

Non-Financial Rewards Towards Academic Job Satisfaction in State Universities in Sri Lanka

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

ABSTRACT

Key words:

Academicians
Job Satisfaction
Non- financial Rewards
Professional
Development
Recognition
State Universities
Work Autonomy

The employee retention and turnover depend on many factors including job satisfaction, financial and non-financial rewards, and other internal and external factors. The financial rewards of an organization are comprised of bonuses, salary incentives, gift vouchers, retirement plans, professional development plans and referral programs etc. Non-financial rewards are recognized as public recognition, experiential rewards, participation in the decision-making, time to work on personal projects, volunteering works, professional training, leadership training, increased autonomy, employee wellbeing programs, personal growth, awards, and career advancement. Hence, the study will focus on the impact of non-financial rewards on the job satisfaction of the academicians among state universities in Sri Lanka. Currently, it is a more significant and apt time to study the job satisfaction of academic staff in Sri Lanka as there is a higher rate of brain drain in Sri Lanka. The study was carried out by using qualitative methodology conducting in-depth interviews with fifteen faculty members in five state universities, aged between 30 to 55 male and female academic staff. Interview guides were used to collect data from selected thirty permanent academicians of state universities in Sri Lanka to determine the influence of non-financial rewards on job satisfaction. Thus, the study identified three main non-financial rewards as work autonomy, recognition, and professional development as the most influential factors towards the job satisfaction of academicians. Further, it was found that non-financial rewards have a positive and strong with job satisfaction than financial rewards. Hence, the study emphasizes the importance of enhancing the non- financial rewards of the employees to obtain their maximum performance.

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1. Introduction

Retention and turnover depend on many factors including job satisfaction, financial and non-financial rewards, and other internal and external factors. The organizations have considered the concept of job satisfaction as a prominent factor (Pushpasiri & Ratnayaka, 2018) and introduced several reward systems to ensure the existence of employees and vice versa. The financial rewards of an organization are comprised of bonuses, salary incentives, commissions, gift vouchers, retirement plans, commuter benefits, extra allowances, health insurance plans, professional development plans, and referral programs (Zaraket & Saber, 2017; Noorazem, Sabri, & Nazir, 2021). Non-financial rewards are recognized as public recognition, experiential rewards, extra time off, flexible working, participation in the decision-making, time to work on personal projects, volunteering works, professional training, leadership training, increased autonomy, employee wellbeing programs, personal growth, awards, and career advancement (Iyer, 2023). The employees consider the financial and non-financial benefits of organizations where they can serve as committed workers with job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction measures the worker's overall contentment of the job. Armstrong (2006) pointed out that Job Satisfaction refers to a positive attitude towards the job while Statt (2004) defined it as the extent to which a worker is content with the rewards. Further, Lim (2008) explained that Job Satisfaction is more important for both personal well-being and organizational effectiveness. An academic in a state university is a profession that requires a high caliber in the relevant field with a comprehensive educational and professional background. A university academic earns comparably a higher salary which is determined by their experiences, qualifications, and commitment. Since, incentives, rewards, and recognition are the main factors of employee motivation, many graduates and well-educated personnel were encouraged to apply for academic vacancies in well-known universities in Sri Lanka. Further, compared to high-stress professions, the academic profession is recognized with well-being, self-growth, and career growth with the allocated non-monetary benefits. The Human Resource of a particular organization is a group that pursues their knowledge, skills, and competencies to achieve the

intended objectives of the organization. An organization intends to manage human resources towards organizational goals and objectives with well-planned strategies and vice versa. While employees contribute organization to accomplish its goals, an organization should provide a justifiable economic gain for the spirit and deeper commitment of employees mutually.

