

# **Does Workplace Environment Influence Employee Engagement Level?**

## **A Case Study Research Report**

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**June, 2023**

**Recommended Citation**

Kayastha, C., & Niroula, P. (2023). Does Workplace Environment Influence Employee Engagement Level? Lalitpur, Nepal: Nepal Administrative Staff College.

**Disclaimer:** This research is funded by Nepal Administrative Staff College. The opinions expressed in this research report do not represent official position of Nepal Administrative Staff College and is of the author.

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## **Acknowledgements**

The study entitled “Does Workplace Environment Influence Employee Engagement Level?” has been prepared with the immense support, continuous supervision, and motivation of distinguished personalities and we express our deep gratitude to all of them.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Research and Consulting Service Department for financial support, continuous guidance, and encouragement all the way through this study.

Similarly, we would like to express our gratitude to research committee for their feedbacks and comments. We also express our profound gratitude to Dr. Rajan Khanal, Executive Director, and Mr. Bishnu Prasad Lamsal, Deputy Executive Director, for their encouragement and incessant support to complete this study.

Our sincere thanks to the respondents whose valuable participation helped us to complete this study in time.

## **Case Study Research Team**

June 2023

## **Abstract**

This study proposed to identify whether the workplace environment plays role in influencing the engagement level of employees in University Grants Commission (UGC). UGC has been a reputed government institution that is authorized to accredit colleges and universities in Nepal. The study followed a qualitative approach in which the researcher adopted case study method as a strategy of inquiry. The respondents of the study were permanent and contract staffs of UGC having diverse academic background, gender, ethnicity, and work experience.

The findings of this study demonstrated that in UGC there might be the issues of the culture of unfair treatment and prevalence of biasness on the basis of permanent and contract staff accompanied by lack of rewards and recognitions based on the performance. Apart from this, employees are found to be less likely motivated enough to take noble initiatives and are less satisfied with the existing unfair practices of promotion at their perceptual level..

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **1.1 General Background**

Building better performing workplace demands an understanding on how the workplaces affect organization behavior and how these behaviors again drives workplace performance. Indeed, the workplace becomes an essential component of the performance in the relationship of employees, work, and the workplace (Joroff et al., 2003). Hughes (2007) in a survey reported that nine out of ten workers believed that quality of work place affects the attitude of employees and increases their productivity.

While a positive work environment is important for an organization to produce better outcomes, employee engagement also has an impact on a company's overall output (Bakker, 2011). Career opportunities, benefits, corporate responsibility, coworkers, employee health and well-being, intrinsic motivation, manager, managing performance, middle management, organizational reputation, pay, people or HR practices, physical work environment, recognition, resources, retirement savings, senior leadership, work-life balance are among the 21 key drivers or components, to enhance employee engagement (Mishra et al., 2014). Therefore, managers and the entire company must endeavor to ensure that workers are interested in their work environment, the activities that are arranged by the organization, and their job responsibilities. The senior management must also make sure that every employee is working in the appropriate capacity. Employees must also be given the opportunity to learn about the company's vision and objective, and any efforts made by them must be recognized and rewarded (Yu, 2013). According to Saks (2006), there is currently a dearth of research on employee engagement, thus more work has to be done in this area. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate how working environment affects employee engagement.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

On one hand, the workplace environment and its effects on employees' engagement has been a prominent research topic for private enterprises while on the other hand, public enterprises are still not in a stand to accept that workplace do affects employees' engagement and performance. May be because of this, there is a severe gap in the productivity level of public and private enterprises. There is strong evidence that productivity advancement in non-governmental organizations is incomparable to the productivity of the government firms (Haenisch, 2012). The challenge is that, in the shadow of a mediocre and bureaucratic working environment, encouraging employees is not an easy undertaking. Due to their unfavorable working conditions, government personnel have a reputation for being sluggish and apathetic (Wright, 2001), and managers are powerless to change this due to strict civil and public service laws and acts. One of the biggest issues in public management is believed to be how managers and institution as a whole can motivate their workers (Behn, 1995). This shows that public enterprises need an immediate intervention to identify whether their employees perceived the workplace environment favorable or not to and how does it affect the employee engagement.

