

# EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, AND INTENTION-TO-QUIT OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN THE INDIAN IT AND BPO SECTOR

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**Abstract** *The Indian IT-BPO sector, despite having a high growth rate, strong infrastructure, and a vast talent pool, continues to face persistent challenges with high employee attrition. This paper examines the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI), Employee Engagement (EE), and Intention-to-Quit (ITQ) among employees working in this sector. Drawing on culturally grounded perspectives and validated scales, the study collected data from 110 employees working in IT-BPO companies. Using correlation, regression, and mediation analysis, findings reveal a significant inverse relationship between EI and ITQ, particularly through the components of emotional regulation and empathy. Furthermore, spiritually aligned engagement was found to mediate the relationship between EI and ITQ, highlighting the role of inner alignment and meaning, making in Indian workplace contexts. The study also emphasises that while emotional intelligence (EI) plays some role in understanding the employees' intentions to quit, other factors, such as, compensation, work-life balance, and stress, may affect retention. Therefore, the paper highlights the need for formulating holistic HR strategies that integrate emotional development with contextual engagement practices to address attrition in India's IT-BPO industry.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Employee Engagement, Turnover Intentions, BPO-IT Sector*

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian IT-BPO industry, one of the world's largest outsourcing hubs, thrives on its technological infrastructure, English-speaking workforce, and demographic advantage, with over 3.5 million graduates entering the workforce annually (Fernandes, 2010). Despite its rapid growth, attrition has long plagued the sector. ASSOCHAM (2011) reported a 55–60% attrition rate in the industry. The total cost of losing an employee is heavy, including one to two years' salary, loss of productivity, affect service quality, employee morale, and causes financial loss (Prakash & Chowdhury, 2004). As a result, the IT-BPO industry is facing a huge talent crisis (HFS Research, 2021).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand and manage emotions, especially in the context of the workplace. It has been shown to strengthen employee commitment and reduce turnover (Carmeli, 2003; Wong & Law, 2002; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Higgs, 2004; Humphreys et al., 2005).

Additionally, turnover intentions are also lowered when employees are psychologically involved and energised to work, in short, when an employee's engagement levels are high (Schaufeli et al., 2006; Spreitzer, 1995). Recent Indian studies reaffirm these relationships by linking high IT sector attrition to low engagement (Noopur & Burman, 2024), and emphasising the predictive power of emotional-social intelligence on turnover (Gupta & Bhatia, 2023). Additionally, Haran and Niederman (2022) highlighted the moderating role of social context and organisational support, and Sharma & Tiwari (2023) found that EI and job satisfaction significantly reduce turnover intent among IT managers. However, there are few studies that examine the relationship between these variables in the Indian IT-BPO sector, especially through the use of culturally specific scales.

Therefore, this study explores the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Employee Engagement, and turnover intentions in India's IT-BPO sector using culturally

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grounded tools. It aims to understand how emotional competencies and engagement interact to influence quitting behaviour in this high-stress, high-turnover industry.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The constructs of emotional intelligence (EI), employee engagement (EE), and turnover intentions (TI) influence each other in one way or another. EI is defined as the ability to perceive, manage, and use emotions effectively and has been consistently found to predict higher engagement levels across sectors (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995; Miao et al., 2017). Thor (2012) observed a moderate correlation ( $r = 0.416$ ) between EI and EE, with emotion management explaining 17.3% of engagement variance; Ravichandran et al. (2011) similarly found a weaker yet significant positive association ( $r = 0.377$ ). In sectors like education, teachers with greater EI demonstrated higher engagement (Anari, 2012), while concerning the Indian corporate organisations, Permall (2011) reported that engagement itself explains over 27% of EI variance, suggesting a bidirectional relationship. Further, Duran et al. (2006) highlighted that EI's "Repair" dimension correlates with lower burnout and higher engagement. The role of EI and employee engagement in influencing turnover intentions is also supported by contemporary studies. Mérida-López and Extremera (2022) found strong links between self-awareness (a component of EI) and work absorption, while Kinnary et al. (2023) demonstrated that EI impacts engagement and job satisfaction of the employees of an Indian rubber factory and its positive effect is enhanced through the mediation of work-life balance. Moreover, Huang et al. (2022) showed that digital workload moderates how EI translates into engagement in modern work environments.

Research on EI and turnover intentions remains inconclusive. Some studies, such as Trivellas et al. (2013) and Siddiqui and Hassan (2013), show that high EI predicts lower turnover intentions among nurses and FMCG managers. Abdallah and Mostafa (2021) and Giao et al. (2020), as well as Uzair and Bhaumik (2023), observed significant negative relationships between EI and turnover in healthcare and banking sectors. In contrast, Steven (2010), Ohrberg (2010), and Miller (2011) found no direct effect of EI on quitting behaviour or job satisfaction. Furthermore, Jordan and Troth (2010) suggest the relationship is indirect, stating that EI enables better supervisor-employee relationships (LMX), which in turn enhances satisfaction and reduces turnover. In oil and gas firms, Abudaqa et al. (2022) reported that EI and job satisfaction mediate the impact of burnout on turnover intentions.

