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Impact of internal marketing on employee retention: The role of organizational trust and employee engagement

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ABSTRACT

Retention of the employees is very important for the success of organization. Therefore, main objective of this study was to examine the effect of different factors namely trust, internal marketing and engagement on the retention. Moreover, this study also aimed to examine these findings on the basis of genders. The data was collected from the employees of telecom sector. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of constructs developed from the literature review of past studies. The data was collected by using random sampling. The usable response rate of the study was 67.21%. The collected data was assessed using ANOVA through SPSS. The findings of the study revealed that retention of the employees players is significantly affected by trust, internal marketing and engagement. Moreover, internal marketing and trust also have positive impact on engagement. In the end, same results were reported by both genders in this study. These results are helpful for the policy makers to retain their employees. This study also discusses future directions in detail.

Keywords: Retention, trust, Internal marketing, engagement, Gender

INTRODUCTION

There is immense competition in the world of business world today (Gratton, Shibli, & Coleman, 2020). Moreover, organizational success is also dependent on its employees, as they play a vital role in achieving organizational objectives. Organizations strive to accomplish their goals and maintain a competitive position through continuous efforts, employee commitment, and effective performance. Employees often face workplace challenges, competition, and interpersonal conflicts that may influence their performance and organizational relationships. Successful organizations are characterized by their employees' dedication, discipline,

professional competence, and commitment to achieving organizational goals. Therefore, retaining key employees is essential for ensuring long-term organizational success, stability, and sustainability (Baker, Schorer, & Wattie, 2018).

There is no exception for the sports organization as well. The main HR in the context of sports is the coach of the team and no one can deny the importance of team. Siegfried (2023) The importance of organizational leadership in achieving organizational success cannot be overlooked. To accomplish strategic objectives, management plays an integral role in creating a professional and competitive working environment. Therefore, organizations increasingly adopt business-oriented approaches and management practices similar to those implemented by successful corporate organizations to enhance operational effectiveness, employee performance, and long-term organizational sustainability (Ruoranen, 2018). These include leadership, public relations, recruitment, scheduling, budgeting, organizing, and planning. Therefore, dual role in the form of educator and manager is performed leaders. In the form of management role, they control, direct, organize and plan the activities of the employee as objective to be successful (Hoye, Misener, Naraine, & Ordway, 2022).

In the competitive environment, trust plays very vital role in the success of the organization along with creation of efficiency and effectiveness. There is main role of trust among employees and management in order to be successful, efficient and effective. Trust of employees on themselves is also a key component of trust within the team. Trust within the organization is referred as employees that are working together. It is one of the facts that trusted employees are few of the most successful teams. It is important to follow the organizational change so they can develop trust within the organization (Gullu, Sahin, & Kiziloglu, 2018). Presently, it is strategically important for the organizations to develop trust among all stakeholders of the teams including team players, management and other stakeholders. If there is inappropriate behavior of any of the stakeholders, it will lead to mistrust among all of them (B. Kim & Jung, 2017).

Internal marketing plays a vital role in organizational success by recognizing employees as internal customers whose needs and expectations must be addressed. Organizations implement internal marketing practices through effective communication, employee training, motivation, empowerment, rewards, and

professional development (Brown, Pattinson, Sutherland, & Davies, 2025). These practices strengthen employees' satisfaction, commitment, and sense of belonging, encouraging them to contribute more effectively towards organizational objectives. Moreover, understanding employees' expectations and responding to their concerns helps organizations develop positive workplace relationships and retain talented individuals (Nemteanu & Dabija, 2021). Consequently, internal marketing enhances employee performance, improves service quality, and strengthens organizational competitiveness, long-term growth, and sustainability.

In the context of human resource and management perspective, engagement of the employee is discussed a number of times. Same has its application in the context of sports as well (Svensson, Jeong, Shuck, & Otto, 2021). Studies have given importance to the concept of engagement as the priority to the leadership. Moreover, they are constantly looking for factors that can play role in engaging the skilled manpower. The decision makers are tested on daily basis in order to determine different mechanism by which they can retain their skilled manpower. Therefore, engagement of the employee is one of the daunting tasks. The factor of engagements is impacted by a number of different factors like rewards, job safety and satisfaction (including many other) (Gumasing, Rendon, & German, 2023). The scholars of sports management argued that engagement of the employees (players in context of sports) is a very important construct in sports industry. The players who are more committed, energetic and passionate are more engaged to their tasks (Liyanaarachchi, 2017).

