

Assessing the Association of Employee Engagement with affective Organizational Commitment in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

In organizations, employee and management are in a symbiotic relationship mediated by good employee engagement initiatives. Several employee engagement studies have been done on the corporate sector and now there is a need for sector specific employee engagement practices. Keeping this thought in mind education sector has been selected for the present study. The engagement of academic faculty is considered to have an enormous effect on the success of the student and the overall development of the society. The article attempts to analyse the relationship of employee engagement with affective commitment among teaching workforce employed in higher education institutions. For the study cross-sectional survey design was used with a sample of 360 faculties and data was analysed with Chi-square statistical test. The findings of the article concluded a positive significant association of employee engagement with affective commitment. Implications are also discussed.

1. Introduction

Employee engagement has become a critical issue across many industry sectors. Engagement has shown to have dramatic impacts on organizations. Engaged employees have a positive attitude towards the organization and its values and deliver better, which is vital for the growth and development (Robinson et al., 2004; Saks, 2006). Hence, regularly communicating with employees, making them feel valued and cultivating a strong corporate culture have been considered important for the management of every organization (Kontakos, 2007). The first use of the term employee engagement occurred in a 1990, in the Academy of Management Journal by William A. Kahn. Kahn's eminent article on the "Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work", examined the conditions at work which contribute to engagement and disengagement. Work engagement is most often defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Bakker, 2010). Engagement goes beyond satisfaction. It is an emotional attachment of the employee towards their workplace. Researchers have found a link between employee engagement and business outcomes like increase in productivity, improvement in quality and talent retention. Employee retention and contribution are significant to the success of business.

Employee engagement is majorly explored area in the corporate world while in the educational sector, it has limited studies (Robinson et al., 2004). Organisations with engaged staff tend to have higher employee wellbeing, and lower turnover and sickness absence. Particularly higher education institutions, having engaged and motivated staff was seen as crucial in delivering high quality teaching and learning. Research highlighted the link between employee engagement and retention, sickness absence and employee advocacy.

Educational institutions all over the world compete like corporate enterprises and this change affects the overall nature and outlook of teachers. Due to this teachers are under pressure to survive and strive in their institutions. Teaching is regarded as a noble profession. Unless and until a teacher derives satisfaction on job performance and develops positive attitude towards their institution and students, they will not be able to do justice to their profession. According to a recent Gallup survey (2017), employee engagement is one of the prime challenges for the majority of colleges and universities. Only about one-third (34 percent) of surveyed faculty members feel engaged in their work, while 52 percent said they were not engaged. Fourteen percent of respondents went as far as to say they were actively disengaged.

Institutions should consider their faculty members as a valuable resource of the organization, but these employees face a daunting challenge. Disengaged employees and those who are actively disengaged, become hindrance to individual success and hamper the likelihood of success for the overall institution. Student success is no longer the sole responsibility of the student. Success is influenced in large part by engaged school employees. According to the Cornerstone OnDemand and Ellucian report (2016) faculty members play a key role, as 80.5 percent of those surveyed agreed that faculty members have a significant impact on student success. But all employees contribute to that success, from student affairs staff (47.7 percent) to deans (35.9 percent) to support staff such as the registrar (33.6 percent).

Teachers helps in building the student character and a responsible society. Therefore teacher's problems should be listened and addressed by every higher education intuitions. And it can only be resolved by continuously surveying the faculty member's opinions. Higher education institutions must be able to measure and track engagement, compare this

information with historical data, and determine what actions should be taken to improve engagement. The findings of the report are that 47.1 percent of institutions do not measure and track engagement levels. Those that do are using tools such as engagement surveys (29 percent), employee reviews (27 percent), student surveys (16 percent) and employee retention data (15.3 percent). Through such initiatives an institution can gauge their faculties' engagement levels. By improving employee engagement, you improve retention and provide students with the support they need to succeed in their lives.

1.1 Problem Statement

Higher education is facing enormous hurdles. It has become a challenge to keep staff engaged, motivated and committed. As per Cornerstone and Ellucian's 2016 Employee Engagement and Retention in Higher Education survey, 39% of colleges and universities do not offer any form of employee engagement opportunities such as leadership development, coaching, or recognition programs and nearly half of respondents say employee engagement is neither tracked nor measured at their institutions. Due to such reasons student's development and organizational growth gets hampered.

