

Organizational Commitment and Work Engagement as a Facilitator for Sustaining Higher Education Professionals

Sunaina Ahuja , Savita Gupta

Abstract: *The rationale for the current study was explained in the light of the challenges faced by Indian higher education system. Given the issues of below expected quality of teaching and learning, lack of quality assurance and poor accountability of teaching staff in higher education institutions, it was found essential to investigate the status of work engagement and organizational commitment amongst higher education professionals. The review of literature revealed the need to conduct a comprehensive study of work engagement of faculty members in the higher education sector, as very few such studies existed in the Indian context. The relationship of work engagement with organizational commitment was found to be a subject of research gap and interest. Based on these, measures for enhancement of work engagement were sought to be identified, the present study was undertaken with the objective to study the relationship between work engagement and organization commitment of higher education institution faculty members. A cross-sectional descriptive study was designed using the quota sampling technique for drawing a fixed number of faculty members from each of the four broad faculty work areas namely Commerce and Business Management (CBM), Science, Engineering and Technology (SET), Applied Medical Sciences (AMS) and Education and Humanities (EHUM) from public and private higher education institutions. Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) and organizational Commitment scale developed by Saks (2006) were used. The statistical analysis approach hierarchical multivariate regression was employed and analysis was done by using SPSS version 22.0. The results revealed that work engagement is positively associated with organizational commitment. A long tenure could be an outcome of a match between organization's result orientation with employees' personal and professional orientation. Hence, it implies that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must design ingenious ways to map the two orientations so that they can retain faculty members for long tenures and capitalize upon their work engagement.*

Index Terms: Higher Education Professionals, Organizational Commitment, Work Engagement

I. INTRODUCTION

The higher education system in India has grown remarkably, particularly in the post-independence era. At the time of independence in 1947, there were 19 universities and

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Sunaina Ahuja , Savita Gupta

several hundred affiliated colleges (CABE, 2005).

According to the Ministry of HRD website, in the year 2014 India had 48,828 higher education institutions consisting of 712 Universities, 36671 colleges and 11445 standalone institutions. There are 12,09,211 teachers employed in universities and colleges. Such statistics make it one of the largest system of its kind in the world with huge potential for further development. It is targeted that by 2022, India will have 500 million skilled workers. By 2022, India will have to develop the skills of 120 million people in non-farm sectors. The highest requirement of skilled labour is expected to come from the construction sector (31 million), followed by retail (17 million) and logistics (12 million). The Government of India is opening of IITs and IIMs in new locations. With greater popularity of online mode of education adopted by several higher education institutions, this sector is all set for some major changes and developments in the coming years. Appropriate and timely steps in this direction will enable India to take true advantage of its demographic dividend.

According to a report titled, 'Understanding India - The Future of Higher Education and Opportunities for International Cooperation' published by the British Council in 2014, despite of significant progress over the last ten years, the system is facing certain challenges for instance:

The demand-supply gap: The rate of enrolment in higher education in India at 21.1% is lower than the global average of 26% and is again low as compared to China at 26% and Brazil at 36%. Thus, there is a huge demand for higher education which is unmet at the moment. By 2030, The Government of India aims at increasing the gross enrolment to 30% which means that India requires a huge increase in the number of Higher Education Institutions. **Low quality of teaching and learning:** Many of the educational institutions are suffering from a serious shortage of faculty, outdated curriculum, rigid pedagogy, poor quality teaching, separation of teaching and research, lack of quality assurance and poor accountability. **Research capacity constraints:** India does not have enough high quality researchers, Ph.D enrolment is very low, opportunities for interdisciplinary research are limited and not properly utilized due to low industry engagement in higher education and on the whole a weak ecosystem for innovation.

Uneven growth and access to



opportunity: The access to education is not equitable across the social strata and geographic divisions. Hence the human resource development is quite uneven.

The above constraints are reflected in the three central pillars of the government's plans for education namely expansion, equity and excellence. The system has many issues of concern at present, of which quality of higher education is a major one. The Higher Education Institutions including the universities and colleges envision to produce an intelligent human resource pool, by making innovations in teaching, research and extension activities. This calls for a fresh approach to tertiary education, in which the teacher assumes the pivotal role. [21] expressed his concern that it is worrying to be struggling with teacher absenteeism and disinterest in colleges and universities. It needs to be immediately reversed with encouraging statistics of teachers' work engagement in order to achieve the vision of becoming a developed society.

According to a study titled, *Skilling India: Empowering Indian Youth through World Class Education* conducted by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India [40] Indians spend about \$6-7 billion per annum in sending their children abroad for higher education. This is not just the case of the elite population but also the middle-class families who spend their life time savings for educating their children abroad. As per the study, more than 2.9 lakh Indians went abroad in 2013 and the count shot up to 6.8 lakh in 2014. One of the major reasons cited for this trend was the lack of quality of education in India. Hence, there is a concern that the country is losing foreign exchange and revenue due to the large exodus of students. If these students could get an opportunity to obtain equivalent quality education in India, they might have stayed back. Thus, the quality of tertiary education in India definitely needs to be increased to match global standards.

