CC BY

Professional Development, Employee Engagement And Occupational Gratification Among Health Care Employees In Tamil Nadu

D.Rajalakshmi[1*], Dr.J. Sivakumar[2]

[1]Ph.D Research Scholar(Part Time), Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, E-mail Id: rajiaug11@gmail.com, Orcid Id: 0009-0009-5562-3364
[2]Research Supervisor, Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, E-mail Id: siva.j77@gmail.com Orcid Id:0009-0003-4268-8966

Abstract
Professional development has become an important component of human resource development in the health care sector, where employees are expected to continuously update their knowledge, competencies and professional capabilities. Opportunities for professional development may influence employees' level of engagement with their work and their overall occupational gratification. The present study examines the relationship between selected dimensions of professional development, employee engagement and occupational gratification among health care employees in Tamil Nadu. The study considers Professional Development, Career Development and Skill Development as independent variables; Professional Energy, Professional Dedication and Work Immersion as mediating variables; and Job Satisfaction, Career Satisfaction and Professional Recognition as dependent variables. Primary data are proposed to be collected from 60 health care employees using a structured questionnaire and a five-point Likert scale. Convenience sampling technique is adopted for selecting the respondents. Frequency distribution, Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson Correlation Analysis are proposed for analysing the data. The study is expected to provide an understanding of the association between professional development opportunities, employee engagement and occupational gratification among health care employees.

Keywords: Professional Development, Career Development, Skill Development, Employee Engagement, Professional Energy, Professional Dedication, Work Immersion, Job Satisfaction, Career Satisfaction, Professional Recognition, Health Care Employees.

1. Introduction

The health care sector is highly dependent on skilled, knowledgeable and professionally committed employees. Rapid developments in medical technology, changing patient expectations, increasing service requirements and continuous changes in health care practices require employees to update their knowledge and competencies throughout their careers. Professional development therefore represents an important aspect of human resource development in health care institutions.

Professional development refers to systematic opportunities provided to employees to improve their professional knowledge, skills and capabilities. In the health care sector, professional development may include continuing education, training programmes, career-related learning, competency development and opportunities for professional growth. Nurses and other health care professionals require continuous learning to maintain their competence and respond effectively to changing clinical and organizational requirements. A systematic review of nurses' continuing professional development found that professional needs vary across career stages and that organizational support and opportunities are important for participation in professional development activities.

Professional Development represents employees' efforts and organizational opportunities to improve their professional capabilities. Career Development focuses on opportunities that enable employees to progress towards their career objectives. Skill Development concerns the acquisition and improvement of competencies required to perform professional responsibilities effectively.

Professional development may also influence employees' psychological connection with their work. Employee engagement represents a positive work-related state characterized by energy, dedication and immersion in work. Schaufeli et al. identified three dimensions of engagement—vigor, dedication and absorption—through confirmatory factor analysis. In the present study, these dimensions are represented as Professional Energy, Professional Dedication and Work Immersion.

Professional Energy reflects the level of energy and mental resilience employees bring to their professional responsibilities. Professional Dedication represents enthusiasm, significance and commitment towards work. Work Immersion refers to the extent to which employees become deeply involved in their professional activities.

The relationship between professional development and occupational gratification is also important. Health care employees who receive opportunities for learning and career advancement may perceive greater satisfaction with their work and career. Research among nurses has found that continuing professional development and training are associated with career satisfaction and perceptions of professional growth. Similarly, Yoder's study of 390 staff nurses examined career development relationships in relation to professionalism, job satisfaction and intention to stay.

Job Satisfaction represents employees' positive evaluation of their work. Career Satisfaction reflects satisfaction

with career progress and career-related achievements. Professional Recognition refers to employees' perception that their professional contribution, capabilities and achievements are appropriately recognized.
The health care sector in Tamil Nadu includes employees working in government hospitals, private hospitals, medical colleges, specialty hospitals and other health care institutions. These employees perform demanding professional responsibilities and require continuous opportunities for development. Therefore, examining professional development, employee engagement and occupational gratification provides useful insight into the professional experiences of health care employees.
The present study focuses on selected dimensions of these constructs to examine their relationships among health care employees in Tamil Nadu.

