

## **EMPOWER TO INSPIRE: BOOSTING JOB SATISFACTION THROUGH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the changing realm of higher education, the significance of employees—faculty, administrative staff, and support personnel—has intensified considerably. Higher education institutions are not only centres of academic brilliance; they are intricate organisations where employee well-being profoundly influences overall success. A crucial yet sometimes neglected element of institutional performance is work happiness, which is intricately linked to staff engagement. This essay examines how promoting employee involvement in higher education may augment job happiness, resulting in enhanced institutional performance, retention, and a more robust work culture. The research examines the essential connection between employee engagement and job satisfaction in higher education organisations. As universities and colleges have increasing difficulties in maintaining skilled teaching and administrative personnel, cultivating a culture of participation has become essential. This research examines how empowerment strategies—such as participatory decision-making, recognition, career development possibilities, and effective communication—improve employee morale and boost overall job satisfaction, utilising both theoretical frameworks and empirical data. The results indicate that engaged staff exhibit more commitment, productivity, and alignment with institutional objectives, hence fostering a flourishing academic environment. This article emphasises actionable solutions for higher education executives aiming to enhance organisational performance via focused engagement activities.

### **Keywords:**

Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Higher Education, Empowerment, Organizational Commitment, Faculty Retention, Participative Leadership, Workplace Motivation

### **INTRODUCTION**

Higher Educational Institutions engage diverse teams of various races, nations, geographical origins, and religious traditions. The companies are vying for competent professionals that deliver exceptional results and possess substantial professional expertise. Employees face significant challenges in effectively managing a diverse workforce, engaging individuals in their roles, committing fully to organisational objectives, remaining with the organisation, and being willing to travel for work purposes. The Indian education system is currently experiencing substantial transformation, prompting teachers to engage in heightened levels of research and scholarly activities. This is implemented to guarantee that pupils obtain current knowledge, enhance their abilities, and foster more favourable views universally. Students in higher education are more likely to succeed in accessing global markets when their educational level is on par with that of other nations. Employees are deemed engaged in their work when they exhibit mental and psychological commitment to the company. Consequently, employee engagement is essential for the effectiveness of education in achieving economic objectives. The beneficial effects of employee engagement would result in an enhanced sense of responsibility and a constructive response to innovation. Staff personnel are required to exert effort, maintain professionalism, and engage in activities that

uphold high performance standards. Employee engagement has two primary components: job-related engagement and organisational engagement. Job-related involvement precedes organisational engagement. This necessity propels employee participation in these domains. Employee engagement predominantly arises from activities performed by firms, particularly those determined by directors, leaders, and teams. It encompasses more than employee contentment, their enjoyment of work, and their financial welfare. Employee engagement serves as a measure of a robust working relationship between management and staff, reflecting the outcome of their interaction. It is inaccurate to assert that highly engaged employees serve as representations of the organisation. Nonetheless, it is inaccurate to assert that these workers serve as representatives of the company. An enhancement in employee satisfaction does not always signify an advancement in the organization's capacity to achieve its objective. There are instances when the very circumstances at work that engender a sense of fulfilment can induce confusion. High-performing employees proactively pursue and embrace change. They consistently seek novel and unique methods to improve their presentations and diverge from the traditional. Employees exert themselves to achieve optimal results for the firm, distinguishing them from those who underperform. Employee engagement predominantly stems from activities performed by firms, particularly those determined by executives, leaders, and teams. It encompasses more than employee contentment, their enjoyment of work, and their financial welfare. The engagement model emphasises both an employee's commitment to the company's advancement and the individual's sense of satisfaction in their employment. They concur that the most effective method to enhance employee engagement, therefore aiding the business in achieving its objectives, is to align the principles, priorities, and aspirations of employees with those of the organisation. This will enable the organisation to attain its objectives more efficiently.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH**

The notion of employee engagement is gaining prominence due to its significant correlation with work-related behaviours, attitudes, job intentions, employee health and well-being, and personality traits. Both organisations and their employees are under to significant pressure to maintain their existence in a highly competitive climate. Given that engaged employees exhibit greater retention and superior performance compared to average or disengaged workers, organisations must prioritise identifying their areas of excellence. Organisations regard their employees as vital assets crucial to the company's functioning, which underscores the importance of employee engagement. Enhanced staff engagement within an organisation correlates with elevated total shareholder return, heightened customer satisfaction, augmented productivity and retention, higher sales growth, and improved safety performance. The engagement process results in mutual benefits when employees contribute to the success of organisations, which then share the rewards of that success with their workforce. Personal fulfillment may be attained by involvement in an organization's success, engaging in purposeful employment, and making a constructive contribution. Research indicates that enhancing employee engagement might improve safety performance. The objective of the research is to deliver a succinct overview of involvement, encompassing definitions, consultant contributions, predictors, and outcomes. To compile the literature on employee engagement, sources including theses, dissertations, research papers, articles, books, journals, newsletters, and newspapers

