37.8%) have a Master's Degree, 68 (13.5%) have Professional Degree, and 18 (3.6%) have other qualifications. 236 (47.0%) of respondents have up to 5 years of experience, 113 (23.5%) have up to 6 - 10 years, 118 (23.5%) have 11-20 years, and 35 (7.0%) have above 20 years of experience. 118 (23.5%) of the respondents have less than 30,000 as their monthly income, 154 (30.7%) have 31,000- 60,000, 80 (15.9%) have 61,000-90,000, and 150 (29.9%) have more than 90,000 as their monthly salary.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between gender concerning the other variables of L&D.

Table 2: t-test for significant difference between Male and Female concerning L&D and other factors.

Factors	Gender				t value	P value
	Male		Female			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		

Learning and Development	31.77	4.25	31.54	4.05	0.617	0.538
Skills Acquisition	33.05	4.42	32.55	4.54	1.235	0.217
Emotional Stability	32.00	4.01	31.24	4.27	2.048	0.041
Performance and Productivity	32.79	3.68	32.50	4.03	0.839	0.402
Retention	31.30	4.64	31.18	4.70	0.272	0.786

In table 2, the mean and standard deviation value of male regarding L&D ($M = 31.77$, $SD = 4.25$) and that of female ($M = 31.54$, $SD = 4.05$), the t value 0.617 and the p -value 0.538 are shown. The mean and standard deviation value of male regarding Skills Acquisition ($M = 33.05$, $SD = 4.42$) and that of female ($M = 32.55$, $SD = 4.54$), the t value 1.235 and the p -value 0.217 are shown. The mean and standard deviation value of male regarding Emotional Stability ($M = 32.00$, $SD = 4.01$) and that of female ($M = 31.24$, $SD = 4.27$), the t value 2.048 and the p -value 0.041 are shown. The mean and standard deviation values of male regarding Performance and Productivity ($M = 32.79$, $SD = 3.68$) and that of female ($M = 32.50$, $SD = 4.03$), the t value 0.839 and the p -value 0.402 are shown. The mean and standard deviation values of male regarding Retention ($M = 31.30$, $SD = 4.64$) and that of female ($M = 31.18$, $SD = 4.70$), the t value 0.272 and the p -value 0.786 are shown.

Since the p -value of emotional stability is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% level of emotional stability. Hence there is a significant difference between male and female employees regarding emotional stability. Based on the mean score, male has better stability regarding emotions than females. But for all the other factors the null hypothesis is accepted, i.e.,

There is no significant difference between males and females concerning L&D, skills acquisition, performance, productivity, and retention.

Null Hypothesis: There are no significant differences among Age groups concerning L&D and other factors on employees in IT companies.

Table 3: ANOVA for significant differences among age groups concerning L&D and other factors on employees in IT companies.

Factors	Age Group in Years								F value	P value
	18 - 25		26 - 30		31 - 35		Above 35			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Learning and Development	31.46	3.77	31.65	4.21	31.17	3.99	32.14	4.49	1.074	0.360

Skills Acquisition	32.07 a	4.39	32.90 ab	4.53	32.62 ab	4.43	33.47 b	4.45	2.116	0.097
Emotional Stability	31.09 a	4.23	31.76 ab	4.11	31.19 ab	4.41	32.26 b	3.90	2.058	0.105
Performance and Productivity	32.35 a	3.98	32.86 a	3.84	32.08 a	3.68	33.00 a	3.80	1.369	0.251
Retention	30.87 a	4.36	31.53 a	4.93	30.85 a	4.88	31.43 a	4.43	0.730	0.535

Different alphabets among Age groups in years denote the valuation of the Post Hoc Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT)

