

From Learning to Engagement: Exploring Pathways to Job Engagement Among Higher Education Faculty

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are instrumental in developing skilled human capital, fostering innovation and contributing in national growth. Realization of these objectives largely depends on highly engaged faculty members who are immersed in the pursuit of learning and growing. To examine the predictors of faculty engagement, data was collected from 222 higher education faculty members of India. PLS-SEM through Smart PLS was used to analyse the proposed relationship. The results showed a positive significant relationship between job engagement, learning goal orientation, perceived organizational support, and use of emotion, where, learning goal orientation landed as the most influential predictor factor. The findings reveal that organisational and personal factors both are instrumental in faculty engagement. The results provide significant implications for higher education institutions that seek to enhance faculty engagement and improve teaching standards to meet the future global demands.

Keywords: Job engagement, Learning Goal Orientation, Perceived Organisational Support, Emotional Intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

Today's competitive and agile work environment has led organisations to consider job engagement as a critical determinant of productivity, employee retention along with organisational and individual growth. Job engagement refers to a positive, fulfilling, and work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigour refers to a high level of energy, dedication is characterised by strong enthusiasm at work while absorption is being absorbed into one's role (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, 2010). Engaged employees are usually full of energy (vigour), actively involved in their work roles (dedication) and happily interested in the activities of the work (absorption) (Schaufeli, 2015). Engaged employees exhibit enhanced work attitudes including commitment, motivation, work well-being and contribute beyond prescribed job requirement (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Chaudhary & Jain, 2025). Thus, identifying the determinants which enhance job engagement has become a major research dimension for organisations.

Job engagement is influenced by various organisational and personal factors out of which perceived organisational support (POS) has surfaced as a major predictor. POS is employee's general perception and belief regarding the extent to which their organisation values their contribution and cares about well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2002). According to organisational support theory, employees who experience organisational support tend to show stronger commitment, enhanced job engagement and greater psychological well-being (Kurtessis et al., 2017). Supported by recent empirical studies a significant positive link is found between POS and JE across multiple occupational settings (Kaur & Randhawa, 2024).

Technological disruptions and evolving job roles have led organisations to emphasize continuous learning and adaptability. In this context, learning goal orientation (LO), has gained traction in HR and OB research. LO is defined as an individual's tendency to develop competence by acquiring new skills and mastering challenging tasks (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). High LO employees perceive challenges as opportunities, thus developing resilience and pro-active work behaviour. Prior research indicates that learning-oriented employees are more psychologically invested in their jobs, resulting in stronger job engagement. Additionally, organizations that promote supportive learning climates, enhances engagement among

employees (Mori et al., 2024). In addition to motivational and organizational factors, individual psychological factor such as emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of employee behaviour and workplace effectiveness. Emotional intelligence (EI) consists of a set of abilities that a person uses to understand, regulate, and make use of his or her emotions. Emotional understanding, regulation, and utilization reflect the capability of a person to manage his or her emotions. Some people have higher competence to do so, while others possess lower competence (Wong & Law, 2002). Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WEIS) consists of four dimensions self-emotion appraisal, others emotion appraisal, regulation of emotion and use of emotion (Law et al., 2004). Out of these four, the use of emotion dimension, depicts the individual's ability to use emotions constructively and positively in all walks of life. Employees with high use of emotion ability remain enthusiastic, take better decision, remain motivated and engaged, while sustaining workplace challenges, thus strengthening job engagement. Studies conducted in recent years have emphasized that emotional intelligence contributes significantly to employee engagement, organizational commitment, and workplace well-being (Malathi & Padhy, 2024). The relationship between POS, LO and UOE with JE has underpinning from JD-R model. According to the JD-R framework, various job demands of an individual can be met by organizational resources such as perceived organizational support and personal resources such as learning goal orientation and use of emotions, which in turn affect employee's motivation and engagement. Employees who receive adequate organizational support, and effectively use emotions are more likely to experience enthusiasm, dedication, and cognitive immersion in their work (Chaudhary & Jain, 2025; Kaur & Randhawa, 2024). While previous studies have individually examined the relationships between POS, learning orientation, use of emotion and job engagement, relatively few research have examined these constructs within a single integrated framework in the context of Indian higher education faculty members. Additionally, the comparative influence of learning goal orientation alongside organizational and emotional factors in predicting job engagement remains unexplored. This gap is addressed by present study by examining the impact of perceived organizational support, learning goal orientation, and use of emotion on higher education faculty's job engagement.

