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Influence of perceived equity, job enrichment, and burnout among educators in Indian private universities on job satisfaction and the desire to quit

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The desire to quit converts into actual attrition if left unaddressed. Additionally, employees' job satisfaction strongly influences their desire to stay or leave. Several individual and organizational factors affect job satisfaction levels, all of which must be thoroughly analyzed to curb both the desire to quit and attrition. The current study tests a model associating perceived equity, job enrichment, and burnout with job satisfaction and the desire to quit of educators employed in private universities in India. Data were collected from 272 university faculty members using five scales, namely, job enrichment, perceived equity, employee burnout, job satisfaction, and intention to leave, and were analyzed using AMOS 17. The initial fitness results failed to support the hypothesized framework, but a revised framework yielded a good fit for the data. Results show that perceived equity has a positive influence on job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2), job enrichment positively affects job satisfaction (Hypothesis 3), burnout negatively influences job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4), and job satisfaction negatively affects the desire to leave (Hypothesis 1). Perceived equity, burnout, and job satisfaction were found to mediate the association between job enrichment and the desire to leave. The results indicate that private universities must focus on job satisfaction to reduce employees' desire to quit, thereby reducing the attrition level, which is currently a severe problem with both financial and non-financial consequences to universities. From the results, it can be seen that job

enrichment has acted as a mediator to influence employees' job satisfaction. Future research can explore HR practices contributing to high job enrichment, and this study would have considerable practical implications.

KEYWORDS

higher education, university faculty members, job satisfaction, perceived equity, burnout, job enrichment, desire to quit job

Introduction

In the era of globalization, many organizations have regarded employee turnover as a critical issue. Every organization expects to increase the performance of employees and reduce the intention to quit. Why do employees leave an organization after making an effort to be hired? Employee quitting will be a loss for both employees and the organization. Organizations invest a lot of money and effort to curb this quitting behavior by adopting practices that enhance employees' staying and performance, thereby increasing their job satisfaction. Previous research studies identify several reasons for employee retention versus turnover. Job satisfaction has been reported to be one of the key reasons for reducing organizational attrition levels. From previous research studies, it can be postulated that job satisfaction includes several factors, such as satisfaction with the work itself and policies and practices like pay, benefits, and career advancement opportunities.

What is the scenario among teaching professionals in private universities in India? The problem faced by the teaching fraternity in private universities is unique. In an informal pilot study conducted before the main study, a variety of issues emerged. The first facet of the teaching profession that the professionals conveyed was that although they work in higher education institutes, their workload combines teaching both graduate and post-graduate courses. In graduate courses, apart from teaching, disciplining the students becomes a major responsibility and deviation from the learning process, which affects their satisfaction with teaching. A second fact conveyed by the teaching professionals was the prevalence of job insecurity and remuneration below industry standards, which affects job satisfaction. The third fact that emerged in the pilot study was that increasing pressures to focus on research and consultancy with heavy workloads (both teaching and administrative responsibilities) affect job satisfaction. The final fact was that, because of severe attrition and a lack of competent teaching professionals, many private universities hire candidates who are doing their doctoral programmes. With the academic and administrative workload and the pressure of completing their doctoral programme, these professionals experience burnout and struggle to continue. With the findings of the pilot study, the current study was theorized and

decided to test the developed framework among teaching professionals working in private universities in India. For better focus and based on the discussions in the pilot study, among private universities, only those teaching professionals employed in "deemed-to-be" universities will be covered in this research.

Job satisfaction and desire to quit

The desire to quit refers to an employee's intention to leave the current job or organization (Dai et al., 2019). Research has shown a strong positive association between this desire to leave and quitting behavior. As a distal outcome of withdrawal behavior (Kim and Beehr, 2018), researchers agree that intent to leave strongly predicts actual turnover (Mor Barak et al., 2001; Hamidi et al., 2018). If organizations analyze the reasons for the intention to leave among employees, they can take proactive measures to prevent employees from leaving the organization. Thus, adequate research in understanding the origin and causes of the intent to leave would help organizations handle attrition problems to a large extent.

A pertinent question in this area is why employees intend to leave the organization after working so hard to get the job to prove their competence? Numerous studies have tried to determine the antecedents of the intention to leave (Kramer et al., 1997; Kalliath and Beck, 2001). The level of job satisfaction has been observed to be one of the prominent reasons for the intention to leave (Mahdi et al., 2012; Prince et al., 2018; Kelly et al., 2019; Park and Johnson, 2019; Smetackova et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020).