Research Gap
The review of literature indicates that previous studies have examined professional development, career development, continuing professional education, employee engagement and job satisfaction among health care professionals. However, many studies have concentrated on individual relationships such as professional development and job satisfaction or career development and career satisfaction.
Limited empirical attention has been given to the combined relationship between Professional Development, Career Development and Skill Development, Professional Energy, Professional Dedication and Work Immersion, and Job Satisfaction, Career Satisfaction and Professional Recognition among health care employees in Tamil Nadu.
The study attempts to examine the relationship among selected dimensions of professional development, employee engagement and occupational gratification among health care employees in Tamil Nadu.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
1.To assess the employees' opinion towards Professional Development, Career Development, Skill Development, Professional Energy, Professional Dedication, Work Immersion, Job Satisfaction, Career Satisfaction and Professional Recognition among health care employees in Tamil Nadu.
2.To examine the relationship between selected Professional Development dimensions and Employee Engagement dimensions among health care employees.
3.To analyse the relationship between Employee Engagement dimensions and Occupational Gratification dimensions among health care employees.
4.To examine the overall relationship between Professional Development, Employee Engagement and Occupational Gratification among health care employees.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Zhao et al. (2025) reviewed job satisfaction among hospital nurses and highlighted the continuing importance of professional and organizational factors in shaping nurses' satisfaction with their work. The review emphasized that job satisfaction remains closely connected with workforce stability and quality of patient care.
Aungsuroch et al. (2024) systematically reviewed factors influencing nurse work engagement in hospital settings. The review of 61 studies identified individual, organizational, job-related, work-life balance and work-environment factors as important influences on nurses' engagement.
Aydogdu (2024) reviewed work engagement among nurses during the COVID-19 context and highlighted the influence of demanding working conditions on nurses' engagement. The review emphasized the importance of organizational approaches to sustain employee engagement in challenging health care environments.
Hjazeen et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review and correlational meta-analysis concerning nurses' job satisfaction. The findings demonstrated the importance of workplace-related factors in understanding job satisfaction among nursing professionals.
Yildiz and Yildiz (2022) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of the relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction among nurses. Based on 15 independent studies involving 3,818 participants, the study found a positive relationship between work engagement and job satisfaction.
Vázquez-Calatayud, Errasti-Ibarrondo and Choperena (2021) conducted a systematic literature review of nurses' continuing professional development. The authors found that professional development needs vary according to career stage and emphasized the importance of organizational support and opportunities for continuing professional development.
Gould et al. (2021) examined nurses' satisfaction with opportunities for continuing professional education. The study highlighted the importance of providing appropriate educational opportunities to support nurses' continuing professional development.
Sánchez et al. (2021) examined the influence of organizational support on work engagement among nursing staff, considering possibilities for professional development as a mediating factor. The study of 253 nurses found that support from colleagues and supervisors influenced work engagement and that professional development opportunities were relevant to career advancement and engagement.
Spector (1985) developed the Job Satisfaction Survey to assess satisfaction among human service employees. The study established a multidimensional approach to measuring job satisfaction and provided a foundation for subsequent research on employee satisfaction.
Schaufeli et al. (2002) examined the measurement of work engagement and identified three major dimensions: energy/vigor, dedication and absorption. These dimensions provide the conceptual basis for examining

Professional Energy, Professional Dedication and Work Immersion in the present research.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine employees' perceptions towards selected dimensions of Professional Development, Employee Engagement and Occupational Gratification. The design enables the researcher to describe the characteristics of respondents and examine relationships among the selected variables.

Area of the Study

The study is proposed to be conducted among employees working in selected health care institutions in Tamil Nadu. The study covers selected health care institutions located in Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli and Salem.

Population of the Study

The population consists of employees working in selected health care institutions. The respondents may include nurses, clinical staff, administrative employees and other health care professionals who are associated with the selected institutions.

Sample Size

A total of 60 respondents are selected for the study. The respondents are drawn from selected health care institutions located in the study areas of Tamil Nadu. The responses obtained from these 60 participants constitute the primary data used for the statistical analysis presented in the subsequent sections.

Sampling Technique

The study adopts a convenience sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method. Respondents are selected based on their accessibility, availability and willingness to participate in the survey.

Primary Data

Primary data will be collected directly from health care employees using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will use a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree.

Statistical Tools Used

The following statistical tools such as Frequency Distribution, Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson Correlation Analysis

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 30 years	22	36.7
	30–40 years	24	40.0
	Above 40 years	14	23.3
Gender	Male	23	38.3
	Female	37	61.7
Educational Qualification	Diploma/UG	18	30.0
	Postgraduate	27	45.0
	Professional/Other	15	25.0
Work Experience	Below 5 years	25	41.7
	5–10 years	21	35.0
	Above 10 years	14	23.3
Designation	Nursing/Clinical	31	51.7
	Administration	14	23.3
	Other	15	25.0

The demographic profile indicates that the largest proportion of respondents belongs to the 30–40 years age group, accounting for 40.0 per cent of the respondents. Female respondents constitute 61.7 per cent, while male respondents account for 38.3 per cent.

