

Examining Faculty Perspectives on Governance in Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract— In the present study, factors affecting faculty satisfaction were explored through a quantitative survey in higher education institutions. 130 faculty members were surveyed across various disciplines and roles. The findings revealed that institutional leadership style significantly influenced faculty satisfaction. Institutions with rigid hierarchical cultures tended to have lower satisfaction levels. Additionally, challenges such as budget constraints, increased workload, and shifting educational paradigms directly impacted faculty satisfaction. To improve satisfaction, institutions should prioritize transparent leadership and foster a participatory organizational culture.

Keywords— Faculty satisfaction, governance, leadership, organizational culture.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education governance refers to the formal organization and management of post-secondary institutions, such as universities and colleges. These institutions typically have governing boards responsible for decision-making, an executive head (often called the CEO), and an administrative team handling day-to-day operations. Faculty members also participate in academic decision-making. While governance structures vary globally, they all share common roots. Tertiary education includes private not-for-profit, private for-profit, and public institutions, each governed by distinct management structures. The complexity arises from different educational models (university education, technical and vocational education, community colleges) and ongoing debates about collegial versus corporate governance.

In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, institutions grapple with insufficient funding, impacting their ability to maintain educational quality, infrastructure, and research (Egitim, 2021). Striking a balance between tuition fees and student accessibility remains a delicate task. Additionally, institutions must adapt to global trends, foster cross-border collaboration, and attract diverse student cohorts. The competitive nature of higher education places faculty and administrators under pressure to enhance institutional rankings and reputation (Egitim, 2023; Yonezawa, 2019; Zeng, 2021). Furthermore, institutions must address the needs of non-traditional students, working professionals, and international learners, ensuring equal opportunities and addressing disparities related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Weick, 2012).

The case study aims to explore faculty members' perspectives on challenges faced by academic institutions, including striking a balance between faculty involvement and efficient decision-making. It also investigates how top-down leadership, hierarchical organizational culture, and current challenges impact faculty satisfaction. The central research question is: "How do these factors affect faculty satisfaction?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Glance at Higher Education Institutions

In higher education institutions, leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping the organizational culture, decision-making processes, and overall effectiveness. Effective leaders can navigate challenges, understand the institution's unique context, and align decisions with its values and goals, fostering a sense of belonging among all members (Meng & Su, 2021; Menon & Motala, 2021). Currently, many higher education institutions follow a top-down approach, where decisions and directives primarily originate from senior administrators—such as university presidents, provosts, and deans. This hierarchical model ensures streamlined processes and consistent policy implementation across the institution (Paais & Patiruhu, 2020).

Institutions with top-down leadership have senior leaders who establish the long-term vision, mission, and goals. They make centralized decisions related to budgets, staffing, and infrastructure. These leaders are responsible for major policies and hold subordinates accountable for achieving institutional objectives. The benefits of this approach include quick decision-making aligned with the overall vision and efficient emergency response. However, it can lead to challenges such as the

exclusion of faculty, staff, and students from decision-making, resistance to top-down changes, and limitations on creativity and adaptability. Research indicates that effective leadership requires a delicate balance by engaging all stakeholders through transparent communication, adapting to changing needs while maintaining strategic direction, and combining decisions with input from diverse voices, creating bottom-up communication (Wahlers, 2018).

Challenges Facing Higher Education

In today's global landscape, higher education institutions encounter numerous challenges. Recent studies reveal declining enrollment in traditional higher education. Between 2011 and 2022, total enrollment decreased by 12.3%, with a 6.6% drop from 2019 to 2021 alone. Community colleges were hit particularly hard, experiencing a 13% decline during the same period. Male student representation has reached an all-time low of 41%. Soaring tuition fees exacerbate the affordability crisis, making college education increasingly unaffordable. Graduates often begin their careers burdened by substantial student debt, impacting their financial stability. High costs discourage potential students from pursuing higher education, leading to declining enrollments and revenue challenges for institutions. Additionally, students from low-income backgrounds face barriers to accessing quality education due to financial constraints.

Furthermore, universities face budget constraints and must balance expenses, including faculty salaries and infrastructure. While adjunct faculty are often used to manage costs, maintaining academic excellence necessitates adequate funding for facilities, technology, and teaching. Emerging alternatives may offer quicker pathways to careers, but they may not match the rigorous education provided by traditional colleges. Universities allocate a significant portion of their budgets to faculty salaries and maintaining infrastructure. Faculty members are essential for teaching, research, and student support. However, striking the right balance between competitive salaries and cost-effectiveness is crucial. To manage costs, many institutions rely on adjunct faculty—part-time instructors who teach specific courses. While adjuncts bring expertise and flexibility, their use can impact educational continuity and student-faculty relationships. Ensuring high-quality education requires adequate funding. This extends beyond salaries to include investments in facilities (classrooms, labs, libraries), technology (computers,

software, online platforms), and teaching resources (textbooks, materials). Non-traditional pathways, such as vocational programs, online courses, and boot camps, promise faster routes to careers. However, they may lack the comprehensive curriculum and holistic learning experience of traditional colleges. University leaders must navigate these complexities while prioritizing student success, research, and community engagement. Strategic resource allocation is essential to maintain academic standards. University leaders must navigate these complexities while prioritizing student success, research, and community engagement. Strategic resource allocation is essential to maintain academic standards.

