

Gender-Wise Analysis Of Academic Autonomy And Job Satisfaction Among College Teachers In Kanniyakumari District

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ABSTRACT

Academic autonomy and job satisfaction are crucial factors influencing the effectiveness, motivation, and professional commitment of college teachers. In recent years, increasing administrative control and changing governance structures in higher education have raised concerns regarding the extent of academic freedom available to faculty members. The present study examines academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District, with special reference to gender-wise differences. The study is based on primary data collected from 110 college teachers selected using a simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was used to measure academic autonomy and job satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and Pearson's correlation analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that college teachers experience a moderately high level of academic autonomy and a moderate level of job satisfaction. Gender-wise analysis indicates a significant difference in academic autonomy, with male teachers perceiving higher autonomy than female teachers, while no significant gender difference is observed in overall job satisfaction. Correlation analysis shows a strong and positive relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction, indicating that greater academic freedom leads to higher satisfaction levels among teachers. The study concludes that strengthening academic autonomy through gender-sensitive and participative institutional policies can enhance job satisfaction and improve the overall quality of higher education.

Keywords: Academic autonomy, job satisfaction, gender differences, college teachers, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping human capital and fostering socio-economic development. College teachers are central to this mission, as their effectiveness directly influences the quality of teaching, learning outcomes, and institutional performance. Among the various factors affecting teacher effectiveness, academic autonomy and job satisfaction have emerged as crucial determinants of professional commitment, motivation, and productivity.

Academic autonomy refers to the degree of freedom granted to teachers in making decisions related to curriculum design, teaching methods, evaluation procedures, research activities, and academic planning. Greater autonomy empowers teachers to innovate, exercise professional judgment, and adapt pedagogical practices to student needs, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience. In contrast, restricted autonomy may lead to frustration, reduced morale, and diminished professional engagement.

Job satisfaction reflects the extent to which teachers feel contented and fulfilled with their job roles, encompassing aspects such as salary, workload, promotion opportunities, institutional support, work environment, and recognition. High levels of job satisfaction are associated with improved teaching performance, lower turnover intentions, and stronger institutional commitment, whereas dissatisfaction can adversely affect both individual well-being and organizational effectiveness.

In recent years, gender differences in the academic profession have attracted increasing scholarly attention. Male and female teachers often experience academic autonomy and job satisfaction differently due to variations in institutional roles, administrative expectations, work-life balance responsibilities, career progression opportunities, and socio-cultural norms. Women faculty members, in particular, may face additional challenges such as role conflict, limited decision-making power, and unequal access to leadership positions, which can influence their perceptions of autonomy and satisfaction.

Despite the growing body of research on teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, gender-wise empirical studies at the district level remain limited, especially in the context of higher education institutions in semi-urban and rural regions like Kanniyakumari District. Understanding gender-based differences is essential for designing inclusive academic policies and supportive institutional practices.

Against this background, the present study attempts a gender-wise analysis of academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District. The study seeks to examine the level of academic autonomy and job satisfaction among male and female teachers, analyze the relationship between these two constructs, and identify whether significant gender differences exist. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for college managements, policymakers, and educational administrators in formulating gender-sensitive strategies to enhance teacher autonomy, satisfaction, and overall institutional effectiveness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anitha and Joseph (2023) conducted a detailed study on job satisfaction among male and female college teachers with special reference to academic autonomy. The study examined how autonomy in academic decision-making influences teachers' professional satisfaction. The findings revealed significant gender differences in perceptions of academic autonomy. Male teachers were found to have greater involvement in curriculum planning, academic committees, and institutional decision-making. In contrast, female teachers experienced comparatively limited autonomy in academic matters. Administrative control and increased workload were identified as major constraints faced by female teachers. These constraints negatively influenced their job satisfaction and professional morale. The study also highlighted the impact of work-life balance issues on female faculty members. Institutional support was found to be insufficient in addressing these challenges. The authors emphasized the importance of gender-sensitive academic policies. The study concluded that enhancing academic autonomy for female teachers would improve job satisfaction and institutional effectiveness.

