

# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: EXPLICATING THE CONTRIBUTION OF ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

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## Abstract

The study's goal is to identify antecedents that influence faculty members' levels of employee engagement in higher education institutions in Uttar Pradesh. To examine the hypothesis, stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed. The investigation revealed that five out of six identified antecedents namely communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, and career growth opportunity were able to explain 64 % of the variance in employee engagement levels of faculty members. As hypothesised, the antecedents of employee engagement (i.e., communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, and career growth opportunity) have a statistically significant impact on the engagement levels of faculty members employed in Uttar Pradesh's higher educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, career growth opportunity, higher educational institutions, faculty member.

## 1. Introduction

The fundamental economic revolution of the 1900s resulted in businesses reorganizing themselves, resulting in workforce downsizing, elimination of management levels and bureaucracy from organizational culture, creation of independent workforce, and even outsourcing. Organizations are rapidly discovering that imaginative and innovative employees with access to organizational knowledge provide a decisive benefit since, unlike other resources, intellectual property is difficult to copy. **(Smith & Kelly, 1997)** claim that "organizations that effectively recruit, nurture, and engage a diverse assortment of the market's greatest and brightest human potential will reap future strategic and economic benefits."

People management is becoming more important and popular, with a focus on attracting, maintaining, and engaging people. As a result, positive psychology, academics, and management practitioners have lately embraced employee engagement as a tool to assess an organization's investment in human capital resources. Simultaneously, employee engagement has been argued that it forecasts a wide range of positive results for companies. According to **(Rama Devi, 2009)** effective organizations know that staff retention and talent management are critical to maintaining their market leadership and development. Developing a retention-rich company that recruits, engaged and fosters long-term loyalty among the most brilliant workers is critical to success in today's global economy.

The study aims to explicate the contribution of work environment [WE], perceived organizational support [POS], compensation and benefits [CAB], communication [COM], career growth opportunity [CGO], rewards and recognition [R&R] towards employee engagement in the context of higher education sector of India.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Employee engagement concept

**(Kahn, 1990)** He describes engagement as the energy utilised by individuals to perform organizational specific behaviours at a relatively high degree of effort over a protracted period of time. **(Rothbard, 2001)** focuses on Kahn's psychological side of engagement, describing it as an individual's psychological presence within and concentration on role behaviours. According to him, engagement is a two-step process that involves two fundamental components: absorption and attention. **(Rich et al., 2010)** expanded Rothbard's measure of engagement and included physical, cognitive, and emotional dimensions to his absorption and attention concept. To describe engagement, **(Maslach & Leiter, 1997)** invented the term "burnout." They describe engagement as vigour, efficacy, and involvement, which they argue are diametrically opposite to the burnout characteristics of exhaustion, ineffectiveness, and cynicism. **(Schaufeli et al., 2002)** characterized and interpreted employee engagement as a unique, independent term considered to be negatively associated to burnout. **(Saks, 2006)** also pushed for a comprehensive perspective of engagement, incorporating prior frameworks of components such as emotional, cognitive, and physical. **(Macey & Schneider, 2008)** approach also portrayed engagement as a multifaceted construct with three distinct aspects of engagement: behavioural, state and trait, with each one building on the one before, eventually resulting in total engagement.

### 2.2. Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was a consequent variable in the study and work environment, perceived organizational support, career growth opportunity, communication, rewards and recognition, compensation and benefits were all examined as antecedent variables.

#### 2.2.1. Work Environment

**(Robbins, 2001)** demonstrated via his research that a working environment is critical for affecting job satisfaction, since employees are concerned about a favourable work environment. As per **(Towers Perrin, 2003)**, engagement is a continuous process that is dependent on considerable and truly enhanced work experience, which comprises of work environment, autonomy, possibilities for development and progress, and responsibility. **(Shuck & Wollard, 2010)** concluded that abstract factors such as work environment and perceived level of safety are vital to actively engaging employees.

#### 2.2.2. Perceived Organizational Support

According to **(Eisenberger et al., 1986)**, employees would perceive their supervisor's evaluative approach towards them as a feature of the organization's support. According to **(Maslach et al., 2001)**, the absence of supervisor support is unquestionably a major component connected with burnout, which authors describe as the polar opposite of engagement. **(May et al., 2004)** discovered a significant connection between a healthy and supportive supervisor-employee relationship and the employee's mental health. Using the social exchange theory, **(Deconinck & Johnson, 2009)** characterized perceived organizational support as an extent to which supervisor value worker's contributions, and this has been demonstrated to influence positive association and individual level performance.

