

The Effect of Equal Employment Opportunity on Faculty Retention and Performance in Higher Education

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Abstract

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies are vital for fostering fairness, inclusion, and non-discrimination within the workplace, particularly in higher education. This research paper explores the impact of EEO policies on faculty retention and performance. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes the relationship between EEO practices and key metrics, including faculty retention rates, research output, and teaching quality. The results indicate that effective EEO policies significantly enhance faculty retention and performance, with particularly positive effects observed among historically underrepresented groups. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, validate these findings, revealing that institutions with strong EEO practices not only retain talented faculty but also improve their research and teaching effectiveness. This study underscores the importance of implementing robust EEO policies to foster an equitable and supportive academic environment, ultimately benefiting both faculty members and the institutions they serve.

Keywords: Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Faculty Retention, Faculty Performance, Research Output, Organizational Fairness, Underrepresented Groups

Introduction

In an increasingly competitive and diverse global landscape, higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping knowledge, fostering innovation, and developing future leaders. At the core of these institutions are their faculty members, whose expertise and dedication significantly influence the quality of education and research. Faculty retention and performance are critical factors that determine an institution's overall success and reputation. However, these factors are intricately linked to organizational practices that promote fairness, inclusion, and equity.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies are essential mechanisms designed to eliminate discrimination and promote equitable treatment in the workplace. These policies aim to ensure that all employees, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability, have equal access to employment opportunities, career advancement, and institutional resources (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006). In academia, EEO practices are not only a legal obligation but also a moral imperative, contributing to a positive and inclusive work environment.

Numerous studies have established that EEO policies are linked to various positive organizational outcomes, including employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Faculty members who perceive their institutions as equitable and inclusive are more likely to remain committed to their roles, which is vital in an era where faculty turnover can hinder institutional stability and student success (Shore et al., 2011). Furthermore, effective EEO practices can enhance the diversity of faculty, bringing in varied perspectives that enrich the academic environment and foster innovative research (Gurin et al., 2002).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of EEO policies, there remains a significant gap in understanding their specific effects on faculty retention and performance in higher education institutions. This research paper seeks to address this gap by investigating the relationship between EEO practices and faculty outcomes, including retention rates, research productivity, and teaching effectiveness.

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights to provide a comprehensive view of the impact of EEO policies. By examining various institutions, the research aims to identify the mechanisms through which EEO practices influence faculty experiences and outcomes, particularly focusing on historically underrepresented groups who may face additional barriers in academia.

In summary, this research is significant in advancing the understanding of how EEO policies can shape the faculty experience in higher education. By elucidating the links between EEO practices and faculty retention and performance, the study contributes to the broader discourse on equity and inclusion in academic institutions, ultimately informing policy decisions and institutional strategies aimed at creating a more equitable and supportive academic landscape.

Literature Review

Bagchi et.al (2023) in his paper examined the connection between equal opportunities and their impact on employee performance within the organization. A questionnaire was prepared and circulated among employees, and based on the collected responses, the paper outlined the nature of the relationship between employee performance and equal opportunities. The study emphasized the importance of the HR department having a clear understanding of this relationship to foster a committed and loyal workforce.

Karen Cantilang (2023) This research primarily focused on assessing the level of diversity and faculty performance among employees at Eastern Samar State University. It also aimed to determine whether there was a correlation between the level of diversity and faculty performance. The results indicated a weak positive correlation ($r=0.4131$) between the two variables. However, the relationship test revealed that the variables related to workplace diversity and faculty performance were not significant. Numerous studies have demonstrated that organizations with diverse employees are better equipped to meet the needs of varied external customers in an increasingly global market. Nonetheless, having a homogeneous set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes can also be advantageous in certain workplaces, particularly in academia. Ultimately, the impact of diversity in the workplace largely depends on how effectively organizational leaders manage it. Through strategic planning, top management can enhance the positive effects of diversity while minimizing its negative aspects in the workplace.

Rasheed.et.al (2021) in their research examined the various factors influencing the retention of teaching staff at higher education institutions. We identified key criteria essential for faculty retention and evaluated these against the standards set by ABET (Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology), focusing on aspects related to “faculty” and “institutional support.” Our findings indicated that only a small percentage of faculty members chose to leave their positions due to a high student-to-faculty ratio and/or the denial of tenure. This suggests that while these issues may contribute to dissatisfaction among faculty, they are not the main reasons for turnover. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for higher education institutions aiming to improve retention strategies and create a supportive environment that encourages faculty commitment and longevity in their academic roles.

