

A study on the influence of various dimensions of work environment of the teachers of higher education institutions

Abstract

One of the biggest challenges for teachers is that their role in the management of the educational institution has also changed. The education institution needs them as individuals, who can make clever decisions and cope with the stress and strain of the changing world of schools and colleges. At the same time teachers need to be able to work in teams, and co-operate with colleagues and parents. They have to be creative and innovative too. In other words, teachers in the higher education scenario today have to be global players with cutting edge skills and profound scholarship if they want to survive respectfully in the cyber society.

Introduction

The role of teachers in society is both significant and well-known. The importance of teachers as architects of our future generations demands that only the best and most intelligent and competent members of our intellectuals are allowed to qualify for this noble profession and exhibit true professionalism. However, teacher professionalism is now truly at crossroads. Recently, countries across the world have taken definitive steps to regulate teacher professionalism, and to reorient it to increasing demands of the global village. It has become a supreme necessity in the globalised world which transcends beyond the traditional classroom boundaries, and leaps into platforms of ICT-enabled learning outcomes and knowledge facilitated by the 'push-button' technology. The conventional teacher image is replaced by the new, evolving techno-savvy and 'knowledge-enhancer' portrait, which can satiate the learner-centered environment of the present educational scenario. Curriculum design is a task teachers have to be adventurously prepared for, because it has to be in tangent with the globalised educational requirements of the students.

A healthy work environment is one where employees trust the people they work for, have pride in what they do and enjoy with the people they work along (Levering, 2004). Work environment is of primary importance to all organizations for its success in the service sector. Employees exhibit unwillingness to leave organizations that revel in high job satisfaction as per the findings of Shelly et al. (2000). What goes into the features for consideration would rest on factors like relationship struck with peers, supervisors and subordinates apart from task autonomy, role clarity, organizational control mechanisms, infrastructure to name a few. Work environment refers to one's work surroundings. The term is further inclusive of the mental state of the employee while on his job, be it negative or positive.

Eliciting a positive response could create comfortable vibes and bring out the best in the employee. The vice versa takes place with an employee who feels stress and discomfort leading to poor performance in the job allocated. To increase the productivity of the employee, every concern must encourage and appreciate the workers. This would not only enhance the quality but also sustain the joy of working.

1.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW LITERATURE ON THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Work environment refers to one's work surroundings. The term is further inclusive of the mental state of the employee while on his job, be it negative or positive. Eliciting a positive response could create comfortable vibes and bring out the best in the employee. The vice versa takes place with an employee who feels stress and discomfort leading to poor performance in the job allocated. To increase the productivity of the employee, every concern must encourage and appreciate the workers. This would not only enhance the quality but also sustain the joy of working.

There are several definitions of work environment. However, for the purpose of the current research, work environment will refer to features of the organization that impact on "the employee's mental, emotional, psychological, and physical status" (Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk, 1995), as experienced by the employee (EAP practitioners). Researchers argue that "work environment can be studied at an organizational level (e.g. organizational culture, organizational climate, structure, policies and procedures) and in the case of the current research at an individual level" (e.g. role overload, role ambiguity, job control, job demands and collegial support) (Richardson & McGrath, 2004).

In (2004) Greef, extolled organizations transacting on five principles by managers that went into the makings of a good working culture: This includes the trust factor, the realization that a breach in trust is inevitable with a single error, trust building as an inherent pursuit, changes effected towards improvement of work culture and full throttle encouragement to boosts pride and camaraderie.

Clement, (2000) says that "competitive salaries and benefits, staff development, awards and recognition, management training, and leadership involvement are the ways to increase a positive work environment in health care industry. Positive environment helps to attract and retain good employees".

Akhtar (2014) observes that attractive salaries failed to entice IT workers. This led to companies striving to create a positive atmosphere instead with more space and more opportunity. Aureolio, Richard (1996) in his study "Motivating a de motivated staff" stressed on the basic parameters and confessed that in the event of an absence of the assurance for a lifelong job security, a corporate culture that supports and upgrade their skills will go a long way for the employees.

Segall, Stewart R (1991) opined that managerial personnel are in a large way responsible for creating a conducive working climate through their permissive attitude. An autocratic or democratic environment paves way for its own negative responses. A work environment can be defined as the locale where the work is executed and completed. The components of a work environment include pay, the hours allotted for a worker, the time permitted for resting between the given task, the remuneration offered for the job, paid holidays, the factors of safety and security. A. K. Srivastava (2008) explained that working conditions rested on job involvement and job satisfaction. These two criteria elicited the best out of the employees. He also asserted that the environment prevalent at work, the work climate, interpersonal relationships together contributed to the effectiveness of an organization. In fact the findings concluded that the psycho-social environment influenced employees behaviour more than the physical environment.

