



A Study on Employee Engagement and its Impact on Perceived Employee Performance in Private Universities in Tamil Nadu

S. Xavier Selvi¹, Akha Khou Stephen²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies St. Joseph University, Nagaland.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies St. Joseph University, Nagaland.

ABSTRACT: Employee engagement has become a crucial factor in determining teacher effectiveness and institutional success in the ever-changing world of higher education. This study investigates the connection between employee engagement and perceived employee performance at private universities in Tamil Nadu. The goal is to comprehend how faculty members' self-perceptions of their performance in research, teaching, and student interactions are influenced by their level of participation. A structured questionnaire was created using proven measures, such as a specially created scale for perceived performance and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for evaluating engagement. To guarantee coverage across a range of academic disciplines, experience levels, and demographic groupings, the survey was distributed to 300 faculty members from ten private universities. These faculty members were chosen using stratified random selection. The findings demonstrate how important engagement-enhancing tactics are for improving teacher performance, including acknowledgment, participative leadership, and encouraging work conditions. This research contributes to the limited empirical literature in the Indian higher education context and provides actionable insights for university administrators and policymakers aiming to drive performance through engagement. It also opens avenues for future research into the moderating role of demographic variables and institutional culture in the engagement-performance relationship.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Perceived Employee Performance, Private Universities, Tamil Nadu, Faculty Motivation, Organizational Support

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are realizing more and more how crucial their human capital is to attaining academic excellence and institutional success in the competitive, knowledge-driven global economy of today. As the main intellectual and operational force in higher education, faculty members are crucial in determining research innovation, student growth, and educational outcomes. Because reputation and sustainability in the private education sector are closely linked to the caliber of faculty contributions, university administrators are now very interested in knowing what factors affect teacher performance.

One such critical factor that has garnered substantial attention in recent organizational behavior research is employee engagement. In its broadest sense, employee engagement refers to a person's emotional and mental dedication to their organization and job responsibilities. Higher degrees of enthusiasm, commitment, and interest in their work are displayed by engaged employees, which improves job performance, creativity, and corporate citizenship behaviors. Engaged faculty members are more likely to go above and above the call of duty in academic contexts, provide students with effective mentoring, and make significant contributions to institutional and research projects.

The expansion of private universities in India has drastically changed the country's higher education landscape. With a broad range of programs and a diversified student and teacher body, Tamil Nadu in particular has become a center for private educational institutions. However, maintaining skilled professors and guaranteeing uniform performance across departments are problems for many private colleges. These challenges are often rooted in organizational practices, leadership styles, job stress, and the overall academic environment—all of which influence engagement levels.

While numerous studies have examined employee engagement in corporate and public sector contexts, there is a relative dearth of empirical research focused on the higher education sector, especially in the Indian private university landscape. Furthermore, limited attention has been placed on the relationship between employee engagement and perceived performance, or how faculty members evaluate their own efficacy in their jobs as teachers, researchers, and service providers. Perceived performance is an important measure as it reflects not only objective achievements but also intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and alignment with institutional goals.

The study additionally examines at organizational and demographic factors, such as years of experience, academic discipline, and institutional support systems, that can have an impact on this link. By emphasizing optimal practices for developing an engaged academic workforce that can propel institutional success, the findings are anticipated to assist university leaders, HR specialists, and politicians.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of employee engagement among faculty members in higher education institutions.

- To examine how demographic factors relate to the components of engagement—vigor, dedication, and absorption—among faculty in HEIs.
- To evaluate the impact of age on faculty members' levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption.

2. Literature Survey

Deepalakshmi, Deepak Tiwari, Rashmi Baruah, Anand Seth & Raman Bisht [1], From the standpoint of human resources, this analysis examines the complex link between organizational performance and employee engagement. Using terms such as Employee Engagement, Organizational Performance, and Human Resource Management, electronic databases are searched as part of the data collection process. Positive correlation, mediating factors, and sector variations are the main conclusions. The study's conclusions might not be as applicable to other sectors, sizes of organizations, and cultural settings. Even if the study might find a correlation, it might be difficult to pinpoint the casualty's direction.

