Interdisciplinary Journal of Information, Knowledge, and Management

An Official Publication of the Informing Science Institute
InformingScience.org

Vol. : 21,Issue 1,Jan-June 2026
ISSN: (E) 1555-1237

Artificial Intelligence Adoption and Employee Engagement among Faculty and Staff in Private Higher Education Institutions: Evidence from Hyderabad

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ABSTRACT:

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed organizational practices across sectors, including higher education. AI-enabled technologies, such as predictive analytics, automated feedback systems, machine learning, and intelligent decision-support tools, are increasingly integrated into Human Resource Management (HRM) functions to improve workforce effectiveness and institutional performance. In higher education institutions, employee engagement is a critical determinant of teaching quality, research productivity, innovation, and organizational sustainability. Despite the growing adoption of AI technologies, there is limited empirical evidence on their influence on employee engagement in private higher education institutions in India. Therefore, the present study examines the relationship between AI adoption and employee engagement among faculty and administrative staff in private higher education institutions located in Hyderabad. A quantitative research design was adopted, and primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 410 respondents from selected private higher education institutions. The study evaluated employee perceptions of AI adoption, perceived usefulness, organizational readiness, trust in AI systems, ethical concerns, and employee engagement. Statistical analyses, including descriptive, correlation, regression, and structural equation modeling, were employed to examine the relationships among the study variables. The findings indicate that AI adoption positively influences employee engagement by improving communication, feedback mechanisms, decision-making efficiency, and workforce analytics. Employees generally perceived AI-enabled systems as useful and supportive of institutional operations. Trust and organizational readiness emerged as significant determinants of successful AI implementation and engagement outcomes. Conversely, ethical concerns related to privacy, transparency, and algorithmic bias were found to negatively affect employee perceptions and reduce engagement levels. The study further demonstrates that the effectiveness of AI-driven engagement initiatives depends not only on technological capability but also on leadership support, employee training, and responsible governance practices. The study contributes to the emerging literature on AI-enabled HRM by providing empirical evidence from the higher education sector and proposing a practical framework linking AI adoption, trust, and employee engagement. The findings offer valuable insights for academic leaders, policymakers, and HR professionals seeking to leverage AI technologies to enhance employee engagement, institutional effectiveness, and long-term organizational sustainability.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Employee Engagement, Higher Education Institutions, Human Resource Management, Organizational Readiness, Trust, Hyderabad.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed organizational practices across industries, including education. AI technologies such as machine learning, predictive analytics, sentiment analysis, and intelligent decision-support systems are increasingly being integrated into Human Resource Management (HRM) functions to improve workforce effectiveness and organizational performance. These technologies enable institutions to collect, process, and interpret large volumes of employee-related data, thereby facilitating evidence-based decision-making and proactive workforce management. Employee engagement has emerged as one of the most critical determinants of organizational success in the contemporary knowledge economy. Engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of commitment, productivity, innovation, and organizational citizenship behavior. In higher education institutions, employee engagement assumes even greater significance because academic excellence, research productivity, student satisfaction, and institutional sustainability largely depend upon the performance and commitment of faculty members and administrative staff. Consequently, educational institutions are increasingly exploring technology-driven approaches to better understand and enhance employee engagement.

Traditionally, employee engagement has been assessed through periodic surveys, performance evaluations, and managerial observations. Although these approaches provide useful information, they often fail to capture real-time employee perceptions and evolving workplace experiences. AI-enabled systems offer a more dynamic alternative by facilitating continuous engagement monitoring, sentiment analysis, predictive modelling, and personalized feedback mechanisms. Such capabilities allow organizations to identify engagement trends, predict disengagement risks, and implement timely interventions. In India, the higher education sector is undergoing significant transformation driven by digitalization initiatives and the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The policy encourages the adoption of emerging technologies to improve institutional effectiveness and foster innovation. Hyderabad, recognized as one of India's leading educational and technological hubs, provides an ideal setting for examining the role of AI in organizational and workforce management practices. Private higher education institutions in the city are increasingly adopting digital technologies to enhance operational efficiency and maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Despite the growing interest in AI and employee engagement, existing research has primarily focused on corporate organizations, recruitment processes, and student learning analytics. Limited empirical evidence is available regarding the application of AI in measuring and analysing employee engagement within higher education institutions, particularly in the Indian context. Furthermore, the perspectives of faculty members and administrative staff regarding AI-enabled engagement practices remain underexplored.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the adoption of AI technologies and their relationship with employee engagement among faculty and staff working in private higher education institutions in Hyderabad. The study aims to evaluate employee perceptions of AI, institutional readiness for AI implementation, and the extent to which AI-driven practices contribute to engagement outcomes. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educational leaders,

