

Does a single model account for much variance in employee job performance? Evidence from Air ticketing agencies

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Abstract

Despite a large corpus of research studies has focused on a wide range of variables determining employee job performance, a combined effect of attitudinal variables on employee job performance has been heretofore neglected. Predicating on theoretical discourse and lacunae left by earlier studies, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between job-related attitudes and employee job performance. Strongly based on ontological and epistemological assumptions, the study adopts a survey strategy with a deductive approach in a cross-sectional time horizon. Data were garnered with a self-reported questionnaire from conveniently chosen 134 employees working in four air ticketing agencies in Sri Lanka. As a caveat, the fundamental statistical assumptions and common method variance (CMV) were examined. Using a series of multiple regression analysis, we have generated four models. The present study discloses that job-related attitudes were accounted for the significant variance in employee job performance. The study further avers that males were slightly greater performers than females. Needless to say, the study has made theoretical contributions to the frontiers of human resource management literature and proffers many useful practical implications. The limitations and suggestions for future research directions are also highlighted at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Job-related attitudes; Employee job performance; Air ticketing agencies; Sri Lanka

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1. Introduction

Nowadays most businesses are globally expanded and operating in a dog-eat-dog world than ever before and consequently, achieving organisational objectives is challenging, described as ‘a wild goose chase’ (Torlak and Kuzey, 2019). One of the most accelerating factors is information technology that has noticeably intruded into almost all of the businesses (Basheer et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2020). Predominantly, the airline industry that connects all nations is the foremost business strongly influenced by the use of information technology (Tae et al., 2020; Thamaraiselvan et al., 2019). Notably, information technology facilitates the airline industry to approach its ultimate consumers. The majority of the air ticketing agencies operate at downtown ticket offices. Employees working in the air ticketing agencies engage with many complicated activities: booking the tickets, reserving the tickets, cancelling the tickets, rebooking the tickets, refunding, visa services, customer services, onboard facilities (Wheel-

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Chair facilities, specific foods, and beverages facilities), etc. By and large, customers are well-informative and fight for the cheapest airfare. Constant contact with customers is required and employees should solve customers' travel problems promptly, which may result in stressful situations. The air ticketing agencies are representatives of the airlines and chiefly expecting that their employees to be well-groomed, friendly and patient and be able to work any time of a day. It is not dubious that the success of the air ticketing agencies is hinged on the ability of the organisation in keeping satisfied, involved and committed workforce. In line with the argument, earlier studies considered employees as the vehicle for accomplishing the organisational objectives (Tsai et al., 2018). What is well-known is that customers are more complex and the jobs that employees do at ticketing offices require a greater amount of scarification and complaisance. Therefore, employees might be less satisfied, involved and committed.

Although a large number of research studies have focused on variables influencing employee job performance, a combined effect of attitudinal variables on employee job performance has been hitherto short-sighted. Moreover, previous studies on factors determining employee job performance that have been investigated in the West are reflective of the particular cultural context and thus, the findings cannot be generalised to another diverse cultural context. Therefore, research studies reflecting Asian context is warranted for negating the knowledge starvation. On balance, earlier studies have not explored the combined effects of job satisfaction, involvement, commitment on employee job performance. On the strong theoretical grounds, the present study fills a hiatus left by previous studies. Studying the relationship between job satisfaction and employee job performance is one of the overriding venerable research traditions in organisational studies (Judge et al., 2001) and thus earlier it is treated as the 'Holy Grail' (Landy, 1989). Anchored in the breadth and complexity job satisfaction and performance literature, research scholars warrant the needs for re-examining the relationship in diverse context since some research studies have not produced much of strong relationships (Judge et al., 2001). Similarly, some earlier studies have not found any significant relationship between commitment and employee job performance: in a recent study on factors affecting employee job performance, Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) did not find any significant relationship between commitment and employee job performance. Therefore, there is a pressing need for establishing the relationship between commitment and employee job performance. On an equal footing, studies on the relationship between job involvement and employee job performance are limited. Job involvement is a crucial element in organisational studies (Mikkelsen and Olsen, 2019). Previous studies maintain that highly involved employees put a higher level of effort on organisational success and less likely to leave their organisations (Kahn, 1990; Pfeffer, 1994; Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007). Although the earlier studies have documented the relationship between job involvement and outcome variables such as motivation and capacity to handle many complex issues (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Mikkelsen and Olsen, 2019), the relationship between job involvement and employee job performance was sparse. Moreover, the findings on the relationship between job involvement and employee job performance were not consistent (Diefendorff et al., 2006; Laskk et al., 2001; Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007). On balance, there is, therefore, a compelling need for establishing the relationship between the variables in exogenous countries and diverse sectors (Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007).