Academic staff is the most prominent factor in the process of achieving the mission and vision of an educational institute (Kodithuwakku, 2017). Education is commonly classified into several forms: preschool, Primary, Secondary, Tertiary Vocational and Special Education (Maduwansha & Peiris, 2021). Among different educational forms, the higher education system plays a vital role in the socio-economic development process of a nation (Amarasena, Ajward, & Haque, 2015), and higher education produces a productive and constructive citizen (Kodithuwakku, 2017) to ensure a higher rate of economic stability, lower crimes, greater equality and healthier lifestyle to the civilized society apart from acquiring knowledge. The academic staff tends to produce a professional human being who can handle the challenges of globalization, changing environment and technology with dynamic trends. Hence, the job satisfaction of academic staff is a substantial topic since they are involved with higher education which not only imparts universal knowledge but produces human capital involved in shaping, merging, and generating future leaders (Kodithuwakku, 2017, p.46943). Amarasena (2015) explained that the job satisfaction of university academics is a vibrant factor to be studied as it leads to higher productivity and performance of undergraduates. Similarly, Maduwansha (2021) stated that academic staff have good job satisfaction to are more dedicated and able to withstand any challenges.

The academic staff needs a working environment that allows them to work freely to use their full potential. It is important to adapt organizational variables that are incorporated with its vision and mission. In a university, the academics should be more intense with knowledge sharing along with developing their career advancement and their research studies. The individuals choose a job that is relevant to their experiences, and qualifications and where they can make accessible for a quality life. The selection of the best occupation depends

on several factors including job experience, monetary factors, career growth, organizational values and culture, location, job responsibilities, company stability, ideal lifestyle, and other non-financial factors. However, an individual faces certain challenges in selecting a better job that can fulfil financial and non-financial desires through the occupation. Every individual is concerned the work-life balance which creates a clear definition between personal and professional life. According to Nadhiya and Umma (2022), the balance between personal and professional life provides a comprehensive life that allows significant time for personal welfare and family concerns. Further, workers are more concerned about the non-financial benefits that organizations provide including rewards, recognition, promotions, career advancement, and participation in decision-making (Harsch and Festing, 2020 as cited in Hickenlooper, 2022). Such non-financial factors symbolize and enhance the motivation and commitment of employees toward the organization.

Despite the non-financial factors, financial factors including fixed salary, variable pay, incentives, and other employee benefits are the first ever components that an individual attracts for a particular job. If individuals are hard to obtain essentials for their families, financial rewards are the most important reward for such people. However, Perera (2017) explained that non-financial rewards could be a more powerful factor in the total reward system, as they impact to a large degree on motivation rather than financial rewards. The author pointed out that “reward management is not only about the monetary terms but, it is also concerned with the non-financial rewards that provide intrinsic or extrinsic motivation” (Perera,2017).

Many scholars have confirmed that there is a significant influence of non-financial rewards on job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational performance (Abdullah & Wan, 2013; Dim, Okeke, & Nwankw, 2020; Pushpasiri et al, 2018; Tausif, 2012 as cited in Wijayathunga & Rathish, 2023). In addition, Latham and Locke (1979) said that “money alone is not enough to motivate high performance” (Perera, p.6. 2017). If employees of an organisation are well-rewarded and recognized for their contribution to a particular organization,

these employees can sense their value and they tend to inspire themselves for the organization to achieve more (Hickenlooper, 2022).

In this regard, there is noticeable evidence that non-financial factors have more influence on the job satisfaction of any employee. However, there are few studies were carried out to realize the impact of non-financial rewards on job satisfaction in Sri Lankan academic staff in the state universities.

Maduwansha and Peiris (2021) argued that very slight attention was given to the studies on job satisfaction among academic staff in Sri Lanka. Currently, it is a more significant and apt time to study the job satisfaction of academic staff in Sri Lanka as there is a higher rate of brain drain in Sri Lanka. Conversely, the state universities are the largest and most renowned university system with a higher number of students and staff compared to private universities in Sri Lanka (Maduwansha & Peiris, 2021).

Thus, the study was initiated to identify the non-financial rewards towards academic job satisfaction in-state universities in Sri Lanka. Further, the purpose of this study is to determine the reliable non-financial factors for the job satisfaction of academic staff in state universities of Sri Lanka. Therefore, the problem of the study is, Do non-financial rewards towards academic job satisfaction in state universities in Sri Lanka?

