

Psychological Empowerment and Employee Engagement on Job Satisfaction among Administrative Staff: Government Universities in Sri Lanka

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Abstract. Psychological Empowerment is one of the emerging concepts that have been given much prominence in the recent past. Also, employee engagement plays a dominant role enhancing job satisfaction. This paper aims to determine the impact of psychological empowerment, and employee engagement on job satisfaction among Administrative Staff of the Government Universities in Sri Lanka and the study revealed a positive relationship exists between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction.

Keywords: *Employee engagement, Psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, regressions, spss, universities, university admin staff.*

1. Introduction

Psychological empowerment is defined as a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal corporate practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information (Spreitzer, 1995). Khan (1990) defined employee engagement as organisational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance.

Rio+ Centre established in Brazil is engaging in the creation and dissemination of knowledge both locally and globally. Several UN organisations have supported the launch of Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, committing Universities around the world to:

- Includes sustainable development concepts into core curriculum across all disciplines and teach ;
- Enhancement research on sustainable development;
- Provide the idea of green campus to stakeholders;
- Backing communities for their sustainability efforts ;
- Involve with and disseminates results through global frameworks

(Source: GUNI, 2014)

Empirical studies have found the positive relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction (Al- Ababneh et al., 2017; Alajmi, 2016; Ifran et al., 2016). Further, employee engagement has also shown a positive impact on job satisfaction. (Khan, 1990; Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Gubman, 2004; Seijts et al., 2006; Harrison, 2007; Vorina et al. 2017)

Sri Lanka is being situated in strategically important location; connecting to global Economy via five hubs is an easy task. It is in a strong position to become regional knowledge hub and as a local knowledge hub can connect to emerging economies in the Asian region, lubricant affluent the Middle East, cutting-edge economies in western and evolving Africa. Universities are integrated part of a society and also apart from the community. Apart means it provide a platform to understand the world as it is and re-imaging the as it has to be.

Universities can play a significant role to produce required human capital. Therefore, the administrative staffs who help to create quality graduates should be happy workers in the system. Identification of their satisfaction levels and actions to mitigate dissatisfaction would be a necessity of the hour to provide excellent service to stakeholders. Therefore, it is evident that government universities have to play a significant role as they absorbed best students out of advanced level examination in Sri Lanka to produce knowledge workers to the knowledge-based economy. Administrators of these universities are playing the vital role to provide quality and relevant graduates on time. Their satisfaction level is impacting on their efficiency. As such identification of their satisfaction level and taking measure to reduce the dissatisfaction and increase the satisfaction is the need of the hour. Further, after 2010, in the postwar era, there are 21 international universities started their academic activities in Sri Lanka. The external opportunities create much staff to leave the government universities or foreign applicants to not to apply for critical positions in universities such as registrars, bursars and directors.

As of now, five vacancies registrars and seven vacancies for bursars are available in the university system. Besides, many other administrative posts are also vacant. Therefore, levels of intention to quit among staff are the key to measure now and identify the level of magnitude to avoid brain drain. If the government universities were to run in an inefficient way the students would be affected very much.

Lives of people inside the organisation are affected by job satisfaction. According to the study of Farage, Cass & Cooper (2005, as cited in Tatsuse & Sekine 2010) job dissatisfaction can result in severe mental health problems burnout, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and even some leading to coronary heart disease (Hemingway & Marmot, 1999 as cited in Tatsuse & Sekine 2010; Sales & House, 1971 as cited in Tatsuse & Sekine 2010). Burnouts, on the other hand, hurt job satisfaction, including emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Ozyurt & Hayran, 2006).

