

Impact of Knowledge-Oriented Leadership on Work Engagement of Academics in Higher Education in Sri Lanka: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

Work engagement is important for academic excellence, innovation and success in higher education. This study examined the impact of knowledge-oriented leadership on the work engagement of academics in higher education in Sri Lanka, with the mediating role of knowledge sharing, as limited empirical research has explored this phenomenon within the Sri Lankan university context. The population of the study consisted of 1,863 academics (UGC statistics) from two urban and two rural state universities, namely, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, University of Colombo, and University of Kelaniya. Using a structured 39-item questionnaire, a sample of 330 was targeted, and data was successfully collected from 95 academics through both physical & online surveys. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 with the PROCESS macro for mediation testing. The findings highlighted the significant positive impacts of knowledge-oriented leadership on work engagement ($p = .000$), knowledge sharing ($p = .000$), and on work engagement ($p = 0.0360$). Moreover, there was a significant positive partial mediating impact of knowledge sharing on the relationship between knowledge-oriented leadership and work engagement ($p = 0.0436$). These results highlighted that knowledge-oriented leadership behaviours encourage knowledge creation, sharing and open communication, facilitating the strong work engagement among academics. Thus, it is recommended to focus on adopting and integrating knowledge-oriented leadership practices into organizational culture in Sri Lankan higher education sector that supports knowledge sharing to improve academic performance.

Keywords: academics, higher education, knowledge-oriented leadership, knowledge sharing, work engagement