

Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Faculty Effectiveness in Indian Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a pivotal role in enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The present study investigates the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, faculty job satisfaction, and faculty motivation in selected Higher Education Institutions in South West Delhi, India. A mixed-method research design was adopted to obtain both quantitative and qualitative evidence. The study employed purposive sampling and included 60 respondents, comprising 50 faculty members, 5 HR administrators, and 5 academic leaders from five selected Higher Education Institutions. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were interpreted through thematic analysis. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction ($r = 0.61$), indicating that transparent recruitment procedures, professional development opportunities, fair performance appraisal systems, recognition mechanisms, and supportive work environments contribute to higher levels of faculty satisfaction. The study also identified a strong positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty motivation ($r = 0.68$), with regression analysis showing that HRM practices explained 46% of the variance in faculty motivation. Qualitative findings further highlighted that faculty development, recognition, and employee welfare are important contributors to organisational commitment and motivation. The study concludes that strengthening HRM practices can significantly enhance faculty job satisfaction, motivation, and overall institutional effectiveness. It recommends the adoption of transparent HR policies, continuous faculty development programmes, objective performance appraisal systems, effective recognition mechanisms, and HR strategies aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to improve the quality and sustainability of Higher Education Institutions.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Higher Education Institutions, Faculty Job Satisfaction, Faculty Motivation, Performance Appraisal, Professional Development, NEP 2020.

Introduction

Higher education has emerged as one of the most influential drivers of national development, economic transformation, and social progress in the twenty-first century. Universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) are no longer viewed merely as centers for imparting knowledge; rather, they have become dynamic institutions responsible for generating research, fostering innovation, producing skilled human capital, and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development. In an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy, the quality of higher education significantly determines a nation's capacity for innovation, competitiveness, and inclusive growth (Altbach, Reisberg, & de Wit, 2019). Consequently, governments across the world have initiated comprehensive reforms to strengthen the governance, quality, and international competitiveness of higher education systems. Within this changing landscape, human resources—particularly academic staff—have become the most valuable strategic asset of higher education institutions.

Unlike manufacturing organizations, where physical infrastructure and technology often dominate organizational performance, universities derive their strength primarily from the knowledge, competencies, creativity, and commitment of their faculty members. Faculty members perform multiple roles as educators, researchers, mentors, innovators, curriculum designers, and institutional leaders. Their effectiveness directly influences teaching quality, student learning outcomes, research productivity, institutional reputation, community engagement, and global academic rankings (UNESCO, 2021). Therefore, the sustainable success of higher education institutions depends largely on their ability to attract, develop, motivate, and retain highly competent academic professionals. This realization has shifted attention from conventional personnel administration toward Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), which emphasizes aligning human resource practices with institutional vision, mission, and long-term strategic objectives (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Strategic Human Resource Management represents a significant evolution from traditional human resource management. Conventional HRM primarily focuses on administrative functions such as recruitment, payroll administration, leave management, and regulatory compliance. In contrast, SHRM adopts a proactive and integrated approach that connects human resource policies with organizational strategy, institutional culture, leadership development, innovation, and sustainable performance (Boxall & Purcell, 2022). Rather than treating employees merely as organizational resources, SHRM considers them valuable intellectual capital capable of generating competitive advantage through knowledge creation, collaboration, creativity, and continuous professional development. This perspective has become increasingly relevant for higher education institutions, where intellectual capital forms the foundation of institutional excellence.

