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Exploring the relationship between employee engagement and Job Satisfaction Among Non-Academic Staff at Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka

B.A.N. Krishantha[1], D.S.R.E.S. Gunawardhana[2*], C.G. Kothalawala[1]
[1]*Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine, Kandy Road, Yakkala, Sri Lanka.*
[2]*Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.*

Abstract:
Employee engagement and job satisfaction are critical factors influencing organizational performance and employee well-being. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction among the non-academic staff at the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine. Employee engagement, the independent variable, was analyzed through six dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, absorption, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. Job satisfaction, the dependent variable, was examined under seven dimensions, namely pay and benefits, reward and recognition, supervision, working conditions, communication, co-workers, and the nature of the job. Data was collected from a sample of 130 non-academic staff members through convenient sampling using a combination of literature research and a questionnaire survey. The IBM SPSS version 26.0 was used to analyze data. The IBM SPSS version 26.0 was used to analyze the data, with a significance level (p-value) set at 0.05. The findings revealed a significantly positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction (rs 0.765, p < 0.05). The findings revealed a significantly positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction, suggesting that higher engagement levels across the six dimensions lead to increased job satisfaction among non-academic staff. The results provided practical implications for university management, emphasizing the importance of fostering an engaging work environment to improve employee satisfaction and productivity.

Key Words*: Employee engagement, Employee productivity, Job satisfaction, .Non-academic staff.*

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I. Introduction

Employees are defined as one of the major assets of an organization which, in addition to being an essential component of the organization's function, gives the organization the strength to compete with the external competitive market environment (Abraham, 2012). Employers in an organization should comprehend that the decisions made by the management affect employee engagement deeply. Employees are required the basic salary and further contributions from the organization. In return, the employees are expected to be engaged efficiently in the organization's activities (Lynn Barden, 2018). In a competitive market environment, the organization always requires the employees to work together with the organization to gain a competitive advantage over the competitors, especially when the competitors offer innovative products and services (Anwar & Qadir, 2017; Sypniewska et al., 2023).

Employee engagement is the term that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication an employee feels toward employment. Job satisfaction is the level of contentment employees feel with their job. Employee engagement is a certain behavior of the employee towards the employment, whereas job satisfaction is a factor that depends on the behavior of the employer towards the employees (Reissová & Papay, 2021). Employee engagement and job satisfaction are interconnected factors, which ultimately are dependent on each other. As emphasized by Masharyono et al., (2021), an organization should pay close attention to both factors to bring its performance to desired levels. Nevertheless, an organization would not be able to measure an employee by checking their personal feelings and attitude towards the organization, since positive feelings expressed by an employee do not always reveal the degree of employee engagement or that of job satisfaction, the crucial factors that contribute to the success of the organization. (Reissová & Papay, 2021). Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) pointed out that employee engagement supports an organization to achieve success in a competitive

environment (Msanya et al., 2020). The top management of an organization who has the power to take decisions regarding the organization should work towards enhancing both employee engagement and job satisfaction, since those factors crucially determine the success of an organization (Lynn Barden, 2018) argued that the retention of employees, a challenge often faced by organizations, can be achieved by providing a competitive environment that fosters greater employee engagement and job satisfaction (Deepalakshmi et al., 2024). The relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction has been extensively examined by numerous researchers. It has been widely recognized that employee engagement leads not only to higher productivity of the organization but also contributes in turn to the enhancement of job satisfaction, fostering an environment of mutual rapport and loyalty (Saks, 2006).

Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, (2018) specifically emphasized the importance of employee engagement in educational institutions, where non-academic staff play a pivotal role in ensuring the smooth functioning of daily operations. Though it may not be very visible in the academic environment, the work of the non-academic employees contributes essentially to the productivity of higher education institutions (Nasidi et al., 2019). Their responsibilities range from administrative support to facility management, directly impacting on the quality of services provided to students, faculty, and other stakeholders. Despite their vital contributions, the level of employees' engagement of non-academic staff frequently receive less attention compared to their academic counterparts Dompelage & Gunawardhana (2021); Teppanyaki & Rinthaisong (2018). This oversight may lead to diminished job satisfaction, increased turnover rates, and overall inefficiency in organization performance (Ahakwa et al., 2021).

The effect of job satisfaction on employee engagement in a public sector university was studied by Ali and Farooqi (2014) and showed that the variation in the dependent variable, (employee engagement), was explained by the independent variable, (job satisfaction). Consequently, the relationship between the two variables was both positive and substantial. Lee (2017) showed that motivators and hygiene positively related to employee engagement and that it corresponded respectively to both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Moreover, according to Abraham (2012), the role of management in creating an environment that can sustain trust, cooperation, and creativity for employees kept experiencing a high level of job satisfaction, leading to employee engagement.

