Career growth and development: the buzzword is continuing education

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the importance of continuing education among employees in information technology companies in India. The study identifies the factors which influence employees for continuing education and its impact on their career growth and development. A systematic survey of the 315 employees working in the top ten IT companies was conducted to accumulate primary data. The analysis of the study stipulates that factors including – financial investment, time requirements for completing the course, employment opportunities and acquiring new skills play an important role among employees for continuing education. This study also reveals that continuing education has a positive impact on career growth and development. With the help of continuing education, employees get professional growth (better career opportunities, job security, salary increment, and promotion) and personal growth (personality development, development of interpersonal skills, development of technical skills and self-confidence).

Keywords: continuing education; career development; professional growth; IT companies.

Biographical notes: Preeti Bhaskar is a working as a faculty at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Ibra, Oman and a Research Scholar at the ICFAI University, Dehradun, India. She possesses nine years of teaching experience in the area of human resource management. Her research interest includes technology adoption, e-government, job performance, job satisfaction, sustainable development, continuing education and e-learning. She has published research papers in many reputed journals (ABDC and SCOPUS) and presented research papers at various national and international conferences. She has also authored two books on ‘general management’ and published two case studies in Case Centre, the UK. She has also completed two minor research projects sponsored by the Symbiosis International University, Pune. She is actively engaged in conducting student development programs and faculty development programs at various colleges and universities.

Amit Joshi is a triple postgraduate in Economics, Commerce and English. He has completed his Master’s Diploma in International Trade from the Symbiosis, Pune. He has been awarded a degree of MPhil in Economics and Doctorate in English. Currently, he is working as the Head of the Department at the ICFAI Business School, ICFAI University, Dehradun. His area of expertise includes English, business communication and life skills. He has more than 18 years of teaching experience and has several research publications in various reputed journals to his credit. He has also authored the poetry book Stimulus: From Darkness to Light (A Collection of Motivational Poems). He has presented research papers at several national and international conferences that include places like Dusseldorf, Germany, Saint Petersburg, Russia, University of Dubai, etc. His research interests include communication strategy, the art of writing, personal effectiveness, marginal productivity theory, trickle-down effect and communication modelling.

Gaurav Chopra is an Assistant Professor at the School of Management, IMS Unison University, Dehradun, India. He is an MBA, PhD and UGC-NET qualified and having diversified experience of more than six years in teaching and research. He has also served in specialised academic institutes of healthcare and aviation. He has published papers in various refereed journals of repute. He has also participated and presented research papers in various national and international conferences. He has participated actively in various workshops of data analysis like SPSS, structural equation modelling through AMOS, R programming, and financial econometrics using e-views. His areas of interest are economics, business analytics, and e-learning.

1 Introduction

Education in most countries is synonymous with employment, the first objective of getting degrees is to get a job and live a decent life. Once an employee gets into the job and comfort zone, they do not wish to continue their education. The education of employees gained during their tenure becomes obsolete in terms of knowledge and skills. Employees working with information technology (IT) sector are more prone to become outdated because of dynamic nature of the IT industry. With the fourth industrial revolution, everyday new technological development takes place and every company wants to be the leader in this cut-throat competition. The ultimate pressure comes on the employee to meet the demands of the companies. IT companies need knowledgeable, skilful, and talented employees. Though India’s digitally skilled workforce is growing at
approximately 20% annually, but demand is likely to rise at a compounded annual growth rate of about 30% by the year 2030 (Barua, 2020). India IT companies are facing a major talent crunch because employees are not having the required knowledge and skills to match the company’s requirements. According to the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), four million IT workforces will be required to enhance their skills in the upcoming years to keep up with the accelerating pace of technological developments in various areas (Sangani, 2018). World Economic Forum estimated that the talent demand-supply gap in artificial intelligence and big data analytics is expected to grow from 62,000 to 140,000 by the year 2030.

