Article can be accessed online at http://www.publishingindia.com

PERCEPTION OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AMONG FACULTY IN PRIVATE ENGINEERING COLLEGES

Putta Sri Valli*, Kota Neela Mani Kanta**

Abstract *The present study aims at understanding the perceptions of student engagement among the members of faculty working in private engineering colleges on the basis of demographic variables. Student engagement is related to their perseverance, learning, and overall campus experience. This brings to light the views and opinions of 110 members of faculty working in private engineering colleges in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh. A descriptive research design is adopted by way of a convenient sampling method, followed up by administering a structured questionnaire for collection of primary data to a relative understanding of measuring the level of student engagement. The study finds faculties were indifferent to the perception of student engagement.*

Keywords: *Student Engagement, Engineering College, Teaching Faculty, Demographic Factors*

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is related to students' perseverance, learning, and overall campus experience. Engagement is a concept evolved long back with integration of research in student involvement and social integration with good practices in higher education (Kuh, 2009). Student engagement is drawn from prominent theories like involvement theory that concentrates on students' time and effort on academic activities (Kuh, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pontius & Harper, 2006).

This study signifies the levels of perceptions of student engagement among faculty working in private engineering colleges. Perception of student engagement among faculty is important because it contributes to develop a positive attitude and environment in organisation. Student engagement plays a significant role in the effective function of the organisation. If the student is highly engaged in attaining education, it creates positive interest in faculty and motivates them to impart more knowledge. But the present scenario reflects that a majority of the students lack focus and concentration in attaining knowledge and skills. Hence, the faculty has to step up their efforts in driving the students into right direction to acquire necessary skills and technical knowledge. It will be realised only when the members of faculty have positive perceptions on students to impart knowledge and skills. Given the context the researcher feels that understanding the perception of faculty regarding student engagement is important for an inclusive and collaborative growth of an organisation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Astin's (1977) theory of student engagement is a decisive theory in the understanding of student engagement. The basic principle of Astin's (1977; 1993) theory states that more the time students invest in academic and co-curricular aspects of the college experience, the greater will be the learning. Astin (1975) describes engagement as a versatile concept that has academic, social, and political dimensions. Involvement of students in under graduation has been linked to retention rates, academic performance, and levels of career related competencies (Gardner & Barnes, 2007).

Astin's (1984) involvement theory has five basic premises: (a) involvement is an investment of time and energy in various objects: (b) involvement occurs on a continuum; (c) involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features; (d) involvement is directly proportional to the quality of the student involvement in the programme; and (e) the effectiveness of any practice is defined by how much that practice increases student involvement. The previous studies on undergraduate students engagement provides similar evidence that a high level of participation is linked to a number of positive outcomes, including overall satisfaction

* Research Scholar, Department of Business Studies, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidayalam, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India. Email: kotasrivalli87@gmail.com

** Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism Management, Vikrama Simhapuri University, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, India. Email: kotamani2003@yahoo.co.in

with the college experience, academic achievement, and persistence (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2001). Astin's work was mainly involved towards connecting effective educational practices to student outcomes (Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). These outcomes range from disciplinary skills and knowledge to grade point average to time-to degree measures.

Tinto's (1975) model explains about the heart of student success is the student's engagement. "One thing we know about determination is that involvement matters. The more academically and socially involved individuals are - that is, the more they interact with other students and faculty - the more likely they are to persist" (Tinto, 1998, p. 167).

Bean and Metzner (1985) have made an extension of Tinto (1975) model called the student attrition model (SAM). The SAM focus on the role those friends, family, and other networks play in student abrasion. Those students who depend on external networks may not have the time or interest in the internal support that are a essential part of the Tinto (1975) model.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is difference in perception of student engagement among men and women faculty.

H2: There is significant difference in perception of student engagement among various age groups of faculty.

H3: Higher the experience of faculty greater will be the perception of student engagement.

H4: There is significant difference in perception of student engagement among educational qualification of faculty.

H5: Perception of student engagement has significant difference among various designation groups of faculty.

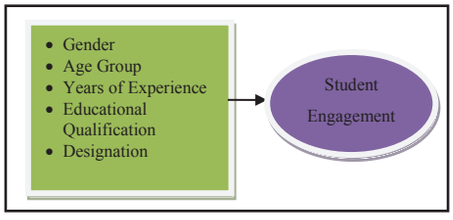

Fig. 1: Schematic Diagram of Demographical Influence on Student Engagement

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study, as aimed at, examines the perceptions of student engagement among various demographic groups of faculty to describe the relationship between demographic variables on the perception of student engagement by following the descriptive design. The demographical factors such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of experience, and designation have been considered for this purpose. A structured questionnaire has been administered to 110 members of faculty working in six private engineering colleges by way of convenience sampling method to get their opinions and views on the theme focused.