1.1. A brief history of University System in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka had only one university called "The University of Ceylon" which was incorporated in 1942 by amalgamating The University College and The Ceylon Medical College (1870) at the time we gained independence. This was a transplant from England and English was the medium of instruction. The university was autonomous and consists of organs such as The Court, the Council and the Senate. The University of Ceylon becomes two separate universities in 1967. In 1958, Vidiyalankara and Vidyodaya Pirivenas were raised to university status. University of Jaffna, Moratuwa, Ruhna, Eastern and the Open University of Sri Lanka were established under the Higher education Act of 1978. Rajarata, Sabaragamuwa and South Eastern universities were developed during years 1998 to 2000. University of Wayamba, Performing Arts, Uwa Wellassa University was established in the recent past. At present, there are 15 universities under the purview of UGC. The striking feature in the development of our university system has been the establishment of 16 numbers of postgraduate institutes and other institutes during the past 41 years. The universities of Sri Lanka have been governed for the past 36 years by the provisions of the Universities Act No 1978 and the amendments made to it in 1985 and the subsequent years. The enactment of 1978 represents a compromise between the principle of university autonomy which was cherished by influential and articulate sections of university academics and the need for regulating and coordinating university education by agencies of the state, a role in which the government had already exercised responsibility and authority for 40 years since 1966. The reorganisation of universities under the provisions of this Act proved to be successful and durable (S.Thilakaratna, 2000). However, the autonomy exercised by the universities in the period before 1966 was not restored entirely under the new scheme. The elevation of the new campuses established in the period 1972-1977 to the status of universities; the establishment of the University Grant Commission and the University Services appeal board are among the principal changes introduced by this enactment in the university system. One of the primary considerations

relating to the autonomy of universities is the power vested in the minister in charge of the university education as specially laid down in the Act. The new government is considering the concept of autonomous universities.

1.2. The objective of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to determine the effect of Psychological Empowerment and Employee Engagement on Job Satisfaction of the university administrators

2. Literature Review

2.2. Psychological Empowerment and Job satisfaction

Spreitzer (1995a), by putting the Thomas and Velthouse model as a base, operationalised it by emerging a scale to measure the four dimensions of empowerment. Spreitzer retitled meaningfulness cognition to 'meaning' and choice cognition was given another name 'self-determination'. Spreitzer (1995a) conducted a study in an industrial firm and an insurance company and found that the four components of psychological empowerment, namely meaning, competence, self-determination and impact, combine additively to create an overall concept of psychological empowerment that results in managerial effectiveness. Further, she found that the absence of any one dimension will reduce the effect of empowerment but will not completely eradicate the overall impact of empowerment that would be experienced in a working context. Correspondingly, Spreitzer et al. (1997) establish that a single component of empowerment on its own was not associated with organisational consequence such as satisfaction, effectiveness and low job-related strain. The research team develops that employee should experience all four components of psychological empowerment for an organisation to reach its outcomes such as contentment, effectiveness and low strain in job-related activities.

The study conducted by Ababneh et al. (2017) has explored the influence of Psychological Empowerment on Job satisfaction in Five Star Hotel in Jordan using the sample of 186

employees working in different departments. It has been found that Psychological Empowerment is a significant predictor of Job Satisfaction. Xiujun Sun (2016) has researched using employees of various types of Enterprises in China as the population. The sample includes 306 male and 267 females. He has found that four dimensions of Psychological Empowerment correlate each other significantly at 0.01 level.

2.3. Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has defined as the extent to which an employee feel good at work and the degree to which an employee has positive emotions that they show during performing their work role (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Though studies found that job satisfaction as an outcome of employee engagement (Zopiatis et al., 2014), there is an argument that it is seen as the key driver of engagement (Yalabik et al., 2013) and it needs to be further investigated (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

Further, researchers have suggested that Employee Engagement has positively correlated with job Satisfaction. The reason is that highly engaged employees are full of energy and have a strong association with their job that may help them to identify themselves powerfully in their working environment (Burke et al., 2009).

3. Methodology

3.1. The Review of the Theoretical Model

The theoretical framework according to Sekaran (2014) imparts the identification of the fundamental variables in the consideration, which are specific for the research problem. The theoretical framework of this study was developed using extant literature, which depicts the underlying disciplines of Spreitzer (1995), Luthans et al. (2004), Appollis (2010).