To stay pertinent in this sector, employees need to upgrade themselves, or else they will be out of the job market. Employees need to understand that continuing education is the only way to upgrade themselves to fulfil the IT companies’ requirements. Though some companies like Wipro are using a skill-based learning framework to enhancing employees’ technical knowledge by giving credit point for completing technical certifications and technical training courses in artificial intelligence, internet of things, big data analytics, blockchain, cloud computing, machine learning, virtual reality intelligent automation, etc. IT companies’ employees need to cope up with rapid technological changes to match the global industrial requirements. Existing employees also need to fulfil the job requirement of the company or they will be replaced by new talent. Many IT employees wish to continue education but unable to register for continuing education due to many reasons. Literature shows that employee needs time for studying and completing the course (Bayar, 2013). IT companies’ employees have a heavy workload and odd working hours so employees do not get time for continuing education. Many times employees wish to earn extra certification program but due to high cost, they postpone for the future (McKay and Sappa, 2019). Within the stipulated time, the employee becomes obsolete for IT companies and no more employable in the job market. Therefore employees need to understand the role of continuing education for career growth and development. This paper focuses on the importance of continuing education among employees in IT companies in India. The study also identifies the factors which influence employees for continuing education and its impact on their career growth and development.

The paper is organised as follows: Section 1 presents an introduction to continuing education; Section 2 consists the review of literature on continuing education factors and dimensions of career growth and development; Section 3 focuses on proposed conceptual framework; Section 4 describes the research methodology; Section 5 data analysis discussion; Section 6 concludes the study with implication and Section 7 highlight the limitation and future scope of the study.

2 Review of literature

2.1 Importance of continuing education among employees

Continuing education enhances proficiency among the employees also enables their chances of getting a promotion (Loveless, 2019) and additional skills and knowledge benefits (Nagovitsyn et al., 2019). A well-trained and well-educated employees help companies to achieve long-term viability and profitability. Literature review proves that continuing education improves the chances of promotion, higher salary, and employee
marketability in the job market, obtain new skills and knowledge, personal development improved self-image and helps in career transition (Fraley and Schaefer, 2017). The importance of continuing education among employees has been studied in various sectors like nursing (Sharma and Panthi, 2018; Ousey and Roberts, 2013); education (Adu and Okeke, 2014; Wan and Lam, 2010); medical (Howard-McNatt et al., 2019; Cullen et al., 2019); business process outsourcing sector (Priya et al., 2015); accounting and auditing (Reinstein et al., 2019); agriculture (Martin, 2018); engineering (Bourne et al., 2005) but none of the studies focused on the IT sector which requires utmost attention in the present scenario. Table 1 illustrates shows the research studies done on continuing education in various sectors. This study will be the first attempt to address the importance of continuing education among employees of IT companies in India.

Table 1 Importance of continuing education in various sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business process outsourcing</td>
<td>Priya et al. (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Martin (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Baukal (2010), Bourne et al. (2005) and Mi et al. (2005)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Factors influencing employees for continuing education

To conduct any activity first we lay down the objectives followed by the justification of the objectives. The question that arises is why employees should go for further education and how they can be motivated to opt for it. The IT industry is dynamic and keep on changing their requirement and look for specific credentials and skills for projects and positions IT companies’ employees need to cope up with rapid technological changes to match the global industrial requirements. Existing employees need to fulfil the job requirement of the company or they may be replaced by new employees who possess those skills. Many IT employees wish to continue education but unable to register for continuing education due to many reasons. Literature shows that employee needs time for
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studying and completing the course (Bayar, 2013). Many times employees want to go for higher education or certification program but due to high fees, they do not opt to continue education (McKay and Sappa, 2019). Garuba (2004) adduced financial difficulties, lack of information on the continuing education programs, and unawareness of the potential benefit on professional output are the reasons for non-participation in continuing education. Employee wants to register for those courses which can enhance their knowledge and keep them updated with the latest trend and technological advancement (Nagovitsyn et al., 2019). IT employees are needed in nearly every industry which further raises global competition among them. Employees want to enrol in continue education when they find that course can offer better employment opportunities (Curran et al., 2019). Based on the above literature, it can be observed that time requirement, financial support, acquiring new knowledge, and employment opportunities can influence IT employees for continuing education.

2.3 **Time requirement**

Continuing education for IT employees is even more challenging due to long working hours, heavy workload, and odd time work schedule. IT employees face mounting workloads which limit the time for registering for education and training courses (Global Knowledge, 2020). Employees need time to participate in a continuing education course for upgrading their knowledge and skills. Working and studying at the same time requires organisation and family support. Employees look for flexibility in the work schedule from the employers for completing the course (Adu and Okeke, 2014; Anhwere, 2013). Time constraints discourage employees from applying for further education which limits their future career growth and development. Thus following hypothesis is proposed:

H1 (a) Time requirements for completing the course is significantly important for influencing employees for continuing education.