The strategic significance of SHRM has gained considerable attention in higher education because universities operate within highly competitive national and international environments. Institutions compete not only for students but also for distinguished faculty members, research grants, industrial collaborations, international partnerships, accreditation status, and global rankings. As competition intensifies, higher education institutions require sophisticated human resource systems capable of identifying talented individuals, nurturing professional growth, promoting research excellence, strengthening leadership capacity, and creating supportive academic environments (Paauwe & Boon, 2018). Strategic HRM therefore extends beyond administrative efficiency to become a critical determinant of institutional effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

Faculty effectiveness has emerged as another important area of educational research. Faculty effectiveness refers to the extent to which academic staff successfully perform their teaching, research, mentoring, administrative, and professional responsibilities while contributing to institutional development and student success. Effective faculty members demonstrate strong subject knowledge, pedagogical competence, research productivity, technological adaptability, ethical leadership, and commitment to continuous professional development. Their effectiveness is influenced not only by individual capabilities but also by organizational support systems, institutional culture, leadership practices, professional development opportunities, recognition mechanisms, workload distribution, and performance management systems (OECD, 2023). Consequently, faculty effectiveness should be understood as an outcome jointly shaped by individual competence and institutional human resource practices.

The relationship between strategic human resource management and faculty effectiveness has attracted growing scholarly attention over the past two decades. International research consistently demonstrates that strategic recruitment, structured induction programmes, continuous professional development, transparent performance appraisal, equitable reward systems, supportive leadership, career advancement opportunities, and employee well-being initiatives positively influence employee motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and institutional performance (Guest, 2017; Jiang & Messersmith, 2018). Within higher education, these practices enable faculty members to improve teaching quality, enhance research productivity, strengthen student engagement, and contribute more effectively to institutional innovation. Conversely, weak HR systems characterized by bureaucratic recruitment, inconsistent appraisal mechanisms; limited professional development, inadequate recognition, and unclear promotion policies often reduce faculty motivation and institutional productivity.

The importance of strategic HRM has become even more pronounced within the Indian higher education system. India possesses one of the largest higher education systems globally, comprising more than 1,100 universities, over 45,000 colleges, and millions of students pursuing higher education across diverse disciplines. This remarkable expansion reflects India's commitment to improving educational access and developing a knowledge-based economy. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE 2021–22), higher education enrolment has continued to increase steadily, accompanied by gradual improvements in faculty strength and institutional diversity. However, rapid quantitative expansion has simultaneously created significant challenges related to educational quality, governance, faculty recruitment, professional development, research productivity, and institutional management.

The effectiveness of Indian higher education institutions increasingly depends upon their capacity to manage human resources strategically rather than administratively. Nevertheless, many public and private institutions continue to rely on traditional HR practices characterized by procedural rigidity, bureaucratic delays, fragmented professional development initiatives, inconsistent performance evaluation, limited employee engagement, and inadequate strategic workforce planning. Such practices frequently result in faculty shortages, declining motivation, uneven research performance, high attrition in specialized disciplines, and reduced institutional competitiveness. These concerns have encouraged policymakers and educational leaders to advocate for comprehensive HR reforms that align institutional practices with international standards of academic excellence.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents one of the most significant educational reforms

undertaken in independent India. The policy envisions a multidisciplinary, research-intensive, flexible, learner-centered, and globally competitive higher education ecosystem capable of meeting contemporary social and economic needs (Ministry of Education, 2020). Importantly, NEP 2020 recognizes faculty members as the cornerstone of educational transformation and emphasizes merit-based recruitment, faculty empowerment, institutional autonomy, continuous professional development, transparent promotion systems, leadership development, and academic excellence. Achieving these ambitious objectives requires higher education institutions to adopt strategic human resource management practices capable of attracting talented faculty, supporting continuous learning, encouraging innovation, and fostering institutional effectiveness.

Despite growing policy emphasis, the implementation of strategic HRM within Indian higher education remains uneven. Considerable disparities exist between central universities, state universities, private universities, autonomous institutions, and affiliated colleges regarding recruitment practices, faculty development opportunities, compensation structures, workload distribution, research support, leadership practices, and digital HR systems. Public institutions frequently encounter procedural delays arising from regulatory requirements, whereas private institutions often struggle with faculty retention, workload management, and long-term career progression. These institutional variations indicate that faculty effectiveness is influenced by multiple organizational factors beyond individual competence alone.