The findings reveal that all three independent constructs have a significant positive influence on job engagement, with learning goal orientation as the strongest predictor. The current study aims to contribute to the existing literature by considering organizational, motivational, and emotional perspectives all together in order to better understand faculty engagement. The findings may also provide practical implications for educational institutions seeking to enhance faculty engagement. In line with the gaps identified above, we intend to explore three main questions in the present research: Firstly, does perceived organisational support contribute to faculty engagement? Secondly, does learning goal orientation of faculties also lead to their job engagement? Thirdly, does use of emotions dimension of faculty contribute to their engagement at work? To explore these questions, we propose a theoretical framework of job engagement among higher education faculties, where we explore the effect of perceived organisational support, learning goal orientation and use of emotion on their job engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Job Demands-Resources best supports the design of this study. According to JD-R theory workplace characteristics are classified into job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands and job resources refers to physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job. Job demands require physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort which can deplete the energy and lead to negative outcomes (Balducci et al., 2011), whereas job resources help in achieving work goals, reduce job demands, accelerate personal and professional growth and learning (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Research has revealed that job demands may lead to adverse effects on health and well-being, whereas job resources such as organisational support leads to work engagement (Bonaiuto et al., 2002). Thus, this study aims to find the combined effect of various job demands and resources on job engagement.

Learning Goal Orientation and Job Engagement

Learning Goal Orientation as defined by Vendewalle (1998) is a desire to develop the self by acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and improving one's competence. It influences how one responds to

difficult tasks and manages failures (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), thus indicating an important personality factor which is adaptive to challenges, solution oriented and engaged in task mastery. LO is found to significantly influence employee creativity, job satisfaction, well-being and job engagement (Janssen & Van Yperen 2004; Zahoor et al, 2022). Studies indicate LO positively correlates with job engagement of employees (Jin & McDonald, 2017; Rozkwitalska et al., 2022). LO becomes relevant in higher education sector particularly because faculties have to keep themselves updated with new advancements in their disciplines long with ever demanding administrative responsibilities. Faculties who have learning goal orientation are motivated by the desire to develop their skills and knowledge, which can lead to greater engagement in their teaching and research activities. Thus, we propose

H1: Learning goal orientation positively influences job engagement among higher education faculty members.

POS and Job Engagement

According to Job Demands Resource theory, POS is considered a resource that leads to enhanced job engagement and well-being (Reynell van der Ross, 2022; Lan et al., 2020). Research indicates that POS enhances job satisfaction and mitigates emotional labor, thus fostering engagement in the current role (Eisenberger et al., 2020; 刘 & Li, 2025). The impact of POS on job engagement among higher education faculty members is significant. When faculty members perceive that their contributions are recognized and appreciated, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement in their roles (Mehta & Kaur, 2025). Thus, we propose.

H2: Perceived organizational support positively influences job engagement among higher education faculty members.

Use of Emotion and Job Engagement

The Use of Emotions is one of the four aspects of emotional intelligence; it portrays an individual's ability to use emotions in a constructive way. Employees with high use of emotion ability are self-motivated and have an optimistic attitude. Research suggests that faculties depicting high levels of EI are better equipped to handle emotional challenge thus leading to increased job satisfaction and engagement (Vasumathi & Sagaya, 2017; Guerra Muñoz et al., 2024). The positive influence of emotional intelligence on work engagement can be attributed to individuals' ability to effectively regulate their own emotions as well as the emotions of others, thereby creating an important source of energy that facilitates the accomplishment of work-related tasks (Green et al., 2017). Thus, we propose

H3: Use of Emotions positively influences job engagement among higher education faculty members.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and procedure

The data for present study were collected from full-time faculty members of higher education institutions of India. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to include selected cities from five geographical zones (North, South, West, Central, East), covering major institutional types (private, public, autonomous). Participants were informed the purpose of study and that their response will be anonymous and confidential. More than 400 respondents were contacted by offline and online methods, out of which 222 responses were received which were complete and suitable for analysis. Table 1 represents the demographic details of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Details