## **UNDERSTANDING JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Employment satisfaction denotes the degree of fulfilment employees experience regarding their employment tasks, responsibilities, and work environment. It includes several elements, including as remuneration, acknowledgement, career advancement, and social interactions.

Conversely, employee engagement refers to the emotional dedication that person possesses for their organisation and its objectives. Job satisfaction is a passive condition, whereas engagement is an active and dynamic process.

In higher education, work satisfaction and engagement are shaped by a distinct combination of academic autonomy, administrative responsibilities, student participation, and institutional governance. When workers perceive them as appreciated, engaged, and acknowledged, they are more inclined to exert effort and innovation in their positions, therefore improving their own satisfaction and positively impacting the organization.

## **IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Higher education institutions have several obstacles, such as financial limitations, escalating student expectations, and the necessity for ongoing innovation in pedagogy and research. Committed personnel can act as catalysts for tackling these difficulties. They are more inclined to exceed expectations in their responsibilities, cooperate efficiently with peers, and enhance a good campus environment. Furthermore, engaged employees typically demonstrate reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, and enhanced loyalty to the organization. This results in decreased turnover rates and improved student outcomes, as content and engaged personnel exhibit more dedication to student achievement. Consequently, cultivating a culture of participation is not only a human resources strategy but a strategic need for higher education institutions.

## **KEY DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **1. Leadership and Vision**

Robust leadership and a distinct organisational vision are essential for motivating employees and students. Leaders who convey a persuasive vision offer guidance, instill confidence, and synchronise personal aspirations with organisational aims. Visionary leadership cultivates a feeling of purpose and dedication, motivating people to strive for shared objectives. Effective leaders exemplify honesty, responsibility, and empathy, fostering a culture of trust and exceptional performance. In educational and professional environments, open and inspirational leadership facilitates the navigation of problems, fosters creativity, and nurtures enduring loyalty. When individuals see that their activities contribute to an important cause, their motivation and involvement markedly rise.

### **2. Recognition and Appreciation**

Recognition and gratitude are essential in reinforcing desired behaviours and enhancing morale. Recognizing accomplishments—regardless of their magnitude—instills a sense of importance and respect in persons. Consistent appreciation, whether by public commendation, rewards, or individualized thank-you cards, fosters ongoing effort and loyalty. It also improves job satisfaction and cultivates a healthy organisational culture. Individuals who feel acknowledged and valued are more inclined to be involved, productive, and emotionally committed to their responsibilities. Consistent, authentic praise enhances individual well-being, fortifies team bonding, and elevates institutional performance.

### **3. Professional Development Opportunities**

Offering professional development opportunities signals an institution's investment in its people. These opportunities—such as workshops, conferences, certifications, and skill-building courses—empower individuals to grow, stay current with industry trends, and advance their careers. Employees and students who continuously develop their capabilities tend to be more confident, motivated, and innovative. Furthermore, career growth pathways

improve retention and reduce turnover, as individuals are more likely to stay with organizations that support their aspirations. Professional development also enhances institutional capacity and adaptability, ensuring long-term sustainability and competitiveness in an evolving environment.

#### **4. Participative Decision-Making**

Participative decision-making fosters a sense of ownership, inclusion, and accountability among team members. When employees and students are involved in shaping policies, programs, or strategies, they feel their voices matter, which enhances motivation and trust. This approach encourages collaboration, diversity of thought, and more informed decisions that reflect real needs and challenges. Participative practices can take the form of committees, surveys, or open forums that invite input from all stakeholders. Institutions that prioritize shared governance are often more resilient, innovative, and effective in implementing sustainable change.

#### **5. Work-Life Balance**

Promoting work-life balance is essential for maintaining motivation, health, and productivity. Excessive demands without adequate rest lead to burnout, dissatisfaction, and disengagement. Organizations that support flexible schedules, manageable workloads, mental health resources, and personal time show they value their members' holistic well-being. A healthy balance between professional and personal life enables individuals to recharge, focus, and perform better. Prioritizing work-life balance not only improves individual happiness but also contributes to lower absenteeism and higher organizational loyalty, fostering a more sustainable and supportive environment.

