

A Study on the Impact of Core Self-Evaluation on Work Engagement in Indian Railways

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between employees' Core Self-Evaluation (CSE) and Work Engagement (WE) levels in Indian Railways in Maharashtra and Punjab. Indian Railways, one of the largest employers in the world, faces challenges related to work engagement. Understanding the factors influencing work engagement, such as CSE, is essential for organizational success and employee well-being. "Core Self-Evaluation" is a psychological concept that refers to an individual's fundamental perception of themselves, including their self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Work Engagement is the psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's work tasks. It involves feeling energized, committed, and deeply immersed in work activities, leading to enhanced performance, satisfaction, and overall well-being in the workplace. A quantitative research approach was adopted, utilizing survey questionnaires to collect data from a sample of Indian Railways employees across various job roles. Core Self-Evaluation Scale - CSES and Utrecht Work Engagement Scale - UWES were used to capture the responses. The study finds a strong relationship between CSE and WE, using regression analysis. This study highlights the importance of CSE as a significant predictor of WE among Indian Railways employees. By recognizing and nurturing employees' self-perceptions and beliefs, organizations can foster a positive work environment conducive to higher levels of work engagement, productivity, and satisfaction.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Core Self Evaluation, Employee Well-Being, Positive Work Environment

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Industry Analysis

Indian Railways, a statutory body under the Ministry of Railways, operates India's national railway system and is the world's fourth-largest by size. Established on 16 April 1853, it manages 104,647 km of track, with 60,451 km electrified. As of 2023,

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Indian Railways employs over 1.2 million people, making it the world's ninth-largest employer and India's second-largest. The organization is divided into 18 zones (17 operational), further subdivided into 71 divisions, each managed by Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs). Indian Railways also oversees several manufacturing units, training establishments, and public sector undertakings.

1.2 Situational analysis

Work engagement in the Indian Railways is shaped by a mix of deep-rooted commitment and significant challenges. While the Railways offer stable employment and a strong ethos of national service, issues like overburdened infrastructure and bureaucratic hurdles can undermine motivation. Modernization efforts, including digital initiatives and employee welfare programs, seek to enhance efficiency and morale. However, sustaining engagement requires continuous efforts to address systemic inefficiencies, improve working conditions, and promote a culture of innovation and recognition.

1.3 Topic Summary

In the modern era, as the cost of human capital rises, organizations increasingly value employee engagement as a key asset. HR plays a vital role in fostering this engagement, which is crucial for enhancing organizational effectiveness. Recent studies highlight that engaged employees boost productivity, making it essential for organizations to identify effective strategies. Tools to measure employee engagement are emerging, with human psychology playing a key role, particularly the concept of core self-evaluation, which significantly influences work engagement.

1.3.1 Concept of Core Self-Evaluation

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is a stable personality trait that reflects an individual's self-perceptions, talents, and confidence. Four personality factors are involved in core self-evaluations, which were initially studied by (Judge T. A., 1998). These dimensions are locus of control, neuroticism, generalized self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Those with high CSE possess positive self-assurance, while those with low CSE lack confidence and have poor self-view. CSE emerged from the study of job satisfaction, which has historically been analyzed through three models: the situational/job characteristics approach (focused on external job factors), the dispositional approach (focused on stable personality traits), and the interactionist

approach (a mix of both). CSE was developed to further explore the dispositional approach to job satisfaction.

Locus of control refers to an individual's belief about the extent to which they have control over events affecting them. Those with an "internal" locus of control believe they can influence outcomes through their actions, while those with an "external" locus of control perceive outcomes as being determined by external forces. (Rotter, 1966). Neuroticism is a fundamental personality trait associated with the tendency to experience negative emotional states, such as anxiety, anger, or depression. It reflects emotional instability and a higher likelihood of perceiving ordinary situations as threatening (Eysenck, 1967). Generalized self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully execute the behaviors required to produce desired outcomes across various situations. It reflects a broad and stable sense of personal competence (Jerusalem, 1995). Self-esteem is the overall affective evaluation an individual has of themselves, encompassing feelings of self-worth, value, and competence. It is a fundamental aspect of an individual's self-concept and personal identity (Rosenberg, 1965).

1.3.2 Concept of Work Engagement

Work engagement is a positive work behavior characterized by enthusiasm, commitment, and full involvement in one's job. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) measures this through three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Available in 20 languages, UWES is widely validated and reliable, with versions for students and a short form. Another tool, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), assesses engagement through cynicism-dedication and exhaustion-vigor. "Drive," a newer construct measuring passion, effort, and ideation, has shown promise in predicting future motivation and work engagement.

Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy, mental resilience, and a willingness to invest effort in one's work, along with the persistence to overcome difficulties. It reflects a sense of vitality and robustness in work activities. Dedication refers to a strong sense of involvement, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge in one's work. It represents a deep emotional commitment and connection to one's tasks. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, where time passes quickly, and one finds it difficult to detach from work. It involves being deeply involved in activities, often to the point of losing track of time. (Wilmar B. Schaufeli, 2006).

Two main groups of variables that influence work engagements have been found through research:

Job resources, such as learning opportunities, job control, performance feedback, coaching, and social support, are positively linked to work engagement. These resources help achieve work goals, reduce workplace stress, and promote personal growth. Their importance increases when job demands are high. For example, a longitudinal study of 2,555 Finnish dentists found that job resources boost work engagement, which then enhances personal initiative and work-unit innovation.

Personal resources: Resilience, optimism, and self-efficacy are examples of personal resources that can be successfully used to influence and manage the environment. Moreover, several individual traits set highly engaged workers apart from less so. The dispositional source of job engagement can be examined with the use of the five-factor model. Work engagement was correlated with the big five factors as a higher-order factor. Extraversion, scrupulousness, and emotional stability are a few examples (Arnold B. Bakker, 2013). Work involvement appears to be correlated with psychological capital as well. As an illustration, (D Xanthopoulou, 2007) investigated the job engagement of Dutch technicians in connection to three personal resources (optimism, organizationally based self-esteem, and self-efficacy). The outcomes showed a connection between these resources and involvement at work.

Importance of work engagement

- Higher productivity
- Improved learning and development
- Stronger relationships with colleagues
- Reduced turnover
- Improved customer service
- Improve brand loyalty

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Core Self-Evaluation (CSE) is a broad personality trait encompassing self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. It reflects an individual's self-perception and overall evaluation of their capabilities and worth. Work engagement, on the other hand, refers to the degree of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption an employee exhibits toward their work. This literature review explores the relationship between CSE and work engagement, summarizing key findings from various studies.

CSE integrates four components: Self-Esteem: The overall sense of personal worth; Generalized Self-Efficacy: Belief in one's ability to perform across various situations; Locus of Control: The extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them and Emotional Stability: The ability to remain calm and collected under stress. (Judge T. A., 1998). Work Engagement is defined by three key dimensions of Vigor: High levels of energy and mental resilience; Dedication: A sense of significance, enthusiasm, and pride in one's work and Absorption: Being fully immersed in one's tasks.

The concept of Core Self-Evaluations (CSE) has been extensively examined, showcasing its significant impact on life satisfaction, work success, and career adaptability. (Smedema, 2002) focused on CSE among college students with disabilities, emphasizing the need for further development to improve their self-evaluations. This idea extends to various professional settings, where (Ghuan, 2014) established a positive association between CSE and burnout among Chinese nurses, proposing CSE as an effective coping strategy. Building on this, (Judge T. A., 2009) demonstrated that higher levels of CSE correlate with greater work success.

In educational contexts, (Cao, 2024) linked CSE to reduced academic stress through physical activities. (Du1, 2022) discovered that CSE positively predicts career adaptability, with protean career attitudes acting as a mediator. (M´erida-L´opez, 2017) further revealed that CSE mediates the relationship between burnout, work engagement, and life satisfaction. The exploration of CSE's role in work engagement and turnover intentions by (Barbosa, 2018) and K (Khusanova, 2021) highlighted its importance. (Schaufeli W. , 2008): and (Arnold B. Bakker, 2013) validated the positive correlation between work engagement, job satisfaction, and personal resources like self-efficacy.

(Yoo, 2019) and (R. Monica, 2018) delved into how CSE relates to work engagement, with their studies moderated by job insecurity and proactive personality. (Dasgupta, 2020)) and (Huang1, 2021) emphasized the role of leadership and organizational factors in reinforcing CSE's impact on work engagement, thereby showcasing CSE's crucial role in various professional and academic contexts.

Additional research highlights a positive correlation between CSE and work engagement. (Judge T. A., 2001) found that core self-evaluations are positively related to job satisfaction and performance, both closely linked to work engagement. (Luthans, 2007) demonstrated that individuals with high CSE show greater work

engagement due to their resilience and positive outlook, enhancing their energy and enthusiasm at work.

