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## A Study on the Antecedents of Employee Engagement: Evidence from a Private Higher Education Institution

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### ABSTRACT

Employee engagement remains a crucial determinant of institutional success, yet research on its antecedents within private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines is limited (Packing, 2023). This study addressed this gap by identifying the antecedents of faculty engagement in a leading private HEI in Northern Mindanao. Utilizing a descriptive, cross-sectional, quantitative research design, the study surveyed 40 faculty members using an adapted and validated questionnaire that assessed demographics and extent of antecedents of employee engagement. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and bivariate testing to examine variations across sex, length of service, and employment status. The findings primarily revealed that meaningful work ( $M = 4.33$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) and co-worker support ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) were the most frequently observed antecedents, while performance feedback ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) was the lowest-rated factor. Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in antecedents of engagement based on sex and length of service. However, employment status was found to have a significant association with perceived organizational support and feedback mechanisms ( $p < 0.05$ ). These results imply the need for enhanced feedback structures and support systems, particularly for contractual faculty.

### INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement refers to the optimistic, satisfying, and fulfilling feelings employees experience at work, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). In the 21st century, executives and managers strive to cultivate a work environment where employees consistently perform at their best, even under pressure and during challenging times. However, despite the substantial efforts and resources invested by companies, only a few succeed in fostering the desired level of employee engagement.

The benefits of an engaged workforce are well-documented. Research by Harter *et al.* (2002) revealed that companies with engaged employees experience a 51% increase in productivity. Similarly, Watson (2009) noted that businesses with highly engaged employees achieve shareholder returns exceeding 9%. Furthermore, Ray *et al.* (2012) affirmed that engaged employees outperform their disengaged counterparts by 20% to 28%. Additionally, Gallup (2011) found that disengaged employees tend to have more absences, averaging 3-5 days, compared to their engaged colleagues.

Among the organizations that play a critical role in national development, higher education institutions (HEIs) stand out as essential contributors. In addition to public tertiary institutions, private higher education institutions, including for-profit organizations, help expand access to higher education, particularly in regions where public universities fall short of meeting demand ("A Global Perspective on Private Higher Education," 2016). The significance of for-profit HEIs extends beyond student development to encompass economic growth and human

resource development. Research indicates that these institutions align their programs with industry needs, producing job-ready graduates who directly contribute to economic progress (Bajaj *et al.*, 2023). By bridging skill gaps across various industries, private HEIs play a vital role in national workforce development (Tilak, 2006). Additionally, they foster economic growth by providing employment opportunities and generating income for faculty members (Johansen & Arano, 2016).

A supportive institutional environment is crucial for faculty career success, job satisfaction, and professional development (Vaičiukevičiūtė *et al.*, 2019). A study has claimed that employee engagement has a significant influence on productivity and academic quality, suggesting that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should prioritize faculty engagement (Azmy, 2019). Furthermore, engaged teaching faculty enhances student learning experiences and overall institutional performance (Kundar & Pakkeerappa, 2021). Nonetheless, despite the acknowledged benefits of employee engagement, much of the existing research is rooted in Western perspectives, with limited studies focusing on Filipino employees (Packing, 2023).

Recognizing this gap, the present study aims to identify the antecedents influencing faculty engagement in one of the leading private higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines, specifically to student enrollment size. As of 2023, a for-profit, non-sectarian, private higher education institution (HEI) in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, has an estimated enrollment of approximately 21,000 students. Notably, the institution recorded its highest number of enrollees during the 2022-2023 academic year

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in the region (Gonzales, 2023).