3.2. Establishment of Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was established based on the literature review and the structured questionnaire using Likert scale 1 to 5 (Dehkordi, Kamrani, Ardestani and Abdolmanafi 2011;

Wang and Lee 2009; Carless 2004; Spreitzer G. , 1995 b; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, , 1997; Appollis ,2010; Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2006; Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005 ; Luthans & Youssef,2004).All these studies were based on Psychological Empowerment and Job Satisfaction, Psychological Capital and Job satisfaction, Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction and Intention to quit and the Likert scale five is deemed appropriate for this research as well.The questionnaire developed for the study is given in Appendix I.

3.3 Definitions for the Study

Definitions for the constructs are to be used for the study is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Definitions.

Variable/Construct	Definition	Source
Psychological Empowerment (PhyEmp)	"is the belief that one has the necessary knowledge and skills to perform the job well that can make a difference in the organization."	Spreitzer (1995)
PhyEmp -Meaning	"A sense of purpose or personal connection to the work goal."	- Do-
PhyEmp -Competence	"A sense of belief that the employees have in their skills and capability to perform their work better."	- Do-
PhyEmp -Self Determination	"A sense of freedom or autonomy about how individuals do their work."	- Do-
PhyEmp -Impact	"A belief that individual employee can influence the	- Do-

	system in which they are embedded "	
Employee Engagement	"organisational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance."	Khan, 1990
Job satisfaction	"Job Satisfaction Stated it as pleasurable or positive personal state resulting from the appraisal of one's job."	Locke (1976) Schultz (1994) Evans (1999)

3.4 Specific Problem Area

Before 2010, in the prewar era, there were only 15 universities under University Grant Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka dominating the higher education sector within the country. In the post-war period, with the invasion of foreign universities, the state universities are in the intensified competition to attract students for fee levying programmes in their universities as well as retain their competent staff within the universities to provide quality, relevance and efficient service to the internal students as well as external students. Most experienced academics and administrators are joining the foreign universities as they offer remarkably higher fringe benefits than the present remuneration in the state universities. As of today, large no of vacancies exists for both higher grade academic and administrative staff. State universities can't attract competent personals to take over these positions as well as retain their key positions staff due to the influx of foreign universities. Therefore, the students are affected due to inefficient service.

No specific studies have been undertaken in Sri Lanka on Intention to quit and Job Satisfaction of Administrative Staff of Government Universities. Previous studies in Sri Lanka were focused mainly on the factors contributed to the Job satisfaction. Nevertheless, the importance of demonstrating the significance of Job satisfaction on "Intention to quit" was never established within the higher education sector. Therefore, this research identified the three antecedents of Job Satisfaction and those were included in the model to test the validity in the context of the higher education system in Sri Lanka.

The inferences of this research would contribute immensely to the Higher Education sector in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in Asia, helping to identify the specific areas the universities need to focus on if they are to increase the retention of staff and improve the efficiency of their universities.

3.5 Development of Measures for the study

There were six sections in the measurement instrument Administered to the participants. Section I for the collection of demographic data, Section II measures Psychological Empowerment, Section III measures the Psychological Capital, Section IV measures Job Satisfaction, Section V measures the Intention to Quit, Section VI measures the Perceived Alternative Job Opportunities measures and final section VII measures the Employee Engagement. The Psychological Empowerment was measured using the study of Spreitzer (1995) entitled, "An Empirical Test of a Comprehensive Model of Intrapersonal Empowerment in the Workplace". The measurement of Psychological Empowerment used a Likert scale of 1 to 5. The respondents were asked to respond to each item in the instrument (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The section was consists of 4 die-mentions, and each consists of 3 items.

The Psychological Capital (PhyCap) was sourced from Kappagoda (2016) and Luthens et al. (2004) entitled, "Human, Social, and New Positive Psychological Capital Management: Investing in People for Competitive Advantage". This section was consists of four die-mentions each composed of 3 items. Respondents were asked to rate each item (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Job satisfaction was measured using the work of Locke (1976) as cited by Kappagoda (2016), this section of the measurement instrument is composed of 16 items to be rated (1 = very dissatisfied; 5 = very satisfied). Intention to Quit measurement was taken from studies Tett, R.P (1993) and Elangovan (2003). 5 items were retained for the final questionnaire after reliability analysis (see Appendix I). The section was allocated to measure Perceived Alternative Job Opportunities which consist of 5 items. Both the constructs were measured on Likert Scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). The last section measure the employee engagement, and it consists of 20 items measured on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5 (1= never; 5 = Always)

3.6 Research Framework

Based on the extensive literature review, the research framework was developed, and it is given below in Figure I.