In contrast, the evidence linking employee engagement to turnover intention is reliably strong. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) showed that organisations with high

engagement scores exhibit lower turnover and stronger business performance. Simon & Manuela (2010) found in healthcare that engagement reduces intention to quit via increased affective commitment. Ballard (2012) confirmed that both leadership quality and engagement predict quitting behaviour in US call centre employees. Bhatnagar (2012) reported that psychological empowerment and engagement among Indian managers significantly lower turnover intentions. Meta-analyses (Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Harter et al., 2002) reinforce that engagement drives retention by enhancing satisfaction and deterring burnout. Further, the recent international studies, such as Emerald Insight (2023), further confirm that engagement mediates job resources and turnover, particularly in modern service environments. Similarly, Indradewa and Santiajie (2022) showed that transformational leadership, organisational culture, and engagement significantly reduce turnover intentions in Indonesian hospitals.

Overall, in high-turnover contexts such as the BPO industry, where emotional labour and shift work are intense, the interaction of EI and EE becomes especially relevant. EI equips employees to handle emotional exhaustion and customer demands, while engagement fosters purpose, resilience, and loyalty. Both variables provide a form of safeguard against attrition (Ravichandran et al., 2011; Duran et al., 2006). The limited research specific to BPOs underscores the need for empirical exploration of how EI, EE, and TI interact in this context. This study, therefore, aims to examine predictive and mediating relationships among EI, EE, and TI within the BPO sector in order to find ways to reduce turnover intentions of employees who work in emotionally demanding work environments. Additionally, it also seeks to understand EI and employee engagement, both psychological constructs, through the usage of culturally specific scales.

## RESEARCH ISSUE

Despite India's IT-BPO service delivery industry growing at a rapid pace and an increasing number of employees joining, the industry continues to wrestle with persistently high attrition rates. The high attrition rates cause significant financial and operational consequences. While emotional intelligence (EI) and employee engagement (EE) are known to influence retention, there is a lack of understanding of their indigenous meaning and measures. Therefore, there is a need to conduct culturally grounded research examining how these psychological constructs interact to affect turnover intentions within the socio-cultural contexts of Indian IT-BPO firms. The pressing issue lies in understanding how EI and EE, both independently and collectively, impact employees' decisions to stay or leave, and how these insights can aid in improving the high-attrition environments in the IT-BPO organisations.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Based on the research issue identified, this study sets out the following specific objectives:

- To examine the relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Engagement (EE) among employees of IT and BPO companies.
- To investigate whether Employee Engagement (EE) is associated with employees' intention to quit their jobs in the IT-BPO sector.
- To assess the relationship between employees' intention to quit and the individual components of Emotional Intelligence—namely Emotional Competence (EC), Emotional Maturity (EM), and Emotional Sensitivity (ES).
- To explore the mediating role of Employee Engagement in the relationship between EI and intention to quit among employees in IT-BPO companies.

## Research Hypotheses

We hypothesised the following relationships:

H01: There is no significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Engagement (EE) among employees of IT-BPO companies.

Ha1: There is a significant positive relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Engagement (EE) among employees of IT-BPO companies.

H02: There is no statistically significant inverse relationship between EE and intention-to-quit of the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Ha2: There is a statistically significant inverse relationship between EE and intention-to-quit of the employees of BPO and IT companies.

H03: There is no significant negative correlation between the components of Emotional Intelligence (EC, EM, ES) and intention to quit among employees of IT-BPO companies.

Ha3: There is a significant negative correlation between the components of Emotional Intelligence (EC, EM, ES) and intention to quit among employees of IT-BPO companies.

H04: Employee Engagement is not the intervening variable in the relationship of EQ and intention to quit amongst the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Ha4: EE is the intervening variable in the relationship between EQ and intention to quit amongst the employees of BPO and IT companies.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a cross-sectional research design based on primary data collected through standardised questionnaires from individuals employed in IT-BPO companies located in Delhi, India. The aim is to examine how Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Employee Engagement (EE), and Intention-to-Stay/Quit are related based on the sample data collected from the professionals working in this sector.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The study sample comprises 110 valid responses, obtained after excluding 15 incomplete questionnaires from the initial set. Respondents were primarily employed by popular multinational BPOs operating in Delhi, India. The sample was drawn using a randomised-convenience sampling method. Participants were aged between 22 and 35 years, with a mean age of 29 years. The gender distribution included 70% male respondents and 30% female respondents. Notably, 52% of the participants reported more than six years of work experience in the IT-BPO sector.