2. Research Questions

01. What are the non-financial rewards to inspire personnel to select academic professions in state universities in Sri Lanka?
02. How do non-financial rewards towards academic job satisfaction in state universities in Sri Lanka?

3. Research Objectives

Accordingly, the objectives are derived from the identified research questions as follows:

- 01.To identify the non-financial rewards to inspire personnel to select academic professions in the state universities in Sri Lanka.
- 02.To identify non-financial rewards towards academic job satisfaction in state universities in Sri Lanka.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Academic Staff in the Sri Lankan State University System

Educational institutes are the most prominent organizations in a nation and higher education plays a noteworthy role central to the creation of a knowledge-based society (Kodithuwakku, 2017) as education accelerates economic, cultural, political, and socio-economic development in any country. Academics are the main source of disseminating knowledge to the youth ensuring a better future. Further, academics play a crucial role by being a professional body to contribute the nation building and affluence, thus, a quality higher education system has become a dynamic element. Amarasena et al. (2015) noted that academicians directly contribute to the superiority of an educational institute and the whole education system in a country subsidizing all forms of professional careers.

The Sri Lankan government spends more money on education, especially due to the free education policy which is prided in fully funded education for thirteen years of school and four years of state universities. Consequently, academicians and education institutes must ensure the quality of education and the value of investment made by the government. Sri Lanka currently has fifteen state universities including approximately 45,000 students and 7,000 academic staff (UGC, 2023). The University Grant Commission is founded by the government of Sri Lanka as an autonomous body to regulate and oversee the quality of higher education. The state universities have clearly stated the terms and conditions for their reward system in the respective establishment code of Sri Lanka. Further, financial rewards including salaries, increments, loans and loan recoveries, overtime/holiday payments, subscription/membership payments, research allowances, traveling claims, advances for salary, festivals etc, or settlements are contained in the remuneration package of academic staff in Sri Lanka (University of Rajarata, 2022). Instead of the majority of employees, academicians in state universities earn more income as the academic staff is involved with the highest source of knowledge and awareness production institutes as the specialist manpower.

Perera (2017) explained that employees could earn basic payment which is a fixed salary established for a particular job, plus a variable pay which is not consolidated into basic payment. Further, the variable payment is determined by the performance, competence and skills of employees. The author relatedly described the employee benefits constituted in Sri Lanka including pensions, sick pay, insurance cover and fringe benefits which are remuneration additional to the various cash pay. Hence, the total remuneration of an employee is the value of all cash payments and benefits. However, an organization should focus on its survival, and attainment of its goals and objectives, thus, non-financial rewards should be introduced which focus on recognition, personal growth and degree of achievements (Perera, 2017).

Consequently, the state universities are occupied and enriched with a creative and talented pool of academic staff which is meant by Amarasena (2020) as market leaders in innovations. The academicians involved with higher education produce future human capital in a nation. Accordingly, quality education and creative academic staff will be attained through job satisfaction among faculty members (Amarasena, 2020). The author further explained academic staff in any nation should be satisfied with the working environment as satisfaction is key to higher productivity and performance which will benefit the organization sequentially.

However, due to the irregularities of salaries, allowances, and benefits, dissatisfied academic staff in state universities have conducted certain strikes and campaigns in Sri Lanka occasionally. In the year 2023, university lecturers in all the state universities in Sri Lanka initiated a protest against the salary issues, slashing of funds granted to the state universities, and tax policies of the government (adaderana.lk, 2023). Similarly, in the year 2012, Sri Lankan university lecturers conducted the longest strike which lasted for nearly 100 days and requested to increase the salaries and grant universities independence from political interference (Alwis, 2012). Hence, several protests have been conducted by academicians in state universities to enhance their financial and non-financial rewards in the past two decades. Despite the protests and strikes, most university lecturers

