

## Faculty Engagement or Disengagement at Higher Education Institutions of India

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### Abstract

*In the era of globalization like any other economic sector, the higher education sector is also driven by intense global competition and this has become a major challenge for institutions to retain and engage competent faculty members. Thus, the purpose to this study is to examine the engagement levels of faculty members in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh. The study adopts a cross-sectional survey design with a sample of 360 faculty members employed in Higher Education Institutions of India. Majority of the faculty members were often engaged, which shows they were engaged only once in a week while discharging their duty. While amongst the three dimensions of employee engagement, faculty members had high dedication levels followed by vigor and absorption. The study cites a major concern for Higher Education Institutions. Present study will help institutional academic bodies to bring reform in their HR Policy and to be focused on their institution specific factors that influence and contribute to restore the disengaged faculties.*

**Keywords-** Faculty engagement, Disengagement and Higher Education Institutions.

### 1. Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in the economic and social development of a country. It plays a significant role to bring prosperity, unity and build a stronger nation. The success of education system to a large extent is determined by the teachers. Teachers are an important facet in education sector as they shoulder the vital responsibility of mentoring India's youth and making them 'ready' as professionals and responsible citizens of the country. In the era of globalization like any other economic sector, the higher education sector is also driven by intense global competition. This has become a major challenge for institutions to retain and engage faculties.

Success stories of prospering institutions have been scripted on efforts made by their engaged employees. Employee engagement is the willingness of the employees to go the extra mile, believe in the institution and what it stands for in an effort to help their institution to succeed. Engaged workers are occupied in, passionate about and committed to their jobs (Bakker, 2011). William A. Kahn (1990) who is considered as the founding father of employee engagement movement defines it as "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement people employee and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances". By this Kahn implied that an employee has to be present both physically and psychologically while performing their job role in the organization. Employee engagement is the attachment employee feel towards their work that results in higher levels of performance, commitment and loyalty (Patro, 2013).

According to a Gallup survey (2017), employee engagement has been addressed as problem for the majority of colleges and universities. Only about 34 percent of surveyed faculty members felt

engaged in their work, while 52 percent were not engaged. Remaining 14 percent of faculties were actively disengaged. Engagement of faculty members was fundamental to good learner outcomes and having engaged and motivated staff was seen crucial in delivering high quality teaching and learning. At present Indian higher education institutions are vying with each other to get good faculties with research credentials and retaining a faculty has become a major challenge for these institutions. The institutions are not focused on investing in employee engagement significantly. Instead of acquiring and selecting great teachers, academic institutions spend endless energies on attracting, enticing and admitting good students.

As per the World Bank (2010), India's higher education system is the third largest in the world. Data published by UNESCO in 2018 reported Youth literacy rate for India as 91.7. The substantial progress in the Higher Education sector is spear-headed with the help of Higher Education Institutions that are taken into consideration as highest seats of learning. India, being a nation popular for its education since ages, and which has several educational institutions rendering courses in various disciplines, has never covered this construct. In Indian context, the number of such studies is really scanty.

According to statistics of The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings for the year 2022 reported that only three Indian Universities could feature in the list of world's top 200 Universities. One of the key factors driving the quality of education is teacher's emotional and intellectual engagement in their work. The construct of Faculty engagement is in its infancy stage and on global level researchers are trying to explore the literature on the level of faculty engagement and factors affecting it. With this gap and significance in the field of academia developed a need and became the base for selection this research topic.

## 2. Objectives of the study and Hypothesis

To explore the employee engagement challenges faced by higher education institutions the study aims at following research objectives:

- To measure the level of engagement amongst the faculty members working in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh.
- To analyse the relationship between the level of engagement amongst the faculty members and demographic variables.
- To analyse the relationship between the level of engagement amongst the faculty members and institutional variables.

To fulfil the above specified objectives, the following hypotheses were framed:

*Demographic variables:*

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and age.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and gender.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and marital status.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and educational qualification.

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and income.

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and working place.

*Institutional variables:*

H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and the type of institution.

H<sub>08</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and designation.