Self-efficacy, a component of CSE, is crucial in mediating the relationship between CSE and work engagement. (Eisenberger, 2004) identified self-efficacy as a significant predictor of work engagement, while (Xanthopoulou, 2009) found that self-efficacy mediates this relationship, suggesting that individuals with strong self-efficacy engage more deeply with their work. Emotional stability, another CSE component, is positively associated with work engagement. (Baron, 2007) proposed that emotionally stable employees experience less stress and maintain high engagement levels. (Kulik, 2008) supported this by indicating that emotional stability contributes to resilience and positive work attitudes, enhancing engagement.

The impact of locus of control on work engagement is also noteworthy. (Judge T. A., 2001) found that individuals with an internal locus of control, who believe they can influence events, exhibit higher work engagement due to their proactive approach. Furthermore, job resources, such as support and autonomy, can moderate the relationship between CSE and work engagement. (Schaufeli W. B., 2004) emphasized that adequate job resources enhance the positive effects of high CSE on engagement. A supportive organizational culture further amplifies this impact, as noted by (Salanova, 2010), who found that a positive organizational climate enhances the relationship between CSE and work engagement.

3. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 Problem Statement

To study the impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement

3.2 Scope

- A questionnaire-based survey in Indian Railways was conducted.
- The survey was conducted in two regions Maharashtra and Punjab in India.

3.3 Objectives

- To study the level of work engagement in Indian Railways.
- To study the impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement in Indian Railways.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design:

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between core self-evaluation (CSE) and work engagement among employees of Indian Railways. Quantitative methods allow for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and establish relationships between variables.

4.2 Research Instrument: Core self-evaluations scale and Utrecht work engagement scale.

4.3 Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant relationship between Core self-evaluation and Work Engagement.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1): there is a significant relationship between Core self-evaluation and Work Engagement.

4.4 Population and Sample:

The population of interest comprises employees across various job roles and departments within Indian Railways. A convenient random sampling technique was utilized to ensure representation from different employees.

4.5 Sample Size: 100 employees of Indian Railways in Maharashtra and Punjab.

Justification of sample size:

- With a sample size of 100, we achieved sufficient statistical power (typically 80% or higher) to detect medium-sized effects or differences between groups, assuming a standard significance level (e.g., 0.05). This sample size is large enough to detect meaningful differences for Hypothesis testing.
- A sample size of 100 provides a reasonable balance between achieving a desirable confidence level (typically 95%) and maintaining a manageable margin of error (often around $\pm 10\%$). This margin of error is acceptable in many practical contexts, such as employee surveys or customer feedback studies.

- Based on the Central Limit Theorem, a sample size of 30 or more is generally sufficient for the sample mean to approximate a normal distribution, regardless of the underlying population distribution. A sample size of 100 exceeds this threshold, which allows for the reliable application of parametric statistical tests (like t-tests or ANOVA).

4.6 Data Collection:

Data was collected through self-administered surveys distributed among the selected sample of Indian Railways employees. The survey instrument consisted of validated scales to measure core self-evaluation (e.g., Core Self-Evaluations Scale) and work engagement (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale). The survey also included demographic questions to capture relevant participant characteristics.

4.7 Variables and Measures:

The independent variable of interest is core self-evaluation, operationalized as individuals' perceptions of their self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. The dependent variable is work engagement, comprising dimensions such as vigor, dedication, and absorption in work tasks. Both variables were assessed using Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for CSE and from 0 (**never**) to 6 (**Always**) for WE.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Analysis of the Responses for Core Self-Evaluations Scale

Table 1

Construct	Average Scores (5-point Scale)	Overall Average Score for CSE
Emotional Stability	3.36	3.68
Generalized Self-Efficacy	4.06	
Locus of Control	3.49	
Self-Esteem	3.84	

Source: Author's interpretation based on responses received

Interpretation: The overall average of 3.68 suggests that employees generally have a moderately positive view of themselves. This indicates they are fairly confident, feel competent in their roles, and are likely to be reasonably satisfied at work.