Employee engagement and three of its components, vigor, dedication, and absorption, were analyzed by Jaya & Ariyanto (2021) and Xu et al. (2020) as mediators of the relationship between employee workplace well-being, employee development, employee retention and employee satisfaction. Here, employee workplace well-being, employee development, employee retention and employee satisfaction were analyzed in separate statistical models. Vigor, dedication, and absorption were analyzed as three parallel mediators. Total employee engagement was analyzed as a mediator in a separate statistical model (Jaya & Ariyanto, 2021, Xu et al., 2020). The hypothesis of this research which argued that job satisfaction has a positive direct effect on employee engagement was formulated based on their analysis.

However, most existing studies on employee engagement and job satisfaction focus either on private sector organizations or academic staff in educational institutions. However, non-academic staff in universities play a critical yet often overlooked role in ensuring smooth institutional operations. Their responsibilities range from administrative support to facility management, directly impacting on the quality of services provided to students, faculty, and other stakeholders. Despite their vital contributions, non-academic employees frequently receive less attention compared to their academic counterparts (Dompelage et al., 2019). This study specifically addresses this gap by focusing on non-academic staff at the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka, providing insights into a population that has been underrepresented in the literature.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction among the non-academic staff at the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine. By delving into this relationship, the research sought to provide actionable insights that could improve human resource policies and practices, ultimately fostering a more supportive and fulfilling work environment for non-academic employees at universities and other higher educational institutes. It aimed at contributing to the broader discourse on organizational behavior and employee well-being, particularly within the context of educational institutions.

The relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction has been a focal point of organizational behavior research, with numerous studies emphasizing their interconnectedness and mutual

influence on organizational performance. Deepalakshmi et al., (2024) highlights that employees are critical assets to organizations, and their engagement is deeply influenced by management decisions. Engagement goes beyond monetary compensation, encompassing intrinsic motivators such as trust, cooperation, and creativity, which contribute to higher job satisfaction and organizational success. Similarly, Zhenjing et al., (2022) underscores the importance of fostering an environment where employees feel valued and engaged, as this directly impacts their dedication to organizational goals.

Research consistently demonstrates that employee engagement and job satisfaction are positively correlated. Vorina et al., (2017) found that job satisfaction significantly predicts employee engagement, with both variables exhibiting a strong, positive relationship. (Pandya, 2024) further elaborates on this connection, showing that intrinsic motivators (e.g., recognition and growth opportunities) and extrinsic factors (e.g., salary and working conditions) play pivotal roles in shaping engagement levels. These findings are aligned with Bora, (2024), who argues that engaged employees not only enhance productivity but also foster loyalty and mutual rapport within organizations.

Despite these insights, gaps remain in literature, particularly concerning non-academic staff in higher education institutions. Avenali et al., (2023) emphasize the critical role of non-academic employees in ensuring the smooth functioning of universities, yet their contributions often receive less attention than those of academic staff. Al-Suraihi et al., (2021) highlight that neglecting the engagement and satisfaction of non-academic employees can lead to increased turnover rates and reduced institutional efficiency. This oversight is especially pronounced in specialized settings, such as indigenous medicine universities, where cultural and institutional nuances may shape employee experiences differently.

Recent studies have explored mediating factors in the engagement-satisfaction relationship Maisyuri & Ariyanto (2021) identify vigor, dedication, and absorption as key components of employee engagement that mediate the effects of workplace well-being, employee development, and retention on job satisfaction. These frameworks provide valuable insights into how organizations can enhance employee outcomes through targeted interventions. However, much of this research originates from Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how these dynamics manifest in non-Western, culturally specific environments like Sri Lanka.

II. Material And Methods

This research was conducted to determine the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction. The independent variables in this study were employee engagement with the dimensions of vigor (four items), dedication (four items), and absorption (four items) (Xu et al., 2020). also, employee engagement with the dimensions of the EES consists of 12 items and three sub-factors ($\alpha > 0.90$), namely cognitive engagement (four items), emotional engagement (four items), and behavioral engagement (four items). Employee engagement was measured using the German language version of the employee engagement scale (EES) of Shuck and Adelson, as translated by Thorben Grubert, Josephina Steuber and Timo Meynhardt (Grubert et al., 2023, Henríquez & Valerio, , Ahakwa et al., 2021).

