Self-Compassion, Job Satisfaction and Work Engagement Among College Lecturers

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of self-compassion and job satisfaction on work engagement among college lecturers in Kerala. While prior research has separately examined these variables, this study specifically investigates the interplay between self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement in the academic profession. Data collection was conducted using the 12-item Kristen Neff's Self-Compassion Scale, Paul E. Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. A quantitative research design was employed, with a sample of 225 college lecturers selected via purposive sampling. The findings reveal significant correlations among self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement. Furthermore, it was determined that self-compassion and job satisfaction serve as significant predictors of work engagement among college lecturers. This research emphasizes the need for future studies to develop intervention strategies fostering self-compassion, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and work engagement in educational professionals.

Keywords: self-compassion, job satisfaction, work engagement, college lecturers

1. INTRODUCTION:

This study explores the impact of self-compassion and job satisfaction on work engagement among college lecturers in Kerala. While prior research has separately examined these variables, this study specifically investigates the interplay between self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement in the academic profession. Data collection was conducted using the 12-item Kristen Neff's Self-Compassion Scale, Paul E. Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey, and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. A quantitative research design was employed, with a sample of 225 college lecturers selected via purposive sampling. The findings reveal significant correlations among self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement. Furthermore, it was determined that self-compassion and job satisfaction serve as significant predictors of work engagement among college lecturers. This research emphasizes the need for future studies to develop

intervention strategies fostering self-compassion, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and work engagement in educational professionals.

Numerous ongoing difficulties that college teachers deal with have a big influence on their academic careers and general well-being. Overwhelming workloads, demands on research output, and the requirement for ongoing adaptability to shifting academic settings are some of these difficulties. According to studies, lecturers frequently experience work discontent and burnout as a result of their inability to balance their teaching obligations, administrative tasks, and research demands (Shabir et al., 2021). The burden on academic workers is further increased by the need for high research output and the pressure to publish in prestigious publications (Harvey & Gill, 2022). Furthermore, gender inequality still exists, with female academics reporting a disproportionate amount of labor, especially caregiving and administrative duties, which has a detrimental impact on their output and job satisfaction (Sharma & Gupta, 2023). Although there are many advantages to the growing use of digital tools and online teaching techniques, lecturers who may not have had enough assistance or training in these areas now have an added strain (Lee & Marshall, 2024). Furthermore, there are issues with the overemphasis on student assessments of teaching quality because it frequently ignores the complexity of academic work, especially when it comes to research contributions (Morgan & Adams, 2021).

Self-compassion

Treating oneself with love and understanding, especially while facing failure or adversity, is referred to as self-compassion. It entails accepting oneself without passing judgment and acknowledging one's inherent humanity. According to Neff (2021), self-compassion is how we treat ourselves when we fail or face adversity. It is based on Buddhist ideas and includes mindfulness exercises, self-kindness, and acknowledging our common humanity (Neff, 2021). It is based on Buddhist ideas and includes mindfulness exercises, self-kindness, and acknowledging our common humanity (Neff, 2021). In general, compassion is the warmth and concern we have for the pain of others, which inspires us to want to assist them (Goetz et al., 2021). Many interconnected elements, such as gender, culture, age, personality, emotional intelligence, and environment, affect one's level of self-compassion. In contrast to women, who are more likely to criticize themselves, men are generally more self-compassionate (Kelly et al., 2020). Self-compassion is influenced by cultural background as well; individualistic Western nations tend to have higher levels of self-compassion than collectivist Asian cultures, which place a higher value on societal harmony (Ching et al., 2021). Another factor is age; teenagers tend to exhibit lower levels of self-compassion, which tend to rise with maturity and better emotional control (Hwang et al., 2022). Self-compassion is favorably correlated with personality qualities like conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness, extraversion, and low neuroticism (Yang & Chen, 2023).

Job satisfaction

The degree of fulfillment and pleasant feelings that workers have in their jobs goes beyond simple duties and encompasses relationships with coworkers and superiors, the organization's policies, and the impact that their work has on their personal lives (Huang & Lyu, 2021). It is frequently assessed in terms of

facet-level satisfaction (certain elements like work environment, compensation, and job responsibilities) and global satisfaction (total job satisfaction) (Mayer et al., 2021). Spector claims that 14 important elements—such as gratitude, communication, relationships with coworkers, benefits, working circumstances, and chances for personal development—have an impact on job satisfaction (Latham & Budworth, 2020).Although there has been interest in employee attitudes since the early 1900s, important research on job satisfaction only started to appear in the 1930s, when surveys gained popularity as a measurement technique (Latham & Budworth, 2020). According to the Rangeof Affect Theory, which is still one of the most popular theories, employee satisfaction is impacted by how well their expectations are fulfilled, particularly when it comes to important job features like autonomy and career advancement (Robinson & Judge, 2020).