The respondents were requested to rate on 5-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The questionnaire has two sections; in the first section, questions were related to demographic variables such as age, group, gender, years of experience, educational qualification, and designation. In the second section, the questions related to student engagement were asked to rate on five point Likert scale. Analysis of variance and independent sample t-test were employed using SPSS 16.0.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of demographic factors pertaining to age group, gender, years of experience, educational qualification, and designation.

Table 1: Demographic Factors of Faculty (N=110)

S. No.	Demographic Factors		No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Age Group	25-30 Years	60	54.5
		31-40 Years	42	38.2
		41-50 Years	5	4.5
		51-60 Years	3	2.7
2	Gender	Male	73	66.4
		Female	37	33.6
3	Years of Experience	0-5 Years	60	54.5
		6-10 Years	34	30.9
		11-15 Years	10	9.1
		15-20 Years	4	3.6
		21 and above Years	2	1.8
4	Educational Qualification	Graduation	11	10.0
		Post-graduation	87	79.1
		NET/ SLET(CSIR)	3	2.7
		M. Phil	6	5.5
		Ph. D	3	2.7
5	Designation	Assistant Professor	97	88.2
		Associate Professor	10	9.1
		Professor	3	2.7
		Others	0	0.0

Source: Analysis of Tabulated data

The demographic data reveal that 54% respondents are in the age group of 25-30 years, 38.2% are in the age group of

31-40 years, 4.5% in the age group of 41-50 years, 2.7% in the age group of 51-60 years. The sample comprises 66.4% male and 33.6% female faculty. The study results reveal that 54.5% faculty members have 0-5 years of experience, 30.9% faculty have 6-10 years, 9.1% faculty have 11-15 years of experience, 3.6% faculty have 15-20 years of experience, and 1.8 % faculty have 20 and above years of experience.

It is observed from the sample analysis that 10 % of the faculty have graduation, 79.1% have post-graduation, 2.7% of the faculty are qualified in NET/SLET, 5.5% have M. Phil, and 2.7% of the faculty have PhD degree. The study reveals that 88.2% faculty are working as assistant professors, 9.1% faculties are working as associate professors, 2.7% of the faculty are working as professors, and 0% faculty are working as visiting and guest faculty.

Analysis of Student Engagement among Men and Women Faculty

The study examines variance in perception of student engagement among men and women faculty members. To examine the variance in perception of student engagement, independent sample t-test is employed. Student engagement is considered as dependent variable and gender is considered as grouping variable. The results are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Student Engagement among Men and Women Faculty

S. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Weighted Mean Scores of Student Engagement	t statistic and p-value (Sig)
1	Men	73	3.63	1.004, .317
2	Women	37	3.48	

Source: Analysis of Tabulated data

Sig at $p < 0.05$

Table 2 exhibits that there is no significant difference in the perception of student engagement among men and women faculty ($t = 1.004$, $p > 0.05$). It is understood from the table that women have lower perceptions of student engagement when compared to men faculty. For this reason, Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Analysis of Student Engagement among various Age Groups of the Faculty

The study measures the variance in perception of student engagement among faculty of different age groups. The study divides the faculty members into four groups based on age, viz. 25-30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, and 51-60 years.

The study employs Analysis of Variance, where age group is taken as grouping variable and student engagement as dependent variable. The results of the data analysis have been tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis of variance of Student Engagement among Age groups of Faculty

S. No.	Age Group (In Years)	No. of Respondents	Weighted Mean Scores of Student Engagement	F ration and p-value (Sig)
1	25-30	60	3.55	.631,.596
2	31-40	42	3.57	
3	41-50	5	4.00	
4	51-60	3	3.66	

Source: Analysis of Tabulated data

Sig at $p < 0.05$

It is interpreted from Table 3 that there is no significance difference in perception of student engagement among various age groups ($F=.631$, $p > 0.05$). It is concluded that faculty among different age groups have been indifferent to the perception of student engagement. Hence Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Analysis of Student Engagement with Respect to Years of Experience

The study analyses the perception of student engagement among the faculty groups based on years of experience. To examine the data, Analysis of Variance has been employed with years of experience as grouping variable and student engagement as dependent variable. The results have been tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant difference in perception of student engagement among the faculty members with diverse years of experience ($F=1.262$, $p > 0.05$). It is concluded that faculty among different experience groups are indifferent in perception on student engagement. Hence Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Table 4: Analysis of Student Engagement levels with respect to Years of Experience