In this milieu, this study aims to explore the status of workplace environment from the view-point of employee and try to identify its effect in the employee engagement.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This study raises the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the workplace environment influence employee engagement level in University Grants Commission (UGC)?

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objective of this study is to explore the influences of workplace environment in the employee engagement level at UGC.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The influence of workplace environment on employee engagement level has always been the issue of research and discussion in the discipline of organizational behavior and human resource management across the globe and Nepal is not an exception. However, very few studies have been done with special focus on a particular organization of public sector. Further, this study is supposed to generate insights that could fill the knowledge gap in the decision making authorities of the concerned organization so that they can ameliorate their workplace environment and ensure better employee engagement level through policy, managerial and operational interventions in the days to come. Apart from this, this study could be a reference material for capacity development service provider like NASC to endorse case based teaching-learning approaches in classroom sessions to impart hands-on knowledge and skills in the trainees with evidence informed case study representing diverse spheres of Nepali Public Service and institutions at large.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

This study mainly aims at assessing and exploring the influence of workplace environment on employee engagement level at selected public organizations. Organizational support and employee well-being shall be the mediating variables for the present study which shall be assessed through case based critical incidences on the selected public organizations.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Employee Engagement**

Despite the fact that there are many definitions of employee engagement, the well-known study by Schaufeli et al. (2002) claims that managers are not always the factors that influence an employee's engagement but rather that engagement is "a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior." The opposite of engagement, according to researchers who study "burnout," is said to include "exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency" (González-Roma et al., 2006). In contrast, engagement is said to consist of "energy, involvement, and efficiency" and "vigor and dedication" (Schaufeli et al, 2002). Employees that are well balance and are emotionally attached to the organization's vision and mission are more likely to be involved in achieving those goals. A motivated employee will work with a forward-thinking mindset, enhancing the organization's reputation and worth. Employers create cultures that reward high levels of employee engagement, and happy workers are eager to take advantage of all the resources provided by their employers (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). In order to engage employees and link their ambitions with those of the corporation, businesses define well-equipped designs. Employee engagement is a useful strategy for preventing employee burnout and disengagement, as well as for indulging their good feelings and promoting ethical behavior at work.

### **2.1 Workplace Environment**

Employees' desire to continue working for the company is significantly influenced by workplace conditions. Previous research has demonstrated that the work environment is a component that may be utilized to assess each employee's level of involvement within the firm (Popli & Rizvi, 2016). According to research by Miles (2001) and Harter et al. (2001), different features of the

workplace might lead to different levels of employee engagement. Management that promotes a supportive work environment is defined as organizations that perform their responsibilities, demonstrate their concern for employees' needs and feelings, provide constructive feedback and allow workers to voice their concerns, develop new skills, and resolve work-related difficulties (Deci & Ryan, 1987). In fact, Kahn (1990) found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships as well as supportive management promoted psychological safety. Organizational members felt safe in work environments that were characterized by openness and supportiveness. Supportive environments allow members to experiment and to try out new things and even fail without fear of the consequences (Kahn, 1990).

### **2.3 Study Framework - Influence of Workplace Environment in Employee Engagement**

The framework of the study is adapted from multiple literatures. The variables of workplace environment are primarily identified through the work environment scale of (Moos, 2005) while few variables like team culture, rewards and incentives, diversity is added after review other relevant literatures (Deci & Ryan, 1987). The working environment at a company is significant, according to Garg & Talwar (2017), because it is thought to encourage employees, which leads to improved productivity, stronger business enthusiasm, and deeper customer involvement. It is also thought that when someone feels respected and appreciated at work, they will positively contribute to the success of the company. Because it may reduce turnover rates, a happy environment is always beneficial for both the individual and the company. The working culture, working style, hierarchies, and human resource practices that have been adopted or followed in an organization are all included in the work environment, in addition to work engagement and motivation at the workplace (Agarwal & Mehta, 2014). In this study however, we would be focusing on the above-mentioned factors of working environment that will be further explained and analyzed in the discussions.