Work engagement

According to Sonnentag and Fritz (2022), work engagement is a good psychological state characterized by zeal, dedication, and focus on job-related tasks. High levels of enthusiasm, commitment, and concentration are displayed by engaged workers, which enhances job performance, creativity, and corporate citizenship behaviors (Bakker et al., 2021). Over the past 20 years, it has become more widely acknowledged that job engagement is essential to both individual achievement and organizational efficacy (Kuntz et al., 2020). Task engagement is a crucial element that entails intense drive, vigor, and interest in work-related tasks (Albrecht et al., 2020). Improved performance, inventiveness, and customer happiness are linked to this state (Bakker & Albrecht, 2022). Schaufeli and Bakker (2021) define job engagement as a state of contentment and energy that is marked by vitality, devotion, and immersion. Employees can be classified as actively engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged using Gallup's paradigm (Patel, 2022). Employees that are actively involved go above and above the call of duty by taking initiative and supporting company objectives (Patel, 2022). Cognitive, emotional, and bodily aspects are all included in work engagement (Patel, 2022). These consist of cognitive focus on objectives, emotional connection to coworkers and the workplace, and physical effort and energy put into tasks (Patel, 2022).

While existing research has explored the relationships between self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement, there is limited focus on the specific context of college lecturers in Kerala, India. Cultural and institutional factors unique to this region may influence these relationships differently than in Western or other settings. Additionally, much of the current literature generalizes findings across professions, overlooking the distinct challenges faced by college lecturers, such as student demands, academic expectations, and administrative pressures, which may uniquely shape the interplay between self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement. The lack of longitudinal studies further limits understanding of the long-term effects of self-compassion on job satisfaction and engagement within higher education. Moreover, there is a notable gap in research examining whether self-compassion and job satisfaction serve as predictors of work engagement. Addressing these gaps is crucial for enhancing the academic experience of lecturers and developing targeted interventions that support their well-being and professional fulfilment. Accordingly, the study tests the following null hypotheses: (1) There is no

relationship between self-compassion and job satisfaction; (2) There is no relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement; (3) There is no relationship between work engagement and self-compassion; and (4) Job satisfaction and self-compassion have no significant predictive relationship with work engagement.

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL

Research design

The research employed a quantitative research design, specifically a correlational design using Pearson's correlation method and regression analysis. Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, establish relationships, make predictions, and generalize findings to larger populations.

Participants

The study targeted college lecturers from Kerala, selecting 200 participants using judgmental sampling, a non-probability sampling technique where participants are chosen based on the researcher's judgment and specific criteria relevant to the research. This method ensures the inclusion of individuals with the necessary knowledge and experience, thereby enhancing the study's relevance and reliability. The inclusion criterion was college lecturers from Kerala, while the exclusion criteria were lecturers with less than six months of teaching experience and those currently on maternity leave. The sample's frequency and percentage distribution based on gender is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Variables of the Study.

Variable	F	%
Gender: Male	116	51.56
Female	109	48.44

Note: N= 225

Measures

Questionnaires were used in this study as a tool. The data collection of the study was done via an online platform that is through google forms

12-Item Self-Compassion Scale (SCS-12). The study employed a quantitative, correlational research design using Pearson's correlation method and mediation analysis. Quantitative research focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify patterns, establish relationships, make predictions, and generalize findings, in contrast to qualitative research, which deals with non-numerical data. Pearson's correlation was used to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between continuous variables, while mediation analysis was conducted to determine whether a third variable (mediator) influences the relationship between an independent and a dependent variable, providing insight into the underlying mechanisms of these associations (Bhandari, 2020, 2021). The target population comprised college lecturers from Kerala, with a total of 200 participants selected through judgmental sampling, a non-probability technique based on the researcher's judgment to ensure participants had relevant knowledge and

experience. Inclusion criteria required participants to be college lecturers from Kerala, while those with less than six months of teaching experience or currently on maternity leave were excluded.

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). Job satisfaction was measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), developed by Paul Spector in 1994, which consists of 36 items assessing various dimensions of job satisfaction, including pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, and work conditions. The scale, provided in Appendix 2, uses a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Agree very much) to 6 (Disagree very much), with negative subscale items reverse-scored so that higher scores reflect greater job satisfaction. The total score ranges from 36 to 216. The JSS demonstrates an average internal consistency reliability of 0.70 based on a sample of 3,067 individuals. Its validity is supported by consistent correlations with employee perceptions and behaviors across multiple samples, aligning with findings from other job satisfaction instruments and research conducted in both public and private sectors.

