



## Original Research Article

## An empirical study of employee engagement among female faculty members of higher educational institutions in Sikkim

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### Abstract

Engaged employees have the potential to significantly affect the productivity of the organization and additionally ensures retention of employees. According to Gallup, a global research and consulting firm, engaged employees, work harder, create more innovations, have lower absentee rates, require less supervision, improve customer satisfaction and generate more revenue. However, juxtaposed to expectations, there are numerous studies that prove that many of today's teachers in higher education are dissatisfied with their jobs, or to put in other words they are not engaged. And gender discrimination and compulsions of family makes things even worse for female faculty members.

There is a research gap regarding engagement of female faculties in higher educational institutions in Sikkim. The present study is aimed to find out the nature of employee engagement of higher educational institutions through different dimension and density of engagement/disengagement levels. A field study was conducted and the collected data was analyzed by using Frequency Distribution, Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation (Karl Pearson correlation). This study is significant in providing higher educational institutions management the vital data they need to create actionable plans for improvement, so they can offer their female faculties and their students a thriving, engaging campus culture.

**Keywords:** Employee Engagement, Retention, Female Faculty Members, Higher Educational Institutions, Sikkim.

**Received:** 15-06-2025; **Accepted:** 06-08-2025; **Available Online:** 24-09-2025

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### 1. Introduction

Engaged employees have the potential to significantly affect the productivity of the organization and additionally ensures retention of employees (Swetha & Kumar, n.d.).<sup>1</sup> According to Gallup, a global research and consulting firm, engaged employees, work harder, create more innovations, have lower absentee rates, require less supervision, improve customer satisfaction and generate more revenue (Daly, 2012). However, juxtaposed to expectations, there are numerous studies that prove that many of today's teachers in higher education are dissatisfied with their jobs, or to put in other words they are not engaged. And gender discrimination and compulsions of family makes things even worse for female faculty members. This study thus seeks to analyze the level of employee engagement of female faculty in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim, also while examining the various factors that lead to employee engagement and retention of female faculty members in Sikkim, India.

### 2. Review of Literature

Review of literature for the present study are as follows:

Mrs. G. Swetha and Dr. D. Pradeep (n.d.), in their article titled, 'Implications of Employee Engagement on Critical Business Outcomes – An Empirical Evidence', point out that "Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace". They lay emphasis on the point that employee engagement today is one of the deciding factors in the success of any organizations throughout the world, as employee engagement not only affects employee retention but also affects productivity and loyalty of the employee. Likewise, there are similar studies done by scholars, such as, Sonal Pandey and Shine David (2013)<sup>2</sup> Dharmendra Mehta and Naveen K. Mehta (2013),<sup>3</sup> Sandeep Kular,<sup>4</sup> Mark Gatenby, Chris Rees, Emma Soane and Katie Truss (2008), Richard S. Wellins,<sup>5</sup> Paul Bernthal and Mark Phelps (2015), Matt Daly (2012),<sup>6</sup> Dr. K. Lavanya

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Latha (n.d.),<sup>7</sup> and etc. who have discussed at length the importance of employee engagement and retention of employees. The foundation of the idea of employee engagement was provided by William A. Kahn in his 1990<sup>8</sup> work titled, 'Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work', wherein his primary argument is that people use varying degrees of their selves – physically, cognitively, and emotionally in work role performances, which has implications for both their work and experiences.

Similarly, there are a plethora of studies that deal with gender biasness and employee engagement. For example, Sumaira Gulzar and Mohd Rafiq Teli<sup>9</sup> in their article titled, 'Gender and Work Engagement: A Study of Academic Staff in Higher Education', have examined the impact of gender differences on the work engagement level of the academicians of three different universities, namely, University of Kashmir, Central University of Kashmir and Islamic University of Science and Technology. The primary findings of the study is that Gender influences the level of employee work engagement. Likewise, there are similar studies done by scholars, such as, Rothbard Nancy P.<sup>12</sup> (1999),<sup>10</sup> Alice Reissova, Jana Šimsova, Kateřina Hášová (2017), Onwuchekwa, Faith Chidi,<sup>11</sup> Onwuzuligbo, Leonard T. and Tochukwu, Ifeanyi Titus (2019), and etc., who have highlighted the role of gender in employee engagement.