### Instruments

Three standardised instruments were used to measure the primary variables of the study: Emotional Intelligence (EQ) was assessed using the Emotional Intelligence Scale developed by Chadha and Singh (2003), based on Singh's (2003) operational definition of EQ. This scale comprises 22 situation-based items and demonstrates high reliability (test-retest = 0.94; split-half = 0.89) and validity (0.89). The scale also enables computation of three sub-dimensions of emotional intelligence:

- *Emotional Competence (EC)*: Items 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 13, 14, 15, 19, and 20.
- *Emotional Maturity (EM)*: Items 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 18, and 21.
- *Emotional Sensitivity (ES)*: Items 2, 8, 16, 17, and 22.

Employee Engagement (EE) was measured using the Spiritually Aligned Employee Engagement Scale (SAEE) developed by Singh and Kumar (2012). This 15-item scale assesses three constructs:

- *Workplace Spirituality (WS)*: Items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13.
- *Alignment*: Items 2, 5, 8, 11.
- *Psychological Meaningfulness (PM)*: Items 3, 6, 9, 12, 14, 15.

All items were rated on a Likert-type scale, enabling the quantification of employee engagement from a spiritually and psychologically grounded perspective. Intent-to-Stay/Quit was measured using Bluedorn's Stay/Leave Index (1982), which includes six items to assess an individual's intention to remain in or leave their current employment.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted through a mixed-mode approach, combining both online and offline methods. An online survey link was created using Google Forms, from which 48 responses were obtained. The remaining responses were collected via hand-distributed questionnaires among employees of IT-BPO offices. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through the process. The collected data were coded and analysed using Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Descriptive statistics were employed to profile the sample, and inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, were applied to examine the relationships between EQ, EE, and Intent-to-Stay/Quit.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The present study aimed to examine the interrelationships between emotional intelligence (EI), employee engagement (EE), and intention-to-quit (ITQ) among employees working in IT-BPO companies in Delhi. The descriptive statistics (presented in Table 1) revealed that the mean score of total emotional intelligence was high ( $M = 375$ ), with emotional competence (EC) emerging as the strongest subcomponent ( $M = 172$ ). Emotional sensitivity (ES) and emotional maturity (EM) followed, with EM scoring the lowest ( $M = 113$ ), falling within the moderate-to-high range. Employee engagement components, including workplace spirituality (WS), alignment, and psychological meaningfulness (PM), were reported to be moderate. The mean intention-to-quit score was also found to be moderate across the sample.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (N=110)**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Intention to Quit	110	17.86	6.12
Employee Engagement	110	55.36	12.75
Workplace Spirituality	110	18.12	4.36
Alignment	110	14.41	3.74
Psychological Meaningfulness	110	22.83	4.93
Emotional Intelligence	110	375.05	29.77
Emotional Sensitivity	110	89.14	8.80
Emotional Maturity	110	113.23	13.62
Emotional Competence	110	172.68	14.68

## Hypothesis One

"H01"- There is no significant positive relationship between EI and EE among the employees of BPO and IT companies.

"Ha1"- There is a significant positive relationship between EI and EE among the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Pearson correlation analysis (Table 2) revealed a moderate positive correlation between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Employee Engagement (EE), with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.38$  ( $p < 0.01$ ). Regression analysis (Table 3) further confirmed that EI accounts for 14.8% of the variance in EE ( $R^2 = 0.148$ ), and the model was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that EI is a meaningful predictor of EE. Component-wise correlation analysis (Annexure Table 1) showed that Emotional Competence (EC) is significantly and positively correlated with Workplace Spirituality (WS) ( $r = 0.356$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Alignment ( $r = 0.330$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and Psychological Meaningfulness (PM) ( $r = 0.362$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Emotional Maturity (EM) also exhibited a moderate positive correlation with PM ( $r = 0.321$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ), while PM was strongly correlated with overall EI ( $r = 0.411$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that individuals with higher EI perceive greater meaning in their work.

**Table 2: Association between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement**

Variables	Total Employee Engagement	
Total Emotional Intelligence	Pearson Correlation	0.384**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	110

\*\* .  $r$  is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3: Predictive Role of Emotional Intelligence in Employee Engagement**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate
1	0.384 <sup>a</sup>	0.148	0.14	11.823

Predictor		B	SE	t	P
1	(Constant)	-6.325	14.31	-0.442	0.659
	Total Emotional Intelligence	0.169	0.038	4.324	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: TEE.					
a. Predictors: (Constant), TEI.					

Additionally, a t-test analysis (Table 4) revealed a significant differences in EE scores between employees with high and extremely high levels of EI. The mean EE score for the high EI group was 52, while the extremely high EI group had a significantly higher mean of 58 ( $t =$  value,  $p = 0.013$ ),

highlighting that individuals with exceptionally high EI tend to exhibit greater engagement at work. These findings lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis H01, thereby confirming a significant positive relationship between EI and employee engagement among employees in IT-BPO companies.