S No.	Years of Experience (In Years)	No. of Respondents	Weighted Mean Scores of Student Engagement	F ration and p-value (Sig)
1	0-5	60	3.48	1.262,.290
2	6-10	34	3.76	
3	11-15	10	3.40	
4	15-20	4	3.75	
5	20 and above	2	4.00	

Source: Analysis of Tabulated data

Sig at $p < 0.05$

Analysis of Student Engagement of Faculty Based on Educational Qualification

In this segment, the study analyses the perception of student engagement of faculty based on their education levels. To attain the proper results, Analysis of Variance tool is utilised; educational qualification is taken as grouping variable and student engagement as dependent variable. The results have been tabulated in Table 5.

Table 5: Analysis of Student Engagement of Faculty based on Qualification

S. No.	Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	Weighted Mean Scores of Student Engagement	F ratio and p-value (Sig)
1	Graduation	11	3.18	1.259,.291
2	Post-graduation	87	3.64	
3	NET/SLET(CSIR)	3	3.66	
4	M. Phil	6	3.33	
5	Ph. D	3	3.66	

Source: Analysis of Tabulated data

Sig at $p < 0.05$

It can be observed form Table 5 there is no significant difference in perception of student engagement among faculty ($F= 1.259$, $p > 0.05$). It is understood from the given analysis that faculty are indifferent to the perception of student engagement. Hence Hypothesis 4 is rejected.

Analysis of Student Engagement of Faculty based on Designation

In this section, the study analyses the perception of student engagement based on designation of the faculty. To obtain the appropriate results, Analysis of Variance tool is put to use; designation is taken as grouping variable and student engagement as dependent variable. The results have been tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6: Analysis of Student Engagement of Faculty based Designation

S. No.	Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	Weighted Mean Scores of Student Engagement	F ration and p-value (Sig)
1	Assistant Professor	97	3.60	2.08, .130
2	Associate Professor	10	3.20	
3	Professor	3	4.00	
4	Others/ Principal	0	0.00	

Source: Analysis of Tabulated data

Sig at $p < 0.05$

The study observes that faculty are indifferent to the perception of student engagement, based on their designation ($F= 2.08$, $p > 0.05$). Consequently, the study opines the diverse designation groups of faculty have similar levels of perception on student engagement. Hence Hypothesis 5 is rejected.

CONCLUSION

The study is ought to find perceptions of student engagement among private engineering college faculty. The study has employed cross-sectional analysis based on demographic characteristics. The study considers gender, age group, years of experience, educational qualification, and designation as demographic factors on which student engagement is analysed. It is found that all groups of faculty hold similar perceptions regarding student engagement.

Management has to take care of creating interest and motivate students towards acquiring practical and scientific knowledge. As of now, the students are joining engineering without proper leaning towards engineering subjects, deficient of communicative skill, and self-application as an engineering student. This is perceived in the case of rural students. The study covers the indifferent perceptions of the members of faculty across demographics responding to the academic disengagement of the students.

It is suggested that the faculty are to be inclusive and democratic in reorienting the students by engaging them positively. The members of faculty need to motivate the students to participate in practical and societal projects, practical assignments, attending training programmes and workshops, interacting with IIT/NIT professors, and student exchange programmes. These will create a responsive eco-system where the students are extrinsically motivated to acquire required skills and knowledge to have positive engagement and immersion in their academic programmes.

It also entails a duty on the engineering college management to support students and faculty by giving necessary financial and moral support.

REFERENCES

Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. (1977). *Four critical years: Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel,* 25, 297-307.

Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Bean, J. P., & Metzner, B. S. (1985). A conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition. *Review of Educational Research,* 55(4), 485-540.

Gardner, S. K., & Barnes, B. J. (2007). Graduate student involvement: Socialization for the professional role. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48(4), 369-387.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the national survey of student engagement. *Change*, 33(3), 10-17, 66.

Kuh, G. D. (2005). What we're learning about student engagement from NSSE: Benchmarks for effective educational practices. *Change,* 35(2), 24-32.

Kuh, G. D. (2009). The national survey of student engagement: Conceptual and empirical foundations. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 141, 1-16.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students, volume 2, a third decade of research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Pontius, J. L., & Harper, S. R. (2006). Principles for good practice in graduate and professional student engagement. *New Directions for Student Services,* 115, 47-58. doi: 10.1002/ss.215.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research,* 45(1)*,* 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2), 167-177.

Wolf-Wendel, L., Ward, K., & Kinzie, J. (2009). A tangled web of terms: The overlap and unique Contribution of involvement, engagement, and integration to understanding college student success. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(4), 407-428.