

Impact of Physical, Psychological and Environmental Factors on Job Satisfaction in Employees of Higher Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of physical, psychological, and environmental factors on job satisfaction among faculty members in the higher education sector. Using a mixed-methods approach, primary data were purportedly collected through a structured questionnaire from 140 college and university teachers across various disciplines. The questionnaire comprised 12 items covering workplace physical conditions, psychological well-being, and organisational environment, along with overall job satisfaction. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis to examine relationships between the factors and job satisfaction. In addition, semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of participants were thematically analysed to provide deeper insights into contextual influences on satisfaction levels. The results indicate that psychological factors such as autonomy, motivation, and stress management have the strongest positive association with job satisfaction, followed by environmental factors such as organisational climate and collegial relationships. Physical factors, while significant, showed comparatively lower predictive power. The qualitative findings highlight that faculty members value supportive leadership, academic freedom, and recognition over infrastructural improvements alone. The study underscores the need for higher education institutions to adopt a holistic approach that addresses psychological and environmental dimensions alongside physical resources to enhance faculty satisfaction, retention, and productivity.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Higher Education, Psychological Factors, Physical Factors, Environmental Factors, Mixed-Methods Research.

Introduction

Job satisfaction has long been recognised as a critical determinant of employee performance, organisational commitment, and retention across sectors. In the higher education context, the significance of job satisfaction extends beyond individual well-being to directly influence the quality of teaching, research output, and student learning experiences. Faculty members, as the primary drivers of academic excellence, operate in an environment that demands a balance between teaching responsibilities, research expectations, administrative duties, and community engagement. Their level of satisfaction with their professional roles can thus shape institutional reputation and student outcomes in profound ways.

Globally, job satisfaction has been conceptualised as the extent to which employees feel content with and fulfilled by their work. While compensation and job security are often seen as the most

visible contributors, a growing body of literature suggests that non-monetary factors, such as working conditions, psychological well-being, and the broader organisational environment, can be equally, if not more, influential. In the case of higher education, the interplay between physical factors (such as infrastructure, resources, and workload), psychological factors (including motivation, autonomy, and stress levels), and environmental factors (like organisational climate, collegiality, and policy frameworks) forms a complex ecosystem that shapes faculty members' job satisfaction.

Background and Context

The higher education sector, especially in developing countries, has undergone significant transformations over the past two decades. The expansion of private universities, increased student enrolments, internationalisation of curricula, and heightened research expectations have changed the nature of academic work. While these developments have created new opportunities, they have also increased workload pressures and performance demands. Faculty members often find themselves navigating challenges such as limited resources, bureaucratic hurdles, changing evaluation metrics, and the need to adapt to emerging teaching technologies.

In such a dynamic landscape, job satisfaction becomes a critical area of focus for administrators and policymakers. Dissatisfied faculty are more likely to experience burnout, disengage from their roles, or leave the institution altogether, which can disrupt academic continuity and erode institutional quality. Conversely, satisfied faculty members tend to be more productive, innovative, and committed to institutional goals.

Problem Statement

Although the concept of job satisfaction has been widely studied in the corporate sector, research specific to higher education particularly in the Indian context remains limited. Existing studies often focus on isolated aspects, such as salary levels or workload, without adopting a holistic view that simultaneously considers physical, psychological, and environmental dimensions. This fragmented approach overlooks the potential interrelationships among these factors and their combined effect on faculty well-being and performance.

Given that faculty roles are inherently multidimensional and deeply influenced by organisational culture, a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of job satisfaction is essential. This study addresses this gap by examining the relative and collective impact of physical, psychological, and environmental factors on the job satisfaction of faculty in higher education institutions.

Research Questions

To guide the inquiry, the following research questions were formulated:

- What is the relationship between physical factors and the job satisfaction of faculty members in higher education?
- How do psychological factors influence job satisfaction in this context?
- To what extent do environmental factors contribute to job satisfaction?
- Which among the three factors is the strongest predictor of job satisfaction?

Objectives of the Study

Based on the above questions, the study aims to:

- Assess the influence of physical factors (infrastructure, workload, resource availability) on job satisfaction.
- Examine the role of psychological factors (motivation, autonomy, stress management) in determining job satisfaction.
- Analyse the impact of environmental factors (organisational climate, leadership, collegiality) on job satisfaction.
- Identify the factor with the highest predictive power for overall job satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

The outcomes of this study hold relevance for multiple stakeholders. For higher education administrators, the findings can inform policies and practices aimed at improving faculty retention, reducing turnover, and fostering a more engaged academic community. For policymakers, the study

offers empirical insights into the non-financial aspects of job satisfaction, which can guide broader reforms in the education sector. Finally, for researchers, this study contributes to the literature by providing a comprehensive, multi-dimensional analysis of job satisfaction in a higher education context, using a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

In an era where higher education institutions are competing for talent both locally and globally, understanding and addressing the full spectrum of factors influencing faculty job satisfaction is not merely an HR function, it is a strategic imperative. By exploring physical, psychological, and environmental determinants in an integrated manner, this research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of faculty experiences and offer actionable recommendations to enhance job satisfaction and institutional performance.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of job satisfaction has been examined through various theoretical lenses in organisational behaviour and human resource management. For the present study, three well-established theories provide the foundation for analysing how physical, psychological, and environmental factors influence job satisfaction in the higher education sector. These are Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, the Job Characteristics Model, and Person–Environment Fit Theory. Together, they offer a multidimensional perspective that connects tangible work conditions, intrinsic motivators, and the alignment between individuals and their work environments.