It is concluded in a recent study that professionalism and competition in management studies is mounting rapidly. Therefore, coaching staff is very vital to retain, groom, recruit and identify the key players (Okwakpam, 2019). Because of the key role of the coaching staff, it is important for the sports team to retain every human resource so they can face challenges in the competitive environment and sustain in the sports industry (Weight, Taylor, Huml, & Dixon, 2021). Therefore, this study is designed to examine the impact of factors like trust, internal marketing and engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee retention

Employee retention in literature is referred as ability of the organization to retain the quality employees. The rate of retention is most of the times referred as goals and percentage to be high and minimizing the turnover rate by promoting positive

environment and appreciating the employees who are performing well (Zainal et al., 2022). It is also important to encourage healthy life balance, and pay rewards to the employees.

It is very important to understand the reason for which employees stay in the organization and the reason for which they leave the organization. When the employees are involved in civic and professional lives, employees develop their network of relationships and contacts. Because of these relationships, employees are encouraged to spend most of their times to their occupation (M. Kim, Perrewé, Kim, & Kim, 2017). These social networks are rearranged when these employees leave their job. If there is integration among employee and organization, it is more likely that employee will like to stay in that organization (Becker & Fiske, 2022). Moreover, if the employees are comfortable in their current role, it is very less probability that they will try to opt new position in any other organization. By using the mechanism of interview, employers can understand the intention of the employees. The performance of the employee is affected by the environment of the team. It is very important for the employers to assess the intentions of the employees so they can understand their future goals (Zhenjing, Chupradit, Ku, Nassani, & Haffar, 2022).

For the development of team cohesion and team building within the organization, employee retention plays very important role. It is also vital so that employees can depend and trust on each other. Diminished competitiveness and productivity are some of the major losses if skilled employees leave the organization. If the turnover rate of the organization is high, it will be harmful for the organization to carry out their goals (Coetzer, Inma, & Poisat, 2017). There will be high cost of replacement if skilled employees leave the firm. The moral of the team is negatively affected as well if any important member of the team leaves the firm. Other stakeholders are also negatively affected if any key member of the organization leaves the firm.

Employee engagement

In literature, employee engagement is explained by Shuck, Osam, Zigarmi, and Nimon (2017) as three basic elements as behavioral engagement, emotional engagement and cognitive engagement. By combining these factors, the experience of employee engagement is developed (Saks, Gruman, & Zhang, 2022). In past studies cognitive engagement is defined as “the intensity of mental energy expressed toward positive organizational outcomes” (Shuck, Adelson, & Reio Jr, 2017). On the other hand,

emotional engagement is referred as openness of the employees to invest resources so the positive organizational outcome can be achieved. There is relationship among emotional and cognition engagement. Whereas, behavioral engagement is referred as organizational intention to act in a certain way so the performance is impacted (Y.-H. Huang et al., 2016). The adaptive requirements of the organizations are mentioned in literature and mentioned that employees who are engaged with their work often take important initiatives in different circumstances that are important for their work. Researchers also referred that expected role is performed by the individual who is behaviourally engaged to the job. If the employee feels that value is given to the employee by the organization, the turnover rate will decrease and extra effort will be input to achieve organizational outputs (Al Balushi, Thumiki, Nawaz, Jurcic, & Gajenderan, 2022).

Engagement and Retention

Studies have mentioned four different reasons for which the employee who is engaged often performs better than the remaining employees (Kumar & Kapoor, 2019). Firstly, positive emotions in the form of enthusiasm, joy and happiness are experienced by the engaged employees. Secondly, the health of the employee who is engaged is better. Thirdly, personal and job resources are created by the engaged employees. In the end, the engagement of the employees is transferred to the others as well. The work environment that is hostile, sense of loyalty is created by the engagement. It boosts the retention and trust among the employees (Bhat & Bharel, 2018).

