“Enhancing faculty retention: The role of student initiatives, mentorship, advocacy, and collaboration”

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ENHANCING FACULTY RETENTION: THE ROLE OF STUDENT INITIATIVES, MENTORSHIP, ADVOCACY, AND COLLABORATION

Abstract

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, higher education institutions face increasing challenges in faculty retention. The study analyzes the impact of Student Initiatives, Mentorship, Advocacy, and Collaboration on faculty intention to stay through the mediation of faculty satisfaction. The research process began with an exhaustive review of existing literature and the development of a structured questionnaire using a quantitative approach. A further survey was undertaken by collecting 390 responses from faculty members working in higher education institutions in Karnataka, India. The mediation was analyzed utilizing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to check the model fit and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to test hypothetical relationships. Results revealed significant direct effects of Student-Led Peer Mentorship, Advocacy Groups, Student Initiatives, and Collaborative Learning on faculty satisfaction. These constructs also significantly predicted faculty retention, both directly and through the mediating effect of faculty satisfaction. Faculty satisfaction mediated these relationships, with the strongest total effect for advocacy groups (β = .537). While collaborative learning had a strong direct effect (β = .347), its mediated impact was comparatively weaker (β = .082). This study highlights that institutions that recognize and value the connection between student engagement and faculty engagement are poised to develop a strong academic community. The practical significance of the current study is considerable for institutional decision-makers and academic leaders. Institutions should not rely on just extrinsic rewards, such as salary or tenure, to be able to develop their faculties, but rather should intentionally develop a participative academic culture.

Keywords faculty retention, higher education, student initiatives, mentorship, advocacy, collaboration

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INTRODUCTION

Faculty retention in Higher Education has long been regarded as a remedy to preserving academic quality, institutional reputation, and student achievement. Historically, faculty retention meant structural issues such as salary, tenure-track, workload, and support systems. The importance of these factors pertains to faculty retention, yet literature in organizational behavior and educational psychology suggests these models fall short in fully explaining why faculty remain and why faculty leave. What remains understudied is the relational aspect of faculty experience. In particular, faculty relationships with students are often overlooked as contributing to a sense of professional well-being and long-term organizational commitment. Most student engagement initiatives are framed in terms of student learning outcomes. Yet there is growing evidence that student behaviors, attitudes, and co-curricular involvement also influence faculty perceptions, satisfaction, and affect their intent to stay. The academic frame is inherently relational, and faculty-student relationships may in fact have a greater

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impact on faculty morale than their structural conditions. Although this potential role is vital, there is limited empirical evidence examining how student-led activities of all kinds (e.g., peer mentorship, advocacy groups, collaborative learning spaces) affect faculty experiences that go beyond teaching and learning attributes. Most importantly, there is a gap in our understanding of whether and how those student-led activities impact faculty satisfaction and retention intention through psychological or emotional processes. Consequently, the scientific problem explored in this study arises from the absence of a comprehensive organizational view of faculty work that deliberately considers students as active agents in workplace satisfaction and organizational commitment. The study aims to further advance science in this area by articulating and focusing on how student engagement through intentional and structured initiatives acts as a relational mediator influencing faculty retention through satisfaction.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Faculty retention is a challenge faced by higher education worldwide, with impacts that include disrupted student learning, recruitment costs, and limited continuity of care (Dunham-Taylor et al., 2008). While more established faculty retention research focuses on extrinsic issues, such as salary, job security, role support, and workload (Khan et al., 2021; Bashir & Gani, 2020), these remain significant. Recent studies indicate the increasing saliency of intrinsic factors (i.e., student engagement, academic climate, and faculty-student engagement) that inform faculty satisfaction and retention. Traditionally, students were seen primarily as passive "receivers" of instruction. As pedagogical approaches have shifted, we recognize that "engaged" faculty feel more emotional and professional satisfaction when a student is engaged and actively participating in the learning process (Blithe & Fidelibus, 2022; Snijders et al., 2020). Applying peer mentoring, advocacy groups, and collaborative learning approaches has not only improved student performance outcomes but also enhanced faculty morale (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016; Kinsella et al., 2023). Collectively, these approaches support a shared purpose and intellectual collaboration – two core components of long-term faculty commitment.