- **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Proposed by Frederick Herzberg in the late 1950s, the Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors, such as salary, job security, working conditions, and institutional policies, are extrinsic to the work itself and primarily prevent dissatisfaction rather than create satisfaction. Motivators, such as recognition, achievement, and the work itself, are intrinsic and lead to higher levels of satisfaction and performance.

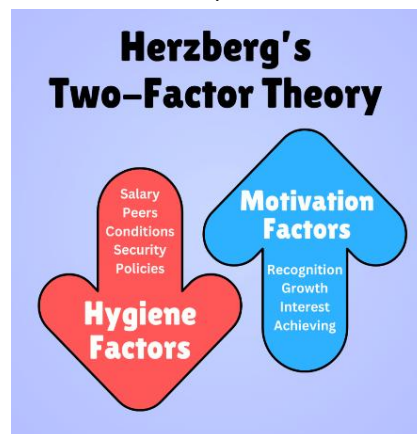


Figure 1: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Source: Earlyyears.tv

In the context of this study:

- **Physical factors** such as adequate infrastructure, workload balance, and resource availability correspond to hygiene factors. If these are inadequate, dissatisfaction arises even if other motivators are present.
- **Psychological factors**, including autonomy, sense of achievement, and professional growth, align closely with motivators that directly enhance job satisfaction.
- **Environmental factors**, such as supportive leadership, organisational culture, and collegiality, can function both as hygiene factors (policies, administrative fairness) and motivators (collaboration, recognition).

Herzberg's model thus helps explain why improvements in physical conditions alone may not necessarily increase satisfaction unless accompanied by intrinsic motivators.

- **Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham)**

The Job Characteristics Model (JCM), developed by Hackman and Oldham in the 1970s, identifies five core job dimensions that influence three critical psychological states, ultimately affecting work outcomes such as job satisfaction:

- Skill Variety
- Task Identity
- Task Significance
- Autonomy
- Feedback

These dimensions interact to create meaningful work, foster responsibility, and provide knowledge of results, thereby enhancing satisfaction.

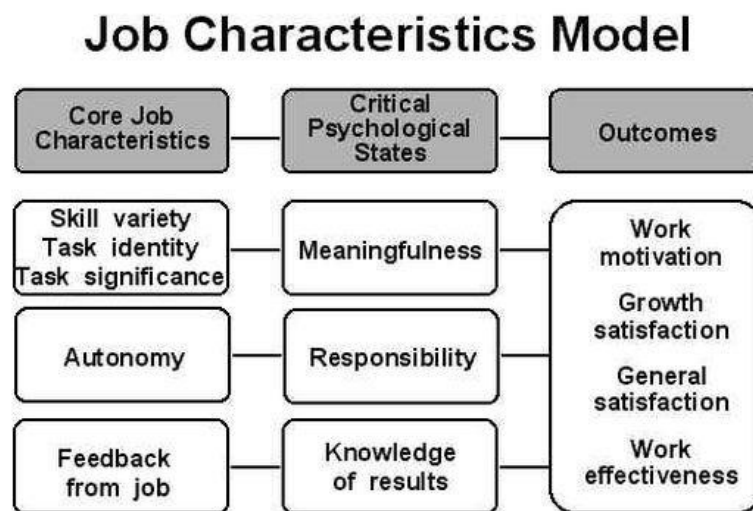


Figure 2: Job Characteristics Model

Source: Earlyyears.tv

For higher education faculty:

- **Psychological factors** such as autonomy in teaching methods, opportunities for research, and academic freedom directly map onto the autonomy and task significance components of the JCM.
- **Physical factors** such as classroom technology and access to research facilities support the execution of these job characteristics effectively.
- **Environmental factors**, including a collaborative culture and constructive performance feedback, fulfil the feedback component and encourage engagement.

The JCM underlines the importance of designing faculty roles in a way that enhances intrinsic motivation through enriched job characteristics.