In a nutshell, the present study aims to establish the relationship between job-related attitudes and employee job performance. Considering the significance of the airline industry, the sample was taken from air ticketing agencies. The remaining part of the paper proceeds as follows. The theoretical bases on which the present study is anchored in is discussed next. Based on the theoretical grounds, the theoretical relationships are expressed in terms of the

hypotheses. Following the theoretical section, methods used in the study is presented including sampling selection, subjects and measures. The results of the data analysis are summarised in the penultimate section. Contributions, practical implications, limitations and the agenda for the future research studies are discussed under discussion and conclusion.

2. Theoretical underpinning

Job satisfaction is a positive feeling about an assortment of job features, personal characteristics, and environment (Moradi et al., 2013). Furnham et al. (2009) define job satisfaction as the extent to which the employees are satisfied with their job. Profoundly Werther and Davis (1999) describe job satisfaction as an employee-view towards their job favourably where the organisation's job conditions meet their expectations. Since employees exert positive and negative feelings of their job, it is expected that the job satisfaction of employees would have a noticeable impact on employee job performance. Employee job performance is the person's contribution to the achievement of organisational objectives (see Santos et al., 2018). Usikalu et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and employee job performance and the results disclosed a positive significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee job performance and their findings are in line with many other studies (Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019; Hanzaae and Mirvaisi, 2013). Similarly, most recent studies show that employees who are highly satisfied tend to be more effective and productive (Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019) and Robbins (2006) submits that job satisfaction is a general behaviour to employee job performance. Nonetheless, taken previous research studies together, the relationship between job satisfaction and employee job performance is strongly based on country-culture specific nature and therefore, some studies did not find any significant relationship (Judge et al., 2001) and the findings that are reflective of a particular culture cannot be applied to another cultural context. Therefore, despite the relationship was well established, many recent studies have been still looking at the relationship (Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019). Consequently, the present study poses an interesting question that whether the positive relationship between employee job satisfaction and job performance prevails in air ticketing agencies, Sri Lanka. Thus, it can be hypothesised:

H₁: Job satisfaction is accounted for significant variance in employee job performance.

Job involvement is the 'the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in and concerned with one's present job' (Paullay et al., 1994, p. 225). Employees who are highly involved treat their jobs as an integral part of their self-definition (Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007). A highly job-involved employee puts a stronger effect on employee job performance and stays longer with the organisations, and in contrast, employees who are low involved are less likely to engage with their job (e.g. Kahn, 1990; Pfeffer, 1994; Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007). Rotenberry and Moberg (2007) examined the impact of job involvement on supervisor performance ratings and their results confirm the impact of job involvement on supervisor rating performance. Surprisingly, a limited number of studies have focused on the relationship between job involvement and employee job performance and therefore, the evidence is not sufficed to generalise the findings across all settings. Moreover, there is a paucity of the research studies on job involvement and employee job performance and such studies are completely lacking in the Asian context. Therefore, there is a compelling need for establishing the relationship between job involvement and employee job performance leading to surmise:

H₂: Job involvement is accounted for significant variance in employee job performance.