Job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experience (Locke, 1976). It is the general attitude and emotional reaction that employees have toward their job. Hulin and Judge (2003) define it beyond the emotional component and state that job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a job that results from the person's comparison of actual outcomes with those desired, anticipated, or observed. Another definition by McKenna (2000) adds that job satisfaction is associated with how well personal experiences are aligned with outcomes. In aligning personal experience with the outcome, employees intend to leave when they find a mismatch, which is supported by previous research

findings. Similar evidence is expected from the current research as well, and hence Hypothesis 1 is framed as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Job satisfaction negatively affects employees' desire to quit.

Perceived equity and job satisfaction

Organizations are interested in identifying the precedents of job satisfaction to enhance employees' experiences in their jobs, indirectly curbing the intention to quit. Management scientists and practitioners have been involved in a significant number of empirical studies to explore the methods for improving job satisfaction, as high levels of it lead to better performance and productivity. Many factors lead to job satisfaction, such as the contentment employees experience while doing the job and their perception of how they are treated. Additionally, monetary components like salary, benefits and other perquisites contribute to satisfaction. On the non-monetary side, the learning they acquire and development opportunities from the job are a few precedents leading to employees' satisfaction in their job.

Among the precedents, perceived equity is one of the factors leading to job satisfaction. [Festinger \(1957\)](#) developed the theory of cognitive dissonance, stating that when there exists an incompatibility between what we perceive and what we do, cognitive dissonance will be created. In his theory of social equity, [Adams \(1963\)](#) states that employees bring their knowledge, competence, and educational qualifications to the workplace and expect an equivalent return in the form of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for what they deliver. If they perceive that the ratio of output to inputs is inequitable to the ratio of their reference group, namely the peer members ([Adams, 1965](#)), both inside and outside the organization, it results in perceived inequity. In such cases, they would either feel under- or over-compensated compared to their reference group ([Walster et al., 1973](#)). When employees perceive inequity in the case of under-compensation compared to their peers, they experience anger or resentment ([Austin and Walster, 1974](#)) and job dissatisfaction. Evidence from previous research posits that employees' job satisfaction is affected by their perceived equity ([Klein, 1973](#); [Khan et al., 2021](#); [To and Huang, 2022](#)). Given this background, the current research investigates perceived equity's influence on employee job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Perceived equity is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Job enrichment and job satisfaction

In a series of experimental studies ([Paul et al., 1969](#)) on lab technicians, sales representatives, design engineers, and production and engineering foremen, the impact of job

enrichment on their performance and job satisfaction was studied. The results led to the conclusion that wherever the trial periods of the experiments were relatively longer, job enrichment practices positively influenced job satisfaction. [Orpen \(1979\)](#) conducted a field experiment for clerical employees and found that enrichment caused a significant increase in job satisfaction, job involvement, and motivation and decreased absenteeism and turnover. Job enrichment refers to adding various factors to a job that make it pleasurable. [Hertzberg \(1966\)](#) introduced job enrichment in 1950 through his work on hygiene and motivational factors, which were later applied in the job designing method.

A study conducted among nursing staff in Finland ([Kivimaki et al., 1995](#)) differentiated enriched jobs (primary nursing wards) and less enriched jobs (functional nursing wards) fitting the five elements of the Job Characteristics Model ([Hackman and Oldham, 1975](#)), the five elements being skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. The results showed that the primary nursing wards had higher satisfaction with the supervisors managing them than the comparison group. In a survey among 547 non-academic staff in 7 private universities in Nigeria ([Sanda et al., 2015](#)), a significant positive relationship was found to exist between job enrichment and employee satisfaction. Another study also suggests that job enrichment positively influences job satisfaction ([Marta et al., 2021](#)).

A survey among 290 nurses in Turkey ([Ozturk et al., 2006](#)) studied their perception of all five elements of the Job Characteristics Model developed by [Hackman and Oldham \(1975\)](#). The survey results show that the nurses considered all five elements—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—highly valuable and wanted them implemented in their jobs. Overall, they perceived that adding all five elements would make their job more meaningful and provide more opportunities to use their skill sets. They perceived that such changes would improve their self-esteem even if they did not receive promotions.