1.2 Significance of the study

As the best resources to any organization is always its human resources, the attainment of an workplace with high caliber employees are the key to success & the way to set competitive advantage in the global scenario. A well functioning organization is the product of its healthy, committed and motivated employees, who can be termed as 'engaged employees'. Engagement takes place when employees are committed to their job. Commitment is an aspect of employee engagement which in turn has predictive value for organizational commitment (Field & Buitendach, 2011). Commitment with the institution contributes toward career satisfaction which helps in increasing their further advancement. As a result of increase in Employee Engagement, Commitment with the institution becomes stronger.

A 2009 Gallup study found teachers' engagement levels are directly related to the engagement levels of the students, which are also linked with student achievement outcomes. Approximately 7 in 10 teachers are not engaged in their jobs, a new Gallup report (April 2014) finds. Therefore measures have to be taken to improve engagement level of the teaching workforce.

2. Review of literature

Extant literature can be found in employee engagement. One of the prominent piece of work on employee engagement is done by William Kahn in 1990, pioneer and one of the first scholars to study engagement. Defined the term person as engagement as the "harnessing of institutional members" selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance".

Luthans and Peterson (2002) elaborated on Kahn's work on employee engagement, it gives a convergent theory on the empirical derivation of Gallup's employee engagement

construct. They opined that emotionally engaged employee has a meaningful connections with others and to experience empathy for them. Towers Perrin (2003), suggests that engagement involves both emotional and rational factors in relation to work and the overall work experience. Wellins and Concelman (2004) suggest that "Employee engagement is the illusive force that motivates employees to higher levels of performance. This desired energy is an amalgamation of "commitment, loyalty, productivity and ownership." they further added that it includes, "feelings and attitudes employees have towards their jobs and their organization.

According to Robinson (2006), employee engagement can be achieved through creating a conducive organisational environment which has positive emotions like involvement and pride are encouraged, which results in improved organisational performance, lower employee turnover and better health.

Shashi (2011) also assessed the significance of employee communication as a success factor of an organization. Article reveals that an organization should realize the importance of employees, more than any other factor, as the most powerful contributor to an organizations competitive position.

Bijaya Kumar Sundaray (2011) explored various factors which lead to employee engagement and steps required by the company to make the employees engaged. Proper attention on engagement strategies will increase the organizational effectiveness in terms of higher productivity, greater profits, improved quality, better customer satisfaction, employee retention and improvised adaptability.

Krishna (2009) suggested that employee engagement and employee commitment have emerged as important concepts when dealing with organizational research that indicates that favourable relationships with employees can result in organizational retention and performance.

Hoffmeister (2006) found that engagement motivates high levels of commitment, performance and helps in bringing innovation. Employees must be offered meaningful work so that they can practice their skills and get recognized for their contribution in achieving the objectives. Employees prefer to work in that organization where the workforce is engaged and their involvement is encouraged in business decisions:

Porters, Steers and Mowday in 1982 defined Organizational commitment as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization and can be characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership of the organization".

Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed a three dimensional approach to organizational commitment: Affective commitment, Continuance commitment and Normative commitment. And they defined these three types of commitment as: affective commitment refers to "the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization".

Continuance commitment as: “the awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization”. Finally, normative commitment represents a perceived obligation to remain in the organization, it refers to commitment based on a sense of obligation to the organization and employees with a strong normative commitment remain because they feel they ought to do so.

Jena, Pratishtha Bhattacharyya and Sajeet Pradhan (2017) made an attempt to examine the indirect effect of employee voice on employee engagement and affective organizational commitment. 301 executives working in Indian service sector were sampled. The finding of the study reported that employee voice plays a mediating role in the association of employee engagement and affective organizational commitment.

Shore et al. (2017) incorporated antecedents and outcomes of measures of manager-rated employee engagement and affective and continuance commitment was tested with 231 managers and 339 subordinates. Organizational citizenship behavior predicted manager-rated affective commitment, whereas side bets (age, tenure, and education) predicted manager-rated continuance commitment. Further, affective commitment was positively and continuance commitment negatively related to a variety of outcomes, including manager promotion.