Student-led initiatives (SLIs) are generally defined as purposeful academic or co-curricular activities that are student-led and that directly or indirectly involve faculty (Fletcher et al., 2018; Lam & Tam, 2022; Berger, 2014; Huang & Chang, 2004). This can include structured groups or organizations like peer mentorship, proprietary advocacy groups, and learning communities. While SLIs are often evaluated based on the student-development, growth, and transition aspects of student involvement, there are several unmeasured or unexplored faculty satisfaction or retention benefits associated with student-led initiatives. For example, peer mentorship programs are often aimed at students, and the programs often have some degree of faculty oversight, or instruction is included in the semester curriculum (Marshall et al., 2021). Faculty involved in peer mentorship programs received professional validation and satisfaction and felt a greater sense of engagement with student-centered growth (Mendez et al., 2019). SLIs such as student advocacy groups also establish ways for faculty to engage intentionally with other people in the same capacity, or similar advocacy values (e.g., equity, justice, and transformation of institutions) with their own work. Faculty who engaged in student advocacy groups also said they felt a greater fit with the institutional culture and emphasized a stronger sense of belonging, which are two of the primary drivers of job satisfaction, as a result of interaction with student-led groups (Kinsella et al., 2023). Collaborative learning environments – project-based learning, co-research, student-led seminars – diminish hierarchies and facilitate mutual learning. Such environments are linked to increased creativity, lower levels of burnout, and elevated motivation for faculty (Blithe & Fidelibus, 2022). Additionally, informal student gestures, like appreciation events and informal feedback, are part of the professional recognition process, even though they are not formalized. Even though they are less institutionalized, these micro-engagement activities provide affirmation and support in a respectful, psychologically positive environment. This study centers on faculty satisfaction, or the faculty's lived sense of persistence, purpose, and appreciation of the institution. Previous research shows that satisfaction increased the quality of teaching, reduced faculty

Source: Developed by the researcher.

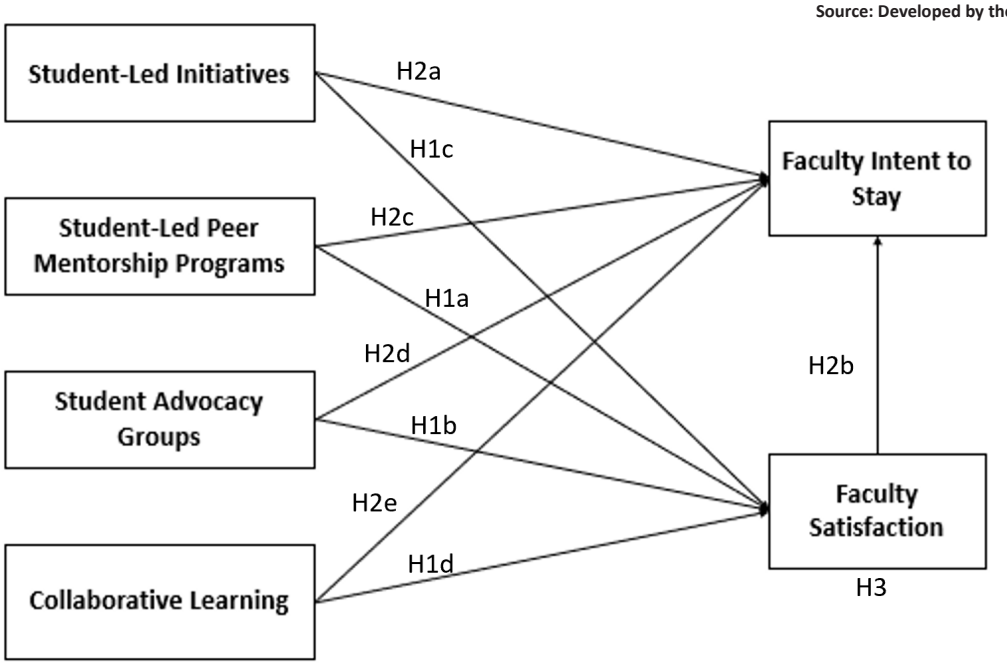

Figure 1. Conceptual model

stress, and improved retention/loyalty to the institution (Dunham-Taylor et al., 2008; Bashir & Gani, 2020). The study proposes faculty satisfaction as a mediating variable between SLIs and intentions to retain faculty.

The framework is rooted in Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), which claims that employees are more likely to stay when they feel embedded by strong social or professional ties, cultural fit, and perceived costs of leaving. Faculty who are engaged in SLIs build stronger relational ties, find fit with institutional values, and identify as being personally invested in student outcomes, which contributes to satisfaction and intent to stay. Despite a growing interest in student-faculty engagement, there is little empirical work examining the impacts of SLIs on faculty retention. Existing retention models focus on institutional supports and, as such, do not consider how student-led engagement models inform faculty commitment.