In a study among 600 US employees ([Society for Human Resource Management, 2017](#)), 56% of the participants stated that opportunities to use their skills and abilities at work are the greatest contributors to employee job satisfaction, which is one of the key elements of job enrichment according to the Job Characteristics Model ([Hackman and Oldham, 1975](#)).

The job enrichment process ([Paul et al., 1969](#)) improves task efficiency and employee satisfaction by providing more scope for personal growth and recognition, increasing work challenges and responsibilities, and enhancing opportunities for employee advancement and growth. Wherever the employees see opportunities and not demands, the job enrichment practices increase their performance and satisfaction levels. A follow-up investigation to study the impact of job enrichment on job satisfaction, to increase the power of the previous findings, using a survey method instead of experiments, is the

focus of the current study. With this background, the following hypothesis is formed.

Hypothesis 3: Job enrichment positively affects job satisfaction.

Burnout and job satisfaction

Freudenberger coined the term “burnout” and first published it in 1974. According to [Freudenberger \(1974\)](#), burnout is both physical and mental exhaustion mainly experienced in professional life. [Jackson and Maslach \(1982\)](#) conceptualized burnout as a syndrome of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion and cynicism toward work due to chronic organizational stress. In the words of [Deutsch \(1984\)](#), burnout is a negative psychological state experienced by employees because of job stress. [Maslach and Leiter \(1997\)](#) also conceptualized that burnout would further change employee attitudes and behavior toward the job, thereby reducing their performance. So, over time, the research findings stressed that burnout is related to employees’ state of mind, resulting from job stress and affecting their job-related behavior. Studies also show that burnout occurs over a period of time and does not happen overnight. It is a culmination of symptoms that gradually develop into a long-term process.

Several researchers started showing an interest in burnout, and subsequent research findings were published. [Maslach and Jackson \(1981\)](#) developed and published the burnout model, which gained the attention of other researchers. While experiencing burnout, employees become incapable of successfully completing their job requirements, and [Tevruz \(1996\)](#) states that it gradually transforms into emotional exhaustion. [Matteson and Ivancevich \(1987\)](#) observed that employees go through different stages while experiencing burnout. In the first stage, they experience signs of strain, fatigue, and depression. In the second burnout stage, the employees detach and exhibit physical and psychological withdrawal. In the third and final stage of burnout, employees are exhausted emotionally, leading to depersonalization, apathy, and low self-efficacy.

Burnout results in high costs for both employees and organizations. It negatively affects the attitudes of employees and leads to deviant work behavior such as low job involvement, low performance, and a high intention to quit ([Jackson and Maslach, 1982](#); [Motowidlo et al., 1986](#); [Leiter and Maslach, 1988](#); [Shirom, 1989](#); [Wright and Bonett, 1997](#); [Wright and Cropanzano, 1998](#)) and low organizational commitment ([Jackson et al., 1987](#); [Leiter and Maslach, 1988](#)). Therefore, studying burnout and its impact on work variables is significant in handling organizational performance. Given this background of previous research findings, the current paper explores job satisfaction and the impact burnout would have on job satisfaction.

Previous studies have shown that the relationship between job satisfaction and burnout is negative, conveying that high burnout leads to lower job satisfaction ([Tsigilis et al., 2004](#)). Earlier studies also conclude that burnout and job satisfaction show a moderate to the high negative association ([Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2017](#); [Madigan and Kim, 2021](#); [Trinidad, 2021](#); [Duraku et al., 2022](#)), but there are research studies where this association is challenged. For instance, a study among New Zealand psychiatrists ([Kumar et al., 2007](#)) showed a high prevalence of burnout and showed that job satisfaction remained high despite burnout. Given this background, the current study focuses on understanding the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction among the teaching fraternity in the Indian context.

Hypothesis 4: Burnout is negatively related to job satisfaction.

The present study

The current study aims to test a hypothesized framework comprising five variables—perceived equity, job enrichment, burnout, job satisfaction, and intention to quit. The study will explore how the experiences of perceived equity, job enrichment, and burnout of university faculty members employed in private higher education institutes in India relate to job satisfaction and in turn influence their intention to quit the job. Consolidating all the hypotheses developed for the current study, a framework to be tested was created. [Figure 1](#) shows the framework hypothesized for the current study.