#### **6. Effective Communication**

Effective communication is the backbone of a cohesive and motivated community. Clear, timely, and transparent communication fosters trust, minimizes misunderstandings, and ensures everyone is aligned with institutional goals. It encourages feedback, nurtures collaboration, and supports relationship-building. Whether it's delivering updates, clarifying expectations, or actively listening to concerns, strong communication practices help people feel heard and informed. In both academic and professional contexts, open channels of communication empower individuals, drive engagement, and create a culture of mutual respect. Institutions that prioritize two-way communication tend to be more responsive, adaptive, and effective.

### **CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Despite the clear benefits, several challenges hinder effective employee engagement in higher education:

#### **Bureaucratic Structures**

Bureaucratic structures, characterized by rigid hierarchies, standardized procedures, and centralized decision-making, often hinder agility and innovation within institutions. While such structures ensure order and compliance, they can lead to delays in decision-making, limited autonomy, and inefficiency in responding to emerging needs. Employees and educators may feel disempowered when they have little influence over policy or operations, leading to reduced motivation and engagement. In academic settings, bureaucracy can also stifle creativity, slow curriculum reforms, and obstruct cross-departmental collaboration. To overcome these challenges, organizations should aim to streamline administrative processes,

empower mid-level leadership, and encourage participatory governance. Flexibility and responsiveness are key to maintaining institutional effectiveness in dynamic environments.

### **Resource Constraints**

Resource constraints—including limited funding, staffing shortages, and inadequate infrastructure—pose significant challenges to both educational and organizational development. Insufficient resources can compromise the quality of services, hinder innovation, and lead to overburdened personnel. For students, it may result in overcrowded classrooms, limited learning tools, and restricted access to support services. For employees, it often means managing multiple responsibilities with minimal support, ultimately affecting job satisfaction and performance. These limitations also restrict access to professional development, research opportunities, and technological upgrades. Institutions must adopt strategic planning and effective resource management to optimize existing assets, prioritize critical needs, and explore alternative funding sources. Collaborations, grants, and technology integration can help alleviate some of these constraints and improve service delivery and operational efficiency.

### **Workload Pressures**

Workload pressures are a growing concern in both academic and professional environments. High demands, tight deadlines, and multitasking can lead to burnout, decreased productivity, and a decline in overall well-being. Educators and staff facing excessive workloads often struggle to maintain work-life balance, which affects their performance, engagement, and job satisfaction. For students, overwhelming academic demands can result in stress, anxiety, and reduced learning outcomes. Sustained workload pressures without adequate support can also increase absenteeism and turnover. Addressing this issue requires equitable workload distribution, time management training, and accessible support systems. Implementing clear expectations, automating repetitive tasks, and promoting collaborative work models can also help ease the burden. Institutions that prioritize workload management foster healthier, more sustainable environments conducive to high performance and innovation.

### **Resistance to Change**

Resistance to change is a common barrier when introducing new policies, technologies, or cultural shifts within institutions. It often stems from fear of the unknown, loss of control, or skepticism about the benefits of change. Employees and students may be reluctant to abandon familiar routines or adopt new systems, especially if they lack proper communication, training, or involvement in the decision-making process. This resistance can stall progress, reduce morale, and result in the underutilization of valuable innovations. To overcome it, change must be managed strategically: leaders should engage stakeholders early, communicate a clear vision, and provide necessary support and resources. Encouraging open dialogue, addressing concerns, and demonstrating quick wins can build trust and momentum. Ultimately, cultivating a culture that embraces learning and adaptability is essential for sustainable transformation and growth.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Employee Engagement:**

#### **Conduct Regular Surveys, Develop Mentorship Programs, Promote Collaborative Projects**

Regular surveys help gauge employee and student satisfaction, allowing institutions to respond proactively to concerns. Feedback collected from surveys can guide improvements in learning environments, workplace culture, and support services. Mentorship programs, pairing experienced individuals with newcomers, foster knowledge sharing, professional

development, and a sense of belonging. These programs can boost both employee retention and student success by offering personalized guidance. Promoting collaborative projects encourages teamwork, innovation, and the development of interpersonal skills. Group initiatives not only build stronger connections among participants but also simulate real-world challenges, preparing individuals for future roles. Together, these strategies contribute to a more engaged, motivated, and high-performing community.