2.4 **Employment opportunities**

IT employees change companies in pursuit of better career growth and development opportunities. According to Global Knowledge (2020), IT employees outweigh career growth over a higher salary. Gaymer (2020) concluded that employees use continuing education for upward career mobility, job enhancement, and personal enrichment. IT employees need additional education qualification in emerging areas like big data, artificial intelligence to increase their marketability in the job market. Employees with new skills are hot candidates for the market and always get better hikes when they switch to other companies. The companies look for potential employees who can make a difference in the job by contributing innovatively (Adu and Okeke, 2014; Brekelmans et al., 2013). Due to additional qualification employees get better job and promotion opportunities. Thus following hypothesis is proposed:

H1 (b) Employment opportunities is significantly important for influencing employees for continuing education.
2.5 Financial support

IT employees have a strong desire to learn and grow their careers. Financial support provided by the employer for continuing education play a very important role. A lack of budget and resources is another major concern for IT employees for continuing education (Global Knowledge, 2020). Employees need to pay a huge amount of fees for upgrading their knowledge by making registration in various technical and non-technical courses. They look for financial support from their organisation for enrolling in these courses (Adu and Okeke, 2014; Anhwere, 2013; Daniels and Walter, 2002). Lack of financial support by the companies demotivates employees for not pursuing continuing education. Thus following hypothesis is proposed:

H1 (c) Financial investment is significantly important for influencing employees for continuing education.

2.6 Acquiring new knowledge and skills

IT employees need to hone their skills to cope with digital transformation. Continuing education directly helps the employees in enhancing knowledge and skills (Adu and Okeke, 2014; Brekelmans et al., 2013; Gaymer, 2020). IT employees cannot afford to stagnate and need to learn new technology. IT employees make personal exploration with emerging technologies like data analytics, cloud computing, virtual reality for working on innovative projects. They upgrade their education continuously so that they can match the company requirement.

Possessing special knowledge and skills helps employees to stand out from the crowd when it is time for a promotion or new employment. Thus following hypothesis is proposed:

H1 (d) Acquiring new knowledge and skills is significantly important for influencing employees for continuing education.

Table 2 shows the factors which influence employees for continuing education.

Table 2 Factors influencing employees for continuing education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time requirements for completing the course</td>
<td>Sharma and Panthi (2018), Adu and Okeke (2014), Neagu (2014), Anhwere (2013) and Stolee et al. (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring new knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Neagu (2014), Adu and Okeke (2014), Brekelmans et al. (2013), Whitaker et al. (2010), Gaymer (2020) and Stolee et al. (2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Career growth and development

Continuing education enhances the skills and personality of the employees thereby provides opportunities and support for career growth and development. Pew Research Center survey found that 87% of employees believe that continued training and education are essential to keep up with changes in the workplace (Raine and Anderson, 2017). IT employees want the opportunity to grow as personally and professionally. They are willing to leave their jobs for career progression and willing to quit jobs for more learning and development opportunities (Hillen, 2019). Laal et al. (2014) categorised benefits of continuing education into skills development, academic development, and personal development. Continuing education improves the chances of promotion opportunities, increases bargaining power for higher wages, enhance job marketability, career transition, personal development, and enhance self-image (Loveless, 2019). Continuing education creates opportunities for both professional development and personal skill enhancement. Based on the above literature review, career growth and development can be categorised in personal growth and professional growth dimensions.

2.8 Personal growth

Employees always want their self-development by increasing their knowledge and skills. In an ever-evolving IT industry where new technologies are introduced frequently. IT employees need to regularly upskill or else they will be out of the market. Continuing education platforms are a great way to develop skills. It improves self-awareness, self-esteem, and boost confidence (Wilson and Hayes, 2009; Kasworm et al., 2010). Continuing education is a perfect way to follow a personal interest and learn new skills. The additional qualification enhances self-image and boost confidence and have a positive impact on employees life (Loveless, 2019). Researchers agree that learning should be a lifelong process and investing time in continuing education results in personal growth. The personal growth includes personal effectiveness, development of interpersonal skills, development of technical skills and self-confidence (Sharma and Panthi, 2018; Bindon, 2017; Adu and Okeke, 2014; Katsikitis et al., 2013; Laal et al., 2014; Tamkin and Hillage, 1999; Schein, 1978). Thus following hypothesis is proposed:

H2 (a) Personal growth is significantly important for career growth and development.

