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Self-esteem and Work Engagement influencing Teaching skill among Indian Higher Education Teachers

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Abstract

Purpose – The study is an attempt to address the concern of education quality in higher education in the region of eastern Uttar Pradesh in India. The study aims to find ways of improving teaching skill of higher education teachers. Self-determination theory has been adapted and teaching skill has been identified as basic psychological need for competence of teachers. The study further tests how internalized motivation namely work engagement and self-esteem could be helpful in achieving psychological need for competence among teachers by proposing a model.

Design/methodology/approach – Study is based on student's feedback so sample includes higher education teacher and students. The sample was taken from five different types of leading higher education institutes of the region. The sample consists of 401 respondents from varied discipline and subjects. Structured questionnaires were distributed among teachers and their respective students. Analysis includes reliability analysis, correlation analysis Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) followed by structural equation modeling (SEM) to propose the model for establishing the relationships.

Findings – The study proposed three hypotheses out of which two were approved. The finding revealed that self-esteem has significant influence on work engagement and teaching skill, whereas, the work engagement and teaching skill was found negatively related. Teacher with self-esteem will be engaged and may show better teaching skills, but it is not necessary that engaging teacher will enhance their skill.

Practical Implications – Study revealed that practitioners and policy maker should make efforts to make teachers feel valued. The policy governing the teachers should have scope of making teachers feel good about themselves, as the finding suggests teachers with self-esteem will have good teaching skills. Secondly excess engagement of teachers may have adverse effect on their teaching skill.

Originality/value – The study is unique as it is based on student's response and most of the studies available are based on self-reported measure. There are very limited studies on teaching skill in Indian context. There are no studies which observes teaching skill in the frame of self-determination theory and identifies it as psychological need for competence.

Keywords: Self-determination theory, Self-esteem, Work engagement, Teaching Skill

Introduction

This has been established that education level of any country contributes significantly in economic well being of the nation. Developing nation like India has shown its acceptance of this fact by expanding its higher education system. The higher education system in India has grown significantly by 400 percent since 2001. India is home to more than 1000 universities and 42000 colleges with gross enrollment rate of 27.1 % (All India Survey of Higher Education AISHE 2019–20).

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Such expansion in higher education sector has made Indian Education system to stand as the second largest in the world. Growth of higher education sector will have an important role in determining the global competitiveness of the nation and in doing so quality of education will be the key.

Education quality has been a concern in the country (Gupta, 2021) as very few higher educational institutes were able to make it in the list of top hundred global institutes (Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)World University Rankings, 2022). Quality of teaching has been named as one of the reason behind lower status of Indian higher education system on global parameters other being low employability of graduates, ineffective governance, insufficient funding and complicated norms. Quality in context of higher education refers to many aspects of education institutes ranging from academic machinery, teaching excellence to skills required (Cullen, 1992).

The present study is an attempt to address the issue of education quality by predicting teaching skill of higher education teachers from region of north-central region of India. The region alone has fair contribution in country's higher education growth as it is home to India's 7.7% of university and 18.28 per cent of colleges.

The study considers management perspective of influencing teaching skill through work engagement and self-esteem. The study adapts self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) which states that every individual is motivated to fulfill his need of competence, relatedness and autonomy. The study tests that how a teacher has internalized work engagement and self-esteem and gets motivated to satisfy his need for competence and improve his teaching skill.

Theoretical Background & Conceptual Framework

The self determination theory by (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) states that an individual has certain basic psychological needs and to fulfill that need they are motivated intrinsically, extrinsically. The theory identifies three such psychological needs which are competence, relatedness and autonomy. The SDT theory categorizes motivation as intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation is about motivation from within and comes without any external obligation or control, whereas extrinsic motivation comes to get any reward or avoid punishment. The extrinsic motivation is about motivation to do something because of compulsion, demand and obligation. According to SDT there is one more type of intrinsic motivation which develops when people internalizes extrinsic motivation in such a

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way that as they own it and becomes internal part of them. Such kind of motivation is referred as internalized motivation.