Table 3 refers to the results of ANOVA regarding the mean, standard deviation, f value, and p-value of factors of L&D and different age groups of the respondents. L&D among the age group of 18-25 years (M- 31.46, SD- 3.77), 26-30 years (M- 31.65, SD- 4.21), 31-35 years (M- 31.17, SD- 3.99), above 35 years (M- 32.14, SD- 4.49), f value – 1.074, and the p-value 0.360. Skills Acquisition among the age group of 18-25 years (M- 32.07, SD- 4.39), 26-30 years (M- 32.90, SD- 4.53), 31-35 years (M- 32.62, SD- 4.43), above 35 years (M- 33.47, SD- 4.45), f value – 2.116, and the p-value 0.097. Emotional Stability among the age group of 18-25 years (M- 31.09, SD- 4.23), 26-30 years (M- 31.76, SD- 4.11), 31-35 years (M- 31.19, SD- 4.41), above 35 years (M- 32.26, SD- 3.90), f value – 2.058, and the p-value 0.105. Performance and Productivity among the age group of 18-25 years (M- 32.35, SD- 3.98), 26-30 years (M- 32.86, SD- 3.84), 31-35 years (M- 32.08, SD- 3.68), above 35 years (M- 33.00, SD- 3.80), f value – 1.369, and the p-value 0.251. Retention among the age group of 18-25 years (M- 30.87, SD- 4.36), 26-30 years (M- 31.53, SD- 4.93), 31-35 years (M- 30.85, SD- 4.88), above 35 years (M- 31.43, SD- 4.43), f value – 0.730, and the p-value 0.535.

Since the p-value of all the factors is more than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between males and females wiconcerning&D, skills acquisition, performance, productivity, and retention.

Alternate Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between L&D and the retention of employees.

Figure 1: Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

SEM is used to measure the association between variables and to authenticate the compatibility of the model that is used (Peter, 2011). For assessment, importance is given to CFI, GFI, PGFI, TLI, IFI, RMSEA, and AGFI which are exposed in the Goodness Fit model in Table: 4. Gerbing and Anderson (1992) convey the criteria for a fit model, and it is as follows: CFI 0.09 or higher RMSEA should be 0.08 or lower, and NFI 0.09 or higher. The appropriateness of the data and the model are verified with the test of goodness-to-fit (GFI) where, equal to 0.9 or greater than displays a good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