Despite the substantial body of literature on employee engagement, retention, and gender-related issues, there remains a conspicuous gap in research focused specifically on the engagement and retention of female faculty members in higher educational institutions in the state of Sikkim. Most of the existing studies are either generalized across sectors or are geographically limited to other parts of India or the world, with minimal attention paid to the unique socio-cultural and institutional context of Sikkim. This regional specificity is critical, as Sikkim's higher education landscape is shaped by distinct demographic, administrative, and cultural dynamics, including the participation of women in academic roles.

Moreover, while gender differences in engagement levels have been addressed in broader terms, little has been done to explore how these differences manifest in smaller, geographically isolated states where female participation in academia may face unique structural and cultural challenges. The lack of empirical data and contextual understanding regarding the experiences of female faculty in Sikkim not only limits the scope of existing literature but also restricts the formulation of targeted policies and institutional strategies aimed at improving engagement and retention outcomes.

This study, therefore, seeks to address this overlooked intersection of geography, gender, and academic engagement by examining the current status of employee engagement and retention specifically among female faculties in higher educational institutions in Sikkim. In doing so, it contributes

to both regional scholarship and the broader discourse on inclusive and equitable workplace practices in academia.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the level of employee engagement of female faculty in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim.
2. To study the factors that Lead to employee engagement of female faculty members.
3. To study the factors that Lead to retention of female faculty members.

#### 3.1. Hypotheses of the study

1. **Null hypothesis:** There is no significant level of employee engagement among female faculty members in higher educational institutions in Sikkim.
2. **Alternate hypothesis:** There is high level of employee engagement among female faculty members in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim.

#### 3.2. Research questions

1. What is the level of employee engagement among female faculty in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim?
2. What are the factors that lead to employee engagement of female faculty in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim?
3. What are the factors that lead to faculty retention of female faculty members?

#### 4.1. Significance of the study

There is a research gap regarding engagement of female faculties in higher educational institutions in Sikkim. The present study is aimed to find out the nature of employee engagement of higher educational institutions through different dimension and density of engagement/disengagement levels. This study may be significant in providing higher educational institutions management the vital data they need to create actionable plans for improvement, so they can offer their female faculties and their students a thriving, engaging campus culture.

#### 4.2. Research methodology

A descriptive study was done. Target population for this study are the female faculty members of different higher educational institutions in Sikkim. The universe of the study includes the female faculties of the higher education institutions in Sikkim, namely, Sikkim University, National Institute of Technology, Sikkim Manipal University, Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India, Sri Ramaswamy Memorial University, and Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University. The sampling unit of this study comprises of female faculty members who hold the designation of Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim.

**4. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Field Study**

A field study that was conducted in order to gather data on the selected topic. The universe for the study included female faculty members of higher educational institutions in Sikkim. The field work was conducted between October 2023 and January 2024. Survey method was used and data was collected through questionnaire designed for the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was administered to 85 female faculty members, of which 42 filled questionnaires were received and 331 questionnaires were selected as they were complete. Random sampling technique was used. The study tried to understand the level of employee engagement and retention of female faculty members in higher educational institutions in Sikkim and whether they are satisfied with their job, pay, working condition and whether they would like to continue their work in their respective institution.

The respondents were mainly from Six Higher Educational Institutions in Sikkim, namely,

1. Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India
2. National Institute of Technology
3. Shri Ramasamy Memorial University Sikkim
4. Sikkim Manipal University
5. Sikkim University
6. Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University.

Various dimensions associated with employee engagement and retention, like, working conditions, company policies, compensation benefits, work pressure, relations with superiors and colleagues among many others were included in the questionnaire. Part I of the questionnaire was designed to acquire information relating to the respondents like; age, sex, marital status, education qualification, work experience, designation, department etc. Part II of the questionnaire was designed on a likert scale, having a total of 44 questions. The reliability of the questionnaire was checked, whereby Cronbach Alpha’s value was .844 that suggested that the questionnaire was reliable. The collected data was analyzed using frequency distribution, mean score, standard deviation.