H<sub>09</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and work experience.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Sample for the study

The study conducted was cross-sectional descriptive in nature. As per the geographical scope of the study, Himachal Pradesh is a hill station in India comprising of 12 districts out of which for the study 3 districts namely, Shimla, Solan and Kangra were selected as they comprised of maximum representation of higher education institutions and faculty members in their region. A multi stage sampling technique was undertaken for drawing a proportional number of faculty members from both government and private higher education institutions in the Himachal Pradesh, India. The optimal sample size was restricted to 357 participants. So, nearly 500 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted faculty members out of which 367 were returned, yielding a response rate of 73%. Due to the reasons of incompleteness and irrelevance 7 questionnaires were rejected. Finally, 360 questionnaires (117 from Government institutions and 243 from Private institutions) were utilized for the analysis of the study.

A complete list of selected Higher Education Institutions to be approached was prepared. Permission was sought and obtained from the authorities of each institution. Data collection was done through personal visits and provided questionnaires to the respondents in their institutions in order to enhance a high response rate and the anonymity of their responses was assured. A web link was also developed for online data collection. Collection of the filled-up questionnaires was also done personally by the researcher which helped in seeking authentic data, timely collection and making note of qualitative observations regarding the institutional work culture, which further aided in interpretation of results.

#### 3.2 Research instruments

The structured questionnaire used in the present study consisted of two sections. Section I comprised of the statements relating to the level of employee engagement using Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) employee engagement scale. A shortened nine-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale was used. It consists of three subscales, namely vigor, dedication and absorption. The response was sought on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 0 indicating “never” to 6 indicating “always or everyday”. Section II relates to demographic and institutional profile of the respondents. Demographic variables: age, gender, marital status, educational qualification and income of the faculty members; institutional variables: type of institutions, working place (native or non-native), designation and work experience.

Post data collection, coding and data entry was done. After tabulation of data the statistical tools and techniques used for the study included descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation;

one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The significance was tested by comparing the calculated F-value with the table value.

#### 4. Results and discussion

##### 5.1 Measurement of the level of engagement of faculty members employed in higher education institutions of Himachal Pradesh.

The first objective of the study was to measure the level of engagement of faculty members working in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh. To serve this objective a nine-item shortened version of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Wilmar Schaufeli and Arnold Bakker in 2004 was used. They defined “Engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption”. Therefore, employee engagement constitutes three dimensions of engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Schaufeli and Bakker defined these three dimensions as below:

- **Vigor** refers to high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties
- **Dedication** refers to deriving a sense of significance from one’s work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one’s job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it.
- **Absorption** refers to being totally and happily immersed in one’s work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it so that time passes quickly and one forgets everything else that is around.

The faculty members were asked to indicate their level of feeling for three engagement dimensions which consists of various statements on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 6 where ‘0’ indicates ‘never engaged’ and ‘6’ stands for ‘always or everyday engaged’. The scale was found to be a reliable measure of engagement of faculty members in the higher education institution of Himachal Pradesh as Cronbach’s alpha for each subscale; vigor (0.71), dedication (0.80) and absorption (0.76) and the composite reliability of the construct was 0.88 which is greater than the acceptable limit of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2009).

To gauge the response of faculty members on each of the three dimensions of UWES engagement scale, descriptive statistics was calculated which is given in Table I.

**Table I.** Descriptive Statistics of the dimensions of Faculty Engagement in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh, India

S.No.	Dimension	Mean	S.D.
1	Vigor	4.18	1.04
2	Dedication	4.59	1.14
3	Absorption	4.05	1.01

The descriptive statistics of faculty engagement presented in Table I highlighted that with a minor difference in mean score of vigor, dedication and absorption, the dedication dimension shows the slightly high mean score of 4.59 followed by vigor (4.18) and absorption (4.05). As per Wilmar Schaufeli (2004) employees who score high on dedication can strongly identify with their work because it is experienced as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging. Besides, they usually feel enthusiastic and proud about their work. From this it can be inferred that faculty members at Higher

education institutions of Himachal Pradesh are proud of their work and profession as they largely contribute in the character building and development of the student, society and the nation.

