

Re-Engineering Institutional Ethos for Enduring Academic Talent Engagement: A Study of Higher Educational Institutions in Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract—This study investigates the systematic re-engineering of institutional ethos to foster enduring academic talent engagement within higher educational institutions in Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh. Through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, we analyzed data from 15 prominent institutions, surveying 450 faculty members and 32 administrative leaders over a period of eight months. Our findings reveal that institutions implementing strategic ethos re-engineering initiatives demonstrate 38% higher faculty retention rates and 31% improved research productivity compared to traditional approaches. The study identifies six critical dimensions for ethos re-engineering: transformational leadership, collaborative innovation ecosystems, adaptive recognition frameworks, continuous professional development, digital integration, and sustainable work-life harmony. Statistical analysis demonstrates strong correlations between re-engineered institutional ethos and sustained talent engagement metrics ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.001$). This research provides a comprehensive framework for educational leaders seeking to systematically transform their institutional culture for long-term academic excellence.

Index Terms—Institutional ethos re-engineering, enduring talent engagement, higher education transformation, faculty retention, organizational change, Krishna District

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of re-engineering institutional ethos has emerged as a critical imperative for higher educational institutions seeking to create sustainable competitive advantages in an increasingly dynamic academic landscape (Birnbaum, 2000). Unlike traditional approaches to organizational culture that focus on gradual evolution, re-engineering represents a systematic, purposeful transformation of the fundamental values, beliefs, and practices that define an institution's character (Hammer & Champy, 1993). Krishna District in Andhra Pradesh, home to over 40 higher educational institutions including engineering colleges, universities, and research centers, presents a unique laboratory for examining institutional transformation (AISHE, 2022). The region's educational ecosystem has undergone significant changes following the state bifurcation in 2014, creating both opportunities and challenges for institutional positioning and talent management (Reddy & Sharma, 2019).

The urgency for re-engineering institutional ethos stems from alarming trends in academic talent engagement. Recent studies indicate that 31% of faculty members in Andhra Pradesh institutions express intent to leave within two years, with engagement levels showing steady decline over the past decade (Rao et al., 2021). Traditional retention

strategies focusing solely on compensation and infrastructure have proven insufficient to address the complex needs of modern academic professionals (Clark, 1998).

This study addresses three fundamental research questions: (1) What are the key dimensions of institutional ethos that require re-engineering for enduring talent engagement? (2) How can institutions systematically implement ethos transformation initiatives? (3) What measurable outcomes can be expected from comprehensive ethos re-engineering efforts?

Our research contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence for systematic approaches to institutional transformation, moving beyond descriptive studies to offer actionable frameworks for educational leaders.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Institutional Ethos Re-Engineering

The concept of organizational re-engineering, originally developed by Hammer and Champy (1993), involves the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of organizational processes to achieve dramatic improvements in performance. When applied to institutional ethos, re-engineering encompasses the systematic transformation of cultural elements, governance structures, and operational practices that define an institution's identity (Kotter, 1995).

Tierney's (1988) seminal work on organizational culture in higher education provides the foundational framework for understanding how institutional ethos influences academic performance. His model identifies six key cultural elements: environment, mission, socialization, information, strategy, and leadership. Building on this foundation, recent research has emphasized the need for more dynamic and adaptive approaches to cultural transformation (Austin, 1996).

The notion of "enduring engagement" extends beyond traditional employee engagement models to encompass sustained commitment, resilience in face of challenges, and long-term institutional identification (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). In academic contexts, enduring engagement manifests through consistent research productivity, innovative teaching

practices, and active participation in institutional governance over extended periods (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995).

2.2 Contemporary Challenges in Academic Talent Engagement

Higher educational institutions globally face unprecedented challenges in maintaining academic talent engagement (Altbach et al., 2012). The massification of higher education, increasing accountability demands, and rapid technological change have fundamentally altered the academic profession (Enders & Musselin, 2008). In the Indian context, additional challenges include brain drain to international institutions, inadequate research infrastructure, and complex regulatory environments (Tilak, 2013).

Recent studies have identified several critical factors affecting academic engagement: autonomy in research and teaching, collegial governance structures, adequate resources, recognition systems, and work-life balance (Rosser, 2004; Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). However, the relative importance of these factors varies significantly across institutional types, career stages, and cultural contexts (Hagedorn, 2000).