Being a service, the quality of education is anchored to its service provider. In the higher education sector, the massive exodus of India's best and brightest science and engineering students to the seemingly greener pastures calls for enthusiasm of academicians to mend the flaws in the prevailing education system. [45] emphasized upon the role of universities in national development by highlighting the facts that the celebrated Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) graduates alone originated technologies that have generated worldwide revenues nearing US\$ 2 trillion. United States houses half of the top 20 universities in engineering and technology, which leaves no doubt regarding why the country dominates the global order. For India to attain this position, it is imperative to reconstitute India's innovation systems on the lines prescribed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who sowed the seeds of the Indian Institutes of Technology [11]. Department of Higher Education, Ministry of HRD, Government of India launched *Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)* a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), in 2013 with the aim of providing strategic funding to eligible state higher educational institutions. The funding to states would be based on a critical appraisal of State Higher Education Plans, as to how do they address issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

[24] commended Prime Minister Narendra Modi's idea of investing in making good teachers expressed in his Teacher's Day address on September 5, 2014. He emphasized on making the right social investment, to make India a nation of teachers with a global presence, a "Jagat Guru", so to speak. In order to achieve this vision every higher education institution needs to emulate the world's most celebrated universities. One of the key factors driving the quality of education is teacher's engagement in their work. It highlights the vital need for investigation of work engagement of teachers or faculty members in the higher education sector. Hence, there is a strong rationale for empirical studies on work engagement of faculty members in the higher education sector, so as to understand the dynamics of this vital phenomena and measures for enhancing it. [15] on the basis of their study of academic staff in South African Higher Education Institutions, aptly concluded that higher education institutions should measure the engagement of their academic staff and provide feedback to the individuals. There should be interventions to promote work engagement of academic staff.

A. Work Engagement:

Several definitions were given [12][22][17][36][5][9] where a fundamental question raised by many authors like [11] as to whether engagement is different from an overall job attitude was addressed in the light of studies by [15][17] who discretely established work engagement as a unique concept, despite its seeming similarity with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job involvement and workaholism. One of the most lucid definitions by [37] states that work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is persistent and pervasive. It is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour. Work engagement consists of three dimensions namely vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour is demonstrated in the form of high levels of energy and mental resilience, willful efforts, perseverance in the face of challenges and not being easily fatigued.

Dedication is deriving a sense of meaning from one's work, demonstrating enthusiasm and pride in the job while being inspired as well as challenged by it. Absorption is reflected as the incumbent being completely and happily immersed in one's work to the tune of having difficulties detaching oneself from it. In a state of absorption, one forgets everything else that is around, feels that time flies, to the extent that while at work one loses the sense of time. Studies by [18] and [27] bring out the uniqueness of work engagement with respect to job satisfaction. A study by [42] distinguished engagement from commitment as against [6]d The Corporate Executive [12] who used the terms engagement and commitment almost as synonyms. Studies by [22][25][34][14] distinguished engagement from job involvement and clarified the seeming overlap appearing in the definition of job involvement given by Brown (1996). The perceived similarity between work engagement and



workaholism was clarified on the basis of a study by Bakker and [6] A study by [3] distinguished work engagement from work-related flow. Study by [14] established engagement as a novel and unique concept accepted in both managerial and academic literature and unlikely to be forsaken as a fad.

For the measurement of work engagement four widely used scales identified were Q12 or Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) or Gallup Engagement Index developed Gallup organization researchers and were reported by Utrecht Work Engagement Scale – UWES developed by [16]) was used for the study. Major factors which affecting work engagement were identified by [26][14][47]and [26]and it was concurred that work engagement is predicted by factors such as job characteristics wherein, work that is challenging, clearly outlined, varied, creative and somewhat autonomous is perceived to be meaningful. Personal resources for example self-efficacy, organization-based self-esteem and optimism are vital antecedents of work engagement. Interpersonal relationships depicting openness, flexibility, trust, support and lack of threat are associated with high degree of work engagement. Organizational Support in the form of economic and socio-emotional resources like recognition, rewards, procedural justice have a positive impact on employee work engagement.

B. Organizational Commitment:

In the corporate world managers continually look for ways to enhance employee performance and retention. In this context, employee commitment to organizations and its relationship with work engagement has become the subject of research interest. Extant research proved that work engagement plays a mediating role in the relationship between job resources and organizational commitment [23] Further research to investigate the relationship between employee work engagement and organizational commitment could be instrumental in development of HR policies on a sound theoretical base.

Committed employees characteristically possess a strong belief in the organization's goals and values, have a willingness to exert substantial effort on behalf of the organization and a firm desire to maintain membership in the organization. Highly committed employees may outperform their less committed companions indicating that organizational commitment may be a helpful indicator of the organizational effectiveness [31] [29] in a study of Finnish Teachers proved that work engagement plays a mediating role in the relationship between job resources and organizational commitment. There is a positive relationship between work engagement and affective emotional commitment [42]; [13][22][29][30]

The relationship of work engagement and organizational commitment was explored on the basis of studies by; [14][17][22][26]In a nutshell, these studies established a positive association between work engagement and affective organizational commitment.