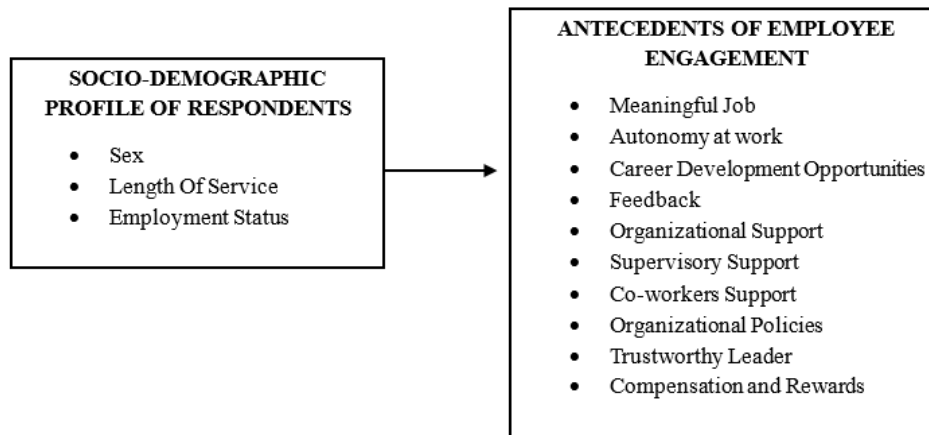
Given this large student population, what would be the impact on the institution if its faculty members were to become disengaged, unmotivated, and uncertain about their roles? Harter *et al.* (2004) emphasized in their study on human sigma statistics that exceptionally high levels of employee engagement and customer engagement (EEXCE) yield the highest levels of financial performance for an organization.

Therefore, this study has two primary objectives. First, it aims to determine the profile of faculty members in higher education institutions. Second, it aims to determine the extent to which the antecedents of employee engagement are present. The findings will provide insights for developing policy interventions that support the growth and well-being of faculty members, ultimately enhancing human resource development within higher education institutions (HEIs).

### Framework

The term employee engagement first appeared as a concept in management theories in the 1900s and has been addressed by various Human Resources consultancy firms' websites. It was mentioned by Towers Perrin (2003) and DDI (2005). It was also mentioned in Workforce Magazine (2005), Harvard Business Review (2005), and The Washington Post (2005).

This study is grounded in the theory of Kahn (1990) and supported by the theories of Maslach *et al.* (2001), as there is no single, universal theoretical framework for employee engagement. Instead, various approaches have been proposed, each with distinct characteristics. The theory of Khan (1990), entitled the "Need-Satisfying approach," presented that employees are engaged if cognitive, emotional, and physical levels are met. The three levels mentioned are significantly influenced by three psychological domains: Meaningfulness, Safety,



**Figure 1:** Schematic Diagram of the Study

and Availability. As a result, the three psychological domains sway how employees perceive and perform roles at work. Similarly, the theory of Maslach *et al.* (2001b), known as the Burnout-Antithesis Approach, claims that employee engagement is the opposite of job burnout. Consequently, the theory defined employee engagement as "a persistent positive affective state of fulfillment in employees, characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (Maslach *et al.*, 2001).

#### Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to measure the difference in the antecedents of employee engagement considering the demographics of the employees;

Specifically, it attempts to achieve the following objectives.

1. To determine the demographic profile of the employees in terms of;
  - a. Sex;
  - b. Length of Service; and
  - c. Employment Status;
2. To assess the extent of the determined antecedents, such as;
  - a. Meaningful Job;
  - b. Autonomy at Work;
  - c. Performance Feedback;

- d. Development Opportunities;
- e. Organizational Support;
- f. Supervisor's Support;
- g. Co-workers' Support;
- h. Organizational Policies;
- i. Trustworthy Leader; and
- j. Compensation and Rewards.

3. To test the difference of the antecedents of employee engagement considering the demographics of the employees.

### Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Antecedents of Employee Engagement significantly differ considering Sex

Hypothesis 2: Antecedents of Employee Engagement significantly differ considering Length of Service

Hypothesis 3: Antecedents of Employee Engagement significantly differ considering Employment Status

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Development and Descriptive Theories of Employee Engagement: Hawthorne Effect

Employee engagement is an evolution of earlier human relations approaches, particularly those pioneered by