2.9 Professional growth

Professional growth factors are related to the career growth of the employees. Continuing education adds weightage to the employee qualification that leads to a better salary at a new position (Western Governors University, 2019). It helps in getting promotion internally and increase chances for better job opportunity (Uzialko, 2018). Continuing education is a good way to develop new skills or knowledge that is necessary for a career transition (Loveless, 2019). The best way to improve job security is by taking continuing education courses and utilising learning for company success (Milano, 2019).
Professional growth factors include better career opportunities, job security, salary increment, and promotion (Sharma and Panthi, 2018; Bindon, 2017; Burrow et al., 2016; Laal et al., 2014; Katsikitis et al., 2013; Ousey and Roberts, 2013; Baxter, 2012; Thomas, 2012; Nsemo et al., 2012; French and Dowds, 2008; Purcell et al., 2003; Patton and McMahon, 2006). Thus following hypothesis is proposed:

H2 (b) Professional growth is significantly important for career growth and development.

Table 3 shows the studies related to career growth and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.10 Impact of continuing education on career growth and development

Technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace and IT employees also need to evolve at the same pace. Continuing education is the key to staying on top of the industry, maintaining personal and professional development, and remaining relevant in an ever-shifting IT work environment (Sullivan, 2015). Continuing education improves the chances of promotion opportunities, increases bargaining power for higher wages, enhance job marketability, career transition, personal development, and enhance self-image (Loveless, 2019). Continuing education enhances the skills and personality of the employees thereby provides opportunities and support for career growth and development. Previous research shows that continuing education has a positive impact on employee career growth and development (Folb et al., 2020; Bentley, 2019; Van Hoof and Doyle, 2018; Kitto, 2018; Sharma and Panthi, 2018; Tsoi et al., 2018). Based on the above literature review, career growth and development can be categorised into personal growth and professional growth. Thus following hypothesis is formulated to test the impact of continuing education on career growth and development:

H3 Continuing education significantly impacts career growth and development.
3 Conceptual framework

The authors proposed the conceptual framework of the study in Figure 1. In this framework factors influencing continuing education are employment opportunities, acquiring new knowledge, the time required and financial investment and dimensions of career growth and (personal growth and professional growth) development are included.

Figure 1 Conceptual framework proposed in the study

4 Research methodology

The study identifies the factors which influence employee for continuing education and its impact on career growth and development. To achieve this objective, the study was conducted across the IT companies of Delhi, India. A systematic survey of the 315 employees working in the top 10 IT companies was conducted. The primary data was collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section 1 composed of factors influencing continuing education and Section 2 consists of dimensions of career growth and development. Factors influencing continuing education are employment opportunities, acquiring new knowledge, the time required for completing courses, and financial investment. Career growth and development dimensions are personal growth and professional growth. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree was used in this section. The data thus collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 21.0. Factor analysis was used to identify the factors influencing for continuing education and dimensions of career growth and development among employees of IT companies. The questionnaire was evolved on the rationale of the extant literature review, thus verify the validity of the
content. A panel of academicians, researchers, and students engaged in e-learning were used to pilot test the questionnaire, following which suggested changes were incorporated to enhance the content as well as develop a specific questionnaire. To test the questionnaire, a sample of respondents contrasting from those involved in the pilot test was requested to answer the questionnaire.

5 Data analysis and results

This paper proposed a conceptual model and its usability was tested by using second-order structural equation modelling. Two second-order model was developed. One is continuing education dimensions which constitute four first-order constructs (employment opportunities, acquiring new knowledge, the time required for completing the course and financial investment) and career growth and development which constitutes two first-order constructs (personal growth and professional growth. Initially, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to determine the items which are correlating to the first-order construct then structural equation modelling via AMOS was used for model fit.

