

Key Determinants of Faculty Retention in Private Educational Institutions: Empirical Evidence from Meerut District

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Abstract- Faculty continuity is central to teaching quality, research capability, student mentoring, and institutional memory, yet private higher education institutions often manage retention through isolated financial incentives. This study examined the organizational, professional, psychological, and labor-market determinants of faculty retention in private colleges, universities, and professional institutes in Meerut District, Uttar Pradesh. A cross-sectional questionnaire survey generated 530 usable responses from full-time faculty members selected through convenience sampling. Thirteen constructs were measured on five-point Likert scales, and the data were examined through descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlations, multiple linear regression, independent-samples t tests, one-way analysis of variance, and Tukey comparisons. All scales showed good-to-excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .856-.926$). The 12-predictor model explained 85.9% of the variance in faculty retention. Job satisfaction was the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = .251$), followed by psychological well-being ($\beta = .199$), effectiveness of retention strategies ($\beta = .168$), organizational culture and employee engagement ($\beta = .161$), and leadership and management support ($\beta = .154$). Faculty burnout ($\beta = -.089$) and external employment opportunities ($\beta = -.073$) reduced retention. Retention also varied across several demographic and institutional groups. The findings reject a salary-only view of retention and support an integrated system combining meaningful work, credible leadership, career mobility, well-being protection, equitable rewards, and institutional attachment.

Keywords— faculty retention, private higher education, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, burnout, Meerut

I. INTRODUCTION

India's higher education system includes a large and diverse private sector, making the stability of the academic workforce a strategic rather than merely administrative concern. The All-India Survey on Higher Education documents the scale and heterogeneity of universities, colleges, and stand-alone institutions, along with the central role of teachers in the system's capacity and quality (Ministry of Education, 2024). For private institutions, faculty turnover carries direct recruitment and onboarding costs, but its more damaging consequences are academic: disrupted course delivery, weaker mentoring relationships, loss of program knowledge, delayed research, and

instability during accreditation and curriculum renewal.

Faculty retention is the institution's capacity to sustain an academic workforce whose members intend and are able to remain. It is not equivalent to passive tenure. A person may remain because alternatives are scarce while being psychologically withdrawn; conversely, a capable academic may leave a generally acceptable institution because the external labor market offers better professional fit. Retention must therefore be understood as the joint outcome of satisfaction, embeddedness, resources, leadership, career prospects, well-being, and perceived alternatives. Meta-analytic evidence has long linked job satisfaction and organizational commitment to turnover intention and actual

turnover (Tett & Meyer, 1993), while job embeddedness research shows that fit, links, and perceived sacrifice explain why people stay beyond conventional attitudes alone (Mitchell et al., 2001). The problem is especially sharp in private educational institutions operating near larger employment markets. Meerut is connected to Delhi, Noida, Ghaziabad, and other education and service centers, increasing the visibility of alternative jobs. At the same time, private institutions may impose dense teaching schedules, administrative duties, accreditation work, and research expectations without commensurate autonomy, progression, or support. Evidence focused on educational institutions links faculty continuity to multiple organizational conditions rather than a single incentive (Khan et al., 2021), while Indian work on private professional education emphasizes leadership, work conditions, rewards, and advancement (Singh & Srivastava, 2024). The present study addresses this regional gap by estimating the simultaneous effects of 12 determinants rather than examining one or two factors in isolation.

The study pursued three objectives: to identify the principal determinants of faculty retention in Meerut's private educational institutions, assess the perceived effectiveness of current retention strategies, and derive actionable priorities for institutional management. Its contribution is empirical and practical: it ranks determinants after controlling for the remaining factors and distinguishes strong independent predictors from variables that are merely correlated with retention.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

1. Motivation, Satisfaction, and Embeddedness

Self-determination theory proposes that motivation and well-being improve when work supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). These needs are highly relevant to academic work, where discretion in teaching and research, professional mastery, collegial identity, and intellectual purpose are intrinsic resources. When managerial control frustrates these needs, compensation may prevent

immediate exit but cannot create durable attachment. The study therefore expected job satisfaction, a supportive work environment, career growth opportunities, and work-life balance to predict retention positively.