Elton Mayo. As noted by Lim and Weissmann (2021) and Sedgwick and Greenwood (2015b), Mayo and his associates at Harvard University were among the first to apply scientific methods to studying workplace behavior. Their research, particularly at the Western Electric Hawthorne plant, played a significant role in shaping the field of management science and behavioral studies.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Mayo and his team were invited by Western Electric Company in Cicero, Chicago, to build on prior unsuccessful research on workplace lighting and productivity. They divided employees into a control group and an experimental group, altering the physical environment of the latter to determine its impact on productivity. Contrary to expectations, productivity increased rather than declined, prompting Mayo to investigate further. This led to the realization that human relations, rather than just physical conditions, have a significant influence on worker performance (Sedgwick & Greenwood, 2015)

Subsequent experiments introduced variables such as salary increases, breaks, and improved working conditions for one group while subjecting another to less favorable conditions. Surprisingly, productivity remained high in both cases, indicating that neither financial incentives nor environmental factors alone dictated performance. Instead, the key determinant was the psychological impact of being observed and supported. This phenomenon, later termed the “Hawthorne Effect,” demonstrated that employee engagement and motivation are driven more by social factors and managerial attention than by physical conditions alone, laying the foundation for modern human relations theories (Sedgwick & Greenwood, 2015).

#### **Descriptive Theories of Employee Engagement: Kahn’s Need-Satisfying Approach**

Kahn (1990) first introduced the concept of employee engagement in the *Academy of Management Journal* through his study, “Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work.” He proposed that employee engagement occurs when cognitive, emotional, and physical needs are met. These needs are influenced by three psychological conditions: meaningfulness, safety, and availability, which shape employees’ perceptions and performance in the workplace. Kahn’s qualitative study examined engagement in two distinct work environments: Camp Carrib, a temporary, low-hierarchy system for adolescent education, and an architectural firm, a permanent, structured workplace. Data collection methods included document analysis, interviews, observations, and self-reflections from 16 counselors at the camp, as well as structured interviews with 16 diverse firm members. His findings showed that meaningfulness ( $x = 7.8$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) arises when employees perceive their work as valuable, while safety ( $x = 7.7$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ) is present in predictable and supportive environments. Availability ( $x = 7.48$ ,  $S.D. = 1.04$ ) reflects employees’ access to necessary resources to perform their tasks.

Subsequent studies supported Kahn’s framework. May *et al.* (2004) empirically validated the link between his three psychological conditions and engagement, while Shuck and Wollard (2010) acknowledged his work as foundational for future research on employee engagement. Kahn’s approach remains a cornerstone in understanding how workplace conditions drive employee motivation and performance.

#### **Descriptive Theories of Employee Engagement: Maslach *et al.* (2001) Burnout- Antithesis Approach**

Before the emergence of positive psychology in employee research, studies primarily focused on negative psychological states such as burnout, stress, and fatigue. Burnout, defined as a response to chronic workplace stress, has been linked to absenteeism, job turnover, workplace disputes, and disrupted teamwork (Maslach *et al.*, 2001b). In contrast, Maslach and colleagues introduced the Burnout-Antithesis Approach, which posits that employee engagement is the opposite of burnout. They defined engagement as a persistent positive state characterized by vigor (high energy and perseverance), dedication (passion and commitment to work), and absorption (deep involvement in tasks). Their findings suggested that engagement is fostered when employees experience sustainable workloads, autonomy, recognition, support, fairness, and meaningful work.

A comparison of Kahn’s (1990) engagement model and Maslach *et al.*’s (2001) burnout framework revealed overlapping factors that influence engagement, including the availability of psychological and physical resources, recognition, supportive work interactions, and meaningful tasks. However, a key distinction lies in their theoretical perspectives: Kahn (1990) explored the cognitive processes of engagement, whereas Maslach *et al.* (2001) primarily argued that engagement exists in the absence of emotional or physical burnout without emphasizing cognitive aspects. Despite these differences, both frameworks emphasize the importance of creating a work environment that promotes employee well-being and motivation.