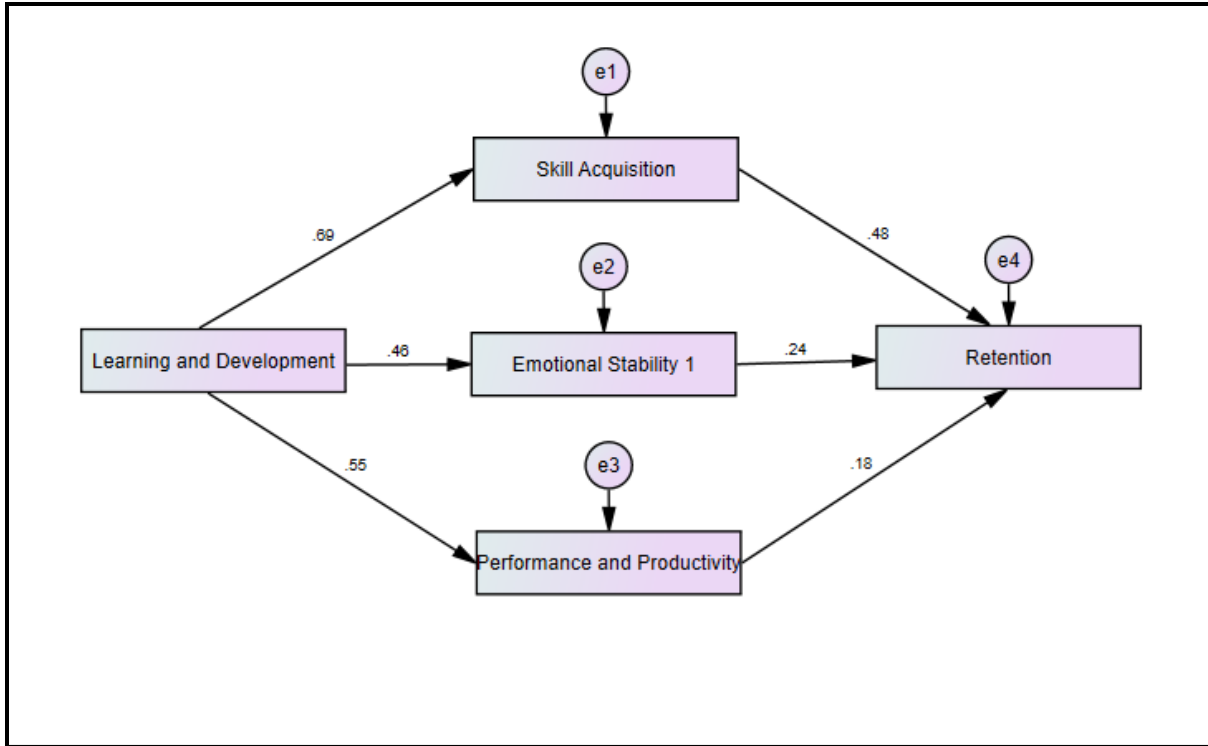


Figure 1 depicts the structural equation model showing the result of L&D leading to Retention through skills acquisition, emotional stability, and performance and productivity. Through L&D skills are acquired at 0.69, emotional stability is acquired through L&D at 0.48, and performance and productivity are enhanced at 0.55 with the help of L&D. Regarding retention, skills acquisition can enhance retention at 0.48, emotional stability at 0.24, and performance and productivity at 0.18. Thus, the alternate hypothesis is accepted that there is a significant relationship between L&D and the retention of employees.

Table 4: Results of Goodness of Fit Test for Structural Equation Modelling (Sem)

Model	Normed chi-Square (χ^2/df)	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Study model	4.82	.838	.794	.819	.817	.087
Recommended model	Less than 5	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.1

Table 4 demonstrates the outcome of the SEM through the Goodness of Fit Test. GFI is 0.838 which is almost equal to the suggested value. The further values are close to the satisfaction level. AGFI is 0.794, CFI is 0.819, NFI is 0.817 and RMSEA is 0.087. Therefore, it is specified that L&D enhances the retention of IT employees through skills acquisition, emotional stability, and performance and productivity up to a certain level.

Table 5: Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Skills Acquisition	<---	Learning and Development	.746	.035	21.536	***
Performance and Productivity	<---	Learning and Development	.511	.034	14.895	***
Emotional Stability	<---	Learning and Development	.517	.044	11.634	***
Retention	<---	Skills Acquisition	.472	.036	13.161	***
Retention	<---	Performance and Productivity	.203	.041	4.965	***
Retention	<---	Emotional Stability	.231	.033	7.037	***

Table 5: depicts the unstandardized regression weights and associated test statistics. The amount of difference in the interceding or dependent variable for each element change forecasting is symbolized by unstandardized regression values. In the table, the standard error as well as the estimate attributed by the standard error. P column is associated with the hypothesis and its acceptance

Table 6: Standardized Regression Weights

			Estimate
Skills Acquisition	<---	Learning and Development	.693
Performance and Productivity	<---	Learning and Development	.554
Emotional Stability	<---	Learning and Development	.461
Retention	<---	Skills Acquisition	.476
Retention	<---	Performance and Productivity	.176
Retention	<---	Emotional Stability	.243

Table 8 shows according to the SEM investigation that, it is skills acquisition that gets more enhanced through L&D and which is the first cause for retention of employees in IT companies.

Conclusion

Learning and Development have always been an important concern for the management of human resources among IT professionals. The sudden storm of the pandemic hit organizations with unexpected transformations for survival in the IT sector. It led to the adaptation of digitization, automation, and innovation to keep up their relationships with employees as well as clients. The dust is quite settled in the present with remote working, infrastructure, and technology. Reinventing L&D in the new normal is

an essential factor for retaining the top talents and creating future-ready leaders. To keep the employees at the top of the game, it is good to invest in them. Providing workplace learning and career development brings an apt sense of business to the employees and prepares them personally and professionally to fit into the new normal. L&D strategies implemented in organizations play a great role in employee engagement, increased productivity, and an upsurge in retention rates. Investing in L&D programs effectively boost the employees by making them more skilled with knowledge and abilities and enhancing their performance and minimizing churn. Opportunities for further development in the profession through learning expand their organizational skill-set. And this skill set is good and needed for employee retention. Investing in digital learning in the new normal with innovative tools for learning and upskilling, cross-functional skilling, reskilling, and continuous learning will retain the top talents of the organizations.

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