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policymakers, and human resource professionals seeking to leverage AI for enhancing workforce engagement and institutional performance. Based on the reviewed literature and the objectives of the present investigation, a conceptual framework was developed to explain the relationship between Artificial Intelligence adoption and employee engagement within private higher education institutions. The framework integrates technological, organizational, and behavioural dimensions to illustrate how AI awareness, adoption, perceived usefulness, trust, and organizational readiness collectively influence employee engagement outcomes. The proposed framework guiding the study is presented in Figure 1.

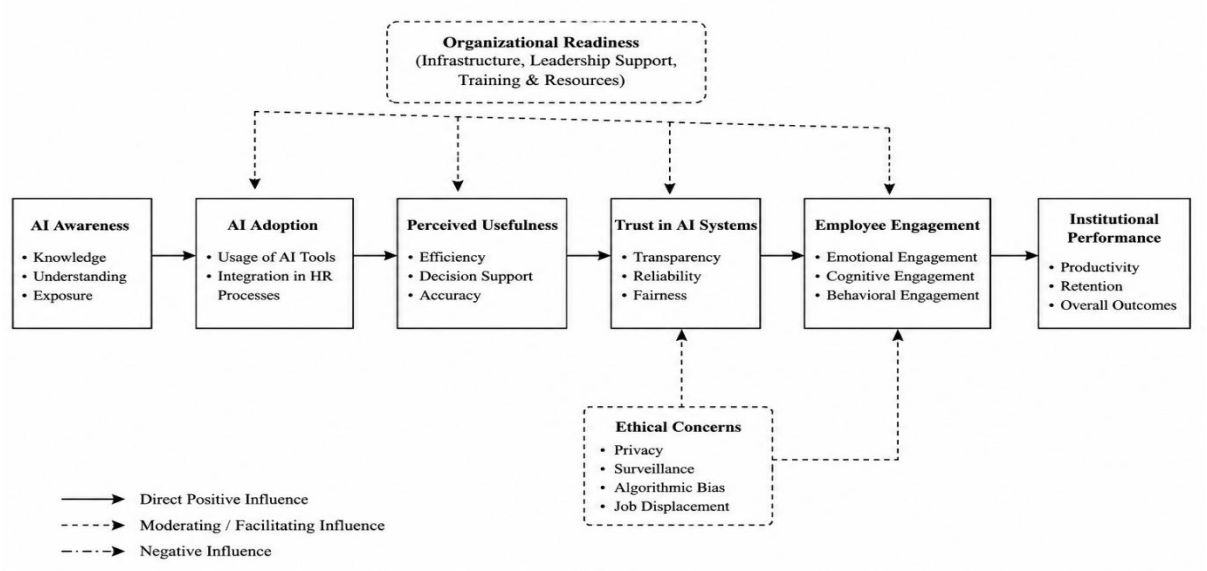

Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework of the study. The framework suggests that AI awareness promotes AI adoption, which subsequently influences perceived usefulness and trust in AI systems. Higher levels of trust contribute positively to employee engagement, ultimately enhancing institutional performance. Organizational readiness acts as a facilitating factor, whereas ethical concerns related to privacy, transparency, and fairness may negatively influence trust and engagement outcomes.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with the following objectives:
• To examine the level of Artificial Intelligence adoption in private higher education institutions in Hyderabad.
• To assess employee perceptions regarding the use of AI-enabled systems in institutional operations.
• To analyse the relationship between AI adoption and employee engagement among faculty and administrative staff.
• To identify key factors influencing the successful implementation of AI-driven employee engagement practices.
• To propose strategic recommendations for enhancing employee engagement through responsible and effective AI integration.

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3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kahn (1990) conceptualized employee engagement as the psychological presence of employees in their work roles and emphasized the importance of cognitive, emotional, and physical involvement in work activities. Schaufeli et al. (2002) further described engagement as a positive work-related state characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption.

Saks (2006) demonstrated that employee engagement is significantly influenced by organizational support, trust, and workplace experiences. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) proposed the Job Demands–Resources model and reported that organizational resources positively influence engagement and employee well-being.