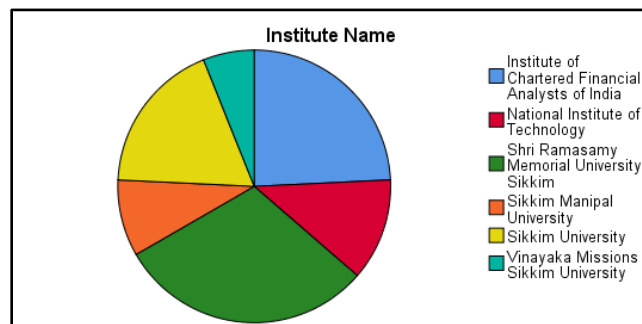
*4.1. Profile of the Respondents*

**Table 1:** Respondents

Name of the Institute	Frequency	Percent
Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India	8	24.2
National Institute of Technology	4	12.1
Shri Ramasamy Memorial University Sikkim	10	30.3
Sikkim Manipal University	3	9.1

Sikkim University	6	18.2
Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University	2	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 1:** Respondents  
Source: Field Survey, 2023-24

*Interpretation*

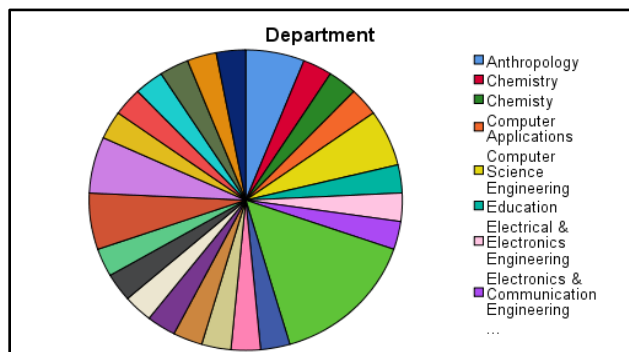
**Table 1** shows that 30.3% of respondents are from Shri Ramasamy Memorial University Sikkim, 24.2% respondents are from Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India, 18.2% of respondents are from Sikkim University, 12.1% of respondents are from National Institute of Technology, 9.1% of respondents are from Sikkim Manipal University and 6.1% of respondents are from Vinayaka Missions Sikkim University.

**Table 2:** Department of respondents

Departments	Frequency	Percent
Anthropology	2	6.0
Chemistry	2	6.0
Computer Applications	1	3.0
Computer Science Engineering	2	6.0
Education	1	3.0
Electrical & Electronics Engineering	1	3.0
Electronics & Communication Engineering	1	3.0
English	5	15.0
Horticulture	1	3.0
Hospitality & Tourism Studies	2	6.0
Humanities and Social Sciences	1	3.0
Information Technology Engineering	1	3.0
Law	1	3.0
Legal Studies	1	3.0

Management	2	6.0
Management Studies	3	9.0
Mechanical Engineering	1	3.0
Nepali	1	3.0
Physics	1	3.0
Public Health	1	3.0
School of Information Technology	1	3.0
Tourism & Hospitality	1	3.0
Total	33	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 2:** Department of respondents  
Source: Field Survey, 2023-24

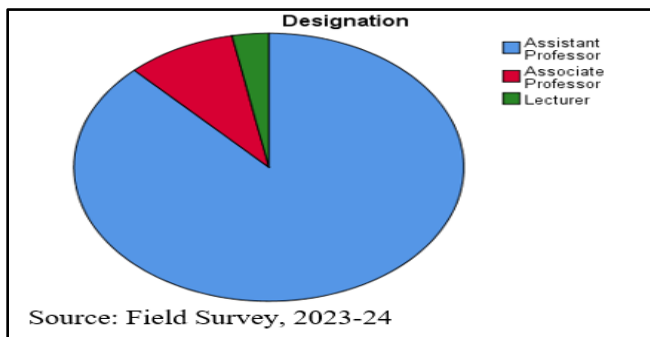
*Interpretation*

**Table 2:** shows the various departments of the respondents. In total the respondents were from 22 departments across the six institutions of Sikkim.