have been emigrating to foreign countries and private universities due to a lack of financial benefits, the autonomy of the working environment, and other non-financial factors (Maduwansha & Peiris, 2021). Recently, a considerable number of academicians have left the country which is driven by the economic crisis and uncertainty of Sri Lanka. Samarawickrama (2023) claimed that nearly 2,000 university lecturers have left the country during the past one and half years according to the UGC data. Precisely, out of 11,900 university lecturers all around the country, approximately 5,300 lecturers have left the country and not returned and some of them have informed their respective universities that they have left their service (Samarawickrama, 2023). As evidence, Colombage (2010) defined that “compensation is a key factor that affects both brain drain and brain gain”.

Since the academic staff is highly concerned about their monthly salary including relevant non-financial factors, the financial policies constituted by the government, remuneration packages of competitive institutions in both local and foreign countries, marital status and number of children, and several other factors can be influenced to the decision of retention and turnover of the academicians in universities. Such incidents may lead to the loss of potential well-experienced, and high-quality academic members who are the cornerstones of a successful educational system.

4.2. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is simply the positive feeling of the working atmosphere of any employee can have. According to Vroom (1964), job satisfaction is defined as the emotional orientation employees possess towards the role of their performance at the workplace. Similarly, Arnold and Feldman (1983) demarcated job satisfaction as the overall positive effort of feeling that an individual has toward a job. Further, Statt (2004) identified job satisfaction as the extent to which a worker is contented with the rewards, particularly in terms of intrinsic motivation (Statt, 2004). Hence, job satisfaction is something generated psychologically inside human beings due to certain factors. A study carried out by Kodithuwakku (2017) found that the physical environment, salary, interpersonal relations, career development, scope of work, workload and promotion opportunities are the aspects that

determine the level of job satisfaction. Remarkably, Herzberg in 1976 identified job satisfaction factors under two categories Hygiene factors and motivation factors (Aziri, 2011). According to Herzberg, hygiene factors include company policies, supervision, interpersonal relations, work conditions, salary, status, and job security, while motivation factors include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and growth. Several studies have been developed as per Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory including Wijayathunga and Rathish (2023), Aziri (2011), and Maduwansha and Peiris (2021).

According to Herzberg’s two-factor theory, non-financial factors were identified as critically influential aspects of job satisfaction by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Further, several scholars confirmed that there is a significant impact of non-financial rewards on job satisfaction which will lead to employee motivation and enhance organizational performance (Wijayathunga and Rathish, 2023; Pushpasiri and Ratnayaka, 2018; Hickenlooper et al., 2022; Amarasena, Ajward and Haque, 2015; Maduwansha and Peiris, 2021).

The employee satisfaction of higher educational institutes is considered a significant factor (Kusku, 2003 as cited in Amarasena, 2020) as their satisfaction and career advancement, employee recognition will enhance organizational productivity and ensure its stability (Wijayathunga & Rathish, 2023). Amarasena et al. (2015) examined the job satisfaction of faculty staff and the findings illustrated that the goals and objectives of state universities could not be achieved if there is a lower degree of job satisfaction (Eyupoglu and Saner, 2009 as cited in Amarasena et al., 2015). However, if the academicians are displeased with the working environment and conditions, they won’t be motivated to perform in the universities and decide to change the institute or leave the profession (Kodithuwakku, 2017). Similarly, Amarasena et al. (2015) argued that inadequate salaries, workload, and loans of academic members in tertiary education will be depressing factors in any nation. Hence, a positive and vigorous university system would enhance the job satisfaction of academicians and the university outcomes. Several studies affirmed that job satisfaction is linked with absenteeism and the turnover of employees (Hackett & Guion, 1985;

Chen et al. 2006) and higher performance, productivity and lower labor turnover are connected with job satisfaction (Joarder & Sarif, 2011; Akhtar, Muniruddin, & Sogra, 2008). Similarly, Kodithuwakku (2017) stated that the satisfaction of academic staff not only counts on the university environment but also the improvement of the learning environment and productivity of the university equivalently.