**Table 4: Comparison of Employee Engagement Between Groups with High and Extremely High Emotional Intelligence**

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Value	Sig.
Total Employee Engagement	High EI	49	52.22	13.295	5.396	0.013*
	Extremely High EI	57	58.32	11.284		

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. EI: Emotional Intelligence

Table 4 illustrates that mean scores of extremely high EQ groups on TEE are found to be higher (Mean=58) than those of the high EQ group, and this is statistically significant ( $p=0.013$ ).

## Hypothesis Two

H02 - There is no statistically significant inverse relationship between EE and intention-to-quit among the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Ha2 - There is a statistically significant inverse relationship between EE and intention-to-quit among the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Pearson correlation analysis (Table 5) revealed an inverse relationship between Employee Engagement (EE) and Intention-to-Quit (ITQ), with a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.354$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that higher levels of engagement are associated with a lower intention to leave the organisation. A component-wise correlation further confirmed this pattern, showing that Workplace Spirituality (WS) was negatively correlated with ITQ ( $r = -0.310$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ), Alignment inversely correlated ( $r = -0.367$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and Psychological Meaningfulness (PM) similarly showed a significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.363$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) (Annexure Table 2). These findings indicate that all dimensions of engagement play a role in reducing employees' intentions to quit.

**Table 5: Correlation and Regression Between Employee Engagement and Intent-to-Quit**

Variables		Total Employee Engagement			
Intention to Quit	Pearson Correlation	-0.354**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
	N	110			
** $r$ is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of Estimate	
1	0.354*	0.125	0.117	5.75	
Predictor		B	SE	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	27.274	2.453	11.119	0.000
	Total Employee Engagement	-0.170	0.043	-3.936	0.000

\*Dependent Variable: Intention to Quit, Predictor: Total Employee Engagement.

In addition, regression analysis revealed that EE predicts 12.5% of the variance in ITQ ( $R^2 = 0.125$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting a causal relationship between higher engagement and lower quitting intentions. The ANOVA results (Table 6) provided further validation, showing that employees with high engagement levels reported significantly lower intent-to-quit scores (Mean = 15,  $n = 36$ ) compared to those with low

engagement (Mean = 21,  $n = 29$ ). Levene’s test confirmed the assumption of equal variances (Levene’s statistic = 1.193,  $p = 0.307$ ). Based on these findings, the null hypothesis H02 is rejected, establishing that there is a significant negative relationship between employee engagement and intention-to-quit among IT-BPO employees.

**Table 6: Comparison of Intent-to-Quit Amongst Employee Engagement Groups**

Variables	Total Employee Engagement	N	Mean	F-Value	Sig.
Intention to Quit	Low EE	29	20.97	6.858	0.002**
	Moderate EE	45	17.67		
	High EE	36	15.61		
	Total	110	17.86		

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). EE: Employee Engagement.

**Hypothesis Three**

H03 - There is no significant negative correlation between intention-to-quit and EI components among the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Ha3 - There is a significant negative correlation between intention-to-quit and EI components among the employees of BPO and IT companies.

This hypothesis predicted that there is a significant negative correlation between intent-to-quit and EI components namely emotional competence (EC), emotional sensitivity (ES), and emotional maturity (EM).

Pearson correlation analysis (Table 7) confirmed an inverse relationship between Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Intention-to-Quit (ITQ). Specifically, total EI was negatively correlated with ITQ ( $r = -0.240$ ,  $p = 0.011$ ), indicating that

higher EI is associated with a lower tendency to quit. Among the components of EI, Emotional Sensitivity (ES) showed a negative correlation with ITQ ( $r = -0.239$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), and Emotional Maturity (EM) was also negatively correlated ( $r = -0.224$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ), both relationships being statistically significant (Annexure Table 3). However, Emotional Competence (EC) did not show a significant correlation with ITQ, suggesting that this dimension of EI may not directly influence quitting intentions. Further support comes from the mean comparison results (Table 7), where the extremely high EI group reported a lower mean ITQ score ( $M = 16.40$ ) compared to the high EI group ( $M = 19.31$ ), reinforcing the pattern that higher EI is linked to lower turnover intentions. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis H03 is rejected, affirming that specific components of EI—especially ES and EM—are negatively associated with the intention to quit among IT-BPO employees.

**Table 7: Comparison of Intent-to-Quit Between Groups with High and Extremely High Emotional Intelligence**

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F-Value	Sig.
Intention to Quit	High EI	49	19.31	6.459	2.25	0.013*
	Extremely high EI	57	16.40	5.318		

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. EI: Emotional Intelligence.

**Hypothesis Four**

H04 - Employee Engagement is not the intervening variable in the relationship of EQ and intention to quit amongst the employees of BPO and IT companies.

Ha4 - EE is the intervening variable in the relationship between EQ and intention to quit amongst the employees of BPO and IT companies.

