

An Exploratory Single Case Study on the Correlates of Work Motivation, Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This single-case study explored the intricate interplay of work motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction within a university professor's experience. Employing in-depth interviews, this qualitative research examined the participant's perceptions, revealing a strong emphasis on intrinsic motivation over financial incentives. The participant's motivation stemmed from the inherent challenges and excitement of teaching, aligning with aspects of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Employee engagement was characterized by a deep emotional connection, reflecting a desire to restore its historical prestige. However, this strong identification also contributed to a perceived cultural divide with the broader university system, leading to resistance towards institutional changes, such as ISO certification. This resistance highlighted the significant influence of organizational identity and perceived autonomy on employee engagement. Job satisfaction was primarily derived from the participant's sense of self-fulfillment in teaching, independent of direct institutional contributions, supporting elements of Self-Determination Theory. The study revealed a perceived interconnectedness between motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction, with intrinsic motivation driving both engagement and satisfaction. The findings underscore the importance of understanding and addressing cultural boundaries within institutions. A top-down approach to policy implementation was deemed ineffective, suggesting the need for a more collaborative and reciprocal management style. The participant's emphasis on human-centered management highlighted the necessity for leaders to prioritize employee perspectives and foster open communication. This study concludes that institutions must recognize and nurture intrinsic motivators, bridge organizational divides, and adopt a democratic approach to policy implementation to cultivate an engaged and satisfied workforce.

Keywords: Motivation, Employee engagement, job satisfaction, democratization

INTRODUCTION

Fostering a productive and harmonious workplace requires a deliberate and sustained effort to cultivate strong employer-employee relationships. Employee performance is significantly influenced by employer-driven initiatives designed to enhance work motivation. Concurrently, employee engagement is directly impacted by the degree to which employers address employee needs, preferences regarding working conditions, reward structures, and other motivational factors. This interconnected dynamic ultimately shapes employee job satisfaction.

A highly motivated workforce is a critical driver of organizational success, impacting both individual productivity and overall institutional efficiency. While work motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction have been extensively researched within organizational behavior (Herzberg et al., 1959; Deci & Ryan, 2000), their complex interrelationships remain context-dependent. Gaining a deeper understanding of

the factors that sustain employee engagement and satisfaction is essential for developing effective human resource policies and management strategies.

In the contemporary educational landscape, characterized by the demand for pedagogical excellence, a deeply engaged and satisfied teaching workforce is paramount.

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping future generations. However, maintaining high levels of work motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction within these demanding environments presents a significant challenge.

Prior research has consistently highlighted the importance of work motivation in driving employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Latham & Pinder, 2005). Similarly, employee engagement, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, has been linked to enhanced productivity and well-being (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job satisfaction, a key indicator of employee morale, has been shown to influence retention and overall organizational climate (Locke, 1976; Judge et al., 2001).

This research adopts a single-case study approach to provide an in-depth understanding of how these constructs interact. Unlike quantitative studies that often generalize findings, this method allows for a detailed exploration of the participant's experiences, revealing the subtle factors that influence their work motivation, engagement, and satisfaction. This holistic case study examines the participant's real-life experiences with motivation, the reasons for engagement, and how motivation affects job satisfaction. This study seeks to understand the unique phenomenon of motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction within the participant's specific environment. The focus is to determine how the participant gains work motivation, demonstrates commitment to the institution, and experiences the impact of motivation on their job satisfaction.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded on three key theoretical frameworks. First, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) is employed, which distinguishes between 'hygiene factors,' such as working conditions and salary, that prevent job dissatisfaction, and 'motivators,' like achievement and recognition, that promote job satisfaction, allowing for the examination of both extrinsic and intrinsic influences on the teacher's experience. Second, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) provides a lens for analyzing the participant's intrinsic motivation by emphasizing the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thus examining their sense of agency, skill development, and social connections within the school. Finally, the concept of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), and related concepts of job satisfaction, which posits that satisfied employees are more likely to work willingly and contribute to organizational effectiveness, is utilized to explain the connections between job satisfaction and the participant's willingness to go beyond their assigned duties.

On the other hand, the conceptual framework of this study illustrates the relationship between Work Motivation, Employee Engagement, and Job Satisfaction, with Organizational Culture acting as a moderating variable. Drawing from Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Organizational Culture Theory, this framework provides a structured understanding of how employees' motivation influences their engagement and overall job satisfaction within an institution.

Work motivation, which consists of both intrinsic factors (e.g., recognition, achievement, and passion for work) and extrinsic factors (e.g., salary, job security, and institutional policies), plays a crucial role in determining an employee's level of engagement. Employees who are intrinsically motivated tend to display higher commitment and dedication, whereas extrinsic factors serve as baseline conditions for maintaining job

performance. When work motivation is strong, it fosters employee engagement, which is reflected in an employee's emotional attachment to the organization, willingness to contribute, and commitment to institutional goals. A highly engaged employee is more likely to be productive, proactive, and aligned with the organization's success. Subsequently, employee engagement leads to job satisfaction, where employees derive fulfillment from their roles, feel valued within the institution, and align their professional goals with the organization's mission.