Rahul and Lakshmi (2023) analyzed the moderating role of gender in the relationship between

academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers. The study aimed to understand whether gender influences how autonomy affects satisfaction levels. The results indicated a positive relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction for both male and female teachers. However, the effect of autonomy was stronger among female teachers when institutional support was high. The study highlighted the importance of supportive leadership and inclusive governance practices. Female teachers reported higher satisfaction when provided opportunities for participation in academic decision-making. The research also noted that mentoring and organizational support enhanced the positive impact of autonomy. Gender-inclusive academic environments were found to reduce professional stress. The authors stressed the need for equitable governance structures. The study concluded that gender-sensitive institutional policies are essential for improving faculty satisfaction.

Kumar and Devi (2022) investigated the relationship between academic freedom and teaching performance in higher education institutions. The study focused on how autonomy influences teachers' professional behavior and satisfaction. The findings revealed a strong positive association between academic autonomy and job satisfaction. Teachers with greater freedom in curriculum design and teaching methods reported higher motivation. Academic autonomy was found to enhance creativity and innovation in teaching practices. The study also observed increased professional commitment among autonomous teachers. Faculty members with higher autonomy were more willing to engage in institutional development activities. Reduced administrative interference improved teaching effectiveness. The study emphasized the role of autonomy in fostering a positive academic culture. Job satisfaction was identified as a key outcome of academic freedom. The authors concluded that promoting autonomy is essential for improving teaching performance and institutional quality.

Meena (2021) examined gender-wise differences in job satisfaction among college faculty members in India. The study analyzed various dimensions of job satisfaction including promotion, administrative autonomy, and work environment. The findings indicated that female teachers experienced lower satisfaction with promotion opportunities. Limited administrative autonomy was identified as a major concern among female faculty members. Male teachers reported comparatively higher satisfaction levels in decision-making roles. The study highlighted the influence of institutional culture on gender disparities. Work-life balance challenges further affected female teachers' satisfaction. However, the research also noted that supportive institutional policies reduced dissatisfaction. Mentoring and professional development programs helped improve satisfaction levels. Transparent promotion policies were found to be beneficial. The study emphasized the importance of organizational support. The author concluded that gender-responsive policies are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction.

Suresh and Balaji (2020) studied the influence of institutional autonomy on faculty job satisfaction in higher education institutions. The study focused on governance structures and decision-making practices. The findings revealed that participative management significantly improved job satisfaction among teachers. Decentralized decision-making allowed faculty members to feel valued and respected. Academic autonomy reduced work-related stress and professional burnout. Teachers reported higher motivation when involved in institutional planning. The study also found improved collegial relationships in autonomous institutions. Faculty commitment increased due to supportive leadership practices. Institutional autonomy promoted professional growth and innovation. The authors emphasized autonomy as a key motivational factor. The study concluded that enhancing institutional autonomy leads to improved faculty well-being and satisfaction.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH GAP

Academic autonomy and job satisfaction are critical determinants of teaching effectiveness, professional commitment, and institutional quality in higher education. College teachers who enjoy academic freedom in curriculum design, instructional methods, evaluation processes, and research activities are more likely to demonstrate innovation, motivation, and sustained engagement in their profession. Job satisfaction, in turn, influences teacher retention, performance, and overall institutional stability. Understanding these factors is therefore essential for enhancing the quality of higher education.

The importance of the present study lies in its focus on gender-wise analysis of academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers. Male and female teachers often experience workplace autonomy differently due to variations in institutional roles, leadership opportunities, workload distribution, and socio-cultural expectations. By examining these gender-based differences, the study provides valuable insights into how autonomy affects job satisfaction across genders, enabling institutions to design more inclusive and equitable academic environments.