Past studies demonstrated that engagement of the employees has significant effect on the retention, productivity and profitability of the organization. Whereas, four reasons for which employee productivity is increased among engaged employees is discussed by the researchers (Al-Omar et al., 2019). Firstly, production is increased because positive feeling is developed among the motivated employee. Second, engaged employees are more receptive to their work, hopefulness and assurance. Thirdly, well-being of the worker has positive relationship with employee engagement. In the end, engaged worker has the ability to generate their own resources. Bond (2022) also mentioned that personal resources such as self-esteem and self-efficacy are also linked to work engagement.

The findings of the study Mxenge, Dywili, and Bazana (2014) revealed that intention to quit and job engagement are highly linked to each other. They showed that the

people having low level of engagement are more likely to switch their jobs. Another study was carried out by Dell, Gervis, and Rhind (2016) to examine the factors that affect intention to quit. According to the findings, communication is one of the major obstacles to quit the job. Employee engagement has significant role in retaining the talented personals. Talent retention is the organizational ability to hire the talented employee and develop mechanism to retain them.

More direct factors include financial rewards. It is developed on relationship of trust among the organization and the employee on other factors than financial ones as well. There is need to develop sound strategy by which likelihood will be increased that valuable talent can be developed after being attracted by the organization (Whysall, Owtram, & Brittain, 2019). Such strategy is also important to retain the employees and teal players for the longer period of time. This strategy includes integration of talent development, talent acquisition and coaching. There are few duties in which talent retention is broken down and need consideration to have big impact. It is based on things like acquisition and development of talent to have significant effect on certain situations.

In the context of sports, it is one of the big challenges to retain the internal stakeholder for the longer period of time. According to past studies, in terms of engagement literature shows the outcome of turnover. These studies suggest that the individual who is engaged with the team will also retained for the longer period of time (Ashraf & Siddiqui, 2020). It means that promoting higher level of engagement having serve as the potential of factor to minimize the turnover and enhance the retention of employees (Svensson et al., 2021).

H1: Engagement has significant positive effect on Retention.

Trust and Engagement

Trust in literature is defined as “people displaying behaviours mutually with each other as part of the scope of universal moral rules” (Bastug, Pala, Kumartasli, Günel, & Duyan, 2016). The trust is a process that has certain impact on the behaviour of the individuals within the organizational structure in a feeling of sincerity, commitment, belief and accuracy. Level of trust within the teams and organizations plays an integral role in developing organizational periods and activities such as formation of team spirit, leadership, setting an objective, performance evaluation, and development of

cooperative behavior. All these factors lead to the satisfaction of employees and team players (Onyeizugbe, Orogbu, Mande, & Michael, 2018).

In order to develop positive job attitude, level of trust plays very important role. In other words, trust is the important predictor of engagement (Basit, 2021). Trust has linkage with other factors as well such as behaviour and perception of stakeholders, organizational survival, innovation and profits of the firm as well. The level of trust among the employees explains the effectivity of the employees in job completion. Moreover, employee's rewards that are offered to employees in job completion. It means that the employee who has certain level of trust will go extra mile as the main characteristic of engagement (Jiang & Luo, 2018). Therefore, there is relationship among trust and engagement.

The relationship among trust and engagement can be explained in different studies (Matin, Khoshtaria, & Tutberidze, 2020). Some of the researchers considered it as the exchange relationship among both parties. The level of trust among the stakeholders shapes the level of perception and relationship between employees and organization. The economic and social principles define the base of exchange relationships among trust and engagement. If the organization values the well-being of the employees, it will have impact on the trust level of the employees. Past studies also revealed empirically that trust has significant relationship with engagement (AlAwadhi, 2019; Downey, Van der Werff, Thomas, & Plaut, 2015). Similar findings were reported by Mohanty and P (2021). Who mentioned that level of trust among leaders and participant develop engagement among the team members. Furthermore, trust also has significant positive effect on retention of the employees. the study by Chitsaz-Isfahani and Boustani (2014) showed positive effect of trust on retention of an employee within an organization. On the basis of above discussion, we hypothesize that

H2: Trust has significant positive effect on engagement.

H3: Trust has significant positive effect in retention.