Ahmad, K (2014) in a study established that social, organizational and physical elements exhibit a tremendous influence on the tasks and activities undertaken, and leave a considerable impact on the workers' performance and work output. Safety and health are prerequisites for the overall efficiency of any organization.

Abbasi, E (2013) proclaimed that work culture lays down the parameters for what is acceptable behaviour and what should go censured. Thus work climate is a concrete indisputable factor to propel any organization forward. He laid emphasis on organizational culture and climate as aspects that directly influenced creativity at the individual level. Goal emphasis, means emphasis, reward orientation, task support and socio-emotional support are five dimensions identified by Abbasi that made up for an organizational climate and in turn influenced creativity.

A working environment points to the settings, situations, conditions and circumstances within which people work. De Greef (2004) explained it be the physical setting (e.g. heat, equipments etc.), job characteristics (e.g. workload, task complexity), broader organizational features (e.g. culture, history) and extra organizational setting (e.g. local labor market conditions, industry sector, work-home relationships). In other words work environment is the sum total of all the interrelationships between employees and the employers inclusive of the technical and the human within an organizational set up.

Elamin, A (2010), where a workplace was described as an amalgamation of three essential sub ethos namely the technical environment, the human environment and the organizational environment. Technical environment included tools, equipment, technological infrastructure and other physical or technical elements of the workplace. The human environment meant the peers, people with whom employees relate, like team and work groups, not to forget the upper echelons of the organizational set up, leadership and management. The human environment verges on the formal and informal interaction among colleagues upwards and downwards, within the framework of organizations. Interactions (especially the informal

interaction) provides for avenues for cross-fertilization of ideas among employees. Interpersonal relations at workplace inevitably influence the employees morale in turn affecting job commitment.

Yusuf and Metiboba, (2012) proposes a third type of organizational environment encompassing systems, procedures, practices, values and philosophies under the management control. He believes that a natural environment in an organization is where its inputs are processed and outputs in form of products or services for public consumption are released. Factors like supplier's influence, customer's role, stakeholders, socio-cultural factors, national economy, technology, legislations, managerial policies and philosophies together constitute a natural environment influencing the psyche and forming the overall attitude. Employees profiles can never be static being always dynamic and adjusting to the changes in the organization. This resulted in the conceptualization of a toxic and conducive work environment.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Research has exposed significant relationship of work environment (Levering, 2004). Companies that have the benefit of higher perception towards the work environment have higher market value. Such companies also display high level of commitments in the form of productivity and creativity.

O'Reilly (1989), defines organizational commitment as a bond shared by an employee with his organization and induces him to continue in the organization with the objectives of the organization in mind. A comprehensive understanding of organizational commitment developed by Allen and Meyers (1991), conceived three parameters: affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Faculty members are often self-motivated and left comfortable when personal and organizational values mingle harmoniously. He examined the relationship between psychological climate and employee performance within the Indian environment, to comprehend and discover the conditions that promote high levels of 'in-role and extra-role performance'.

This study intends to explore how various factors of work environment influence the different dimensions of organizational commitment. This knowledge can be of great significance to develop appropriate work environment, which can impact performance and productivity of educators, who in turn can make a difference in the higher education scenario in India.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the significant differences between Work environment and different age groups.
2. To examine significant difference between Work environment and gender.
3. To analyze the dimensions of work environment of the teachers of higher education institutions

1.4 LIST OF VARIABLES

Work Environment: Work environment points out one's work surroundings at your place of occupation; e.g. inside, outside, at a desk, in a cubicle, etc. The term has also come to mean a sort of the mental state while on the job which may be positive, negative, friendly and so on.

Organizational Structure (OS): It is a system used to define a hierarchy within an organization. It means how activities such as task allocation, coordination and supervision are directed toward the achievement of organizational aims.

Leadership Style (LP): It is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. As seen by the employees, it includes the total pattern of explicit and implicit actions performed by their leader.

Interpersonal Relationship (IP): It is a strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people that may range in duration from brief to enduring. It may be based on inference, love, solidarity, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment.

Teaching Method (TP): It comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner.

