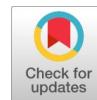


A Study on the Relationship between Employee Engagement and Faculty Retention in Higher Education Institutions

Savita Singh, Ajit Singh Patel



Abstract: Employee engagement plays a crucial role in faculty retention within higher education institutions. This study explores the relationship between engagement levels and faculty members' decisions to remain in academic institutions. The study draws on survey responses from faculty members at various universities to assess how engagement influences retention rates. Findings indicate that institutions with higher engagement levels exhibit lower faculty turnover, as engaged faculty members demonstrate increased commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction. The study emphasises the importance of implementing strategic policies that foster engagement through professional development, recognition programs, and supportive leadership. These insights provide valuable recommendations for higher education administrators seeking to promote a stable and motivated faculty workforce.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Faculty Retention, Higher Education, Increased Commitment, Institutional Support.

Abbreviations:

HEIs: Higher Educational Institutions

NIRF: National Institutional Ranking Framework

RUSA: Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

NIRF: National Institutional Ranking Framework

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India play a pivotal role in shaping the country's educational landscape and contributing to the development of its human capital. India is home to a vast and diverse higher education system, comprising over 1,000 universities and numerous colleges that offer a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs. These institutions cater to millions of students annually and encompass a broad spectrum of disciplines, including engineering, medicine, social sciences, humanities, law, business, and the arts. The Indian higher education system is characterised by its strong emphasis on academic excellence, research, and innovation.

of a skilled workforce that can contribute to both the national and global economies. In recent years, the higher education sector in India has witnessed significant growth, driven by factors such as increased demand for quality education, globalization, and the expansion of both public and private institutions. The Indian government has made substantial investments in higher education, with the establishment of various policy initiatives aimed at improving access, quality, and inclusivity (Ababneh, 2016) [1]. Programs such as the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) are among the government's initiatives to promote the development of quality education and encourage higher education institutions (HEIs) to strive for global standards. Furthermore, initiatives to promote research and innovation have been launched, with the aim of fostering collaboration between universities, industries, and the government. Despite these advancements, Indian HEIs face several challenges (Barman & Roy, 2011) [2].

Faculty engagement and retention also remain significant challenges in the Indian higher education sector. The pressure to balance teaching, research, and administrative duties, coupled with relatively low salaries and limited career advancement opportunities, has led to burnout and dissatisfaction among many faculty members. This has resulted in high turnover rates, particularly in non-elite institutions (Dinibutun et al., 2020) [3]. To address these issues, there is a growing need for policies that promote faculty engagement, career growth, and work-life balance. Another critical aspect of Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) is the need for inclusivity. While access to higher education has increased, a significant gap remains in enrollment rates among different socio-economic groups, including students from rural areas, lower-income families, and marginalised communities. While higher educational institutions in India have made great strides in expanding access to quality education, several challenges remain. Ensuring quality, improving faculty engagement, addressing infrastructural needs, and making education more inclusive are key areas that require continuous attention. As the Indian higher education system continues to evolve, both public and private institutions must adapt to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world, equipping students with the skills necessary to succeed in a globalized, knowledge-driven economy (Verma & Kaur, 2024) [4].

Talent retention has become a significant challenge in today's fast-paced environment, where technological advancements have streamlined the comparison of opportunities across organizations, accelerating talent mobility. The higher

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*Correspondence Author(s)

Savita Singh*, Research Scholar, Faculty of Commerce and Management, Madhyanchal Professional University, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), India. Email ID: savitasingh0802@gmail.com, ORCID ID: [0009-0008-6725-4001](https://orcid.org/0009-0008-6725-4001)

Dr. Ajit Singh Patel, Professor, Faculty of Commerce and Management, Madhyanchal Professional University, Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), India. Email ID: vicechairmn@patelcollege.com

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education sector is no exception, facing a severe shortage of quality educators, particularly in developing nations. Retaining skilled faculty is crucial for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to maintain a strategic advantage, making it imperative to examine the factors influencing retention thoroughly (Nagraj, 2024) [5].