Methods

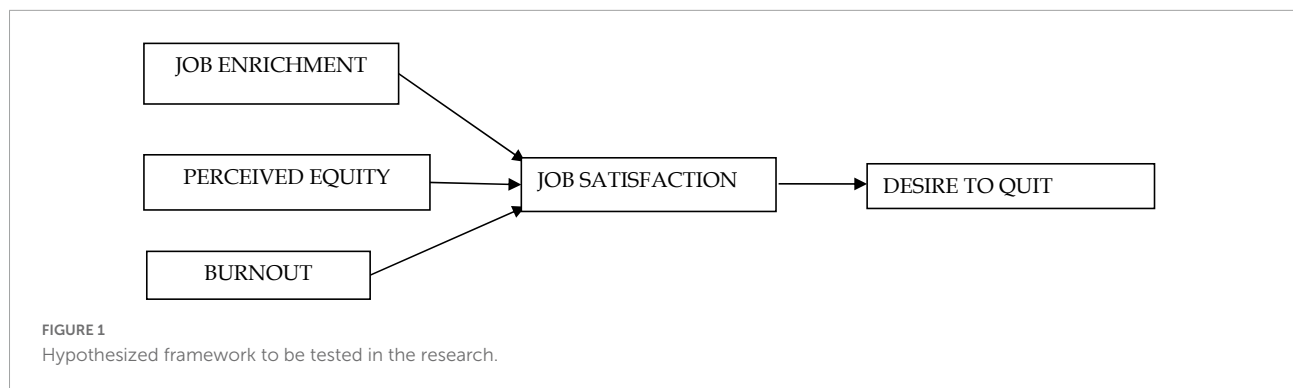
Participants and procedure

Participants in the study were educators working in private universities in India. Participation in the study was voluntary. Four hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed; 272 completed the questionnaire (60 percent response rate). Primary data were collected through a five-item questionnaire: job enrichment, perceived equity, burnout, job satisfaction, and intention to leave.

Instruments

The questionnaire by [Sekaran and Bougie \(2010\)](#) was taken as the basis, and suitable modifications were made, adhering to the participants’ profiles for the current study.

Job enrichment was measured using a four-item scale, namely, “My job is quite simple and repetitive” (reversed), “My job requires me to use a number of complex or higher-level skills,” “My job requires a lot of cooperative work with other



people, and “My job itself is not very significant or important in the broader scheme of things.”

Perceived equity was measured using a five-item scale comprising the following statements: “I invest more in my work than I get out of it,” “I exert myself too much considering what I get back in return,” “For the efforts I put into the organization, I get much in return,” “If I take into account my dedication, the company ought to give me better training,” and “In general, the benefits I receive from the organization outweigh the effort I put into it.” Responses for both job enrichment and perceived equity were requested on a 5-point scale from “I agree completely” (5) to “I disagree completely” (1).

The Burnout Measure: short version (Pines, 2005) was used to study the burnout experience. It comprised a ten-item scale—“tired,” “disappointed with people,” “hopeless,” “trapped,” “helpless,” “depressed,” “physically weak/sickly,” “worthless or like a failure,” “sleep difficulties,” and “I have had it.” Responses were on a 5-point scale from “always” (5) to “never” (1).

To measure job satisfaction, a six-item scale was used, which included statements like “respect and fair treatment from the boss,” “getting along well with most of my co-workers,” “opportunity for personal growth and development,” “feeling of worthwhile accomplishment,” “participation in determining methods, procedures and goals,” and “feeling of job security.” Responses were given on a 5-point scale ranging from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

Intention to quit was measured using a single-item scale, “with what level of certainty do you intend to leave this organization within the next year?” The responses ranged from “very certain” (5) to “not at all certain” (1).

Results

Almost 74.6 percent of the respondents reported that they would leave the job in the next year, preferring to move to a similar or non-similar job. 53.7% of the respondents stated they were satisfied with their current job. To test the hypothesized model, data were analyzed using AMOS 17, where the initial fitness results failed to support the hypothesized framework, but a revised framework (Figure 2) yielded a good fit to the

data, χ^2 (df = 3) = 5.766; p = 0.124, GFI = 0.992, CFI = 0.984, AGFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.946, RFI = 0.897, NFI = 0.968, IFI = 0.984, and RMSEA = 0.058.