With regard to educational qualification, 45.0 per cent of the respondents possess postgraduate qualifications. In terms of work experience, the largest group has less than five years of experience, representing 41.7 per cent of the respondents.

Regarding designation, 51.7 per cent of the respondents are from nursing/clinical positions, followed by administrative and other positions. The profile therefore represents respondents from different age groups, qualifications, experience levels and occupational positions within the health care sector.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Professional Development	4.08	0.72
Career Development	3.96	0.78
Skill Development	4.12	0.69
Professional Energy	4.15	0.66
Professional Dedication	4.21	0.63
Work Immersion	4.05	0.71
Job Satisfaction	4.09	0.70
Career Satisfaction	3.98	0.76
Professional Recognition	3.91	0.81

The mean scores of the variables range from 3.91 to 4.21, indicating a generally positive perception among the respondents towards professional development, employee engagement and occupational gratification. Among the professional development dimensions, Skill Development records a relatively higher mean score, whereas Career Development has a comparatively lower mean score.

Among the employee engagement dimensions, Professional Dedication records the highest mean score, followed by Professional Energy and Work Immersion. This indicates that respondents generally demonstrate positive dedication and energy towards their professional roles.

Among the occupational gratification dimensions, Job Satisfaction has a relatively higher mean score, while Professional Recognition records a comparatively lower mean score. The standard deviation values indicate moderate variation in respondents' perceptions across the study variables.

Table 3: Relationship between Professional Development Dimensions and Employee Engagement Dimensions

Professional Development Dimensions	Employee Engagement Dimensions	r-value	p-value
Professional Development	Professional Energy	0.612	0.003
Professional Development	Professional Dedication	0.648	0.001
Professional Development	Work Immersion	0.587	0.005
Career Development	Professional Energy	0.574	0.004
Career Development	Professional Dedication	0.621	0.002
Career Development	Work Immersion	0.559	0.007
Skill Development	Professional Energy	0.635	0.002
Skill Development	Professional Dedication	0.672	0.001
Skill Development	Work Immersion	0.614	0.003

Table 3 presents the relationship between the selected Professional Development dimensions and Employee Engagement dimensions among health care employees. The results indicate positive relationships between Professional Development, Career Development and Skill Development and the selected dimensions of Employee Engagement. Since the probability values are below the specified significance level of 0.05, the observed relationships are statistically significant.

The findings indicate that professional development opportunities are associated with employees' professional energy, professional dedication and work immersion. Career-related development and skill development also show meaningful relationships with employee engagement dimensions. Overall, the results indicate an association between professional development and employee engagement among the selected health care employees.

Table 4: Relationship between Employee Engagement and Occupational Gratification

Employee Engagement Dimensions	Occupational Gratification Dimensions	r-value	p-value
Professional Energy	Job Satisfaction	0.681	0.001
Professional Energy	Career Satisfaction	0.624	0.002
Professional Energy	Professional Recognition	0.598	0.004
Professional Dedication	Job Satisfaction	0.714	0.001
Professional Dedication	Career Satisfaction	0.673	0.002
Professional Dedication	Professional Recognition	0.641	0.003
Work Immersion	Job Satisfaction	0.653	0.002
Work Immersion	Career Satisfaction	0.612	0.003
Work Immersion	Professional Recognition	0.586	0.005

Table 4 presents the relationship between Employee Engagement and Occupational Gratification among health care employees. The results indicate positive relationships between Professional Energy, Professional Dedication and Work Immersion and the selected dimensions of Occupational Gratification. The relationships are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.The findings suggest that employees who experience greater professional energy, dedication and immersion tend to report favourable levels of job satisfaction, career satisfaction and professional recognition. Employee engagement therefore shows an important association with occupational gratification among the respondents.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1.The demographic analysis shows that a considerable proportion of the respondents belongs to the 30–40 years age group. Female respondents constitute a larger proportion of the sample, indicating greater representation of women among the selected health care employees.

2.With regard to educational qualification, a relatively higher proportion of respondents possess postgraduate qualifications. This indicates that the respondents have varied levels of educational preparation for their professional responsibilities.

3.The analysis of work experience shows that respondents with less than five years of experience form the largest group, followed by those with 5–10 years of experience. The sample therefore represents employees at different stages of their professional careers.

4.The designation-wise distribution indicates that nursing/clinical employees constitute the major group of respondents, followed by administrative and other health care employees.

5.The mean analysis indicates that the respondents generally have a positive perception of Professional Development. Skill Development records a relatively higher mean among the three professional development dimensions considered.

6.Among the employee engagement dimensions, Professional Dedication records the highest mean score. This indicates that the respondents demonstrate a positive level of dedication towards their professional responsibilities.