Variables	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	114	51.4



Female	108	48.6
Age		
Less than 35 years	72	32.43%
35-45 years	97	43.69%
45-55 years	45	20.27%
More than 55 years	8	3.60%
Type of Institution		
Private	125	56.3
Public	78	35.1
Autonomous	19	8.6
Current Designation		
Assistant Professor	164	73.87%
Associate Professor	38	17.11%
Professor	20	9.00%
Geographical Zone of Institution		
East	31	13.9
West	37	16.7
North	58	26.1
South	40	18.1
Central	56	25.2
Total	222	100

Measures

The variables in our study were evaluated using items from well-established scales. Perceived organizational support was assessed through the items adapted from Eisenberger et al. (1997). A sample item for perceived organisational support is “My organisation cares about my opinions.” Use of Emotion is a subfactor of Emotional Intelligence and was assessed from the items of Emotional Intelligence scale developed by (Wong & Law, 2002). A sample item includes “I always set goals for myself and then try my best to achieve them.” The Learning Goal Orientation (LO) was evaluated by the items adapted from Work Domain Goal Instrument developed by (VandeWalle, 1997). A sample item consists of “I am open to taking on challenging tasks to learn new things”. Job engagement was evaluated from the ultrashort measure for work engagement developed by (Schaufeli et al., 2019). The sample items include “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”.

Common Method Bias

To assess the influence of common method biasness, Harman's single-factor test was performed using exploratory factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The analysis revealed that the first unrotated factor explained less than 30% of the total variance, indicating that no single factor accounted for the majority of the covariance among the measured variables. Therefore, the results suggest that common method bias is not present in the current study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM (Smart PLS 3.0) to predict the dependent variable. PLS-SEM is extensively used in management and human resource management studies (Hair et al., 2012).

Measurement Model

Measurement model is assessed by examining factor loading, internal consistency, convergent and

discriminant validity. The factor loading value represents the degree of relationship of each item with the latent variables. Each item should have a loading value greater than 0.6 as recommended by Chin (1998a). Table 2 depicts that loading values of each item is above 0.85 which is more than the recommended threshold value. Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α) were used to measure reliability. Table 2 exhibits the values of composite reliability and alpha of JE (CR = 0.899; α = 0.832); LO (CR = 0.915; α = 0.860); POS (CR = 0.939; α = 0.919) and UOE (CR = 0.930; α = 0.900). The acceptable values of CR and α should be >0.70 (Hair et al., 2011); hence, all the values are acceptable. Convergent validity was tested by calculating the AVE values.

Table 2 depicts AVE of all the variables lies between (0.748-0.781) which is above 0.50 and hence acceptable (Henseler et al., 2016). Discriminant validity was evaluated by heterotrait –monotrait (HTMT) ratio and Fornell Larcker, as suggested by Fornell and Larcker(1981). Table 3 depicts that the square roots of AVE are higher than off-diagonal factors in corresponding rows and columns and Table 4 exhibits that HTMT ratio values are <0.90 (Gold et al., 2001). This suggests that discriminant validity comes under the acceptable criteria. Additionally, the study calculated the variance inflation factor test (VIF) to check the data's multicollinearity issue. The values of VIF should be <10 (Aiken et al., 1991). The VIF values in Table 5 are <10; thus, there was no multicollinearity issue. Hence, the proposed model has a considerable level of internal consistency, reliability, convergent and discriminant validity for employing a structural model.

Table 2. Assessment of reliability and validity

Instrument/Items and constructs	Loadings	(α)	CR	AVE
Job Engagement				
JE1	0.856	0.832	0.899	0.748
JE2	0.857			
JE3	0.882			
Learning Goal Orientation				
LO1	0.899	0.860	0.915	0.781
LO2	0.886			
LO3	0.867			
Perceived Organisational Support				
POS1	0.852	0.919	0.939	0.755
POS2	0.858			
POS3	0.887			
POS4	0.878			
POS5	0.869			
Use of Emotion				
UOE2	0.884	0.900	0.930	0.767
UOE3	0.859			
UOE4	0.879			
UOE1	0.883			

α : Cronbach's alpha, CR: Composite Reliability, AVE: Average Variance Extracted

Table 3. Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker criterion)