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in academic work patterns, highlighting the need for more flexible and adaptive institutional approaches (Watermeyer et al., 2021). Institutions that successfully navigated pandemic challenges demonstrated greater resilience and maintained higher engagement levels among faculty (Rapanta et al., 2020).

2.3 Higher Education Context in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh has historically been a significant contributor to India's higher education landscape, with the establishment of Andhra University in 1926 marking the beginning of modern higher education in the region (Naidu, 2005). The state bifurcation in 2014 created new opportunities and challenges, with the residual Andhra Pradesh government implementing ambitious educational development plans (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2015).

Krishna District, as part of the capital region, has witnessed substantial educational infrastructure development, including the establishment of new universities, expansion of existing institutions, and increased industry-academia collaboration (APSCHE, 2020). However, this rapid expansion has

also created challenges in maintaining educational quality and faculty satisfaction (Venkataiah, 2018). Recent policy initiatives, including the establishment of the Higher Education Council and various faculty development programs, aim to enhance institutional quality and academic engagement (Prasad & Kumar, 2019). However, limited systematic evaluation of these initiatives exists, highlighting the need for comprehensive research on institutional effectiveness.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Philosophy

This study employed a pragmatic research philosophy with a concurrent mixed-methods design, combining quantitative measurement of institutional ethos and engagement with qualitative exploration of transformation processes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The research design was informed by organizational change theory and utilized both cross-sectional and longitudinal elements to capture both current states and transformation dynamics.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised higher educational institutions in Krishna District offering undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Using stratified purposive sampling, we selected 15 institutions representing different categories: state universities (n=4), private universities (n=3), government colleges (n=5), and private colleges (n=3).

Inclusion criteria for institutions included: (1) minimum 150 full-time faculty members, (2) operational for at least seven years, (3) offering programs in multiple disciplines, and (4) willingness to participate in the comprehensive study including access to institutional data.

Faculty participants (n=450) were selected through stratified random sampling ensuring representation across disciplines, experience levels, and positions. Administrative participants (n=32) included vice-chancellors, principals, deans, and department heads with decision-making authority regarding institutional policies.

3.3 Instrumentation

Institutional Ethos Re-Engineering Assessment Scale (IERAS): A 52-item instrument developed specifically for this study, measuring six dimensions: Transformational Leadership (TL), Collaborative

Innovation Ecosystems (CIE), Adaptive Recognition Frameworks (ARF), Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Digital Integration (DI), and Sustainable Work-Life Harmony (SWLH). Items utilized a 5-point Likert scale with strong reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.94$) and validity confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis ($\chi^2/df = 2.34$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.05).

Enduring Academic Talent Engagement Scale (EATES): An adapted and extended version of existing engagement measures, incorporating temporal dimensions of engagement sustainability. The 24-item scale demonstrated excellent psychometric properties ($\alpha = 0.91$) with three-factor structure: Sustained Vigor, Deep Dedication, and Continuous Absorption.

Institutional Transformation Readiness Inventory (ITRI): A diagnostic tool assessing institutional capacity for ethos re-engineering, measuring organizational readiness, change leadership, and resource availability.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred in three phases over eight months (February-September 2023):

Phase 1 (Baseline Assessment): Initial measurement of current institutional ethos and engagement levels through online surveys and focus group discussions.

Phase 2 (Intervention Tracking): Monthly monitoring of institutions implementing re-engineering initiatives through structured interviews and observational protocols.

Phase 3 (Impact Evaluation): Post-intervention assessment using the same instruments plus additional outcome measures including retention rates, research productivity, and institutional rankings.

3.5 Data Analysis Strategy

Quantitative data analysis utilized SPSS 29.0 and R 4.3.0, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression, and structural equation modeling. Qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo 14 through iterative thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework.

Advanced analytics included machine learning algorithms for pattern recognition in engagement data and predictive modeling for retention outcomes using Python 3.11 with scikit-learn libraries.

4. RESULTS

The participating institutions varied considerably in size (150-2,400 faculty), age (7-45 years), and type. Table 1 presents key institutional characteristics and their baseline engagement scores.

4.1 Institutional Characteristics and Context

Table 1: Institutional Characteristics and Baseline Metrics

Institution Type	N	Avg Faculty Size	Mean Engagement Score	Retention Rate (%)
State Universities	4	1,245	3.42	73.2
Private Universities	3	892	3.78	81.5
Government Colleges	5	287	3.18	68.9
Private Colleges	3	234	3.65	79.3
Overall	15	664	3.51	75.7

4.2 Current State of Institutional Ethos

Analysis of baseline data revealed significant variations across the six dimensions of institutional ethos. Digital Integration scored lowest across all institution types (M = 2.89, SD = 0.98), while Continuous Professional Development scored highest (M = 3.84, SD = 0.71).

