

Comparative Analysis of Job Satisfaction Among Higher Education Employees of Public and Private Colleges

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Abstract: Job satisfaction among employees in higher education institutions is a key factor influencing teaching quality, institutional performance, and overall academic progress. This article undertakes a comparative study of job satisfaction among higher education employees in the public and private sectors. It analyses major dimensions such as job security, pay and benefits, work-life balance, working environment, academic autonomy, and workplace relationships. Primary data were gathered from staff members of government and private colleges through structured questionnaires and direct interactions. The results indicate notable variations in satisfaction levels across institutional categories. Employees in government colleges exhibit higher satisfaction regarding job security and employment stability, whereas those in private colleges report relatively greater satisfaction with performance-linked rewards and administrative flexibility. Nonetheless, challenges such as heavy workloads, restricted career advancement, and work-related stress were observed in both sectors. The study emphasizes the importance of policy-oriented reforms, effective human resource management, and supportive work environments to improve job satisfaction among higher education employees. Enhancing employee satisfaction is vital for maintaining academic excellence and achieving sustainable growth in the regional higher education sector.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction; Higher Education Employees; Work-Life Balance; Job Security; Academic Environment.

Introduction - Employees working in higher education institutions play a decisive role in shaping academic performance, institutional credibility, and long-term educational outcomes. The effectiveness of colleges and universities is closely linked to the attitudes, motivation, and satisfaction of their teaching and non-teaching staff. When employees experience a positive and supportive work environment, they are more likely to engage productively in instructional, administrative, and academic development activities, thereby strengthening institutional functioning.

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which individuals feel content and fulfilled with their professional roles. In the context of higher education, it is influenced by a wide range of factors, including compensation structures, employment stability, workload management, workplace climate, opportunities for advancement, autonomy in academic decision-making, and professional recognition. The increasing complexity of academic responsibilities, coupled with rising performance expectations and administrative demands, has made job satisfaction an issue of growing concern for higher education employees.

Differences in governance and management practices between public and private colleges significantly affect employment experiences. Public institutions typically offer regulated service conditions and long-term employment security, whereas private institutions often function under competitive, outcome-oriented systems. These contrasting frameworks can shape employees' perceptions of fairness, growth opportunities, flexibility, and job continuity, leading to variations in overall satisfaction levels across institutional types.

Local and regional contexts further influence job satisfaction within higher education institutions. Neemuch and Mandsaur districts in Madhya Pradesh have experienced gradual expansion in higher education facilities over recent years. Despite sharing similar socio-economic characteristics, institutions across these districts may differ in terms of administrative efficiency, infrastructure, availability of academic resources, and institutional support mechanisms. Such differences can have a meaningful impact on employees' professional experiences and satisfaction.

In this context, a comparative examination of job satisfaction among higher education employees in public and private colleges of Neemuch and Mandsaur districts becomes essential. Analysing satisfaction across multiple dimensions helps identify both shared challenges and sector-specific issues affecting employees. The findings of this study are expected to contribute valuable insights for institutional leadership and policymakers by highlighting areas that require targeted intervention. Enhancing job satisfaction among higher education employees is critical not only for improving employee well-being but also for fostering academic excellence and ensuring the sustainable development of higher education in the region.

Objectives of the Study: The main objective of the paper is to examine and compare the level of job satisfaction among higher education employees of public and private colleges.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the level of job satisfaction among higher education employees of public and private colleges.

Literature Review

Gupta et al. (2015) conducted a study titled "Impact of Work Engagement on Performance in Indian Higher Education System", explored how job resources—specifically supervisory support, co-worker support, and perceived autonomy—affect academic staff engagement and, subsequently, their performance as evaluated by students. The study involved 261 faculty members from various Indian universities, who assessed their own levels of support and autonomy, and 261 students who rated the faculty's performance. Using structural equation modelling, the findings revealed that work engagement mediates the relationship between supervisory support and performance. Additionally, engagement among academic staff in India's expanding tertiary sector.