## **2. Celebrate Achievements**

Recognizing and celebrating accomplishments—whether academic, professional, or personal—boosts morale, reinforces positive behavior, and strengthens organizational loyalty. Celebrations, both formal and informal, validate efforts, foster a culture of appreciation, and motivate continued excellence.

## **3. Offer Wellness Programs, Enhance Onboarding Experiences**

Wellness programs addressing physical, mental, and emotional health promote overall well-being and reduce stress. They can include fitness initiatives, counseling services, and workshops on work-life balance. A strong onboarding experience is equally crucial—it sets the tone for future engagement. Effective onboarding helps new employees and students understand expectations, access resources, and connect socially, leading to faster integration and greater long-term satisfaction. Combined, these strategies enhance retention, productivity, and institutional reputation.

## **ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ENGAGEMENT**

Digital tools can play a significant role in fostering engagement. Platforms for internal communication, project management, and virtual collaboration help streamline workflows and keep employees connected. Online training modules and webinars expand access to professional development. Moreover, data analytics can provide insights into engagement trends, enabling targeted interventions. However, it is crucial to ensure that technology enhances rather than replaces human interaction. Overreliance on digital tools without personal touchpoints can lead to isolation and decreased morale. Technology plays a transformative role in enhancing engagement among students and employees by making communication, collaboration, and access to resources more efficient and inclusive. Digital platforms such as learning management systems (LMS), project management tools, and video conferencing applications allow seamless interaction, regardless of location. For students, technology enables personalized learning experiences through adaptive software, interactive content, and instant feedback systems, increasing motivation and academic success. For employees, tools like performance dashboards, recognition platforms, and virtual training modules foster a culture of transparency, development, and continuous improvement. Social media and internal communication apps enhance community-building and real-time feedback, strengthening institutional culture. Additionally, data analytics helps organizations monitor satisfaction, identify gaps, and make informed decisions to improve engagement strategies. Ultimately, when used strategically, technology not only boosts efficiency but also creates a more responsive, connected, and empowered academic or work environment.

## **MEASURING THE IMPACT OF ENGAGEMENT ON JOB SATISFACTION**

To evaluate the effectiveness of engagement initiatives, institutions should track key performance indicators such as:

**Employee Satisfaction Scores:** Employee satisfaction scores are critical indicators of how content and engaged employees are within an organization. These scores are typically derived

from surveys assessing various dimensions such as workplace culture, leadership support, compensation, work-life balance, and opportunities for growth. High satisfaction scores are often linked to increased motivation, better performance, and reduced absenteeism. Organizations use this metric to identify strengths and areas needing improvement in their human resource practices. Regular tracking allows leaders to implement changes that align with employee expectations, thereby fostering a more positive workplace environment. Conversely, low scores may indicate dissatisfaction, which can lead to decreased productivity and higher turnover. Therefore, analyzing employee satisfaction is essential not only for improving individual morale but also for enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. Benchmarking these scores against industry standards also helps organizations remain competitive in attracting and retaining top talent.

**Retention and Turnover Rates:** Retention and turnover rates provide insight into an organization's ability to maintain a stable and committed workforce. Retention refers to the percentage of employees who stay with the organization over a specified period, while turnover reflects the rate at which employees leave. High turnover can be costly, leading to disruptions, recruitment expenses, and loss of institutional knowledge. Low retention often points to dissatisfaction with workplace conditions, inadequate career growth, or uncompetitive compensation. On the other hand, strong retention suggests positive engagement, supportive management, and effective human resource strategies. Organizations analyze these rates to understand workforce trends and inform policy adjustments. Exit interviews and engagement surveys often accompany turnover analysis to uncover underlying causes. Continuous monitoring of retention and turnover is essential for developing targeted strategies to improve employee satisfaction, reduce attrition, and build a resilient organizational culture.

**Participation in Professional Development Programs:** Participation in professional development programs is a key metric for evaluating an organization's commitment to employee growth and upskilling. These programs may include workshops, certifications, seminars, or continuing education initiatives aimed at enhancing knowledge, skills, and career progression. High participation rates generally indicate a culture that values learning and supports career advancement. This investment in human capital contributes to employee satisfaction, retention, and organizational adaptability. Employees who engage in ongoing development are often more productive, innovative, and equipped to take on greater responsibilities. Conversely, low participation may suggest a lack of awareness, motivation, or inadequate support from management. Tracking participation rates helps HR and leadership teams assess the effectiveness and reach of their training programs. Additionally, linking development initiatives to performance outcomes can validate their impact and justify further investment. Encouraging active involvement in learning also signals an organization's dedication to long-term employee and organizational success.