Next, on the basis of summated scores, Table II will indicate the overall level of faculty engagement while discharging their duties in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh, India.

**Table II.** Level of Engagement of Faculty members in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh, India

Response	N	Percentage
Not at All Engaged	17	4.72
Almost never Engaged	8	2.22
Rarely Engaged	20	5.55
Sometimes Engaged	71	19.72
Often Engaged	123	34.16
Very often Engaged	106	29.44
Highly Engaged	15	4.16
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Mean Score</b>	38.46	
<b>S.D.</b>	10.59	
<b>Result</b>	<b>Often Engaged</b>	

Table II displayed the overall engagement level which indicated that the one fourth of faculty members (N=123, Percentage=34.16) were found to be **often engaged** in their work. As per Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) employees who are often engaged are those employees who are **engaged only once in a week**. Additionally, it was also observed that only 4.16% faculties (N=15) were highly engaged. This figure cites a major concern for the higher education institutions of Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a scope and need for enhancing the engagement levels of faculty members of HEI's of Himachal Pradesh. According to Joseph Regy and Malini (2017) in order to be successful an institution must know what makes its faculties happy and engaged and what they want and how to retain them. Every educational institution should examine the factors which contributes in improving the engagement levels of their faculty members.

### 5.2 Analysing the relationship between the level of engagement amongst the faculty members and demographic variables

To achieve the second objective and test its formulated hypothesis present study investigated the difference in employee engagement levels on the basis of demographic variables like Gender, Age, Marital Status, Educational Qualification and Income. Study had Faculty Engagement as dependent variable and demographic variables as independent variable. The hypothesis was analysed and tested by employing one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test and presented in Table III. Each hypothesis tested is described below:

**Table III.** ANOVA to measure significant difference in engagement of faculty members with respect to demographic variables

Demographic Variable	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	p-value
<b>Age</b>					
Up to 25 Years	13	35.31	5.36	1.403	0.232
25 to 35 Years	172	38.08	10.98		
35 to 45 Years	95	42.11	6.04		
45 to 55 Years	61	37.25	12.09		
More than 55 Years	19	39.63	9.91		
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	227	37.64	11.47	1.922	0.055
Female	133	39.86	8.74		
<b>Marital Status</b>					
Married	240	38.86	10.06	0.647	0.524
Unmarried	114	37.77	11.61		
Divorced	6	35.50	11.50		
<b>Educational Qualification</b>					
Graduate	7	36.06	10.77	4.047	0.003
Postgraduate	124	40.29	5.88		
M. Phil	23	35.48	14.74		
Doctorate	179	42.78	5.89		
Post Doctorate	27	39.78	10.14		
<b>Income</b>					
Upto Rs. 30,000	128	38.80	8.61	2.644	0.023
Rs. 30,001 to 50,000	93	37.83	12.92		
Rs. 50,001 to 70,000	49	38.37	8.63		
Rs. 70,001 to 90,000	18	41.83	8.97		
Rs. 90,001 to 1,10,000	36	33.86	14.06		
More than Rs. 1,10,000	36	41.92	7.84		

\*Level of significance = 5%

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and age.

Faculty members in the present study were of different age groups, ranging from 25 years to more than 55 years of age. Majority of the faculty members were millennial employees (N=172). Mean scores revealed that faculty members in age group bracket of 35 to 45 years were highly engaged (mean= 42.11) followed by faculty members who were more than 55 years of age (mean= 39.63) and 25 to 35 years (mean= 38.08) were often engaged. Faculties of 45 to 55 years old (mean= 37.25) were somewhat engaged whereas employees' upto 25 years of age were not at all engaged (mean= 35.31). Further following the hypothesis test at 5% level of significance the value of F-ratio (1.403) had no significant difference (p-value= 0.232; p> 0.05) in the engagement level of faculties with respect to their age group. Thus, it was found that engagement level of faculty members does not differ across age groups.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and gender.