To address the gap, this study is intended to demonstrate that student-led initiatives, peer mentorship, advocacy, and collaborative learning directly improve a faculty member's intention to stay at an academic institution, in addressing the essential intermediate step of clarifying how these student-led practices promote faculty satisfaction, and how satisfaction mediates their desire to stay.

In particular, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of Student Initiatives, Mentorship, Advocacy, and Collaboration on faculty intention to stay through the mediation of faculty satisfaction.

Based on the above literature and theoretical review, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: Peer Mentorship Programs (H1a), Student Advocacy Groups (H1b), Student-Led Initiatives (SLIs) (H1c), and Collaborative Learning (H1d) positively influence Faculty Satisfaction.

H2: Faculty intention to stay is significantly influenced by Student-Led Initiatives (SLIs) (H2a), Faculty Satisfaction (H2b), Peer Mentorship Programs (H2c), Student Advocacy Groups (H2d), and Collaborative Learning (H2e).

H3: Faculty Satisfaction mediates the relationship between Student-Led Initiatives (SLIs), Peer Mentorship Programs, Student Advocacy Groups & Collaborative Learning and Faculty Intent to Stay.

All the above hypothetical relationships are demonstrated in Figure 1.

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2. METHODS

The methodology section details the study design, including data collection methods and sample selection of faculty members working in higher education institutions in Karnataka, India. Information about the participants aids in studying the sample profile. It includes dependent, independent, mediating, and modifying components for studying faculty behavior patterns.

The study addressed the impact of student-led initiatives, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, Student Advocacy Groups, and Collaborative Learning retention of Faculty members working in higher education institutions in Karnataka. Karnataka has a strong higher education ecosystem that includes a large number of student-led initiatives such as peer mentoring programs, student advocacy groups, and collaborative learning platforms. These initiatives indicate a growing trend toward interactive learning settings, which is expected to have an impact on faculty engagement and retention rates. The choice of Karnataka is further supported by the region's high literacy rates, broad use of digital platforms in education, and cultural emphasis on academic performance, all of which provide fertile ground for investigating the influence of student-led initiatives on faculty retention. To ensure an unbiased representation, a basic random sample procedure was applied. Samples were acquired through an online and physical questionnaire. The online questionnaires garnered 390 responses through Google Forms and in person. The research instrument included items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Ethical considerations were followed; informed consent and the confidentiality of the information provided were maintained. Data collection followed standardized processes, and response rates were monitored. The questionnaire used in this study was approved by the Scientific Review Board of Yenepoya (Deemed to be University) under the university's research policy and procedures.

The sample profile (Table 1) highlights employees' demographic characteristics. 52.6% of the faculty are aged between 31 and 35, and 26.2% belong to the age category of 26 to 30. Among 390 respondents, 65.1% are female, and 61.8% of them are married. Additionally, 54.9% are lecturers, and 62.3% of respondents have work experience of 1-5 years. Further, 94.1% of them are working as faculty members in commerce and management, and 92.6% of them belong to Universities (Central Universities, State Universities, Private Universities, Deemed Universities, Open Universities).

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Source: First-hand survey data.

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
26-30	102	26.2
31-35	205	52.6
36-40	33	8.5
41-45	30	7.7
Below 25	20	5.1
Gender		
Female	254	65.1
Male	136	34.9
Marital Status		
Married	149	38.2
Single	241	61.8
Academic Position		
Assistant Professor	162	41.5
Associate Professor	7	1.8
Lecturer	214	54.9
Research Scholar	7	1.8
Years of experience		
1-5 years	243	62.3
11-20 years	86	22.1
20+ years	7	1.8
6-10 years	54	13.8
Faculty/Department		
Arts and Humanities	8	2.1
Commerce and Management	367	94.1
Computer Science	8	2.1
Sciences	7	1.8
Institution Type		
Colleges (Affiliated Colleges, Autonomous Colleges, Private Aided Colleges, Private Un-aided Colleges)	29	7.4
Universities (Central Universities, State Universities, Private Universities, Deemed Universities, Open Universities)	361	92.6

The study used a structured questionnaire, with Part One covering sample demographics and Part Two focusing on Faculty Intent to Stay, Collaborative Learning, Student Advocacy Groups, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, faculty satisfaction, and student-led initiatives. Student-led initiatives were assessed using items from Zilvinskis

et al. (2017), while Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs were evaluated using Simmonds and Dicks (2018). Student Advocacy Groups were measured using items from Matthews and Dollinger (2023), and Collaborative Learning was measured using Zilvinskis et al. (2017). Rosser (2005) was used to evaluate faculty retention, while Candela et al. (2015) were used to assess faculty satisfaction. For statistical analysis, including percentage analysis, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), measurement model validation, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study used SPSS 26 and AMOS 23. An objective and representative sample of faculty members from private higher education institutions in Karnataka was obtained by closely adhering to ethical principles like informed consent and confidentiality in order to guarantee data authenticity and reliability.