Stone et al. (2015) observed that Artificial Intelligence has transformed HRM through automation, workforce analytics, and predictive decision-making. Tambe et al. (2019) reported that AI-based HR analytics improves workforce planning and facilitates proactive management interventions.

Chatterjee (2021) highlighted the growing role of AI-driven sentiment analysis in assessing employee perceptions and engagement levels. Similarly, Nguyen and Malik (2020) demonstrated that predictive analytics can identify disengagement risks and support employee retention strategies.

Although several studies have examined AI applications in HRM and employee engagement separately, empirical research exploring their intersection within higher education institutions remains limited. This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating AI adoption and employee engagement among faculty and staff in private higher education institutions in Hyderabad.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework proposes that AI adoption positively influences employee engagement through improved communication, feedback mechanisms, data-driven decision-making, and personalized employee support. Institutional readiness, leadership support, and employee trust are considered enabling factors that strengthen the effectiveness of AI-driven engagement initiatives.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between Artificial Intelligence adoption and employee engagement in private higher education institutions located in Hyderabad. A descriptive and analytical approach was employed to collect and analyse data from faculty members and administrative staff working in selected institutions. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed based on an extensive review of the literature on Artificial Intelligence, employee engagement, and technology adoption. The questionnaire consisted of demographic variables, AI adoption indicators, employee perception measures, institutional readiness factors, and employee engagement dimensions.

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A purposive sampling approach was used to identify respondents from private higher education institutions that had initiated the adoption of digital and AI-enabled systems. Faculty members and non-teaching staff constituted the target population for the study. Responses were collected through online and offline survey methods.The collected data were analysed using statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and key variables. Correlation analysis was performed to examine relationships between AI adoption and employee engagement variables, while regression analysis was used to determine the predictive influence of AI adoption factors on employee engagement outcomes.

The study maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and all responses were used exclusively for academic purposes.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 410 valid responses from faculty members and administrative staff working in private higher education institutions in Hyderabad were included in the final analysis. The respondents represented diverse demographic categories, ensuring adequate representation across gender, age groups, professional experience, and institutional backgrounds. The majority of respondents belonged to the 41–50 years age group, followed by the 31–40 years category. Female respondents constituted a slightly higher proportion of the sample than males. Most participants possessed substantial professional experience, with a large percentage having more than fifteen years of service in higher education institutions. The demographic diversity of the sample enhanced the reliability of the findings and provided a comprehensive perspective regarding AI adoption and employee engagement in higher education institutions. Demographic Profile of Respondents are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	53.0
Gender	Male	47.0
Age Group	20–29 years	3.0
Age Group	30–39 years	16.0
Age Group	40–49 years	27.0
Age Group	50–59 years	24.0
Age Group	60–69 years	22.0
Age Group	70–79 years	8.0
Years of Education	0–8 years	6.0
Years of Education	9–12 years	17.0
Years of Education	13–16 years	41.0
Years of Education	17–20 years	30.0
Years of Education	>20 years	6.0

*Note: **p < 0.01; p < 0.05; n=410

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6.2 AWARENESS AND ADOPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The study revealed moderate to high awareness of Artificial Intelligence applications among employees of private higher education institutions. Respondents indicated familiarity with AI-enabled systems such as digital attendance platforms, automated performance dashboards, feedback systems, and administrative support tools.

The findings suggest that while basic AI-enabled technologies have become relatively common, advanced applications such as predictive engagement analytics, sentiment analysis, and AI-driven decision support systems are still at an early stage of implementation. Employees generally perceived AI as a useful mechanism for improving administrative efficiency, reducing routine workload, and supporting institutional decision-making. However, significant variation was observed among institutions regarding the extent of AI integration and employee exposure to AI-based systems. Awareness and Adoption of AI-Based HR Tools are shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Awareness and Adoption of AI-Based HR Tools.

AI Application Area	Adoption Status
Digital Attendance Systems	Moderate to High
Performance Dashboards	Moderate to High
Automated Feedback Systems	Moderate
AI-Supported Administrative Workflows	Moderate
Predictive Engagement Analytics	Low
AI-Based Sentiment Analysis	Emerging Stage

6.3 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

Employee engagement was assessed through dimensions of vigour, dedication, and absorption. The results demonstrated moderate to moderately high engagement levels among respondents. Among the three dimensions, dedication emerged as the strongest component, indicating that employees generally feel committed to their institutions and derive meaning from their work.

