

Employee Engagement in Environmental, Social, and Governance Practices: A Mediating Mechanism between Hybrid Workplace Practices and Employee Work Engagement

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Abstract

The healthcare industry's effectiveness and service quality depend significantly on employee performance. This study aims to investigate the effect of training and development practices on employee performance mediated by employee engagement of the employees working in private hospitals. The research design used was quantitative, cross sectional with the use of a structured questionnaire and primary data were obtained from 720 respondents. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the proposed conceptual framework. The results have shown that training and development practices positively affect employee engagement and employee performance. Employee engagement also plays a strong positive role in employee performance and is also a partial mediator between training and development practices and employee performance. Measurement models as well as the structural models were found to possess adequate reliability, validity and model fit, which provided evidence for the proposed hypotheses. The paper emphasizes the need for effective training programs along with employee engagement strategies to boost productivity and performance in private hospitals. The results contribute to the theoretical literature of human resource management and offer practical implications for hospital managers who want to use strategic employee development programs to enhance their employee's performance.

Keywords: Training and Development Practices; Employee Engagement; Employee Performance; Private Hospitals; PLS-SEM; Human Resource Management.

JEL Classification: M12, M53, I11, C39

Introduction

In recent years, the modern workspace has seen significant change, especially with the advent of new technologies, digitalization and employee demands for flexibility and integration of work and life. Hybrid Working (also known as flexible working) is a strategy that organisations have started to embrace to increase efficiency and help to support employee wellness while ensuring remote working will be integrated with office-based working. All of these practices offer workers more autonomy, flexibility and work-life balance. But successful hybrid working requires organisations to be able to keep people in touch, engaged, motivated and productive in a variety of work environments. Employee work engagement has become an important organizational outcome, as work engaged employees are characterized by higher levels of enthusiasm, dedication and productivity as organizations continue to redesign their work models. As a result, organizations are now shifting their attention to sustainable human resource practices and hybrid workplaces to guarantee the long-term effectiveness of their organizations and resilience of their workforce (Sneppen, 2025; Nisha et al., 2026; Yong et al., 2025).

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory states that organizational resources (e.g., workplace flexibility, managerial support, autonomy, meaningful work) can improve employee motivation and decrease work-related stress which positively influences work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Similarly, the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) Theory posits that

organizations can ensure that higher employee performance is achieved by ensuring that employees have the right abilities, motivation, and opportunities to contribute effectively towards organizational goals (Appelbaum et al., 2000). The theoretical perspectives suggest that hybrid workplace practices can be useful organizational resources when backed by suitable organizational programs, it can enhance employee engagement.

Employee Engagement in ESG Practices as a Mediating Mechanism

ESG practices have become more than just a regulatory & corporate reporting requirement and now are strategic initiatives within organizations that engage employees in sustainability, ethical governance, environmental responsibility, and social development. When employees are engaged in ESG practices, they are able to contribute to activities that benefit not only the organization, but society and the environment as well. This type of involvement fosters employees' purpose, organizational identification, and commitment, ultimately impacting their workplace attitudes and behaviors. It has become an accepted fact that employees are one of the key actors in the successful implementation of ESG initiatives (Malhotra & Pachauri, 2023; Narayanan, 2022; Lulewicz-Sas et al., 2025).

In today's hybrid workplace, where keeping people connected and fostering a culture of belonging can be difficult, the role of ESG is even more significant. Embedding ESG activities into hybrid working offers opportunities to for employees to work together on goals that are socially responsible, irrespective of where they work. Studies have shown that an ESG-focused workplace positively affects employee well-being, lowers stress levels at the workplace, boosts organizational commitment, and encourages sustainable innovation and responsible business practices (Chen & Fang, 2025; Catalfo et al., 2026; Li & binti Norman, 2025). Also, the leadership support, sustainable HRM practices and organizational values have a strong impact on the willingness of employees to engage in ESG initiatives, which positively impacts task performance and contextual performance (Arslan et al., 2026; Ohri & Dutta, 2026).