**Table 3:** Designation of respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percent
Assistant Professor	29	87.9
Associate Professor	3	9.1
Lecturer	1	3.0
Total	33	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 3:** Designation of respondents  
Source: Field Survey, 2023-24

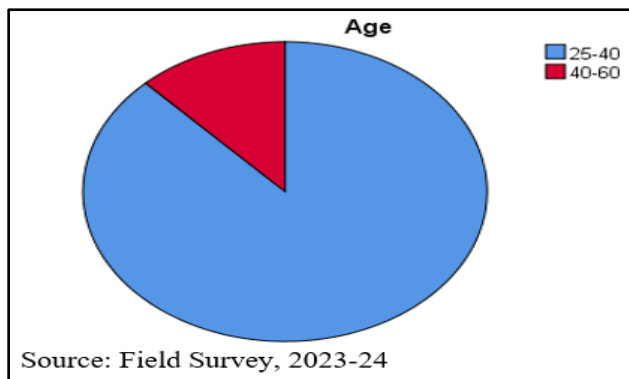
*Interpretation*

**Table 3** shows that 87.9% of the respondent’s designation is Assistant Professor, 9.1% of respondent’s designation is Associate Professor, and 3.0% of respondent’s designation is Lecturer.

**Table 4:** Age wise distribution of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
25-40	29	87.9
40-60	4	12.1
Total	33	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 4:** Age wise distribution of respondents

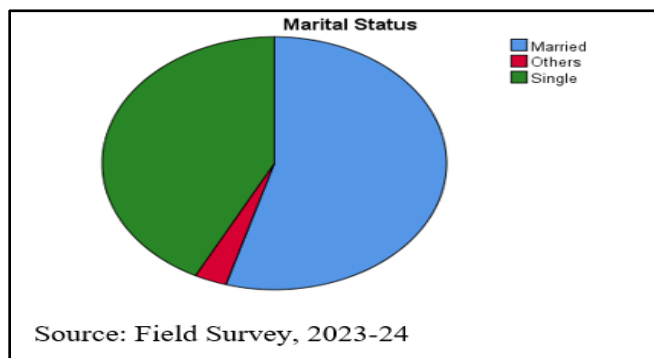
*Interpretation*

**Table 4** shows that 87.9% of respondents are in the age group 25-40 and 12.1% of respondents are in the age group 40-60.

**Table 5:** Marital status of respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	18	54.5
Others	1	3.0
Single	14	42.4
Total	33	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 5:** Marital status of respondents

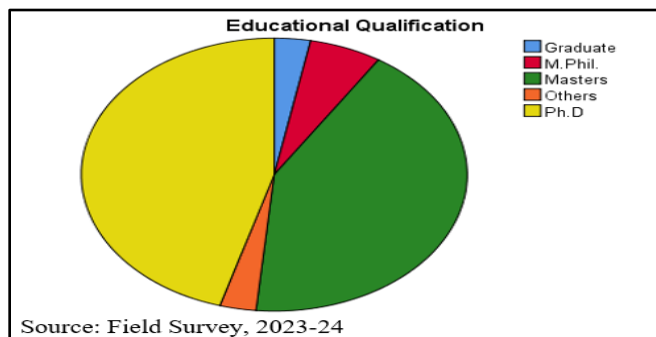
*Interpretation*

**Table 5** shows that 54.5% of the respondents are married and 42.4% respondents are single and 0.9% are others.

**Table 6:** Educational qualification of respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent
Graduate	1	3.0
M.Phil.	2	6.1
Masters	14	42.4
others	1	3.0
Ph.D.	15	45.5
Total	33	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 6:** Educational qualification of respondents

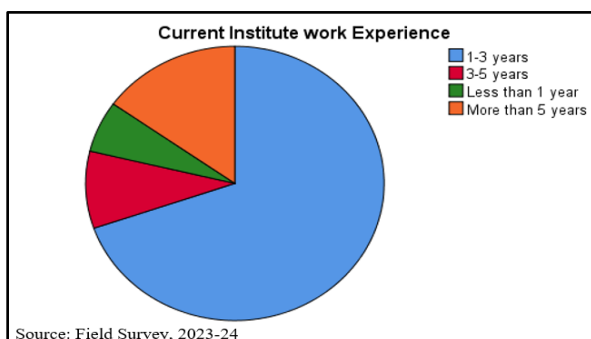
*Interpretation*

**Table 6** shows that 45.5% respondents are Ph.D. holder, 42.4% respondents are masters, 6.1% of the respondents are M.Phil., 3.0% of respondents are graduate and 3.0% of respondents are others.