Physical Infrastructure (PI): It is the basic physical systems of a business or nation; transportation, communication, sewage, water and electric systems are all examples of infrastructure. These systems tend to be high-cost investments; however, they are vital to a country's economic development and prosperity.

Staff Development Activity (SDA): Staff development refers to all training and education provided by an employee to improve the occupational and personal knowledge, skills and attitudes of vested employees.

Recognition and Appreciation (R&A): It refers to the admiration of something. Holding something in high regard, like a work of art, is an example of having an appreciation of it. Appreciation is defined as feelings of thankfulness.

table 1.1.1 demographic profile of the respondents

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Up to 30	84	29.0
31-40	116	40.0
41-50	66	22.8
Above 50	24	8.3
Total	290	100.0

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	122	42.1
Female	168	57.9
Total	290	100.0

1.5 FACTORS AFFECTING WORK ENVIRONMENT

table 1.1.2 mean and standard deviation of all factors

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vision and Mission	1.54	0.64
Communication	2.10	0.97
Responsibility	1.72	0.86
Equality	1.90	1.10
Transparent	1.99	0.85
National Standard	2.25	1.03
Autocratic	3.30	1.26
Consultation	2.55	1.15
Participation	2.24	0.99
Personal Problems	2.28	0.98
Unity	3.46	1.41
With Principal	1.81	0.80
With HOD	1.52	0.82
With Staff	1.52	0.72
Lecturing	1.57	0.61
Interactive	1.62	0.67
Assignment	1.83	0.74
Projects	1.85	0.80
Evaluation	1.68	0.71
Infrastructure	2.22	1.07
Learn new things	2.03	0.92
Library	2.21	1.02
Internet	2.28	1.11

1.6 E-WAY ANOVA TO TEST THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AGE AND DIFFERENT VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

H1: There is no significant difference between Work environment and different age groups

A one sample analysis of variance is used to test hypotheses about means when there is three or more groups of one independent variable. In this case, Age was considered to be the independent variable, which included

four age groups as (a) up to 30, (b) 31-40; (c) 41-50 and (d) Above 50. So ANOVA was used to compare the mean intention scores of different age groups and the result is exhibited in Table 1.1.3

table 1.1.3 means, standard deviation and f value for age

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p value</i>
Work environment	Up to 30	84	50.17	12.65	2.788	0.041
	31-40	116	50.28	11.19		
	41-50	66	50.03	12.57		
	Above 50	24	42.92	8.96		

The results of the ANOVA test depicted in Table 1.1.3 reveals that a statistical value of p is less than 0.05 for the Work environment. So we conclude that the mean score of all the variables of Work environment differs with age of the respondents. So we reject the hypothesis H₁.

1.7 Z-TEST TO TEST THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENDER AND DIFFERENT VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

H₂: There is no significant difference between Work environment and gender

table 1.1.3 means, standard deviation and z value for gender

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p value</i>
Work environment	Male	122	49.31	12.25	-0.326	0.745
	Female	168	49.77	11.68		

The results of the Z - test depicted in Table 1.1.3 reveals that a statistical value of p is greater than 0.05. So we accept the hypothesis H₂.

1.8 SEM TO ANALYSE THE DIMENSIONS OF WORK ENVIRONMENT

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.1.4 and 1.1.5.