Organizational Culture plays a moderating role in this relationship, shaping employees' perceptions of workplace policies, resistance to change, and overall satisfaction. If an institution fosters a positive and inclusive culture—where employees feel heard, recognized, and involved in decision-making—it enhances motivation, strengthens engagement, and leads to greater job satisfaction. Conversely, a rigid or detached organizational culture may hinder employees' ability to adapt to change, affecting their engagement and long-term satisfaction.

By integrating these theories and relationships, this conceptual framework highlights the interdependence of motivation, engagement, and satisfaction in an academic institution. It underscores the importance of fostering an employee-centered approach to management, where both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators are recognized, engagement strategies are strengthened, and organizational culture is adapted to support employee well-being and institutional growth.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative single-case approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews and direct observation to gather data. The informant was selected based on extensive tenure (almost three decades) within the institution, ensuring a depth of experience. Data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. The study acknowledges its limitations in generalizability due to its single-case design but suggests that its findings may inform broader discussions in organizational behavior research.

Data collection methods: This single case study employed a multi-faceted approach to data collection. First, in-depth interviews were conducted using open-ended questions designed to explore the participant's experiences with work motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. Second, observational data were gathered through the examination of the participant's daily interactions and responses to organizational changes within the university. Finally, document analysis was performed, involving the review of internal institutional reports like rated Individual Performance Commitment Review (IPCR) and relevant scholarly literature to provide contextual understanding and triangulation of findings.

Data analysis techniques: Data analysis was conducted using a combination of thematic coding and comparative analysis. Thematic coding was utilized to identify key themes and recurring patterns within the interview transcripts, observational notes, and documents. Subsequently, a comparative analysis was performed to link the emergent findings to established motivation and job satisfaction theories, specifically including Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the participant's experience by situating it within the broader theoretical framework of organizational behavior.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS

While financial incentives are often perceived as primary motivators, research indicates that they may not consistently enhance long-term productivity or job performance. An excessive focus on monetary rewards can potentially lead to a narrow pursuit of financial gain, negatively impacting employee attitudes. Recognizing the complexity of human motivation, studies have highlighted the significant influence of non-financial factors, such as recognition, social affirmation, and performance feedback.

This study, therefore, focused on exploring these non-financial motivators through in-depth interviews with a participant whose experiences aligned with this perspective. The interview questions regarding motivation were designed to elicit detailed insights into this non-financial aspect:

- How do you motivate yourself at work?
- Where do you find motivation?

In terms of employee engagement, the informant was asked regarding emotional attachment and commitment to work, willingness and ability to help the institution succeed. It pertains to the informant's positive attitude towards the organization and its value. Research questions were asked in the following forms:

- How do you demonstrate your willingness to help this institution succeed?
- What is your role as an employee in realizing the goals of this institution?

This study recognizes the central role of employees within Human Resource Management (HRM), emphasizing the 'employee concept' as a core principle. Effective Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) aims to align organizational goals with employee development, motivation, and commitment (Wallace, Eagleson, & Waldersee, 2000). Within this context, fostering motivation is intrinsically linked to enhancing job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction, defined as the affective response to the discrepancy between desired and perceived outcomes (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992), is a foundational element of organizational citizenship behavior (Ozdevecioglu, 2000). Satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit proactive and supportive behaviors, contributing to organizational effectiveness. In this research, the participant's perspective on job satisfaction was explored through the following questions:

- How would you describe your job satisfaction?
- What is the contribution of this institution to your job satisfaction?

ON WORK MOTIVATION

The participant, with thirty years of service, presented a rich and nuanced perspective on work motivation, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. The participant's extensive experience provided valuable insights that diverged from conventional theoretical expectations.

Regarding work motivation, the participant emphasized intrinsic factors over extrinsic rewards, stating, "It is never about the money. It is my excitement to face the challenge in teaching, and my desire to finish my work early. Other than that, are just mere physiological or bodily needs." This perspective suggests that the participant's primary motivators were derived from the inherent challenges and accomplishments of the teaching role.

While the participant expressed a desire for recognition, the responses indicated a complex relationship with tangible rewards. This suggested a preference for intangible forms of appreciation, such as acknowledgment of their contributions and expertise. Further analysis of this complex relationship is needed.

During the interview, the topic of institutional changes, specifically ISO certification, was introduced to explore potential influences on the participant's stated motivations. Contrary to expectations of a shift in perspective, the participant maintained a consistent stance, revealing a perceived cultural divide between the College where the participant belongs and the broader university system.

The participant articulated a belief that the college operates under a distinct management system, stating, "The college is different from the University as a whole; ISO doesn't apply to the us" and "We have our own

system or way of management.” This suggests a strong sense of autonomy and a perception that the college has established boundaries that separate it from the university's administrative framework.