Research Gap and Study Objectives

Although there is an increasing literature on hybrid workplaces, employee engagement, and ESG, the literature is limited in empirical studies exploring how employee engagement in ESG practices act as an intervening variable between hybrid workplace practices and employee work engagement. Previous research has tended to investigate hybrid work, employee engagement, and ESG in isolation, and only a few have combined the constructs in a comprehensive model. Furthermore, there is not much empirical evidence of the Indian context, especially in the city of Chennai, where the information technology, manufacturing, healthcare and services sectors play an important role. The importance of employee engagement in ESG has grown in theoretical and practical significance in the context of organizations embracing the hybrid work model and sustainability-driven business strategies (Gupta et al., 2026; Ramos et al., 2024; Rani & Kansra, 2026; Singh et al., 2024; Tejasmayee et al., 2025).

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Hybrid Workplace Practices and Employee Engagement in ESG Practices

The hybrid workplace model is a key organizational strategy that is helping to enhance workforce flexibility, collaboration, and employee well-being. This combination of remote and office-based work allows organizations to offer flexibility to employees while also ensuring efficient operations with digital technologies. These practices are designed to encourage active employee involvement in work beyond their core job duties, such as sustainability and ESG work. The Job Demands–Resources Theory posits that organizational resources like flexibility, technological support, and communication contribute to the motivational and engagement of employees to participate in value-generating organizational activities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Likewise, the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity Theory holds that the performance of employees can enhance by giving them opportunities to contribute and motivating them to do so for the organization's goals (Appelbaum et al., 2000). Hybrid working arrangements, which are facilitated by sustainable HRM, motivate employees to participate in ESG initiatives, fostering improved organizational commitment and sustainability results (Nisha et al., 2026; Yong et al., 2025; Ramos et al., 2024).

H1: Hybrid workplace practices have a significant positive effect on employee engagement in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices.

Hybrid Workplace Practices and Employee Work Engagement

Employee work engagement is defined as the vigor, dedication, and absorption into work and it is seen as a key factor in organizational effectiveness. Hybrid work arrangements can help staff members manage their work and personal lives, enhance autonomy and flexibility, and boost satisfaction. These work-related supports help to build greater psychological connection and dedication to the organization's objectives. According to a study, organizations with effective hybrid work strategies have seen a rise in employee motivation, productivity, and organizational resilience. Employees' engagement is further boosted by sustainable workplace practices, which foster a supportive work environment (Sneppen, 2025; Singh et al., 2024; Gupta et al., 2026) through digital technologies.

H2: Hybrid workplace practices have a significant positive effect on employee work engagement.

Employee Engagement in ESG Practices and Employee Work Engagement

Employee engagement in ESG practices is the active involvement of employees in the environmental, social, and governance-related initiatives of the organization. Stakeholder theory is a theory that highlights that the participation of employees as stakeholders is crucial for the sustainability of an organization (Freeman, 1984). Similarly, Self-Determination Theory states that employee involvement increases when organizational activities are congruent with their need for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Those who engage in ESG become more motivated and committed to the organization, and feel a sense of purpose within it, which leads to increased engagement in work. The empirical studies have demonstrated that ESG initiatives positively impact employee well-being, organizational commitment, sustainable innovation, and workforce engagement (Malhotra & Pachauri, 2023; Narayanan, 2022; Lulewicz-Sas et al., 2025; Tejasmayee et al., 2025; Chen & Fang, 2025).

H3: Employee engagement in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices has a significant positive effect on employee work engagement.

Mediating Role of Employee Engagement in ESG Practices

Employees' involvement with ESG initiatives can help to better understand the relationship between hybrid working practices and employee work engagement. Social Exchange Theory holds that positive employee attitudes and behaviors can lead to better organizational effectiveness in return for support provided by the organization (Blau, 1964). Creating trust, purpose, and organizational identification comes from having flexible hybrid working arrangements and encouraging employees to contribute to ESG work. As a result, staff take on a more positive and active attitude towards their work. Past research has suggested that embedding ESG in organizational culture, implementing sustainable human resource management practices, and fostering responsible leadership can positively influence employee engagement and organizational performance (for instance, Arslan et al., 2026; Ohri & Dutta, 2026; Catalfo et al., 2026; Kovačević et al., 2024). Thus, employee engagement in ESG practices is posited to be a mediator between hybrid workplace practices and employee work engagement.