Consensus has been reached with the existence of three components of commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990). The affective commitment describes as an affective or emotional attachment to the organisation in which employees enjoy membership in the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1990). In contrast, continuance commitment is about employees' continuity to be with the organisation owing to considerable investment, time and energy that an employee spent mastering a job skill in which their skills are difficult to transfer (Allen and Meyer, 1990). As for normative commitment, employees are influenced by their experiences on both prior to (familial/cultural socialization) and following (organisational socialisation) entry into the organisation (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Therefore, employees have been longer with the organisation and are loyal to the organisation. Hettiarachchi and Jayeathua (2014) highlighted that employees who are highly committed show positive behaviours, loyalty and sacrifice towards their organisations. This implies that highly committed workforce contributes more to attaining organisational objectives (Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019). A considerable amount of studies has investigated the relationship between commitment and employee job performance. For instance, studies were undertaken by Chen and Francesco (2003) and Somers and Birnbaum (1998) found a positive relationship between commitment and employee job performance. Similarly, Tolentino (2013) revealed a significant positive relationship commitment and work performance of the academic personnel. Most recently, Eliyana and Ma'arif (2019) stress that commitment is an important contributor to work performance. Nonetheless, some studies did not find any significant relationship between commitment and employee job performance. Moreover, completely dearth of the studies is reflecting the Asian context and therefore, there is a need for the study to understand the nature of the relationship. Thus, the present study raises a question that whether the relationship between commitment and employee job performance prevails in Sri Lankan context. Consequently, it is hypothesised:

H3: Commitment is accounted for significant variance in employee job performance.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and subjects

Considering the importance of the variables studied, air ticketing agencies were sampled. Four air ticketing agencies, namely Travel Pass, Sharmila Travels and Tours, Hemas Travels (Pvt) Ltd, and Sri Lankan Airlines PTA Ticket office were conveniently chosen. Of the 150 questionnaires distributed, 134 were usable yielding a response rate 89%: 53 questionnaires from Travel Pass; 44 questionnaires from Sharmila Travels and Tours; 19 questionnaires from Hemas Travels (Pvt) Ltd; and 18 questionnaires from Sri Lankan Airlines PTA Ticket office. Sample made up 58% of males ($n=78$) and the remaining 42% were females ($n=56$). The majority of the respondents were under 30 years (42%), followed by over 45 years (32%) and ages between 30-45(26%). As for employee status, 63% were married, 31% were single, 4% were widowed, and the remaining 2% were divorced.

3.2. Measures

Job satisfaction of employees was gauged with three-items Michigan Organisational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979): (1) *All in all I am satisfied with my job* (2) *In general, I like working here*, and (3) *In general, I don't like my job*. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As can be seen in Table 1, the internal consistency of the measure, the Cronbach's α , is .67 indicating the acceptable level of the reliability.

Job involvement was measured using the scale originally developed by Lodahl and Kejnar (1965). Despite the age of this measure, many recent studies have confirmed its validity

(Lieberman et al., 2011; Shantz et al., 2016; Tan and Chou, 2018). Sample items are ‘Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking ahead to next day’s work’, and ‘I live, eat and breathe my job’. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As can be seen in Table 1, the internal consistency of the measure, the Cronbach’s α , is .79 indicating higher reliability of the scale.

Allen and Meyer’s commitment scale (1990) was used to measure employee commitment. Sample items are ‘I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation’, ‘It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to’ and ‘Jumping from organisation to organisation does not seem at all unethical to me’. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As can be seen in Table 1, the internal consistency of the measure, the Cronbach’s α , is .69 indicating the reliability of the measure.

The most widely used measure of employee job performance, originally developed by Welbourne et al. (1998), was applied in the present study. The sample items cover many aspects of the job that an employee performs including quantity of work output; quality of work output; accuracy of work and customer service provided (internal and external). Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement using a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). As can be seen in Table 1, the internal consistency of the measure, the Cronbach’s α , is .71 indicating higher reliability of the measure.