Table 4 reflects the descriptive statistics of the data. The mean of professional growth is highest, followed by personal growth. Cronbach alpha (reliability) of all the constructs shows a value greater than 0.900, which shows a high degree of internal consistency within the constructs and suggests highly reliable constructs. Skewness and kurtosis value shows that data is very near to normal. The correlation between the time required with financial investment is 0.493. The correlation between employment opportunities with acquiring new knowledge is 0.652. The correlation between personal growth with professional growth is 0.700.

5.1 Factor analysis

Table 5 exhibits factor loadings of the items on the retained factors for both the constructs. The factor loadings of all the items are evaluated above 0.5 which indicates that there is a high correlation with the respective factors (Hair et al., 2016). From the principal component analysis, six factors have been extracted from 26 items on which structural equation modelling has been applied. Factors influencing employees for continuing education; four items have been grouped into employment opportunities, four items have been grouped into acquiring new knowledge, four items have been grouped into financial investment, and four items have been grouped time in time requirements for completing the course. The dimension of career growth and development; 4 items have been grouped into professional growth and the other four items have been grouped into professional. Table 5 shows the rotated component matrix obtained from factor analysis in SPSS to substantiate the underlying structure of the research model. As all values are above 0.500 of the factor loadings of the respective constructs and all items of the research instrument are properly loaded in their respective variables. This confirms a very sound underlying structure of the proposed model.
### Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Correlation with 1</th>
<th>Correlation with 2</th>
<th>Correlation with 3</th>
<th>Correlation with 4</th>
<th>Correlation with 5</th>
<th>Correlation with 6</th>
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<td>Time reqd.</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.930</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Employment opportunity</td>
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<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>-1.298</td>
<td>0.471**</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>-1.258</td>
<td>0.493**</td>
<td>0.638**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acq new knw and skl</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-1.225</td>
<td>0.480**</td>
<td>0.652**</td>
<td>0.562**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
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<td>0.949</td>
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<td>-1.273</td>
<td>0.255**</td>
<td>0.560**</td>
<td>0.515**</td>
<td>0.493**</td>
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<td>0.945</td>
<td>-0.369</td>
<td>-1.133</td>
<td>0.277**</td>
<td>0.606**</td>
<td>0.595**</td>
<td>0.581**</td>
<td>0.700**</td>
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</table>

Note: **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 5 Rotated component matrix

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<td>The time required for</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFG1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.791</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFG2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFG3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFG4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: TMR: time required; EMP: employment opportunities; FI: financial investment; KNS: acquiring new knowledge and skills; PSG: personal growth; PFG: professional growth.

5.2 Convergent and discriminant validity

It can be observed from Table 6 that composite reliability (CR) is above 0.930 of all the constructs [it should be greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2016)], Further, average variance extracted (AVE) is above 0.768 [it should be greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2016)] and all values of MSV are less than AVE (Hair et al., 2016). This verifies the sound convergent validity of all the constructs. Additionally, all the constructs are different from each other, as shown in Table 6 that all the italic values are greater than the corresponding values in the respective columns (inter-construct correlations).
Table 6 Convergent and discriminant validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV (1)</th>
<th>MSV (2)</th>
<th>MSV (3)</th>
<th>MSV (4)</th>
<th>MSV (5)</th>
<th>MSV (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal goal</td>
<td>0.949</td>
<td>0.823</td>
<td>0.548</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time required</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.272</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment opportunities</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td>0.504</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial investment</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>0.529</td>
<td>0.675</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring new knowledge</td>
<td>0.941</td>
<td>0.798</td>
<td>0.477</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>0.515</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional growth</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>0.548</td>
<td>0.740</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.628</td>
<td>0.615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: AVE: average variance extracted; CR: composite reliability, MSV: maximum shared variance; the diagonal italic values are the square root of AVEs of the diagonal values are correlation values.

5.3 Structural equation model approach

Hair et al. (2016) explained the role of the structural equation model in determining how well the data collected supports the theory. Model fit indicators depict various indicators of goodness of fit for the proposed model along with their acceptance values. The value of chi-square/df is not significant but we have to look at other indicators also because for larger samples generally chi-square value discards the acceptance of the model (Bentler and Bonnet, 1980), also chi-square test becomes sensitive if sample size exceeds 200 (in this study sample size is 315). The CFI of the model is 0.948 (close to 0.95) and RMSEA is 0.066 (less than 0.08) so this model is acceptable with the acceptable fit indices. Table 7 and Figure 2 shows the structural model results.