3. RESULTS

Four important parameters were examined to evaluate the reflective measurement models: Internal consistency, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and indicator dependability (Hair et al., 2012). The values of CR obtained by means of the study fell beyond the recommended threshold of 0.7, which means that reliability is strong. Hair et al. (2010) point out that a widely accepted means of measuring scale reliability, Cronbach's alpha, should be greater than 0.7 to be considered satisfactory. The results exceeded 0.7 on all alpha coefficients. Furthermore, Table 2 shows the CR and AVE for each construct, and it is noted that all AVE and CR thresholds were satisfied for each construct at 0.50 and 0.70, respectively. These results provide convergent and overall reliability evidence of the constructs.

Furthermore, Table 2 provides a comparable proof of discriminant validity in accordance with the suggestion made by Fornell and Larcker (1981). According to this, for a construct to fulfil discriminant validity, the square root of AVE for each construct must be bigger than the intercorrelations with other constructs. Table 2 demonstrates that the square roots of AVE were bigger than the correlation coefficients for each pair of components. The findings support the discriminant validity of the measures.

The histogram was used to calculate the normalcy check. The data's presumed normalcy has been fulfilled for the study's construct, as shown by the bell-shaped graphs and PP plot.

To assess the direct effect of student-led initiatives, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, Student Advocacy Groups, and Collaborative Learning on faculty satisfaction and Faculty Retention and other mediation analyses, Structural Equation Modelling is employed.

Table 3 shows that Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs (β = .490, t = 10.89, p = 0.000), Student Advocacy Groups (β = .650, t = 13.27, p = 0.000), Student-led initiatives (β = .671, t = 14.57, p = 0.000), and Collaborative Learning (β = .390, t = 7.80, p = 0.000) strongly impact faculty satisfaction, highlighting that empowering students to lead, advocate, and collaborate doesn't just enhance student outcomes – it significantly uplifts faculty morale and satisfaction as well. This leads to the acceptance of *H1*. Additionally, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs (β = .482, t = 8.57, p = 0.000), Student Advocacy Groups (β = .401, t = 6.90, p = 0.000), Student-led initiative (β = .724, t = 14.12, p = 0.000), Collaborative Learning (β = .347,

Table 2. Construct validity

Source: Computed using AMOS.

Construct	CR	AVE	CL	FIS	FS	PMP	SAG	SLI
CL	0.907	0.551	0.742	–	–	–	–	–
FIS	0.912	0.537	0.718	0.733	–	–	–	–
FS	0.827	0.545	0.698	0.576	0.738	–	–	–
PMP	0.880	0.514	0.547	0.691	0.714	0.717	–	–
SAG	0.887	0.529	0.624	0.474	0.718	0.696	0.727	–
SLI	0.878	0.509	0.567	0.684	0.718	0.665	0.706	0.713

Note: CL = Collaborative Learning, SLI = Student-Led Initiatives, FS = Faculty Satisfaction, PMP = Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, SAG = Student Advocacy Groups, FIS = Faculty Intent to Stay.

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Table 3. Direct effect of study variables

Source: Output computed using AMOS.

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	S.E	t-value	P	Decision
H1a	FS ← SLPMP	.490	0.045	10.89	***	Supported
H1b	FS ← SAG	.650	0.049	13.27	***	Supported
H1c	FS ← SLI	.671	0.046	14.57	***	Supported
H1d	FS ← CL	.390	0.050	7.80	***	Supported
H2a	FIS ← SLI	.724	0.051	14.12	***	Supported
H2b	FIS ← FS	.490	0.047	4.42	***	Supported
H2c	FIS ← SLPMP	.482	0.056	8.57	***	Supported
H2d	FIS ← SAG	.401	0.058	6.90	***	Supported
H2e	FIS ← CL	.347	0.061	5.69	***	Supported

Note: SLI = Students Led Initiative, *SLPMP* = Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, *SAG* = Student Advocacy Groups, *CL* = Collaborative Learning, *FS* = Faculty Satisfaction, *FIS* = Faculty Intent to Stay.

t = 5.69, p = 0.000), and Faculty satisfaction (β = .490, t = 4.42, p = 0.000) strongly impact faculty intent to stay, suggesting that fostering a student-centered, participative academic culture not only benefits student growth but also serves as a powerful strategy for faculty retention. Institutions that invest in empowering students and enhancing faculty satisfaction are more likely to build a stable, loyal academic workforce. This further supports the acceptance of *H2*.