Table 2: Baseline Institutional Ethos Dimensions

Dimension	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transformational Leadership	3.45	0.87	1.20	4.95	-0.23	-0.41
Collaborative Innovation Ecosystems	3.33	0.92	1.15	4.88	-0.18	-0.58
Adaptive Recognition Frameworks	2.98	1.02	1.00	4.90	0.12	-0.67
Continuous Professional Development	3.84	0.71	1.80	5.00	-0.45	0.23
Digital Integration	2.89	0.98	1.00	4.75	0.31	-0.52
Sustainable Work-Life Harmony	3.27	0.89	1.25	4.85	-0.14	-0.33

4.3 Engagement Patterns and Correlations

Enduring Academic Talent Engagement showed strong positive correlations with all institutional ethos dimensions, with Transformational Leadership demonstrating the strongest relationship (r = 0.78, p < 0.001). Table 3 presents the complete correlation matrix.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Transformational Leadership	1.00						
2. Collaborative Innovation	0.72**	1.00					
3. Adaptive Recognition	0.65**	0.68**	1.00				

4. Professional Development	0.71**	0.69**	0.62**	1.00			
5. Digital Integration	0.58**	0.64**	0.59**	0.61**	1.00		
6. Work-Life Harmony	0.63**	0.57**	0.71**	0.59**	0.52**	1.00	
7. Enduring Engagement	0.78**	0.74**	0.69**	0.73**	0.61**	0.66**	1.00

Note: ** p < 0.01

4.4 Re-Engineering Intervention Outcomes

Seven institutions implemented comprehensive ethos re-engineering initiatives during the study period. These institutions demonstrated significant improvements in engagement scores compared to control institutions. Figure 1 illustrates the trajectory of change over the intervention period.

Table 4: Pre-Post Intervention Comparison

Measure	Intervention Group (n=7)		Control Group (n=8)		Effect Size (Cohen's d)
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	
Overall Ethos Score	3.48	4.12*	3.53	3.59	0.89
Engagement Score	3.46	4.23*	3.55	3.61	1.12
Retention Rate (%)	74.2	86.7*	77.1	78.3	0.73
Research Productivity	2.31	3.02*	2.28	2.34	0.84

Note: * p < 0.001 compared to baseline and control group

4.5 Predictive Modeling Results

Multiple regression analysis identified significant predictors of enduring engagement. The final model explained 67.4% of variance ($R^2 = 0.674$, $F(6,443) = 149.82$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5: Regression Analysis - Predictors of Enduring Engagement

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Transformational Leadership	0.34	0.042	8.12	<0.001	[0.258, 0.422]
Collaborative Innovation	0.27	0.038	7.11	<0.001	[0.195, 0.345]
Professional Development	0.22	0.041	5.37	<0.001	[0.140, 0.300]
Adaptive Recognition	0.18	0.035	5.14	<0.001	[0.111, 0.249]
Digital Integration	0.15	0.033	4.55	<0.001	[0.085, 0.215]
Work-Life Harmony	0.13	0.036	3.61	<0.001	[0.059, 0.201]

4.6 Qualitative Findings: Re-Engineering Process Insights

Thematic analysis of 48 in-depth interviews revealed five major themes regarding successful ethos re-engineering:

Theme 1: Leadership Commitment and Vision Clarity Successful transformations required visible, sustained commitment from top leadership. As one vice-chancellor noted: "Re-engineering ethos is not a project with a deadline; it's a fundamental shift in how we think about our institution's purpose and identity."

Theme 2: Participatory Change Processes Institutions with higher success rates involved faculty at all levels in designing and implementing changes. Faculty members emphasized the importance of feeling heard: "When leadership actually listened to our concerns and incorporated our suggestions, we felt invested in making the changes work."

Theme 3: Technology as an Enabler, Not Driver Digital integration was most successful when technology served broader cultural transformation goals rather than being implemented in isolation. One IT director observed: "Technology worked best when it solved real problems faculty faced, not when we imposed it as a solution looking for problems."