Internal Marketing, trust and Engagement

Internal marketing refers to organizational practices designed to recognize employees as internal customers and address their needs, expectations, and professional requirements. Organizations develop internal marketing strategies through effective communication, training and development, empowerment, managerial support, and

employee-oriented policies (Y.-T. Huang, 2019). These practices aim to strengthen employees' satisfaction, commitment, and engagement while creating a supportive working environment. Previous studies have highlighted that internal marketing contributes to improved employee performance and organizational outcomes (Toma & Kant, 2024). Moreover, internal marketing strengthens employees' psychological attachment to organizations by developing a sense of organizational support, mutual understanding, and trust. When employees perceive that organizations value their contributions and respond to their expectations, they are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes, stronger engagement, and reciprocal commitment. Effective internal communication, managerial support, and employee empowerment further reinforce trust in organizational management (Baca & Aliu, 2026). Organizational trust also encourages employees to maintain long-term relationships with their employers and reduces their intentions to leave. Therefore, internal marketing is considered an important organizational strategy for enhancing employee engagement, developing organizational trust, and ensuring employee retention (Rasool, Hassan, & Shahab, 2019).

H4: Internal Marketing has significant positive effect on engagement

H5: Internal Marketing has significant positive effect on trust.

H6: Internal Marketing has positive effect on retention.

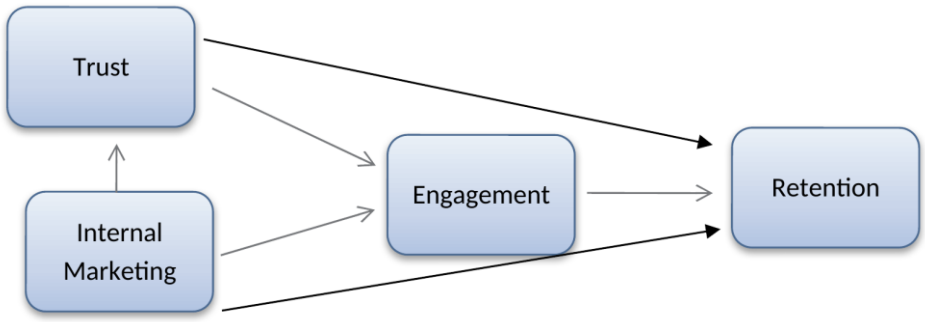

Figure 1. *Research framework*

METHODOLOGY

This research used quantitative and descriptive research design methodology. In this study, statistical methods were used to analyse and measure the variables. The population of the present study were the employees of telecom sector. The data was collected in the form of questionnaires developed from past studies. These questionnaires were distributed among respondents using simple random sampling.

The questionnaire was distributed among 250 respondents. The response rate of the study was 67.21%. These questions were developed through literature review of the past studies. Constructs of each study were developed from the past studies. The instruments of data collection were derived from variables that were used in past literature review. They were found robust in terms of reliability and validity.

Analysis of the results based on the Hypothesis derived from literature and on PI. The PI tested with the help of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and tests of Cronbach's α. On the basis of principle component analysis joint with the varimax rotation the factoring was done. PCA based on criterion of Kaiser Eigenvalue rule, factor extraction was completed. In this criterion the factor having eigenvalue more than or equals to will be retained. Moreover, scree test of Cattell was performed in which all factors break in plot or above elbow are retained, because of their high contribution in most of the explanation of variance set of data (Cattell, 1966). There was a lot of criticism on both above-mentioned tests due to overestimating the components number (Zwick & Velicer, 1986). To avoid criticism the researcher performed parallel test of Horn (1965) Montecarlo test of principle component analysis developed by Watkins and Glutting (2000). The parallel approach is considered most appropriate for the identification of correct components to be retained in factor analysis. It involves the components having size of eigenvalue with the components from randomly generated data set of the similar size. For the effective factor analysis there is no agreement among the researchers about the size of the data set. According to Pallant and Tennant (2007) large sample size is better than the small size because the correlation coefficient among variables varies from sample to sample and less reliable. Therefore, researcher considered the data of 250 respondents to meet the requirement of minimum sample size for the factor analysis. Nunnally (1978) recommended the minimum sample size as the ratio of 10 to 1 (10 cases for each item) for the factor under consideration. Moreover, it is recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) for the investigation of correlation evidence must be greater than 0.3. If few coefficients are greater than 0.3, the analysis will not be appropriate. In case of current study most of the correlations of all five scales were greater than 0.30 that indicates that data set is suitable for further analysis. Prior to the testing of the model, normality of the data was tested. This was done through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test statistic. In this test the significance value less than 0.05 demonstrate the deviation from normality. Internal marketing the value of correlation is 0.07 i.e. significant 0.05, for trust the value is 0.16, for

engagement is 0.15 and for retention the value if 0.08 indicating the normality of data. Hypotheses were derived from the literature using ANOVA (Spearman's rank correlation and analysis of variance).