The mediating role of faculty satisfaction in the relationship between student-centered, participative academic culture (student-led initiative, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, Student Advocacy Groups, and Collaborative Learning) and faculty intent to stay has been examined. Table 4 and Figure 2 depict that student-led initiatives directly affect Faculty Retention (β = .720***), emphasizing a dynamic, participatory, and self-motivated student culture. Student-led initiatives make the academic environment more rewarding and fulfilling for faculty members. Incredibly, the total effect (β = .840***) is greater than the direct effect, demonstrating that student-led initiative has a significantly greater influence on Faculty Retention when it is mediated by faculty satisfaction. The indirect effect (β = .120***) highlights that faculty are likely to feel a deeper sense of purpose, belonging, and professional satisfaction when they witness students demonstrating leadership and responsibility.

Moreover, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs directly affect Faculty Retention (β = .480***). Incredibly, the total effect (β = .583***) is greater than the direct effect, demonstrating that Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs have a significantly greater influence on Faculty Retention when it is mediated by faculty satisfaction. The indirect effect (β = .103***) highlights that while peer mentorship programs independently contribute to faculty members' decision to stay, their impact becomes even more pronounced when these programs simultaneously enhance faculty satisfaction.

In addition, Student Advocacy Groups directly affect Faculty Retention (β = .400***). Incredibly, the total effect (β = .537***) is greater than the direct effect, demonstrating that Student Advocacy Groups have a significantly greater influence on Faculty Retention when it is mediated by faculty satisfaction. The indirect effect (β = .137***) highlights that it directly supports faculty retention and, through the positive mediating role of faculty satisfaction, further deepens faculty commitment to the organization.

In addition, collaborative learning directly affects Faculty Retention (β = .347***). Incredibly, the total effect (β = .429***) is greater than the direct effect, demonstrating that collaborative learning has a significantly greater influence on Faculty Retention when it is mediated by faculty satisfaction. The insignificant indirect effect (β = .082) highlights that, whereas collaborative learning activities among students independently increase faculty members' likelihood of remaining at the institution, faculty satisfaction does not play a substantial role in this relationship. In other words, collaborative learning improves faculty retention mostly through direct impact, rather than by increasing faculty satisfaction.

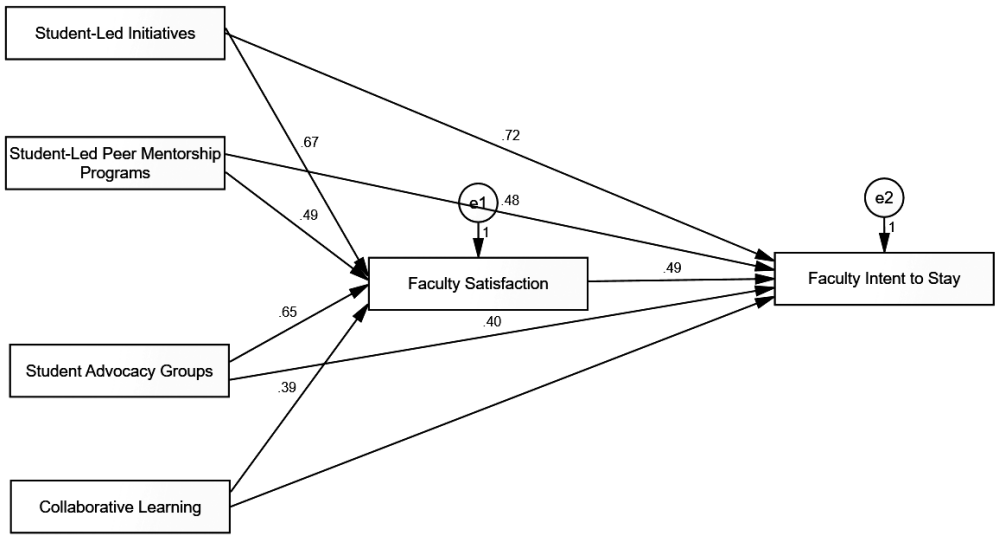

Figure 2. Mediating role of faculty satisfaction in the relationship between student initiatives, mentorship, advocacy, and collaboration and faculty retention

Table 4. Mediating role of environmental advocacy behavior in the relationship between digital fatigue, psychological safety, and faculty retention.

Source: Output computed using AMOS.