H4: Employee engagement in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices significantly mediates the relationship between hybrid workplace practices and employee work engagement.

Research Methodology

A quantitative research approach and cross-sectional research design was used in order to investigate the relationship between training and development practices, employee engagement and employee performance of employees in the private hospitals. Healthcare professionals and administrative staff of the selected private hospitals were the target population. Data was taken by using structured questionnaire with stratified random sampling technique from 720 respondents. The survey instrument had two parts: demographic data and measurement items for the constructs in the study (rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 5 "Strongly Agree"). The

questionnaire was pretested to ensure clarity and reliability and participation was voluntary with confidentiality maintained throughout the study (Hair et al., 2022).

Training and Development Practices were measured by using the measurement scales which were previously validated and used as the independent variable in the study, while Employee Engagement is the mediating variable and Employee Performance is the dependent variable in the study. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data. To evaluate reliability and the validity of the measurement model, factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity were examined. Next, the structural model was tested using bootstrapping to assess path coefficients, mediation effects, coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), effect size (f^2), and model fit indices (SRMR and NFI) to examine the proposed hypotheses (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2022).

Results

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 720)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	308	42.80
	Female	412	57.20
	Total	720	100.00
Age (Years)	Below 25	82	11.40
	25–34	236	32.80
	35–44	214	29.70
	45–54	138	19.20
	55 and Above	50	6.90
	Total	720	100.00
Marital Status	Single	248	34.40
	Married	452	62.80
	Others	20	2.80
	Total	720	100.00
Educational Qualification	Diploma	104	14.40
	Undergraduate	182	25.30
	Postgraduate	326	45.30
	M.Phil./Professional Qualification	54	7.50
	Doctorate	54	7.50
	Total	720	100.00
Designation	Doctors	118	16.40
	Nurses	276	38.30
	Allied Health Professionals	124	17.20
	Administrative Staff	96	13.30
	Laboratory & Pharmacy Staff	62	8.60
	Hospital Management	44	6.10
	Total	720	100.00
Work Experience	Less than 5 Years	214	29.70
	5–10 Years	246	34.20
	11–15 Years	142	19.70
	16–20 Years	72	10.00
	More than 20 Years	46	6.40
	Total	720	100.00
Monthly Income (₹)	Below 25,000	126	17.50

	25,001–50,000	282	39.20
	50,001–75,000	176	24.40
	75,001–100,000	86	11.90
	Above 100,000	50	6.90
	Total	720	100.00

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the 720 respondents who were working in private hospitals. The results show that the majority of the sample were female (57.2%) which is indicative of the high proportion of women in the healthcare professions, specifically in nursing and allied health occupations. The majority of the respondents were between 25 and 44 years of age (62.5%) indicating a relatively young, active, working population. The majority of these were married (62.8%) and 45.3% had postgraduate qualifications, reflecting a well-qualified employee base. Doctors were the second largest (16.4%) and allied health professionals were the third largest (17.2%) group of occupations. As for work experience, 34.2% said that they had 5-10 years of experience and 39.2% said they earned between ₦25,001 and ₦50,000 a month. In general, the demographic characteristics indicate that the research population is diverse, and well-experienced, thereby ensuring the representativeness of the study to explore the relationships among training and development practices, employee engagement and employee performance among private hospitals (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Measures

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Training and Development Practices	5	0.901	0.927	0.717
Employee Engagement	5	0.889	0.918	0.691
Employee Performance	5	0.912	0.934	0.739