#### **Antecedents of Employee Engagement**

Some literature uses “drivers” and “antecedents” interchangeably, but antecedents refer to fixed characteristics of individuals, organizations, or jobs (Saks, 2006), such as meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990). In contrast, drivers are actions or activities that promote engagement, like team-building, sports, and scholarship programs (Andrew & Sofian, 2011; Bakker *et al.*, 2022). This section presents factors—whether antecedents or drivers—that positively influence employee engagement.

Meaningful job is considered an influential factor in employee engagement. It is defined as the positive return on investment in performing a role at work. It is derived from task characteristics that challenge employees at work, allowing them to utilize their diverse skills as

needed (Kahn, 1990).

Moreover, Kahn (1990), in one of his psychological domains, meaningfulness, mentioned that aside from task characteristics or challenging jobs, autonomy also influences meaningfulness. Ma *et al.* (2022) noted that autonomy is related to the perspective of authority. Autonomy is the delegation of work from a higher-level hierarchy to its subordinates, granting employees sufficient decision-making authority regarding the execution of their jobs.

The burnout anti-thesis approach postulates that a lack of autonomy and feedback leads to employee burnout at work (Maslach *et al.*, 2001b). Mbhele and De Beer (2022), based on a survey conducted, have proposed that both top-down and bottom-up communication are key to employee engagement. They also reported that if employees are given the chance to share their ideas upward and their opinions are received positively, it will encourage them to engage more deeply. Similarly, Shoko and Zinyemba (2014) concluded in their study that regular performance feedback was the strongest driver of employee engagement.

Andrew and Sofian (2011) stated that career development opportunities were found to have a positive influence on employee engagement. This may suggest that employees are returning the favor or giving back to the organization if they feel their growth needs are being met or if they envision themselves in better roles in the future at that workplace.

Also, perceived organizational, supervisory, and support from colleagues are also considered antecedents that influence employee engagement. This concept is derived from Kahn's (1990) notion of psychological safety, which he defines as the domain where employees feel secure enough to engage in their work roles without fear of negative consequences. It is safe at work when employees feel a sense of openness and supportiveness. Additionally, the antithesis approach mentioned that burnout is consistently found to be the result of a lack of social support (Maslach *et al.*, 2001b). Moreover, Apriani *et al.* (2023) noted that perceived organizational support (POS) exists in a company when employees hold general beliefs that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Lastly, according to Nauert (2012), coworker support can reduce stress and boost productivity.

Besides the above-considered factors, the researcher also regarded the organizational policies of a company as an antecedent that affects employee engagement. Narmadha and Vinayagam (2024) affirmed that organizational policies influence employee engagement, finding that well-crafted policies contribute to a positive workplace culture and engagement. Chiemeko *et al.* (2018) assessed the impact of organizational policies on work-life quality and engagement, highlighting the importance of employee involvement in policy formulation.

Trustworthy leadership is also considered one of the important factors that affect employee engagement. A study by Wang and Hsieh (2013) revealed that authentic

leadership positively influences employee engagement through trust. Leaders who demonstrate consistency between words and actions foster employee trust, which in turn enhances engagement. Similarly, Engelbrecht *et al.* (2017) published that leader integrity and ethical leadership contribute to trust in leadership, which in turn enhances employee engagement.

Compensation and remuneration were also found to be undisputable factors in employee engagement. In support of Kahn, the Needs Satisfying approach mentioned that employees' engagement varies depending on the benefits they receive from work roles (Kahn, 1990). A recent study of Nikisi *et al.* (2024), accentuated that increased compensation and benefits significantly improve engagement levels, recommending competitive pay structures for better retention.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional, quantitative research design. An adapted and modified survey questionnaire was used as the data-gathering instrument in the study. The questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first part of the survey questionnaire pertains to the demographics of the faculty members, including sex, length of service, and employment status. The second part is expressed on a 5-point Likert scale, containing 10 antecedents of employee engagement derived from theoretical approaches. Each antecedent is assessed through three-item statements; thus, Part 2 sums up to a 30-item test.