H	Relationship	Total Effect		Direct Effect		Relationship	Mediating Effect	
		β	t-value	β	t-value		β	t-value
H3a	SLI → FIS	.840***	16.80	.720***	14.12	SLI → FS → FIS	.120***	2.40
H3b	PMP → FIS	.583***	11.06	.480***	8.57	PMP → FS → FIS	.103***	2.06
H3c	SAG → FIS	.537***	9.63	.400***	6.90	SAG → FS → FIS	.137***	2.74
H3d	CLI → FIS	.429***	8.28	.347***	5.69	CLI → FS → FIS	.082	1.64

Note: SLI = Students Led Initiative, *SLPMP* = Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, *SAG* = Student Advocacy Groups, *CL* = Collaborative Learning, *FS* = Faculty Satisfaction, *FR* = Faculty Retention.

However, as a whole, the results prove that faculty satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationship between student-centered, participative academic culture (student-led initiative, Student-Led Peer Mentorship Programs, Student Advocacy Groups, and Collaborative Learning) and faculty intent to stay; hence, *H3* proved to be true.

4. DISCUSSION

This study focused on exploring its effect on faculty satisfaction and retention when student-initiated programs, peer mentorship programs, advocacy teams, and collaborative learning platforms are in place at the institution. We found that establishing a student-centered, participative academic culture contributes to improving student learning experiences and, importantly, allows faculty to feel empowered, which is related to improved job satisfaction and retaining a commitment to the institution. These insights add important knowledge to the growing literature on faculty engagement and retention strategies.

In alignment with the work of Bergmark and Westman (2018), this study confirms that providing students with opportunities for experiential, engaged learning and leadership will contribute to a more engaged and less static academic environment that is richly rewarding for faculty. Faculty satisfaction was noted to be an important outcome of student involvement, which, again, supports de Azambuja et al. (2021) who found that faculty members found their work as more fulfilling when students shape their experience via active engagement. When students take ownership of their learning through initiatives, mentoring, or advocacy, faculty members know that their instruction is valued, and this knowledge increases overall job satisfaction.

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The findings revealed that student-initiated projects had a direct and mediated impact on faculty retention. This is consistent with findings by Xerri et al. (2018), who concluded that student involvement has a positive effect on the broader academic culture, which ripples outwards and positively influences the impact on faculty well-being. The shared ownership and respect that resulted from student-led ways of working may also be the reason for a much stronger faculty commitment in this study. In addition, faculty members who see students as partners, not just appointed recipients of knowledge, will stay committed to institutions that endorse such models of engagement (Bovill et al., 2011).

Peer mentor programs were also beneficial to faculty satisfaction and retention. Most discussions of mentoring focus on student benefits, yet this study adds a perspective that considers the institutional ripple effects. Faculty members who engaged, whether through facilitation or observation, in peer mentoring may have a sense of heightened purpose and opportunities for affirmation of their role. This aligns with the conclusions of Skjevik et al. (2024), who argue that mentoring programs contribute to supportive educational climates, having a positive effect on both student and faculty morale. The study makes this argument empirically, demonstrating that student mentoring activities spill over positively into faculty retention outcomes.

Peer mentorship programs also proved to be instrumental in enhancing faculty satisfaction and retention. While mentorship is typically studied in terms of student gains, this research provides an alternative lens by highlighting its institutional ripple effects. Faculty involved in facilitating or observing peer mentoring may experience heightened purpose and affirmation of their role. This is consistent with the conclusions drawn by Skjevik et al. (2024), who asserted that mentoring programs contribute to a supportive educational climate, which in turn boosts both student and faculty morale. The study advances this argument by empirically demonstrating the positive spillover of student mentorship activities into faculty retention outcomes.

Similarly, student advocacy groups were found to significantly influence faculty satisfaction and, by extension, faculty retention. The concept of advocacy, by nature, suggests a sense of agency and belonging to an institution through the student voice. When faculty observe advocacy, it frames their perceptions of the institutional culture as progressive and inclusive. Kezar and Maxey (2014) would agree since they noted that academic environments with interdependent shared governance and student voice increase faculty satisfaction. Faculty are more likely to stay in environments that advocate for open and shared dialogue, creating mutual respect and openness between students and staff.

Collaborative learning, although directly influencing retention, appeared to have a weaker mediating role through faculty satisfaction, as alluded to previously. This nuanced finding suggests that, while beneficial for promoting change in student learning activities through group-based learning, these activities do little to shift any existing views that the faculty have about their work or work conditions. Slightly at odds with prior literature (e.g., Zhao & Cao, 2023), that suggested collaborative pedagogy improved learning at the teaching level amongst faculty), faculty might benefit from collaborative learning as a classroom dynamic but not in terms of any commitment to the institution, implying that further exploration is warranted in examining the change that collaborative learning may have long-term on faculty well-being.