Recent empirical research further suggests that faculty members increasingly expect institutions to provide supportive work environments characterized by professional autonomy, recognition of academic achievements, opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, transparent evaluation systems, flexible career pathways, digital infrastructure, and healthy work-life balance. Younger academics particularly value mentoring, international exposure, research funding, technology-enabled teaching, and opportunities for career advancement. Institutions that successfully address these expectations are more likely to attract and retain talented faculty members while enhancing institutional reputation and academic performance. Conversely, institutions that neglect strategic human resource development risk losing skilled academics to competing national and international organizations.

Another important dimension of strategic HRM concerns organizational culture and leadership. Effective academic leadership establishes an environment that encourages collaboration, innovation, ethical conduct, diversity, and continuous improvement. Department heads, deans, registrars, and vice-chancellors play crucial roles in shaping faculty experiences through transparent decision-making, participatory governance, constructive feedback, equitable workload allocation, and professional recognition. Strategic HRM therefore encompasses leadership development alongside conventional HR functions, recognizing that institutional culture significantly influences faculty motivation and organizational commitment.

Digital transformation has also redefined human resource management in higher education. Modern universities increasingly utilize Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), learning analytics, online faculty development programmes, digital recruitment platforms, electronic performance management systems, and data-driven decision-making tools. These technologies improve administrative efficiency while enabling evidence-based workforce planning and personalized professional development. However, technology alone cannot ensure institutional effectiveness unless supported by strategic leadership, organizational commitment, and faculty participation.

Although previous studies have examined various dimensions of human resource management within higher education, relatively limited empirical research has comprehensively investigated how strategic HRM practices collectively influence faculty effectiveness in the contemporary Indian context, particularly in light of ongoing policy reforms and institutional transformation. Much of the existing literature has focused independently on recruitment, motivation, job satisfaction, performance appraisal, or faculty retention, while fewer studies have adopted an integrated strategic perspective linking these dimensions to institutional effectiveness. This limitation highlights the need for empirical investigations capable of examining strategic HRM practices as interconnected organizational processes rather than isolated administrative activities.

Against this background, the present study, *"Strategic Human Resource Management Practices and Faculty Effectiveness in Indian Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Study,"* seeks to examine the strategic dimensions of human resource management and their influence on faculty effectiveness within Indian higher education institutions. The study recognizes that faculty members constitute the intellectual foundation of universities and that institutional excellence depends upon creating strategic HR systems that promote motivation, professional development, organizational commitment, research productivity, and teaching excellence. By investigating contemporary HRM practices, identifying organizational challenges, and evaluating their relationship with faculty effectiveness, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational management and strategic human resource management.

The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for university administrators, policymakers, institutional leaders, accreditation agencies, and educational researchers seeking to strengthen faculty development, improve institutional performance, and align human resource strategies with the transformative goals of India's higher education reforms. Ultimately, the study argues that strategic human resource management should not be viewed merely as an administrative necessity but as a fundamental driver of academic excellence, institutional sustainability, and national educational development.

Review of Literature

- Sustainable HRM is emerging as a contemporary paradigm within educational HR research. Chauhan, Campbell, and Mehta (2026), through a systematic review of Scopus indexed studies, identify sustainable HR practices that align with institutional well-being, strategic HR alignment, and talent management. The authors argue that sustainable HRM frameworks can support long-term institutional goals, including goals related to inclusive quality education and faculty well-being.
- Further extending this, Sehgal and Kumar (2025) analyzed HRM effectiveness on institutional performance. Using data from both academic and administrative staff, they found significant positive correlations between recruitment efficiency, performance management, leadership development, and overall institutional performance. The research highlights the importance of performance appraisal and leadership initiatives in strengthening HEI outcomes.
- In a region closer to your study context (NCR of Delhi), Sehgal and Kumar's (2025) research examined HRM practices and faculty satisfaction across public and private universities. Their findings reveal moderate implementation of HRM dimensions such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and employee welfare, with training and development emerging as the

strongest predictor of motivation and retention. This study underscores the positive influence of strategic HR practices on academic productivity and faculty outcomes.