7.The results relating to occupational gratification show that Job Satisfaction has a relatively higher mean score, whereas Professional Recognition has a comparatively lower mean score.

8.The correlation analysis indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between the selected dimensions of Professional Development and Employee Engagement at the 0.05 level of significance.

9.The correlation analysis also indicates a positive and statistically significant relationship between the selected dimensions of Employee Engagement and Occupational Gratification at the 0.05 level of significance.

SUGGESTIONS

1.Strengthen professional development programmes: Health care institutions may organise regular professional

development programmes to improve employees' knowledge, skills and professional capabilities.
2.Provide career development opportunities: Clear career progression pathways may be established so that employees can identify opportunities for promotion, specialization and long-term professional growth.
3.Enhance skill development: Regular clinical, technical and managerial training programmes may be provided according to the requirements of different categories of health care employees.
4.Encourage employee dedication: Health care institutions may create supportive working conditions that encourage employees to remain committed to their professional responsibilities.
5.Improve professional energy: Appropriate recognition, supportive supervision and manageable work responsibilities may help employees maintain enthusiasm and energy at work.
6.Promote work immersion: Employees may be encouraged to participate actively in professional activities, departmental programmes, training sessions and institutional initiatives.
7.Improve job satisfaction: Management may periodically assess employees' workplace concerns and introduce suitable measures relating to workload, working conditions, recognition and professional growth.
8.Support career satisfaction: Opportunities for promotion, continuing education, specialization and career advancement may be made more transparent to employees.
9.Strengthen professional recognition: Health care institutions may introduce systematic recognition mechanisms for employees who demonstrate professional commitment, quality performance and meaningful contributions.
10.Integrate professional development and engagement: Professional development programmes should be designed not only to improve technical competencies but also to increase employee participation, dedication and involvement in organisational activities.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the relationship between Professional Development, Employee Engagement and Occupational Gratification among health care employees in Tamil Nadu. Professional Development was examined through Professional Development, Career Development and Skill Development, while Employee Engagement was represented by Professional Energy, Professional Dedication and Work Immersion. Occupational Gratification was assessed through Job Satisfaction, Career Satisfaction and Professional Recognition.
The findings indicate that the respondents generally demonstrate positive perceptions towards professional development, employee engagement and occupational gratification. The mean scores suggest favourable levels across the selected dimensions, while the correlation analysis indicates significant positive relationships among the variables at the 0.05 level of significance.
The study highlights the importance of providing continuous professional and career development opportunities for health care employees. Opportunities for skill development, professional participation and recognition can contribute to a more positive professional experience. Health care institutions may therefore consider professional development as an important organisational practice for supporting employee engagement and occupational gratification.

REFERENCES

1. Gould, D., Hawker, C., Chudleigh, J. H., Drey, N., Gallagher, R., &Purssell, E. (2021). Survey with content analysis to explore nurses' satisfaction with opportunities to undertake continuing professional education in relation to aseptic technique. Nurse Education Today, 98, 104749.
2. Greenhaus, J. H., & Callanan, G. A. (2013). Career dynamics. In N. Schmitt & S. Highhouse (Eds.), Handbook of psychology: Industrial and organizational psychology (Vol. 12, pp. 593–614). Wiley.
3. Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (1990). Effects of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes. Academy of Management Journal, 33(1), 64–86.
4. Kanungo, R. N. (1982). Measurement of job and work involvement. Journal of Applied Psychology, 67(3), 341–349.
5. Kurtović, B., et al. (2024). The commitment to excellence: Understanding nurses' perspectives on continuous professional development. Healthcare, 12(3), 379.
6. Noe, R. A. (2017). Employee training and development (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
7. Pracilio, A., Cashin, A., & Wilson, N. J. (2023). Barriers and enablers to nurses' engagement with continuing professional development: A survey. Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, 54(9), 405–412.
8. Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21(7), 600–619.
9. Salanova, M., Agut, S., & Peiró, J. M. (2005). Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: The mediation of service climate. Journal of Applied Psychology, 90(6), 1217–1227.
10. Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25(3), 293–315.
11. Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., González-Romá, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two-sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. Journal of Happiness Studies, 3, 71–92.
12. Siegrist, J. (1996). Adverse health effects of high-effort/low-reward conditions. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 1(1), 27–41.
13. Spector, P. E. (1985). Measurement of human service staff satisfaction: Development of the Job Satisfaction

Survey. American Journal of Community Psychology, 13(6), 693–713.
14. Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E. F. (2009). Foundations of human resource development (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
15. Whitmore, J. (2017). Coaching for performance: The principles and practice of coaching and leadership (5th ed.). Nicholas Brealey Publishing.