The research was conducted at a private higher education institution in Cagayan de Oro, Northern Mindanao, Philippines, during the last quarter of 2023. This institution was selected due to its distinction as the largest HEI in the region in terms of student enrollment. The respondents in the study were randomly selected from the full-time faculty of seven PHEI academic departments. Other faculty members, such as educators from basic education and professors from graduate schools, are not included in the study. The researchers utilized non-probability convenience sampling.

Content validation and pilot tests were conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the adapted and modified survey questionnaire. The test was proven to be highly suitable for the given purpose after the test yielded a result of a mean of 4.53. Meanwhile, the 30 non-participating individuals responded to the questionnaire to measure internal consistency. Thus, the result showed a Cronbach alpha of 0.97, indicating a very high internal consistency of the utilized instrument.

The data were tabulated and coded using MS Excel 365. The demographic profile of the respondents was treated using simple percentages. On the other hand, the determined antecedents of employee engagement were treated using a weighted mean. Finally, the bivariate test was used to examine the differences in the antecedents of employee engagement, taking into account the identified demographics.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic Profile of Faculty Members**

**Table 1:** Demographic Profile of Faculty Members

Items	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	16	40%
	Female	24	60%
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
Length of Service	Less than 3 years	28	70%
	More than 3 Years	12	30%
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>
Employment Status	Regular	5	12.50%
	Contractual	35	87.50%
<b>Total</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the faculty members from a private higher education institution in Northern Mindanao who participated in the study on the antecedents of employee engagement. The respondents consisted of 40 faculty members, with a majority being female (60%) and the remaining 40% are male. In terms of length of service, most respondents (70%) had been with the institution for less than three years, while

30% had served for more than three years. Regarding employment status, a significant portion (87.5%) were contractual employees, whereas only 12.5% held regular positions, highlighting the prevalence of non-permanent faculty members in the institution.

**Extent of Antecedents of Employee Engagement**

The result suggested that meaningful job ( $x = 4.33$ ,

**Table 2:** Extent of Antecedents of Employee Engagement

Antecedents	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Meaningful Job	4.33	0.61	Very Large Extent
2. Autonomy at Work	3.91	0.71	Large Extent
3. Career Development	3.63	0.81	Large Extent
4. Feedback	3.44	0.89	Large Extent
5. Organizational Support	3.83	0.82	Large Extent
6. Supervisory Support	3.96	0.89	Large Extent
7. Co-workers' Support	4.23	0.59	Very Large Extent
8. Organizational Policies	3.54	0.82	Large Extent
9. Trustworthy Leader	3.62	1.02	Large Extent
10. Compensation and Rewards	3.58	0.93	Large Extent
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>3.81</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>LARGE EXTENT</b>

SD=0.61) is at very large extent experienced by most of the employees. The faculty, who are the respondents in this study, found purpose in their work and felt that the job they were doing was important. Khan (1990) reported that the meaningfulness of a job is one of the important psychological domains of employee engagement. If this psychological condition is met, employees feel worthwhile and valuable and are not taken for granted.

Data show that co-workers' support yields a mean of  $x = 4.23$ , with a standard deviation of  $SD = 0.59$ , and exists to a large extent in the workplace. Faculty members felt supported and valued by their colleagues. Maslach *et al.*, (2001b) emphasized the importance of social support in reducing burnout. Similarly, Maslach *et al.* (2001) have reported strong evidence that high social support lowers stressors and burnout in the workplace.

Additionally, a trustworthy leader ( $x = 3.62$ ;  $SD = 1.02$ ) was rated to a large extent by the majority of respondents,

yet it exhibited the highest dispersion compared to the other nine antecedents. It is at this antecedent that respondents' answers varied and diverged on the question of having a trustworthy leader. In support, Karsan (2011) suggested that trustworthy leadership is crucial for fostering relationships and essential for cultivating engagement.

Likewise, compensation and rewards ( $x = 3.58$ ;  $SD = 0.93$ ) are also rated to a large extent by the respondents in the study, although there are dispersed responses from the faculty. Khan (1990) proposed that engagement level depends on the benefits employees receive from their work roles.