The relationship between engagement and retention is often positive, as engaged faculty are generally more satisfied with their work environment, feel a stronger sense of belonging, and are more committed to their institution's mission. Engaged faculty members tend to stay longer because they derive greater job satisfaction from their roles, which include opportunities for professional development, work-life balance, and meaningful contributions to academic growth (Bhattacharya, 2018) [6]. This sense of fulfilment can reduce turnover intentions and foster long-term loyalty to the institution. Several factors contribute to this relationship, including leadership style, institutional culture, compensation, career growth opportunities, and workload. Institutions that promote supportive leadership, a collaborative work environment, and recognition for faculty achievements tend to experience higher engagement levels, which, in turn, lead to better retention rates.

A. Rationale of the Study

The rationale for studying employee engagement. Retention of faculty members in higher educational institutions (HEIs) stems from the critical role faculty play in shaping the academic and research outcomes of universities. Faculty members are the backbone of any educational institution, responsible for imparting knowledge, guiding research, and shaping the intellectual and social development of students. However, in recent years, higher education institutions (HEIs) across the globe have faced challenges related to faculty turnover, job dissatisfaction, and disengagement. The increasing mobility of talent, coupled with the high demands placed on faculty in terms of teaching, research, and administrative duties, has made faculty retention a significant concern [7]. Understanding the factors that influence faculty engagement and retention is therefore essential for the long-term sustainability and growth of higher education institutions (Soomro & Ahmad, 2013; Thakral, 2020) [8].

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As various studies highlight the importance of faculty engagement as a driver of institutional success, they also underscore the need for targeted strategies that address the unique challenges faced by faculty members. As higher education institutions continue to evolve, it becomes increasingly crucial to develop policies and practices that foster faculty engagement, promote job satisfaction, and enhance retention, thereby ensuring the continued growth and success of these institutions.

A study examines the relationship between work engagement and employee productivity within the higher education sector, aiming to identify strategies that enhance faculty performance and overall institutional effectiveness. Using a quantitative research approach, the study surveys faculty members across various higher educational institutions to examine how engagement impacts

productivity. The results reveal that higher levels of work engagement led to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and performance among employees (Lakshmi & Jayavardhini, 2018) [9].

A research revealed the key factors influencing employee retention within India's education sector, and the authors focus on the challenges faced by educational institutions in retaining qualified and experienced faculty members, highlighting the significant role of job satisfaction, career growth opportunities, work-life balance, and organizational support (Pillai & Kurup, 2020) [10].

The crucial challenge of faculty retention in the Indian higher education institutions, considering the strategic role that employee engagement plays in attaining long-term commitment and job satisfaction for academic staff (Gupta & Gomathi, 2018) [11]. The paper analyses the multiple factors influencing faculty turnover, which include job satisfaction, career development opportunities, work-life balance, and collegiate support. Bhattacharya's discussion is current and holistic in covering university engagement and retention strategies, including professional development programs, positive work culture, competitive comp packages, and recognition of academic contributions.

Research investigates the role of organisational commitment and work engagement as key facilitators for sustaining higher education professionals. In their research, the authors explore the interplay between organizational commitment, defined as the emotional attachment and identification with the institution, and work engagement, which reflects the level of enthusiasm and dedication towards one's job [12]. The study emphasizes that fostering high levels of both organizational commitment and work engagement can significantly enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover intentions, and improve overall performance among faculty members in higher educational institutions (Iqbal et al., 2014; Nazir & Islam, 2017) [13].

A study presents a critical examination of current issues affecting employee engagement in Indian higher education settings. This title delves into specific challenges particular to the education sector: faculty turnover, limited options for career advancement and the attenuation of work-life balance with increased pressures at work (Banerjee & Das, 2021) [14]. The book is based on significant field research and case studies conducted in a range of institutions, and Saxena strongly emphasizes the role of leadership, organizational culture, and recognition as keys to building an engaged workforce.

Recently, a paper was presented at the National Conference on Education Management conducted by IIT Kanpur. It does a thorough analysis of how different leadership approaches, namely transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, affect faculty engagement and retention rates. The research presents a qualitative and quantitative analysis of data collected from questionnaires administered to faculty members at universities and colleges across India. The results showed that transformational leadership, characterised by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, had a significantly positive relationship with faculty job satisfaction and retention in

India (Sharma & Verma, 2021) [15].

