
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Faculty Engagement: A Study on the Higher Education Institutions' Setting

Jennelyn R. Artates

Instructor, College of Accountancy and Business Administration, President Ramon Magsaysay State University, Iba Zambales, Philippines

Corresponding Author: Jennelyn R. Artates, **E-mail:** jennelynartates04@prmsu.edu.ph

| ABSTRACT

Faculty who are highly engaged are indeed an asset to any organization, whereas disengaged faculty might end up being a major liability. Faculty are the storehouses of knowledge for nurturing the manpower needs of the nation and, hence, for satisfying the aspirations of the people for a good and humane society. Thus, this study aimed to discuss faculty engagement in the Higher Education Institution setting. The study utilized empirical research through desk review to evaluate the different dimensions of faculty engagement. The findings show that universities across the world portray a different picture of educational values, higher education system and faculty so employed. Faculty who are highly engaged are indeed an asset to any organization, whereas disengaged faculty might end up being a major liability. Nearly all studies conducted on faculty members show a growing tendency for absenteeism, intention to leave the profession, and early retirement of teachers, all of which reflect their disengaged condition. Faculty engagement is a significant predictor of enhanced student learning, which is the goal of all educational reforms. Engaged faculty will be more enthusiastic about investing more time and energy in teaching students. Further studies can be conducted to enhance the understanding of the effects of selected psychographic variables on faculty's job engagement and organizational engagement in the Philippines' educational context.

| KEYWORDS

Faculty engagement, university faculty, engagement, higher education

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

A high-quality student experience is dependent on a number of aspects, including faculty knowledge and pedagogical style, but it is also dependent on faculty employee engagement (Marken, 2021). A thriving organization is built on the shoulders of committed and engaged people. Any organization's or institution's success stories have always been based on the contributions of engaged human resources. They act as a catalyst for business and market success (Nagoji et al., 2022).

In academia, faculty members need to be engaged. By their unique nature, universities are expected to be a repository of the most specialized and skilled intellectuals. They serve as storehouses of knowledge for nurturing the manpower needs of the nation and, hence, for satisfying the aspirations of the people for a good and humane society. Universities across the world portray a different picture of educational values, higher education system and faculty so employed (Raina et al., 2015).

Employee engagement, according to Kaur (2017), is a distinct and exclusive concept of commitment, involvement, and satisfaction towards the job, and it includes three elements, physical: involving physical labor while working and showcasing a positive outlook; emotional, including an employee's ability to link personal 'self' and commitment to organizational goals, and cognitive. This contains the employee's knowledge, experience, and abilities.

Barman et al. (2011) mentioned in their study that "Employee engagement is best defined as the degree of commitment to a particular job. Commitment, in the work context, can be separated into rational commitment – which is driven by self-interest or

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the belief that engaging will result in something of value, such as financial reward or professional development – and emotional commitment – which is driven by a deeper belief in the job, other employees or the organization as a whole. The most tangible measures of employee engagement are how hard an employee works and how long they stay as a result of that commitment.”

Faculty who are psychologically and physiologically invested in their jobs and workplaces are said to be engaged. Engaged employees are less likely to leave their organization, represent reduced healthcare expenses for their employer, take fewer sick days, and are more likely to promote their organization as a place to work, according to Gallup. While these are significant results for schools, the student experience is just as significant, and faculty engagement is a strong indicator of a high-quality student experience (Marken, 2021).

Higher education offers the potential to engage students in critical discourse, increase cultural understanding and tolerance, and bridge differences. To achieve these objectives, institutions must develop a comprehensive approach to Higher Education Institutions (HEI) where policies, programs, and curricula are purposely integrated across the university to deliver inclusive and meaningful internationalized educational experiences. It is widely agreed that faculty engagement is critical to the development of such learning (Friesen, 2012).

Correspondingly, educational institutions are crucial for the development and survival of other sectors. College and university outreach and engagement may be expressed through faculty teaching, research, and service. Employee engagement is a strong predictor of positive organizational performance (Markos, 2010).