Variables	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
1. Job Engagement	0.865*				2.922	1.212
2. Learning Goal Orientation	0.485	0.884*			3.014	1.239

3. Perceived Organisational Support	0.383	0.091	0.869*	2.968	1.240	
4. Use of Emotion	0.238	0.114	0.068	0.876*	2.907	1.253

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio for Discriminant Validity

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Job Engagement				
2. Learning Goal Orientation	0.572			
3. Perceived Organisational Support	0.436	0.104		
4. Use of Emotion	0.272	0.126	0.075	

Assessment of Structural Model

Structural model of this study was assessed using the 5000 bootstraps method in Smart-PLS software. Model fitness was examined using SRMR values. The study recorded SRMR value of 0.047, in accordance with the latest study of Cho et al. (2020), the value should be <0.08 , thus our study exhibits adequate level of model fitness. The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates the proportion of variance in the endogenous construct explained by its predictor variables. In the present study, the R^2 value for job engagement (JE) was 0.378, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.375. This suggests that learning orientation (LO), perceived organizational support (POS), and use of emotions (UOE) jointly explain 37.8% of the variance in job engagement. According to Hair et al. (2011), the model demonstrates moderate explanatory power, indicating that the selected predictors account for a meaningful proportion of employees' job engagement. The effect size (f^2) was examined to determine the individual contribution of each exogenous construct to the R^2 value of job engagement. The effect size (f^2) is suggested as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and significant (0.35) by Cohen (2013), and if the f^2 value is <0.02 , there is no effect. Table 5 represents the f^2 values LO ($f^2 = 0.299$) has medium effect; POS ($f^2 = 0.176$) exerts medium-low whereas UOE (0.044) exerts relatively low influence on job engagement. The predictive relevance of the structural model was assessed using the Stone–Geisser Q^2 value obtained through the blindfolding procedure. The Q^2 value for job engagement was 0.272, which is greater than zero, indicating that the model possesses satisfactory predictive relevance (Stone, 1974; Geisser, 1974).

Table 5. Saturated Model Results

Construct	R^2	Adj. R^2	F^2	Q^2	VIF	SRMR
JE	0.378	0.375		0.272		0.047
LO			.299		1.019	
POS			.176		1.012	
UOE			0.044		1.016	

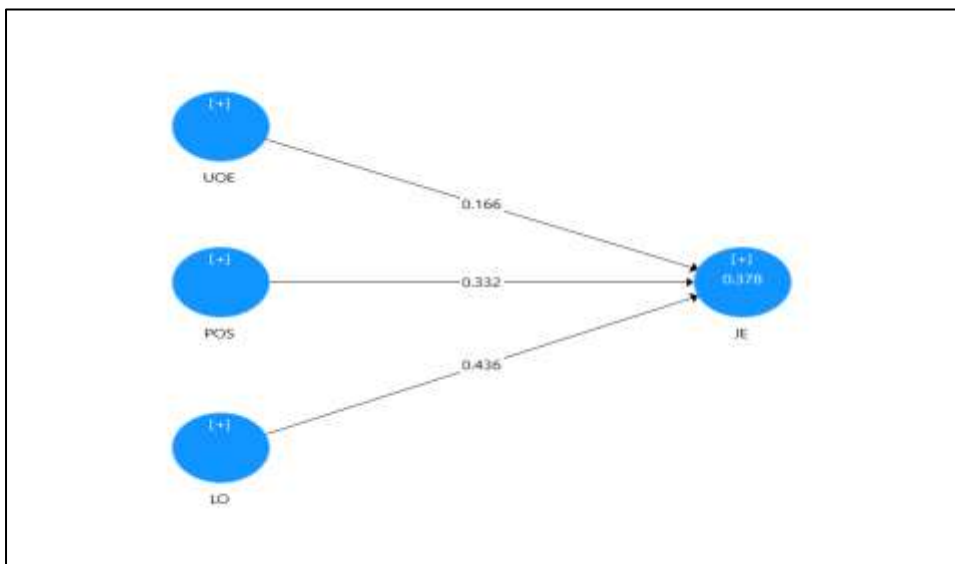
Abbreviations: VIF-Variance Inflation Factor, Q^2 -Predictive Relevance, F^2 -Effect Size, SRMR-Standardized Root Mean Square, R^2 -Determination of Coefficient