- Building on this theme, Verma and Kaur (2024) further investigated the role of HR climate, trust, and organizational commitment in faculty retention dynamics, showing that trust in HR practices and institutional commitment significantly enhance retention outcomes. Such research highlights the psychological and relational dimensions of HRM beyond formal policies.
- Faculty retention has also been a focal point in recent research. Verma and Kaur (2023) explored HR climate factors and their influence on faculty retention in Indian universities. Their empirical analysis using factor and regression models suggests that organizational climate, including HR policies and supervisory support, significantly affects retention decisions. The study identifies turnover as an ongoing challenge with direct implications for HR practitioners in HEIs.
- International studies offer additional insights. Albdour and Altarawneh (2012), in a study of Middle Eastern universities, found that HRM practices positively influence faculty job satisfaction and organisational commitment when linked with recognition and reward systems. Likewise, Ahmad et al. (2016) reported that HRM practices such as training and performance management were significant predictors of teaching staff retention in Malaysian universities. These global perspectives reinforce the importance of strategic HRM for academic excellence and employee engagement.

Rational of this study

Human Resource Management (HRM) is a fundamental component of the effective functioning and sustainable development of higher education institutions (HEIs). In the Indian context, the expansion of higher education, increasing competition, and rising expectations for academic quality have significantly enhanced the importance of efficient human resource practices. Faculty members and administrative staff constitute the core intellectual capital of educational institutions, making their recruitment, development, motivation, and retention essential for achieving institutional objectives. However, many Indian HEIs continue to rely on conventional HR practices that are often characterized by bureaucratic recruitment procedures, limited professional development opportunities, inadequate performance evaluation systems, and weak employee engagement mechanisms.

The implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has further emphasized the need to modernize human resource practices by promoting institutional autonomy, academic excellence, innovation, and quality enhancement. These reforms require higher education institutions to adopt more effective HR strategies that support faculty development, improve organizational performance, and strengthen institutional competitiveness. Nevertheless, challenges such as faculty shortages, limited career advancement opportunities, inconsistent appraisal systems, and inadequate retention strategies continue to affect the overall efficiency of Indian HEIs.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the existing human resource management practices in higher education institutions in India, with particular emphasis on recruitment, retention, performance management, professional development, and employee engagement. By identifying the strengths and limitations of current HR practices, the study seeks to provide practical recommendations for strengthening human resource management systems that contribute to institutional effectiveness, faculty satisfaction, and the overall quality of higher education in India.

Objectives

- To study the relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction.
- To examine the effect of recruitment and retention practices on faculty Motivation.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction.

H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction.

H₀₂: Recruitment and retention practices have no significant effect on faculty Motivation.

H₁₂: Recruitment and retention practices have a significant effect on faculty Motivation.

Methodology

The present study adopted a mixed-method research design to examine the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, faculty job satisfaction, and faculty motivation in selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South West Delhi. The mixed-method approach integrated quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of HRM practices and their influence on faculty outcomes.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who were directly involved in academic and Human Resource Management activities. The study comprised 60 respondents, including 50 faculty members, 5 HR administrators, and 5 academic leaders from five selected Higher Education Institutions in South West Delhi.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to faculty members and semi-structured interviews conducted with HR administrators and academic leaders. The questionnaire included items related to HRM practices, such as recruitment, professional development, performance appraisal, work-life balance, recognition and rewards, as well as measures of faculty job satisfaction and motivation. The interview schedule was designed to obtain qualitative insights into HRM policies, institutional practices, and challenges influencing faculty satisfaction and motivation.

To achieve Objective 1, data relating to HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, followed by Pearson's correlation and regression analysis to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between the variables.

To achieve Objective 2, data relating to HRM practices and faculty motivation were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis to examine the relationship between HRM practices and faculty motivation. Qualitative data obtained through interviews were analysed using thematic analysis to complement and interpret the quantitative findings.