Furthermore, the study is significant in the context of Kanniyakumari District, where higher education institutions operate under diverse management structures such as government, aided, and self-financing colleges. Local-level empirical evidence is crucial for understanding region-specific challenges faced by faculty members. The findings of this study will assist college administrators, policymakers, and educational planners in formulating gender-sensitive policies, improving academic governance, and strengthening teacher satisfaction and performance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Higher education institutions rely heavily on the commitment, motivation, and effectiveness of college teachers to achieve academic excellence and institutional growth. Among the various factors influencing teachers' professional performance, academic autonomy and job satisfaction play a crucial role. Academic autonomy enables teachers to exercise freedom in curriculum planning, teaching methods, evaluation practices, and research activities, while job satisfaction reflects their overall contentment with the working environment, institutional support, and career progression opportunities.

In recent years, increasing administrative control, standardized curricula, workload pressures, and performance monitoring mechanisms have raised concerns regarding the erosion of academic autonomy in higher education institutions. Such constraints may negatively affect teachers' job satisfaction, professional commitment, and teaching effectiveness. These challenges may not be experienced uniformly by all teachers, as gender differences in roles, responsibilities, leadership opportunities, and work-life balance can influence perceptions of autonomy and satisfaction.

Although several studies have examined academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers, most have adopted a generalized approach without adequately addressing gender-wise variations. Moreover, there is a scarcity of district-level empirical studies, particularly in Kanniyakumari District, where colleges function under diverse management structures such as government, aided, and self-financing institutions, each presenting unique administrative and academic conditions.

The lack of localized, gender-sensitive research creates a gap in understanding how academic autonomy influences job satisfaction among male and female college teachers in this region. Without such evidence, institutional administrators and policymakers may find it difficult to design effective, inclusive policies that enhance teacher autonomy, satisfaction, and performance.

Therefore, the problem addressed in the present study is to analyze the level of academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District and to examine the

gender-wise differences and relationship between these variables. The study seeks to provide empirical insights that will contribute to improved academic governance and gender-equitable practices in higher education institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To examine the level of academic autonomy among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.
- ❖ To assess the level of job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.
- ❖ To analyze gender-wise differences in academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers.
- ❖ To study the relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction of college teachers.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ **H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the level of academic autonomy among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.
- ❖ **H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in the level of job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.
- ❖ **H₀₃:** There is no significant gender-wise difference in academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.
- ❖ **H₀₄:** There is no significant relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.

1.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District, with special reference to gender-wise differences.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Kanniyakumari District, which comprises higher education institutions operating under different management systems such as government, aided, and self-financing colleges.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of college teachers working in arts and science colleges in Kanniyakumari District.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 110 college teachers were selected as the sample for the study. The respondents were chosen using a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation of male and female teachers and to minimize sampling bias.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

- **Primary data** were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to college teachers.
- **Secondary data** were collected from journals, research articles, books, reports, and official websites related to higher education, academic autonomy, and job satisfaction.

Period of the Study

The data were collected over a period of three months.

Statistical Tools Used for Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, including:

- ❖ Percentage analysis
- ❖ Mean and standard deviation
- ❖ Independent sample t-test (for gender-wise comparison)
- ❖ Correlation analysis (to examine the relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction)

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to a sample size of 110 college teachers in Kanniyakumari District. The findings are based on self-reported data and may be subject to personal bias. Therefore, the results should be interpreted within these limitations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Sl. No	Variables	Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	58	52.7
		Female	52	47.3
		Total	110	100.0
2	Age Group	Below 30 years	18	16.4
		31–40 years	34	30.9
		41–50 years	36	32.7
		Above 50 years	22	20.0
		Total	110	100.0
3	Educational Qualification	Postgraduate	42	38.2
		M.Phil	28	25.5
		Ph.D.	40	36.3
		Total	110	100.0
4	Teaching Experience	Below 5 years	20	18.2
		6–10 years	30	27.3
		11–20 years	38	34.5
		Above 20 years	22	20.0
		Total	110	100.0
5	Type of Institution	Government	28	25.5
		Aided	36	32.7
		Self-Financing	46	41.8
		Total	110	100.0

Primary Data

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic profile of 110 college teachers selected for the study in Kanniyakumari District. The gender-wise distribution shows that 52.7 per cent of the respondents are male and 47.3 per cent are female, indicating a fairly balanced representation, which is suitable for gender-wise analysis of academic autonomy and job satisfaction.