Job satisfaction was analyzed with the dimensions of pay and benefits (six items), reward and recognition (seven items), supervision (four items), working conditions (four items), communication (four items), co-workers (four items), nature of the job (four items) (Duy Anh, 2021) (Khalid et al., 2011) (Dompelage et al., 2019). The analysis unit used in this study was the non–academic staff members of the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka. There were two sections to this study's structured questionnaire. The basic demographic and professional data included in the first part of the questionnaire were sex, age, nationality, position, civil status, level of education and academic degrees, job category, and length of service. The post, age limit, period of service, nationality, and civil status were considered as very important factors because those are important factors when human-related research are concerned. The second part of the questionnaire contained 57 items to identify the relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction. Each item required a 5-option Likert-type response coded from 1 to 5 as “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”.

The quantitative approach was used in this study. Primary data collection was done by employing a questionnaire to test the hypotheses, whereby a set of questions was provided to all respondents. Structured questionnaires were distributed through an electronic survey. The form was created on Google Forms. This allows us to generate a link to the questionnaire that respondents can easily use to answer the questions. This was done with the objective of studying the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement.

The target population for this study consisted of all non-academic staff employed at the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka. A total of 169 non-academic employees were identified as part of the population frame, based on the university's official records. Due to time and resource constraints, a convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants who were readily accessible and willing to participate in the study. This approach involved distributing questionnaires to non-academic staff members who were available during the data collection period and expressed willingness to contribute.

A total of 145 questionnaires were distributed among the selected participants, out of which 133 responded, yielding a response rate of approximately 91.7%. The decision to distribute 145 questionnaires was based on practical considerations, ensuring enough responses while accounting for potential non-responses.

The data collection techniques employed in this study included both literature research (to gather theoretical insights and contextual background) and field studies (to collect primary data through the administered questionnaires). The collected data were screened for completeness and consistency before being analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS), version 26.0.

III. Result

Cronbach's Alpha was used to confirm the internal consistency (reliability) of each factor's constituent parts before beginning the actual computations, where it was permissible to use values between 0.6 and 0.8. The values that fall between 0.8 and 1 are regarded as excellent, exhibiting excellent consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha showed the reliability of the data used in the questionnaire (Table 1) and the value should be > = 0.8. Table 2 makes it evident that every variable had extremely high dependability (Hair . et al., 2010).

Table no 1: Reliability analysis of scales

Reliability Statistics		
Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Employee engagement scale	.894	24
Job Satisfaction scale	.902	33
General Reliability	.910	57

The SPSS output for the dependent variable Job Satisfaction indicated a normal distribution, as evidenced by the results of the tests for normality. The study employed the assessment of the skewness and kurtosis to examine the normality of the data collected. The acceptable threshold for skewness and kurtosis is below ±3 and below ±8 respectively. The findings given in table 2 showed that the values of skewness and kurtosis for the variables were below the threshold. As such, this result showed that the data collected for this study was normally distributed. It meant that the significance value (P Value) was greater than 0.05, so that the research data was normally distributed. This normality ensured that, as Hair et al., (2010) pointed out, parametric tests, such as correlation, could be appropriately applied to analyze the relationship between job satisfaction and employee engagement.

Table no2: Descriptive statistics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Employee engagement	3.08	.479	130
Job Satisfaction	2.88	.575	130

Table no3: Normality tests of dependent variable

Tests of Normality						
Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Job Satisfaction	.068	130	.200	.981	130	.170
*. This is a lower bound of true significance. a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						
Descriptives						
Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Job Satisfaction	102.9769	13.70309	.115	.212	. -.031	.422

