

The Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship Between Subjective Well-Being and Work Engagement: A Study of Kurunegala Divisional Secretariat Employees in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Subjective well-being, encompassing life satisfaction, the presence of positive emotions, and the absence of negative emotions, is increasingly acknowledged as a critical determinant of employee performance and organisational success. Work engagement, characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption, is vital for enhancing public sector efficiency and improving service delivery. Most research on the association between subjective well-being (SWB) and work engagement comes from Western countries. There is insufficient evidence from South Asia, especially Sri Lanka, where cultural and workplace factors differ. It also examines gender as a possible moderator, offering new insights into occupational well-being in a South Asian context. The objective of this study is to examine the effect of subjective well-being on work engagement with the moderation role of gender among Divisional Secretariat employees. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires from a representative sample of 375 employees across multiple Divisional Secretariats. Statistical analyses, including regression and moderation testing, were employed to test the hypotheses. The findings reveal a significant positive impact of subjective well-being on work engagement. Employees reporting higher levels of life satisfaction and positive emotions demonstrated greater engagement, while negative emotions were inversely related to engagement. Interestingly, gender did not significantly moderate this relationship, indicating that the impact of well-being on engagement is consistent across male and female employees. This is among the first studies in Sri Lanka to test the role of gender in the SWB-engagement relationship within the public sector. Future studies could investigate other moderators like age, tenure, or organisational culture to deepen the understanding of employee engagement. Organisations are encouraged to implement strategies that enhance employee well-being, such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), emotionally intelligent leadership practices, and integration of well-being metrics into performance evaluations.

Keywords: gender moderation, negative emotions, positive emotions, subjective well-being, work engagement