Sakshi Jaiswal (2023) The goal of this article was to examine the subject of equal employment opportunities in the hiring and selection procedures for HR. The study was conducted because both HR managers and applicants were involved in these processes, each having their individual perspectives. Thus, it was determined whether both parties agreed on the existence of this notion during the aforementioned steps. Equitable employment opportunities were recognized as essential for any company and a major factor in attracting talented workers. Equal opportunity for all employees was identified as one of the key pillars for achieving social justice in the workplace. Consequently, equal opportunity was viewed as more than just a claim to be made. In this regard, one of the main objectives of this work was to examine and analyze the empirical literature on the impact of employee equality on performance based on previous research conducted by the authors.

Sadagheyani.et.al (2022) said universities must adopt appropriate policies and conduct thorough investigations into the reasons behind faculty departures through exit interviews. Identifying the factors contributing to faculty turnover is essential, as is developing strategies to eliminate these factors. Given the ongoing changes in the academic environment and the evolving needs of faculty members, systematic research is necessary to assess the various factors affecting retention and to ensure that policies are updated accordingly. By focusing on the retention of faculty, universities can better fulfill their missions and create a more stable and effective academic environment.

Sarah A. Keim.et.al (2023) investigation aimed to explore whether research administrators evaluated extramural grant applicants differently based on gender and career rank. Contrary to prior research, the study revealed that research administrators rated male and female applicants similarly in terms of competence. Female candidates were generally viewed as more likable and received higher ratings for mentoring potential. Additionally, senior-ranked applicants were rated higher for research competence. Overall, research administrators did not significantly contribute to the discrimination against female researchers.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the research are:

1. To examine the relationship between Equal Employment Opportunity policies and faculty retention in higher education institutions.
2. To analyze the impact of EEO policies on faculty performance, including research output and teaching quality.
3. To identify the key factors in EEO practices that influence faculty satisfaction and retention.
4. To investigate the role of EEO policies in promoting diversity and reducing faculty turnover, especially among underrepresented groups.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are proposed for this study:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the implementation of EEO policies and faculty retention in higher education institutions.

H2: EEO policies have a significant positive impact on faculty research productivity and teaching performance.

H3: Faculty satisfaction mediates the relationship between EEO policies and faculty retention.

H4: EEO policies contribute to higher retention rates among historically underrepresented faculty groups, such as women and minorities.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a holistic understanding of the relationship between Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and faculty retention and performance. The primary focus was on gathering quantitative data through a structured questionnaire, which was supplemented by qualitative insights from open-ended questions. This approach enabled a thorough investigation into how faculty perceive EEO policies and how these perceptions influence their intent to stay at their institutions and their overall job performance.

Questionnaire Development

The development of the questionnaire was grounded in a comprehensive review of the existing literature and expert consultations in the fields of human resources and higher education. The questionnaire included several key sections: demographic information, EEO policy perceptions, job satisfaction, retention intentions, and performance metrics. Demographic questions gathered data on participants' gender, age, race, academic rank, and years of service. The section on EEO policies employed a 5-point Likert scale to assess faculty perceptions regarding the fairness, effectiveness, and transparency of these policies. Job satisfaction was measured using standardized scales adapted from the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The retention intentions section focused on gauging the likelihood of faculty members remaining at their institutions over the next few years, also using a 5-point Likert scale. Additionally, faculty were asked to self-report their

research output and teaching quality as part of the performance metrics. Open-ended questions were included to allow faculty to share personal experiences and perspectives on how EEO policies have impacted their retention and performance.

Sampling Methodology

The target population for this study was faculty members from 10 higher education institutions. To ensure that the sample was representative of diverse demographic and institutional characteristics, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Faculty members were stratified by the type of institution (public versus private), geographic location, and academic rank, which included professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and lecturers. The goal was to collect responses from approximately 500 faculty members, a sample size deemed sufficient to achieve statistical power for meaningful analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered electronically, with invitations sent via email and LinkedIn to ensure easy access for participants. The data collection period lasted for four weeks, during which two reminder emails were sent to increase the response rate. By the end of the collection period, a total of 275 completed questionnaires were received, resulting in a response rate of 55%. Any incomplete responses were excluded from the final analysis to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and to identify overall trends in faculty perceptions of EEO policies, job satisfaction, and retention intentions. Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between EEO policies and faculty retention and performance. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the impact of EEO policies on retention and performance metrics, with demographic variables controlled for. For the qualitative data, open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying recurring themes related to faculty experiences with EEO policies and their impact on retention and performance. This mixed-methods approach provided both statistical insights and in-depth qualitative understanding of the research topic.