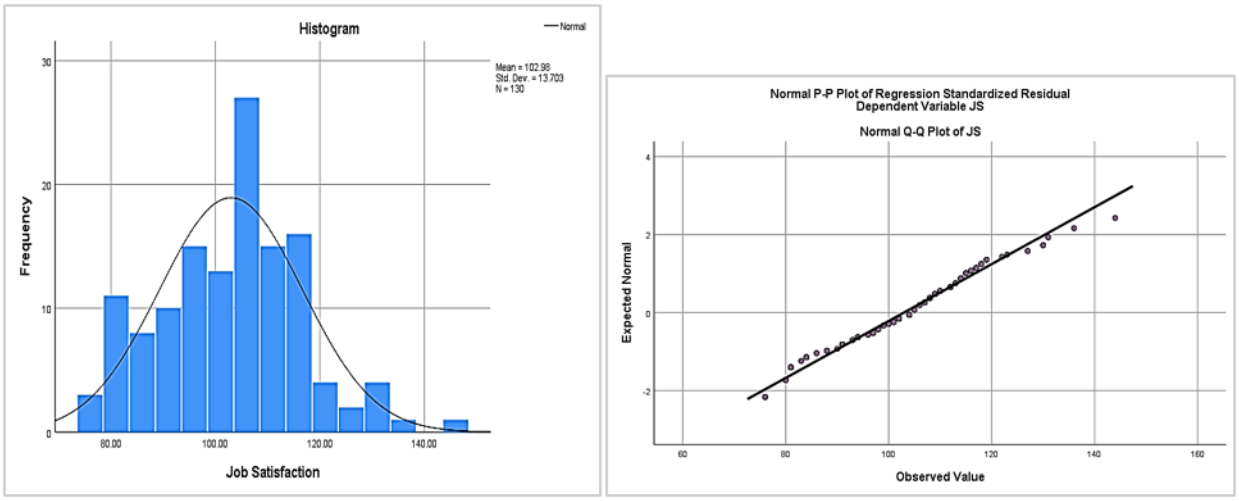


Figure 1. Normality curve of JS

Table no3 presents the mean and standard deviation of the variables analyzed. The independent variable, employee Engagement, and the dependent variable, Job Satisfaction, are summarized with mean values ranging from 3.08 to 2.88 and standard deviations ranging from 0.479 to 0.575. These results indicated that the variables were at a relatively high level.

Table no 3: Correlations analysis

Correlations			
		Employee engagement	Job Satisfaction
Employee engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	130	130
Job Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.765**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	130	130
** Correlations is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)			

The output table (table 4) provides the Pearson correlation coefficient (rs 0.765). This correlation coefficient is approximately equal to the point biserial correlation coefficient. It also returns the number of pairs (n-130) and the two-tailed significance (p = 0.002). The correlation coefficient between the variables of employee engagement and job satisfaction was 0.765, showing a positive relationship. The relationship between the variables of employee engagement and job satisfaction was significant at 1% level of significance and 99% confidence level. Based on the results from SPSS, the point-biserial correlation coefficient was significant r_(pb(15))=0.765,PM<0.05). Based on those results, it could be concluded that there was a positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction.

IV. Discussion

The findings of this study underscored the significant positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction among the non-academic staff at Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine. Employee engagement, measured through vigor, dedication, absorption, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement, emerged as a critical determinant of job satisfaction. These results are consistent with prior research, such as (Vorina et al., 2017), who found that job satisfaction significantly predicts employee engagement, and (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2018), who demonstrated that intrinsic motivators like recognition and growth opportunities enhance both engagement and satisfaction.

In particular, the analysis revealed that higher levels of vigor and dedication among employees contribute significantly to their job satisfaction, especially in areas such as the nature of the job and reward and recognition. This finding aligns with the work of (Sypniewska et al., 2023) and (Anwar & Qadir, 2017), who identified vigor and dedication as key components of employee engagement that mediate the relationship between workplace well-being and job satisfaction. Similarly, (Ahakwa et al., 2021) emphasized the role of management in fostering trust, cooperation, and creativity, which enhances employees' dedication and, in turn, their satisfaction.

Absorption - employees' full immersion in their tasks was strongly correlated with satisfaction derived from pay, benefits, and communication within the organization. This result resonates with the findings of (Msanya et al., 2020), who highlighted the importance of creating an engaging work environment that supports employees' focus and concentration. Cognitive engagement, representing employees' mental investment in their work, also had a notable impact on satisfaction related to supervision and working conditions. This finding is supported by (Nasidi et al., 2019), who argued that engaged employees are more likely to perceive their supervisors and work environments positively due to their active involvement in organizational activities.

Emotional engagement, reflecting an individual's emotional attachment to their role, was aligned with enhanced interpersonal relationships, particularly with co-workers. This outcome corroborates the findings of (Ahakwa et al., 2021; Reissová & Papay, 2021), who argued that fostering emotional connections within the workplace can improve retention and satisfaction. Furthermore, behavioral engagement—manifesting as active participation in organizational activities strongly influenced the perception of fair rewards and favorable working environments. This result aligns with the work of (Sypniewska et al., 2023), who emphasized the role of employee participation in enhancing organizational commitment and satisfaction.

The study also identified that job satisfaction, measured through variables such as pay and benefits, supervision, and communication, was not merely influenced by tangible aspects of employment but also by intangible elements derived from engagement. This finding extends the work of (Anwar & Qadir, 2017), who argued that employees require more than basic salary and benefits - they need a supportive environment that fosters engagement. Effective communication and a supportive supervisory framework were found to amplify the role of engagement in fostering satisfaction, consistent with the findings of (Ahakwa et al., 2021), who highlighted the importance of leadership in creating a positive work culture.