Research Methodology

Research Design: The study adopts a comparative mixed-method research design to examine job satisfaction among higher education employees in public and private colleges. A quantitative approach was used to measure job satisfaction across key dimensions, while qualitative methods were employed to gain deeper insights into employees' perceptions and workplace experiences. This design enabled triangulation of data and strengthened the reliability of the findings.

Area of the Study: The research was conducted in the public and private colleges of Neemuch and Mandsaur districts. These districts were selected due to the presence of both government and private higher education institutions and their similar socio-economic and educational contexts, making them suitable for comparative analysis.

Population and Sample: The population of the study comprised academic and non-academic employees working in government and private higher education

institutions in the selected districts. A purposive stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from both districts, institutional types, and employee categories. The final sample consisted of 200 respondents, with 100 employees drawn from each sector.

Sources of Data: Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized in the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, while secondary data were obtained from books, research journals, government reports, institutional documents, and relevant online sources to support the conceptual framework.

Research Instruments: The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant literature and the objectives of the study. It measured major dimensions of job satisfaction, including job security, salary and compensation, work-life balance, academic freedom, and work environment, using a five-point Likert scale. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected respondents to explore issues related to institutional policies, workload, recognition, and professional challenges.

Data Collection Procedure: Data collection was carried out in two stages. Questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity to encourage honest responses. Follow-up interviews were conducted after obtaining informed consent, and the responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Each statement was measured using a five-point Likert scale, where respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The response categories were standardized as follows:

- 1 = Strongly Agree
- 2 = Agree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Disagree
- 5 = Strongly Disagree

Reliability and Validity: The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a value of 0.72, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Validity was ensured through expert review, pilot testing, and alignment of the research instruments with established theoretical frameworks related to job satisfaction.

Data Analysis Techniques: Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequencies, and percentages. Inferential statistical techniques, including Independent Samples t-test and Mann-Whitney U test, were applied to examine differences between groups, while Pearson's correlation was used to assess relationships among job satisfaction dimensions. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance.

Ethical Considerations: Ethical principles were strictly

followed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. Data were stored securely, and findings were reported accurately and responsibly.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected to examine job satisfaction among higher education employees in public and private colleges of Neemuch and Mandsaur districts. The data were systematically classified, coded, and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques to ensure meaningful interpretation. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondents' profiles and to assess satisfaction levels across key dimensions such as job security, salary and benefits, working conditions, work-life balance, academic freedom, promotional opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. Inferential statistical tools were applied to identify significant differences in job satisfaction between government and private college employees and across districts. The results are presented in a structured manner through tables and figures for clarity and ease of understanding. Interpretation of findings was carried out by relating statistical outcomes to the objectives of the study and the practical realities of higher education institutions. This approach provides a sound basis for drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations aimed at improving job satisfaction among higher education employees.

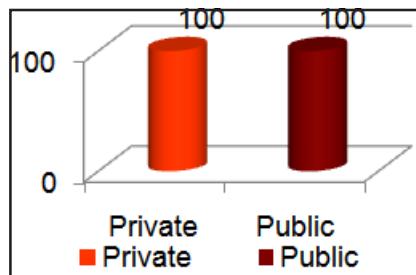
Overall Trends by Sector

Table 1 : Sample Size and Variation in Job Satisfaction Across Sector

Sector	Count	Variation Overall Satisfaction
Private	100	0.35
Public	100	0.55
Total	200	0.48

Table 1: The table presents the distribution of higher education employees by sector (public and private) and the corresponding variation in their overall job satisfaction. (Source: Survey results)