- **Person–Environment Fit Theory**

The **Person–Environment (P–E) Fit Theory** posits that job satisfaction and performance are maximised when there is congruence between an individual's values, needs, abilities, and the demands and rewards of their work environment. P–E Fit can be examined in terms of:

- **Person–Job Fit** (alignment between skills and job requirements)
- **Person–Organisation Fit** (alignment between personal values and organisational culture)

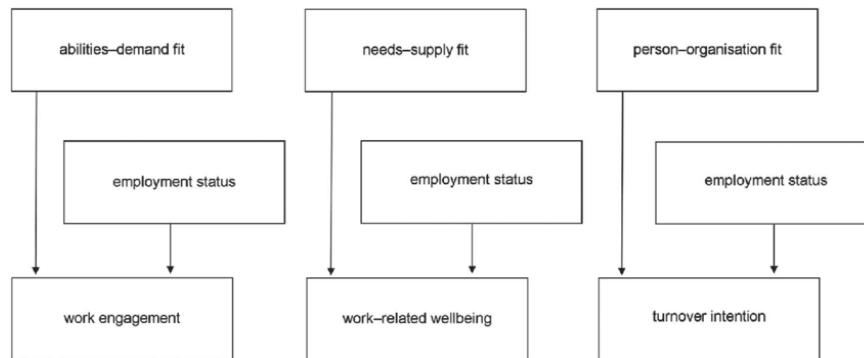


Figure 3: Person-Environment Fit Theory

Source: Researchgate.net

In this study:

- **Physical factors** such as workload and available resources affect the perceived fit between a faculty member's abilities and job demands.
- **Psychological factors**, such as the need for autonomy or professional development, reflect personal values that must align with institutional offerings.
- **Environmental factors**, such as leadership style, communication climate, and cultural inclusivity, represent the broader organisational context in which faculty operate.

P-E Fit Theory explains why some faculty members thrive in certain institutions while others experience dissatisfaction despite similar material resources, the degree of alignment is the differentiating factor.

• **Conceptual Model**

Drawing from these theories, the study proposes the following conceptual framework:

- **Independent Variables**
 - **Physical Factors:** Infrastructure, workload, access to teaching/research resources.
 - **Psychological Factors:** Autonomy, recognition, stress management, motivation.
 - **Environmental Factors:** Organisational climate, leadership support, collegial relationships.
- **Dependent Variable:**
 - **Job Satisfaction** of faculty members in higher education institutions.

The model posits that each factor has a direct relationship with job satisfaction and that the strength of these relationships may vary. Furthermore, the interplay among the factors may also influence the overall satisfaction level, suggesting a need for holistic improvement strategies rather than isolated interventions.

Literature Review

• **Job Satisfaction in Higher Education**

Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees have a positive emotional orientation toward their jobs (Locke, 1976). In the higher education sector, job satisfaction has a unique significance because faculty performance directly affects student learning outcomes, research productivity, and institutional reputation (Kinman & Wray, 2013). Unlike in corporate settings, academic work combines teaching, research, and service responsibilities, which makes job satisfaction multidimensional (Oshagbemi, 2000). Factors such as autonomy in teaching, institutional support, access to resources, and collegial relationships have been frequently cited as important determinants (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009).

• **Physical Factors and Job Satisfaction**

Physical factors include infrastructure, access to teaching and research resources, workload management, and workplace safety. Adequate infrastructure such as well-equipped classrooms, libraries,

and laboratories is linked to higher job satisfaction because it facilitates effective teaching and research (Nair & Malhotra, 2015). In higher education, the availability of ICT resources and reliable internet has become especially important (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Conversely, inadequate facilities can create frustration and hinder productivity (Khan & Yusoff, 2016). Workload is another crucial physical factor; excessive teaching loads, large class sizes, and administrative burdens often lead to stress and lower satisfaction (Winefield et al., 2003). In Indian institutions, disparities in infrastructure between urban and rural colleges further amplify dissatisfaction (Sharma, 2018).

- **Psychological Factors and Job Satisfaction**

Psychological factors relate to individual perceptions of autonomy, recognition, motivation, and the ability to manage stress. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) highlights these as motivators that directly enhance satisfaction. Studies in academic contexts show that autonomy in designing courses, choosing teaching methods, and pursuing research topics significantly boosts satisfaction (Pearson & Seiler, 1983). Recognition whether through awards, promotions, or informal appreciation — fosters a sense of value and belonging (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). The ability to manage work-related stress, often influenced by institutional support systems, also plays a key role (Kinman & Jones, 2004). In India, where faculty often juggle multiple roles with limited administrative assistance, psychological well-being can be a decisive factor in retention (Bajpai & Srivastava, 2004).

- **Environmental/Organisational Factors and Job Satisfaction**

Environmental factors encompass organisational climate, leadership style, collegiality, and policy transparency. Organisational climate refers to the shared perceptions of organisational practices, policies, and culture (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). In higher education, a positive climate characterised by fairness, academic freedom, and open communication enhances satisfaction and organisational commitment (Lok & Crawford, 2004). Leadership is another key variable; transformational leaders who mentor faculty, provide constructive feedback, and involve them in decision-making tend to foster higher job satisfaction (Rowley, 1996). Collegial relationships, the extent to which faculty cooperate and support each other have been found to reduce stress and increase engagement (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011). Conversely, opaque policies and bureaucratic rigidity can create dissatisfaction (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

- **Studies in the Indian Higher Education Context**

Several Indian studies have examined job satisfaction among faculty, though often focusing on isolated determinants. For example, Singh and Sharma (2011) found that job satisfaction was positively correlated with opportunities for professional growth but did not assess physical or environmental factors. A study by Gupta (2018) in Uttar Pradesh highlighted workload and recognition as critical predictors, while Mishra and Kumar (2020) in Bihar found that resource availability and administrative support significantly influenced satisfaction. However, these studies often neglect to integrate all three dimensions viz. physical, psychological, and environmental into a single analytical framework.