The structural model was evaluated by examining the path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values obtained through the bootstrapping procedure in Smart PLS (Fig.1). Results showed that H1: LO had a direct positive and significant impact on JE with $\beta = 0.436$, $t = 8.136$, $p = 0.000$. H2: POS has direct positive and significant impact on JE with $\beta = 0.332$, $t = 6.845$, $p = 0.000$. Also, H3: UOE has positive and significant direct impact on JE with $\beta = 0.166$, $t = 3.189$, $p = 0.002$, (Table 6). These findings indicate that learning orientation, perceived organizational support, and use of emotions significantly enhance employees' job engagement, with learning orientation exerting the strongest influence among the three predictor variables

Table 6. Hypothesis Constructs

Hypothesis	Relationship	Effect (β)	SE	t-statistics	p-values	Results
H1	LO → JE	0.436	0.054	8.136	0.000	Hypothesis Supported
H2	POS → JE	0.332	0.049	6.845	0.000	Hypothesis Supported
H3	UOE → JE	0.166	0.052	3.189	0.002	Hypothesis Supported
R-square – 0.378 and Adjusted R-square – 0.375						
Notes: POS – Perceived Organisation Support, UOE – Use of Emotion, LO – Learning Goal Orientation and JE – Job Engagement						

Fig 1. Partial least square structural equation model (PLS-SEM), shows positive relationships in the model



CONCLUSION

The major objective of the present study was to examine the influence of perceived organizational support, learning goal orientation and use of emotions on the work engagement of faculty members of Indian institutions of higher education. Specifically, an attempt was made to find the comparative effect of organizational factor and learning goal orientation as an individual resource and emotional competence. The importance of this study lies in the fact that previous studies have examined the relationships of these variables separately, but their overall impact under an integrated framework in the case of Indian higher education faculty members is comparatively less studied. Therefore, the current study extended the existing knowledge about the antecedents of work engagement in the higher education sector.

The findings of the study clearly assert that perceived organizational support, learning goal orientation and use of emotions all three positively and significantly influence work engagement. Among them, learning goal orientation landed as the most influential predictor factor, aligning with the previous studies (Rozkwitalska et al., 2022). This outcome is particularly important as the instinct to continuously learn, earn new skills and develop their professional competencies is able to reinforce faculty members' enthusiasm, dedication and active participation in their work. The positive effect of organizational support again shows that institutional recognition, leadership collaboration, access to resources and development opportunities are important organizational resources for enhancing employee work engagement. The significance of use of emotions in job engagement is aligned with the findings of Kaur and Randhawa (2024) who highlighted that

the constructive appropriation of positive emotions in the workplace can strengthen employee motivation and engagement.

Theoretically, these findings support the core intent of the JD-R model, where organizational resources as well as individual resources play an important role in enhancing employees' motivation and work engagement to meet work demands. From a practical perspective, HEIs should strengthen continuing education programs, faculty-development initiatives, research-mentoring, peer-learning groups and opportunities to attend conferences and workshops. The significant effect of POS, suggests the need of supportive leadership, transparent communication, recognition and rewards along with fair workload distribution to further enhance job engagement. Subsequently, training programs for the development of emotional competence including activities on emotional awareness, emotion regulation and managing classroom and workplace challenges should also be incorporated into institutional policies. These measures can strengthen faculty members' job engagement, performance and institutional commitment.

Although the limited sample size, specific sampling methodology and cross-sectional study design require caution in generalizing the findings, the findings of the present study demonstrate an important direction in the Indian higher education context. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among learning goal orientation, perceived organizational support, use of emotions, and job engagement, as all variables were measured at one point in time. Future studies should employ longitudinal or time-lagged designs to examine whether changes in these predictors lead to subsequent changes in faculty job engagement. Future longitudinal studies, with a variety of larger samples and the inclusion of variables such as organizational identity, self-efficacy, career intentions and burnout could test this model as more comprehensive. Ultimately, recruiting competent faculty members alone is not enough for the sustainable development of higher education; rather, they should create a work environment that integrates ongoing learning, emotional competence and organizational support. It is such a coordinated approach that is able to create a motivated, engaged, productive and long-term committed academic workforce at an institution.

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