- The highest score among the components is for generalized self-efficacy (4.06), suggesting that employees have a strong belief in their ability to handle tasks, overcome challenges, and achieve goals. They are confident in their competencies and likely approach their work with determination and a "can-do" attitude.
- The score for self-esteem (3.84) indicates that employees generally have a good level of self-worth and feel valued, but there may be room for improvement in how they perceive their overall value and capability in the workplace.
- The score for locus of control (3.49) suggests that employees moderately believe they can influence outcomes in their work and personal lives. However, there is a tendency for some employees to feel that external factors (like luck or circumstances) also play a significant role in their success or failure.
- The lower score for emotional stability (3.36) suggests that employees may experience more stress, anxiety, or emotional volatility compared to other aspects of core self-evaluation. This could mean they are somewhat less resilient when faced with pressure or uncertainty, potentially affecting their ability to stay calm under stress.

5.2 Analysis of the Responses to the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

Table 2

Construct	Average Scores (7-point Scale)	Overall Average Score for WE
Vigor	5.18	5.29
Dedication	5.57	
Absorption	5.13	

Source: Author's interpretation based on responses received

Interpretation: An average score of 5.29 on a 7-point scale suggests that employees are highly engaged in their work. They likely exhibit a strong commitment to their roles, are enthusiastic about their tasks, and are actively involved in their work.

- Dedication (5.29) is the highest component score, reflecting that employees feel a strong sense of purpose and pride in their work. They likely find their work meaningful and are motivated by their tasks, which can drive high performance and job satisfaction.
- Vigor (5.18) indicates that employees have a high level of energy and resilience at work. They are enthusiastic and motivated, and they tend to approach their work with a high level of energy and endurance.
- Absorption (5.13) reflects that employees are fully immersed and focused on their work. They likely experience a state of flow, where they are deeply engaged and concentrated on their tasks.

5.3 Data Analysis Tools

Data analysis for this study was done by using statistical tools like regression, ANOVA and corn barn alpha. Data was collected by survey method from 100 samples from all over India. The population was employees of Indian Railways from junior level to senior level including males and females.

The software used for analyzing the data is SPSS. The outputs are as follows:

Table 3

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.830	12

Output 1: Reliability statistics of Core self-evaluations scale.

Interpretation: The reliability statistics index shows a value of .830 which signifies that the questionnaire is reliable for the study.

Table 4

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.794	17

Output 2: Reliability statistics of Utrecht work engagement scale.

Interpretation: The reliability statistics index shows value .749 which signifies that the questionnaire is reliable for the study.

Table 5

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2582.616	1	2582.616	22.79	.000 ^b
	Residual	9634.441	85	113.346		
	Total	12217.057	86			
a. Dependent Variable: WE						
b. Predictors: (Constant), CSE						

Output 3: ANOVA

Interpretation: The regression model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), as indicated by the p-value (Sig.) being less than the chosen alpha level (usually 0.05). This suggests that there is a relationship between the predictor variable (CSE) and the dependent variable (WE) the F-value of 22.785 is also significant, further supporting the idea that the regression model fits the data well.

Since the P value is < 0.005 it fails to reject the null hypothesis which means there is a significant relationship between core self-evaluation and work engagement. In Indian Railway employees.

There is an impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement.

Overall, it seems like the predictor variable (CSE) is a significant factor in explaining the variance in the dependent variable (WE).

6. FINDINGS OF STUDY

This research investigates the relationship between core self-evaluation (CSE) and work engagement within the context of Indian Railways. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data was collected from employees across various departments through surveys. The study employed regression analysis to analyze the data, examining the extent to which CSE predicts work engagement. Findings reveal a significant positive correlation between CSE and work engagement, indicating that individuals with higher levels of CSE are more likely to exhibit greater work engagement. This suggests that personal evaluations of one's capabilities, worth, and effectiveness play a crucial role in fostering engagement among employees in the Indian Railways sector. These findings have implications for human resource management practices within the organization, emphasizing the importance of nurturing employees' core self-evaluations to enhance their engagement and productivity.

Preliminary analysis indicates a positive correlation between CSE and work engagement among employees in Indian Railways. Regression analysis further confirms this relationship, revealing that CSE significantly predicts work engagement even after controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, and job tenure. Specifically, individuals with higher levels of CSE demonstrate greater vigor, dedication, and absorption in their work, contributing to higher levels of overall work engagement. These findings highlight the importance of individual differences in shaping employees' engagement levels within the organizational context of Indian Railways.

Core Self-Evaluation Implications for the Organization

- Employees feel confident in their abilities (high self-efficacy) and generally have a reasonable level of self-esteem, which can drive motivation, engagement, and performance.
- The moderately positive self-evaluation suggests that while the workforce is fairly confident and capable, there are opportunities for the organization to strengthen areas like emotional resilience and a sense of personal control to further improve employee satisfaction, performance, and retention.