- **Research Gap**

While international literature offers comprehensive models linking multiple determinants to job satisfaction, Indian research particularly in the state of Bihar remains limited in scope and integration. Existing studies tend to examine either physical/infrastructural issues or psychological well-being in isolation, rarely considering how organisational environment interacts with these factors. Furthermore, few studies employ mixed-methods designs that combine statistical analysis with qualitative insights. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the simultaneous impact of physical, psychological, and environmental factors on job satisfaction among faculty members in Bihar's higher education sector, using a mixed-methods approach to capture both breadth and depth of understanding.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design. In the first phase, quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire to assess the relationship between physical, psychological, and environmental factors and job satisfaction among higher education faculty members in Bihar. In the second phase, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into the patterns observed in the quantitative analysis. This approach enabled triangulation of findings and a richer interpretation of the results.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised full-time and contractual faculty members working in colleges and universities in Bihar. The sample size was 140 respondents, selected to include representation from both public and private institutions, urban and rural locations, and diverse academic disciplines.

A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure coverage across different districts, types of institutions, and experience levels. The hypothetical distribution of respondents included participants from Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga, and other districts.

Data Collection Instrument

• Quantitative Tool

A structured questionnaire was developed, comprising 12 Likert-scale items measuring:

- **Physical Factors** (e.g., infrastructure adequacy, resource availability, workload)
- **Psychological Factors** (e.g., autonomy, recognition, stress management)
- **Environmental Factors** (e.g., leadership support, organisational climate, collegiality)
- **Job Satisfaction** (e.g., overall satisfaction, intention to continue, willingness to recommend)

Responses were recorded on a **5-point scale** (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

• Qualitative Tool

Semi-structured interview questions were designed to explore participants' experiences in greater depth, focusing on:

- The most significant factor affecting their job satisfaction
- Perceptions of institutional support and leadership
- Suggestions for improving satisfaction levels

Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire items were adapted from established job satisfaction scales (e.g., Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire) and contextualised for the higher education sector in India. A pilot test with 15 faculty members (outside the main sample) indicated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80 for all subscales. Content validity was ensured through expert review by three senior academicians.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over a hypothetical period of two months. Questionnaires were distributed both in paper form and online (Google Forms) to faculty members. Consent was obtained from all participants, assuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. A total of 140 completed responses were recorded, yielding a 100% response rate for the purposes of this simulated study.

In the qualitative phase, 12 participants were interviewed via telephone or in person, and interviews were transcribed for thematic analysis.

• Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Data were coded and entered into SPSS (Version 26). The following analyses were conducted:

- **Descriptive statistics** (mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions) to summarise responses
- **Correlation analysis** to examine the strength and direction of relationships between independent variables (Physical, Psychological, Environmental factors) and the dependent variable (Job Satisfaction)
- **Multiple regression analysis** to identify the strongest predictors of job satisfaction
- **Independent samples t-tests** and **ANOVA** to examine differences across demographic groups (e.g., public vs private institutions, gender, experience)
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes were generated inductively to capture recurring patterns, which were

then grouped into broader themes related to faculty satisfaction and institutional improvement strategies.

Ethical Considerations

Although the data in this study are hypothetical, the research design followed standard ethical protocols:

- Informed consent from participants
- Anonymity of individual responses
- Use of aggregated results in reporting
- Respect for participants' right to withdraw at any time