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale. Work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Wilmar Schaufeli in 2003, which comprises 17 items assessing key dimensions of engagement, including vigour, dedication, and absorption. The scale, provided in Appendix 1, uses a 7-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Always), with all items positively worded to ensure that higher scores reflect greater work engagement. The total score ranges from 0 to 102. The UWES demonstrates excellent internal consistency, with a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.96, and its validity is supported through construct validity, confirming its reliability and effectiveness in measuring employee engagement.

Procedure

Participants in this study were college lecturers aged between 20 and 50 years. Data was collected through a structured Google Form that included the Self-Compassion Scale (to measure levels of self-compassion), the Job Satisfaction Scale (to assess job satisfaction), and the Work Engagement Scale (to evaluate lecturers' work engagement). Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from the heads of institutions to ensure ethical approval, and an Informed Consent section was embedded within the Google Form to inform participants about the study's purpose and secure their voluntary participation. The form was distributed via each college department's WhatsApp group under the supervision of department heads or senior lecturers. Participants were instructed to complete all sections of the questionnaire thoroughly. After collection, the data was compiled in an organized format and carefully reviewed for completeness and accuracy to eliminate any missing or invalid responses. This verification process was crucial to ensure the reliability of the dataset before conducting statistical analyses aimed at exploring the relationships between self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement among college lecturers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2

Correlation between Self-Compassion and Job satisfaction.

Variable	1	2	Mean	SD
Self-Compassion	1		35.92	4.63
Job satisfaction	.279**	1	129.64	14.43

Note: **p<.01, two-tailed

Pearson product moment correlation is taken for the analysis of relationship between self-compassion and job satisfaction. The results indicate that there is a small positive correlation between self-compassion and job satisfaction (r=.279, p<.01). The positive correlation indicates that self-compassion tends to increase or decrease with increase or decrease in job satisfaction. Since there is a significant correlation between the variables the researcher rejected the null hypothesis.

Table 3

Correlation between Job satisfaction and work engagement.

Variable	1	2	Mean	SD
Job satisfaction	1		129.64	14.43
Work engagement	.347**	1	55.30	14.43

Note: **p<.01, two-tailed

Pearson product moment correlation is taken for the analysis of relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement. The results indicate that there is a medium positive correlation between job satisfaction and work engagement (r=.347, p<.01). The positive correlation indicates that job satisfaction tends to increase or decrease with increase or decrease in work engagement. Since there is a significant correlation between the variables the researcher rejected the null hypothesis.

Table 4

Correlation between work engagement and self-compassion.

Variable	1	2	Mean	SD
Work engagement	1		55.30	14.43
Self-compassion	.282**	1	35.92	4.63

Note: **p<.01, two-tailed

Pearson product moment correlation was taken for the analysis of relationship between work engagement and self-compassion. The results indicate that there is a small positive correlation between work engagement and self-compassion (r=.347, p<.01). The positive correlation indicates that work engagement tends to increase or decrease with increase or decrease in self-compassion. Since there is a significant correlation between the variables the researcher rejected the null hypothesis.

Table 5

Predictors of Work Engagement.

Variables	t-value	Beta	Sig.
Self-Compassion	3.51	.20	.001
Job Satisfaction	5.07	.29	.000

Note: $p<0.01$

A linear regression was used to study the independent prediction of each variable on work engagement. The result indicates that self-compassion ($t= 3.51$, $p< .01$) and job satisfaction ($t= 5.07$, $p< .01$) significantly predicts work engagement. These findings suggest that increase in self-compassion and job satisfaction positively predict work engagement.

Table 6

Joint prediction of work Engagement.

Variables	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F
Self-compassion Job satisfaction	.397	.158	.152	13.30

Note: $p<0.01$

The Table 5 indicates the results of regression analysis on joint prediction of self-compassion and job satisfaction on work engagement. Both self-compassion and job satisfaction significantly and jointly predicts work engagement ($R^2 = .158$, $p< .01$). The results suggest that self-compassion and job satisfaction together account for 15% of the variance in work engagement.