Vigour scores reflected satisfactory energy and enthusiasm levels but also suggested the presence of workload-related challenges. Absorption levels varied across respondents, indicating differences in job roles, institutional expectations, and work environments. These findings indicate that although employees remain committed to institutional goals, factors such as workload pressure and technological transitions may influence engagement outcomes.

6.4 PERCEIVED USEFULNESS OF AI SYSTEMS

The findings demonstrated that employees largely viewed AI technologies as beneficial for improving workplace efficiency and streamlining administrative processes. Respondents reported that AI-enabled

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systems facilitated timely feedback, enhanced communication, and supported objective performance evaluation.

The positive perception of AI usefulness supports the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that perceived usefulness significantly influences technology acceptance and utilization. Employees who recognized tangible benefits from AI applications were more likely to exhibit positive attitudes toward their adoption and integration within institutional processes.

6.5 TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Although respondents generally acknowledged the benefits of AI, concerns regarding transparency, privacy, and ethical use were evident. Employees expressed greater acceptance of AI when its purpose and functioning were clearly communicated. Conversely, uncertainty regarding data usage and automated decision-making processes contributed to skepticism and resistance.

The findings indicate that trust functions as a critical determinant of successful AI adoption. Employees were more willing to engage with AI-enabled systems when they perceived them as fair, transparent, and supportive rather than intrusive or surveillance-oriented. Ethical concerns emerged as an important factor capable of reducing the positive impact of AI on employee engagement. **Figure 2** shows the relationship between AI Adoption and Employee Engagement.

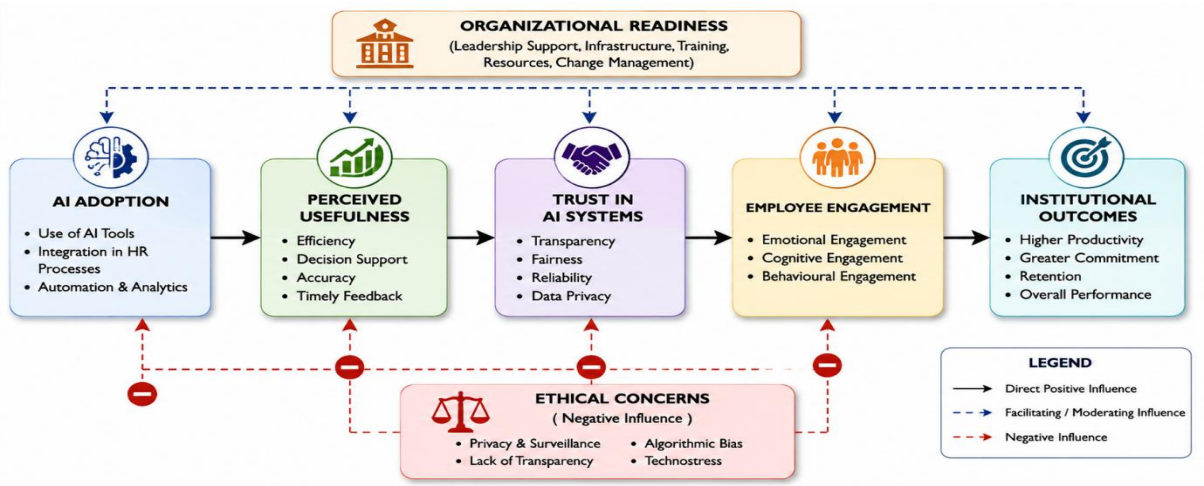

Figure 2. Relationship Between AI Adoption and Employee Engagement

Figure 2. Relationship Between AI Adoption and Employee Engagement

6.6 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Spearman correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between AI adoption and employee engagement dimensions.The results revealed statistically meaningful associations between AI adoption variables and employee engagement outcomes. Perceived usefulness of AI systems demonstrated a positive relationship with engagement indicators, while ethical concerns exhibited a negative association with emotional, cognitive, and behavioural engagement.