Job embeddedness adds a retention-specific explanation. Faculty accumulate links to colleagues, students, programs, and local professional networks; they remain when the institution fits their values and leaving would sacrifice valued relationships or opportunities (Mitchell et al., 2001; Shah et al., 2020). Organizational culture and employee engagement should strengthen these links. Effective retention practices-such as transparent promotion, recognition, mentoring, faculty development, research support, and welfare provisions-should increase the perceived benefits sacrificed by departure. Accordingly, organizational culture and engagement, institutional support, and the effectiveness of retention strategies were hypothesized to have positive effects on faculty retention.

2. Support, Leadership, and Reciprocity

Perceived organizational support theory argues that employees form a general belief about whether their organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Fair treatment, supervisor support, rewards, and favorable job conditions signal that continued effort will be reciprocated. This logic connects leadership behavior, institutional support, and compensation with attachment. Supportive leaders also provide voice, role clarity, recognition, and access to development. Recent evidence on teacher retention suggests that autonomy, professional development, and employee voice operate together through well-being and commitment rather than as independent administrative programs (Nguyen et al., 2026). Leadership and management support, compensation and benefits, and institutional support were therefore expected to predict retention positively.

3. Burnout, Well-Being, and External Alternatives

Burnout reflects chronic work strain expressed through exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy

(Maslach et al., 2001). In universities, competing teaching, research, mentoring, administrative, and accreditation demands can convert meaningful work into sustained resource loss. Burnout should therefore reduce the willingness to remain, whereas psychological well-being should preserve motivation, resilience, and attachment. Evidence also associates organizational support and employee care with stronger engagement and lower turnover intention (Li et al., 2022). Work-life balance is part of this resource system; flexible, credible practices can reduce conflict and reinforce satisfaction and commitment (Allen, 2001; Deery & Jago, 2015).

Finally, retention is relative to available alternatives. Attractive salaries, research infrastructure, status, or career progression elsewhere increase perceived ease of movement. External opportunities were thus expected to predict faculty retention negatively. In total, the model proposed positive effects for compensation and benefits, work environment, leadership and management support, career growth opportunities, job satisfaction, work-life balance, institutional support, organizational culture and employee engagement, psychological well-being, and effectiveness of retention strategies, with negative effects for external employment opportunities and faculty burnout.

III. METHOD

1. Design, Participants, and Procedure

A positivist, deductive, cross-sectional survey design was used. The population comprised full-time assistant professors, associate professors, and professors employed for at least one year in private colleges, private universities, and professional institutes in Meerut District. Government and government-aided institutions, visiting or part-time faculty, administrative staff, and incomplete or duplicate responses were excluded. Because no comprehensive faculty sampling frame was accessible, participants were recruited through non-probability convenience sampling using institutional contacts, professional networks, academic groups, personal visits, email, and an online questionnaire. This limits population-level generalization even though the sample covered varied disciplines,

designations, institution types, experience levels, and employment arrangements.

Of 600 distributed questionnaires, 548 were returned and 18 incomplete records were removed, leaving 530 usable responses (88.33%). Men comprised 58.1% of the sample and women 41.9%; 54.5% were assistant professors, 29.6% associate professors, and 15.9% professors. Colleges accounted for 46.4% of respondents, universities 31.9%, and professional institutes 21.7%. Permanent faculty represented 56.8%, contractual faculty 30.4%, and temporary faculty 12.8%. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about confidentiality and anonymity.

Table 1 Selected Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Category	n (%)
Gender	Male	308 (58.1)
Gender	Female	222 (41.9)
Designation	Assistant professor	289 (54.5)
Designation	Associate professor	157 (29.6)
Designation	Professor	84 (15.9)
Institution	College	246 (46.4)
Institution	University	169 (31.9)
Institution	Professional institute	115 (21.7)
Employment	Permanent	301 (56.8)
Employment	Contractual	161 (30.4)
Employment	Temporary	68 (12.8)

Note. N = 530. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

IV. MEASURES AND ANALYSIS

The instrument contained demographic questions and 57 five-point Likert items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scales measured compensation and benefits (CB), work environment (WE), leadership and management support (LMS), career growth opportunities (CGO), job satisfaction (JS), work-life balance (WLB), institutional support (IS), organizational culture and employee engagement (OCEE), external employment opportunities (EEO), faculty burnout (FB), psychological well-being (PWB), effectiveness of retention strategies (ERS), and faculty retention (FR).