### 2.2.3. Compensation and Benefits

According to **(Kular et al., 2008)**, compensation and benefits have minimal influence on employee retention, despite being appealing to applicants during the recruitment process. **(Mercer, 2010)** explain the significance of implementing compensation and benefit packages to enhance employee engagement, as the researchers believe this is the best strategy for achieving the best possible outcomes. According to **(Anitha, 2014)**, the existence of engagement is determined by compensation, which encompasses both monetary and non-monetary benefits, further motivating employees to perform at a high level of efficiency and produce good results.

### 2.2.4. Communication

Communication is a critical aspect of employee engagement, according to **(Kahn, 1992)**. According to **(Freitag & Picherit-Duthler, 2004)**, clear communication enables individuals to comprehend their jobs, thereby enhancing organizational success. Communication is the key aspect of each and every organization claim **(Pitsis et al., 2004)**. **(Holwerda, 2007)** discuss the effect and execution of the employee engagement technique, which focuses on the necessity of communication among employees in an organization.

### 2.2.5. Career Growth Opportunity

Human resource development experts attempt to provide training opportunities that support human potential in an organization, as per **(Peterson, 2004)**. According to **(Bhatnagar, 2007)**, firms that do not embrace professional development and promotion opportunities may experience recurring losses. **(Salanova et al., 2010)** claim that training programmes and career development initiatives targeted towards primarily towards an employee's self-awareness and progress might substantially affect engagement levels of the employees. Career growth has been highlighted as an important component of engagement by **(AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013)**.

### 2.2.6. Rewards and Recognition

According to **(Maslach et al., 2001)**, burnout may be exacerbated by a lack of rewards and recognition; consequently, an unbiased reward and recognition system is required for engagement. **(Stairs, 2005)** recommends that management develop a fair and attractive remuneration structure if they want their employees to connect with the organization on an emotional level. **(Saks, 2006)** emphasized the significance of job design in an individual's engagement, and that job characteristics can only be attained if rewards and recognition can enhance engagement. **(Ali & Ahmed, 2009)** indicate that recognition has a significant effect on job satisfaction, implying that the amount of satisfaction might vary depending on how recognition is handled. According to the study, as the recognition framework improves, so does employee engagement.

## 3. Statement of the Problem

The manufacturing sector has long been the focus of employee engagement, but only recently has it begun to turn its attention to the service sector. In a higher education institution, faculty members are no more than service providers, with their customers right in front of them. Almost no attention has been paid to the issues related to employee engagement in workplaces like institutions of higher education, where faculty members provide service to the nation and contribute to society's needs through their work.

#### 4. Need of the Study

Employees in higher education institutions are confronted with a wide variety of challenges, some of which include shifting job responsibilities as a result of globalization, the implementation of new teaching methods, an emphasis on research, and the utilisation of technology to enhance learning. An investigation into what antecedents contribute to employee engagement in higher education institutions has now become relevant, as evidenced by this study.

#### 5. Objectives of the Study

The purpose is to discover the antecedents that influence faculty members' employee engagement, who are employed in institutions of higher education in Uttar Pradesh.

#### 6. Hypothesis of the Study

**H0:** Employee engagement of faculty members working in higher educational institutions is unaffected by the aforementioned antecedents: work environment [WE], perceived organizational support [POS], compensation and benefits [CAB], communication [COM], career growth opportunity [CGO], rewards and recognition [RR].

**H1:** A faculty member's level of employee engagement is significantly influenced by the above antecedents.

Although each antecedent could be presented as six hypotheses, the above is consolidated and the effects are discussed in depth. Being a precondition to employee engagement, each of these antecedents will have a favourable influence on employee engagement. These factors are distinct concepts, and thus, studies have examined employee engagement by taking into account the fact that these antecedents are separate concepts.

#### 7. Research Methodology

##### 7.1. Sample Selection

The study exclusively includes primary data gathered based on faculty member's perceptions about the antecedents of engagement and their employee engagement. Sample for the study consisted of 364 faculty members working in higher education institutions from cities Agra, Gorakhpur, Prayagraj, Kanpur, Lucknow, Farrukhabad, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Researchers were able to gather precisely 364 totally completed questionnaires out of 500 given, equal to a 72.8 % response rate. Table [1] represents the demographic and academic profile of faculty members.

**Table [1] Demographic and Academic Profile of Faculty members**

CHARACTERISTICS	CATEGORIES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
<i>Gender</i>	Male	197	54.15
	Female	167	45.9%
<i>Age / Generation</i>	Less than 25 Years (Generation Z)	23	6.3%
	25 – 40 Years (Millennials)	165	45.3%
	41 – 56 Years (Generation X)	124	34.1%
	Above 56 Years (Baby Boomers)	52	14.3%
<i>Experience in Academics</i>	Less than 6 Years	103	28.3%