table 1.1.4 model fit indices for cfa –work environment

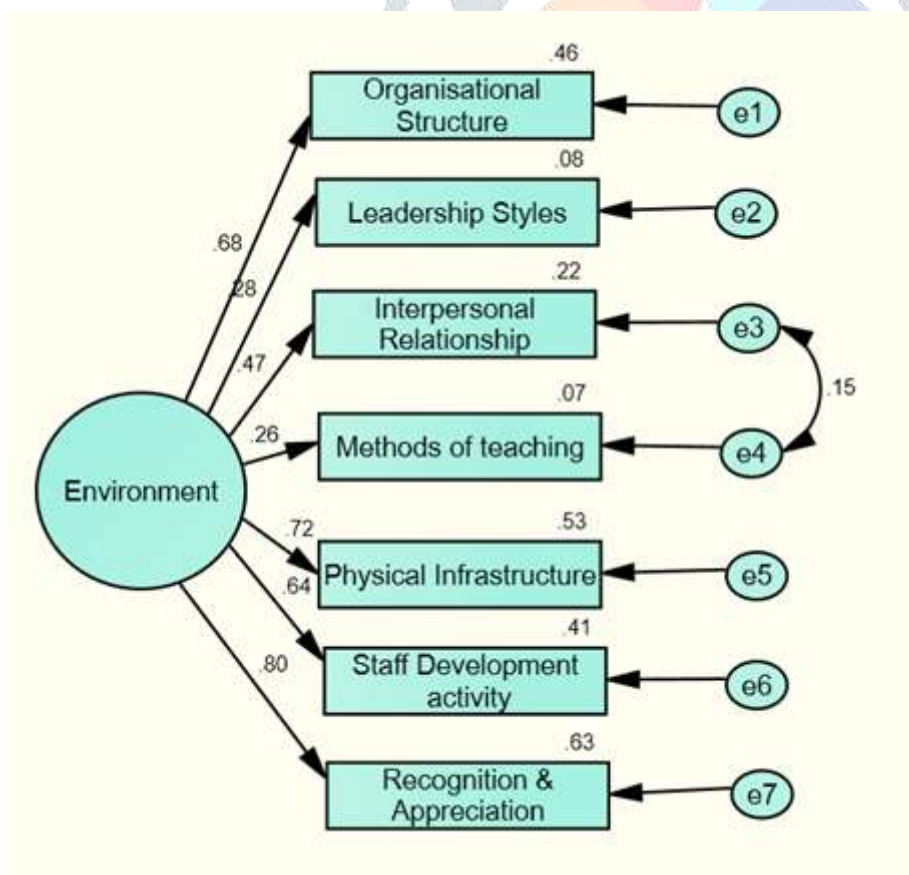
	χ^2	DF	P	Normed χ^2	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
Work Environment	16.525	13	.222	1.271	.984	.965	.965	.987	.992	.318	.031

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All the attributes loaded significantly on the latent constructs. The value of the fit indices indicates a reasonable fit of the measurement model with data. In table 18 we present the regression coefficients

table 1.1.5 the regression coefficients -work environment

Path	Estimate	Critical Ratio (CR)	P	Variance explained
Organizational Structure→ Work environment	0.679	14.015	<0.001	46.1
Leadership Styles→ Work environment	0.281	4.892	<0.001	7.9
Interpersonal Relationship→ Work environment	0.469	8.619	<0.001	22.0
Methods of teaching→ Work environment	0.264	4.581	<0.001	7.0
Physical Infrastructure→ Work environment	0.725	15.554	<0.001	52.6
Staff Development activity→ Work environment	0.638	12.787	<0.001	40.7
Recognition & Appreciation → Work environment	0.796	18.425	<0.001	63.3



3. To analyze the dimensions of work environment of the teachers of higher education institutions

- The results revealed that the regulatory construct Organizational Structure has significant influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Organizational Structure is 0.679 (Table 1.1.5), which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant).
- The results showed that the regulatory construct Leadership Styles has no influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Leadership Styles is 0.281 (Table 1.1.5), which is less than the recommended value of 0.4.
- The results revealed that the regulatory construct Interpersonal Relationship has significant influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Interpersonal Relationship is 0.469 (Table 1.1.5), which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant).
- The results exhibited that the regulatory construct Methods of teaching has no influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Methods of teaching is 0.264 (Table 1.1.5), which is less than the recommended value of 0.4.
- The results showed that the regulatory construct Physical Infrastructure has significant influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Physical Infrastructure is 0.725 (Table 1.1.5), which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant).
- The results revealed that the regulatory construct Staff Development activity has significant influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Staff Development activity is 0.638 (Table 1.1.5), which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant).
- The results exhibited revealed that the regulatory construct Recognition & Appreciation has significant influence on work environment of teachers as the standardized direct effect of this construct on Recognition & Appreciation is 0.796 (Table 1.1.5), which is more than the recommended value of 0.4 (p value is significant).

Conclusion

Work environment has an utmost importance to all organizations for its success in the service sector. Employees exhibit unwillingness to leave organizations that revel in high job satisfaction. In the light of this assumption, an exhaustive study is conducted and its result indicates the powerful impact of work environment in the field of education. According to this, there is significant difference between Work environment and age group and there is no remarkable difference between Work environment and gender. There are seven variables, which are selected for creating a peaceful and meaningful ambience in the work place. Out of seven variables of work environment, 5 variables are really significant and two are not indispensable in creating a positive work environment for the teachers within their education frame work

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