From the above review of literature it can be inferred that organizations need to adopt a multi-faceted approach of engagement and commitment of employees to achieve holistic success.

3. Objectives of the study

On the basis of review done on past studies, the present study was undertaken to fulfill following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment among teaching workforce employed in higher education institutions.
2. To examine the relationship between employee engagement and affective commitment among teaching workforce employed in higher education institutions.

4. Research hypothesis

Based on the above stated objectives, following hypothesis have been formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between employee engagement (faculty members) and organizational commitment.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between employee engagement (faculty members) and Affective organizational commitment.

5. Research methodology

The present study was descriptive in nature implying natural observation of the characteristics of the research subject without influencing the variables. It is a cross sectional design where a sample is taken from the population at one point of time. Study comprise of faculty members employed in higher

education institutions of Himachal Pradesh. Higher Education Institutions namely universities and colleges can be broadly categorized into two types namely the government institutions which are and the private institutions. Hence, for the sake of feasibility and economy the scope of the study was narrowed down to three districts of Himachal Pradesh, viz Shimla, Solan and Kangra. Multi-stage sampling technique was undertaken for the selection of respondents. Data was gathered through a well-designed questionnaire which were distributed to 500 faculty members. Out of these 360 were returned (yielding a response rate of 72%) and utilized for analysis of the study. Chi-square statistical test was employed for data analysis.

5.1 Research instruments

Organizational Commitment was measured using the latest version scale developed by Meyer, Allen, &Smith⁽¹⁷⁾ in 1993. It is a three dimensional Allen and Meyer Organizational Commitment scale. The scale consists of 18 items comprising of three types of commitment i.e. Affective commitment, Continuance commitment and Normative commitment (6 items in each sub scale). However, according to the present study only affective organizational commitment scale was employed and analysed. The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) is a self-scoring questionnaire. Allen and Meyer’s (1990) is a multidimensional construct that conceptualises organisational commitment and can be applied across domains. Respondents were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements considering their current workplace. Responses to the scale was given on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors labeled: 0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. The scale was found to be a reliable measure of employee engagement of faculty members in the higher education area of Himachal Pradesh, India as Cranach’s alpha was computed as 0.78 which is above the acceptable limit of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2009).

6. Results and discussion

6.1 Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic profile comprise of Type of institution, Designation, Gender, Age and Marital status, The demographic profile of respondents is shown as under:

Table 6.1 shows that the survey had 67.50% respondents (N=243) from private institutions and 32.50% respondents (N=117) from government institutions.

Table 6.1: Type of Institution of Respondents

Type of Institution	N	Percentage
Government	117	32.50
Private	243	67.50
Total	360	100

Table 6.2 shows that the maximum number of respondents (N=246, Percentage=68.33) were assistant professors, 18.06% respondents (N=65) were professors and 13.61% respondents (N=49) were associate professors.

Table 6.2: Designation of Respondents

Designation	N	Percentage
Professor	65	18.06
Associate Professor or equivalent	49	13.61
Assistant Professor or equivalent	246	68.33
Total	360	100

Following table 6.3 shows that maximum numbers (63.06) of respondents surveyed were male and rest 36.94% respondents were female.

Table 6.3: Gender of Respondents

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	227	63.06
Female	133	36.94
Total	360	100

Table 6.4 showcased that the survey had majority of respondents (47.78) belong to the age group of 25 – 35.

Table 6.4: Age of Respondents

Age	N	Percentage
Up to 25 Years	13	3.61
25 to 35 Years	172	47.78
35 to 45 Years	95	26.39
45 to 55 Years	61	16.94
More than 55 Years	19	5.28
Total	360	100

Table 6.5 represents the marital status of the respondents, maximum respondents (66.67) were married, and very few were divorcees.