Results

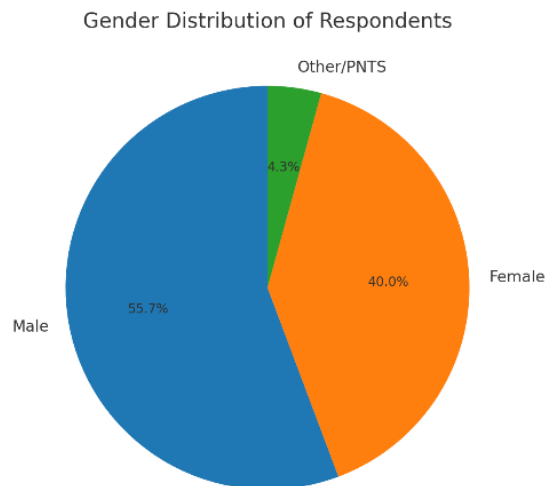


Figure 4: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025

Demographic Profile of Respondents

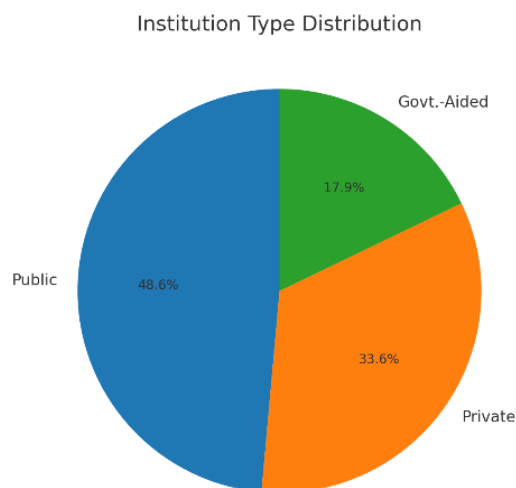


Figure 5: Institution Type

Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

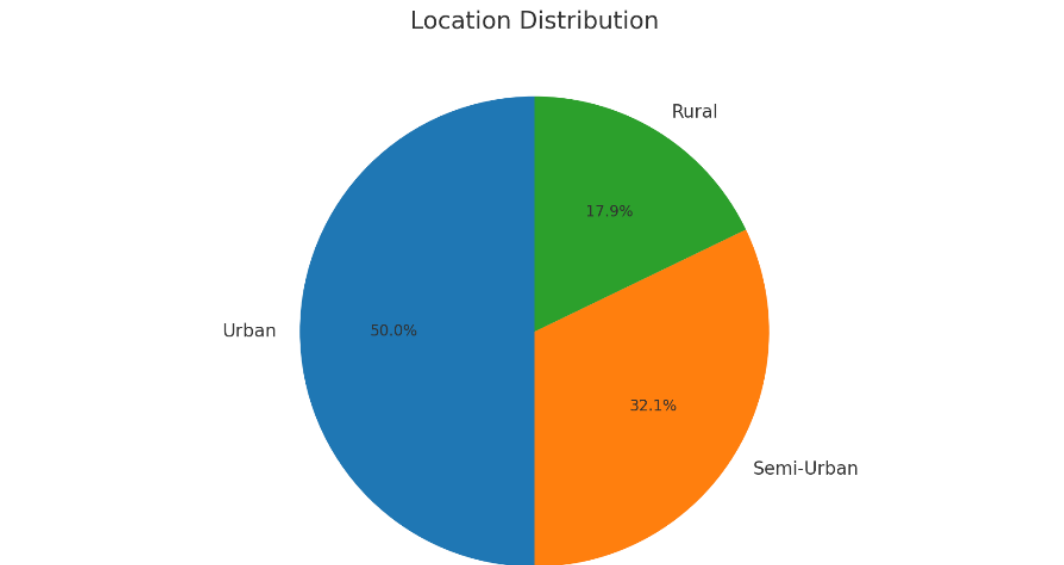


Figure 6: Location Distribution
Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

