



A STUDY ON MEDIATOR ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EMPLOYEES' STRESS AND THEIR RETENTION OF TEACHING FACULTY OF ENGINEERING COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

Despite of the fact that there are a huge number of engineering graduates passing out from the college every year, they are unable to get any decent job in the recent years. Therefore, engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu today are facing a crisis and their seats remain unfilled. The teachers are the most affected due to this problem. They face a lot of stress in their job and because of this reason retaining them in the colleges has become very difficult. The major focus of the present article is to analyse the relationship between job stress, job engagement and job retention. It is located in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu and the total number of respondents is 427. The data was collected from these respondents using multi stage area sampling techniques from probability method. In order to analyse the data tools like anova T-test, confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modeling and mean score ranking analysis were used. One of the major finding of the present research is that job stress leads to a decrease in job retention, but when the mediator job engagement interferes, there is a huge impact in job retention. Therefore, the present research has suggested that in order to increase job retention among the teaching faculties of engineering colleges, they will have to increase the job engagement factor among the faculties.

KEYWORDS: Teaching faculty, stress, employee engagement and Employee retention.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a term commonly used to describe feelings of tensions or exhaustion usually associated with work overload or overly demanding work. Stress is natural phenomenon in an individual's daily life. In the workplace, it can serve to enhance an individual's motivation, performance, satisfaction and personal achievement. In other words, stress is considered to be any pressure which exceeds the individual's capacity to maintain physiological, psychological and/or emotional stability (Furnham, 2005)¹. Hans Selye (1979) defines stress as any external events or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium. That is, stress is anything that changes our physical, emotional, behavioral or mental state while we counter various stimuli in our environment Occupational Stress can be described as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand on them (Health and Safety Executive, 2005). Teaching profession was once viewed as a 'low stress occupation' (Fisher, 1992) and they have been envied for tenure, light workloads, flexibility and other perks such as foreign trips for study and conference (Winefield,

¹ Furnham, A., Petrides, K. V., Tsaousis, I., Pappas, K., & Garrod, D. (2005). A cross-cultural investigation into the relationships between personality traits and work values. *The Journal of Psychology*, 139(1), 5-32.

2003). However, recent studies have demonstrated that university/college professors experience levels of stress that are unparalleled in any other employed group of individuals. College/University professors tend to experience higher than normal levels of stress and these high levels of stress have increased over the last 6 years. (Korotkov, Fraser, Houlihan, Fenwick, McDonald and Fish, 2008)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kanyakumari is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu that has a high percentage of literacy. Throughout the district, education is given much importance. Education institutions situated in this district play a major role in sustaining this status. In Kanyakumari district, it is estimated that, there are more than 30 engineering colleges in total. But the current trend in engineering education is that, the number of students who choose engineering education keeps dwindling. There are many engineering colleges, in recent times, which got closed for want of student strength. Kanyakumari district is no exception. The engineering colleges that remain open today are also facing a lot of trouble. And the faculty members who are working in these engineering colleges are the worst affected due to this factor. The college management passes on almost all the stress that they face to the faculty members. The faculty members are faced with problems like heavy workload, job insecurity, no appreciation or recognition at the college level, addition academic and administrative work, involvement in poaching for students, etc.

All these extra work increases the job stress of the faculty members. When their stress increases, it decreases job involvement and naturally it leads to lack of retention of faculty members in engineering colleges. In such a situation, the teachers naturally want to move away to a better college where the facilities are better and job stress is less. In such a context that present research is located. The focus of the present research is to identify the stress factors influencing the teacher of engineering colleges in Kanyakumari district to move away from one college to another college. What are the reasons for the stress of the teachers and what can be done to avoid the stress so that the job retention of the teachers is increased.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the relation between employee stress and employee engagement.
2. To evaluate the impact of employee stress on employee retention .

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned in the statement of the problem, the major focus of the present research is to analyse the factors that increases the stress level of the teachers in engineering colleges. After analysing the stress levels and the factors that leads to the stress levels, the present research will also focus on how to increase the job engagement and job retention of the teachers of the engineering colleges. After analysing all these factors, the present research will also focus on the various strategies used by both the college management as well as the teaching faculties to avoid job related stress. Furthermore, the present research also will provide suggestions and recommendations as to how the job stress of the teachers can be reduced which can increase the retention level of the teacher of engineering colleges.

RESEARCH GAP

There have been various research done in the field of stress levels of the teachers working at colleges in India in general. Similarly there are many studies that focuses on the job stress of the employees of various organizations including colleges as a whole. But very few researches can be seen that focuses on the job stress of engineering college faculties and particularly in the context of Kanyakumari district. Moreover, there is hardly any research that tries to bring out the relationship between job stress, job engagement and job retention. This is the gap that the present research is trying to fill.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Research Design : Descriptive research

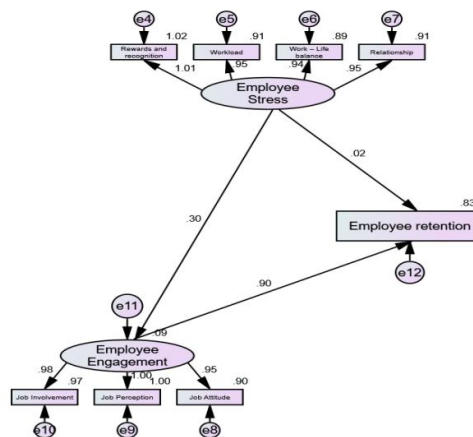
- Survey method : Sampling survey
- Sampling method: Multi stage Area sampling techniques from probability method.
- Data collection method: Questionnaire method
- Sample size : 427 Respondents.