**Productivity and Performance Appraisals:** Productivity and performance appraisals are vital for measuring individual and team contributions toward organizational goals. Productivity assesses output relative to input, while performance appraisals evaluate job effectiveness, goal achievement, and behavioral competencies. Together, they help identify high performers, skill gaps, and areas needing improvement. Regular, fair appraisals aligned with objective metrics foster accountability and motivation. Constructive feedback, recognition, and goal-setting during appraisals contribute to continuous employee development. A robust appraisal system also informs decisions about promotions, compensation, and training needs. However, inconsistent or biased evaluations can demotivate staff and harm morale. To be effective, appraisals should be transparent, data-

driven, and involve two-way communication. Integrating these assessments with broader organizational performance goals ensures alignment and relevance. Productivity metrics and performance reviews, when used holistically, not only enhance individual outcomes but also support strategic planning and workforce optimization efforts.

**Student Satisfaction and Success Metrics:** Student satisfaction and success metrics are crucial indicators of the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. Satisfaction is typically measured through surveys assessing teaching quality, campus facilities, support services, and overall learning experiences. High satisfaction levels suggest that students feel supported, engaged, and valued. Success metrics often include graduation rates, employment outcomes, GPA trends, and progression statistics, providing insights into academic performance and long-term achievements. These metrics help institutions identify strengths and areas for improvement in curricula, teaching methods, and student services. Monitoring these indicators also enhances institutional accountability and informs policy development. A strong correlation often exists between student satisfaction and success, making it essential to address both holistically. Data from these metrics guide strategic planning, accreditation processes, and resource allocation. Ultimately, prioritizing student satisfaction and success supports retention, reputation, and the institution’s mission to deliver meaningful and impactful education.

### Key Drivers of Employee Engagement in Higher Education

#### Descriptive Statistics

Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
<b>Leadership and Vision</b>	120	3.43	1.158	4.73
<b>Professional Development Opportunities</b>	120	1.81	.569	2.23
<b>Participative Decision-Making</b>	120	1.60	.760	2.05
<b>Work-Life Balance</b>	120	3.31	1.002	4.66
<b>Recognition and Appreciation</b>	120	3.36	.731	4.73
<b>Performance Appraisals</b>	120	2.05	.708	2.60

The data reflects perceptions of various factors influencing employee engagement and job satisfaction among 120 respondents in a higher education context. **Leadership and Vision** and **Recognition and Appreciation** emerged as the most positively perceived factors, each with a **mean score of 3.43 and 3.36 respectively**, and a **mean rank of 4.73**, indicating their strong influence on job satisfaction. **Work-Life Balance** also received a favorable response, with a **mean of 3.31** and a **mean rank of 4.66**, highlighting its significance in maintaining employee well-being. In contrast, **Professional Development Opportunities**, **Participative Decision-Making**, and **Performance Appraisals** were rated notably lower, with means of **1.81, 1.60, and 2.05** respectively, and lower mean ranks (ranging from **2.05 to 2.60**). These findings suggest that while leadership, recognition, and work-life balance are well-regarded, there is a perceived gap or dissatisfaction in areas related to development, involvement in decision-making, and performance evaluation processes. This indicates a potential need for

institutional improvement in these areas to enhance overall employee engagement and satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, employee engagement is a powerful lever for enhancing job satisfaction in higher education institutions. As the sector faces increasing complexity and demand for excellence, it is imperative that institutions cultivate environments where employees feel valued, empowered, and inspired. Engagement is not a one-size-fits-all approach but a multifaceted strategy that requires intentional leadership, inclusive policies, and a commitment to continuous improvement. By promoting transparent communication, offering growth opportunities, recognizing contributions, and respecting work-life boundaries, institutions can unlock the full potential of their workforce. The result is not only higher job satisfaction but also a thriving academic community where innovation, collaboration, and excellence are the norm. In essence, when institutions empower their employees, they do not just boost morale—they build the foundation for sustainable success in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. The journey toward enhanced engagement and satisfaction is ongoing, but with deliberate effort and strategic vision, higher education institutions can become exemplary workplaces that attract, retain, and inspire top talent for years to come.

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