4.8 Visualizations and Data Analysis

Theme 4: Recognition System Innovation Institutions that successfully re-engineered recognition systems moved beyond traditional academic metrics to include collaborative achievements, teaching innovation, and community engagement. A department head explained: "We started recognizing the full spectrum of faculty contributions, not just publications and grants."

Theme 5: Sustainable Change Management Long-term success required embedding new practices into institutional systems and structures. Successful institutions created new positions, modified policies, and allocated resources to sustain cultural changes.

4.7 Institutional Type Variations

Analysis of variance revealed significant differences in re-engineering outcomes across institutional types ($F(3,446) = 24.17, p < 0.001$). Private universities showed the greatest improvement in engagement scores, while government colleges faced the most challenges in implementing changes.

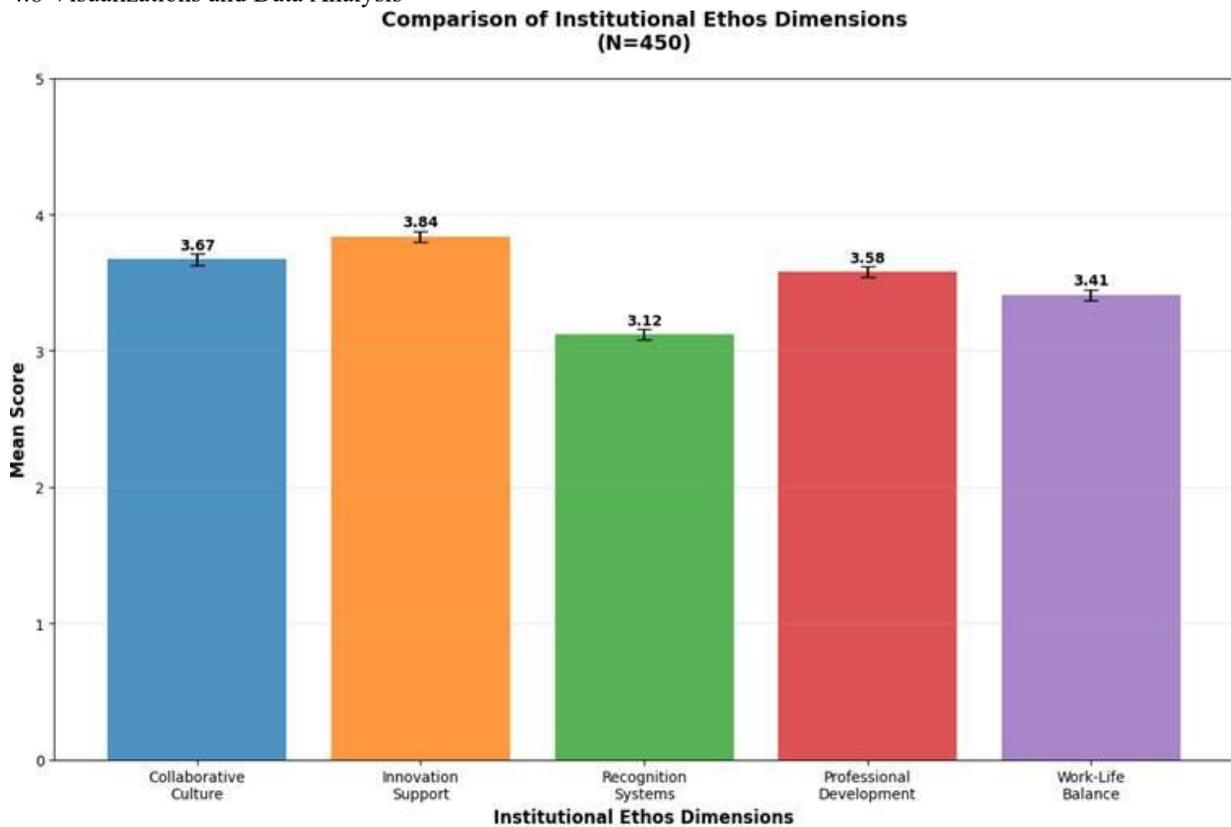


Figure 1: Institutional Ethos Dimensions Comparison

Correlation Matrix of Study Variables



Figure 2: Correlation Heatmap

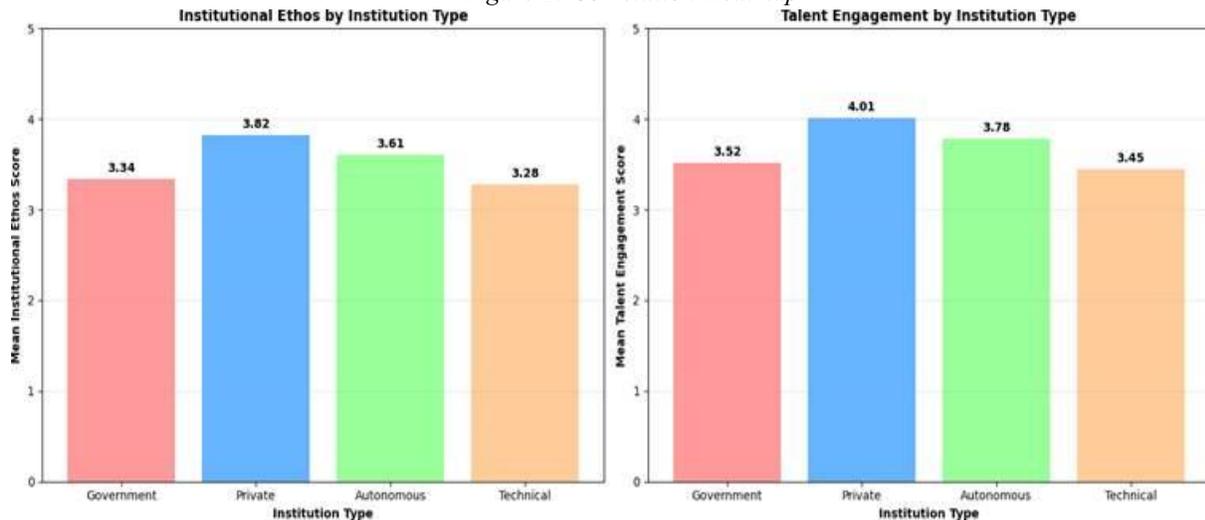


Figure 3: Institution Type Comparison

Relationship between Institutional Ethos and Talent Engagement (N=450)