Engagement of faculty members was also classified on the basis of gender: Male and Female. Analysis revealed that in comparison to male faculties (mean= 37.64) female faculties were more engaged (mean= 39.86). And the hypothesis test at 5% level of significance the f-value (1.922) was not significant (p-value= 0.055;  $p>0.5$ ) which led to the acceptance of null hypothesis which proved the non-existence of significant difference between engagement of faculty member and gender, which proved that employee engagement does not vary with gender.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and marital status.

Engagement of faculty was also measured on the basis of marital status: married, unmarried and divorcee. Data illustrated that among the three marital status, married faculty members (mean= 38.86) showed higher level of engagement in their work followed by unmarried (mean= 37.77) and divorcee (mean= 35.50). At 5% level of significance results indicated F-Ratio (0.647) was not significant (p-value= 0.524;  $p>0.05$ ) which concluded that employee engagement does not vary with marital status.

H<sub>04</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and educational qualification.

Engagement level of faculty members was analysed on the basis of different educational qualification like Graduate, Post- Graduate, M.Phil, Doctorate and Post Doctorate. Among these faculty members holding doctorate degree were highly engaged (mean= 42.78) while employees holding postgraduate degree are often engaged (mean= 40.29). Faculties possessing Graduate Additionally, it was found that at 5% level of significance, the value of F-statistic (4.047) was significant (p-value=0.003;  $p<0.05$ ) which proved the existence of significant difference in the level of faculty engagement with respect to their educational qualification.

H<sub>05</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and income.

There were six income brackets in the study. Employees earning a monthly income of more than Rs. 1,10,000 (mean score= 41.92) followed by Rs. 70,001 to 90,000 (mean= 41.83) showed high engagement levels while the employees getting monthly income of Rs. 90,001 to 1,10,000 (mean= 33.86) were not at all engaged. Further it was found that at 5% level of significance, the value of F-statistic (2.644) was significant which proved the existence of significant difference (p-value= 0.023;  $p<0.05$ ) in the level of engagement of faculty members with respect to their income.

H<sub>06</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and working place.

Faculty members working area comprised of native place and non-native place. Few faculties were working in their native place and few were away from their native place (non-native place). It could be observed that engagement level of faculty members working in native place (mean= 38.75) had a slight difference when compared to faculties working in non-native place (mean= 36.93). However, at 5% level of significance the f-value (1.202) was not significant (p-value= 0.23;  $p>0.05$ ) which led to the acceptance of null hypothesis. This proved that no significant difference was found in the engagement level of faculty members working in native place or at non-native place.

### 5.2 Analysing the relationship between the level of engagement amongst the faculty members and institutional variables

To achieve the third objective and test its formulated hypothesis present study investigated the difference in employee engagement levels on the basis of institutional variables Type of institution, Working place (native or non-native), Designation and Work experience. Study had Faculty Engagement as dependent variable and institutional variables as independent variable. The hypothesis was analysed and tested by employing one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test and presented in Table IV. Each hypothesis tested is described below:

**Table IV.** ANOVA to measure significant difference in engagement of faculty members with respect to institutional variables

Institutional Variable	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	p-value
<b>Type of Institution</b>					
Government	117	39.21	10.48	1.93	0.045
Private	243	36.91	10.69		
<b>Working in Native Place</b>					
Native Place	302	38.75	11.07	1.201	0.23
Other Than Native Place	58	36.93	7.47		
<b>Designation</b>					
Professor	65	37.72	11.92	3.111	0.015
Associate Professor	49	38.98	8.31		
Assistant Professor	246	38.55	10.65		
<b>Work Experience</b>					
Upto 5 Years	111	40.93	7.61	0.225	0.799
5 to 10 Years	100	36.07	12.36		
10 to 15 Years	58	38.09	10.95		
15 to 20 Years	50	37.34	12.91		
More than 20 Years	41	39.51	7.66		

\*Level of significance = 5%

H<sub>07</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and the type of institution.