	6 – 10 Years	69	19.0%
	11 – 15 Years	54	14.8%
	16 – 20 Years	29	8.0%
	More than 20 Years	109	29.9%
<b>Designation</b>	Assistant Professor	237	65.1%
	Associate Professor	109	29.9%
	Professor	18	4.9%
<b>Tenure in present Institution/University</b>	Less than 6 Years	129	35.4%
	6 – 10 Years	62	17.0%
	11 – 15 Years	57	15.7%
	16 – 20 Years	15	4.1%
	More than 20 Years	101	27.7%
<b>Highest Qualification</b>	Postgraduate Only	40	11.0%
	Postgraduate with NET	55	15.1%
	Postgraduate with NET – JRF	30	8.2%
	Doctorate	224	61.5%
	Post Doctorate	15	4.1%

## 7.2. Sources of Data

Scale developed by (Khan & Nirupa, 2020) “A study of Antecedents & Consequences of Employee Engagement” was modified accordingly for the present study and the antecedents’ part along with employee engagement was used for the study after a discussion with a panel of experts. To boost the sensitivity of the measure, five-point scale (1 being strongly agree and 5 strongly disagree) was applied rather than a seven – point scale. In this study the contribution of antecedents towards employee engagement in higher education institutions was explored with the help of self-administered questionnaire.

## 7.3. Period of the Study

From January 2020 to January 2022, the study was carried out.

## 7.4. Tools used in the Study

The data was analysed using SPSS, a statistical package for social science. The study’s antecedents were evaluated for their impact on faculty members’ engagement in higher education institutions using a statistical method known as stepwise multiple regression analysis.

## 8. Data Analysis

### 8.1. Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis

Communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, and career growth opportunity were used in a stepwise regression analysis to predict employee engagement. **Table [2]** shows the variables’ correlation analysis which is significant from a statistical point of view, with communication and career growth opportunity having strongest relationships with employee engagement.

**Table [2] Correlation of Variables in the Analysis (N = 364)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. EE</b>	.444**	.576**	.606**	.711**	.597**	.549**
<b>2. WE</b>	-----	.541**	.479**	.394**	.438**	.191**
<b>3. POS</b>		-----	.543**	.631**	.475**	.166**
<b>4. CGO</b>			-----	.638**	.549**	.414**

5. <b>COM</b>				-----	.584**	.435**
6. <b>RR</b>					-----	.423**
7. <b>CAB</b>						-----

Note. 1. \*\*All correlations were statistically significant ( $p$ -value < .001) 2. WE – Work Environment, POS – Perceived Organizational Support, CGO – Career Growth Opportunity, COM – Communication, RR – Rewards and Recognition, CAB – Compensation and Benefits

The prediction model contained five out of six predictors as work environment was excluded in the stepwise regression process. Employee engagement ( $R^2 = .640$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .635$ ) was accounted for roughly 64 % by the model, which was statistically significant,  $F(5, 358) = 127.428$ ,  $p < .001$ . Employee engagement was predicted largely by higher levels of communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, and career growth organization. Therefore, the empirical evidence does not support  $H_0$  null hypothesis, but it does support  $H_1$  alternate hypothesis (i.e., communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, career growth opportunity which are the antecedents of employee engagement significantly influence employee engagement). **Table [3]** yields the regression equation given below.

**Table [3] Stepwise Regression Results**

Model	R <sup>2</sup> Change	$\beta$	SE- $\beta$	Beta	$t$	Sig.	Pearson r	sr <sup>2</sup>
Constant		3.339	.008		394.560	.000		
COM	.505	.082	.013	.308	6.223	.000	.711	.038
CAB	.071	.074	.010	.278	7.386	.000	.549	.054
POS	.044	.057	.012	.214	7.910	.000	.576	.024
RR	.016	.038	.011	.143	3.417	.001	.597	.011
CGO	.005	.027	.012	.100	2.232	.026	.606	.005

Note. The dependents variable was Employee Engagement.  $R^2 = .640$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = .635$ .

$\beta$  is the Unstandardized Coefficients, Beta is the Standardized Coefficients. sr<sup>2</sup> is the squared semi-partial correlation.