Faculty members grapple with burnout, heightened workloads, and uncertainty. The tenure system, once a symbol of academic stability, now faces scrutiny. The rigorous demands of academic roles, combined with various stressors, can lead to exhaustion, adversely affecting both faculty well-being and educational quality. Faculty must balance multiple responsibilities, including teaching, research, student mentoring, and administrative duties. The pressure to publish research articles and secure funding can become overwhelming.

Faculty members actively participate in committees, attend meetings, and engage in decision-making processes. However, administrative responsibilities can accumulate, leaving less time for research and teaching. To address faculty burnout, institutions must implement systemic changes, foster empathetic leadership, and prioritize faculty well-being. A healthy faculty contributes to a vibrant and effective learning environment. The current challenges prompt a critical question: Is higher education approaching a tipping point, or can colleges reinvent themselves to better serve the evolving needs of students? The answer lies in how institutions adapt and innovate in response to these headwinds (Egitim & Umemiya, 2023; Graburn et al., 2008; Honkimäki et al., 2022).

METHOD

The study aims to explore how faculty members perceive organizational culture, leadership style, and organizational challenges. The study seeks to assess the relative importance of the 30 statements related to these aspects. For this, a quantitative research approach was employed. A survey was created using Google Forms and distributed to 130 faculty members. The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert scale, with 1

indicating the highest importance and 7 representing the lowest. It consisted of 30 statements aimed at understanding faculty members' perceptions of organizational culture, leadership style, organizational challenges, and potential solutions. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS.

Findings

The study employed the Pearson Product Moment method to analyze the relationship between leadership style ($\alpha=0.87$), organizational culture ($\alpha=0.91$), current challenges in higher education ($\alpha=0.71$), and faculty

satisfaction ($\alpha=0.89$). The results revealed a negative correlation coefficient (-0.067) between top-down leadership and faculty satisfaction, indicating that top-down leadership adversely affected faculty satisfaction. Additionally, the hierarchical organization showed a similar negative association with faculty satisfaction (-0.0031). To improve faculty satisfaction, fostering more inclusive leadership and organizational culture is recommended. Notably, the challenges faced by faculty members demonstrated a positive correlation (0.047) with their overall satisfaction.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SE	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Faculty Satisfaction	3.31	0.0554	0.629	1.35	4
Top-down Leadership	3.40	0.0618	0.658	1	4
Hierarchical Organization	3.63	0.0681	0.652	1	4
Higher Ed. Challenges	3.27	0.0744	0.727	1	4

Note. $n = 130$

Table 2. Relationships between NPRM and BPN Subscales Controlled for Gender and Age

Dep. variable	B	S.E.	b*	t	p	R2
Top-down leadership	-0.067	-.081	.589	6.788	< .001	.503
Hierarchical Organization	-0.0031	-.075	.517	6.516	< .001	.679
Higher Ed. Challenges	0.047	.057	.036	.894	< .001	.417

Note. $n = 130$

DISCUSSION

The study found that faculty satisfaction is influenced by governance style, organizational culture, and current challenges in higher education. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing faculty satisfaction, which, in turn, contributes to a positive teaching and learning environment. The study recommends engaging all faculty, including part-time staff, in professional development programs like faculty learning communities. Improving faculty satisfaction positively impacts student success and overall institutional effectiveness.

Effective communication and engagement between instructors and students significantly impact faculty satisfaction. When instructors feel connected to their students and witness positive learning outcomes, it contributes to job satisfaction. The integration of technology in teaching and learning affects faculty satisfaction. When instructors receive adequate training and support to use educational technologies effectively, it positively influences their overall experience. Faculty members' satisfaction is closely tied to the level of support they receive from their institutions. This

includes administrative assistance, access to resources, and professional development opportunities. Institutions that prioritize faculty well-being tend to foster higher satisfaction levels. Factors such as workload, available resources, and job security play a crucial role in faculty satisfaction. Institutions that promote work-life balance and provide necessary support services contribute to overall job satisfaction. Effective leadership styles and organizational culture impact faculty satisfaction. Transparent decision-making processes, supportive leadership, and a positive work environment contribute to faculty members' overall well-being (Argote, 2013; Barringer et al., 2020).

Creating an inclusive campus environment through transparency and active efforts to improve the climate can enhance faculty satisfaction and positively impact student learning. Additionally, recognizing and rewarding faculty contributions—such as teaching awards, tenure, and promotions—can further promote a positive campus atmosphere. In summary, institutions should prioritize transparent leadership, encourage a participatory organizational culture, and address

challenges in higher education proactively (Ouyang et al., 2020).

The small sample size was a limitation of this study, which precluded the implementation of a structural equation model for a more comprehensive representation of the associations between the variables of interest. Future large-scale studies should prioritize understanding how each factor influences the others through confirmatory factor analysis and explore causal relationships among these variables (Argote, 2013; Asaoka, 2018; Yonezawa, 2019).

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