Graph 1 : Sample Size and Variation in Job Satisfaction Across Sector



Given table compares the variation in overall job satisfaction between employees working in public-sector and private-sector higher education institutions. Each sector includes 100 respondents, allowing for an even comparison between the two groups. The standard deviation values reflect the degree of variation in satisfaction levels, providing insight

into how consistently employees within each sector perceive their work experiences. Private-sector employees exhibit a variation of 0.35, which is relatively low compared to their public-sector counterparts. This indicates that job satisfaction levels among private-sector employees are more uniform, suggesting that most respondents in this group share similar perceptions of their work environment. Such consistency could stem from standardized management practices, performance-based systems, or homogenous work cultures typical of private institutions. However, this does not necessarily imply higher satisfaction—only that perceptions are less dispersed. Private-sector employees may uniformly experience challenges such as heavier workloads, extended working hours, or limited work-life balance, leading to a shared pattern of responses. Public-sector employees, by contrast, display a higher variation in satisfaction (0.55), indicating more diverse experiences among respondents. This greater dispersion may be attributed to differences in institutional size, administrative policies, transfer patterns, or disparities in resource allocation. Public-sector employment generally provides greater job security and benefits, yet issues like bureaucratic procedures, lack of modern teaching equipment, and inconsistent institutional management may affect satisfaction unevenly across individuals. Overall, the data suggests that job satisfaction in private institutions tends to be more consistent but possibly constrained by uniform challenges, while in public institutions, satisfaction varies widely, reflecting a more complex and heterogeneous organizational environment. These differences highlight the importance of sector-specific interventions when addressing employee satisfaction in higher education.

Table 2 & Graph 2 (See in last page)

The sector-wise comparison of job satisfaction reveals a consistent and significant advantage for employees in the public sector, who report higher satisfaction across all measured dimensions. The overall satisfaction mean for public-sector employees stands at 2.67, compared to 2.94 in the private sector, indicating a clear disparity in how the two groups perceive their work environments. The most prominent gaps are observed in salary (2.74 vs. 3.04) and job security (2.64 vs. 2.90), dimensions that are deeply linked to the structural and policy-related distinctions between the two sectors. Public institutions typically provide standardized pay structures, pension benefits, and secure tenure, which together foster a sense of financial and occupational stability. In contrast, private-sector employees often experience variable compensation schemes and performance-linked contracts, resulting in less predictable job continuity and heightened pressure to meet organizational targets. These differences highlight how economic assurance and institutional stability act as foundational elements in shaping employee satisfaction and overall workplace morale. Beyond compensation and job protection, notable

distinctions are also evident in areas such as workload management and work-life balance, where public-sector employees again report slightly more favourable perceptions (2.63 vs. 2.92 and 2.66 vs. 2.87, respectively). Although the differences are smaller, they remain meaningful in reflecting the differing nature of institutional environments. Public organizations tend to operate within regulated workloads, fixed working hours and structured administrative systems, allowing employees greater predictability in managing their responsibilities. Conversely, private sector employees may encounter intensive teaching schedules, administrative multitasking, and pressure for continuous performance improvement, leading to greater strain and reduced capacity for work-life equilibrium. The academic freedom scores (2.62 in the public sector vs. 2.89 in the private sector) further underscore this divide, as public-sector institutions often provide more autonomy in teaching and research, whereas private institutions may impose tighter control over curriculum delivery and performance metrics. The consistency of these trends across all dimensions strengthens the validity of the findings and demonstrates the structural coherence of the observed sectoral differences. The close alignment between section-wise scores and overall satisfaction implies that the advantage enjoyed by public-sector employees is not limited to isolated aspects of their professional life but is instead reflective of a broader and more integrated institutional advantage. Private-sector employees' moderate satisfaction levels particularly regarding salary and job security point to systemic challenges such as limited financial incentives, contractual employment, and competitive organizational cultures, which may erode long-term satisfaction. These results also suggest that while private-sector institutions may offer opportunities for innovation and faster career growth, such advantages do not necessarily translate into higher job satisfaction, especially when perceived job stability and fairness are compromised. From an interpretive standpoint, these findings emphasize the central role of institutional design and employment policy in shaping faculty well-being and performance attitudes. The public sector's structured environment, supported by transparent governance and predictable benefits, appears to create a more secure and satisfying work experience. In contrast, the private sector's dynamic and performance-oriented nature while potentially stimulating in the short term may contribute to professional fatigue and uncertainty overtime. When viewed alongside district-level and demographic analyses, these sectoral results enrich the broader understanding of contextual influences on job satisfaction within higher education. Figure 16 provides a visual representation of these findings, illustrating the relative strengths of public institutions across the measured dimensions and making the sectoral contrasts immediately apparent. This visualization not only enhances comprehension but also

underscores the practical implications of these results for policymakers and institutional leaders seeking to strengthen satisfaction and retention across both sectors.