Higher education is the ultimate component of nation-building, and it necessitates scrutiny and evaluation to predict future outcomes in a specific country. It is, in fact, an accolade for residents, as it brings knowledge and respect, as well as self-assurance and a career. Higher education, according to human capital theory, is a powerful device for developing science and technology competencies that are necessary for a good quality of living in a knowledge-based economy around the world (Ding & Zeng, 2015). And to execute this, faculty play a very important role. It is necessary to comprehend the aspects that influence the growth of quality teachers.

Though most of the studies focus on corporate employees only, faculty teaching in government and private institutions also face this issue. In a developing nation like the Philippines, the number of institutions engaged in rendering business management and technical education has increased manifold in recent years. This signifies the importance of such programs as it generates a force of graduates who serve a number of industries (Raina et al., 2015).

In lieu of this, the psychological wellbeing of teachers has recently received considerable attention. The teaching profession has high rates of turnover and early retirement, and the emotional and motivational experiences of teachers may have a significant impact on how they perform in the classroom. Academics influenced the development of the idea of engagement. Later, it was utilized by corporate organizations, but more lately, management, organization behavior, and psychology academics have begun to pay attention to this idea (Welch, 2011).

Faculty who are highly engaged are indeed an asset to any organization, whereas disengaged faculty might end up being a major liability. Nearly all studies conducted on faculty members show a growing tendency to absenteeism, intention to leave the profession, and early retirement of teachers, all of which reflect their disengaged condition (Raina et al., 2015). Although there have been studies on employee engagement conducted by researchers and consultants all over the world, there is an obvious call for a context-specific engagement metric customized to the job performed by faculty in HEI and studies on the fit of institutional-oriented engagement models in educational contexts might be conducted. The goal of this study is to identify the factors that affect faculty engagement in the Philippines' higher education system.

All educational institutions strive for better student learning, which is strongly correlated with faculty engagement. The majority of research on faculty engagement concentrates on either organizational or individual factors, whereas the current study examines both individual and organizational factors that influence faculty engagement. The university and academic institution faculties, authorities, and regulatory bodies would greatly benefit from this study. Faculty engagement practices will also be covered in this study, thereby contributing to increasing the degree of faculty engagement in colleges and universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Engagement

There have been many studies on employee engagement, and numerous factors that have a significant influence on engagement have been identified. Depending on the organization, employee engagement is defined in a variety of ways. The study highlighted the following definitions:

Kahn (1990, p. 694), who first gave a proper concept to this term, defines employee engagement as: "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances".

Employee involvement and engagement is an excellent strategy for any organization wishing to get a strategic advantage over its competitors. People are the only resource that competitors cannot duplicate or imitate, and they are the most precious commodity if they are treated well. (Bakker, 2011) Employees who are completely invested in their jobs are fully attached to their work. They are filled with enthusiasm, committed to their job, and fully absorbed in their tasks. According to the findings, work and individual resources are crucial indicators of engagement. When there are high job demands, these services become more important. Staffs who are engaged are more receptive to new information, more creative, and eager to go above and beyond. Furthermore, to stay committed, engaged employees change their work environment regularly.

According to Shuck and Wollard (2010), "Engagement" is the mental, emotional, and behavioral state of an employee with the intention of achieving desired organizational outcomes. According to Macey and Schneider (2008), various academics and scholars may have diverse interpretations of this idea. It might be a behavioral strategy, operational attribute, or psychological condition. According to Pritchard (2008), the terms: Stay (measure of how employees will portray their own organization), Strive (measure of employees' loyalty to their organization), and Strive (measure of employees' willingness to go "over and above" their duties to achieve organizational success) are all appropriate ways to define employee engagement.

Employee engagement is defined, in general, as the level of commitment and involvement an employee has toward their organization and its values (Anita, 2014). According to Bakker (2011), engagement is best described as a happy, highly awakened emotional state with the qualities of energy and commitment. Three criteria were established by Soane et al. (2012) as part of their model of employee engagement: a work-role focus, activation, and positive affect. Employee engagement was broken down into four categories by Xu et al. (2013): organizational identity, work attitude, mental state, and responsibility effectiveness. Employee engagement, according to Xiao and Duan (2014), is conceptualized in terms of five factors: initiative, loyalty, effectiveness, identity, and commitment. According to Liu (2016), there are five components that make up knowledge worker employee engagement: organizational identity, dedication, absorption, vigor, and pleasant harmony.