Table 6.5: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	N	Percentage
Married	240	66.67
Unmarried	114	31.67
Divorced	6	1.67
Total	360	100

Association of Employee Engagement with organizational commitment amongst the faculty members employed in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh

First objective of the study was to study the level of organizational commitment of employees. To measure the level of organizational commitment respondents were asked to indicate the level of agreement towards various statements and final result is concluded on the basis of summated scores as presented in table 6.6. From the results it can be found that majority of respondents (93.61) feel that they are somewhat committed towards their institute. The mean score was 54.94

% along with S.D. of 4.83% concluded that respondents are somewhat committed towards their organization.

Table 6.6: Level of Organizational Commitment of Respondents

Response	N	Percentage
Not at All Committed	0	0.00
Slightly Committed	7	1.94
Somewhat Committed	337	93.61
Moderately Committed	12	3.33
Extremely Committed	4	1.11
Total	360	100
Mean Score	54.94	
S.D.	4.83	
Result	Somewhat Committed	

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between employee engagement and organizational commitment

To measure relationship between Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement, chi-square test is applied as presented in table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Chi-Square test results to measure Relationship between Employee Engagement and Organizational Commitment

Organizational Commitment	Level of Employee Engagement					Total	Chi-Square Value	Significance
	Not at All Engaged	Slightly Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Highly Engaged			
Slightly Committed	3	4	0	0	0	7	74.311	0.000
Somewhat Committed	14	24	89	99	111	337		
Moderately Committed	0	0	9	3	0	12		
Extremely Committed	0	0	0	0	4	4		
Total	17	28	98	102	115	360		

*Level of significance at 5%

It can be seen and inferred that at 5% level of significance the calculated value of chi-square is significant which proves the relationship between Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement. Therefore null hypothesis gets rejected and it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and employee engagement. This result is supported by Rebeeca Jones (2018) who reported that is an association between employee engagement and organizational commitment and employee engagement is statistically significant predictors of organizational commitment.

Association of Employee Engagement with Affective organizational commitment amongst the faculty members employed in Higher Education Institutions of Himachal Pradesh

Table 6.8 presents the level of affective organizational commitment and it can be observed that majority of respondents (N=276, Percentage=76.67). The mean score (17.25) along with S.D. (2.04) concluded that respondents are somewhat committed towards their organization on Affective scale.

Table 6.8: Level of Affective Organizational Commitment of Respondents

Response	N	Percentage
Not at All Committed	0	0.00
Slightly Committed	58	16.11
Somewhat Committed	276	76.67
Moderately Committed	23	6.39
Extremely Committed	3	0.83
Total	360	100
Mean Score	17.25	
S.D.	2.04	
Result	Somewhat Committed	

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between employee engagement and affective organizational commitment

To measure Relationship between affective Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement, chi-square test is employed and presented in table 6.9.

Table 6.9: Chi-Square test results to measure Relationship between Employee engagement and Affective Organizational Commitment

Affective Organizational Commitment	Level of Employee Engagement					Total	Chi-Square Value	Significance
	Not at All Engaged	Slightly Engaged	Somewhat Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Highly Engaged			

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Slightly Committed	7	6	19	17	9	58	73.965	0.000
Somewhat Committed	10	15	63	82	106	276		
Moderately Committed	0	7	16	0	0	23		
Extremely Committed	0	0	0	3	0	3		
Total	17	28	98	102	115	360		

Level of significance = 5%

At 5% level of significance it can be inferred that the calculated value of chi-square is significant which proves the relationship between affective Organizational Commitment and Employee Engagement. So here null hypothesis gets rejected and it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between affective organizational commitment and employee engagement. It implies that increase in affection toward you institution is likely to enhance engagement levels. 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.

7. Conclusion and implications

The study was undertaken to examine the association between employee engagement and affective organizational commitment in education sector. The study found a statistically significant relationship between employee engagement and affective organizational commitment.

It can be certainly concluded that high levels of employee engagement will lead to improved employee commitment thus creating a motivated and sustainable workforce which will work together to achieve the common goals of the institutions as well as employees. Faculty play a pivotal role and success of student life and institution is influenced in large part by engaged faculty. The evidence presented in this article gives a clear message to employers that employee engagement is important for upliftment of student, institution and society, but is likely to be unsustainable unless it goes hand in hand with faculty objectives and challenges. Therefore, every education institution must listen to their employee's grievances, periodically check engagement levels and further design an action plan to resolve the issues.

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