FINDINGS

Table 1 demonstrates the mean scores of constructs of this study. Trust consists of the three constructs with propensity of belief have the highest score (X=5.825, σ=1.332). Information content has lowest score with (X=4.323, σ=1.226). Internal marketing consists of 2 components inward and outward, while internal marketing has highest value with (X=5.221, σ=1.037) and inward internal marketing having mean value (X=4.546, σ=1.493). Engagement consists of three components in which long duration have highest mean score with (X=5.783, σ=1.271) while energy has lowest mean score with (X=4.976, σ=1.065). Retention has three constructs in which the management has highest score with X=5.980, σ=1.131. Recognition has lowest score with (X=4.207, σ=1.027). With respect to the global variable considering all sub-scales the average score of all variables is higher than 3.5 (median). Retention has highest mean score with (X=4.531, σ=1.142). The data demonstrates that trust and internal marketing have relatively low mean scores.

Table 1. *Mean scores*

Variables (Construct)	constructs		Mean	SD
Trust	Propensity		5.825	1.332
	Competence		5.261	1.114
	Information content		4.323	1.226
Internal Marketing				
	Inwards		4.546	1.493
	outwards		5.221	1.037
Engagement	Duration		5.783	1.271
	energy		4.976	1.065
	meaning		5.656	1.112
Retention	Encouraging		4.332	1.421
	management		5.980	1.131
	recognition		4.207	1.027
	respect		5.446	1.022
Global variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Trust	1.14	6.67	4.012	1.023
Internal Marketing	1.42	7.00	3.687	1.128
Engagement	1.69	6.43	4.332	1.020

Variables (Construct)	constructs		Mean	SD
Retention	1.32	6.22	4.531	1.142

To test the reliability, factor ability and validity of the constructs Cronbach's α and principal component analysis was used. The construct's suitability was of data was assessed for factor analysis before of performing the principal component analysis. This was done by KMO and Barler test, based on sample size adequacy. The table 3 shows that values of KMO exceed 0.60 (Trust=0.878, internal marketing =0.768, Engagement =0.841 and Retention=0.792) as defined by Kaiser (1970). According to Bartlett's test of sphericity all scales are statistically significant (the value of significance is 0.000). Thus, all results support the correlation matric's factorability. For all four scales to determine the reliability, Cronbach α was computed and we see that all the constructs have reliability greater than 0.70, as defined by the scholars like Nunnally (1978) for the satisfactory level of reliability the value of α must be greater than 0.70. In the factor analysis using varimax all the items of the construct have loadings greater than 0.40 except the scale of engagement. In the engagement scale only 12 were retained.

Table 2. *KMO*

Construct	Trust	internal marketing	Engagement	Retention
Items	7	8	15	9
KMO adequacy of sample	0.878	0.768	0.841	0.792
Bartlett's test of sphericity (Approx. X2)	1515.937	1716.839	3290.125	2813.045
d.f	26	28	408	116
Significance	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Un standardized Cronbach's a	0.726	0.864	0.789	0.886
Standardized Cronbach's a	0.736	0.865	0.799	0.887
PCA	61.70	59.8	62.7	65.43

Hypothesis testing

To test the association among the global variables spearman's rank correlation was conducted. Researcher found the positive significance association between the trust and internal marketing (r=0.346 significant at 0.000). Engagement and trust are positively significantly correlated (r=0.242 significant at 0.000). Retention and trust are positively significantly correlated (r=0.146 significant at 0.000). Engagement and internal marketing are positively significantly correlated (r=0.298 significant at 0.000). Retention and internal marketing are positively significantly correlated (r=0.351 significant at 0.000). Furthermore, retention and engagement are positively significantly correlated (r=0.362 significant at 0.000). Although all variables are

positively significantly correlated but the magnitude of relationship is weak 35% to 36%. It shows that there may be other constructs of the retention of team and can be explored later.