Most notably, faculty satisfaction as a mediator in most tested pathways is consistent with Herzberg's (1968) two-factor theory in which job satisfaction plays a huge role in employee retention, as the positive emotions gained from engaging, responsible, and proactive students meet intrinsic motivators (e.g., recognition, esteem, and achievement) and raise organizational commitment. Similarly, and aligned with social exchange theory (Blau, 1986), faculty likely reciprocate positive student engagement with higher institutional loyalty.

This study's results are rooted in Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), which indicates that individuals are less likely to leave their jobs when they become embedded or develop strong interpersonal connections (links), align with institutional values (fit), and

feel they will lose a lot if they leave (sacrifice). The promotion of faculty satisfaction and intent to stay as a function of student-led initiatives (SLIs) in the study supports this idea. SLIs contribute to building connections, a common goal, and a professional investment into an academic environment that increases faculty embeddedness. Those who engage in peer mentorship, student advocacy, and collaborative learning create emotional and communal professional bonds to the academic environment that heighten their intent to stay at the institution.

Overall, this study reaffirms the connection between the use of student-centered academic practices and faculty satisfaction/retention. Institutions that recognize and value the connection between student engagement and faculty engagement are poised to develop a strong academic community.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the impact of student-led initiatives (SLIs) (e.g., peer-mentorship initiatives, student activist groups, and cooperative learning) on faculty satisfaction and intent to remain in a higher education context. In particular, it aimed to investigate the impact of Student Initiatives, Mentorship, Advocacy, and Collaboration on faculty intention to stay through the mediation of faculty satisfaction. Based on Job Embeddedness Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Self-Determination Theory, the results show that faculty with meaningful and sustained relationships with students in the form of SLIs experience more relational connectedness with colleagues and students, professional satisfaction, and shared values with their institution. Faculty satisfaction was the primary mediation effect, supporting the idea that positive motivators (recognition, autonomy, and purpose) relate to faculty retention. The positive implications of SLIs shown here support students as important actors in the student experience, but they can also help identify faculty morale and commitment.

The practical significance of the current study is considerable for institutional decision-makers and academic leaders. Institutions should not rely on just extrinsic rewards, such as salary or tenure, to be able to develop their faculties, but rather should intentionally develop a participative academic culture. Developing student leadership and mentoring opportunities for students and faculty, facilitating advocacy opportunities, and developing collaborative and collaborative learning in courses have the potential to create a community for faculty that is more rewarding and inclusive. Finally, faculty development opportunities that would assist faculty in engaging student-led initiatives and advocacy might facilitate the effect even further.

Despite these contributions, this study does have some limitations. The cross-sectional methodology limits causal inference and was constrained to a specific academic context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future work might consider using longitudinal methodologies to follow faculty satisfaction and retention over time. Research exploring differences based on academic discipline, institution, or cultural context could also provide valuable information about the impact of differing SLIs on faculty member outcomes. Additionally, research exploring institutional support structures or leadership style as potential moderators could enhance the theoretical model.

This study adds to a growing body of literature that reconceptualizes faculty retention as a social and motivational process. Student-led initiatives serve as catalysts for faculty engagement, satisfaction, and long-term commitment to the institutional context so that faculty can continue to teach, research, and offer community service. The study demonstrates how student empowerment promotes faculty satisfaction, which helps mitigate the impact of potential attrition in uncertain transformational times to incorporate positive change. Institutions that can acknowledge and take advantage of this interconnectedness will be able to cultivate thriving academic communities where there are engaged faculty and satisfied students.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

1. Age

☐ Below 25
☐ 26-30
☐ 31-35
☐ 36-40
☐ 41-45
☐ 46 and above

2. Gender

☐ Male
☐ Female

3. Marital Status

☐ Single
☐ Married
☐ Other:_____

4. What is your academic position?

☐ Lecturer
☐ Assistant Professor
☐ Associate Professor
☐ Professor
☐ Other (Specify)

5. How many years have you worked in academia?

☐ Less than 1 year
☐ 1-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ 11-20 years
☐ 20+ years

6. Which faculty/department do you belong to?

☐ Sciences
☐ Arts and Humanities
☐ Health Sciences
☐ Engineering and Architecture
☐ Commerce and Management
☐ Legal Sciences
☐ Other:……..

