Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction Among Faculty Members in Self-Financing Colleges in Kerala: A Conceptual Perspective

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***Abstract*—The quality and effectiveness of higher educational institutions largely depend on the commitment, motivation, and satisfaction of their employees. In recent years, employee engagement and job satisfaction have emerged as significant constructs in organizational behaviour research due to their influence on employee performance, organizational commitment, retention, and institutional effectiveness. Self-financing colleges in Kerala have become an important component of the higher education sector, contributing significantly to educational access and development. However, these institutions often face challenges related to faculty retention, workload management, work-life balance, career advancement opportunities, and organizational support. This conceptual review examines the existing literature on employee engagement and job satisfaction in higher educational institutions with special reference to self-financing colleges in Kerala. The review synthesizes findings from previous studies and identifies leadership behaviour, organizational support, work environment, employment-life quality, compensation, and professional development opportunities as major determinants of employee engagement and job satisfaction. The paper further explores the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction and proposes a conceptual framework for future empirical research. The review highlights the need for comprehensive studies focusing on self-financing colleges in Kerala and provides insights for educational administrators seeking to improve institutional effectiveness through employee-centred practices.**

***Index Terms*—Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Self-Financing Colleges, Higher Education, Faculty Members.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a vital role in the social, economic, and intellectual development of a nation. The effectiveness of these institutions depends largely on the quality and commitment

of their human resources. Faculty members and other employees contribute not only to teaching and learning but also to research, mentoring, academic administration, and institutional development. Consequently, employee-related factors have become increasingly important in determining institutional success.

Among the various human resource variables, employee engagement and job satisfaction have received considerable attention from researchers and practitioners. Employee engagement reflects the degree of emotional and psychological attachment employees have toward their work and organization, whereas job satisfaction refers to the positive feelings employees experience regarding their job and work environment. Both concepts have been associated with enhanced productivity, organizational commitment, reduced turnover intentions, and improved performance.

In Kerala, self-financing colleges constitute a significant segment of the higher education sector. These institutions have expanded educational opportunities across the state and accommodate a large number of students and faculty members. Despite their contribution, self-financing colleges often face challenges such as high workload, limited promotional opportunities, job insecurity, performance pressure, and resource constraints. Such challenges may influence employee engagement and job satisfaction among faculty members. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing engagement and satisfaction is essential for ensuring institutional effectiveness and employee well-being.

This paper aims to review the existing literature on employee engagement and job satisfaction and examine their relevance within the context of self-financing colleges in Kerala.

II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is generally defined as the extent to which employees are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally connected to their work and organization. Engaged employees exhibit enthusiasm, dedication, commitment, and willingness to contribute beyond their formal job requirements. According to Vance (2006), employee engagement is closely linked to organizational commitment and performance.

Employee engagement is characterized by three major dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigorous employees demonstrate high levels of energy and resilience. Dedicated employees display strong involvement and enthusiasm toward their work, while absorbed employees become deeply immersed in their job responsibilities.

In educational institutions, employee engagement is reflected through active participation in teaching, research, student mentoring, curriculum development, and institutional activities. Engaged faculty members contribute significantly to institutional growth and educational quality.

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to the positive emotional state resulting from an individual's evaluation of job experiences. It reflects employees' perceptions regarding various aspects of their work,

including salary, supervision, working conditions, recognition, career opportunities, and organizational policies.

Iiacqua, Schumacher, and Li (1995) identified both intrinsic and extrinsic factors as important determinants of job satisfaction in higher education. Intrinsic factors include achievement, responsibility, autonomy, and professional growth, whereas extrinsic factors include salary, benefits, institutional policies, and working conditions.

Higher levels of job satisfaction are associated with improved performance, reduced absenteeism, increased organizational commitment, and lower turnover intentions. Consequently, job satisfaction remains a critical concern for educational administrators and policymakers.

2.3 Self -Financing Colleges

Self- Financing colleges are higher educational institutions that operate primarily through student fees and other non-government sources of revenue. These institutions play a significant role in expanding access to higher education in Kerala. Despite their contribution to the educational sector, faculty members in many self-financing colleges face challenges related to compensation, job security, workload, and career advancement opportunities. These factors can influence both employee engagement and job satisfaction, making the sector an important area for academic investigation.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kennerly (1989) examined the relationship between leadership behaviour and faculty satisfaction and found that supportive leadership practices positively influence faculty job satisfaction. The study highlighted the importance of organizational climate and administrative support in enhancing employee morale and commitment.

Iiacqua et al. (1995) reported that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors significantly influence job satisfaction among higher education employees. Achievement, responsibility, professional growth, salary, and institutional policies were identified as important determinants of satisfaction.

Eisenberger et al. (2002) demonstrated that perceived supervisor support contributes significantly to employees' perceptions of organizational support and retention. Employees who receive adequate support from supervisors tend to exhibit greater commitment and positive work attitudes.

Vance (2006) emphasized the strategic importance of employee engagement and argued that engaged employees contribute significantly to organizational performance and effectiveness.