Findings

Correlation Analysis: The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to quantify the relationship. A coefficient of $r=0.52$ ($p < 0.01$) indicates a moderate to strong positive correlation, suggesting that higher EEO policy strength is associated with increased faculty retention rates. This means that as institutions strengthen their EEO policies, faculty members are more likely to remain at the institution. Similarly, a correlation of $r=0.46$ ($p < 0.01$) between EEO policies and faculty performance implies that better EEO practices are associated with improved research output and teaching quality.

The significance level ($p < 0.01$) confirms that these correlations are statistically significant, indicating that the likelihood of observing these relationships by chance is very low. This analysis supports the hypothesis that effective EEO policies positively influence both retention and performance.

Multiple Regression Analysis: Multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of EEO policies on faculty retention and performance while controlling for other variables such as demographic factors.

The regression model included independent variables such as EEO policy strength, faculty satisfaction, and access to resources. The coefficients (β) obtained from the analysis represent the degree to which each independent variable predicts the dependent variables (retention and performance). For instance, a coefficient of $\beta=0.38$ ($p <$

0.01) for EEO policy strength indicates a significant positive relationship with faculty retention. In other words, for each unit increase in EEO policy strength, retention increases by 0.38 units, holding other variables constant.

Results Table:

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value
EEO Policy Strength	0.38	<0.01
Faculty Satisfaction	0.29	<0.05
Access to Resources	0.34	<0.01
R ²	0.49	

From the table above the R² value of 0.49 indicates that 49% of the variance in faculty retention can be explained by the model, suggesting a moderate level of explanatory power. The significance of faculty satisfaction ($\beta = 0.29, p < 0.05$) and access to resources ($\beta = 0.34, p < 0.01$) further supports the conclusion that these factors also play a crucial role in enhancing faculty retention and performance.

Mediation Analysis: Mediation analysis was used to explore whether faculty satisfaction mediates the relationship between EEO policies and faculty retention.

The analysis involved testing two paths: the direct effect of EEO policies on faculty satisfaction ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.01$) and the effect of faculty satisfaction on retention ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.05$).

The findings indicate that EEO policies have a significant direct effect on faculty satisfaction, which in turn positively influences retention. The partial mediation suggests that while EEO policies directly enhance retention, faculty satisfaction is an important pathway through which these policies exert their effects. This emphasizes the importance of job satisfaction in retaining faculty and highlights the need for institutions to focus not only on EEO policy implementation but also on improving faculty satisfaction to enhance retention outcomes.

The application of these statistical tests reveals that robust EEO policies positively correlate with and predict both faculty retention and performance. The mediation analysis underscores the critical role of faculty satisfaction, indicating that efforts to enhance job satisfaction can further strengthen the retention effects of EEO policies. Overall, the results provide compelling evidence for the importance of EEO practices in higher education institutions, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to promote equity and satisfaction among faculty members.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis identified several key themes:

1. **Perceptions of Fairness:** Faculty members who felt that their institution's EEO policies were effectively implemented reported higher job satisfaction and motivation to stay. They emphasized that fair treatment in promotions, resource distribution, and decision-making processes contributed to their sense of belonging.
2. **Support for Underrepresented Groups:** Faculty members from minority groups, particularly women and people of colour, highlighted that EEO policies were essential in creating an inclusive environment. Many reported that their institutions actively worked to address historical inequities, providing mentorship programs and ensuring diversity in leadership positions.
3. **Challenges in Implementation:** Despite the overall positive impact of EEO policies, several faculty members expressed concerns about inconsistencies in policy enforcement. Some mentioned that while EEO policies were officially in place, subtle biases still influenced decisions related to tenure and resource allocation.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the significant role that EEO policies play in improving faculty retention and performance in higher education institutions. The correlation and regression analyses provide strong evidence that EEO policies positively impact both retention rates and performance metrics such as research output and teaching quality. Moreover, the mediation analysis highlights the importance of faculty satisfaction as a key factor linking EEO policies to retention.

Institutions with well-implemented EEO policies are more likely to retain talented faculty members by fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. The study also demonstrates that EEO policies benefit underrepresented faculty groups by providing equitable opportunities for career advancement and professional development.

However, the challenges related to policy implementation must be addressed. Institutions must ensure that EEO policies are not only present on paper but also actively enforced and monitored. Addressing subtle biases and providing continuous training on diversity and inclusion will further enhance faculty retention and performance.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that Equal Employment Opportunity policies significantly impact faculty retention and performance in higher education institutions. EEO policies contribute to a fair and inclusive work environment, which improves job satisfaction, research productivity, and teaching quality. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of implementing EEO policies effectively to ensure that all faculty members have equal access to opportunities and resources.

By prioritizing EEO practices, higher education institutions can enhance faculty retention, promote diversity, and improve overall institutional performance. Future research should explore the long-term effects of EEO policies on faculty career trajectories and investigate strategies for improving policy enforcement.

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