4.3. Non- Financial Rewards

Two types of reward systems were identified and analyzed by several studies including Perera (2017); Armstrong and Murlis (2005); Pushpasiri and Ratnayaka (2018); Khan, Tarif, and Zubair (2016); Hickenlooper (2022). The studies have categorized reward systems as financial and non-financial reward systems or monetary and non-monetary reward systems. Perera (2017) defined a monetary reward system that focuses on the direct satisfaction of the employees whereas non-monetary reward system, focuses on employee recognition. According to Pushpasiri and Ratnayaka (2018), financial rewards have a short-term effect on employee motivation whereas non-financial rewards have a long-term effect. The author further, noted that Maslow in 1998 affirmed: "Many people are influenced more by non-monetary than monetary considerations". Hickenlooper (2022) stated that non-financial rewards increase the motivation of employees, and self-esteem and it was identified that such rewards can ensure professional desires and personal well-being. In addition, Pushpasiri and Ratnayaka (2018) found that about 70% of employers use non-financial rewards in many organizations as such institutes have recognized the significance of preserving a reward system.

It is observed that the academic members in state universities are entitled to various non-financial rewards including, recognition, promotion opportunities, flexible job arrangements, and career development by certain policies. Colombage (2010) explained that the academic staff at the local level are relatively disadvantageous compared to the salary structure of industrial, banking and business sectors. Aside from Sri Lanka being confronted with certain socio-economical challenges including drastic economic crises and ethnic conflicts, the relatively lower rewards have been a key factor in increasing the migration of

qualified and skilled persons. Hence, the university academic staff was worse affected by the salary stagnation (Colombage, 2010). Thus, adequate compensation is a significant aspect that determines the retention of intellectuals within state universities.

Work autonomy is one of the main factors coming under non-financial rewards to the academicians in state universities. Further, work autonomy is identified as the most motivated factor for university academics (Castillo & Cano, 2004) and job autonomy is consistently linked the job satisfaction. In addition, the increased flexibility and favorable work conditions which allow employees to be involved in decision-making and take responsibilities reflected the job autonomy. Similarly, job autonomy tends to impact an employee's psychological state experiencing work attraction, responsibilities and self-esteem (Lin & Ping, 2016). The work autonomy of academicians has enhanced the number of research publications as they have freedom and independence over their individual researches and scientific experiments which increase their professionalism and career development. Amarasena et al., (2015) confirmed that research and individual studies are key to professional development and autonomy is a significant predictor of employee job satisfaction. Further, the authors acknowledged that job autonomy and flexibility are key elements of entering and retaining as an academician (Bellamy et al., 2003 as cited in Amarasena et al., 2015). Similarly, the work-life balance is another aspect along with work autonomy. Work-life balance is achieved when there is a balance between work life and personal life, which gives priority to both professional and family life (Pushpasiri & Ratnayaka, 2018). The academicians have to have a work-life balance relative to the private sector employees who are employed in the banking sector and industrial sector. Hence, encouraging work-life balance fascinates the attraction of new recruitments and aids lessen the turnover and absenteeism, thus, the enthusiasm of employees will be upsurged.

Recognition is another important element to determine the satisfaction of academic staff in state university. The academicians in state universities are representing the most expertised, qualified, skilled, capable and knowledgeable portion in the nation. Since the university academician has been

recognized as a remarkable and reputed profession in the global context faculty members contribute to the ultimate goals of a nation by creating the young generation suited for the labor market. Sonawane (2008) found that employees are satisfied and motivated if the organization is reputed and well-known, and this resulted in employees remaining in such organizations.

Hickenlooper, (2022) identified social recognition as more casual acceptance, affirmation and gratitude for a particular job, hence, a state university faculty member is accepted, well-recognized and acknowledged by the general society in any nation. Since, non-financial rewards provide systematic and eternal inspirational values compared to financial rewards, generally, potential employees are being alerted to join state universities. Further, there is a particular status established for the profession of faculty members at the global level. Such intrinsic motivational impacts provide a strong sense of security and a stable organizational setting that empowers and ensures employee satisfaction and performance.

