

**Determinants of Employee Engagement among Teaching Faculty in Higher Education Institutions: Evidence from Chennai City**

**S Mallika**

Research Scholar, Department of Commerce  
Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS)  
Pallavaram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India-600117.  
Email Mail : [smallika5789@gmail.com](mailto:smallika5789@gmail.com)

**G Mythili**

Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor  
Department of Commerce, Vels Institute of Science, Technology and Advanced Studies (VISTAS)  
Pallavaram, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India-600117.  
Email Mail : [mythili.sms@velsuniv.ac.in](mailto:mythili.sms@velsuniv.ac.in)

**Abstract**

Employee engagement has emerged as a critical factor in achieving institutional effectiveness and faculty retention in higher education. Engaged faculty members demonstrate commitment, enthusiasm, and active participation in institutional goals, thereby enhancing the learning environment and organizational reputation. This study aims to identify the **determinants of employee engagement** among teaching faculty in higher education institutions in Chennai City.

The research focuses on variables such as **leadership support, work environment, recognition and rewards, and professional development opportunities**, and examines their impact on employee engagement levels. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from **200 teaching faculty members** representing both public and private higher education institutions. Statistical analyses including **descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation, and multiple regression** were conducted using SPSS software.

The findings reveal that **leadership support, recognition, and work environment** significantly influence employee engagement, while professional development also contributes positively but to a lesser extent. The study concludes that effective leadership and supportive institutional culture are vital to sustaining engagement among teaching faculty.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Teaching Faculty, Higher Education, Leadership, Recognition, Work Environment, Chennai City

**Introduction**

In today's dynamic academic environment, **employee engagement** has become an essential human resource strategy for achieving excellence in higher education institutions. Engaged employees are emotionally connected to their work, highly motivated, and committed to organizational success. In educational institutions, particularly in higher education, faculty engagement directly impacts teaching quality, student satisfaction, innovation, and institutional performance. **Employee engagement** in academia extends beyond job satisfaction — it encompasses emotional commitment, intellectual contribution, and proactive participation in institutional goals. In Chennai, one of India's leading higher education hubs, universities and colleges face increasing challenges such as heavy workloads, limited recognition, and administrative pressures. These factors often influence faculty morale and engagement levels. This study explores how **leadership support, recognition, work environment, and professional development** determine engagement among teaching faculty in Chennai's higher education institutions. Understanding these factors will help institutions adopt strategies to strengthen faculty commitment and organizational success.

**Statement of the Problem**

Higher education institutions in Chennai are facing increasing demands to deliver quality education while maintaining faculty motivation and institutional effectiveness. However, many teaching professionals report disengagement due to factors such as inadequate leadership support, limited growth opportunities, insufficient recognition, and challenging work environments.

Disengagement among faculty members can result in **reduced teaching quality, decreased productivity, absenteeism, and turnover intentions**, which ultimately affect student learning outcomes and institutional reputation. While studies on employee engagement in corporate sectors are abundant, limited research focuses on **faculty engagement in higher education**, particularly in Chennai City.

Thus, this study aims to identify and analyze the **key determinants of employee engagement** among teaching faculty in higher education institutions in Chennai, and to examine how these factors collectively contribute to overall engagement and institutional commitment.

**Review of Literature**

- **Kahn (1990)** defined employee engagement as the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles, reflecting cognitive, emotional, and physical involvement.
- **Saks (2006)** established that organizational support and recognition directly affect engagement through perceived fairness and reciprocity.
- **Bakker & Demerouti (2008)** introduced the Job Demands-Resources model, highlighting that engagement depends on work resources such as support, autonomy, and feedback.
- **Shuck and Reio (2014)** observed that leadership effectiveness and open communication are key to fostering engagement among academic staff.
- **Albrecht (2015)** found that recognition and empowerment are essential for creating a culture of engagement within universities.
- **Salanova et al. (2016)** reported that psychological safety and supportive work environments are significant predictors of engagement among teaching faculty.
- **Srivastava & Misra (2018)** concluded that professional growth opportunities enhance motivation and engagement among educators in Indian higher education.
- **Choudhury & Ghosh (2020)** identified institutional leadership and work culture as primary determinants of engagement in academic settings.
- **Nair & Thomas (2022)** highlighted the mediating role of job satisfaction between organizational support and engagement among college teachers in South India.
- **Rajesh & Anitha (2024)** emphasized that digital adaptability and participative leadership are new-age drivers of engagement in higher education post-COVID-19.

