

IMPACT OF DECENT WORK ON EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AMONG TEA PLUCKING EMPLOYEES IN BADULLA DISTRICT

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INTRODUCTION

Decent work is a concept that has been increasingly discussed in recent decades in different business models as a vital aspect of individual, organizational, and social well-being. Decent work refers to economically productive employment that promotes fairness, safety, and well-being for workers (ILO, 2003). It encompasses various aspects of work to ensure that workers are treated with dignity and have the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives inside and outside the workplace. It is widely acknowledged that upholding the principles of decent work leads an organization towards enhanced sustainability and resilience in today's fiercely competitive business environment, as it fosters the loyal contribution and commitment of the employees to the accomplishment of organizational goals.

One of the primary objectives when building a skilled workforce in a developing nation is to nurture employee commitment to foster economic growth. As defined by Meyer & Becker, (2004), employee commitment is "the psychological state of an employee's sense of obligation to remain with the organization or team, even when considering leaving the job" (Meuse, 2000). Committed employees play a pivotal role in realizing organizational goals and objectives. The absence of committed employees harms individuals and organizations and a country's poverty, unemployment, and economic decline (Vance, 2006).

Despite the overall decrease of poverty and inequality over the past couple of decades, Sri Lanka is presently grappling with a severe economic trauma cause, leaving the country with higher levels of poverty and inequality. Poverty and inequality have been observed as a long-continued reality in the estate sector (Aheeyar, 2006). Thousands of estate workers work under poor socio-economic and welfare conditions (Vijesandiran, 2022). It is often highlighted that more than their salaries are needed to fulfill their needs, their jobs could be more secure, resulting in lower commitment (Dharmadasa et al., 2018).

Against this backdrop, it would be worthwhile to see whether decent work conditions could impact the commitment of estate workers, a phenomenon that still needs to be discussed. Thus, the present study aims to examine the impact of decent work on the responsibility of tea-plucking employees who work in tea estates in the Badulla district.

METHODOLOGY

The present study takes a deductive approach based on a positivistic stance and chooses a quantitative survey design to measure the key variables. Based on the previous literature, the conceptual framework of the study identified the commitment of the tea-plucking employees as the dependent variable and the four dimensions of decent work as perceived by them, namely, labor standards and worker's rights, adequate earning and productive career, social protection, and social dialog as independent variables. Accordingly, the present study hypothesized a significant positive impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The population of the study was tea-plucking employees in the Banadarawela tea

estate area of Badulla district, and a sample of 155 tea-plucking employees was selected for the examination as per the Krejcie and Morgon sampling technique (McNaughton & Cowell, 2018) through the convenient sampling method. The study used both primary and secondary sources to collect data. A questionnaire was developed based on literature to gather primary data from the sample and tested for validity. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS v21 software to reach the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The validity of the data was ensured with Cronbach's Alpha test, and the appropriateness of data was confirmed through multicollinearity tests. The results show a moderate level of commitment ($\mu = 2.40$) among the tea-plucking employees in the sample. Also, they have perceived their work as decent to a reasonable extent regarding labor standards, worker's rights ($\mu = 2.36$), adequate earning productive work ($\mu = 2.5$), social protection ($\mu = 2.33$), and social dialog ($\mu = 2.59$).

As per the result of the data analysis, it was identified that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between decent work and employee commitment. The most vital relationship was observed between adequate earning and productive work and employee commitment ($r=0.756$), where labor standards and worker rights also showed a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable ($r=0.661$). However, it was found that social dialog and social protection have a moderately positive relationship with the employees' commitment ($r= 0.597$ and $r=0.407$, respectively).

Table 1

Result of Correlation analysis

	A	B	C	D	E
A. Employee Commitment	1				
B. Labor Standards & Worker's Rights	0.661**	1			
C. Adequate Earning and Productive Work	0.756**	0.444**	1		
D. Social Protection	0.407**	0.468**	0.511**	1	
E. Social Dialog	0.597**	0.576**	0.522**	0.202*	1

Further, it was identified that labor standards & workers' rights, and adequate earning and productive work have a visible impact on tea-plucking employees' commitment ($\beta = 0.275$ and 0.38 respectively). Conversely, the relative result of social dialog on employee commitment was found to be 0.048 , whereas social protection showed a minimal negative impact of 0.07 , both statistically insignificant. However, the model suggested that the independent variables explain 71.6% of the variance of employee commitment with a high goodness of fit indicated by the adjusted R^2 of 0.708 .

Table 2
Result of regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.840	.095		8.887	.000
Labor Standards & Worker's Rights	.275	.041	.400	6.750	.000
1 Adequate Earning and productive work	.380	.038	.585	10.024	.000
social protection	-.070	.040	-.096	-1.728	.086
social dialog	.048	.036	.080	1.347	.180

a. Dependent Variable: Employee commitment

Findings of the relationship between dependent and independent variables are congruent with many previous literatures where the impact of social protection and social dialogue shows a slight inconsistency with the available literature.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the above results, it can be concluded that decent work and employee commitment have a significantly positive relationship where labor standards and worker's rights, adequate earning and productive work, social protection, and social dialog impact the duty of tea-plucking employees. The impact of proper earning and practical work, labor standards, and workers' rights are most significant in determining employee commitment.

Based on the available research and evidence, when tea-plucking employees are provided with decent work conditions, they tend to be more engaged, motivated, and committed to their work, leading to increased productivity, improved job performance, and a positive impact on the organization's overall success. Further, it implies that the lack of decent work practices, such as inadequate compensation, poor working conditions, and lack of job security, can lead to low morale, decreased job satisfaction, and joint employee commitment.

Therefore, tea plantations and organizations must implement and promote decent work practices to ensure their tea-plucking employees have a conducive work environment that meets their basic needs, fosters personal and professional growth, and inspires their commitment to work and the organization. By doing so, tea plantation owners and managers can enhance their employees' well-being and quality of life and achieve tremendous success and sustainability in their business operations. Further, it is suggested to carry out further studies in the future in the same scholarly scope and the same empirical setting to find out the unique characteristics or conditions embedded in the context.

Keywords: Decent work, employee commitment, tea industry

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