Shukla, Adhikari, and Singh (2015) identified demographic and personality-related variables as important determinants of employee engagement. Their study suggested that employee engagement is influenced by both individual and organizational factors.

Jalagat (2016) reviewed the relationship between job performance, job satisfaction, and motivation and concluded that these variables are closely interconnected. Higher levels of job satisfaction contribute to improved employee performance and organizational outcomes.

Chaudhry et al. (2017) found that working environment and training opportunities positively influence organizational performance through the mediating roles of employee engagement and job satisfaction. The study highlighted the importance of creating supportive work environments.
Nowfal, Muhammed, and Mohan (2019) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement among teachers working in self-financing colleges in Kerala. Their findings revealed a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement, providing direct evidence from the Kerala higher education context.
Vasani and Pillai (2019) reported that employee engagement positively affects employee performance. Engaged employees were found to demonstrate greater productivity and commitment toward organizational goals.
Postrado and Matildo (2023) examined employee engagement and job performance among employees in higher educational institutions and found a highly significant positive relationship between engagement and performance.
George and Usha (2026) explored the influence of employment-life quality on faculty satisfaction in Kerala and reported that work environment, institutional support, and work-life balance significantly predict faculty satisfaction.

IV. FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION

The literature identifies several factors that influence employee engagement and job satisfaction in educational institutions.

Leadership Behaviour

Leadership behavior refers to the actions, attitudes, and management practices adopted by leaders to influence and guide employees toward organizational goals. Effective leadership fosters trust, communication, motivation and employee involvement in decision-making. In educational institutions, supportive leadership creates a positive work climate that enhances faculty commitment, engagement, and satisfaction. Studies have consistently reported that leadership behavior plays a significant role in shaping employee's perceptions of their work environment and overall job satisfaction.

Organizational Support

Organizational support refers to employee's perception that their institution values their contributions and cares about their well-being. According to Eisenberger et.al.(2002), perceived organizational support strengthens employee's emotional attachment to the organization and encourages greater commitment and engagement. In educational institutions, support in the form of recognition, professional development opportunities, fair policies, and resource availability contributes significantly to employee satisfaction and retention.

Work Environment

Work environment encompasses the physical, psychological, and social conditions under which employees perform their duties. A healthy work environment promotes collaboration, communication, safety and professional growth. In higher educational institutions, factors such as workload, collegial relationship, administrative support, and infrastructure influence both employee engagement and job satisfaction. A positive work environment enables faculty members to perform effectively while maintaining motivation and commitment.

Work-Life Balance

Balancing professional and personal responsibilities is particularly important for faculty members who perform multiple academic and administrative roles.

Compensation and Benefits

Fair compensation and benefits contribute to employee motivation and satisfaction. Perceived inequities in compensation may negatively affect engagement.

Professional Development

Training opportunities, research support, promotion mechanisms, and career advancement opportunities enhance both engagement and satisfaction.

Employment-Life Quality

Employment-life quality encompasses autonomy, recognition, collegiality, institutional support, and work environment. High employment-life quality contributes significantly to employee satisfaction.

V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND JOB SATISFACTION

The literature consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction. Satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment toward their work. Similarly, engaged employees tend to develop positive perceptions of their work environment, leading to greater satisfaction.

Nowfal et al. (2019) provided empirical evidence supporting this relationship among teachers working in self-financing colleges in Kerala. Their findings suggest that improvements in job satisfaction can contribute to higher level of employee engagement and vice versa.

Thus, employee engagement and job satisfaction may be viewed as mutually reinforcing constructs that collectively contribute to organizational effectiveness and employee performance.

VI. RESEARCH GAP

Although considerable research has been conducted on employee engagement and job satisfaction, studies focusing specifically on self-financing colleges in Kerala remain limited. Existing research has largely examined individual variables such as leadership behaviour, work-life balance, organizational support, and employment-life quality independently. Comprehensive conceptual and empirical studies integrating these variables within a unified framework are scarce. Therefore, there is a need for further research examining the combined influence of organizational and individual factors on employee engagement and job satisfaction among faculty members in self-financing colleges in Kerala.

VII. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leadership Behaviour → Organizational Support → Work Environment & Employment-Life Quality → Employee Engagement ↔ Job Satisfaction → Job Performance → Institutional Effectiveness

VIII. CONCLUSION

Employee engagement and job satisfaction have emerged as critical determinants of organizational success in higher educational institutions. The literature reviewed indicates that leadership behaviour, organizational support, work environment, work-life balance, compensation, professional development opportunities, and employment-life quality significantly influence employee engagement and job satisfaction. Evidence from previous studies suggests that employee engagement and job satisfaction are positively related and collectively contribute to employee performance and institutional effectiveness. Given the growing importance of self-financing colleges in Kerala, educational administrators should adopt employee-centred practices that enhance engagement and satisfaction. Future empirical studies may validate the proposed framework and provide context-specific insights for improving faculty well-being and institutional performance.

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