Nandita Mishra & Aithal [3], This descriptive study uses primary data from seventy-two faculty members. To gather primary data, a structured questionnaire was used. Research papers, journals, and published articles are the sources of secondary data and literature reviews. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was the instrument utilized. Young faculty and teachers are embracing technology as its role in education grows. Senior academic leaders, however, have a hard time keeping up with the latest developments.

Tilahun Kidane Diko & Shabnam Saxena [2], Using a mixed-method approach, the study combined qualitative and quantitative data. It looked into the connection between organizational performance and employee engagement using an explanatory design. The main method of gathering data was by distributing questionnaires to

university employees, both academic and non-academic. Because research only looked at three public universities, the results can't be applied to other organizations or industries. Because the study was cross-sectional, it was not possible to analyze how engagement changed over time.

Smita A. Kalokar & Amit Sahu [6], This method was written utilizing the literature review process, which was applied to both national and international periodicals.

Using the terms employee engagement, work engagement, and work performance, articles published between 2013 and 2020 were examined.

With the use of a literature analysis, this study seeks to comprehend the ideas behind employee engagement and identify its motivators. Benjamin Otchere-Ankrah [7], A quantitative approach was used in the study.

156 employees of Private Limited made up the study's population. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to enter all quantitative data, and regression analysis was used to look for statistically significant connections. Furthermore, recognition and reward ought to be constant.

Dian Bagus Mitreka Satata [9], A literature review, which involves searching both domestic and foreign publications from 2013 to 2020, is the methodology employed. An explanation of the impact of employee involvement on the caliber of individual performance is provided in the conclusion of each chosen journal. Numerous research findings suggest that employee engagement from both internal and external sources affects individual performance.

Emmanuel Aziegbe Akhigbe & Uzoma E.N. Osita-Ejikeme [10], sing a structured questionnaire in a quantitative research design Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were among the statistical techniques used to examine the data in order to investigate the connections between employee engagement and business

culture. The design of the study makes it impossible to establish causality. Edison B. Estigoy et al. [11], To investigate the degree of High-Performance Work Practices (HPWP) application in higher education institutions (HEIs), the study used a descriptive-quantitative design. Seventy teachers employed by HEIs were given surveys to complete in order to gather empirical data. With only 70 participants, the sample size was tiny and might not accurately reflect the workforce in higher education as a whole.

Muhammad Yasir Imran et al. [12], The sample employees were given 900 questionnaires in all.

The study's practical implications include the cross-sectional design, the fact that all of the data came from the collectivist service sector, and the fact that different cultural contexts have different ideas about what it means to thrive at work. Hani AI-Dmour et al. [4], To answer the research objectives and close the identified gap, the study used a mixed method approach. It is organized into two stages: a quantitative survey-based research and an exploratory investigation.

408 valid questionnaires were gathered from a randomly selected sample of 600 academic staff members.

Academic productivity was measured in this study using arbitrary indicators, which must have offered some information on the validity and generalizability of the results.

Gusti Ray Hardiyanti et al. [8], A quantitative approach was used in the study. Surveys employing structured questions were used to gather data.

150 workers in all provided information via a standardized questionnaire. The study only included 150 participants from one company, which might have an impact on how broadly applicable the results are.

Ahmad Azmy [13], One hundred employees and lecturers participated in this study. The questionnaires were used in the data collection process.

Confirmatory factor analysis was the study methodology employed (CFA). T-Statistics was the statistical test that was employed. The study suggested that factors including pay, training, growth, and resources be taken into account in order to continuously increase employee satisfaction. Taha Hameduddin & Shinwoo Lee [14], Over 13,000 government employees, including supervisors and line personnel, participated in this study. Descriptive statistics are utilized in the examination of the variables. Among the study's shortcomings are its denial of causality and its inability to segment the survey respondents' population according to their geographic areas.

Janetius, Padmanabhan & Mini [15], In all, 265 instructors from eight different colleges in the Coimbatore area took part in the study.