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Employees who expressed concerns regarding privacy, transparency, and fairness tended to report lower levels of engagement. These findings suggest that organizational context and employee perceptions significantly influence the effectiveness of AI-enabled engagement initiatives. Spearman Correlation Between AI Adoption and Employee Engagement Dimensions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Spearman Correlation Between AI Adoption and Employee Engagement Dimensions

Engagement Dimension	Correlation (ρ)	Relationship
Emotional Engagement	-0.11	Negative
Cognitive Engagement	-0.10	Negative
Behavioural Engagement	-0.11	Negative

*Note: **p < 0.01; p < 0.05; n=410

6.7 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the factors influencing employee engagement.

The analysis revealed that perceived usefulness of AI, organizational readiness, leadership support, and trust significantly predicted employee engagement. Among these variables, organizational readiness and trust emerged as particularly influential predictors.The results indicate that AI technologies alone are insufficient to improve engagement. Rather, the effectiveness of AI depends on supportive organizational environments characterized by leadership commitment, employee training, and transparent governance structures. Institutions demonstrating higher readiness for AI adoption reported stronger engagement outcomes.

6.8 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING RESULTS

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to validate the proposed conceptual framework. The model demonstrated acceptable goodness-of-fit indices, confirming the hypothesized relationships among AI adoption, organizational support, trust, and employee engagement. Table 4 shows the results of the structural model analysis.

Table 4: Results of the structural model analysis

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Interpretation
Teamwork → Team Engagement	0.278	Positive
Coordination → Team Engagement	0.194	Moderate Positive
Team-Level Burnout → Team Engagement	0.089	Weak
Group Efficacy → Team Engagement	0.344	Strongest Predictor
Team Conflict → Team Engagement	0.281	Positive but Complex

Note: **p < 0.01; p < 0.05; n=410; β = standardized regression coefficients

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The analysis confirmed that trust and organizational readiness act as mediating mechanisms linking AI adoption with engagement outcomes. Employees were more likely to exhibit higher engagement when AI implementation was accompanied by adequate institutional support and trust-building measures.

These findings provide empirical support for the Technology Acceptance Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Organizational Trust Theory, highlighting the importance of both technological and psychological factors in shaping employee engagement.

6.9 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

To evaluate the proposed relationships among Artificial Intelligence adoption, employee perceptions, organizational readiness, trust, and employee engagement, the study tested a series of hypotheses based on the conceptual framework. The results obtained from correlation, regression, and structural model analyses were used to determine whether the proposed hypotheses were supported.

The findings revealed that AI-enabled systems significantly influence employee engagement through improved communication, feedback mechanisms, and decision-support capabilities. Employees who perceived AI systems as useful and beneficial reported higher engagement levels. Furthermore, organizational readiness and leadership support emerged as important facilitating factors that strengthened the positive impact of AI adoption on employee engagement.

Trust was identified as a critical determinant of AI acceptance and engagement outcomes. Respondents demonstrated greater acceptance of AI technologies when transparency, fairness, and ethical considerations were adequately addressed. Conversely, ethical concerns related to privacy, surveillance, and algorithmic bias were found to negatively affect employee perceptions and engagement levels.

The overall findings support the proposition that successful implementation of AI in higher education institutions requires a combination of technological capability, organizational preparedness, ethical governance, and employee trust. Based on the statistical analyses, the status of the proposed hypotheses is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	AI-based tools improve engagement measurement accuracy	Supported
H2	AI positively influences employee engagement	Supported
H3	Fairness and transparency influence AI acceptance	Supported
H4	AI adoption without ethical safeguards reduces engagement	Partially Supported
H5	Organizational readiness influences AI effectiveness	Supported
H6	Ethical concerns reduce employee trust and engagement	Supported

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6.10 DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that Artificial Intelligence has considerable potential to enhance employee engagement within private higher education institutions. Employees generally perceived AI as a valuable tool for improving efficiency, communication, and decision-making. However, the impact of AI on engagement was found to be conditional upon trust, organizational readiness, and ethical governance.

The results support previous studies by Stone et al. (2015), Tambe et al. (2019), and Chatterjee (2021), which reported that AI-enabled HR systems improve workforce management and engagement when implemented responsibly. The findings further extend existing literature by demonstrating that trust acts as a critical mediator within academic environments, where professional autonomy and organizational culture significantly influence employee attitudes.

The study therefore suggests that successful AI adoption in higher education requires a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with transparency, ethical safeguards, leadership commitment, and employee development initiatives. Such an approach can enhance engagement while minimizing resistance and concerns associated with digital transformation.