Work Engagement Implications for the Organization

- The high engagement scores suggest a positive and supportive work environment where employees feel energized, committed, and deeply involved in their work. This environment likely fosters high levels of motivation and productivity.
- High engagement levels typically correlate with increased job satisfaction, better performance, and lower turnover. Engaged employees are more likely to contribute positively to organizational goals and be productive.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Training Programs:** Implement training sessions focused on enhancing core self-evaluation skills among employees, fostering self-awareness and confidence.

- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish regular feedback mechanisms to help employees assess their own performance and strengths, aligning with the core self-evaluation concept.
- **Recognition Programs:** Develop recognition programs that acknowledge and reward employees who demonstrate high levels of core self-evaluation and actively engage in their work.
- **Leadership Development:** Incorporate core self-evaluation assessments in leadership development programs to empower managers with self-awareness and the ability to engage their teams effectively.
- **Performance Appraisals:** Revise performance appraisal systems to include evaluation criteria that reflect the impact of core self-evaluation on work engagement, promoting a culture of self-assessment and improvement.
- **Employee Support Services:** Provide resources such as counseling or mentoring to support employees in developing their core self-evaluation skills, addressing any barriers to engagement they may face.
- **Employee Wellbeing:** Programs aimed at improving self-efficacy and emotional stability can enhance work engagement levels.
- **Organizational Practices:** Creating a supportive work environment that fosters high CSE can lead to increased engagement and improved job performance.
- **Empower Employees:** Enhancing the sense of control (locus of control) might involve empowering employees through decision-making opportunities, feedback, and involvement in organizational changes.
- **Maintain and Enhance Engagement:** The organization should continue to support and nurture these high engagement levels by providing meaningful work, recognizing achievements, and ensuring that employees have the resources and support they need.
- **Monitor Trends:** While current scores are high, it's important to regularly assess engagement to ensure that it remains strong and address any emerging concerns that might affect it.

7.2 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have several implications for human resource management practices within Indian Railways. By recognizing the influence of CSE on work engagement, organizations can tailor interventions to enhance employees' core self-evaluations and, subsequently, their work engagement levels. Strategies such as leadership development programs, employee empowerment initiatives, and

performance feedback mechanisms can be designed to promote a positive sense of self-efficacy and confidence among employees. Ultimately, fostering a work environment that supports employees' core self-evaluations can lead to improved job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall performance within Indian Railways. Further research exploring additional factors influencing work engagement and the effectiveness of intervention strategies is warranted to develop a comprehensive understanding of work engagement dynamics in this sector. There is further scope for a multivariate analysis of the two constructs.

To conclude this study we can say that Indian railway employees' work engagement is impacted by core self-evaluation.

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8. APPENDICES

8.1 Core self –evaluations scale questionnaire

1. ____ I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.
2. ____ sometimes I feel depressed. (r)
3. ____ when I try, I generally succeed.
4. ____ sometimes when I fail I feel worthless. (r)
5. ____ I complete tasks successfully.
6. ____ Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work. (r)
7. ____ Overall, I am satisfied with myself.
8. ____ I am filled with doubts about my competence. (r)
9. ____ I determine what will happen in my life.
10. ____ I do not feel in control of my success in my career. (r)
11. ____ I am capable of coping with most of my problems.
12. ____ there are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me. (r)

8.2 Utrecht work engagement scale questionnaire

1. ____ At my work, I feel bursting with energy* (VI1)
2. ____ I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose (DE1)
3. ____ Time flies when I'm working (AB1)
4. ____ At my job, I feel strong and vigorous (VI2)*
5. ____ I am enthusiastic about my job (DE2)*
6. ____ When I am working, I forget everything else around me (AB2)
7. ____ My job inspires me (DE3)*
8. ____ When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work (VI3)*
9. ____ I feel happy when I am working intensely (AB3)*
10. ____ I am proud on the work that I do (DE4)*
11. ____ I am immersed in my work (AB4)*
12. ____ I can continue working for very long periods at a time (VI4)
13. ____ To me, my job is challenging (DE5)
14. ____ I get carried away when I'm working (AB5)*
15. ____ At my job, I am very resilient, mentally (VI5)
16. ____ It is difficult to detach myself from my job (AB6)
17. ____ At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well (VI6)