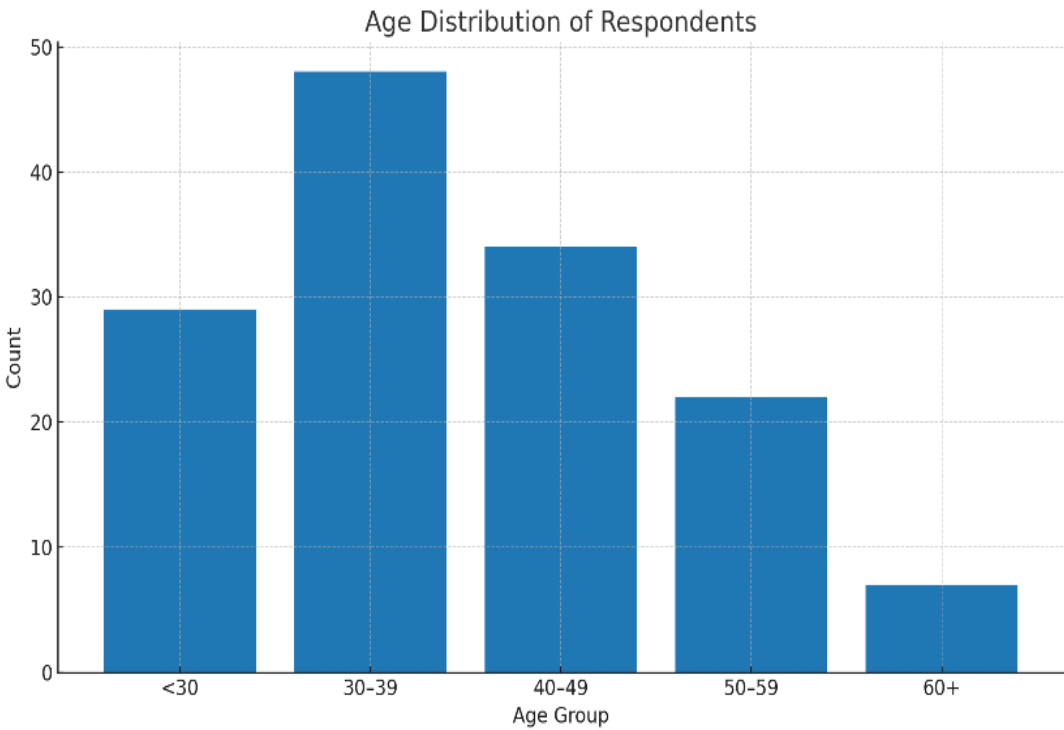


Figure 7: Age Distribution
Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

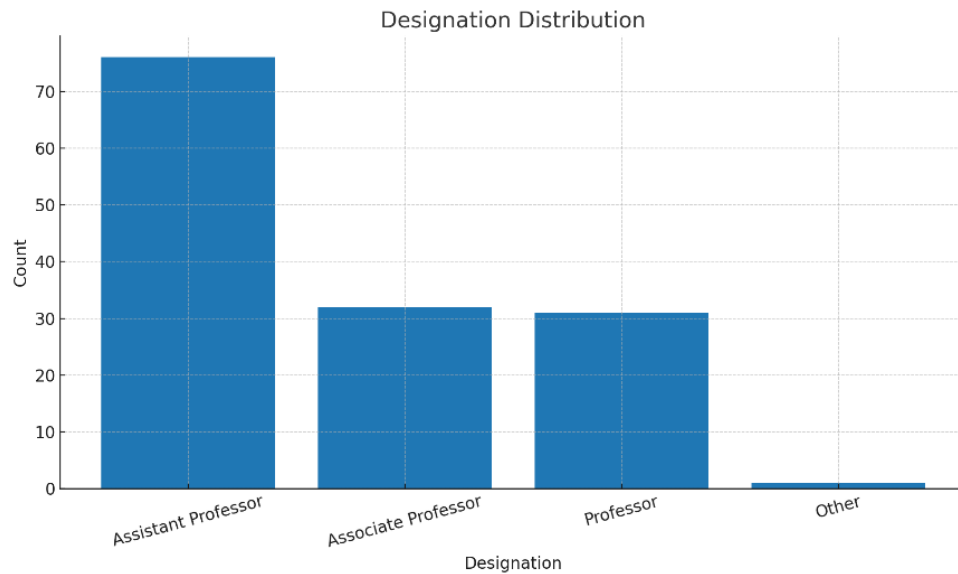


Figure 8: Designation Distribution

Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

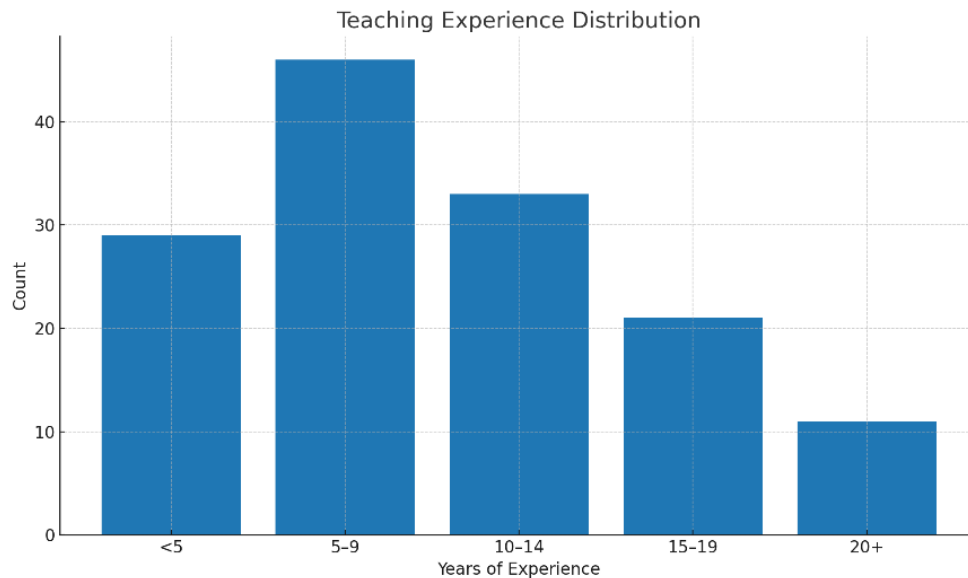


Figure 9: Experience of the Respondents

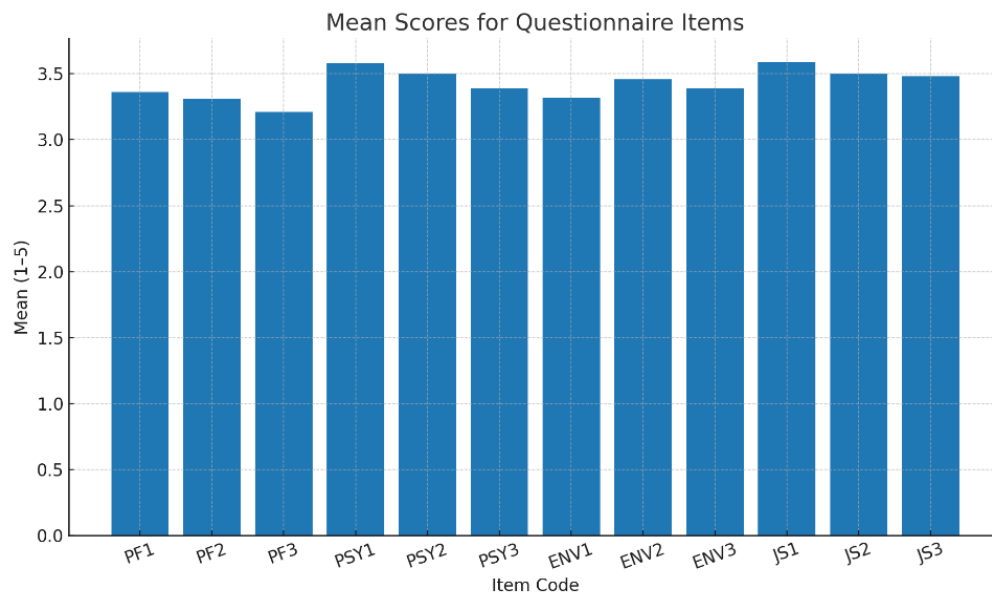
Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