To examine the mediation effect, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) four-step regression framework was applied. This approach

employs both simple and multiple regression techniques to establish the presence of mediation. In the first step, the mediating variable (measured construct) is regressed on the independent variable using a simple regression. In the second step, the predicted variable (measured construct) is regressed on the independent variable, also using a simple regression. The third step involves regressing the predicted variable on the mediator. Finally, in the fourth step, the predicted variable is regressed on both the predictor and mediating variables (measured construct) using a multiple regression model.

According to Baron and Kenny’s model, mediation is supported under the following conditions:

Firstly, if the predictor measured construct significantly predicts the mediator, also significantly predicts the dependent variable, and the mediator significantly predicts the predicted variable. Secondly, if the effect of the predictor measured construct on the predicted variable becomes weaker or statistically non-significant when the mediator is included in the model, then mediation is established—specifically, full mediation is indicated when this effect becomes non-significant.

Steps one through three are conducted to establish that significant relationships exist among the independent, dependent, and mediating variables. If any of these relationships are non-significant, researchers typically conclude that mediation is unlikely or does not exist (MacKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2007).

Table 8 presents the mediation effect of Employee Engagement (EE) on the association of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Intention-to-Quit. In line with Baron and Kenny’s (1986) framework for mediation, Step 1 involved regressing EE (mediator) on EQ (independent

variable), which yielded a statistically significant result ( $p = 0.000$ ). In Step 2, Intention-to-Quit (dependent variable) was regressed on EQ, and the relationship remained significant ( $p = 0.011$ ). In Step 3, EE (mediator) was regressed on Intention-to-Quit (dependent variable), and this relationship was also significant ( $p = 0.000$ ). Lastly, in Step 4, Intention-to-Quit was regressed on both EE (mediator) and EQ (independent variable).

As indicated in the results, once EE was included in the model (Step 4), the previously significant effect of EQ on Intention-to-Quit became non-significant ( $p = 0.210$ ), which exceeds the 0.05 threshold. This outcome implies full (or perfect) mediation. Therefore, it is concluded that EE fully mediates the relationship between EQ and Intention-to-Quit, thereby supporting the alternative hypothesis.

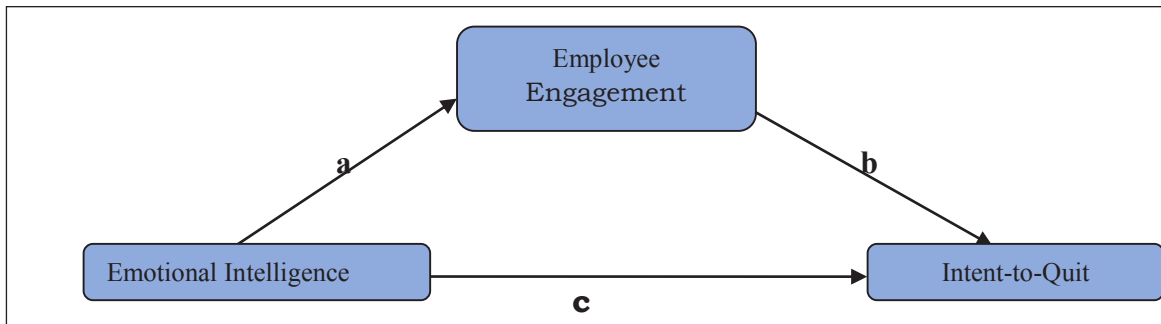
To confirm the significance of the mediation effect, Table 9 illustrates four paths (a, b, c, and c’). The significance of the indirect effect (path c’) is evaluated to demonstrate that EE fully mediates the EQ–Intention-to-Quit relationship. The paths are also illustrated in Fig. 1. The regression coefficient of the indirect (mediating) effect is obtained by multiplying the unstandardised beta coefficients of path a and path c’ ( $0.164 * -0.147 = 0.024$ ).

**Table 8: Causal Step Mediation Testing Model**

Step 1					
Model		B	SE	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-6.325	14.310	-0.442	0.659
	Total Emotional Intelligence	0.164	0.038	4.324	0.000
When dependent variable is total employee engagement					
Step 2					
Model		B	SE	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	36.395	7.220	-0.442	0.659
	Total Emotional Intelligence	-0.049	0.019	-2.575	0.011
When dependent variable is intention to quit					
Step 3					
Model		B	SE	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	27.274	2.453	11.119	0.000
	Total Employee Engagement	-0.170	0.043	-3.936	0.000
When dependent variable is Intention to Quit					
Step 4					
Model		B	SE	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	35.463	6.943	5.108	0.000
	Total Emotional Intelligence	-0.025	0.020	-1.260	0.210
	Total Employee Engagement	-0.147	0.047	-3.160	0.002
When dependent variable is intention to quit.					