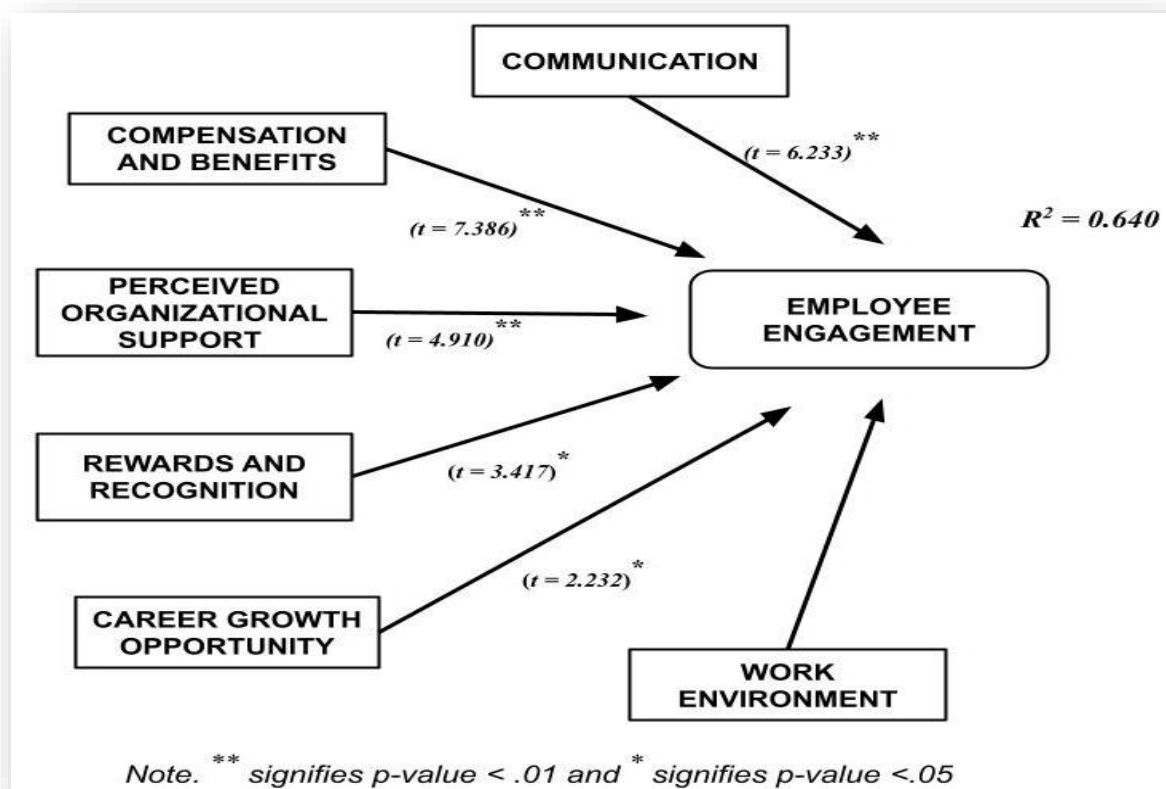
**Employee engagement = .082 × communication + .074 × compensation and benefits + .057 × perceived organizational support + .038 × rewards and recognition + .027 × career growth opportunity.**

The R<sup>2</sup> Change represents the contribution made by the predictors towards predicting the model, where communication contributes up-to 50.5 percent, compensation and benefits contributes 7.1 percent, perceived organization support 4.4 percent, rewards and recognition 1.5 percent and least by career growth opportunity 0.5 percent.

## 9. Findings of the Study

The study's antecedent variables, communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, and career growth opportunities, all had a substantial influence on employee engagement, which was a consequent variable. In the absence of other antecedent variables communication accounted for up to 50.5 % of the variance in employee engagement. The stepwise multiple regression analysis eliminated work environment since its significance value was larger the .05 when it was combined with other five antecedents

for predicting the variance in employee engagement. Figure [1] depicts a model of the impact of antecedents on employee engagement.



**Figure [1] Model of Impact of Antecedents on Employee engagement**

## 10. Suggestions

It is hard to improve faculty engagement in higher education without also increasing communication. Transparent and unambiguous communication is critical between faculty members, management, etc. Another important antecedent that affects faculty engagement is the degree of compensation and benefits they get. Faculty members should be sufficiently compensated, and they should be provided suitable leave, and their institutions should pay them for the costs of professional development programmes, seminars, or refresher courses. As a consequence of a faculty's belief that their institution cares about and is committed to them, engagement levels grow. A positive impression of institution may be created in a faculty member by the encouragement, support, and clear communication provided by their management, supervisor, boss, etc.

Thus, open communication, fair remuneration and benefits, and a solid work relationship between employees and employers are vital for faculty engagement. Rewards and recognition, as well as professional progression prospects, also affect faculty engagement in higher education, although less.

## 11. Conclusion

The present study tested the influence of antecedents of employee engagement on faculty member engagement levels at higher education institutions in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Communication, compensation and benefits, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, and career

growth opportunities are all found to account for up to 64 % of the variance in employee engagement among faculty members at the higher education institutions in Uttar Pradesh. According to the findings of the study, communication may be responsible for as much as half of a faculty member's level of employee engagement.

## 12. Limitations of the Study

This study only focuses at a few of the antecedents of employee engagement within the setting of higher education institutions. Demographic factors including age, experience in academics, and length of service at the institution were also not taken into account, all of which can potentially affect faculty members' level of engagement in their workplaces.

## 13. Scope for Further Research

In future, the sample size can be increased and more cities in Uttar Pradesh can be included, as only seven were included in the current study, allowing the results to be generalized. In addition, a comparative study of faculty members from government and private institutions is also recommended.

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