2.2 Faculty Engagement

Engagement has been studied for a long time, but the concept of faculty engagement is relatively new. Almost all major studies on this concept have been conducted in Western nations.

Livingston (2011, p. 11) described faculty engagement as: Perpetual focused attention, delight, and passion for the tasks involved with faculty work through which the individual finds purpose, perceives congruence with personal beliefs and talents, is motivated to apply knowledge and skills, and enjoys productivity even during tough times. Academic environments will experience significant changes attributed to an engaged faculty. The amount of faculty engagement is influenced by a variety of factors. One of the reasons is the shifting demography of the faculty teaching in technical institutions. The psychological health of teachers has recently attracted a lot of attention. Early retirement and turnover rates are high, and instructors' motivational and emotional experiences may have a significant impact on how well they teach (OECD, 2005).

On the basis of the level of initiatives taken by faculty in their institutions, Hagner and Schneebeck (2000) classified faculty teaching in US universities into different categories, viz.: *The Entrepreneurs*: They take risks and will come up with something innovative to promote teaching and learning; *The Risk Aversives*: They will always hesitate to make themselves completely engaged in the process of learning, lack expertise and need significant support to make revolutionary transformations; *The Reward Seekers*: The motivation of such faculty is related to the reward structure offered by the university. When they come to know that adopting new technologies and forms of learning there will be a great impact on promotion, tenure and salary, they are ready to transform; *The Reluctants*: They firmly believe that old traditional modes were far better than present day methods and it becomes very tough to engage such faculty as they are psychologically discarded from the educational system.

Barman and Ray (2011) investigated 150 faculty members from management and business schools in East India and identified factors affecting faculty engagement. Their idea was to come up with a model to suggest such factors. They did not end up with any concrete findings on how to measure the engagement level of faculty members but developed a scale on the basis of the 10 C's of engagement given by Seijts and Crim (2006), viz. Connect, Career, Clarity, Convey, Congratulate, Contribute, Control, Collaborate, Credibility and Confidence.

In the Asian context, Malik et al. (2010) surveyed 650 faculty members from two public sector universities in Pakistan to map their organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The results showed that faculties of these universities are much more satisfied with their work, co-workers and the nature of work itself, whereas they are less satisfied with promotion opportunities and salaries.

Selmer et al. (2014) surveyed more than 1,000 faculty in three large universities in Denmark to map the knowledge processing and faculty engagement in multi-cultural universities; it was found that knowledge location and sharing are strongly positively related to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement.

To analyze the attitude of university faculty toward their work and careers, Bexley et al. (2011) conducted a study on over 5,000 faculty from 20 universities across Australia. The results reveal that only less than one-third of faculty members feel that their workload is manageable, and less than one half say that it is not manageable. The early career staff is found to be more dissatisfied with job security and income; a significant proportion of the academic staff have intentions to move to another institution, and young people have this tendency more. The major issues behind this intention are job security, remuneration, fewer research funds and dissatisfaction with organizational culture; the leadership and role of management are also responsible for the development of this attitude.

A study conducted by Ahmad and Mir (2012) on ten universities of different nature viz. central, state and deemed in India were studied for mapping the perceptions of teaching (Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors) and non-teaching staff (Registrar, Controller of Examinations, Deputy registrar, etc.). The perceptions were recorded on variables like the significance of Human Resource Development (HRD) programs in Indian universities, organizational culture and climate of universities. While analyzing perceptions toward organizational climate, it was found that the attitude of top administrative officials toward employees is very strict, authoritarian, and emotionless, which is not beneficial for employees as well as the university as a whole. Dissatisfaction was recorded among employees toward non-identification of their potential by administrators of universities and autonomy to teaching staff. The professors and readers were not found to be satisfied with the present system of training and development and feedback mechanisms used by universities, whereas the non-teaching staff was found to be satisfied with training and development programs, feedback mechanisms and independence to work.