LIMITATIONS

There is no research that can claim that it has no limitations at all. similarly, the present research also has its own limitations. One of the major limitation of the present research is the context of Kanyakumari district and that too only the self-finance engineering colleges have been selected. Government engineering colleges or other colleges are not considered in the present research. Moreover, the sampling technique followed in the present is random sampling technique and through this technique only 50 per cent of the colleges from Kanyakumari district are selected. Apart from that the present research focuses on the stress that is created from the management side, it doesn't focus on the stress that is created by the students. These are some of the limitations of the present research.

Data Analysis

Impact of employee stress on Employee retention with the mediation effect of Employee Engagement



**Fig. 3: Standardized regression weight
Standardized Effects**

		Total Effects		Direct Effects		Indirect Effects	
		Employee stress	Employee engagement	Employee stress	Employee engagement	Employee stress	Employee engagement
1	Employee Engagement	.299	.000	.299	.000	.000	.000
2	Retention	.293	.902	.024	.902	.269	.000
3	Job involvement	.294	.985	.000	.985	.294	.000
4	Job perception	.298	.998	.000	.998	.298	.000
5	Job attitude	.284	.950	.000	.950	.284	.000

		Total Effects		Direct Effects		Indirect Effects	
		Employee stress	Employee engagement	Employee stress	Employee engagement	Employee stress	Employee engagement
6	Relationship	.952	.000	.952	.000	.000	.000
7	Work-life balance	.942	.000	.942	.000	.000	.000
8	workload	.954	.000	.954	.000	.000	.000
9	Rewards and recognition	1.011	.000	1.011	.000	.000	.000

The above table talks about the standardized effect of employee engagement on employee stress. When the total effect is taken into consideration, a 1 point increase in stress leads to an increase in job retention at 0.293 points. Within this, when the direct effect is taken into consideration, there is only a 0.024 percentage in the employee retention. But the mediation of job engagement comes into play, then the indirect effect increases to 0.269. Therefore, it is clear that the mediation of job engagement is a crucial factor that can lead to an increase in the job retention of the employees.

FINDINGS

- Job involvement is the major influencing factor for job engagement of faculty members in engineering colleges
- Perception and attitude towards the job in this institution of the faculty members is low (Mean value is 2.33 and 2.14).
- Workload increases the stress level of the faculty members (Mean value is 4.41).
- Lack of rewards and recognition also is a major factor that leads to an increase in the stress level (Mean value is 3.89).
- Work-life balance is average among the faculty members of engineering colleges (Mean value is 3.48).
- Relationship with others within the institution is average (Mean value is 3.37).
- Lack of Job security and compensation benefits, no proper recognition or rewards, admission related vouching works that leads to job stress.
- Job stress has a negative relationship with job engagement.
- Similarly job engagement has a positive relationship with job retention
- From the SEM analysis the direct effect between job stress and job retention is -0.33. When job engagement acts as a mediator, the indirect effect between job stress and job retention is -0.17.
- Most of the respondents follow strategies such as exercises, spending time with family and friends and time management in order to get out from the job stress.

SUGGESTIONS TO MANAGEMENT

- Rewards and recognition – another factor that increases the stress level of the faculty members. Therefore, the colleges need to focus on fixing a proper salary, proper increment based on their experience and correct promotions based on their expertise.
- Leaves are a necessary element in reducing the stress levels of the faculty members.
- Work load is another factor that increases the stress level of the faculty members. Too much of workload not only increases the stress level of the faculties, but it also decreases the efficiency of the faculty members. Therefore, the colleges need to make sure that the working hours doesn't go beyond 8 hours at any circumstance.

- The colleges need to make sure that the faculty members are provided with enough leaves such as medical, casual, maternity, etc.
- The semester holidays and summer vacation are a necessary part of the college life. It cannot be compromised for other college related works. The college management needs to make sure that the faculty members enjoy the full benefit of the holidays and refresh themselves for another semester of hard work.
- Because of the dwindling student strength in many of the engineering colleges, many colleges resort to poaching in order fill their seats. Moreover, the act of poaching is handed over to the faculty member and only when they fill certain number of seats on their behalf, their job is secured. This is the case in most of the engineering colleges and this practice needs to stop immediately.
- Decreasing stress levels of the faculty members is necessary in order to increase retention. Therefore, the colleges can focus of conducting various workshops and seminars focusing on stress and related activities.
- Arranging family get-together, outing, family tours once or twice a year are some of the activities that can increase the work-life balance of the faculty members and that can decrease the stress levels of the faculty members.
- Career growth and personal development of the faculty members are also to be considered by the college. If the faculty members are growing as an individual, then the institution also grows along with the individual.

SUGGESTIONS TO THE INDIVIDUAL

- Exercise is the most effective stress buster as opined by most of the respondents. Therefore, the faculty members need to make physical exercise a part of their routine activity. This can greatly reduce their stress levels.
- Proper time management is another factor that can prevent stress from occurring. The faculty members need to maintain a proper time management so that their stress is reduced.
- Whenever there is a possibility, spending time with family and friends can greatly reduce the stress level of the faculty members. It also can lead to increased focus on work.
- Job involvement leads to personal growth. Activities like publishing papers, doing higher studies, presenting papers, attending conferences, etc. are some of the activities that can increase the job involvement of the faculty members. When the individual grows, the institution also grows along with the individual.

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