Job demand links to the negative impact on work engagement whereas job resources links to the positive impact on work engagement. The aspects of employee engagement are adopted from the work engagement scale of Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) that consists of vigor, dedication and absorption. The term "vigor" describes having a high amount of drive, stamina, perseverance, readiness, and mental toughness when working. Being dedicated to one's work and feeling fulfilled, satisfied, and challenged are examples of dedication. Absorption refers to being engaged and fully engrossed in one's work (without knowing the time passing by) and finds it difficult to separate from that task. For this study, only two determinants vigor and dedication were considered.

## **CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study was guided by qualitative approach following the case-based research methods. Qualitative research has an influential nature where the researcher explores the meanings and insights of the data rather than the numerical and analytical data (Mohajan, 2017). The choice of case study as a method is a response to a desire to gain holistic and meaningful insights into a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Yet, as has been mentioned it is constructed of several phases, each constituting its own form of methodology. This study is an explorative qualitative study that shall be conducted via semi-structured interviews with employees of University Grants Commission in order to seek the answer to the research questions of this study.

### **3.2 Study Population, Sample Size and Sampling**

The study population are the employees of University Grants Commission of Nepal. Altogether 7 respondents were selected through purposive sampling considering different department, different age group and years of experience (Creswell, 2007). All the respondents were thoroughly interviewed through in-depth semi-structured interview method.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Data collection for the qualitative study were begin after receiving the approval from the selected public enterprise. Once approval accepted, participants are informed with consent documents. Following the submission of the informed consent documents, data collection is accomplished through conduction of semi-structured interviews utilizing an interview guide. The researcher was the key data collection instrument (Sutton & Austin, 2015) for the present study. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule as the main instrument for data collection. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research to seek a deeper understanding of the human experience (Bearman, 2019) as it allows the opportunity to develop personalized open-

ended questions based on participants' response (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Interviews with each participant was conducted face-to face. The questions were developed based on the literatures on the factors considered in the conceptual framework.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

The research team pre-informed the respondents of the study about the study objective and purpose and received their consent. In addition to this, the research team mentioned about the professional treatment of the insights and information shared by respondents ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. This allowed respondents to open up and freely share their valuable experiences and feelings during the interview sessions.

## CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Findings

Before starting a data analysis, the collected data in the form of interview and recordings were first transcribed and individual cases (stories) were built upon the experienced shared by the respondents. Those cases are presented below as the finding of the study.

***Table 1: Respondent Profile***

| <b>Respondent</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Position</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Nature of Job</b> | <b>Years of Experience</b> | <b>Qualification</b>                           |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1                 | Male          | Officer III     | 40         | Permanent            | 14                         | Master in Journalism and Public Administration |
| 2                 | Female        | Assistant I     | 29         | Contract             | 5                          | Master in Business Studies                     |
| 3                 | Male          | Officer II      | 54         | Permanent            | 20                         | Masters                                        |
| 4                 | Male          | Officer II      | 45-50      | Contract             | 10                         | IT Engineer                                    |
| 5                 | Female        | Assistant II    | 29         | Contract             | 4                          | M. Phil in Public Administration               |
| 6                 | Female        | Officer III     | 49         | Permanent            | 20                         | Master in Public Administration                |
| 7                 | Female        | Assistant I     | 37         | Permanent            | 13                         | Masters in Sociology                           |

**Respondent 1 – Narendra (Name Changed)**

Narendra has been working in University Grants Commission for the last 12 years. He has joined the office as Senior Assistant and after 11 years of service he now worked as an Assistant Director. The Assistant Director post was not given to him through promotion or performance appraisal. After 12 years of dedication and vigorous experience in UGC, he has to compete in the internal as well in open completion for the same post. He is proud of what he had achieved but he is also disheartened by the treatment of an organization towards him and similar other staff who are yet not promoted even after working for more than a decade.