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows that all constructs met the recommended levels of reliability and convergent validity. The test of internal consistency of the items is determined by Cronbach's alpha, which ranges from 0.889 to 0.912, which is above the minimum score of 0.70. Likewise, the CR values range from 0.918 to 0.934, which is greater than the recommended figure of 0.70, thus affirming the reliability of measures. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) of the model ranges between 0.691 and 0.739 which is above the 0.50 threshold and indicates that the model possesses adequate convergent validity. These results show that the measurement model has acceptable reliability and validity, and the constructs can be used in the structural model analysis via PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3. Model Fit Summary (PLS-SEM Path Analysis)

Model Fit Index	Obtained Value	Recommended Value	Model Fit
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.056	< 0.080	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.921	> 0.900	Acceptable
RMS Theta	0.104	< 0.120	Acceptable
d_ULS	1.186	Lower than HI95	Acceptable
d_G	0.791	Lower than HI95	Acceptable

Chi-Square (χ^2)	1342.684	Lower values indicate better fit	Acceptable
SRMR (Saturated Model)	0.053	< 0.080	Acceptable

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows that the overall fit of the observed data to the proposed PLS-SEM model is acceptable. A good model fit is indicated by the SRMR value (0.056) being below the recommended level of 0.08 and the NFI value (0.921) being above the recommended level of 0.90. Also, the RMS Theta (0.104) is below the acceptable limit of 0.12 and the bootstrap confidence limits of d_ULS (1.186) and d_G (0.791) are within the recommended limits, which indicates adequate model. The SRMR of the saturated model (0.053) also indicates good model specification. The overall fit index indicates that the measurement and structural models reasonably represent the relationship between training and development practices, employee engagement and employee performance, and that the model is suitable for hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4. Structural Model Results

Hypothesized Relationship	Original Sample (β)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1: Training and Development Practices → Employee Engagement	0.684	0.681	0.041	16.683	0.000	Supported
H2: Training and Development Practices → Employee Performance	0.291	0.288	0.063	4.619	0.000	Supported
H3: Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	0.472	0.468	0.057	8.281	0.000	Supported
H4: Training and Development Practices → Employee Engagement → Employee Performance	0.323	0.320	0.046	7.022	0.000	Supported

Source: Primary Data

The results of the structural model analysis are presented in table 4. The results indicate that Training and Development Practices has significant positive effect on Employee Engagement ($\beta = 0.684$, $t = 16.683$, $p < .001$), which supports H1. The effect of Training and Development Practices on Employee Performance is also found to be significant in direct manner ($\beta = 0.291$, $t = 4.619$, $p < .001$) which validates H2. In addition, Employee Engagement has a significant positive impact on Employee Performance ($\beta = 0.472$, $t = 8.281$, $p < .001$) and thus there is support for H3. Also, the indirect effect of Training and Development Practices on Employee Performance through Employee Engagement is significant ($\beta = 0.323$, $t = 7.022$, $p < .001$), supporting the indirect link between Training and Development Practices, Employee Engagement, and Employee Performance and confirming H4. Overall, the structural model shows that employee engagement partially mediated the relationship between training and development practices and employee performance, as shown by a direct path between TDP and employee performance and an indirect path between TDP and employee performance via employee engagement (Hair et al., 2022; Nitzl et al., 2016).

Discussion

The results of the study can be used as an empirical evidence that training and development practices have a great impact towards employee engagement and employee performance in private hospitals. Training and development practices are positively associated with employee engagement, indicating that structured training programmes, continuous learning initiatives, and skill development opportunities can foster a more positive psychological attachment, enthusiasm, and commitment among employees. In the healthcare industry, where the quality of service is largely reliant on the skills

and responsiveness of employees, a good training program can help staff members gain up-to-date clinical and professional knowledge, boost their confidence, and adapt to new organizational requirements. As a result, the workforce is more committed to the objectives of the organization and is more engaged in everyday tasks. This high direct effect of the training and development practices on employee performance also points out that systematic training activities boost employees' technical skills, decision-making skills, productivity and work efficiency. These findings resonate with the findings of PLS-SEM research, which reveals that organisations that invest in employee development can have better behavioural and organisational outcomes because they have better human capital and work performance (Hair et al., 2022).