Preliminary Analysis: As a first step, before testing the proposed framework, an item analysis using a reliability test was conducted, and one item from the job enrichment item set was removed to get an alpha value of above 0.8, perceived equity (0.905), job enrichment (0.783), burnout (0.890), job satisfaction (0.818), and intention to leave (0.858). Following this, zero-order correlational coefficients among the variables were studied (Table 1). The strength and direction of relationships among the variables were consistent with prior research, showing a significant positive correlation between perceived equity and job satisfaction, job enrichment and job satisfaction, burnout and intention to leave, and a significant negative correlation between burnout and job satisfaction (significant), job satisfaction and intention to leave (significant), perceived equity and burnout (significant), perceived equity and intention to leave (non-significant), job enrichment and burnout (significant) and job enrichment and intention to leave (non-significant). Overall, the results were meaningful.

Testing the hypothesized proposed framework

According to the norms suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the proposed framework and a combination of different paths were tested. The hypothesized framework studied comes under recursive path models since all the effects among the variables are unidirectional (Kline, 1998). As a first step, the whole structured framework hypothesized was tested and the initial results indicated a poor model fit of the data collected, χ^2 (df = 6) = 47.674, GFI = 0.930, CFI = 0.754, AGFI = 0.825, TLI = 0.590, RFI = 0.557, NFI = 0.734, IFI = 0.759, and RMSEA = 0.160. However, in the process of testing different path combinations, it was observed that the correlation between perceived equity and job enrichment (r = 0.244, p = 0.000), perceived equity and burnout (r = -0.223, p = 0.000), and job enrichment and burnout (r = -0.247, p = 0.000) were low but significant; hence, paths from job enrichment to perceived

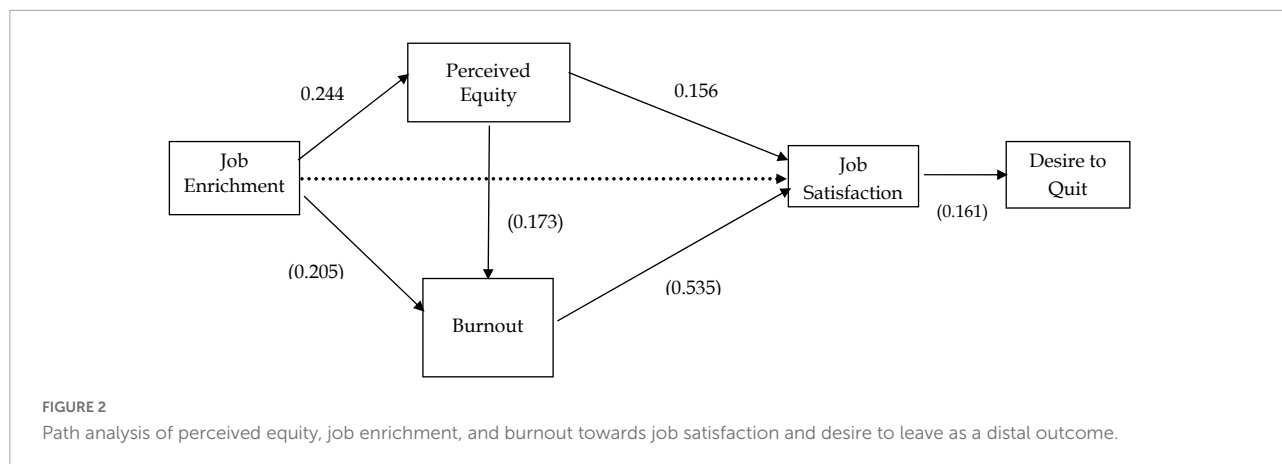


FIGURE 2 Path analysis of perceived equity, job enrichment, and burnout towards job satisfaction and desire to leave as a distal outcome.

TABLE 1 Research variables inter-correlation results.

Variables studied	1	2	3	4	5
1 Perceived equity	1	0.244**	-0.223**	0.011	0.295**
2 Job enrichment		1	-0.247**	0.067	0.265**
3 Burnout			1	0.142*	-0.574**
4 Intention to leave				1	-0.161**
5 Job satisfaction					1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). Pearson correlation - Sig. (2-tailed) (N = 272).