It has been more than 5 years since his deputation in a Quality Assurance and Accreditation division. QAA is considered to be the busiest and most charming division of UGC (mentioned by all the respondents). According to him, in QAA despite the other hurdles of organization, team cohesiveness is very high as they have weekly meetings to divide our workload. All the team members are clear with their roles and responsibilities. All the crucial planning and decisions related to QAA are made in the team meeting and once the team members are assigned with the roles, they are independent enough to perform their work in terms of authority and responsibility. He shared that the major reason behind the efficient work in QAA is the balanced number of contract and permanent staff, their educational background, and mostly the zeal of their team members to efficiently perform the work. He also expressed the irony; the same culture is not seen in any other division of UGC.

While we were interviewing him, we figure out that he was totally disregarding the workplace environment. He mentioned that the organization does not promote initiation and new ideas. Also, there is a big question mark in the performance appraisal system. There are so many loopholes in

the system. The evaluation of the performance is done by someone who is not even related to the division where he is deputed. He shared that there is no logic or bases for promoting someone. For instance, 1 year back someone got promoted just because of seniority saying that seniority is the crucial base for promotion while this year someone who was 8 years junior to other senior employees was promoted and the reason was his performance was better in comparison to senior staff. However, there is no official performance measurement scale to valid this claim. This person particularly seems to have a good relationship with the higher authority as mentioned by Mr. Narendra.

### **Respondent 2 – Nalina (Name changed)**

Nalina is working with UGC for the last 5 years. She was appointed as a QAA assistant in contract-based recruitment. Since she was also from QAA Division, she shared similar experiences as respondent 1. She mentioned that environment in her division is friendly, the work is rigorous and the communication channel is clear and strong in her division which makes it easy for her to work smoothly. She mentioned that she is getting an immense opportunity to learn from experts and professors of national and international universities in the QAA division because of which she enjoys her work.

When we asked her about the workplace environment outside the QAA division she mentioned that the informal relationship is good, especially with female staff. This excites her to come to work every day. But since the HR and appraisal system of the organization is not strong and effective, she is also looking for better opportunities for her career growth. She further mentioned that the contract staff is not given equal opportunities in comparison to permanent staff even though contract staffs are the ones who perform better than the permanent. She has shared that many good talents of UGC had joined other public institutions for better opportunities just because

of the lack of a strong HR policy for contract staff. If only UGC could retain the pool of talents that it used to have, UGC could excel in its efficiency. According to her, the major problem in UGC is the lack of initiation from higher authority in establishing and implementing a strong HR policy and system.

In the end, she added the workplace environment is a very subjective thing. It depends on the nature of the person, and how he or she perceives the situation. She knows there are many issues in UGC, but she prefers to look on the brighter side, the colleagues who are good friends, the nature of the job, the

### **Respondent 3 – Kiran (name changed)**

Kiran is one of the oldest staffs of UGC. He has been working at UGC for the last 20 years. His journey started as a senior assistant and after he first joined the institution as a senior assistant and after 7 years he was promoted to an officer. Recently he also had his 2nd promotion after 11 years as an undersecretary. He is leading the research and scholarship division with two of his subordinates. He mentioned that each and every division has its clear jurisdiction and job description which make them easy to perform their task and make decision regarding their work. However, in the case of work-life balance, I won't say we have work pressure that we took to home but the phone calls that we receive from clients are very disturbing it goes beyond office timing.

He also added that even though the recruitment process follows certain standards to maintain inclusion, in the case of the job specification and job distribution, diversity is not well maintained. Kiran highlighted a real-time example of a person who has done his master's in economics but is currently looking after IT and communications. No one in the organization knows how this got

channelized, actually, they don't have a system to allocate jobs according to people's interests and qualifications as informed by the respondent.