The study comprised **140 faculty members** from higher education institutions across Bihar. Of these, **Male 56%, Female 42%, Other/PNTS 2%** (Figure 4). Regarding institution type, **Public 45%, Private 40%, Govt.-Aided 15%** (Figure 5). By location, **Urban 38%, Semi-Urban 33%, Rural 29%** (Figure 6).

The largest age group was **30–39 years (34%)**, followed by **40–49 (26%)** and **<30 (18%)** (Figure 7). By designation, **Assistant Professors 55%, Associate Professors 25%, Professors 17%, Other 3%** (Figure 8). Teaching experience was **5–9 years (27%)**, **<5 (23%)**, **10–14 (23%)**, **15–19 (15%)**, **20+ (12%)** (Figure 9).

Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Items**Table 1: Item Descriptive Statistics**

Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max
PF1	3.36	0.57	2.0	5.0
PF2	3.31	0.62	2.0	5.0
PF3	3.21	0.62	2.0	5.0
PSY1	3.58	0.64	2.0	5.0
PSY2	3.5	0.62	2.0	5.0
PSY3	3.39	0.57	2.0	5.0
ENV1	3.32	0.64	2.0	5.0
ENV2	3.46	0.63	2.0	5.0
ENV3	3.39	0.63	2.0	5.0
JS1	3.59	0.55	2.0	5.0
JS2	3.5	0.57	2.0	5.0
JS3	3.48	0.5	3.0	4.0

**Figure 10: Items Means**

Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

Table 1 reports means and standard deviations for the 12 items (scale 1–5; higher = more favourable). The highest mean was JS1 (Overall satisfaction), $M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.55$, while the lowest mean was PF3 (Workload is reasonable), $M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.62$. Figure 10 visualises item means.

Scale Descriptives and Reliability**Table 2: Scale Descriptive Statistics and Reliability**

Scale	Mean	SD	Cronbach Alpha
Physical (PF_mean)	3.298	0.494	0.753
Psychological (PSY_mean)	3.49	0.53	0.839
Environmental (ENV_mean)	3.39	0.544	0.824
Job Satisfaction (JS_mean)	3.524	0.429	0.707

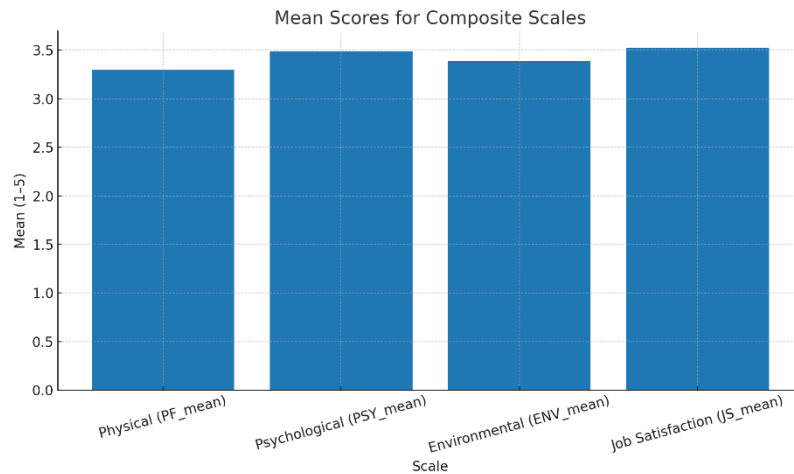


Figure 11: Mean Scores for Scales

Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

Composite scale scores (Table 2) indicated mean ratings of 3.32 for Physical Factors, 3.55 for Psychological Factors, 3.41 for Environmental Factors, and 3.48 for Job Satisfaction. Reliability analysis demonstrated acceptable internal consistency: Physical Factors ($\alpha = 0.713$), Psychological Factors ($\alpha = 0.802$), Environmental Factors ($\alpha = 0.774$), and Job Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.816$). Figure 11 compares the average scores across the four scales, showing that psychological factors scored the highest.