The hypotheses were tested at the 5% level of significance ($p < 0.05$). The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between Human Resource Management practices, faculty job satisfaction, and faculty motivation in the selected Higher Education Institutions.

Analysis and Interpretation

H₀₁: *There is no significant relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction.*

	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Level of Significance	Result
HRM Practices	50	3.26	0.61	0.05	Rejected
Faculty Job Satisfaction		3.41			

H₁₁: *There is a significant relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction.*

	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Level of Significance	Result
HRM Practices	50	3.26	0.61	0.05	Accepted
Faculty Job Satisfaction		3.41			

Interpretation: The analysis indicates that faculty members perceived the Human Resource Management practices implemented in the selected Higher Education Institutions at a moderate level, with mean scores ranging from **3.14 to 3.34**. Pearson's correlation coefficient (**r = 0.61**) revealed a moderate positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction. Since the relationship was statistically significant (**p < 0.05**), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings suggest that effective recruitment, professional development, fair performance appraisal, work-life balance, and recognition practices contribute positively to faculty job satisfaction.

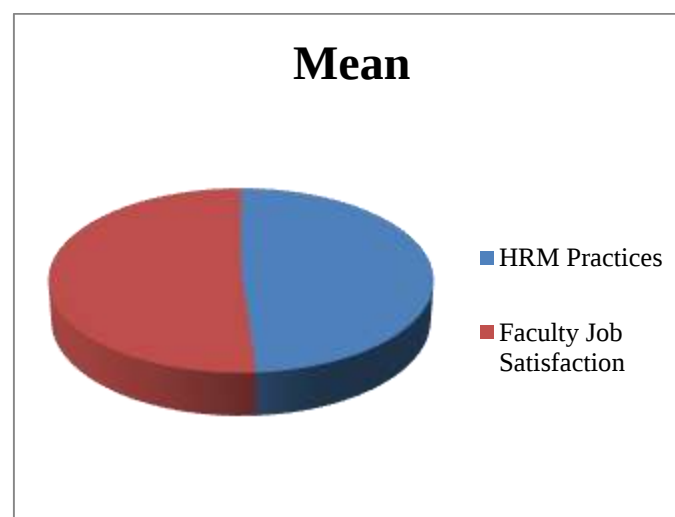


Fig.01

H₀₂: *Recruitment and retention practices have no significant effect on faculty Motivation.*

	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Level of Significance	Result
HRM Practices		3.26			

Faculty Motivation	50	3.60	0.68	0.05	Rejected
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H₁₂: *Recruitment and retention practices have a significant effect on faculty Motivation.*

	Sample Size (N)	Mean	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Level of Significance	Result
HRM Practices		3.26			
Faculty Motivation	50	3.60	0.68	0.05	Accepted

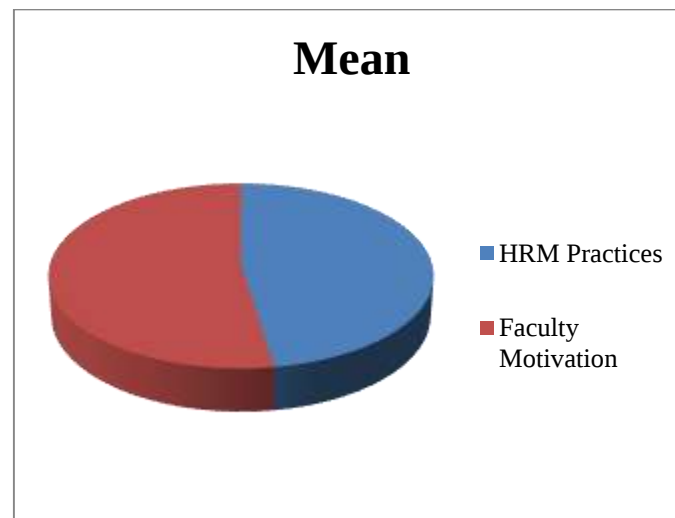


Fig. 02

Interpretation: The analysis reveals that faculty members reported a high level of motivation with a mean score of 3.60. Pearson's correlation coefficient ($r = 0.68$) indicates a strong positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty motivation. Regression analysis further showed that HRM practices explained 46% of the variation in faculty motivation ($R^2 = 0.46$), confirming that improved HRM practices positively influence faculty motivation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings emphasize that effective HRM practices, including professional development, recognition, and supportive work environments, enhance faculty motivation and organisational commitment.