Paying attention to the geographical spread of work engagement and organizational commitment studies, there is a requirement to conduct such studies in India in order to map

the perception of Indian population in the light of its culture and value system. The review of literature revealed the need to conduct a comprehensive study of work engagement with organizational commitment of faculty members in the higher education sector, having its unique size and challenges. Following objective and hypothesis are framed:

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the relationship between work engagement and organization commitment of higher education institution faculty members.

III. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

There is no significant relationship between work engagement and organizational commitment between the faculty members of higher education institutions.

IV. METHODOLOGY

As per the objectives of the current study, relationship between organizational commitment as an independent variable and work engagement as a dependent variable was investigated. Organizational Commitment was measured with the six-item scale developed by [34]Cronbach's alpha value was 0.911 which is well above the acceptable limit of 0.70 [38] Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) a self-reporting instrument that has been validated in many countries across the world [36]was used in the study. The scale was found to be a reliable measure of work engagement of faculty members in the higher education sector of Punjab India as Cronbach's alpha was 0.862 which is above the acceptable limit of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2009).

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As per the objectives of the study whether there is an associative relationship between work engagement and organizational commitment a correlation analysis was performed. The results are tabulated in Table 1.4.

Table1.4: Inter correlations between the independent dimensions of variables under study.

Variables	Mean	SD	1
1. Organizational Commitment (OC)	4.37	1.17	(0.911)
2. Work Engagement (WE)	4.58	.87	.539*
** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level; N=463			

A strong correlation was found between organizational commitment and work engagement ($r = .539, p < .05$). It indicates that faculty members who are highly committed to their current organizations are likely to be

more work engaged than their less committed counterparts. In order

to understand the direction of the relationship, the hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed and results obtained are shown in Table 1.5. The respondents’ personal variables namely type of institution, faculty work area, place of posting, designation, total experience, current organization experience, age, gender, educational background, regional background and monthly salary were taken as control variables.

Table 1.5: Result of Multiple Hierarchical Regression for testing the impact of organizational commitment on work engagement

Variable	Work Engagement			Work Engagement		
	Step 1			Step 2		
Step 1: Control Variables	B	T	p-value	B	T	p-value
Constant	4.451	13.931	.000	2.434	7.735	.000
Type of Institution	-.101	-1.547	.123	.047	.817	.414
Discipline	.118	2.477	.014	.071	1.740	.083
Posted at	.037	.573	.567	.071	1.290	.198
District	-.175	-3.596	.000	-	-2.535	.012
Designation	.138	1.924	.055	.043	.703	.483
Total Experience	.025	.260	.795	-	-.349	.727
Experience in Current organization	.016	-.194	.846	-	-.625	.532
Age	.074	.784	.434	.028	.350	.726
Gender	-.011	-.218	.827	.007	.173	.863
Doctorate	.028	.491	.624	.059	1.231	.219
Regional Background	-.013	-.273	.785	-	-.121	.904
Monthly Salary	-.095	-1.109	.268	.025	.341	.734
Step 2: Independent Variables						
Organizational Commitment (OC)				.542	12.5	.000
F-Value			3.08			16.71
R ²			0.276			0.571
Adjusted R ²			0.051			0.307

ΔR ²						0.295
Notes: N = 463, Standardized beta coefficients are reported in the regression table. * p < .05.						

Hypothesis there is no significant relationship between organizational commitment and work engagement was rejected on the basis of results obtained. Table 1.5 reveals that work engagement is predicted by organizational commitment with significant F value. There is a significant positive relationship between organizational commitment and work engagement, $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.307$.

Findings: It implies that increase in organizational commitment is likely to enhance work engagement. The findings reinforce the results obtained by Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) who found that affective commitment is positively associated with high job engagement and organizational engagement.

Faculty members who are highly committed to their current organizations are likely to be more work engaged. Work engagement of long tenured faculty members was found to be higher than others who had less experience in the organization. Work engagement will be sustainable when employee wellbeing is also high (Robertson and Cooper, 2010).

VI. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

It simply highlights the need for measures to enhance organizational commitment through suitable HR policies and their spirited adherence by all those in leadership positions. It also implies that HEIs must design ingenious ways to map the two orientations so that they can retain faculty members for long tenures and capitalize upon their work engagement.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

It is established that faculty members who are highly committed to their organizations are likely to be more work engaged than their less committed counterparts. It is further substantiated that when faculty members stay associated with an organization for a long tenure, they develop a clear understanding of organizational orientation for results which was identified as another vital factor predicting faculty work engagement. A long tenure could be an outcome of a match between organization’s result orientation with employees’ personal and professional orientation. An employee value proposition of care and concern fuels affective commitment which has a strong positive association with work engagement. Studies on work engagement can be furthered to construct workplace happiness index – an aggregation of all vital metrics of employee wellbeing can also be carried out.

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