Conclusion: The study concludes that job satisfaction among higher education employees in public and private sectors is influenced by a combination of institutional, sectoral, and personal factors, making it a multidimensional and context-specific phenomenon. Overall satisfaction levels are moderate, with employees in public sector institutions reporting relatively higher satisfaction compared to private colleges. Public sector employees benefit from greater job security, stable salaries, balanced workloads, and academic freedom, which significantly enhance their satisfaction. In contrast, private sector employees experience comparatively lower satisfaction due to job insecurity, excessive workload, and limited work-life balance, despite better performance-based recognition. Hierarchical position, educational qualifications, age, and gender further shape satisfaction levels, with senior faculty, female employees, and mid-to-late career professionals demonstrating higher satisfaction. The findings clearly establish that stable employment conditions, supportive institutional culture, equitable workload distribution, and recognition of professional contributions are key drivers of job satisfaction. Overall, the study highlights the critical role of institutional policies and governance structures in shaping employee well-being and underscores the need for targeted interventions to improve satisfaction and effectiveness in higher education institutions.

Problems: The analysis reveals several persistent problems affecting job satisfaction among higher education employees in both public and private colleges. In the public sector, low remuneration, rigid salary structures, frequent transfers, bureaucratic delays in promotions, and inadequate teaching infrastructure emerge as major sources of dissatisfaction. Despite job security, these factors contribute to feelings of stagnation and underappreciation. In contrast, private sector employees face excessive workload, unpaid overtime, long working hours, poor work-life balance, and high levels of job insecurity due to short-term contracts and performance-linked employment conditions. Additionally, limited opportunities for professional growth, lack of transparent promotion policies, and insufficient recognition of individual achievements affect employees across both sectors. The absence of modern teaching resources, coupled with increasing administrative pressures, further exacerbates stress and reduces motivation. These interconnected problems not only undermine employee satisfaction but also adversely impact teaching quality, institutional commitment, and the overall effectiveness of higher education institutions in the region.

Suggestions: To enhance job satisfaction among higher education employees, a comprehensive and balanced approach is required across both public and private sectors. Public institutions should revise salary structures, introduce

performance-based incentives, rationalize transfer policies, and invest in modern teaching infrastructure to improve motivation and professional fulfillment. Private institutions, on the other hand, must address excessive workload by enforcing clear workload norms, compensating overtime, promoting work-life balance, and offering greater job security through transparent and longer-term employment contracts. Across both sectors, institutions should strengthen career development opportunities through timely promotions, faculty development programmes, research support, and leadership training. Establishing systematic recognition and appreciation mechanisms can further boost morale and institutional loyalty. Additionally, participatory governance, gender-sensitive policies, and employee welfare committees should be encouraged to create inclusive and supportive work environments. Implementing these measures will help build a motivated, stable, and satisfied academic workforce, thereby improving institutional performance and ensuring sustainable development of higher education.

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Table 2 : Comparative Analysis of Job Satisfaction Scores by Sector

District	Salary score	Job Security score	Workload Management score	WorkLife Balance score	Academic Freedom score	Overall Satisfaction
Private	3.04	2.90	2.92	2.87	2.89	2.94
Public	2.74	2.64	2.63	2.66	2.62	2.67

Table 2: The table shows the average job satisfaction scores across different dimensions by sector. (Source: Survey results)

Graph 2 : Comparative Analysis of Job Satisfaction Scores by Sector