A study explores the critical issue of talent management and retention strategies for academicians within Indian higher education institutions. Recognising the pivotal role of faculty members in ensuring the quality and competitiveness of educational outcomes, the authors investigate key factors that influence retention, including organisational culture, leadership styles, work-life balance, professional development opportunities, and employee engagement. The findings reveal that supportive leadership, transparent career advancement policies, and a favourable institutional environment significantly impact faculty retention (Raj & Abraham, 2022) [16].

Recent research explores the critical relationship between leadership styles and faculty retention in Indian private universities [17]. Using a case study approach, the research examines how different leadership styles—transformational [18], transactional, and laissez-faire—impact faculty members' job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. The findings reveal that transformational leadership significantly enhances faculty retention by fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment. In contrast, transactional leadership offers mixed results, being effective only when paired with adequate rewards and recognition systems (Dutta & Bose, 2023).

III. RESEARCH GAP

Research on faculty engagement and retention in higher education institutions (HEIs) has grown significantly in recent years; however, several gaps remain that require attention. While existing studies have extensively explored faculty engagement in terms of job satisfaction, work-life balance, and organizational commitment, there is still a lack of in-depth research on the specific factors that contribute to faculty engagement and retention within different cultural and institutional contexts, particularly in countries like India. Many studies tend to focus on Western models of faculty engagement, often overlooking the unique challenges faced by faculty members in developing nations, where issues such as inadequate infrastructure, resource scarcity, and low compensation are more prevalent. Furthermore, the influence of organizational culture, leadership styles, and institutional policies on faculty engagement and retention has not been thoroughly examined, especially in the context of public and private institutions in India.

Objective: To examine the relationship between employee engagement and Faculty Retention of higher education institution faculty members

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

A descriptive research design was employed in this study. This approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of how various factors, including job satisfaction, compensation, career progression, work-life balance, training and development, and institutional support, influence faculty retention. By using surveys, questionnaires, and statistical analyses, the study captures the faculty members'

perceptions and experiences, identifying key patterns and relationships.

B. Sources of Data Collection

i) Primary data: The primary data for this study were gathered through a survey method. The primary data were collected from higher educational institutions offering various courses, including Management, Commerce, Engineering, and Humanities, in the Indore Division, where faculty members were available and ready to answer queries using a structured questionnaire.

ii) Secondary data: For this purpose, secondary data were collected from all associated sources, including books, research journals, magazines, periodicals, internet web sources, and libraries of reputed universities and institutes in and around the Indore Division. The online libraries of Google, Google Scholar, Ebsco, Springer, and J-Gate were also used to obtain relevant documentation for this purpose.

C. Sampling Method

Convenient sampling is applied.

D. Size of Sample

355 Faculty Members.

E. Sample Area

The sample area was the Indore Division, and the following educational institutions were selected for study: Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth, Sage University, Prestige Institute of Management and Research, Old GDC, Arts and Commerce College, and Oriental University.

F. Test of Reliability

- Reliability value on Employee Engagement Scale (.916)
- Reliability value on Faculty Retention Scale (.926)

G. Statistical Analysis

Correlation was applied.

V. RESULTS

H_{a1}: There is a significant relationship between employee engagement and Retention in Higher Educational Institutions.

Table 1: Model Summary on Employee Engagement and Retention Factors

Model Summary on Employee Engagement and Retention Factors									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.734 ^a	.539	.538	8.52782	.539	412.694	1	353	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Engagement									
b. Dependent Variable: Retention									

The table presents the model summary of a regression analysis examining the relationship between employee engagement and faculty retention in higher educational institutions. The alternative hypothesis (H_{a1}) states that employee engagement has a significant relationship with faculty retention. The R-value (0.734) indicates a strong positive correlation between employee engagement and retention, suggesting that higher

levels of engagement are associated with better retention rates. The R-Square value (0.539) shows that employee engagement factors can explain 53.9% of the variance in faculty retention. This is a substantial proportion, indicating that engagement plays a crucial role in faculty retention. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