To test the significance of this mediating effect, the procedure suggested by MacKinnon and Dwyer (1993) was followed, which involves dividing the indirect effect

by its standard error ( $a*b/S.E.ab$ ). The standard error of the mediation effect is computed using the formula provided by Sobel (1982).



**Fig. 1: Employee Engagement Mediating Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Intent-to-Quit (Path Diagram)**

**Table 9: Summary of Causal Step Mediation Model for Testing Mediation**

Steps	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Unstandardised $\beta$	Standardised $\beta$	Standard Error	Sig.	R Square	Path
1	Total Employee Engagement	Total Emotional Intelligence	0.164	0.384	0.038	0.000	0.148	a
2	Intention to Quit	Total Emotional Intelligence	-0.049	-0.240	0.019	0.011	0.058	c
3	Intention to Quit	Total Employee Engagement	-0.170	-0.354	0.043	0.000	0.125	b
4	Intention to Quit	Total Emotional Intelligence Total	-0.250	-0.122	0.020	0.210	0.138	c'
		Employee Engagement	-0.147	-0.307	0.047	0.002		

Standard error of mediating effect =  $\sqrt{(a^2 * seb^2) + (b^2 * sea^2)}$  where,  
 a = un-standardised beta coefficient of EQ in step 1.  
 b = un-standardised beta coefficient of EE in step 4.  
 seb = standard error of b.  
 sea = standard error of a.

The resulting value was a z-score. In our case, the standard error for the mediating effect was 0.0084, and therefore the z-score was 2.8482 (0.024/0.0084). The Z-score value corresponds to a p-value equal to 0.0044; thus, it can be said that the mediation effect is statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.024, p < 0.01$ ). Thus, the results indicated that employee engagement (SAEE) is a statistically significant pure mediator between EI and intent to quit.

## RESULTS AND SUMMARY FINDINGS

The findings of this research reveal a significant and positive correlation between EI and employee engagement, with  $r = 0.384 (p = 0.000)$ , thereby leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. However, further regression analysis indicates a weak causal link, with EI accounting for only 14.8% of the variance in employee engagement. When comparing mean scores, the group with extremely high EI (Mean =

58,  $n = 57$ ) demonstrated higher levels of engagement than the group with high EI (Mean = 52,  $n = 49$ ), indicating a stronger tendency toward higher engagement among the former. Inter-correlational analysis also revealed that total EI is associated with higher psychological meaningfulness ( $r = 0.41$ ), while emotional competency significantly relates to alignment ( $r = 0.33$ ) and workplace spirituality ( $r = 0.35$ ).

A moderate but significant negative relationship was found between employee engagement and intent-to-quit ( $r = -0.35$ ), with all engagement subscales—workplace spirituality, psychological meaningfulness, and alignment—showing inverse correlations with intent-to-quit ( $r = -0.31, -0.36, \text{ and } -0.036$ , respectively). Regression analysis further showed that 12.5% of the variation in intent-to-quit is explained by employee engagement. Employees with moderate engagement reported lower intent-to-quit scores (Mean = 15) than those with low engagement (Mean = 21), and this difference was statistically significant according to ANOVA results. Similarly, EI was found to have a weak

but significant inverse relationship with intent-to-quit ( $r = -0.240$ ), with lower intent-to-quit scores observed in the extremely high EQ group ( $M = 16.40$ ,  $n = 57$ ) compared to the high EQ group ( $M = 19.31$ ,  $n = 49$ ). Finally, mediation analysis using Baron and Kenny's (1986) framework established that employee engagement fully mediates the relationship between EI and intent-to-quit, underscoring the pivotal role of engagement in reducing turnover intentions among emotionally intelligent employees.

## DISCUSSIONS

The current research study found a relationship between contextually rooted emotional intelligence, spiritually aligned engagement, and turnover intentions of BPO and IT companies' employees. The findings are discussed below:

### Employee Engagement and Emotional Intelligence of IT-BPO Companies' Employees

The present study reveals a moderate relationship between EI and employee engagement, underscoring the critical role of emotional resources in shaping positive behavioural responses (Carmeli & Josman, 2006; Jung & Yoon, 2011; Korkmaz & Arpaci, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Wong & Law, 2002). Since EI is often measured as either an ability or a dispositional trait, it is logical to posit that it serves as a foundational driver of employee engagement. The current study operationalises engagement through the dimensions of workplace spirituality, alignment, and psychological meaningfulness, all of which are deeply intertwined with emotional well-being, a construct significantly shaped by EI (Johnson & Indvik, 1999).