**Table 7:** Work experience in current company

Work Experience in Current Company	Frequency	Percent
1-3 years	23	69.7
3-5 years	3	9.1
Less than 1 year	2	6.1
More than 5 years	5	15.2
Total	33	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 7:** Work experience in current company

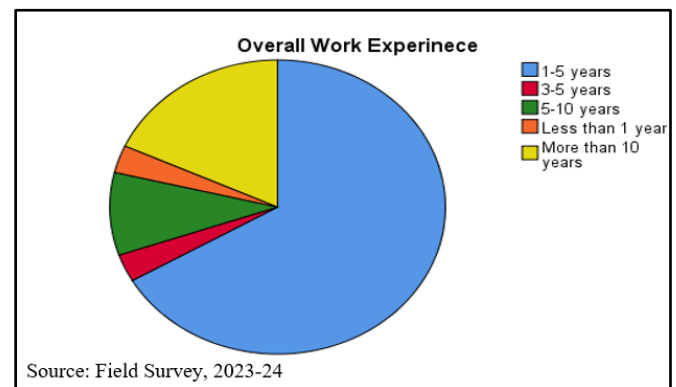
*Interpretation*

**Table 7** shows that 69.7% respondents have 1-3 years of work experience, 9.1% respondents have 3-5 years of work experience, 6.1% have less than 1 year of work experience and 15.2% of respondents have more than 5 years of work experience in their current institute.

**Table 8:** Overall work experience

Overall Work Experience	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	22	66.7
3-5 years	1	3.0
5-10 years	3	9.1
Less than 1 year	1	3.0
More than 10 years	6	18.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24



**Figure 8:** Overall work experience

*Interpretation*

**Table 9** shows that 66.7% respondents have 1-5 years of overall work experience, 3.0% respondents have 3-5 years of work experience, 9.1% of respondents have 5-10 years of overall work experience, 3.0% respondents have less than 1 year of work experience and 18.2% have more than 10 years of overall work experience.

Analysis of 1<sup>st</sup> Objective: To study the level of employee engagement of female faculty in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim

*Interpretation*

**Table 10** shows that the mean of the employee engagement score is 3.53 on a scale of 1-5. Employee engagement score is calculated through Gallup 12 questions by calculating the mean of the responses of the respondents (The Mean of Gallup 12 questions are discussed in **Table 11**. Hence the null hypothesis that there is low level of employee engagement in the higher educational institution in Sikkim is rejected and alternate hypothesis that there is high level of employee engagement in the higher educational institution in Sikkim is

accepted. However, one must point out that a mean score of 3.53 highlights only moderate<sup>2</sup> level of employee engagement.

**Table 9:** Mean score of gallup items

Question. No.	Gallup item	Mean score*
1.	I know what is expected of me at work.	4.39
2.	I have the materials, equipment and other resources I need to do my work right.	3.75
3.	At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.	3.96
4.	In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.	2.69
5.	The head of my institute, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.	3.21
6.	There is someone at work who encourages my development.	3.36
7.	At work, my opinions seem to count.	3.39
8.	The mission or purpose of my institute makes me feel my job is important.	3.84
9.	My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.	4.06
10.	I have a best friend at work.	3.21
11.	In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.	2.84
12.	This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.	3.69
<b>Total Mean</b>		<b>3.53</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24