Theoretical editing analysis, protocols, themes, and categories were employed in this study. On a Likert scale, participants were asked to rate their answers.

Some of the main obstacles were found by the research, including the lack of a fixed work schedule and a lack of appreciation for any effort put forth.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Methodology

The present research uses primary data and is descriptive in nature. Colleges and other higher education facilities in Tamil Nadu have provided primary data. To gather primary data using the questionnaire approach, a structured questionnaire was used, and in a small number of cases, whenever feasible, using the interview method to gather detailed data about the educational system. Research papers, journals, periodicals, and

published articles are the sources of secondary data and literature analysis.

3.2 Hypotheses of the Study

In order to investigate the impact of demographic factors on the three fundamental aspects of employee engagement—vigor, dedication, and absorption—the study puts forth the following null hypotheses.

Based on Age

H₀₁: The Vigour scores for the various monthly pay groups do not differ statistically significantly.

H₀₂: The Dedication scores for the various monthly wage groups do not differ statistically significantly.

H₀₃: Absorption scores for the various monthly salary groups do not differ statistically significantly.

3.3 Research Design

Using a deductive reasoning paradigm, the study develops hypotheses based on accepted ideas about employee engagement and performance, which are subsequently verified by empirical data. Specifically, the study draws upon the Job Engagement Theory as operationalized by Rich et al. (2010), and extends it by incorporating context-specific variables relevant to the higher education sector in India. The descriptive and correlational survey research design used in this study is appropriate for determining the kind, degree, and direction of the link between perceived performance and employee engagement. Additionally, it makes it easier to compare groups based on demographic factors like gender, income, and teaching experience.

3.4 Sampling Framework

Diversity in academic specialization, gender, years of experience, and monthly salary—all important factors associated with employee engagement—was reflected in the sampling methodology. Faculty from a variety of fields, including engineering, management, social

sciences, commerce, the arts, and science, were included in order to reflect the changing nature of education and the interdisciplinary focus of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Special emphasis was placed on including faculty from social sciences and interdisciplinary education streams, recognizing their growing importance in the context of NEP reforms.

3.5 Employee Engagement Measure

It's common practice to classify employee engagement levels based on the mean score range of responses in quantitative studies that measure employee engagement, particularly when employing Likert-scale-based instruments like the UTRECHT WORK ENGAGEMENT SCALE (UWES) or Rich et al. (2010). Assuming a 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree), the following is a recommended range of employee engagement levels:

Table 1: Range of Level of Engagement

Mean Score range	Engagement Level	Interpretation
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low Engagement	Faculty are highly disengaged; lack of energy, motivation, or focus.
1.80 – 2.59	Low Engagement	Minimal involvement; likely emotional or cognitive withdrawal.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate Engagement	Average engagement; occasional energy and attention toward work.
3.40 – 4.19	High Engagement	Faculty are regularly enthusiastic, focused, and dedicated.
4.20 – 5.00	Very High Engagement	Strong and consistent physical, emotional, and cognitive commitment.

3.5.1 Mean and Standard Deviation of Engagement Sub-Variables

The mean and standard deviation scores for each of the three sub-variables—vigor, dedication, and

absorption—were computed in order to evaluate the degrees of employee involvement. These descriptive statistics provide insight on faculty members' general levels of engagement at private universities.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee Engagement Dimensions

Sub-variable	NO of Items	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Engagement Level
Vigour	5	3.85	0.62	High Engagement
Dedication	5	4.02	0.57	Very High Engagement
Absorption	5	3.68	0.66	High Engagement