Empirical evidence from prior research also reinforces this linkage. A longitudinal study conducted over three years at AMADORI, a major supplier to McDonald's in Europe, found a robust association between EI and organisational engagement. It revealed that managers' EI predicted 76% of the variability in employee engagement scores (Six Seconds, 2019). Although the present study also finds a statistically significant association between the two variables, the predictive power remains moderate. This suggests the involvement of additional mediating or moderating variables influencing engagement beyond EI in the IT BPO sector. One likely explanation pertains to the high-stress environment, which may attenuate the favourable impact of EI on engagement (Shanthi & Bhargava, 2007). In this context, Prashant Chawla, COO of Integreon, a Mumbai-based KPO, highlighted three primary stressors affecting employees in such sectors: stringent deadlines, monotonous job roles, and night shifts. These stressors may account for a significant portion of the unexplained variance in

employee engagement, pointing toward the need for further exploration into occupational stress, coping mechanisms, and organisational support as critical factors influencing engagement in emotionally demanding work settings (Chawla, 2006).

Recent studies (e.g., Liu et al., 2021; Rathi & Lee, 2022; Sood & Bakhshi, 2023) further validate that while EI influences engagement, its impact is situational and can be moderated by organisational culture, leadership style, and occupational stress levels. Therefore, future research should integrate these evolving variables to build a more comprehensive understanding of the engagement dynamics, especially within high-stress service-oriented industries like IT and BPO. A critical factor may be the underlying value differences between many Western-origin firms, whose goals and organisational culture are shaped by their home-country culture and the spiritually aligned engagement and contextual EI of employees operating in the Indian work environment. When Indian employees seek experiences within a goal-oriented Western framework, they may perceive a misfit, thereby experiencing only a moderate or limited effect of EI and engagement in reducing their turnover intentions.

### Employee Engagement and Intent-to-Quit of IT-BPO Companies' Employees

This study also observed a modest association between employee engagement (EE) and the intention of quitting the job, further supported by a causal link wherein employee engagement accounted for 12.5% of the variability in employees' intent-to-quit scores of IT-BPO companies' employees. This suggests that employees who experience lower levels of engagement, particularly due to a lack of goal alignment with the organisation, are more likely to consider exiting their jobs. Misalignment in values and objectives leads to a diminished sense of involvement, thereby increasing disengagement and the propensity to quit. There is a possibility that although partial misalignment and meaninglessness in the work may enhance an individual's intention to quit the job in the IT BPO sector but there are other factors that may contribute to such behaviour. It could be possible that Indian millennials, who possess a blend of traditional and modern value systems, often strive for both meaningfulness in work and material rewards. A lack of fulfillment on either front can contribute to attrition. In this context, Ramaiya and Bhas (2008) reported that approximately 27% of employees in IT-BPO firms cited compensation as the main reason for quitting, followed by limited career growth and role stagnation. The phenomenon of "external inequity in compensation" remains a critical attrition driver, especially in roles that are both demanding and monotonous. Moreover, the organisational culture

typical of the BPO sector is characterised by long working hours, rotational shifts, and inadequate leave policies. All these factors have been associated with adverse health outcomes and burnout (Raina, 2006). These stressors hinder employees from finding psychological meaningfulness and alignment in their work, which further diminishes engagement and strengthens the intent-to-quit. Although increased engagement is generally viewed as a protective factor against attrition (Ballard, 2012), this assumption does not fully apply to the outsourcing industry in India, where operational and situational constraints play a significant role in turnover dynamics. We can state that Indian employees do seek alignment and purpose in their work, but these cannot provide an adequate safeguard against the occupational stress present in the IT-BPO companies, which run on Western values of goal-orientation and profit maximisation (Rathi & Lee, 2022; Sood & Bakshi, 2023). Therefore, the cultural misfit has resulted in moderate predictions in the current study.

### **Emotional Intelligence, Intent-to-Quit, and Employee Engagement of IT BPO Companies' Employees**

The present study further explored the intervening role of spiritually aligned engagement in the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and turnover intentions among IT-BPO sector employees. The findings revealed that engagement, when grounded in spiritual alignment, significantly mediated this relationship, which is consistent with prior findings by Brunetto et al. (2012). Their study revealed that the EI of police officers predicted their well-being and the satisfaction they derive from their jobs, and the levels of well-being and satisfaction in turn influenced engagement and their emotional attachment with their work, ultimately leading to reduced turnover intentions. In the Indian context, this mechanism may be rooted in the culturally embedded concept of "sthitaprajña", which refers to a stable wisdom and a detached mindset (Gayathri & Meenakshi, 2013). The emotions in the Indian context are experienced with a detached mindset; in this sense, they are automatically regulated and managed. This could be a critical factor in aligning oneself with work. Emotionally intelligent people are well prepared to regulate disturbances, understand emotional triggers, and cultivate internal harmony, which is foundational to spiritual engagement and lowers the likelihood of leaving one's job (Miao et al., 2020; Extremera et al., 2021). However, Indians have a complex hybrid value system combining traditional ideals of purpose and modern aspirations for status, compensation, and growth. As such, the causal model linking EI to engagement and reduced intention to quit provides only a partial explanation of attrition behaviour. Situational factors such as job stress, unsociable work hours, low pay parity, and career stagnation

also contribute to employees' intent to quit. These concerns are widely noted in studies on the Indian BPO-IT workforce (Shanthi & Bhargava, 2007; Chawla, 2006; Ramaiya, 2008; Raina, 2006) and reaffirmed by recent empirical work highlighting the toll of workplace stressors on engagement and well-being (Arora & Dhole, 2022; Sharma & Sharma, 2021).