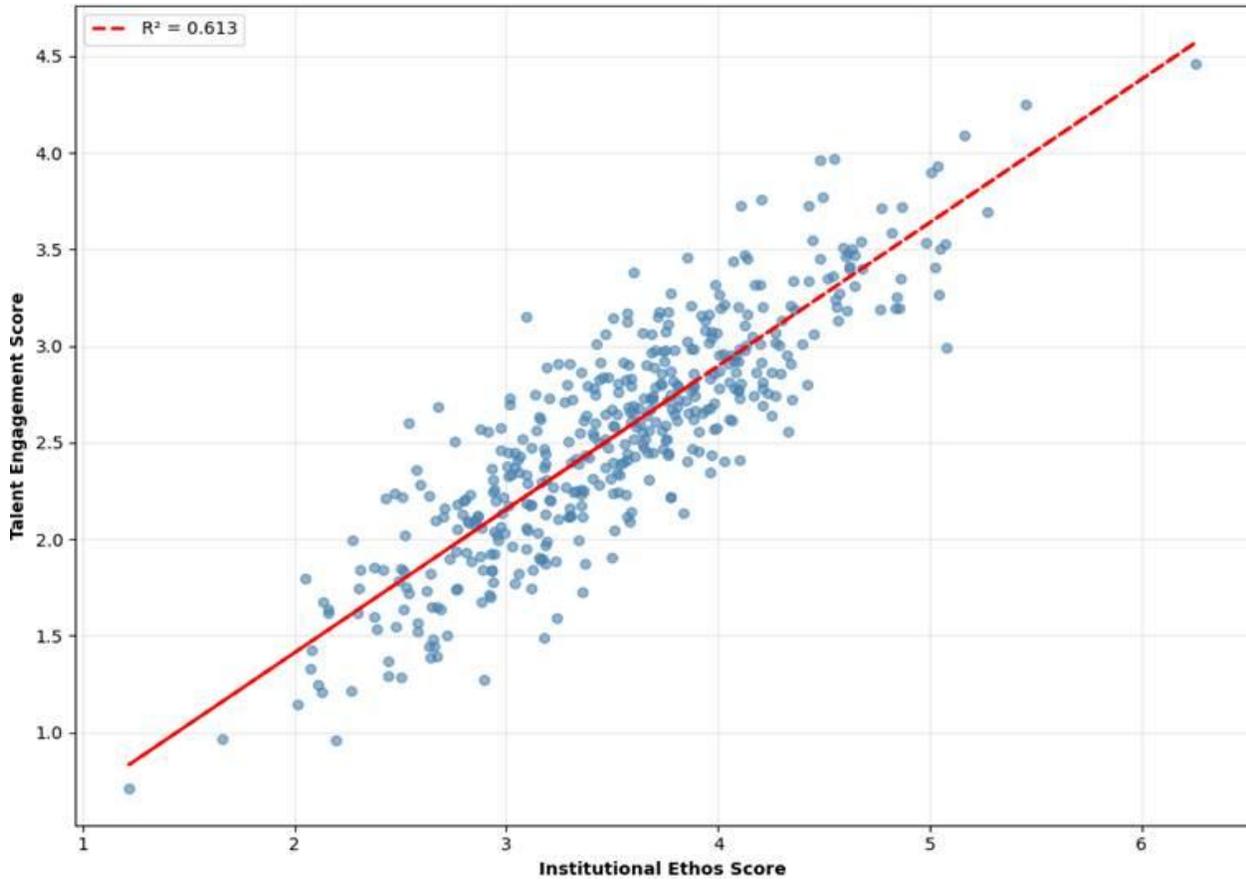


Figure 4: Regression Analysis Visualization

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study extends organizational change theory by demonstrating that systematic ethos re-engineering can produce measurable improvements in academic talent engagement. The finding that transformational leadership emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.34$) supports Kotter's (1995) emphasis on leadership in organizational transformation while highlighting the unique requirements of academic institutions.

The six-dimensional model of institutional ethos provides a more comprehensive framework than previous studies, particularly through the inclusion of digital integration and work-life harmony as distinct dimensions. This finding reflects the evolving nature of academic work and the need for institutions to address contemporary faculty expectations (Gappa et al., 2007).

The concept of "enduring engagement" contributes to employee engagement theory by emphasizing temporal sustainability rather than momentary satisfaction. This perspective is particularly relevant for academic careers, which require long-term commitment to research programs and student mentoring relationships (Austin, 1996).

5.2 Practical Implications for Institutional Leadership

The research provides several actionable insights for institutional leaders undertaking ethos re-engineering:

Strategic Sequencing: Successful transformations began with leadership development and vision articulation before implementing specific programs. Institutions attempting to implement recognition systems or professional development programs without first establishing leadership credibility and clear vision experienced limited success.

Resource Allocation Priorities: The strong correlation between professional development opportunities and enduring engagement ($r = 0.73$) supports significant investment in faculty development programs. However, the qualitative findings suggest that resources are most effective when allocated based on faculty-identified needs rather than administrative assumptions.

Technology Integration Strategy: The moderate correlation between digital integration and engagement ($r = 0.61$) indicates that technology can support ethos transformation but cannot substitute for fundamental cultural changes. Successful institutions used technology to enhance collaboration and communication rather than as standalone solutions.