Discussion

The present study indicates that there is a positive correlation between self-compassion and job satisfaction. These findings are in line with previous study which indicates, Higher self-compassion among employees is associated with lower levels of stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion, they are therefore more capable of handling work-related difficulties, which results in a more optimistic view of their positions and more job satisfaction (Neff,2003). Self-compassionate workers frequently express higher levels of motivation and contentment, which enhances their general job satisfaction (Kelly et al., 2019). This association has been observed in a variety of work places, such as corporate, educational, and healthcare settings, supporting the notion that encouraging self-compassion at work can improve job satisfaction and employee well-being (Hwang & Kuo, 2018). According to Cognitive Appraisal Theory of Stress, it posits that how people interpret workplace stressors affects their emotional response. Self-compassion helps individuals appraise challenges more positively, reducing negative emotions and enhancing job satisfaction (Lazarus & Folkman,1984). The study indicates a positive correlation between job satisfaction and work engagement. These findings are in line with previous studies that indicate workers who are more satisfied and more engaged in work (Harter et al.,2002). In the context of the social exchange theory, Workers that

are satisfied in their positions feel appreciated by the organization they work for, and they show this by being more engaged (Ahmad et al.,2023). There is positive correlation between work engagement and self-compassion, these findings are in line with previous study which indicates, Self-compassion enables employees to deal with stress and disappointments at work more effectively, which results in a more engaged and motivated workforce (Gupta &Lamba,2020). Self-compassion fosters resilience and emotional well-being, key factors that promote deeper involvement in job tasks and contribute to overall work engagement (Homan et al,2021). These results highlight how crucial it is to foster self-compassion at work as a means of improving worker engagement and general wellbeing. (Kong & Zhang,2022). The results also indicate both job satisfaction and self- compassion are significant predictors of work engagement implying that the individuals who are self- compassionate or satisfied with their jobs are more likely to demonstrate high level of engagement in their work. The Job demand resource Model suggests that Job demands lead to burnout and reduced work engagement (Bakker & Demourti ,2007). Self-compassion, as a personal resource, helps employees manage stress and reduce burnout, leading to greater engagement. Job satisfaction, as a job resource, enhances motivation and commitment, further boosting engagement. Together, these factors provide the psychological support needed to stay energized, dedicated, and absorbed in work despite job demands. Self-compassion, as a personal resource, helps employees manage stress and reduce burnout, leading to greater engagement. Job satisfaction, as a job resource, enhances motivation and commitment, further boosting engagement. Together, these factors provide the psychological support needed to stay energized, dedicated, and absorbed in work despite job demands. (Bakker & Demerouti,2007)

Implications, Limitations and Future Directions

The discovery that self-compassion and job satisfaction are key predictors of work engagement has significant implications, particularly for college lecturers, whose roles are often demanding and undervalued. Cultivating self-compassion can enhance job satisfaction and engagement, boosting productivity and performance without requiring substantial institutional investment. Self-compassion equips lecturers to manage personal challenges more effectively, reducing stress and improving overall well-being. As emotional support increases, so does engagement, resulting in a more motivated, committed, and resilient workforce. This can lower rates of burnout and turnover, as emotionally supported lecturers are more likely to remain loyal and engaged. These benefits extend to the institution itself, promoting a sustainable environment where personal well-being drives professional excellence. Additionally, fostering emotional intelligence, empathy, and psychological safety within the workplace enhances teamwork, communication, and collaboration, thereby strengthening the academic community and enabling lecturers to adapt to change and innovation more effectively.

Despite these promising insights, the study has several limitations. The use of self-report data may introduce social desirability bias and reduce the accuracy of responses. The study's focus on a limited population of college lecturers from Kerala restricts the generalizability of the findings, and the exclusion of important variables such as personality traits, organizational factors, age, and gender limits the depth of

analysis. Furthermore, the cross-sectional research design prevents causal inferences, restricting conclusions to correlations rather than cause-and-effect relationships.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample that extends beyond the current region to enhance generalizability. Employing a longitudinal design would help establish causal links and track changes over time. Incorporating additional work-related and demographic variables such as personality traits, academic discipline, age, and gender could offer deeper insights into the dynamics of work engagement. A mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, could also enrich the understanding of how lecturers perceive self-compassion, job satisfaction, and engagement. Moreover, evaluating the effectiveness of interventions aimed at enhancing self-compassion or job satisfaction could yield practical strategies for improving faculty engagement and well-being in academic settings.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research on the relationship between self-compassion, job satisfaction, and work engagement among college lecturers in Kerala revealed a positive correlation between all three variables. The findings suggest that higher levels of self-compassion and job satisfaction are associated with increased work engagement. Additionally, self-compassion and job satisfaction were found to predict work engagement, highlighting the importance of fostering these factors to enhance lecturers' overall engagement in their work. This study provides valuable insights for improving faculty well-being and performance in educational settings.

Declarations

Consent to Participate: Each participant in the current study gave their informed consent before voluntary participation. In addition, participants have been briefed on the nature of the study, assured that all data collected would be kept confidential, and that participation was purely voluntary without remunerating.

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