The present study is about teachers and is concerned with teaching skill of teacher so we have considered competence as the psychological need which every teacher wants to attain for his optimal wellness and to achieve that competency he is autonomously motivated. The work engagement and self-esteem has been taken as internalized motivation. Engaging an individual is about asking him to express at three level namely physical, cognitive and emotional (Kahn, 1990). Employee's vigor, dedication and absorption is possible only if he has internalized his organizational role as their own.

Similarly, the study assumes self-esteem as internal motivation as it is being referred as completely internal but depends a lot on external factors. Self-esteem is about idea of self and how an individual evaluates his self worth and value (Rosenberg, 1965). Development of self-esteem takes place when an individual keeps internalizing his positive experiences and impression about himself which he collects from his external surroundings and workplace (Burns,1979; Korman, 1970).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem could be defined as how an individual evaluates his self worth or value (Rosenberg, 1965). This evaluation of self is much influenced by how an individual perceives his competency and role he is playing (Korman, 1970; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995; Simpson & Boyle, 1975). Burns (1979) also suggested that self-esteem is much dependent on the how well an individual fits in organizational role.

Employee's performance depends on his competency as self esteem has also been defined in context of an individual's competency to perform his role in the organization (Korman, 1970). Studies in past has identified self-esteem as a predictor of outcomes at organizational, behavioral and attitudinal level (Rosenberg, 1995; Brockner, 1988; Korman, 1970, 1976). Self-esteem has been identified as predictor of many outcomes at individual and behavioral level which include self-efficacy, engagement and job performance (Judge and Bono, 2001, Rosenberg, 1995). Self esteem is an important ingredient for personal well-being and happiness. (Diener, 2009).

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Work engagement

The concept of work engagement is studied among practitioner and scholars as it leads to outcomes at individual level and organizational level (Macey and Schneider, 2009; Saks, 2006; Shuck and Reio, 2011). Work engagement was first studied by Kahn (1990) he defined engagement as “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; engaged employee express themselves at three levels namely physically, cognitively, and emotionally in performing the role. Later May *et al.* (2004), also identified work engagement as psychological meaningfulness as an essential aspect of work engagement. Kahn’s idea of engagement is about how an individual’s psychological experience in their work context determines his presence while performing the task. The psychological involvement of employees leads to many outcomes such as; satisfaction, motivation, and turnover intention and behavioral outcomes such as; performance and absenteeism.

Teaching skill

Education quality has direct correlation with quality of teachers and their teaching skills (Nikolaidis and Dimitriadis, 2014, Skelton, 2005). Quality of teaching has been a concern as it is very challenging to measure teaching skills. The literature on teaching skills indicates that it is difficult to specify what constitute teaching skills. There are varied perspectives about teaching skills which includes perspective from people who are involved in training the teachers, who are monitoring the standard and quality of teachers, who are doing research in the field of teaching skills. Kyriacou, (2007) in his book after considering different perspectives referred teaching skill as goal oriented activity, high level of expertise and could be improved through training. Wragg’, 2005 defines teaching skill as strategies used by teachers to facilitate learning of students. Kyriacou (2007) also related teaching skill with students learning and defined Teaching as discrete and coherent activities by teachers which enhance student’s learning. He identified three observable elements of teaching skill namely knowledge of subject, curriculum, teaching methods, decision making in context of how to achieve intended educational outcome and behavior of teacher to foster student’s learning. The most common idea about teaching skills that has emerged from the literature is that it is student learning oriented.

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The present study is based on the elements of effective teaching skill given by Arreola (2007), he suggested five elements of effective teaching which includes content expertise, instructional design skills, instructional delivery skills, instructional assessment skills, and course management skills. The elements given are mostly instruction skill oriented and studies in past have already discussed that instructional quality is more influential in promoting learning among students (Pianta et al., 2009; Kim Raza & Seidman, 2019)