4. Results

Prior to examining the hypotheses, the fundamental assumptions of statistics for employing parametric tests were investigated. Most importantly, normality was examined with skewness, Kurtosis, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Shapiro-Wilk test and P-P plots. The skewness and Kurtosis are within the range, and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Shapiro-Wilk test were not significant: job satisfaction ($p=.19$; $p=.35$); job involvement ($p=.20$; $p=.63$); commitment ($p=.17$; $p=.56$); and employee job performance ($p=.21$; $p=.46$). In addition, plots of *ZRESID against *ZPRED, a histogram and normal probability plot of the residuals were examined, and the results have met the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity and normality. Moreover, the Durbin–Watson test was performed to examine the assumption of the independent error (i.e., the residuals are independent). The value of the Durbin–Watson test 1.68 is between the acceptable range 1 and 3 (Field, 2013). Since multicollinearity is a serious concern in doing multiple regression analysis, researchers have examined it using VIF (Variance inflation factor) and tolerance. The VIF is ranging from 1.30 to 1.59 and the tolerance is from .63 to .77. The values fell within the acceptable range: VIF should be below 5 and tolerance statistics should be above 0.2 (Field, 2013). In addition, as can be seen in Table 1, the highest correlation is found between job satisfaction and job involvement ($r=.51$). Taken the values of VIF, tolerance and correlation together, the data are free from the concerns of multicollinearity. Next, since the data were from a single-sourced and self-administrated questionnaire, there is a possibility for common method variance (CMV) and thereby examined the CMV. Initially, as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) procedural remedies were followed in the data collection process. For robustness, the most popular Harman’s one-factor test was executed, and the results show no indication of CMV.

Table 1 shows means, standard deviations and correlations of the independent and dependent variables. As can be seen in Table 1, the highest mean is for commitment ($M=4.25$, $SD=.40$), followed by employee job performance ($M=4.22$, $SD=.30$), job satisfaction ($M=4.17$, $SD=.66$), and job involvement ($M=3.83$, $SD=.74$). The values indicate that on average employees are agreed with each statement. As for correlation, the highest correlation is between

job satisfaction and job involvement ($r = .51, p < 0.01$) and the lowest is between employee job performance and job satisfaction ($r = .34, p < 0.01$). As expected, all three independent variables are reasonably positively correlated with employee job performance: job satisfaction and employee job performance $r = .34, p < 0.01$; job involvement and employee job performance $r = .46, p < 0.01$; and commitment and employee job performance $r = .50, p < 0.01$. This implies that job satisfaction, job involvement and commitment increase employee job performance.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and Bivariate Correlations

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1 Job Satisfaction	4.17	.66	(.67)			
2 Job involvement	3.83	.74	.51**	(.79)		
3 Commitment	4.25	.40	.36**	.44**	(.69)	
4 Employee job performance	4.22	.30	.34**	.46**	.50**	(.71)

$n = 136$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard deviation; Cronbach's α in parenthesis

Following the correlation analysis, independent sample t-test was performed to see whether gender forms any different model. The summary of the outputs is presented in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is only significant for job satisfaction and therefore, the assumption that variance is roughly equal is not supported. However, in the field of business and management, the violation of assumption over 30 samples could not cause any serious concern (Field, 2013). For all other insignificant values, the column 'equal variances assumed' was read. As can be seen in the same Table, there is no mean difference between gender (male and female) and independent variables: job satisfaction $p = .20$; job involvement $p = .08$; and commitment $p = .36$. Nonetheless, the performance level of employees is different between males and females ($p < .05$). This implies that males report a higher level of employee job performance ($M = 4.27, SD = .28$) than females ($M = 4.17, SD = .33$).

Table 2: Gender Difference in The Focal Variables

Variable	Gender	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	Mean difference Sig. (1-tailed)
Job satisfaction	Male	4.13	.78	13.44**	$p = .20$
	Female	4.22	.43		
Job involvement	Male	3.91	.76	.55	$p = .08$
	Female	3.73	.72		
Commitment	Male	4.24	.43	.81	$p = .36$
	Female	4.27	.37		
Performance	Male	4.27	.28	2.63	$p = .03$
	Female	4.17	.33		

$n = 136$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The formulated hypotheses were examined with the help of multiple regression analysis. The results are shown in Table 3.