VI. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

The study analysed employee engagement and retention factors in higher educational Institutions among 355 faculty members and found their impact on retaining faculty in every possible manner. The major findings are as follows:

- The results indicate that organizational commitment is seen similarly by male and female faculty members, suggesting that gender has no bearing on their degree of dedication to the university. This can be a sign of a balanced workplace culture, equal opportunities, and comparable experiences regarding institutional support and career security.
- The results show that faculty members with varying levels of experience—less than 5 years, 5.1–10 years, 10.1–15 years, and over 15 years—do not reveal differences in terms of their view of organizational commitment, one of the determinants of employee engagement in higher learning institutions.
- The results demonstrate that the experience of the faculty members has no substantial effect on the perceived Task Identity as a principal Employee Engagement factor in Higher Education Institutions. This implies that faculty members, regardless of their years of experience, similarly view Task Identity, i.e., they all equally identify and acknowledge the importance of their role within the institutional system.
- Employee engagement has a significant positive relationship with retention in higher educational institutions. Engaged employees exhibit higher job satisfaction, more substantial institutional commitment, and lower turnover intentions. Factors such as supportive leadership, recognition, professional development, and a positive work environment contribute to sustained engagement, reducing burnout and increasing job longevity. Moreover, engaged faculty and staff enhance student outcomes, further reinforcing their loyalty to the institution. To improve retention, institutions must implement strategic initiatives such as mentorship programs, career advancement opportunities, and a culture of recognition, ensuring long-term commitment and institutional stability.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study confirms a strong positive relationship between employee engagement and faculty retention in higher education institutions. Engaged faculty members are more committed, satisfied, and less likely to leave, contributing to institutional stability and student success. Key factors, including leadership support, professional development, recognition, and a positive work environment, play a crucial role in enhancing engagement and retention. To reduce faculty turnover, institutions must prioritize strategies that

foster engagement, including mentorship programs, career growth opportunities, and a culture of appreciation. Strengthening these aspects will not only improve retention but also enhance overall institutional performance and academic excellence.

SUGGESTIONS

To enhance employee engagement in higher educational institutions, it is essential to implement well-structured strategies that foster a supportive and motivating work environment. One key factor is leadership support, where academic leaders and administrators should actively engage with faculty members, acknowledge their contributions, and provide clear communication regarding institutional goals and expectations. Transparent and open communication channels ensure that faculty members feel valued, heard, and included in decision-making processes, thereby increasing their sense of belonging and commitment to the institution.

Ultimately, a positive and inclusive work environment is crucial for sustaining employee engagement. Institutions must cultivate a collegial atmosphere where faculty members feel respected, included, and supported. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering diversity and inclusion, and addressing workplace concerns promptly contribute to a healthy institutional culture. Creating platforms for faculty feedback and regularly assessing engagement levels through surveys can also help institutions refine their policies and practices to better support their faculty members.

FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

Future research on employee engagement and faculty retention in higher educational institutions can explore several critical areas to enhance institutional policies and academic work environments. One potential research direction is the long-term impact of engagement initiatives on faculty retention. Studies can analyze how various engagement strategies, such as mentorship programs, leadership involvement, and faculty recognition, contribute to sustained faculty retention over time. Longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into which initiatives yield the most significant benefits and how they evolve in response to changing academic landscapes.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Savita Singh is an Assistant Professor at Madhyanchal Professional University with 12 years of academic experience in Human Resource & Management. Her expertise spans organizational behavior, talent management, strategic HR practices, and various aspects of business management, including leadership, organizational development, and decision-making. She has made significant contributions to academia through her research, publications, and mentorship of students in the fields of HR and management.



Dr. Ajit Singh Patel is a distinguished academic with more than two decades of experience in teaching, research, and academic administration in the field of Management. He is currently serving as a Professor at Madhyanchal Professional University, where he plays a key role in advancing management education and research. His areas of specialisation include Strategic Management, Leadership Development, and Organisational Dynamics. Dr. Patel has published several research papers in peer-reviewed national and international journals and has presented his work at various academic forums. He is also actively involved in guiding research scholars and contributing to curriculum development. Dr. Patel's commitment to academic excellence and practical relevance makes him a respected figure in the academic community.

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