This perceived cultural separation implies that the college community views itself as a distinct entity with unique operational procedures, rendering standardized initiatives like ISO certification potentially incompatible. The participant's comments highlight a potential challenge for the institution in implementing university-wide changes within the college setting. This resistance to integration may impede the effectiveness of administrative and organizational initiatives aimed at standardization and improvement.

This suggests that the participant's primary motivation was rooted in intrinsic factors, specifically the inherent excitement of teaching and the challenge of overcoming pedagogical obstacles, rather than financial incentives.

This finding aligns with aspects of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes that intrinsic motivators, such as recognition and responsibility, are key drivers of job satisfaction. However, the introduction of institutional changes, notably ISO certification, revealed a resistance grounded in perceived cultural boundaries. This highlights the significant influence of organizational identity and perceived autonomy on the participant's motivation and willingness to embrace institutional changes.

ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) defines employee engagement as “employees' willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis.” This study highlights the influence of both emotional and rational factors on engagement. In this case study, the participant's responses regarding their willingness to contribute to the institution revealed a strong emotional connection specifically to the institution. The participant expressed a desire to “make the University rise again” and “restore the former glory of the College,” demonstrating a deep personal investment in the school's success.

The participant's emotional investment appears to stem from a perceived decline in the school's reputation. Historically, university students achieved notable awards at various levels. The participant indicated that teachers were being held responsible for the perceived decline. This context provides insight into the participant's primary source of motivation: the excitement of overcoming challenges within their teaching role.

However, this strong emotional attachment and drive to restore the school's reputation may also contribute to the reinforcement of cultural boundaries. The participant's resistance to institutional changes, such as administrative or organizational reforms, suggests a potential conflict between their desire to restore the college's legacy and the implementation of university-wide initiatives. This presents a challenge to the institution, as the participant's strong identification with the participant's home College may impede the acceptance of necessary changes.

Employee engagement was observed through the informant's willingness to contribute to institutional success. However, this engagement was localized within the College level rather than the broader university system. The informant expressed a strong emotional attachment to past institutional successes but viewed administrative changes as external threats rather than opportunities for improvement. These findings suggest that engagement strategies must consider employees' historical and cultural contexts to be effective.

ON JOB SATISFACTION

Employee satisfaction is generally defined as the degree to which an employee is pleased with their position (Moyes, Shao, & Newsome, 2008). Based on this definition, the participant expressed satisfaction with her teaching role, stating, “For me, teaching is self-fulfillment” and “I am content being a teacher.” However,

when asked about the institution's contribution to their job satisfaction, the participant indicated a lack of direct institutional influence, stating, "As long as I am teaching, that is enough for me."

This emphasis on teaching as self-fulfillment aligns with the participant's earlier statements regarding intrinsic motivation and engagement. The participant's responses suggest a perceived interconnectedness between these three constructs. Specifically, their motivation appears to be realized through their engagement, which is then reinforced by their job satisfaction. This suggests that the participant's intrinsic drive to teach is the primary source of their satisfaction, independent of institutional factors.

Despite high levels of intrinsic motivation and engagement, the participant's perception that the institution plays no direct role in their job satisfaction supports aspects of Self-Determination Theory. This theory emphasizes the significance of autonomy and self-fulfillment in contributing to workplace satisfaction. The findings suggest that while intrinsic motivation can sustain job satisfaction, institutional policies and practices may not always directly contribute to or may even indirectly impact employee morale.

SYNTHESIS/CONCLUSION

This single-case study revealed a complex interplay between the participant's intrinsic motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction, compared with the challenges posed by perceived cultural boundaries within the institution. While the participant exhibited high levels of personal satisfaction and commitment to her teaching role, a distinct cultural separation between the College where she belongs and the broader university system emerged as a significant factor.

This perceived cultural divide presents a potential obstacle to the implementation of institutional changes, such as ISO certification. The participant's comments suggest that a top-down approach to policy implementation may be ineffective in this context. Instead, a more collaborative and reciprocal approach, prioritizing employee input and understanding, is warranted.

The participant's remark, "They are just papers, we are the people being managed," underscores the importance of human-centered management. This suggests that top managers should engage directly with employees, moving beyond administrative tasks to foster open communication and build trust.

This study highlights the critical role of cultural boundaries in shaping employee experiences and the necessity for institutions to adopt a more democratic and reciprocal approach to policy implementation. To cultivate an engaged and satisfied workforce, institutions must:

- Prioritize understanding and incorporating employee perspectives.
- Recognize and nurture intrinsic motivators.
- Bridge organizational divides through open communication and collaboration.

By adopting these principles, institutions can create a more inclusive and effective environment for both employees and the organization as a whole.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Enhancing Organizational Communication:** Administrators should actively engage employees in discussions about policy changes to mitigate resistance and foster a culture of inclusivity.
2. **Recognition and Feedback Mechanisms:** Non-monetary rewards, such as social recognition and professional development opportunities, can enhance motivation.
3. **Bridging Cultural Divides:** Efforts should be made to align different institutional subcultures through participatory decision-making processes.
4. **Incorporating Empirical Data:** Future research should integrate engagement surveys and turnover rates to strengthen the study's credibility and applicability.

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