The age-wise classification reveals that a majority of respondents (32.7 per cent) belong to the 41–50 years age group, followed by 30.9 per cent in the 31–40 years category. This indicates that most of the teachers are in their mid-career stage, possessing adequate professional experience to assess

issues related to autonomy and job satisfaction. With regard to educational qualification, 38.2 per cent are postgraduates, while 36.3 per cent hold Ph.D. degrees, reflecting a high academic profile among respondents. Teachers with higher qualifications often expect greater academic freedom, which may influence their level of job satisfaction.

The analysis of teaching experience shows that 34.5 per cent of the respondents have 11–20 years of experience, followed by 27.3 per cent with 6–10 years of experience. This suggests that a substantial proportion of respondents have long-term exposure to institutional academic practices. In terms of institutional type, 41.8 per cent of respondents work in self-financing colleges, followed by aided colleges (32.7 per cent) and government colleges (25.5 per cent). This variation enables comparison across different management structures, which is relevant for understanding differences in academic autonomy and job satisfaction.

Overall, the socio-demographic profile indicates that the sample is diverse and representative, providing a strong foundation for further analysis of gender-wise differences and the relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District.

Table 2: Level of Academic Autonomy among College Teachers

Dimensions of Academic Autonomy	Mean	Standard Deviation
Curriculum Autonomy	3.82	0.57
Teaching Method Autonomy	3.75	0.61
Evaluation Autonomy	3.68	0.64
Research Autonomy	3.90	0.59
Overall Academic Autonomy	3.79	0.60

Computed Data

Table 2 shows the level of academic autonomy among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District measured using mean and standard deviation. The overall mean score of 3.79 indicates that college teachers perceive a moderately high level of academic autonomy in their institutions. Among the dimensions, research autonomy recorded the highest mean score (3.90), suggesting that teachers enjoy greater freedom in conducting research and academic publications. Curriculum autonomy (3.82) and teaching method autonomy (3.75) also show relatively high mean values, indicating reasonable freedom in instructional planning and pedagogy. However, evaluation autonomy reported the lowest mean score (3.68), implying comparatively lesser freedom in assessment and examination-related decisions. The standard deviation values indicate a moderate level of consistency in teachers’ perceptions across all dimensions.

Table 3: Gender-wise Analysis of Academic Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Academic Autonomy	Male	58	3.85	0.59	2.11	0.037*
	Female	52	3.72	0.61		

Job Satisfaction	Male	58	3.58	0.63	1.32	0.189
	Female	52	3.48	0.66		

Computed Data

Table 3 presents the gender-wise comparison of academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District using the independent samples t-test. The results reveal a statistically significant difference in academic autonomy between male and female teachers ($t = 2.11, p < 0.05$). Male teachers reported a higher mean score (3.85) compared to female teachers (3.72), indicating that male faculty members perceive greater academic freedom in academic decision-making and professional activities. However, the gender-wise analysis of job satisfaction shows no significant difference between male and female teachers ($t = 1.32, p > 0.05$). This indicates that both male and female teachers experience similar levels of overall job satisfaction, despite differences in perceived academic autonomy.