Hypothesis Development

Self-esteem and Work engagement

Self-esteem and work engagement both the construct have been established as positive state of mind. Self esteem is positive self-evaluation which is determined by how an individual performs his role, and how well he fits in the organizational settings (Korman, 1970; Burns,1979).Whereas, work engagement is about positive state of mind in context of roles to be performed by individual. Work engagement has also been defined in context of psychological conditions which are meaningfulness (feeling about meaningfulness of task), safety (social elements) and availability (individual distractions).Psychological meaningfulness in task indicates motivation in performing the task (May et al,2004). Job content is known to have relation with self-worth and good mental being and promotes engagement (Tharenou,1979, Demorouti & Bakker, 2011). Studies by Crowford, et al (2014) and Saks,et al, (2019) have revealed in their study about the relationship between self-esteem and work engagement. The available studies allow us to propose our first hypothesis that, teachers high on self-esteem are engaged. Thus we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 1: Self-esteem positively influence work engagement

Self esteem and Teaching skill

There are no direct study which tests the relation between self esteem and teaching skill of teachers in Asian context. There are sufficient content available to highlight the positive relation between self-esteem and job performance (Brockner, 1988; Korman, 1970, 1976). Job performance has been identified in many contexts such as characters, skills and expertise (Sonntag and Frese; 2002). The job performance also talks about skill and expertise required to do the assigned job well the present study has interpreted the performance of teachers as teaching skill.

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The general assumption says that employee who feels better about self and have self-esteem will perform better and have good teaching skill. This has been well supported by literature as self-esteem has been identified as an antecedent of job performance (Campbell and McCloy, Oppler and Sager; 1993). The second hypothesis expects and assumes that self-esteem will positively influence teaching skill

H2: Self-esteem will positively influence teaching skill

Work Engagement and Teaching Skill

Work engagement being a positive state of mind characterized by vigor dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It have been found that people who are engaged are completely involved shows positive energy and they are completely engrossed in their work (May,et al, 2004). The concept of job performance could also be discussed as behavior of employee in which he is engaged, indicating relation between engagement and job performance. The past studies have supported well that engaged employees tends to perform better (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007). The performance also includes proficiency in performing the core task and commitment towards the assigned work (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al, 1993; Sonnentag ,Volmer & Spsychala; 2008).The studies available makes us to propose our third hypothesis that Work engagement will influence teaching skill (H3)

***Work Engagement will have positive relationship with teaching skill.
(H3)***

Research Methodology

Participants and procedure

Data was collected by distributing questionnaire among the respondents from leading higher education institutes of eastern Uttar Pradesh namely Varanasi, Allahabad and Jaunpur. The response was collected from students to assess the teaching skills of the teachers. Five types of institutes were taken in the study namely institutes of national repute, Central University, State University, Government college and private college. The respondents were from varied discipline which includes Engineering, science, Arts, Performing arts, Commerce, Management, Journalism and Law. Total 450 questionnaires were distributed and 450 responses were collected out of which 401 were found usable (89.11 response rate) and sufficient to conduct structural

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equation modeling analysis (Shah and Goldstein, 2006). The responses collected indicates a fair mix of gender, out of 401 respondents 262 were male (65.3per cent) and the remaining 139 were female (34.7per cent).The age respondents varied from 25 years to 65 years maximum. Experience ranges from maximum of 38 years to minimum of 1 year with the mean of 12 years. This indicates that sample is of good blend of males and females with good experience of teaching.

Measures

Measuring tool have been divided in to two parts first includes the demography and second part covers the constructs of this study which includes Self-esteem, work engagement and teaching skill.

Work engagement: To asses Work engagement using 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale developed by Schaufeli et al., 2006. The scale has three sub dimensions vigor, dedication and absorption with three items in each and scale measures engagement on 6-point Likert scale (0= Never to 6= Always).

Self-esteem: To measure self esteem the most established scale developed by Rosenberg (1965) has been used. The scale measures self-esteem on 4 point likert scale and has 10 items.

Teaching Skill

Teaching skill have been measured using 12 item which covers the dimensions of teaching skills given in past teaching effectiveness literature (Arreola, 2007).The dimension includes course management skills (CMS, 6 items), instructional delivery skill (IDS, 3 items), and instructional assessment skill (IAS, 3 items). Teaching skill was measured on seven point likert scale.