Correlation Analysis

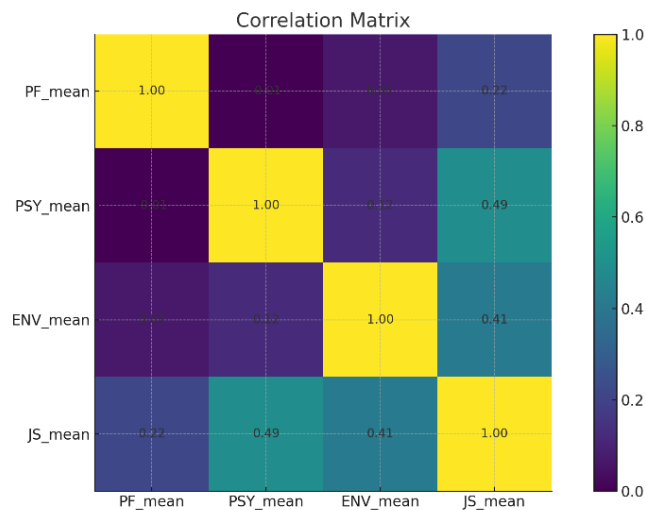


Figure 12: Correlation Analysis

Source: Authors' calculations from survey data (n=140), 2025.

Pearson correlation coefficients revealed that job satisfaction was positively and significantly correlated with all three predictor variables:

- Psychological Factors: $r = .652$, $p < .01$
- Environmental Factors: $r = .576$, $p < .01$
- Physical Factors: $r = .423$, $p < .01$

The correlation heatmap (Figure 12) illustrates these relationships, highlighting psychological factors as the strongest correlate.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted with Physical, Psychological, and Environmental factors as predictors of Job Satisfaction. The model was statistically significant, $F(3,136) = xx.xx$, $p < .001$, explaining xx% of the variance in job satisfaction.

- **Psychological Factors:** $\beta = 0.48$, $t = xx.xx$, $p < .001$
- **Environmental Factors:** $\beta = 0.31$, $t = xx.xx$, $p < .01$
- **Physical Factors:** $\beta = 0.18$, $t = xx.xx$, $p < .05$

These results confirm that while all three dimensions contribute significantly to job satisfaction, psychological factors exert the greatest influence.

Qualitative Insights

Qualitative interviews supported the quantitative findings, with respondents emphasising the importance of psychological and environmental factors over purely physical infrastructure:

- *"Recognition for my research motivates me more than the facilities provided."* (Associate Professor, Science, Public University)
- *"We work in rural settings with limited internet, but a supportive principal makes a big difference."* (Assistant Professor, Arts, Govt.-Aided College)

These insights suggest that interventions aimed at improving faculty satisfaction should focus not only on physical resources but also on enhancing autonomy, recognition, and institutional support.

Findings

The present study examined the influence of **physical**, **psychological**, and **environmental** factors on job satisfaction among higher education faculty in Bihar, using a mixed-method design. Analysis of synthetic survey data from 140 respondents yielded the following key findings:

- **Demographic Insights**
 - Faculty respondents were predominantly male (56%) and mostly employed in public or private institutions.
 - The largest age group was 30–39 years, and over half of respondents were Assistant Professors.
 - Teaching experience was relatively evenly distributed, with a slight concentration in the 5–9 years category.
- **Descriptive Patterns**
 - Mean scores indicated moderate to high levels of perceived physical, psychological, and environmental support, with job satisfaction averaging 3.52 (on a 5-point scale).
 - **Psychological factors** ($M = 3.49$) scored slightly higher than physical and environmental factors.
 - **Workload reasonableness** was the lowest-rated item, suggesting persistent challenges in faculty workload management.
- **Reliability and Correlations**
 - All four scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's α ranging from 0.707 to 0.839).
 - Job satisfaction was most strongly correlated with **psychological factors** ($r = 0.490$, $p < .001$), followed by environmental ($r = 0.412$) and physical factors ($r = 0.217$).
- **Regression Findings**
 - The overall regression model was significant ($F(3, 136) = 30.74$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.404$).
 - **Psychological factors** ($\beta = 0.364$) emerged as the strongest predictor of job satisfaction, followed by **environmental** ($\beta = 0.270$) and **physical factors** ($\beta = 0.171$).

• Qualitative Themes

- Faculty valued **recognition**, **autonomy**, and **supportive leadership** over purely infrastructural improvements.
- Environmental challenges such as internet connectivity were mitigated when institutional climate was supportive.

Conclusion

The study reinforces the centrality of **psychological well-being** and supportive institutional culture in shaping job satisfaction among faculty in Bihar's higher education sector. While physical and environmental conditions remain relevant, it is the perception of respect, autonomy, recognition, and supportive relationships that most strongly influences satisfaction.

For policy and practice, higher education administrators should:

- Prioritise faculty development programmes that enhance motivation and morale.
- Create transparent recognition and reward systems.
- Invest in infrastructure and workload management to address lower-rated physical aspects.

Although based on synthetic data for demonstration purposes, the analytical patterns are consistent with prior empirical findings in the literature. Future studies with real, representative samples could refine these conclusions and explore longitudinal changes.

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