He also shared that last year a bunch of new permanent recruits were appointed. However, the 25% remuneration provision of UGC in the salary was not applicable to them as they were new recruits, and as it is mentioned in the "aarthik niyamawali" new recruits will not be eligible for this provision. He further told us to imagine what kind of environment would be there in the office if the same level of officers and staff are getting different salaries and perks. He also emphasizes the poor retirement plan of UGC. He says that UGC lacks a leader who can take a risk and work for the betterment of an organization. In the last 20 years, he has not witnessed any significant change in an organization.

When we asked him, does he feel like coming to the office or does he feel a sense of accomplishment while leaving the office, he mentioned that he along with his other colleagues are looking for a golden handshake so that they can leave the office. There is no motivation or encouragement to work and neither can resign from the job because the retirement plan is so weak. He thinks he is stuck there which has made him more and more sluggish.

#### **Respondent 4 – Heena (name changed)**

Heena is one of the junior staff of UGC who is working there for the last 4 years. However, her academic qualification is overqualified for her post. She has completed her Master's in Philosophy in Public Administration. She shared about her enthusiasm, motivation, and curiosity while joining a public institution like UGC 4 years back. It was a dream come true for her to work in a public institution. However, it didn't even take a year to break her dream because the environment of an institution is very demotivating. People there bully her for being overqualified for the job she is doing and sarcastically tell her to find better opportunities. She has big reservations about her JD

itself. She thinks that the JD that she is provided does not match her skills and learning enthusiasm. She is interested in research and works to work in the research division but she has been working as a receptionist for the last five years. There is no such thing called the right man in the right place. The only thing she is thankful for is that her JD does not demand rigorous and extra time otherwise the organization has never given any consideration to things like work-life balance and employee motivation. Also as she is a contract staff, she shared that contract staff are not treated equally. UGC gives fellowships and scholarships to emerging scholars however because she was a contract staff there she couldn't apply for the same. In the case of permanent staff, they have certain quotas for fellowship and scholarship. These kinds of systematic biases dishearten and demotivate employees who join policy-making organizations like UGC with learning hopes. She rightfully pointed out that information, communication, and participation are three things that an organization needs for better research and development and if she was in the right place in UGC (as an officer) she said she could have done her best to channelize all these 3 dimensions from every possible way. However, she also mentioned that right she is not happy with her job and thoughtfully looking for better opportunities outside UGC.

**Respondent 5: Dipak (name changed)**

Dipak is working as Under Secretary in UGC for the last 10 years. However, his tenure in UGC is on a contract basis. He has a little bit of perspective toward the work environment of UGC. He thinks that because it is a nonautonomous organization, UGC is not independent enough to make their own decision regarding any issues so this might have been the main reason behind whatever is happening in UGC. He also mentioned that we need to look at the bigger, our whole society, our education system, our politics, and our economy is deteriorating and since our institution is just a simple sub-system of this society, it is obvious that things will also not work out here. But he has learned to make himself happy and positive. He also raised a question about the administrative

function of the institution. The leader or let us say the main authority of the organization came through political appointment, especially the retired professors. So the professors who in their entire life have never worked in administrative functions how come can make contextual or relevant decisions or initiations in UGC? In the end, he mentioned that he is happy with what he is doing at UGC.

**Respondent 6: Uma (name changed)**

As a mother of two children, she never wanted to take her work to her home, and in her 20 years of working experience in UGC, she doesn't remember taking office pressures home. She is clear that UGC doesn't promote workaholism but yes if somebody wants they can take their work home there is no hard and fast rule on this. She mentioned that they have a job description for each and every division and post however, it is not concrete enough and has a layer of confusion. Uma did not hesitate to mention that UGC has a pool of young talents but the institution is not able to utilize those talents. Job placement has been done wrongfully. Youth are not given opportunities to share their innovative ideas.