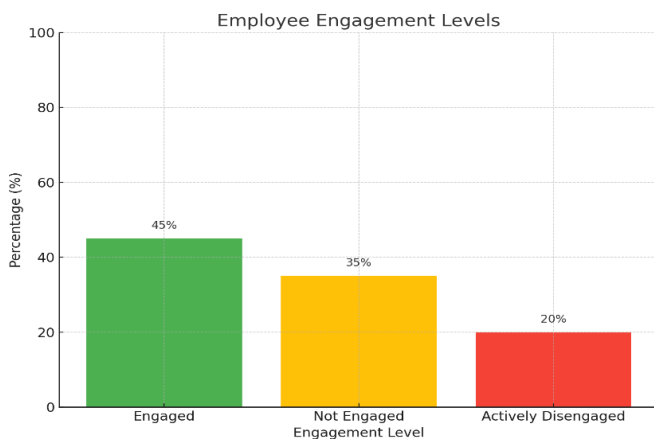


Figure 1: Distribution of Employees Based on Engagement Levels

4. Analysis of Data

Inferential statistical techniques were employed to test the formulated hypotheses, allowing for deeper analysis and validation of the study's assumptions.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group (in Years)	Code	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
30–40	1	24	33.3

40–50	2	17	23.6
50–60	3	27	37.5
60 and above	4	4	5.6
Total	-	72	100.00

The largest group of participants (27) were in the 50–60 age range, followed by 24 in the 30–40 age range, 17 in the 40–50 age range, and just 4 in the 60+ age range. This implies that a sizable percentage of senior faculty members—especially those aged 50 to 60—took part in the survey, which may indicate a strong interest in learning about employee engagement strategies and a desire to better assist and guide junior colleagues.

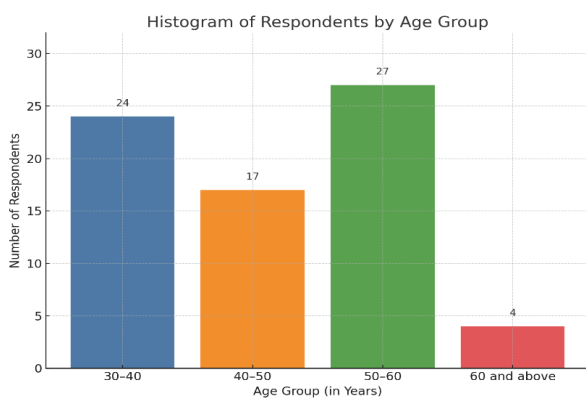


Figure 2: Histogram-style bar graph showing the distribution of respondents by age group

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation for Employee Engagement Sub-Variables

Sub-Variable	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
Vigour	I feel bursting with energy at my work	4.12	0.74
	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	4.05	0.81
	I am mentally resilient at work	4.21	0.68
Absorption	I am immersed in my work	3.89	0.92
	I get carried away when I'm working	3.76	1.01
	I feel happy when I am working intensely	4.00	0.85
Dedication	I am enthusiastic about my job	4.35	0.66
	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	4.28	0.70

	My job inspires me	4.17	0.75
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Strong emotional investment among employees was indicated by the highest mean score under the Dedication dimension, notably for the statement “I am enthusiastic about my position (M=4.35, SD=0.66). The comparatively lower mean scores for absorption point to point possible areas for improvement in terms of immersion and flow at work.

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of employee engagement on perceived performance among faculty members in private universities in Tamil Nadu. The findings confirm that engagement—especially the component of dedication—is a strong predictor of how faculty members evaluate their own effectiveness in teaching, research and student engagement. Among the three sub-dimensions of engagement—vigor, absorption, and dedication—dedication emerged as the most dominant driver of performance. Faculty members who found meaning in their work and felt inspired were more likely to report high levels of self-perceived performance. While vigor and absorption also contributed positively, slightly lower scores in absorption suggest potential areas for institutional improvement in fostering deeper immersion and focus at work.

Demographic insights, such as variations based on gender, teaching experience, and monthly salary, provide further understanding of engagement trends and highlight the need for tailored engagement strategies. The presence of experienced faculty, particularly those in the 50–60 age group, suggests an opportunity to leverage senior academic staff as mentors and cultural anchors in institutional development. This research contributes empirical evidence to the limited literature on employee engagement within Indian higher education, offering actionable insights for university administrators, HR professionals, and policymakers. To sustain

academic excellence and competitive edge, institutions should focus on nurturing engagement through participative leadership, recognition, clear career pathways, and supportive work environments. Future studies may explore the moderating effects of organizational culture, disciplinary context, and longitudinal changes in engagement levels.

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