Procedure

The proposed hypothesis was tested using two step procedures (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Medsker *et al.*, 1994). The first step is correlation to test the relationship between the variables followed by CFA to examine the distinctness of the measures adapted.

In the second step SEM was conducted with all variables to test the feasibility of the proposed model. The goodness of fit of the model was tested through various fit indices which includes Goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Comparative fit index (CFI), Increment fit index (IFI), Normed fit index (NFI), and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Bentler, 1990; Bentler and Bonett, 1980; Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989)

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Results

The reliability analysis revealed sound cronbach α value indicating good reliability of the adapted scales. The reliability for self esteem was found .739, for work engagement .857 and for teaching skill was.876. The next step of correlation analysis revealed significant relationship between the variables, the Pearson's correlation coefficients were found ranging from 0.572 to 0.433 ($p < 0.01$) (see Table I).

Table I: Descriptive Statistics, reliabilities correlations

Sl.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1	Self-esteem	14.08	3.17	1(.739)		
2	Work engagement	25.52	3.86	.572**	1(.857)	
3	Teaching Skill	45.34	6.40	.433**	.442**	1(.876)

Notes: n=630; ** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed).

Values given in the parenthesis are α reliability coefficients;

Confirmatory factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor analysis was done (CFA) through software package Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS). The CFA analysis further validated the adapted scale and tests if the items fit well to measure the variables taken in the study. Values obtained of different fit indices GFI, IFI, CFI, NFI were in acceptable range and indicates strong psychometric properties (Table-II)

Table-II Individual CFA Fit Indices

S.no	Variable	CMIN/DF	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
1.	Self-esteem	3.154	.969	.922	.945	.902	.944	.073
2.	Work Engagement	5.5655	.979	.971	.976	.940	.976	.107
3.	Teaching Skill	6.139	.966	.969	.974	.932	.974	.113

Hypothesis Testing

Testing of proposed hypothesis and proposed model was assessed through conducting Structural Modeling (SEM). The model was identified after improvising the modification indices within the constructed model (Steiger, 1990), The proposed model stood well with the data (GFI=0.953; NFI=0.921; IFI=0.932; TLI=0.869; CFI=0.932) indicating the good fit of the model; whereas the value of RMSEA=0.118 falls under the criteria of marginal fit (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993; Kline, 1998;

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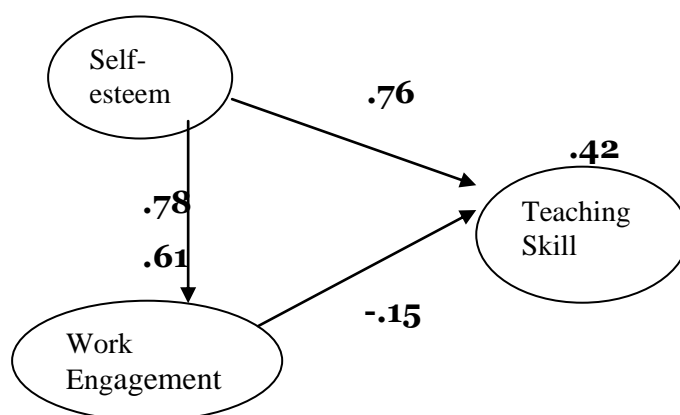
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Browne and Cudeck, 1992). Value of CMIN/DF = 6.563 was also within reasonable fit indicates reasonable fit. Self-esteem was taken as an exogenous variable and predicted work engagement and teaching skill (see Figure-1).

Figure-1: Identified Model



The Self-esteem among teachers influences their level of engagement significantly with 61 per cent of variance ($\beta = 0.784$, $p < 0.001$) proving our first hypothesis H1. Similarly our second hypothesis H2 was also proved as the influence of self-esteem on teaching skill was found significant with 42 percent variance ($\beta = 0.761$, $p < 0.001$). Whereas our third hypothesis H3 was disapproved as it was found that work engagement influencing teaching skill insignificantly and negatively ($\beta = -0.147$) see Table III.