A panel of 30 academic, human-resource, administrative, and methods experts reviewed relevance, clarity, sequencing, and contextual fit; wording and redundancy were revised before pilot testing. More than 90% of experts rated the items quite or highly relevant.

IBM SPSS Statistics 29 was used for descriptive and inferential analyses. Scale distributions were judged acceptable from skewness, kurtosis, histograms, and probability plots. Cronbach's alpha assessed internal consistency. Pearson coefficients described bivariate associations, and simultaneous multiple linear regression estimated the unique effect of each determinant on faculty retention. Independent-samples t tests, one-way ANOVA, and Tukey HSD comparisons examined group differences at $\alpha = .05$. Tolerance values ranged from .401 to .692 and variance inflation factors from 1.45 to 2.49, providing no indication of problematic multicollinearity; the Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.962.

Table 2 Construct Descriptives, Reliability, and Standardized Effects

Construct	M	SD	α	β
CB	3.68	0.71	.879	.081
WE	3.74	0.69	.867	.091
LMS	3.79	0.67	.914	.154
CGO	3.63	0.73	.921	.103
JS	3.82	0.65	.901	.251
WLB	3.57	0.76	.856	.076
IS	3.66	0.70	.885	.087
OCEE	3.77	0.68	.896	.161
EEO	3.41	0.74	.872	-.073
FB	2.81	0.79	.913	-.089
PWB	3.72	0.67	.904	.199
ERS	3.70	0.66	.918	.168
FR	3.76	0.69	.926	-

Note. N = 530. β values are standardized coefficients from the simultaneous regression predicting FR. All predictor coefficients were significant at $p \leq .001$. See the text for construct abbreviations.

V. RESULTS

1. Descriptive and Correlational Findings

As Table 2 shows, respondents reported the highest mean for job satisfaction ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.65$), followed by leadership and management support ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.67$) and organizational culture and employee engagement ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.68$). Faculty retention itself was moderately high ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.69$). Work-life balance was comparatively weaker ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.76$). Burnout had the lowest mean ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.79$), although a low average should not be read as absence of risk because subgroup and workload differences can be masked. Internal consistency was strong across all constructs, with α ranging from .856 to .926.

Every proposed bivariate relationship with faculty retention was statistically significant ($p < .001$). The strongest positive correlations were for job satisfaction ($r = .786$), psychological well-being ($r = .748$), leadership and management support ($r = .721$), organizational culture and engagement ($r = .702$), and effectiveness of retention strategies ($r = .694$). Burnout ($r = -.512$) and external employment opportunities ($r = -.446$) were negatively associated with retention. These correlations support the proposed directions, but they do not establish independent effects because the organizational predictors overlap.

2. Multivariate Determinants of Faculty Retention

The simultaneous regression model was strong, $R = .927$, $R^2 = .859$, adjusted $R^2 = .856$, standard error of estimate = .261. Recalculation from the reported regression and residual sums of squares produced $F(12, 517) = 262.24$, $p < .001$. Thus, the predictors jointly accounted for 85.9% of observed variation in retention. The magnitude is unusually high for cross-sectional attitudinal data and should be interpreted with caution because predictor and outcome measures came from the same questionnaire at one time point.

Job satisfaction was the largest unique positive predictor ($\beta = .251$, $t = 7.86$, $p < .001$), followed by psychological well-being ($\beta = .199$, $t = 6.72$, $p < .001$).

.001), effectiveness of retention strategies ($\beta = .168$, $t = 5.71$, $p < .001$), organizational culture and employee engagement ($\beta = .161$, $t = 5.12$, $p < .001$), and leadership and management support ($\beta = .154$, $t = 5.04$, $p < .001$). Career growth opportunities ($\beta = .103$), work environment ($\beta = .091$), institutional support ($\beta = .087$), compensation and benefits ($\beta = .081$), and work-life balance ($\beta = .076$) also contributed positively. Burnout ($\beta = -.089$) and external opportunities ($\beta = -.073$) retained significant negative effects. Figure 1 makes the ranking visible: satisfaction and well-being dominate, whereas compensation has a smaller unique effect once the broader employment experience is controlled.