Furthermore, feedback ( $x=3.44$ ,  $SD=0.89$ ) has been identified as one of the antecedents with the lowest mean and high standard deviation of responses. It connotes that, although the management provides updated results from performance evaluations every semester, the faculty

still feels that there is no formal way for them to raise concerns, as performance evaluations are not addressed to program heads and deans. Shoko and Zinyemba (2014) concluded in their study that regular performance feedback is the strongest driver of employee engagement.

**Bi Variate Analysis**

As shown in Table 3, the bivariate analysis examines the association between sex and various antecedents of employee engagement, using t-tests to determine statistical significance. The findings indicate that none of the tested variables—meaningful job, autonomy at work, career development opportunities, feedback, perceived organizational support, supervisory support, co-worker support, organizational policies, trustworthy leadership, and compensation and rewards—show a statistically significant difference by sex. The result is supported by

T-statistic (T-stat) values that are consistently lower than the critical T-values (T-crit), as well as p-values that exceed the conventional threshold of 0.05. These results suggest that male and female employees perceive and experience these antecedents of engagement similarly, implying that sex is not a determinant of how individuals engage with their work environment.

The absence of significant differences based on sex also posited that employee engagement strategies should not be gender-specific but rather tailored to broader organizational and contextual factors. Organizations aiming to enhance employee engagement should focus on aspects such as organizational culture, leadership effectiveness, and job design rather than sex-based interventions. Previous studies have reported that the drivers of employee engagement are not significantly affected by gender (Eviana, 2024).

**Table 3:** Bivariate Analysis of Antecedents of Employee Engagement and Sex

Variables	T Stat	T Crit	P Value	Interpretation
Sex & Meaningful Job	0.17	2.03	0.87	Not Significant
Sex & Autonomy at Work	0.06	2.03	0.95	Not Significant
Sex & Career Development Opportunities	0.40	2.03	0.70	Not Significant
Sex & Feedback	0.18	2.04	0.86	Not Significant
Sex & Perceived Organizational Support	0.22	2.03	0.83	Not Significant
Sex & Supervisory Support	0.34	2.03	0.74	Not Significant
Sex & Co-workers' Support	1.23	2.02	0.23	Not Significant
Sex & Organizational Policies	0.47	2.04	0.65	Not Significant
Sex & Trustworthy Leadership	0.85	2.05	0.40	Not Significant
Sex & Compensations and Rewards	0.29	2.03	0.78	Not Significant

**Table 4:** Bivariate Analysis of Antecedents of Employee Engagement and Length of Service

Variables	T Stat	T Crit	P Value	Interpretation
LS & Meaningful Job	1.20	2.02	0.24	Not Significant
LS & Autonomy at Work	0.28	2.02	0.78	Not Significant
LS & Career Development Opportunities	1.12	2.08	0.28	Not Significant
LS & Feedback	0.11	2.05	0.91	Not Significant
LS & Perceived Organizational Support	0.61	2.07	0.55	Not Significant
LS & Supervisory Support	0.97	2.09	0.34	Not Significant
LS & Co-workers' Support	0.87	2.09	0.40	Not Significant
LS & Organizational Policies	0.25	2.06	0.81	Not Significant
LS & Trustworthy Leadership	0.31	2.09	0.76	Not Significant
LS & Compensations and Rewards	0.64	2.07	0.53	Not Significant

As shown in Table 4, the bivariate analysis of length of service (LS) and antecedents of employee engagement reveals no statistically significant relationships across all examined variables. The T Statistic (T Stat) values for each antecedent—meaningful job, autonomy at work, career development opportunities, feedback, perceived organizational support, supervisory support, co-worker support, organizational policies, trustworthy leadership, and compensations and rewards—are consistently lower than the T Critical (T Crit) values. Additionally,

the P values exceed the 0.05 significance threshold, indicating that length of service does not significantly influence employees' perceptions of these antecedents. This suggests that employees, regardless of their tenure, experience similar levels of engagement concerning these organizational elements, implying that longevity in the organization does not inherently shape perceptions of workplace support, development, or leadership. These findings have significant implications for organizational strategies that aim to promote employee

engagement. Given that length of service does not appear to drive engagement differences, organizations should consider alternative factors—such as workplace culture, leadership effectiveness, and job role design—when developing engagement initiatives. A systematic review

by Wollard and Shuck (2011) on numerous antecedents of engagement includes individual and organizational factors but did not emphasize tenure as a significant driver.