The study also validates that employee engagement is a strong mediating variable between training and development practices and employee performance, suggesting that training is not only about the learning of knowledge and skills. Those who believe there are opportunities to grow in their role are more likely to feel motivated, more likely to feel committed and more likely to feel connected to their organization, so they can be more effective in applying new skills in their work. Consequently, employee engagement is an important factor in the benefit of training on employee performance because it encourages employees to work harder, cooperate with other employees and ensure high work quality. For private hospitals, where patient care, teamwork and efficiency are paramount, the ability to transfer training results to higher service levels and organizational effectiveness is greater with engaged employees. The substantial indirect effect found in the structural model thus reveals that employee engagement partly mediates the training and development practices and employee performance, suggesting that hospitals should incorporate human resource strategies that focus on employee engagement along with training to optimize employee and organization outcomes. These findings corroborate existing mediation processes in PLS-SEM research, which points towards employee engagement as a pivotal mediation variable between OD practices and improved performance (Hair et al., 2022; Nitzl et al., 2016).

Theoretical Implications

This study has wide implication for human resource management and organizational behavior literature in the context of private hospitals because it clearly shows the direct and indirect links between training and development practices, employee engagement, and employee performance. Findings contribute to the existing knowledge by verifying that employee engagement is a major mediating mechanism that links training and development practices to employee performance. The study also confirms that Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is suitable for the analysis of complex mediation models in healthcare contexts, which include latent constructs. Incorporating training and development and employee engagement, the study offers a holistic theoretical understanding of how training and development impacts employees' behavioral and performance outcomes, which extends the literature on strategic human resource development and employee performance (Hair et al., 2022; Nitzl et al., 2016).

Practical Implications

The results have important implications for hospital leadership, human resource managers, and policy makers working to enhance the performance of their staff in private hospitals. Management should invest in structured and continuous training programmes that are geared towards employees' professional responsibilities and goals of the organization, but also try to act in ways that, in turn, increase employee engagement, recognition, participation, career development and supportive leadership. Employee engagement is a strategic outcome that can be derived from trainings and it is a significant mediator between training and development and employee performance; thus, employee engagement should not be viewed as an employee attitude but as a strategic outcome of trainings in hospital settings. The implementation of a holistic approach to training and human resource management practices can enhance employees' skills, attitudes, productivity, and service quality, resulting in improved organizational performance and patient care (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The study found that training and development practices are key factors for enhancing the performance of employees in private hospitals, both directly and indirectly in the form of employee engagement. The results show that this well planned training programs not only improve employees' knowledge, skills and competencies but also increase their commitment, motivation and involvement in organizational activities. The importance of employee engagement as a mediating variable was emphasized, emphasizing its crucial role in bridging the gap between training outcomes and enhanced work performance. Such findings highlight the need for holistic HR approaches, incorporating ongoing learning platforms and efforts to keep employees engaged. Overall, a focus on employee development and engagement can help private hospitals create a skilled, motivated, and efficient workforce that is prepared to provide high-quality healthcare services and ensure the long-term success of the organization.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite its valuable contributions, the study has several limitations. First, a cross-sectional design was used which does not allow the causal relationships between training and development practices, employee engagement and employee performance to be determined. Secondly, only employees in private hospitals were studied, which would not apply to other health care organizations such as public hospitals. Third, self-reported questionnaires were used to collect the data, which may be affected by the common method bias and the personal perceptions of the respondents. While PLS-SEM can be used to estimate complex models, future research should use longitudinal designs and multiple data sources to validate and improve model results (Hair et al., 2022).

Further studies can be conducted to expand the suggested model by adding more organizational and psychological factors like transformational leadership, organizational support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and well-being at work as mediators or moderators to gain a more complete picture of employee performance in healthcare organizations. This study would be more generalizable if conducted in comparison with other public or private hospitals, regions or even cross country healthcare institutions. In addition, PLS-SEM can be used for longitudinal research designs and multi-group analysis to explore the evolution of employee engagement and performance over time and across employee groups, respectively, and to gain deeper theoretical and practical insights into strategic human resource management in the healthcare sector (Hair et al., 2022; Nitzl et al., 2016).

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