Table 7 Structural model result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Decisions***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a CE --&gt; Time_R</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>9.884</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b CE --&gt; Emp_O</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>14.084</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1c CE --&gt; FI</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>0.069</td>
<td>13.329</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1d CE --&gt; Kno_Sk</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>13.533</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a CGD --&gt; PrS_G</td>
<td>0.810</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>14.326</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b CGD --&gt; PrF_G</td>
<td>0.914</td>
<td>0.075</td>
<td>14.326</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 CE --&gt; Cr_G_D</td>
<td>0.815</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>12.866</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: SE = standard error, CR = critical ratio, ***p < 0.01, $\chi^2 = 302.516$, df = 245, $\chi^2$/df = 1.235, CFI = 0.994, GFI = 0.940 and RMSEA = 0.025.
Our first hypothesis proposes to check whether the four factors which were identified in the research are representing the latent second-order construct of continuing education. It can be seen from Table 7 that all the parts of the first hypothesis are supported. Employment opportunity is having the maximum loading on continuing education, followed by financial investment and acquiring new knowledge and skills and the least loading is of time required for the study. This shows that people opt for continuing education mostly for generating more employment opportunities for themselves and they are least concerned for the availability of time for studies among the four predators of continuing education.

Our second hypothesis was to verify whether the professional growth and personal growth are reflected by another latent second-order construct of career growth and development. It can be seen from Table 7 that all the parts of the second hypothesis are also supported. Professional growth has more impact on career growth and development (factor loading is 0.914) as compared to personal growth. It shows that people put professional growth above personal growth for career growth and development.

Our third hypothesis is to confirm whether there is an impact of continuing education on career growth and development. Our proposed model has confirmed that continuing education has a significant impact on career growth and development (beta = 0.815, p-value < 0.000). Employee’s personal motivation to acquire new knowledge and better employment opportunities important factors that influence employees personally for continuing education and support provided by the organisation in terms of financial support and time flexibility also motivate employees for continuing education. Employees get benefits for personal and professional growth when they get better
Career growth and development

qualifications. Thus it can be concluded that continuing education opportunities increase career growth and development.

5.4 Conclusions

IT companies employ a large number of employees but at the same time, they also face high attrition levels vary from due 12% to 18% (Basu and Sarkar, 2019). This happens due to many reasons such as poor organisation policy, lack of career prospects, lack of creativity, monotonous work, stressful job, higher salary expectation, lack of security, lack of social interaction, unusual working hours, lack of development opportunities, etc. (Asthana, 2014). IT companies need to double their efforts to prevent employees from hopping to control attrition rates. IT sector is dynamic and rapid technological changes like digitalisation or emergence of new tools call for constant re-skilling, and people who do not scale up pro-actively tend to suffer. The companies by providing support for continuing education exhibit that they value their employees, which effectively improves employee retention, which results in the reduction of expenditure incurred by employee turnover. The findings of the study indicate that factors like financial investment, time requirements for completing the course, employment opportunities, and acquiring new knowledge and skills play an important role among employees for continuing education in IT companies in India. Continuing education can help employees to climb the career ladder. With the help continuing education, employees get professional growth in terms of better career opportunities, job security, salary increment, and promotion and personal growth helps in personality development, development of interpersonal skills, development of technical skills and self-confidence (Loveless, 2019).

Both employees and employers can be in a situation of win-win through continuing education in the workplace. Continuing education boosts the confidence of the employees and also helps the organisation to sustain. Companies interested in the welfare of their employees and their professional development offer complete or partial financial aid for continuing education. Based on the findings and recommendation it can be concluded that continuing education is beneficial for employers as well as for the employee. Continuing education improves proficiency in the workplace, provides promotion opportunities, and develops inclination to learn new skills (Valamis, 2019). Continuing education among employees will make them highly skilled workforce which will result in many intrinsic benefits. Highly skilled employees bring innovative ideas and generate creativity; technical skills are developed constantly to face the rapidly changing market (Florida, 2017). Companies that invest in the skills development of their employees have better employee retention, increase employee morale, better job satisfaction, improve productivity, and prepare them as future leaders. Companies that promote continuing education have a direct financial beneficial impact (Cohen, 2015). It is evident from this research that providing time for completing the course, financial support for continuing education by employers motivates employees to perceive that companies value their existence in the organisation, in turn, effectively improves employee retention (Florentine, 2019). Secondly, it can also be comprehended that employee’s personal motivation to acquire new knowledge and looking for better career opportunities are other important factors that influence employees for continuing education. Many other sectors are supporting their employees for continuing education by doing a tie-up with educational institutes and universities. IT companies can also do a tie-up with national and international organisations for upgrading their employee’s knowledge and skills.
6 Practical implication of the research