She also shared the recent incident of unfair treatment to her regarding promotion. She joined UGC as a senior assistant and got promoted to officer after 7 years. 2 days back she was supposed to get promoted to Under Secretary, however, someone who was more than 7 years junior to her in terms of work experience got promoted. It seems this incident has disheartened her deeply. She feels that she is stuck in UGC and if given a golden handshake opportunity she would have live the job and started a new business. Her motivation to come to the office has declined to zero since the recent incident.

### **Respondent 7: Sabina (name changed)**

Sabina observes a serious lacking in the capacity-building part of the institution. She has been working in UGC for the last 13 years and she has got few national and international training opportunities yet she did not find any relevance of those training to her workplace. Also, she added that middle-level managers create hindrances in the career growth of junior staff. There is no culture of coaching and mentoring. Supervisors and seniors only seek their individual benefits. There is no such thing called mutual benefits in this organization. Sabina was our 7th respondent and was from the Newar community of *Purano Thimi*. She shared that when she joined the office only 1 or 2 *Newars* were there and because we have a *Newari* accent in our communication, we were tagged as an under performer or “*kaam najjane*” who does not know how to work with other community of people. These kinds of negative vibes have made her feel isolated in the office. Yet she added .....despite these negatives, she has learned to be aware of herself to perform better for her promotion, career growth, and organizational development.

### **4.2 Discussions**

After the preparation and review of the transcribed data, the variables that are mentioned in the literatures are scrutinize and interpreted and the discussions is proceeded then after.

The discussion for this study is done based on the research question of the study. The findings suggested that there are elements of workplace environment that might influence the level of engagement of employees. However, the finding also suggested that there are other factors besides workplace environment that also intervene in the engagement level of employees.

### **Work Life Balance**

Work-life balance has been described in a variety of ways over the years. WLB is vital in determining an employee's attitude toward their business and their lives, claims Scholarios (2004).

Timms et al. (2015) looked at work-life balance as a potential indicator of job engagement. They also took into account the impact of WLB on work performance, both good and bad and the study demonstrated a relationship between all three aspects of job engagement (i.e., absorption, devotion, and vigor). In UGC the respondents were clear about the healthy work life balance that they have been experiencing till now. The finding also suggested that it depends on the people nature on how you handle the work pressure otherwise the work that are allocated to be done by the staffs are enough to be done within the hours.

*“As a working mother I never want to take office work at home, and neither the office forced me to do so” (Respondent 6, Uma)*

The discussion also figured out that employees would be more satisfied if there is a documented provisions for the welfare of employees in terms of WLB. Male and Female counterparts have also given the same response that work life balance in UGC is well maintained however in near future if any imbalance occurs there is no any office provisions in case of work life balance so they are not sure this will prevail for long.

### **Role Clarity**

The findings of several studies on employee motivation showed that perceived role clarity has many advantages in the form of positive employee outcomes. The findings from the indepth interview of UGC staffs contribute on these studies. Organizations seems to struggle to engage and encourage their workers in their work because of the lack of clear job description. UGC has a certain standard job description which sounds charming but is not objectified.

*Our JD is given to us but it very unclear. It considers of superficial things like achieving project goals with utmost efficiency and effectiveness however we are not clear with the project goals. The*

*detailing and simplification of the job description is required for role clarity. (Respondent 7, Sabina)*

Jada et al. (2019) correctly said that managers should emphasize creating clear job descriptions as well as communicating to staff members what is expected of them. By frequently outlining job goals and expectations, management may help workers understand their roles better (Hassan, 2013). According to a study by Kundu et al. (2019) on perceived role clarity, innovative work behavior is directly impacted favorably by role clarity, employees have a tendency to act better when they understand their work duties. Additionally, Dalal (2018) made the correct point that when employees are unclear about their jobs, they lose energy in bewilderment rather than completing their tasks, which lowers their level of engagement at work.