As shown in Table 5, the bivariate analysis examining the

**Table 5:** Bivariate Analysis of Antecedents of Employee Engagement and Employment Status

Variables	T Stat	T Crit	P Value	Interpretation
ES & Meaningful Job	1.06	2.57	0.34	Not Significant
ES & Autonomy at Work	1.92	2.57	0.11	Not Significant
ES & Career Development Opportunities	1.71	2.45	0.14	Not Significant
ES & Feedback	2.94	2.45	0.03	Significant
ES & Perceived Organizational Support	3.03	2.20	0.01	Significant
ES & Supervisory Support	0.88	2.57	0.42	Not Significant
ES & Co-workers' Support	0.33	2.57	0.75	Not Significant
ES & Organizational Policies	1.63	2.57	0.17	Not Significant
ES & Trustworthy Leadership	1.73	2.36	0.13	Not Significant
ES & Compensations and Rewards	0.81	2.36	0.45	Not Significant

difference in the extent of antecedents by employment status reveals that most variables do not exhibit a statistically significant association. Specifically, the T-statistic (T-stat) values for meaningful jobs, autonomy at work, career development opportunities, supervisory support, coworkers' support, organizational policies, trustworthy leadership, and compensation and rewards fall below their respective critical T-values (T-crit). In contrast, the P values exceed the 0.05 threshold. These findings suggest that employment status—whether regular or contractual—does not substantially affect employees' perceptions of these engagement factors. Employees across different employment categories likely experience similar levels of support and opportunities within the organization, indicating that job security alone does not determine engagement levels in these areas.

However, two variables—feedback (T Stat = 2.94, P = 0.03) and perceived organizational support (T Stat = 3.03, P = 0.01)—show statistically significant differences in terms of employment status. These results suggest that employees with varying employment statuses perceive differences in feedback mechanisms and the level of support they receive from the organization. This suggests that regular employees may feel more valued and supported, while contractual or probationary employees might experience weaker feedback systems and less organizational backing. The findings corroborate those of Lee and Jeung (2018), who claimed that employees with lower-status positions (e.g., contract or probationary employees) exhibited a more significant improvement in affective commitment and job performance when they perceived high levels of organizational support.

Moreover, the significant differences observed in perceived organizational support and feedback based on employment status align with Kahn's (1990) perspective that employees need to feel valued and supported to engage fully. The study adds further depth to this

theory by illustrating that while some factors remain universally influential, employment status may moderate the perception of organizational support and the effectiveness of feedback mechanisms.

### CONCLUSION

The study reaffirms the critical role of meaningful jobs, autonomy at work, career development opportunities, feedback, perceived organizational support, supervisory support, co-worker support, organizational policies, trustworthy leadership, and compensation and rewards in fostering employee engagement among faculty members in a private higher education institution. The findings indicate that while gender and length of service do not significantly influence perceptions of engagement antecedents, employment status influences perceived organizational support and feedback mechanisms. Also, contractual employees reported lower levels of support and formal feedback, suggesting a potential gap in engagement strategies for non-regular staff. These results also emphasize the need for private HEIs to strengthen inclusive engagement practices by enhancing support systems and communication channels, particularly for contractual employees. Nonetheless, the study has a few limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other HEIs. Second, it is a cross-sectional research design, which prevents causal inferences regarding the relationship between antecedents and employee engagement. Lastly, while this study focused on the faculty's perspective, future research should incorporate the viewpoints of administrators and policymakers to develop comprehensive engagement strategies that address both institutional and employee needs.

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