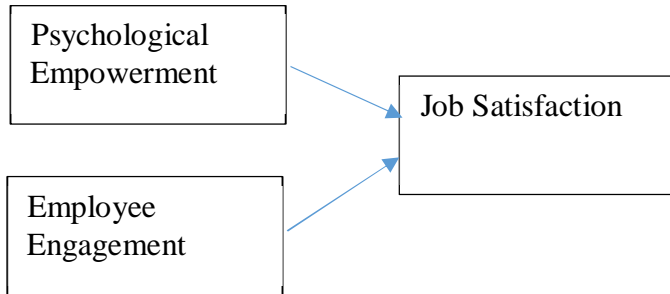


Figure I. Research Framework

3.7. The Pilot Test to be conducted for the Study

The meaning of carrying out a pilot test is that it enables elimination of variables that do not meet the reliability criteria and recognise any other amendments required to carry out the main research. 35 questionnaires to be sent to Administrative officers of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (SRIJ) 25 and ten respectively.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Demographic Variables

Personal information of the respondents was collected, and frequency analysis was carried out, and results are given below Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Variables

	Frequency	Percent	Cum. Percent
<u>Age</u>			
Below 25 Years	2	.7	.7
25 to 35 Years	70	22.8	23.5
36 to 45 Years	121	39.4	62.9
46 to 55 Years	91	29.6	92.5
56 to 65 Years	23	7.5	100.0
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	163	53.1	53.1
Female	144	46.9	100.0
<u>Education</u>			
Diploma	18	5.9	5.9

Degree	115	37.5	43.3
Postgraduate	174	56.7	100.0

Position

<u>Junior</u>			
Management	110	35.8	35.8
<u>Middle</u>			
Management	144	46.9	82.7
<u>Senior</u>			
Management	53	17.3	100.0

.Tenure

Less than 5 Years	74	24.1	24.1
5 to 10 Years	74	24.1	48.2
11 to 15 Years	56	18.2	66.4
16 to 20 Years	49	16.0	82.4
21 or Over	54	17.6	100.0

4.2 Multiple Regressions

Further to analyse the causes of job satisfaction multiple regression tools was used in SPSS. The reason for using multiple regression as a tool was that it reveals the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. It is the simultaneous amalgamation of multiple factors to measure how and to what degree they affect an inevitable consequence. The result of ANOVA is given below;

Table 3. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	38.033	5	7.607	24.113	.000 ^a
Residual	94.952	301	.315		
Total	132.985	306			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Meaning, Self- Determination, Impact, Competence, Employee Engagement

b. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

This test is carried out to verify whether the complete regression model is a good fit for the obtained data. According to the above table, F (20.146) and p is .000<.005. Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.654	.261		6.327	.000
	Meaning	.198	.051	.245	3.917	.000
	S/Determin	-.262	.064	-.246	-4.073	.000
	Impact	.170	.042	.224	4.033	.000
	Competence	.191	.057	.200	3.351	.001
	Engagement	.187	.059	.189	3.179	.002

Dependent variable: Job Satisfaction

Multiple Regression equation:

$$Y = C + \beta X_1 + \beta X_2 + \beta X_3 + \dots + \beta X_n$$

Y= Prediction relationship of types of variables toward Job satisfaction

C= Constant value

β = Unstandardized coefficient

X= Dimension of Independent variables

X1: Independent Variable 1 (Meaning Dimension)

X2: Independent Variable 1 (Self/Determination)

X3: Independent Variable 1 (Impact)

X4: Independent Variable 1 (Competence)