These findings underscore the importance of designing initiatives that nurture both the emotional and functional aspects of employee engagement. For instance, fostering a culture of recognition and providing avenues for skill development could significantly enhance dedication and behavioral engagement, while addressing pay and benefits equitably could further solidify satisfaction levels. The interplay between these variables suggests that employee engagement and job satisfaction are mutually reinforced, creating a virtuous cycle that benefits both employees and the institution. This conclusion aligns with the broader discourse on organizational behavior, as noted by (Tavárez de Henríquez & Domínguez Valerio, 2023), who emphasized the need for organizations to pay close attention to both factors to achieve desired performance levels.

Nevertheless, the study also identified areas that needed improvement, such as addressing specific pain points related to workload or career development opportunities, which could further enhance job satisfaction. These findings provide actionable insights for university administrators, emphasizing the need to invest in engagement strategies to not only improve job satisfaction but also to create a more supportive and thriving workplace. Future research could explore the influence of demographic factors or compare engagement levels across different departments to gain a deeper understanding of these dynamics.

The findings of this study have significant implications for both theory and practice, particularly in the context of non-academic staff in higher education institutions like the Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine. These implications are discussed below under three key dimensions: theoretical contributions, practical applications, and policy recommendations. Theoretical Contributions: This study contributes to the broader discourse on employee engagement and job satisfaction by emphasizing their interdependence and mutual reinforcement. While prior research has established a positive relationship between these constructs (Sypniewska et al., 2023), this study extends the literature by focusing on a unique population—non-academic staff in a specialized institutional setting. The findings align with frameworks proposed by (Nasidi et al., 2019), which identified vigor, dedication, and absorption as critical components of engagement that mediate workplace outcomes. By demonstrating how these components influence specific facets of job satisfaction (e.g., pay, supervision, communication), this study enriches the understanding of how

engagement operates in non-Western, culturally specific contexts like Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of considering both tangible and intangible factors in fostering employee well-being, adding nuance to existing theories of organizational behavior.

The findings of this study offer several practical insights for university administrators and human resource managers seeking to enhance the engagement and satisfaction of non-academic staff. To foster higher levels of engagement, institutions should prioritize recognition and reward systems that acknowledge employees' contributions, such as structured appreciation programs or public commendations. Effective communication and supportive supervision were also identified as critical factors influencing job satisfaction; therefore, training supervisors to cultivate open dialogue, trust, and collaboration within teams is essential. Additionally, addressing pain points such as workload and limited career development opportunities can significantly improve employee morale. Offering professional development programs, mentorship initiatives, and clear career progression pathways can help mitigate these concerns, while equitable pay and benefits remain foundational to ensuring employee retention and satisfaction. By implementing these strategies, universities can create a more supportive and fulfilling work environment, ultimately enhancing organizational performance and reducing turnover rates.

At the policy level, universities should institutionalize practices that prioritize employee engagement and well-being by integrating them into strategic planning processes. Regular surveys and feedback mechanisms can help monitor engagement levels and identify areas for improvement, ensuring that interventions are data-driven and targeted. Policies should also focus on creating an inclusive and collaborative workplace culture through flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and team-building activities. Given the unique roles of non-academic staff, interventions must be tailored to address their specific needs, administrative staff may benefit from streamlined workflows, while facility management staff may require better access to resources and tools. Furthermore, benchmarking against global best practices in higher education can help institutions adapt successful strategies to their local contexts. By adopting these measures, universities can not only improve workforce well-being but also strengthen their capacity to deliver high-quality services, thereby contributing to the broader goals of educational and societal development.

V. Conclusion

The study highlighted that when non-academic employees feel energized and dedicated to their work, that means when showing a high degree of employee engagement, they tend to perceive their job environments more positively, fostering job satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings suggested that fostering a culture of engagement within the organization could lead to improved morale, better teamwork, and enhanced productivity. This relationship underscored the cruciality of management practices that promote employee engagement, such as recognizing contributions, providing opportunities for professional growth, and ensuring equitable benefits.

The findings offered valuable insights into university management, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies that enhance both employee engagement and job satisfaction. Initiatives such as promoting recognition programs, ensuring equitable pay and benefits, improving communication channels, and providing supportive supervision could serve as effective measures to strengthen the link between employee engagement and job satisfaction.

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