This research will help the IT companies to understand the factors which influence employees for continuing education. Companies can provide financial investment support and time for completing the course to upgrade the knowledge and skills of their employees. This result of the study shows that continuing education helps in the personal and professional development of the employees. Employee development also leads to organisation development by reducing the attrition rate and making employees more loyal and committed to the organisation. Based on the conclusions of the study, various suggestions are proposed to the IT companies of India for influencing employees for continuing education for better career growth and development.

- Companies can offer financial support by offering education allowance, tie-up with banks for providing education loans at low interest, tie-up with educational institute and university with tuition fees waivers, so that they feel the less monetary burden on their shoulders. Through investing in employees, companies can express their care about their employees. Employer-sponsored continuing education opportunities are the definition of a win-win situation for both employees and the organisation.

- The employee needs time for completing the course and they look for support from their companies for continuing their education. Since the employees are busy with their jobs, it is difficult for them to take out enough time for attending regular classes. Employees can be offered with the study leaves, early leaving from office, flexible timings, etc. will act as a motivator for employees to opt for new courses for continuing education. This will be a boon for employers also as the employees will become more loyal and committed to the organisation.

- Employees always look for professional development opportunities for enhancing their knowledge, skills, and abilities. As per a report on by Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) the Employee Benefits Report, the most common type of opportunities provided by employers for educational and professional development’ include professional organisation memberships, offsite events, and workplace training or courses.

- Companies can motivate employees to participate in short term courses, seminars, workshop conferences, knowledge sharing programs, etc. for establishing professional relations outside the companies. IT companies can provide continuing education by making tie-up with university and training institutes, e-learning certification courses, external and internal training.

- Continuing education benefits employees to enhance their skills and add value to the marketplace. It helps them to earn a better employment opportunity or promotion internally. Companies also will reap the benefits of a skilled, satisfied workforce and attract new intrinsically motivated employees.

- Acquiring new knowledge and skills is another important factor for continuing education. IT employees can opt for multidisciplinary courses related to different functional areas such as management, psychology, etc. Such courses will not only provide vast knowledge to the working professionals regarding distinct streams but
will also develop the ability among them so that they could perform different tasks simultaneously with equal efficiency.

6.1 Contribution to the theory and current knowledge

There is a lack of literature on continuing education in the IT sector. This research contributes to the theory and current knowledge by proposing a conceptual framework for ‘Continuing education and its impact on career growth and development’. The research is also contributed by adding new factors (time requirement, financial support, acquiring new knowledge and employment opportunities) that influence employees for continuing education and new dimension (personal and professional growth) of career growth and development have been established in this research. This conceptual framework can also be used in other sectors by testing it with appropriate statistical techniques.

7 Limitation and scope for future research

There is a lack of studies on continuing education in the IT companies in India has deprived the researchers of the possible comparison with other sectors. Because of the time and other resource constraints, this study limits itself to the geographic extent of Delhi and a sample size of only 315 respondents. Future research needs to use more diversified random samples to generalise the research findings. In this research, only four factors, i.e., financial investment, Time requirements for completing the course, Employment opportunities, and acquiring new knowledge and skills have been considered. However, there are other important factors such personal factors (Adu and Okeke, 2014), family support (Anhwere, 2013), cultural factors (Brekelmans et al., 2013), professional development opportunities (Neagu, 2014; Adu and Okeke, 2014; Brekelmans et al., 2013), possibility of establishing a professional relation (Neagu, 2014) can also influence the employees to opt for continuing education. The impact is also studied on the two broad factors, viz., personal growth and professional growth. More parameters can be considered while understanding the impact of continuing education on career growth and development; these factors have not been discussed in this study. To further enhance the study and to gain better insight, research needs to encompass more factors for continuing education. Further research would also need to include a broader set of career growth and development indicators.

References