Table 3. *Correlation*

Variables	1	2	3	4
Trust	1			
Internal Marketing significance	0.346 (0.000)	1		
Engagement significance	0.242 (0.000)	0.298 (0.000)	1	
Retention significance	0.146 (0.000)	0.351 (0.000)	0.362 (0.000)	1

Table 4.

	Trust	internal marketing	Engagement	Retention
MALE				
Minimum	2.01	2.32	1.16	2.10
Maximum	6.89	7.00	6.67	6.70
Mean	4.09	5.85	4.87	5.32
SD	1.06	1.12	1.09	1.14
Female				
Minimum	1.98	2.21	1.27	2.26
Maximum	7.00	6.92	6.83	6.81
Mean	4.23	5.35	4.26	4.96
SD	1.17	1.48	1.21	1.66

ANOVA table shows that there is no significant difference among the two groups about the retention of team. Although there is a significant difference in case of engagement and the magnitude was quite small that is 0.038

Table 5. *ANOVA*

	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	Significance	Levene statistic	Significance	ϩ squared
Trust								
Within group	0.051	1	0.051	0.086	0.772	0.002	0.943	
Between group	191.316	248	0.771					
Total	191.367	249						
Internal marketing								
Within group	0.041	1	0.041	0.046	0.828	0.142	0.705	
Between group	286.619	248	1.155					
Total	286.66	249						
Engagement								
Within group	6.525	1	6.525	10.629	0.001	0.017	0.895	0.038
Between group	169.858	248	0.685					
Total	176.383	249						

	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean square	F	Significance	Levene statistic	Significance	ϩ squared
Retention								
Within group	0.657	1	0.657	1.276	0.261	2.922	0.088	
Between group	142.969	248	57.65					
Total	143.626	249						

Therefore, gender would not affect the team retention process among football teams

DISCUSSION

Engagement of the sports team player is the key for the success of the sports team. It is similar to the engagement of employees within the organization. Therefore, it is important to find out the factors that can help in the retention of the sports team players. This research was designed to assess the effect of factors like engagement, trust and internal marketing on retention of employees. The findings of the study pointed that engagement is the key predictor of retention. It is very important organizations to retain the skilled player in their organization. The employee who is retained will not look to change the organization. These employees are retained because they feel that the environment is friendly. Also, the management is dealing with them fairly. These findings are similar to the findings (Svensson et al., 2021).

The findings suggest that internal marketing plays a significant role in developing organizational trust, employee engagement, and retention. When organizations consider employees as internal customers and address their professional needs through effective communication, managerial support, empowerment, and development opportunities, employees develop greater confidence in organizational management. Such practices create a supportive working environment where employees feel valued, respected, and psychologically connected with their organizations. Moreover, organizational efforts to facilitate employees strengthen their willingness to reciprocate through greater involvement, enthusiasm, and dedication towards assigned responsibilities. Employees who experience supportive internal marketing practices are also more likely to develop long-term relationships with their employers, as organizational support reduces dissatisfaction and intentions to leave. Thus, internal marketing strengthens workforce stability and organizational sustainability.

The result of the study also shows that trust has significant positive effect on engagement of the employees. In general, employee wants to stray in the organization

where the management have trust on the employee. Similar employees must have trust among each other. By the development of trust, they can better have plans. Moreover, one of the plausible reasons for these findings is that employees think that they trust the management. Moreover, the management is upfront and open with them. They are also of the view that intentions and motives of the employees are good. Additionally, they also expect that management will treat them better. Trust among the team members develops team cohesion and psychological safety. It is also a source of effective communication among internal stakeholders. Reliability of the employees is also ensured by the high level of trust among the team players of both genders. In past, the findings of Mohanty and P (2021) also revealed same findings. On the other hand, trust has significant impact on the retention of employees. As the trust develop easiness among the employees. Therefore, they do not prefer to switch or quit the organization as long. This result is similar to the results of Chitsaz-Isfahani and Boustani (2014).

In the end, the findings of the study also revealed that gender of the respondents do not have any difference in terms of retention of team players. They have same application of internal marketing, trust and engagement factors. Male and Females both give same importance to the factor of internal marketing and trust. These factors have same importance for the retention of male and female.

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