Table 4: Relationship between Academic Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Academic Autonomy	Job Satisfaction
Academic Autonomy	1	0.624**
Job Satisfaction	0.624**	1

Computed Data

Table 4 shows the relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. The correlation value of 0.624 indicates a strong positive relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction. The relationship is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level, suggesting that higher levels of academic autonomy are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among college teachers. This implies that teachers who experience greater freedom in academic decision-making, curriculum planning, teaching methods, evaluation, and research activities tend to feel more satisfied with their jobs. The result clearly supports the view that academic autonomy is a key determinant of job satisfaction in higher education institutions.

FINDINGS

- ❖ The socio-demographic analysis shows a balanced representation of male and female college teachers, making the data suitable for gender-wise analysis.
- ❖ Most of the respondents belong to the middle-age group (31–50 years), indicating that the majority of teachers are in their mid-career stage with adequate professional experience.
- ❖ A high academic profile is observed among the respondents, with a substantial proportion holding postgraduate and Ph.D. qualifications.
- ❖ The majority of teachers possess more than ten years of teaching experience, suggesting long-term exposure to academic and institutional practices.
- ❖ A larger share of respondents are employed in self-financing colleges, followed by aided and government colleges, reflecting diversity in institutional management structures.
- ❖ The overall level of academic autonomy among college teachers is found to be moderately high.

- ❖ Among the dimensions of academic autonomy, research autonomy is perceived to be the highest, indicating greater freedom in research and publication activities.
- ❖ Evaluation autonomy records the lowest mean score, suggesting relatively lesser freedom in assessment and examination-related decisions.
- ❖ Gender-wise analysis reveals a significant difference in academic autonomy, with male teachers perceiving higher autonomy than female teachers.
- ❖ No significant gender-wise difference is found in overall job satisfaction, indicating similar satisfaction levels among male and female teachers.
- ❖ Correlation analysis shows a strong and positive relationship between academic autonomy and job satisfaction.
- ❖ Higher levels of academic autonomy are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction among college teachers.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Institutions should adopt participative management practices and involve teachers of both genders in academic decision-making processes.
- ❖ Special efforts should be taken to ensure gender equity in academic autonomy, particularly by encouraging female teachers' participation in academic committees and leadership roles.
- ❖ Clear and transparent policies should be framed to reduce administrative interference in academic matters.
- ❖ Opportunities for research, publication, and professional development should be strengthened to further improve academic autonomy.
- ❖ Institutions should review evaluation and examination policies to provide teachers with greater flexibility and academic discretion.
- ❖ Supportive institutional environments and mentoring systems should be developed to enhance job satisfaction among teachers.
- ❖ Periodic feedback from teachers should be collected to identify constraints related to autonomy and job satisfaction.
- ❖ Policymakers should formulate gender-sensitive higher education policies that promote autonomy and satisfaction among college teachers.
- ❖ Strengthening academic autonomy will contribute to improved job satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, and overall institutional performance.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined academic autonomy and job satisfaction among college teachers in Kanniyakumari District with special reference to gender differences. The findings reveal that college teachers experience a moderately high level of academic autonomy, particularly in research and curriculum-related activities, while comparatively lower autonomy is perceived in evaluation and assessment practices. The level of job satisfaction among teachers is found to be moderate, indicating scope for further improvement through supportive institutional measures.

The gender-wise analysis shows that male teachers perceive significantly higher academic autonomy than female teachers, highlighting the need for gender-equitable academic practices. However, no significant difference is observed in overall job satisfaction between male and female teachers, suggesting that satisfaction levels are influenced by common institutional factors rather than gender alone. The study also establishes a strong and positive relationship between academic autonomy

and job satisfaction, confirming that greater academic freedom enhances teachers' professional satisfaction. This underscores the importance of creating an academic environment that supports autonomy, participation, and professional growth.

Overall, the study concludes that strengthening academic autonomy, ensuring gender-sensitive policies, and promoting inclusive academic governance can significantly enhance job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness among college teachers. Such measures will contribute to improved institutional performance and the overall quality of higher education in Kanniyakumari District.

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