This complex traditional and modern value system of Indian employees, which is partly influenced by traditional philosophies and partly by Western materialist ideals, influences the way they regulate and manage emotions and find purpose and value in their work. Indian employees' quitting behaviour, therefore, may reflect a personality dynamic that is growingly becoming responsive to external rewards rather than to internal emotional or spiritual alignment. Therefore, the construct of engagement itself, as a reflection of holistic well-being, is now compromised by the deterioration of work-life balance and organisational culture stressors within the competitive Indian outsourcing industry (Ballard, 2012; Singh & Garg, 2021). In such a landscape, EI and engagement are critical but cannot independently curb attrition unless coupled with systemic changes in organisational policies, compensation structures, and cultural alignment.

### **CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

As the study investigated the EI and employee engagement of Indian IT-BPO sector employees using indigenous measures, it found that contextual emotional management and regulation, and purpose-driven engagement did influence their turnover intentions. The study found an inverse association between IT-BPO companies' employees' EI and intent-to-quit, with employee engagement serving as a partial mediator. However, these influences are moderate and not very strong. Therefore, the study suggests that the cultural misfit that exists between Western value-driven organisations and the indigenous value systems of the Indian employees hampers a synchronicity essential for both variables to exert a strong force on lowering the intention to quit. Furthermore, the study suggests that while emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to remain engaged, their intentions to stay are also shaped by systemic and environmental factors.

The implications of these findings are multifold. Firstly, organisations in high-pressure industries like IT-BPO must provide emotional training and development for their employees that is rooted in indigenous practices and learnings. EI is not only predictive of greater engagement but also serves as a buffer against disengagement and turnover when coupled with supportive work environments. Secondly, engagement strategies must move beyond

superficial motivational programmes and instead address the deeper cultural, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of work that are particularly salient in the Indian socio-cultural context. Incorporating principles of workplace spirituality, alignment of values, and emotional well-being into employee engagement frameworks can offer a more sustainable model for workforce retention in India. Thirdly, organisational policies must account for structural issues, such as compensation equity, flexible work arrangements, role enrichment, and mental health support. This is because engagement alone cannot fully mitigate turnover in the presence of high stress and poor working conditions.

However, this study is not without limitations. Firstly, the sample was based on convenience sampling and limited to IT-BPO professionals in India, which may constrain the generalisability of findings to other sectors or geographies. Secondly, the model does not comprehensively account for other known predictors of turnover intentions, such as job satisfaction, leadership, growth opportunities, or personal circumstances.

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## ANNEXURES

**Table 1: Inter-Correlation of EE and EQ Components**

		Correlations Matrix							
Components		TEE	ES	EM	EC	TEQ	En WS	En A	En M
TEE	Pearson Correlation	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
ES	Pearson Correlation	0.239*	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012							
EM	Pearson Correlation	0.299**	0.391**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.000						
EC	Pearson Correlation	0.359**	0.442**	0.500**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000					
TEQ	Pearson Correlation	0.384**	0.693**	0.820**	0.853**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000				
En WS	Pearson Correlation	0.976**	0.210*	0.272**	0.356**	0.362**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.028	0.004	0.000	0.000			
En A	Pearson Correlation	0.979**	0.190*	0.275**	0.330**	0.345**	0.939**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.046	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000		
En M	Pearson Correlation	0.979**	0.289**	0.321**	0.362**	0.411**	0.925**	0.941**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.002	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2: Inter-Correlation of EQ Components and Intent-to-Quit**

		Correlations				
Components		INTQ	ES	EM	EC	TEQ
INTQ	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
ES	Pearson Correlation	-0.239*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012				
EM	Pearson Correlation	-0.224*	0.391**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.019	0.000			
EC	Pearson Correlation	-0.137	0.442**	0.500**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.154	0.000	0.000		
TEQ	Pearson Correlation	-0.240*	0.693**	0.820**	0.853**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.011	0.000	0.000	0.000	
N		110	110	110	110	110

**Table 3: Inter-Correlation of EE Components and Intent-to-Quit**

Correlations						
Components		TEE	EnWS	EnA	EnA	INTQ
TEE	Pearson Correlation)	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed					
EnWS	Pearson Correlation)	0.976**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.000				
EnA	Pearson Correlation)	0.979**	0.939**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.000	0.000			
EnM	Pearson Correlation)	0.979**	0.925**	0.941**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.000	0.000	0.000		
INTQ	Pearson Correlation)	-0.354**	-0.310**	-0.367**	-0.363**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).