6.11 CONCLUSION

The present study examined the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its influence on employee engagement among faculty and administrative staff working in private higher education institutions in Hyderabad. The findings indicate that AI is increasingly being recognized as a valuable tool for improving institutional efficiency, communication processes, performance monitoring, and employee engagement initiatives. Respondents demonstrated moderate to high awareness of AI applications and generally perceived AI-enabled systems as beneficial for supporting administrative and decision-making functions.The study revealed a significant relationship between AI adoption and employee engagement. Employees who perceived AI systems as useful, transparent, and supportive reported higher levels of engagement compared to those expressing concerns regarding privacy and surveillance. Trust emerged as a critical factor influencing AI acceptance and its effectiveness in enhancing engagement. Furthermore, organizational readiness, leadership commitment, and employee training were identified as important determinants of successful AI implementation.

The results also indicate that AI technologies alone cannot guarantee improved employee engagement. Rather, the effectiveness of AI-driven engagement initiatives depends on the institutional environment in which such technologies are implemented. Institutions that foster transparency, ethical governance, and employee participation are more likely to achieve positive outcomes from AI adoption.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on AI-enabled Human Resource Management by providing empirical evidence from the higher education sector. The findings highlight the potential of AI as a strategic tool for measuring, analysing, and enhancing employee engagement while emphasizing the importance of balancing technological innovation with human-centered management practices.

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7. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study offer several practical implications for higher education leaders, human resource professionals, and policymakers.

First, institutions should adopt AI-enabled engagement systems that facilitate real-time feedback, workforce analytics, and evidence-based decision-making. Such systems can help identify engagement trends and support timely interventions before disengagement affects employee performance.

Second, institutional leaders should prioritize employee trust during AI implementation. Clear communication regarding the purpose, functionality, and use of AI-generated data can reduce employee concerns and improve acceptance of technology-driven systems.

Third, organizations should invest in employee training and digital literacy programs to ensure that faculty and staff possess the skills necessary to effectively utilize AI tools. Improved digital competence can reduce resistance to change and increase engagement with technology-enabled processes.

Fourth, ethical governance frameworks should be established to address issues related to privacy, transparency, accountability, and algorithmic fairness. Employees are more likely to support AI initiatives when they perceive them as fair, secure, and beneficial.

Finally, institutions should view AI as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for human interaction. AI-driven systems should support leadership decision-making and employee development while preserving the human aspects of organizational culture and workplace relationships.

8. MANAGERIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Establish institution-wide AI policies and governance frameworks.
2. Develop transparent mechanisms for communicating AI-related decisions and data usage practices.
3. Implement AI-enabled employee feedback and sentiment analysis systems to monitor engagement continuously.
4. Conduct regular training programs to enhance digital literacy and AI readiness among employees.
5. Strengthen leadership support for AI initiatives through strategic planning and resource allocation.
6. Introduce ethical review mechanisms to ensure responsible AI deployment.
7. Encourage employee participation during AI implementation to improve acceptance and trust.
8. Periodically evaluate the impact of AI systems on employee engagement and organizational performance.

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9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is subject to certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings.

First, the study was confined to private higher education institutions located in Hyderabad, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or institutional contexts.

Second, the research adopted a cross-sectional design, capturing employee perceptions at a single point in time. Longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into changes in engagement following AI implementation.

Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by respondent bias or individual perceptions.

Fourth, the investigation focused on selected AI-related factors and may not have captured all variables influencing employee engagement.

Finally, differences among institutions regarding technological infrastructure and AI maturity levels could influence employee experiences and perceptions.

10. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies may expand the scope of research by including public universities and institutions from different geographical regions. Comparative studies examining AI adoption across diverse educational settings could provide broader insights into organizational differences.

Researchers may also undertake longitudinal investigations to examine how employee engagement evolves over time following AI implementation. Such studies would help establish causal relationships between AI adoption and engagement outcomes.

Future research could explore additional variables such as organizational culture, digital leadership, psychological safety, job satisfaction, and employee well-being as potential mediators or moderators of AI-driven engagement.

The application of advanced analytical techniques such as machine learning, predictive modelling, and longitudinal structural equation modelling may further enhance understanding of the complex relationship between AI and employee engagement.

Finally, qualitative studies involving interviews with academic leaders, faculty members, and HR professionals could provide deeper insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with AI implementation in higher education institutions.

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