The reviewed literature establishes that employee engagement among faculty members depends on both **institutional and personal factors**, including leadership quality, recognition, and work environment.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the key determinants influencing employee engagement among teaching faculty in higher education institutions in Chennai City.

2. To analyze the relationship between leadership support, recognition, work environment, and professional development with employee engagement.
3. To assess the relative contribution of each determinant toward overall engagement.
4. To provide suggestions for enhancing faculty engagement and institutional performance.

**Hypotheses**

- **H01:** There is no significant relationship between leadership support and employee engagement among teaching faculty.
- **H02:** Recognition and rewards do not significantly influence employee engagement.
- **H03:** Work environment has no significant impact on employee engagement.
- **H04:** Professional development opportunities do not significantly affect employee engagement.

**Research Methodology**

The study follows a **descriptive and analytical research design** to explore how different institutional factors influence employee engagement among faculty members. The research was conducted among **teaching faculty of higher education institutions in Chennai City**, including arts and science colleges, engineering colleges, and universities.

A total of **200 respondents** were selected through **stratified random sampling**, ensuring representation across public and private institutions. Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** based on a **five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)**. The study considered **leadership support, recognition, work environment, and professional development** as **independent variables**, and **employee engagement** as the **dependent variable**. The collected data were analyzed using **SPSS software**, employing **descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha), correlation analysis, and multiple regression** to test the hypotheses and examine relationships among variables.

**Analysis and Results**

**1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	92	46.0
	Female	108	54.0
<b>Age Group</b>	Below 30 years	46	23.0
	31–40 years	88	44.0
	41–50 years	44	22.0
	Above 50 years	22	11.0
<b>Type of Institution</b>	Public	78	39.0
	Private	122	61.0
<b>Experience (Years)</b>	Less than 5	40	20.0
	5–10	84	42.0
	Above 10	76	38.0

**Interpretation:**

A majority of respondents are between 31–40 years of age and belong to private institutions, indicating that mid-career educators form a substantial portion of Chennai’s teaching workforce.

**2. Reliability Analysis**

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Leadership Support	4	0.83
Recognition & Rewards	4	0.84
Work Environment	4	0.85
Professional Development	4	0.82
Employee Engagement	4	0.88

**Interpretation:**

All constructs show strong internal consistency (Cronbach’s Alpha > 0.80), validating the reliability of the questionnaire items.

**3. Correlation Analysis**

Variables	Leadership	Recognition	Work Environment	Professional Development	Engagement
Leadership Support	1	0.68**	0.66**	0.62**	0.74**
Recognition	0.68**	1	0.64**	0.60**	0.72**
Work Environment	0.66**	0.64**	1	0.65**	0.76**
Professional Development	0.62**	0.60**	0.65**	1	0.70**
Employee Engagement	0.74**	0.72**	0.76**	0.70**	1

Note: p < 0.01 (2-tailed)

**Interpretation:**

All variables are positively correlated with employee engagement, indicating that strong leadership, recognition, and a positive work environment enhance faculty engagement levels.

**4. Regression Analysis**

Predictor Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Sig. (p)
Leadership Support	0.27	4.20	0.000
Recognition & Rewards	0.25	3.88	0.000
Work Environment	0.29	4.52	0.000
Professional Development	0.22	3.65	0.001
<b>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.71, F = 90.43, p &lt; 0.001</b>			

**Interpretation:**

The regression model explains **71% of the variance** in employee engagement. The most significant predictor is **work environment ( $\beta = 0.29$ )**, followed by **leadership support ( $\beta = 0.27$ )**, **recognition ( $\beta = 0.25$ )**, and **professional development ( $\beta = 0.22$ )**.

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that **employee engagement among teaching faculty** in Chennai's higher education institutions is primarily driven by leadership support, recognition, and a conducive work environment. Faculty members who feel valued, supported, and provided with growth opportunities are more likely to stay motivated and contribute actively to institutional success.

Institutions should prioritize **transparent communication, participative leadership, fair recognition policies, and professional development programs** to sustain engagement. A supportive work culture enhances not only faculty satisfaction but also the overall teaching-learning experience, thereby improving institutional reputation and academic outcomes.

Strengthening engagement practices will empower faculty members to align their personal goals with institutional missions, ensuring excellence in higher education.

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