X5: Independent Variable 2 (Employee Engagement)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate	p
1	.535 ^a	.286	.274	.56165	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Meaning, Self-Determination, Impact, Competence, Employee Engagement

b. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

Based on the above model summary, the value of R Square is 0.286 which as a percentage 29%. The meaning is that two independent variables can explain 29% of the variance in Job satisfaction. The independent variable one refers to

psychological Empowerment which consists of four dimensions: Meaning, Self Determination, Impact and Competence. Independent variable 2 is the Employee Engagement

5. Suggestions and Conclusions

5.1 Suggestions

5.1.1. Improving Psychological Empowerment in the Universities

The amount of the payoff is enormous for those who achieve psychological empowerment in their organisations even though that it is challenging for managers to create a situation where their employees experience psychological empowerment; Psychological Empowerment involves preparing the employees by boosting their confidence and competence and at the same time by communicating a clear vision and goals. So many things must be in place for a person to feel empowered and what works for one employee might not work for another.

Having considering those challenges, many managers have difficulty finding time to focus on the needs of their employees because their jobs are so confused. Nevertheless, empowerment is worth the effort. Effective empowerment of your staff can lead to higher levels of customer responsiveness and innovation, higher levels of employee motivation and satisfaction, lower levels of stress, burnout and intention to Quit for employees.

Therefore, the Universities should improve the Psychological Empowerment in the workforce by ;

- Helping employees to achieve Job Mastery
- Allowing more control
- Providing successful role models
- Using social reinforcement and persuasion
- Giving emotional support

5.1.2. Improving Employee Engagement in the Universities

The review of the literature revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between Employee Engagement

- Promote and advocate for workplace engagement
- Lead informative sessions that educate managers and leaders about engagement
- Deliver the half-day Creating an Engaging Workplace course for managers
- Guide managers through the engagement process
- Assist managers in delivering useful individual conversations and team action planning sessions
- Empower managers to take the necessary steps to create engaging teams
- Provide ongoing coaching support to managers

5.2 Scope for Future Research

Since this study established that Psychological Empowerment, Psychological Capital, Employee Engagement have a significant relationship on Job Satisfaction and Intention To Quit. Mediating role of Job Satisfaction was evident all most all the constructs of three Independent variables and Intention To Quit. Further, the review confirmed that there is a negative relationship between Job Satisfaction and Intention To Quit and Perceived Alternative Opportunities moderate said relationship.

It is recommended that further studies are to be conducted at all levels of employees with larger sample size than this research. More demographic factors can also be included in the study. Further research on university employees could use the separate sample to determine whether result varies according to sample demographics. Additional information from the third party such as peers, or superiors may provide information regarding the behaviour of the employees. This study is based on the higher sector only. The study can be extended to all service industries throughout the country.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

Though the higher education sector belongs to the service sector, findings generated from the university employees may not be strictly applicable to employees of all groups of service sector such as banks, hospitals, hotels etc. Only government universities were taken for the study. Private and other universities, as well as higher education institutes, may have a different culture, and so the psychological empowerment, Psychological Capital and Employee engagement effect of those variables on employees of other universities and higher education institutions may be different.

6. Conclusion

Despite the fact understanding the job satisfaction among academic staff and giving prominence to it, is very important, job satisfaction among non-academic staff should also be taken into consideration. (Nawi, Ismail, Ibrahim, Raston, & Jaini, 2016). According to Ismail and Abdul (2012), both the academic and the non-academic staff play an important role in educational institutions. Administrative staff also falling into non - academic staff of universities in the university system in Sri Lanka

Further, the strength of a university is not only dependent on the quality of researching, teaching and learning, but the administration also plays a significant role in managing all matters related to the sphere of administration of the university. Several studies focus on job satisfaction among non-academics such as Smerek and Peterson (2006), which examines the satisfaction among the non-academic staff working in a university.

The prime objective of this research study was to determine if there is a relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Employee Engagement on Job Satisfaction among the Administrative staff of the university system in Sri Lanka and found that there is the significant positive relationship between psychological empowerment and job satisfaction as well as employee engagement and job satisfaction.

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