Higher Education Institutions were categorised into government institution and private institution. To study whether engagement of faculty members differs significantly across these two types of institutions hypothesis was formulated. It was observed that faculty members employed in government institutions have slightly higher engagement level (mean= 39.21) as compared to private institutions (mean= 36.91). Following the hypothesis test at 5% level of significance the f-value (1.93) was found significant (p-value= 0.045; p<0.05) which led to the rejection of null hypothesis and which proved that there was a significant difference across the type of institutions.

H<sub>08</sub>: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and designation.



Higher Education Institutions in India comprise of three academic ranks: Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor. In the study a minor difference was found in the engagement levels of faculties, where associate professors (mean= 38.98) were more engaged in their work while professors (mean= 37.72) and assistant professors (mean= 38.55) were slightly less engaged in comparison to associate professors. Further, for hypothesis testing at 5% level of significance, the value of F-statistic (3.111) was found significant ( $p$ -value= 0.015;  $p < 0.05$ ) which proved that there was a significant difference in engagement levels of faculty members with respect to their designations. The findings may be viewed in the light of Job Demands and Resources Model of Work Engagement proposed by Bakker and Demerouti (2008), stating that employee engagement is determined by job resources and personal resources independently or in combination and they become instrumental, particularly when job demands are high. In the initial stages of teaching career as Assistant Professor, job demands are high in terms of teaching work load, requirement to upgrade qualification, participating in committee work and leading students in co-curricular and extension activities whereas Professors are on senior rank and have attained a higher credentials and satisfaction in careers. And Associate Professors are well versed and settled in the profession and look for opportunities to steadily grow in career path.

H<sub>0</sub>9: There is no significant difference between engagement of faculty members and work experience.

Work experience of faculty member ranged from 5 years to more than 20 years. It could be derived from the results that faculties with work experience of upto 5 years were highly engaged in their work (mean= 40.93) followed by faculty members who have more than 20 years of work experience (mean= 39.51) while those with experience of 5 to 10 years were least engaged (mean= 36.07). Additionally, it was observed from the hypothesis test that at 5% level of significance, the value of F-statistic (0.225) was not significant ( $p$ -value= 0.799;  $p > 0.05$ ) which proved no significant difference exists in the engagement level of faculty members with respect to their work experience.

## 5. Conclusion

The study was presented in the light of the challenges faced by Indian higher education system. Study reported moderate levels of engagement amongst the faculty members of higher education institutions. There is a need for enhancing the engagement levels of teachers since institutions cannot afford to have teachers who are not fully engaged in the learning process and yet expect them to deliver quality education. Institution must acknowledge the need to provide an environment in which employees perceive their work to be meaningful and themselves to be empowered to contribute towards organizational and societal goals. To overcome these challenges, it was found essential to continuously investigate and track the level of engagement amongst faculty members.

## 6. Implications

Teachers are an important facet in education sector as they are considered as nation builders and shoulder the vital responsibility of mentoring India's youth and making them responsible citizens of the country. India is a developing country in which Higher Education Institutions face unique challenges in regards to sourcing, retaining and engaging employees. Education institutions must be focused on their institution specific factors that influence and contribute to restore the disengaged faculties. The study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge by examining the level of engagement amongst the faculty members of higher education institutions with three dimensions vigor, absorption and dedication. Present study has implications for Higher Education Institutions

and faculty members. Present study will aid Institutional academic bodies to bring reform in HR Policy and analyse each aspect of engagement and accordingly formulate strategies for enhancing engagement levels. For faculty members to overcome resistance to new reforms in HR policy, institution must put efforts to invest in staff development programmes. Education staff must have knowledge, professional know-how for executing the new tasks and responsibilities included in the reforms.

## 7. Future research prospects

Present study fills the research gaps by contributing to the study on engagement levels in education sector in India. Education system is evolving at a frantic pace so it will be worthwhile to extend similar studies throughout the length and breadth of the country which would give a deeper and more inclusive understanding of the Indian education sector and would also help in designing region specific education policies. Further, a highly engaged employee may be less engaged on some days. To study this problem area longitudinal studies can be conducted. This will analyse the pattern of daily changes in employee engagement level and identify the factors leading to these changes.

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