### **Team Culture**

Team culture refers to members who share the same insights about emergent and simplified sets of norms, values and beliefs developed after mutual interactions and expect the same type of work ability and behaviour among its members (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). While organizational culture affects the effectiveness of the organization, team culture influences team effectiveness, commitment and work engagement of its team members and this can be seen in UGC as the finding showed that despite organization culture of UGC was not appreciated by many of the staffs, the team culture of one or two division seems to be integrated, valued and as (Costa et al., 2014) mentioned that the team member who feels contributed and valued are also the one who feel inspired, energetic and willing to work with that team even despite possible external setbacks.

*In QAA division, out of 7 members, 5 of us are contract staffs but we never felt that way. We love our work and we perform our work equivalent to permanent employee. Also in case of team*

*cohesiveness our QAA division is considered the best in the organization itself. This is because in QAA our voices are heard, our ideas are respected and roles are clear” (Respondent 2, Nalina)*

Employees who work in the same team interact more frequently, so they can be more influenced by their direct workgroup than by the organization itself (Shin et al., 2015). Thus, the study suggested that the stronger the team culture, the greater the team work engagement of its members.

### **Rewards and Recognition**

Engagement of the employee cannot be separate from the employees’ individual interests. Maslach et al., (2001) have suggested that a lack of rewards and recognition can lead to burnout and appropriate recognition and reward is important for engagement. Employees of UGC seems to lack emotional attachment to the organization which is an important part of engagement as it can be measured by looking on how they feel motivated in their work. Employee tends to be more motivated if they get something that can make them feel more excited in the workplace. So the vigor of coming to work is highly affected by the lack of formal recognition in an organization. However, the personal character of a person can play a mediating role in case of dedication of performing the work as if an employee is a hard-working person, even in the absence of reward he/she will give his best at work.

*There is no any recognition or rewards based on my performance, instead after giving 9 years of my valuable time in an organization, my office even did not provide me a paid leave when I get an opportunity for Chinese Embassy to pursue my master degree. What can I expect from this organization, the best employee award is given in roll call based rather than evaluating a performance. This has demotivated me to come to work but if you ask particularly about performing my duties, yet I am doing with my full dedication. (Respondent 1, Narendra)*

## **Fairness and Diversity Management at Workplace**

The labelling of an organization as “fair” can be made off of the basis of perception and reality. Fairness is ideally seen and felt throughout all levels of the organization (thereby confirming it is real rather than just perceived) and can take many forms in the workplace; application of policies, procedures and the presence of unions to help level the playing field. In UGC, the respondents mentioned that there is no any union that can speak for the employees. The ratio permanent and contract employees are almost same yet contract employees are deprived of all the facilities of the institution.

*I am academically a sound scholar. I have done my M. Phil in Public Administration. I am highly interested in research and academic work. But the irony is despite working in a academic institution like UGC, just because I am a permanent staff I am not eligible to apply for research grants or PhD fellowship. I don't understand what kind of provision is this. How can institution like UGC can discourage its own staff to pursue for research works. (Respondent 4, Heena)*

Equity, and in essence - fairness, is a key driver of employee engagement. Other factors that impact perceptions of fairness include; proximity (how close an employee is to the situation and their level of involvement), expectations and entitlement (Beugré, 1998). Demographic factors also impact perceptions of fairness; level of education, occupational status, occupational tenure and gender – where men are more likely to perceive fairness as equity, whereas women are more likely to perceive fairness as equality (Beugré, 1998). There is no any seen biasness in terms of diversity in the organization. However, the findings depicted that employees do give sarcastic judgement based on education and ethnicity in UGC which is taken normally in the organization culture.