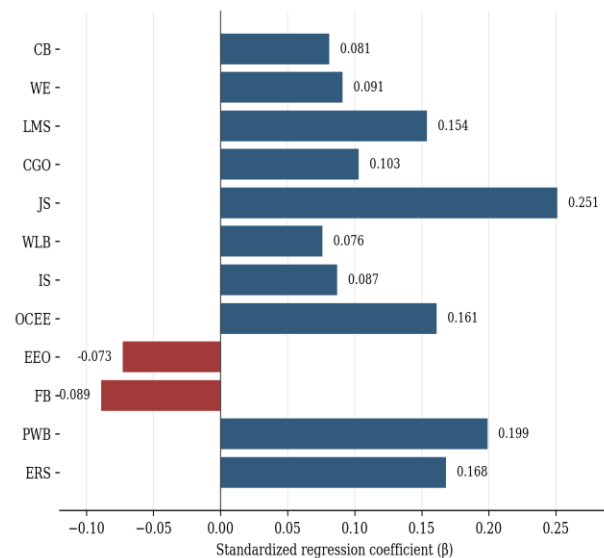


Figure 1 Relative Effects of the Twelve Predictors on Faculty Retention

Note. CB = compensation and benefits; WE = work environment; LMS = leadership and management support; CGO = career growth opportunities; JS = job satisfaction; WLB = work-life balance; IS = institutional support; OCEE = organizational culture and employee engagement; EEO = external employment opportunities; FB = faculty burnout; PWB = psychological well-being; ERS = effectiveness of retention strategies.

Group Differences

Table 3 Differences in Faculty Retention Across Groups

Grouping variable	Test	Statistic	p	Decision
Gender	t	2.34	.020	Significant
Marital status	t	1.98	.048	Significant
NAAC status	t	4.87	< .001	Significant
Institutional status	t	3.56	< .001	Significant
Age group	F	5.62	.001	Significant
Qualification	F	3.78	.024	Significant
Designation	F	4.95	.008	Significant
Institution type	F	6.31	.002	Significant
Discipline	F	1.94	.103	Not significant
Employment tenure	F	7.16	< .001	Significant
Teaching experience	F	6.24	< .001	Significant
Monthly salary	F	8.48	< .001	Significant
Employment nature	F	5.13	.006	Significant

Note. Independent-samples t tests were used for two-group variables; one-way ANOVA was used for variables with three or more groups.

As summarized in Table 3, retention scores were higher for men than women, $t = 2.34$, $p = .020$; married than unmarried faculty, $t = 1.98$, $p = .048$; faculty in accredited than non-accredited institutions, $t = 4.87$, $p < .001$; and faculty in autonomous than affiliated institutions, $t = 3.56$, $p < .001$. ANOVA also indicated differences by age, qualification, designation, institution type, employment tenure, teaching experience, salary, and employment nature, but not discipline ($p = .103$). Tukey comparisons showed particularly large contrasts between faculty earning below ₹30,000 and above ₹70,000 (mean difference = 0.41), and between tenure below two years and above 10 years (mean difference = 0.34). These are associative comparisons; unequal group composition and omitted covariates prevent causal or equity conclusions.

VI. DISCUSSION

The results show that retention in Meerut's private educational institutions is a system outcome. A salary-only policy is analytically weak: compensation mattered, but its standardized effect was far smaller than the effects of job satisfaction and psychological well-being. This does not mean pay is unimportant. It means that once leadership, growth, culture, support, and well-being are considered simultaneously, salary explains less unique variance. Institutions that raise pay while leaving opaque promotion, excessive workloads, weak voice, or disrespectful supervision untouched may slow departures without creating commitment.

The primacy of job satisfaction is consistent with meta-analytic evidence connecting satisfaction to turnover cognitions and behavior (Tett & Meyer, 1993). It also fits self-determination theory: academic satisfaction is likely to reflect whether work permits competence, autonomy, and relatedness rather than simply whether contractual terms are acceptable (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The strong role of psychological well-being and the negative burnout coefficient reinforce the same mechanism. Chronic exhaustion consumes the resources faculty need for teaching, research, and collegial engagement (Maslach et al., 2001). Well-being initiatives therefore cannot be limited to occasional workshops. If workload, role conflict, and evaluation pressure remain unchanged, wellness programming becomes symbolic rather than preventive.