Table III Direct Standardized effect and Hypothesis status

Hypothesis	R ²	Direct Effect Standardized	Hypothesis	Result
SE → WE	.615	.784***	H1	Approved
SE → TS	.425	.761	H2	Approved
WE → TS		-.147	H3	Disapproved

.***=p<0.0001

Discussion

Teaching quality has been discussed in past literature from more than a decade (Darling-Hammond, 2000, Goldhaber & Anthony, 2003), and have been a matter of concern in Indian context (Chhaphia, 2013). The existing concern over the quality of teaching indicates the need to find ways of improving teaching skill.

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The current study attempts to predict the ways of improving teaching skill through self-esteem and work engagement. The study is significant as it does not use self reported measure but assesses the teaching skill through student's feedback. The other ground on which basis this study could be considered important is the insight of the study. The study uses self-determination theory and projects teaching skill as teacher's psychological need for competence, whereas the engagement level and self-esteem has been considered as internalized motivation.

The first hypothesis H1 posits that teachers with higher self-esteem are more skilled and was accepted. There have been studies in past which relates self-esteem with performance and states that individuals who feel better about themselves tend to perform better at work (Brockner, 1988; Korman, 1970, 1976). This study considers performance of teachers in terms of teacher's skill and the findings revealed that positive self-esteem may also influence the teaching skill. The findings suggest that if a teacher feels better about himself, feels confidence then this may lead to good teaching skills. Similarly the second hypothesis H2 tests the influence of self-esteem on work engagement and was accepted. The result obtained is consistent with the past studies (Saks, 2006; Fairlie, 2011; Crawford *et al.*, 2014). Self-esteem has been identified as personal resources (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007a) it was found that employees by engaging themselves in organizational role maintains their self-esteem (Mauno *et al.*, 2007). Our third hypothesis H3 assumes that teachers who are engaged are more skilled but the results did not support the hypothesis and was rejected. Considering the findings of the previous studies on work engagement and performance we have proposed engaged teachers will lead to teaching skill. The finding of the study was not consistent the possible reason for this finding is engagement of teachers in non academic task. There are studies which states that engagement is fostered by psychological need to be able to relate with students (Klassen, Perry & Frenzel, 2012) teachers might mostly engage in activities unrelated to students and academic which could be referred as un-engaged teachers (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). Engagement of teachers in non-academic activities could be the cause of poor teaching performance or teaching skills. One more possible reason of this inconsistent finding is engagement may lead to burnout. In some instances it has been found from social exchange perspective inappropriate balance between give and take may lead to burnout (Schaufeli, 2006). Teachers may invest large amount of

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effort and personal resources into their jobs without this may cause burnout in employees leading to poor performance or teaching skill.

Conclusion

The study has developed a model in which self esteem and work engagement has been taken as inputs to predict teaching skill of higher education teachers. The findings revealed that if self-esteem in teachers is maintained it may lead to enhanced teaching skill and hence overall education quality. The study also confirms that self-esteem among teachers also helps them to keep them engaged. Whereas the other finding was inconsistent with our assumption that engaged teachers will have good teaching skill. The possible reason for this negative relationship is the excess engagement of teachers causing stress and workload in them.

Limitation and Practical Implication

The study has some significant findings and contribution but has certain limitations too. Firstly attempts have been made in the study to ensure fair representation of the vast and varied universe but still a vast population needs to be studied for generalization of findings. Second the study has considered only five dimensions of teaching skills, although literature on teaching skill has many dimensions which need to be tested and studied.

The finding of the study is a sincere attempt to address the concern for education quality in many folds as findings could be helpful for managers, administrators, teachers and academicians. Managers and practitioners should make efforts in promoting self-esteem of higher education teachers and make them feel valued for enhanced teaching skills and quality of education. The practitioners should also realize that too much engagement of teachers may have adverse effect on teaching skill. Teacher needs to feel good about themselves to make their teaching effective. The study gives insight for academicians and researchers to view work engagement and self-esteem as input for performance outcome. There are limited studies which observe work engagement in the frame of self-determination theory and internalized motivation. The study indicates lot of future studies with similar frame but varied context and variables.

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