The higher education system in Asia is three-tiered: at the first level are flagship universities that offer a range of subjects, with emphasis on research and receipt of huge government funding; at the second level are teaching-oriented institutions that specialize in applied subjects, with a focus on locally relevant research; and at the third level are the lower-quality, vocational program-oriented, privately funded institutions. The faculty teaching in these institutions lack access to resources, are demotivated and face remuneration problems. Less salary has emerged to be the major reason for attrition in these countries (The Economic Intelligence Unit, 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1 Work Engagement Theory of Kahn

Work engagement denotes the degree to which a person shows self-preference in job tasks to promote connections between self and job, which can increase role performance through cognitive, emotional, and physical self-investment (Kahn, 1990). Based on the WE theory, this study believes that the WE theory should be divided into cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and physical engagement. For example, a person who invests cognitive resources in work (e.g., I ought to work hard) to increase role performance is not necessarily to put emotional resources into a job (e.g., I am enthusiastic about work) or physical resources into a job (e.g., I actually work hard) at the same time.

3.2 Job Demands-Resources Model

Employee engagement is also affected by Job Demands-Resources Model (Salminen et al., 2014). Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model believes that different organizations may be confronted with different working environments, but the characteristics of these environments can always be classified into two general categories—job demands and job resources—thus constituting an overarching model that may be applied to various occupational settings, irrespective of the demands and resources involved. Job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Examples are high work pressure, role overload, poor environmental conditions and problems related to reorganization.

3.3 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

A stronger theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement can be found in social exchange theory (SET). Levinson (1965) stated that employment is a transaction between labor, loyalty and actual interest, and social rewards. To a certain extent, the relationship between employee and employer is suitable for reciprocity, in which a request for a return will lead to beneficial results for both parties, no matter who gains preferential treatment. Masterson et al. (2000) proposed that one party expects a return in the future after contributing or providing services to the other party. At the same time, the party that gets something of value will produce a sense of responsibility to return to the other party. For individuals who have helped them, employees will actively give a return to gain more benefits in the future. Many scholars analyzed the relationship between organizations and members based on social exchange theory. Employees are loyal to the organization and work hard in exchange for economic benefits and social rewards, establishing the organization-employee relationship.

Eisenberger et al. (1986) stated that high levels of perceived organizational support create obligations within individuals to repay the organization, thereby demonstrating an attitude and behavior conducive to the organization. Saks (2006) argued that one way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement. In other words, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees in response to the resources they receive from their organization.

4. Results/Findings

The concept of faculty engagement is in its infancy stage, and researchers are trying to explore the literature as well as the empirical relationships among the constructs related to engagement, like commitment, job performance, job satisfaction, intention to stay/leave the organization, etc. The researchers could find limited published doctoral work done in this area. This gap and its significance in the field of academia remain the base for picking up this topic for an extensive literature review.

Job and organizational engagement, which are the two main categories of engagement so identified, can be explored with respect to faculty teaching in professional and technical institutions, as faculty may be more engaged toward one of these components or both.

Faculty engagement is a significant predictor of enhanced student learning, which is the goal of all educational reforms. Engaged faculty will be more enthusiastic about investing more time and energy in teaching students. Further studies can be conducted to enhance the understanding of the effects of selected psychographic variables on faculty's job engagement and organizational engagement in the Philippines' educational context.

5. Conclusions

The fundamental literature on faculty engagement is derived from the well-researched main notion of "Engagement." Even so, several research are exploring its various facets, causes, effects, and influences. The engagement has been linked to increased market share, improved performance, more community interest, and much fewer intents to resign.

Similar assumptions might be made for university faculty members who educate students. Academic institutions can also be used to study a variety of other outcomes. Higher education research is always evolving ever since; with the average increase of so many institutions, the dynamics of the closely related aspects are evolving fast. The fact that new technology, teaching philosophies, learning strategies, research interests, and mechanisms for personal development are moving from one part of the world to another has been recognized by experts as having a significant contribution to make in the time of globalization.

Still, many challenges lay before the higher education institutions and the administrators who have this major task at hand. Like they say in corporate that if employees are engaged, then they will attract a good reputation for the organization; similarly, engaged faculty can bring many laurels to higher education institutions and to other levels of education as well. An engaged campus will have much more to offer to society in terms of well-informed and productive faculty who would like to serve their organizations for long and well-equipped students with skills so required for corporate and good management practices for handling and developing competent faculty.

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