The effects of culture, leadership, and retention strategy are mutually reinforcing. Perceived organizational support develops through repeated signals-fair decisions, supervisor care, recognition, adequate resources, and dependable policies-rather than slogans (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Evidence on leadership for teacher retention similarly highlights autonomy, development, and voice as an interacting bundle (Nguyen et al., 2026). The findings from Meerut extend this logic to a private higher education context: faculty appear more likely to remain when they can trust decision processes, see a future inside the institution, and participate meaningfully in academic governance.

The positive effect of career growth and the negative effect of external opportunities also align with job embeddedness. Development, mentoring, research support, and transparent promotion increase fit and perceived sacrifice, while attractive outside options reduce the cost of leaving (Mitchell et al., 2001). The practical response is not to restrict mobility or demand loyalty. Institutions must make internal mobility credible. Career pathways need published criteria, predictable review cycles, development resources, and evidence that advancement decisions follow stated rules.

Group differences should be used diagnostically, not stereotypically. Higher retention among faculty in accredited and autonomous institutions may reflect better resources, governance, reputation, or career value; the design cannot isolate which mechanism is responsible. Salary, seniority, age, and designation are also entangled. The observed gender difference could reflect uneven care burdens, safety, mobility, promotion access, or institutional sorting, none of which were modeled. Management should therefore disaggregate confidential retention data and investigate processes rather than infer that demographic identity itself causes commitment.

Managerial Implications

A credible retention architecture should begin with quarterly measurement of job satisfaction, psychological well-being, workload, supervisor support, and intention to stay. Results should be segmented by department, contract type, career stage, and gender, with minimum-cell rules to protect confidentiality. The next priority is managerial accountability: heads and deans should be evaluated on fairness, feedback quality, faculty development, workload planning, and preventable turnover. Promotion and appraisal criteria must be published, consistently applied, and broad enough to recognize teaching, research, mentoring, accreditation, and institutional service. Structured faculty development should be designed around academic roles and stakeholder experience rather than delivered as generic training (Ghasemi et al., 2023).

Workload reform should precede superficial wellness campaigns. Institutions should map teaching, research, mentoring, and administrative assignments, cap overload, rotate accreditation duties, and provide recovery periods after peak cycles. Compensation should be benchmarked externally and corrected where inequitable, but it should be paired with internal career mobility, research support, mentoring, recognition, flexible scheduling where feasible, and genuine participation in decisions. Research links flexible arrangements to engagement and lower turnover intentions (Gašić & Berber, 2023), while perceived support can reduce turnover intention by strengthening reciprocal attachment (Wang & Wang, 2020). The optimal strategy is a coordinated portfolio, because the regression results show that no single lever explains retention by itself.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has four material limitations. First, convenience sampling prevents probability-based generalization to all faculty in Meerut or India. Second, cross-sectional self-report data cannot establish temporal or causal ordering and are vulnerable to common-method inflation, which may partly explain the very high R^2 . Third, retention was measured as an attitudinal intention rather than verified subsequent employment. Fourth, the model combined broad constructs whose conceptual boundaries may overlap. Future research should use stratified probability samples where institutional lists are available, collect predictors and outcomes at separate times, link surveys to actual turnover records, test measurement models through confirmatory factor analysis, and use multilevel analysis to separate faculty-level from institution-level effects. Longitudinal and qualitative work should also examine why the reported effects differ by gender, contract status, accreditation, and career stage.

VII. CONCLUSION

Faculty retention in Meerut's private educational institutions depends less on a single inducement than on the coherence of the employment system. Job satisfaction and psychological well-being were

the strongest determinants; credible retention practices, constructive culture, and supportive leadership followed. Burnout and attractive alternatives weakened attachment. Institutions that want stable faculty must therefore redesign the work experience-not merely offer episodic incentives-by combining fair rewards, manageable demands, voice, development, recognition, and trustworthy career pathways.

Declarations

- **Funding:** No external funding was reported for this study.
- **Conflict of Interest:** No conflict of interest was reported.
- **Ethics and Consent:** Participation was voluntary; respondents received information about the study and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.
- **Data Availability:** The underlying survey data were not supplied with the source thesis and therefore are not included with this manuscript.

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