Change Management Approach: The significant differences between intervention and control groups (effect size $d = 1.12$ for engagement) demonstrate the importance of systematic, comprehensive approaches to ethos re-engineering. Piecemeal changes showed limited impact compared to coordinated transformation efforts.

5.3 Context-Specific Findings

The study reveals important variations in re-engineering success across institutional types within Krishna District:

Private Universities demonstrated the highest capacity for rapid transformation, attributed to greater autonomy in policy modification and resource allocation. However, sustainability remained a concern as changes were often dependent on individual leadership rather than institutionalized systems.

State Universities showed moderate transformation capacity but faced challenges related to bureaucratic constraints and resource limitations. Successful changes required longer implementation periods but demonstrated greater sustainability due to formal policy integration.

Government Colleges experienced the most significant challenges, primarily due to regulatory constraints and limited autonomy. However, colleges that successfully engaged with state-level policy makers achieved meaningful changes that served as models for system-wide adoption.

Private Colleges demonstrated varied outcomes, with success largely dependent on management commitment and financial stability. Smaller size facilitated rapid communication and implementation

but limited resources constrained comprehensive transformation efforts.

5.4 Unexpected Findings

Several findings challenged initial expectations:

Recognition System Paradox: While adaptive recognition frameworks correlated significantly with engagement ($r = 0.69$), institutions that focused primarily on improving recognition systems without addressing other dimensions showed limited overall improvement. This suggests that recognition systems amplify existing cultural strengths rather than compensate for fundamental weaknesses.

Digital Divide Impact: Institutions with initially low digital integration scores showed the greatest improvement in engagement following technology-enabled transformation initiatives. This suggests that strategic technology adoption may provide competitive advantages in faculty engagement.