7. Institution Type

☐ Universities (Central Universities, State Universities, Private Universities, Deemed Universities, Open Universities)
☐ Colleges (Affiliated Colleges, Autonomous Colleges, Private Aided Colleges, Private Unaided Colleges)
☐ Institutes of national importance (IITs, IIMs, NITs, AIIMS, Other National Institutes)

8. How many courses do you teach per semester?

☐ 1-2
☐ 3-4
☐ 5+

9. How often do you engage in research activities?

☐ Regularly
☐ Occasionally
☐ Rarely
☐ Never

APPENDIX B

Kindly state your agreement level for the following items.
(5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Disagree, 5 – Strongly Disagree)

Table B1. Student-led initiatives (SLI)

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
1.	Students take the lead in organizing academic and extracurricular activities.						Zilvinskis et al. (2017)
2.	It provides opportunities for faculty-student collaboration beyond the classroom.						

Table B1 (cont.). Student-led initiatives (SLI)

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
3.	They encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and development.						Zilvinskis et al. (2017)
4.	It contributes to an engaging and dynamic academic environment.						
5.	It promotes innovation in teaching and learning experiences.						
6.	Students recognize and appreciate faculty contributions through their initiatives.						
7.	Institutional support enhances the sustainability and impact of student-led initiatives.						

Table B2. Student-led peer mentorship programs (SLPMP)

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
1.	Student-led peer mentorship programs provide structured support for student academic success						Simmonds and Dicks (2018)
2.	Student mentors take the initiative in organizing and leading mentorship sessions						
3.	These programs facilitate peer-to-peer learning without direct faculty intervention.						
4.	Student mentors offer academic and personal guidance to their peers						
5.	The mentorship program develops student leadership and mentoring skills						
6.	Student-led mentorship initiatives are well-organized and sustained across academic terms						
7.	These programs are institutionally recognized and supported to enhance student learning						

Table B3. Student advocacy groups (SAG)

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
1.	Student advocacy groups actively engage in university governance to promote institutional improvements						Matthews and Dollinger (2023)
2.	These groups represent student interests in academic policy discussions and decision-making processes						
3.	Student advocacy groups contribute to a more inclusive and transparent institutional culture.						
4.	The involvement of student advocacy groups strengthens collaboration between students, faculty, and administration						
5.	Student representatives work to improve learning environments and academic resources.						
6.	Student advocacy groups raise awareness about issues affecting the academic experience						
7.	These groups play a key role in fostering student leadership and active citizenship within the institution						

Table B4. Collaborative learning (CL)

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
1.	Students and faculty actively collaborate in discussions, projects, and learning activities						Zilvinskis et al. (2017)
2.	Students take an active role in shaping classroom learning experiences						
3.	Collaborative learning promotes knowledge-sharing and mutual learning between students and faculty						
4.	Faculty and students frequently work together on interdisciplinary or research-based projects						
5.	Classroom discussions encourage critical thinking and problem-solving through student participation						

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Table B4 (cont.). Collaborative learning (CL)

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
6.	Collaborative learning fosters a sense of mutual respect and partnership between students and faculty						Zilvinskis et al. (2017)
7.	Students contribute ideas that help improve course content and teaching strategies						
8.	The learning environment is enhanced when students and faculty engage in co-learning experiences						

Table B5. Faculty satisfaction

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
1.	I am satisfied with my overall experience as a faculty member at this institution						Rosser (2005)
2.	My engagement in student-led initiatives positively contributes to my job satisfaction						
3.	Collaborative learning with students enhances my professional fulfillment						
4.	I feel valued by the institution for my contributions to student mentorship and engagement programs						
5.	The academic quality of the students I teach contributes to my teaching satisfaction						
6.	Institutional policies support my involvement in student-led and collaborative learning activities.						
7.	I am satisfied with my workload balance between teaching, research, and service						
8.	My participation in faculty-student collaboration makes me more committed to this institution						
9.	I would recommend this institution to other faculty members based on my job satisfaction						

Table B6. Faculty intent to stay

Sl No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	Ref
1.	I intend to continue working at this institution for the foreseeable future						Candela et al. (2015)
2.	My engagement with student-led initiatives positively influences my decision to stay						
3.	The opportunity to collaborate with students enhances my commitment to this institution.						
4.	I feel a strong sense of belonging at this institution						
5.	Institutional support for faculty development encourages me to remain in my position						
6.	My overall job satisfaction makes me less likely to seek employment elsewhere						
7.	I would recommend this institution to other faculty members as a great place to work						
8.	The balance between teaching, research, and service at this institution makes me want to stay						
9.	I feel valued and recognized for my contributions, which increases my commitment to stay						