**Table 10:** Factors that lead to employee engagement

Factors	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Meaningfulness of work	Expected work	4.39	0.49
	My job is Important	3.85	0.93
	Job makes Good use of my Skills	3.91	0.91
	Work is interesting & engaging	4.15	0.66
	Sense of accomplishment	3.94	0.86
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>4.04</b>		
Psychological Safety	Received Recognition	2.70	1.01
	Someone care about me	3.21	1.02
	Encourages my development	3.36	1.05
	Talked about my Progress	2.85	0.93
	Never thought of Getting Dismissed	3.52	1.03
	Feeling Safe While working in institute	3.97	0.95
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.26</b>		
Psychological Availability	Available Equipment	3.76	1.11
	Best friend at work	3.21	0.96
	Satisfied with Infrastructure	3.00	1.11
	Medical Benefits and Facilities	2.76	1.17
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.18</b>		
Job Satisfaction	Satisfied with Job	4.00	0.66
	Consider Institute as one of the Best Employer	3.36	0.85
	Recommend my friend to work	3.48	1.03
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.61</b>		
Opportunities for Learning and Growth	Opportunity to do what I do Best	3.97	0.72
	Opportunities to Learn and Grow	3.70	0.81

	Institute allows to attend Faculty Development Program and Refresher Courses	3.79	1.16
	Institute provide Financial support to attend seminars	3.30	1.01
	Institute provide Financial support for conducting Research	3.03	1.10
	Get leave for field work	3.03	1.10
	Encourage to Develop My Profile	3.91	0.72
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.53</b>		
Fair Salary & Promotion	Salary is Fair & Motivating	3.55	0.97
	Salary Revised in Regular Interval	3.33	1.24
	Pay is Competitive to other Institute	3.48	1.03
	Promotions are Fair	3.42	0.86
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.44</b>		
Clear Policies and Open Communication	Policy insures Higher Engagement	3.27	0.71
	Say in Decision Making	2.94	0.96
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.10</b>		
Rewards and Recognition	Good Performance is Rewarded	3.76	0.66
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.76</b>		
Transparency and unbiased Administration	My opinion counts	3.39	1.02
	Job not blocked by Favoritism	3.58	1.00
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.48</b>		
Work Life Balance	Able to Balance work & Life	3.36	0.85
	workload is very Burdensome	2.64	1.05
	Stress on Job Reduces Confidence	2.33	1.10
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>2.77</b>		
Work Environment	Colleagues are committed	4.06	0.65
	Work Environment is Healthy	3.73	1.03
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.89</b>		

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24

### Interpretation

**Table 11** shows the mean score of Gallup's 12 statements. The mean scores indicate that the female faculty members are more satisfied with certain aspects like clarity in expectation of the work, opportunity to do the best in the work, associates are committed to do quality work, opportunities for growth and development. But they are relatively less satisfied with certain items such as having the necessary resources to do the quality work, recognition for doing good work, friend at work, talked about progress, opinion count, development encourages by someone and someone at work, seems to care as a person.

*2<sup>nd</sup> objective: To study the factors that Lead to employee engagement of female faculty members.*

### Interpretation

In the above table (8.1.12), the mean of eleven broad factors of employee engagement were identified and administered to the respondents.

To study the first factor, that is 'Meaningfulness of Work', five questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 4.04, which indicates that the female faculty members believe that their work is meaningful.

To study the Second factor, that is 'Psychological Safety', six questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.26, which indicates that the female faculty members believe they have very less psychological safety.

To study the third factor, that is 'Psychological Availability', four questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.18, which indicates that the female faculty members believe they have very less psychological availability.

To study the fourth factor, that is 'Job Satisfaction, three questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.61, which indicates that the female faculty members are moderately satisfied.

To study the fifth factor, that is 'Opportunities for Learning and Growth, seven questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.53, which indicates that the female faculty members think that they have very less opportunities to learn and grow in their institution.

To study the sixth factor, that is 'Fair Salary & Promotion, four questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.44, which indicates that the female faculty members are moderately satisfied.



To study the seventh factor, that is ‘Clear Policies and Open Communication’, two questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.10, which indicates that the policies are not clear and communication is very less open to the female faculty members.