equity, from perceived equity to burnout, and job enrichment to burnout were added and tested. During the study, the path from job enrichment to job satisfaction (Hypothesis 3) was non-significant and hence not supported. The non-significant path was deleted (Byrne, 2010) and the revised framework (Figure 2) was tested, which yielded a good fit to the data, χ^2 (df = 3) = 5.766; p = 0.124, GFI = 0.992, CFI = 0.984, AGFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.946, RFI = 0.897, NFI = 0.968, IFI = 0.984, and RMSEA = 0.058. As observed in Figure 2, perceived equity has significant positive effects on job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2), burnout has significant negative effects on job satisfaction (Hypothesis 4), and job satisfaction has significant negative effects on the desire to leave (Hypothesis 1). Although not hypothesized, path analysis revealed unexpected relationships: the significant positive effect of job enrichment on perceived equity, the significant negative effect of job enrichment on burnout, and perceived equity on burnout. However, the opposite paths were not significant. Employees' perception of high equity increases the likelihood of experiencing greater job satisfaction, decreasing their intention to leave. But higher levels of burnout decrease job satisfaction, thus increasing their likelihood of leaving the job.

Discussions, limitations, and future research direction

Of the four hypotheses studied, namely job satisfaction negatively affecting employees' desire to leave (-0.161), perceived equity positively associated with job satisfaction (0.156), job enrichment positively affecting job satisfaction (not proved), and burnout negatively relating to job satisfaction (0.535), the results of three hypotheses were corroborated with previous research findings, whereas Hypothesis 1 was not supported. One must understand why its impact on job satisfaction was not significantly proven, despite perceived job enrichment. The hypothesized framework was also set to test that path from job enrichment to job satisfaction. Other variables may influence this association; for instance, in another path, perceived equity mediated between job enrichment and job satisfaction, which needs to be tested further strongly in the future.

Although the correlation scores between job satisfaction and desire to leave (-0.161), perceived equity and job satisfaction (0.156), and burnout and job satisfaction (0.535) are statistically significant, their r -value is not impressive and is quite low. While teaching professionals experience low job satisfaction,

they do not have the intention of quitting. This raises a question: Are other factors mediating job satisfaction and the desire to leave? An exploration in this direction will provide us with the answer to why the r -value is low. The correlation score between perceived equity and job satisfaction (0.156) is also low, although they are statistically significant. How important is perceived equity for teaching professionals? Since teaching is perceived as a noble profession, perceived equity may not be a dominating factor in providing satisfaction to teaching professionals. However, this has to be studied further. Further exploration into the determinants of satisfaction levels among teaching professionals would offer clarity.

The new paths developed and diverted from the hypothesized framework need further research to strengthen the results. Employees experiencing high job enrichment perceive equity, which leads to their high job satisfaction level (new path 1); employees experiencing high job enrichment perceive low burnout, which leads to increased job satisfaction (new path 2). From the resulting framework, job enrichment of employees emerged as the starting point, pushing both perceived equity and burnout, mediating it to influence employees' job satisfaction. This finding raises a question about what makes employees experience more job enrichment in the workplace. Once this aspect is explored and given due importance, the perceived equity, burnout, job satisfaction, and desire to quit behavior can be influenced accordingly for positive organizational results. Consequent to this finding, the HR practices in organizations must focus on making employees experience job enrichment. Research exploring HR practices contributing to high job enrichment can be studied in future research since such a study would have considerable practical implications.

In India, universities are recognized and regulated by the University Grants Commission (UGC), and they categorize private universities into state and deemed-to-be. The working environment, motivation level, and job satisfaction will vary among the two types of private universities. The current research focuses on teaching professionals from deemed-to-be universities only. Future researchers can test the model for other types of universities in India.

Conclusion

What contributes to the high quality of higher education? The placement records of the students or their success in the career they choose? This has to be studied in the long term, but the immediate success can be attributed to the positive transformation in their knowledge level, skills, and attitude, all of which set the tone for success in placements and overall careers. An effective learning process enhances that transformation, and the facilitators' role plays a significant

part. Faculty members act as facilitators in the learning process for students pursuing higher education; hence, their mindset contributes indirectly to students' learning process and, in turn, the quality of education delivered. The level of job satisfaction and intention to quit behavior experienced by faculty members affect their facilitation skills. With the pressure of multiple responsibilities such as effective teaching, disciplining, getting grants, doing research and publishing research papers in the form of knowledge creation, conducting development programmes for students and industry practitioners, and mentoring students, the job satisfaction and intention to quit behavior of higher education providers would affect the quality of education offered to the student community.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical review and approval was not required for the study on human participants in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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