*“As a Newar I am always judged for my accent and I am not given chance to speak in programme or host any event.” (Respondent 7, Sabina)*

*People keep telling me that I am not in a right place as per my education. I don't that this is there sincere concern or just trying to let me down. (Respondent 4, Heena)*

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

This study proposed to identify whether the workplace environment plays role in influencing the engagement level of employees in University Grants Commission. UGC has been a reputed government institution that is also a authorized organization that accredited colleges and universities. It is important for an organization to have a strong human resource management as the function of UGC demands wide range of human resources from academic as administrative view. Effective human resource management is also synonymous effective employee engagement and the literatures suggested that the environment of workplace plays a vital role in the creating the level of engagement of employees in an organization.

UGC is comprised of permanent and contract employees almost in the same ratio. Our study demonstrated in UGC there might be the issues of culture of unfair treatment and biasness on the basis of permanent and contract staff and lack of rewards and recognitions based on the performance. Also, it seems employees are not motivated to be initiative. Employees seems dissatisfied with the system of promotion because of which it became hard for an organization retain to talented and intellectual staffs which eventually make the workplace worse. Thus, with this study we can conclude that to create a better workplace environment the system should be developed in such a way that it addressed the issues of employees because if employees are satisfied they are engaged well which eventually contributes in the productivity of an organization.

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### Annex 1: Interview Checklist

1. **Name:**
2. **Position:**
3. **Tenure in UGC:**
4. **Gender:**
5. **Age:**
6. **Academic Background:**

| S.N | Workplace Environment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Employee Engagement                                                                                  |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | My work schedule is flexible enough for me to meet my family/personal responsibilities. How? Does your organization offer a healthy work life balance?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Are you provided with the clear job description?                                                     |
| 2   | Do you feel appreciated for your contributions at work? How? Is there any recognition and rewarding system?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Do you feel connected to the work that you do? Does your education and interest match with your job? |
| 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your organization hire people from diverse backgrounds?</li> <li>• How are they given opportunity?</li> <li>• Is diversity and inclusion a priority in your organization? Are diverse perspectives valued at organization?</li> <li>• Are people of all cultures and backgrounds respected and valued?</li> </ul>                                                                                                    |                                                                                                      |
| 4   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many people work with you in your team?</li> <li>• Are goals and accountabilities clear to everyone on your team?</li> <li>• Do your subordinates, supervisor and seniors appreciate your contributions at work?</li> <li>• Do you feel as though you can depend on the other members of your team?</li> <li>• How often do you feel familiar with organizational changes and the process involved in it ?</li> </ul> |                                                                                                      |
| 5   | Do you feel any concern regarding incidences of harassment or discrimination at your workplace? Is there any mechanism to lodge and resolve it?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Do you feel that your compensation is fair, relative to similar roles at the organization.           |

|    |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                        |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6  | Are you encouraged to express your opinion and feelings?                                                                                   | Do you leave work with a sense of achievement on most days?                            |
| 7  | Do you share strong connections with your colleagues?                                                                                      | How often do you accomplish a lot of good work?                                        |
| 8  | Is your organization a place where people feed off each other's positivity and energy?                                                     | Is your organization a place where people believe they can grow and master new skills? |
| 9  | Does your work environment foster a strong sense of community and connection?                                                              | Do you find your work engaging?                                                        |
| 10 | Is your organization a place where people feed off each other's positivity and energy?                                                     | How likely are you to continue working for this organization for the next 12 months?   |
| 11 | Is there anything about your organization that you really don't like?                                                                      | Do you have opportunities for advancement or promotion at this organization?           |
| 12 | How conducive do you find your workplace environment?                                                                                      | Does your immediate manager regularly coach you on your job performance?               |
| 13 | How often do you feel like going to the workplace and avail your productive time to organization every new morning?                        | Do you have the resources and information you need to do your job?                     |
| 14 | If you were in the leadership role, mention three key changes you would love to make to ensure best workplace environment at organization? | Do you feel your immediate manager cares about your development?                       |
| 15 | On a scale of 1–10, how happy are you at work?                                                                                             | On a scale of 1–10, how well do you feel engaged at work?                              |