As can be seen in Table 3, model 1 explains the impact of control variables on employee job performance. The results show that gender has a negative significant impact on employee job performance ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$) explaining males' positive influence over employee job performance. The model is explained by 5% of variance in employee job performance. In model 2, job satisfaction has been added onto the model 1. The results revealed that job satisfaction has a positive impact on employee job performance. Similarly, job involvement and commitment have been added onto the model 3 and model 4 respectively. As can be seen in model 4, all independent variables are significant and together explain 38% of variance in employee job performance ($F = 12.94, p < .05$). The hypothesis H_1 predicted that job

satisfaction is accounted for significant variance in employee job performance was supported ($\beta = .06$, $p < .05$; $\Delta R^2 = .14$ -model 2). In a similar vein, the hypothesis H₂ predicted that job involvement is accounted for significant variance in employee job performance was also supported ($\beta = .10$, $p < .05$; $\Delta R^2 = .09$ -model 3). Finally, the results disclose a significant positive effect of commitment on employee job performance. Consequently, the hypothesis H₃ surmised that commitment is accounted for significant variance in employee job performance was supported ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$; $\Delta R^2 = .10$ - model 4). On balance, as discussed earlier, our model is accounted for 38% variance and the remaining 62% of variance in employee job performance was not explained by the model.

Table 3: The Effects of Job Satisfaction, Job Involvement and Commitment on Employee job performance

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Controls</i>				
Age	.06	.08*	.08*	.07*
Gender	-.12*	-.14*	-.11*	-.13*
Experience	.08	.12*	.10	.08
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Job satisfaction		.18**	.09*	.06*
Job involvement			.15**	.10*
Commitment				.27**
R^2	.05	.19	.28	.38
ΔR^2	.05	.14	.09	.10
F	2.4	7.68**	9.95**	12.94**
ΔF	2.40	22.36**	15.54**	20.35**

$n = 136$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; Gender 1= Male; 2= Female

5. Discussion, implications and directions for future research

The present study discloses a positive significant relationship between job satisfaction and employee job performance. This implies that job satisfaction increases employee job performance. The finding is in agreement with some earlier studies (Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019; Hanaeze and Mirvaisi, 2013; Judge et al., 2001; Usikalu et al., 2015). Therefore, the present study contributes to the extant literature by affirming the relationship, inter alia mixed findings. The managers and practitioners should find appropriate strategies for strengthening job satisfaction that improves their employees' job performance. The study made another contribution to the literature by confirming the relationship between job involvement and employee job performance where earlier studies produced mixed results. It explains that job involvement increases employee job performance and the finding is in congruence with earlier studies (Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007). Some other studies averred that low-involved employees usually are thinking of leaving their jobs and involving in various undesirable activities that are not needed by the organisations (Rotenberry and Moberg, 2007). Therefore, it is paramount important for managers and practitioners to find the best ways to boost the job involvement of the employees. In addition, the current study found a positive relationship between commitment and employee job performance implying that commitment of employees increases employee job performance. The finding is in line with earlier studies (Chen and Francesco, 2003; Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019; Somers and Birnbaum, 1998; Tolentino, 2013). Affirming the relationship between commitment and employee job performance is another form of contribution that our study makes owing to the inconsistent findings in the literature. Consequently, the present study behoves managers and practitioners to find ways of improving employee commitment. Moreover, the present study made a geographical contribution to the extant literature by unearthing findings from a culturally diverse country.

Albeit the current study is strongly grounded on theoretical bases, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The relationship between job-related attitudes and employee job

performance was established from the data that have been marshalled with a cross-sectional time horizon and therefore, it cannot make a firm conclusion about the causality. To overcome such problem, longitudinal studies are warranted. Another important limitation is the common method variance. Since data were from a single-sourced, self-administrated questionnaire, there might be a portent of common method variance (Favero and Bullock, 2014). Even though the present study confirms little concerns over CMV, future research should collect the data from multi-sources and time-lagged approach. As discussed earlier, our model only explained 38% of variance in employee job performance. Since the remaining 62% of variance accounts for other variables, future studies should discover other factors contributing to employee job performance. For instance, performance may be impacted by organisational support, ability, management effectiveness, and training and development (Rowold, 2008). Further, earlier studies highlighted the important intervening and moderating variables between job-related attitudes and employee job performance. For example, organisational support might be an intervening variable of the relationship between commitment and employee job performance. Similarly, transformational leadership might influence commitment and then commitment might have a subsequent impact on employee job performance (Eliyana and Ma'arif, 2019). Therefore, it behoves practitioners and human resource managers to study exogenous factors determining employee job performance.

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