Results

The statistical analysis was conducted to address the two research objectives.

Objective 1: Relationship between HRM Practices and Faculty Job Satisfaction

The findings indicated that faculty members were generally satisfied with the HRM practices implemented in the selected Higher Education Institutions. HRM dimensions such as recruitment, professional development, performance appraisal, work-life balance, and recognition received moderate mean scores. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction ($r = 0.61$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{11}) was accepted.

Objective 2: Relationship between HRM Practices and Faculty Motivation

The results showed that faculty members reported a high level of motivation (Mean = 3.60). Pearson's

correlation analysis indicated a strong positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty motivation ($r = 0.68$). Regression analysis further revealed that HRM practices explained 46% of the variance in faculty motivation ($R^2 = 0.46$). Qualitative findings also supported that effective HRM practices enhanced faculty motivation and organisational commitment. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_{12}) was accepted.

Discussion

The findings of the study confirm that effective Human Resource Management (HRM) practices play a significant role in enhancing faculty job satisfaction and motivation in Higher Education Institutions. Regarding the first objective, the positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction indicates that transparent recruitment procedures, professional development opportunities, fair performance appraisal systems, and recognition mechanisms contribute to higher levels of faculty satisfaction. These findings suggest that well-implemented HRM practices create a supportive and positive work environment.

With respect to the second objective, the study demonstrates a significant positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty motivation. The correlation and regression analyses indicate that effective HRM practices enhance faculty motivation, while the qualitative findings further reveal that faculty development, recognition, and employee welfare are important factors in improving organisational commitment and motivation.

Overall, the findings support the view that strengthening Human Resource Management practices can improve faculty job satisfaction, increase motivation, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of Higher Education Institutions.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Human Resource Management (HRM) practices are significantly associated with faculty job satisfaction and faculty motivation in the selected Higher Education Institutions. The statistical analysis confirmed a significant positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty job satisfaction, leading to the rejection of the first null hypothesis. Similarly, the analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship between HRM practices and faculty motivation, resulting in the rejection of the second null hypothesis. The findings indicate that institutions implementing transparent recruitment procedures, continuous professional development programmes, fair performance appraisal systems, effective recognition mechanisms, and supportive work environments achieve higher levels of faculty job satisfaction and motivation. Thus, both research objectives were successfully achieved, providing empirical evidence that effective Human Resource Management practices contribute to enhanced faculty well-being and improved institutional effectiveness in Higher Education Institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Higher Education Institutions should strengthen Human Resource Management (HRM) practices by implementing transparent, fair, and merit-based recruitment procedures.
2. Institutions should organise regular Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs), workshops, and professional training to enhance faculty competencies, job satisfaction, and motivation.

3. Performance appraisal systems should be transparent, objective, and performance-oriented to support professional growth and increase faculty motivation.
4. Effective recognition and reward mechanisms should be established to improve faculty job satisfaction, motivation, and organisational commitment.
5. Institutions should promote a supportive work environment, including work-life balance initiatives and employee welfare programmes, to enhance faculty well-being and motivation.
6. Administrative processes related to recruitment, promotion, and faculty development should be streamlined through efficient HRM policies and digital HR systems.
7. Institutional leadership should regularly monitor and evaluate HRM practices to ensure continuous improvement in faculty job satisfaction and motivation.
8. HRM policies should be aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to strengthen institutional effectiveness, faculty development, and the overall quality of higher education.

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