To study the Eighth factor, that is ‘Rewards and Recognition’, one question was asked, whether good performance is rewarded in the institute, then the mean score come to 3.81 which indicates that female faculty members are rewarded and recognized for their work.

To study the Ninth factor, that is ‘Transparency and unbiased Administration’, two question were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.48, which says that female faculty members are moderately satisfied with this issue.

To study the Tenth factor, which is ‘Work Life Balance’, three questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 2.77, which indicates that female faculty members are not at all able to balance their work-life.

To study the Eleventh factor, that is ‘Work Environment’, two question was asked, the average of this factor is 3.89, which indicates that female faculty members are satisfied with their work environment.

3<sup>rd</sup> objective: To study the factors that Lead to retention of female faculty members.

**Table 11:** Factors that lead to female faculty retention

Factors	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Possibility of Turnover</b>	Like to Continue work	3.67	0.73
	Given opportunity will move to other Institute	3.67	0.77
	May Resign to Pursue Higher Education	2.91	1.30
	May Quit to Relocate Family	2.61	0.99
	May Give up Job due to Personal Issue	2.97	0.98
<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>3.16</b>		

Source: Field Survey, 2023-24

*Interpretation*

In the above table (8.1.13), the mean of the factor related to retention of female faculty members is analysed. To study the factor, that is ‘Possibility of Turnover’, five questions were asked. The average mean of this factor is 3.16, which indicates that the female faculty members would like

to continue work in their respective institute. In fact, in the question asked under this factor, that is, whether they would like to continue work in their respective institute, then the mean score is 3.67, means respondents want to stay in the institution. When asked that when given opportunity will they move to other Institute, then the mean score is 3.67, which indicates that they would like to continue to work in their respective institution. When asked that whether they would resign to pursue higher education, mean score is 2.91. This means that the female faculty members will not go for higher education after resigning, as few faculty pointed out that they get study leave for the same. But when asked questions such as whether they may quit to relocate family and whether they will give up job due to personal issues, the mean score is 2.61 and 2.97 respectively, which clearly indicates that they would not relocate for newer job.

**5. Findings**

The findings of the study thus reveal that the level of employee engagement among female faculty members in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim is only moderate, signifying that though they are satisfied with certain factors like clarity in meaningfulness of work and work environment, they have lots of grievances, such as, lack of psychological safety and psychological availability, unfair salary and promotion, absence of clear policies and communication, and difficulty in maintaining work life balance. The study also revealed that the female faculty members are also only moderately satisfied with the necessary resources provided to them to do quality work, that is, they are only moderately satisfied with the infrastructure provided. During the survey some of the faculty members revealed that the infrastructure is poor and there is the absence of office space, laptops/desktops, sports ground, seminar halls, auditorium, etc. Some of the faculty also pointed out that an inadequate infrastructure is a major problem and an impediment in the university’s growth.

The second major finding of the study was that the female faculty members only showed moderate interest on the factor dealing with intension to continue work in their respective institute and revealed that given an opportunity they would move to other institutes or in extreme circumstances would even quit. The primary reasons cited by them was for personal reasons like family consideration and for pursuing higher education.

**6. Recommendations**

During the course of the survey it has been witnessed that there are multiple issues being faced by faculty in the higher educational institutions in Sikkim. The respondents have provided their suggestions in this regard, which are discussed below;

The management of the institute should:



1. Provide adequate teaching and research opportunities and should organize more faculty development programs / conference / seminars and workshops for the enhancement in the teaching and research skill of the faculty.
2. Improve infrastructure and provide salary and other facilities to teachers as per University Grants Commission (UGC) norms.
3. Good healthcare services must be provided and extended to teachers and their family members.
4. Institute should provide facilities for teachers' spouse & children. Crèche must be provided. There is a need for good school education for children of employees and in certain intervals extra-curricular engagements must be organised for employee's children. Opportunities must also be provided for the educated spouses.

## 7. Source of Funding

None.

## 8. Conflict of Interest

None.

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**Cite this article:** Payal M. An empirical study of employee engagement among female faculty members of higher educational institutions in Sikkim. *J Manag Res Anal.* 2025;12(3):166-174.