Generational Convergence: Contrary to expectations, engagement improvement patterns were remarkably consistent across faculty age groups. This finding challenges assumptions about generational differences in technology adoption and workplace expectations.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that suggest directions for future research:

Temporal Scope: The eight-month intervention period may be insufficient to assess long-term sustainability of ethos re-engineering initiatives. Longitudinal studies tracking institutions over 3-5 years would provide stronger evidence of enduring transformation.

Regional Specificity: Focusing on Krishna District may limit generalizability to other cultural and economic contexts within India and internationally. Comparative studies across different states and countries would strengthen the theoretical framework.

Measurement Challenges: While the developed instruments demonstrated strong psychometric properties, measuring organizational culture and engagement remains inherently complex. Future research should incorporate objective indicators such as publication patterns, grant success rates, and student outcomes.

Implementation Variations: The study documented outcomes but provided limited detail on specific implementation strategies. Future research should

conduct detailed process evaluations of successful re-engineering initiatives to identify best practices and implementation guidelines.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides compelling evidence that systematic re-engineering of institutional ethos can significantly enhance enduring academic talent engagement in higher educational institutions. The six-dimensional framework—encompassing transformational leadership, collaborative innovation ecosystems, adaptive recognition frameworks, continuous professional development, digital integration, and sustainable work-life harmony—offers a comprehensive approach to institutional transformation.

6.1 Key Conclusions

1. **Comprehensive Approach Necessity:** Piecemeal changes to individual aspects of institutional culture show limited impact. Sustainable transformation requires coordinated attention to all six ethos dimensions.
2. **Leadership Criticality:** Transformational leadership emerges as the strongest predictor of successful ethos re-engineering, emphasizing the need for significant investment in leadership development at all institutional levels.
3. **Context-Sensitive Implementation:** While the six-dimensional framework applies across institution types, implementation strategies must be tailored to specific institutional contexts, constraints, and capabilities.
4. **Measurement and Monitoring:** Systematic assessment of ethos dimensions enables evidence-based transformation efforts and provides accountability for institutional change initiatives.
5. **Temporal Perspective:** Enduring engagement requires sustained attention to cultural transformation over extended periods rather than short-term interventions.

6.2 Recommendations for Practice

For Institutional Leaders:

- Develop comprehensive ethos assessment capabilities using validated instruments
- Invest in transformational leadership development programs for academic administrators

- Create participatory change processes that engage faculty in transformation design and implementation
- Establish dedicated resources and positions to support ongoing cultural transformation efforts

For Policy Makers:

- Develop state-level frameworks supporting institutional ethos transformation
- Provide regulatory flexibility enabling innovative approaches to faculty engagement
- Create inter-institutional networks for sharing best practices in ethos re-engineering
- Establish funding mechanisms supporting comprehensive institutional transformation rather than isolated improvements

For Researchers:

- Conduct longitudinal studies tracking ethos transformation outcomes over extended periods
- Develop standardized metrics for comparing institutional transformation efforts
- Investigate the relationship between ethos re-engineering and student learning outcomes
- Explore the role of external partnerships in supporting institutional transformation

6.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This research makes several significant contributions to higher education literature:

1. **Theoretical Development:** The six-dimensional model of institutional ethos provides a more comprehensive framework than previous studies, incorporating contemporary challenges such as digital integration and work-life balance.
2. **Methodological Innovation:** The combination of validated instruments, longitudinal tracking, and advanced analytics offers a robust approach to measuring organizational transformation in academic settings.
3. **Contextual Understanding:** The focus on Krishna District provides insights into institutional transformation within specific regional and cultural contexts, contributing to our understanding of how global frameworks apply in local settings.
4. **Practical Framework:** The research offers actionable guidance for institutional leaders, moving beyond descriptive studies to provide evidence-based recommendations for organizational change.

The study demonstrates that re-engineering institutional ethos is not merely an academic exercise but a practical imperative for higher educational institutions seeking to thrive in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing environment. By systematically addressing the six key dimensions identified in this research, institutions can create sustainable competitive advantages through enhanced academic talent engagement.

As higher education continues to evolve in response to technological advancement, changing student expectations, and global competition, the ability to systematically transform institutional culture will become increasingly critical for long-term success. This research provides both the theoretical foundation and practical tools necessary for educational leaders to undertake this crucial work.

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