Professional development is another aspect of non-financial rewards assigned to academic staff in state universities. Universities themselves organize various training and development programs as every state university has established a staff development center to ensure the professional development of academic staff. The main objective of training and development programs is to offer lifelong learning which contributes to the improvement of quality teaching, research and publications, management, and personal and professional development of each faculty member. Unless in other professions, an academician should build professional qualifications including a master's degree, MPhil, PhD degree and other relevant academic and teaching qualifications which considered for job promotions. UGC commission circular No: 408 describes the procedure of sabbatical leave which is entitled to the university academic staff.

Further, faculty members have allowed certain leaves which have not been granted for other professions including study leave, Leave to attend seminars, conferences and training programs, etc., leave during vacation and authority for leave abroad (Chapter X, 1989). Chapter X of the establishment code describes that academic staff

are allowed the salary and allowances for periods of study leave and the academicians are granted leaves to participate in seminars and conferences which are not allowed for the other professions. Especially, academic staff are granted research allowances which provide funds for their research and related studies and motivate academicians to enhance their research and publications which will benefit the job promotions and their profiles. Hence, in general, academic staff in state universities are granted certain opportunities to develop their professional career unless other employees are. As per Herzberg's dual factor theory, extrinsic factors which include salary, allowance and other monetary factors have reduced job dissatisfaction while intrinsic factors including non-financial rewards provided by organizations have increased job satisfaction of employees (Gawel, 1996 as cited in Wijayathunga & Rathish, 2023).

Subsequently, the study only focused on how non-financial rewards impact the job satisfaction of academicians in state universities. Hence, the motivational factors coming under Herzberg's dual factor theory were identified as the main motivated, non-financial factors towards job satisfaction of academicians. Accordingly, the study identified the motivational factors defined by Herzberg as the positive influences to enhance the job satisfaction of academic staff in Sri Lankan state universities.

5. Research Methodology

The study was carried out by using qualitative methodology conducting in-depth interviews associating with thirty faculty members of state universities who were interested in participating to the study. A sample of thirty university academic staff in different state universities, different age ranges, different educational qualifications, and diverse personalities were selected based on judgemental sampling method. For instance, the sample was consisted with male and female academic staff including professors, senior lecturers and lecturers of selected state universities and aged between 30 to 55. The interview guide was used to collect data from selected thirty permanent academicians of state universities in Sri Lanka to determine the influence of non-financial rewards on job satisfaction. The collected data from the in-depth interviews were analysed by using the thematic analysis method.

6. Data Analysis and Results

The findings of the interviews demonstrated certain factors as influences on the job satisfaction of the academic staff in Sri Lankan state universities. Since the retention and attraction of new human resources towards state universities are emerging concerns, financial rewards along with non-financial rewards have been upgraded periodically by establishing new policies. The findings indicate that non-financial rewards have a higher impact on employee satisfaction and retention of academicians. The following factors were identified as the findings of interviews and as the non-financial rewards that faculty members mostly count on.

6.1. Work Autonomy

Instead of other professions including accountants, administrative employees, directors and managers in both the private and public sector, academicians in state university systems are experiencing work autonomy as they have assigned flexible lecture hours that allow them to optimize the work-life balance and enhance personal and professional development. As per the findings from the interviews, work autonomy is the most motivating factor of remaining and potential academic staff in state universities.

A respondent commented on the work autonomy and flexibility of state universities: “University academics have allocated flexible time slots for conducting lectures between 08.00 am to 05.00 pm, and most importantly there is no attendance count using fingerprint machines similar to other organizations. However, some private universities in Sri Lanka are using fingerprint machines or other techniques to count the attendance of lecturers.”

The state universities evaluate the progress and performance of academicians by the output of lectures, tutorials, or practicals conducted and the outcomes of the numbers of undergraduates who completed degrees and several distinctions, classes, medals, and awards received per batch. Further, the results of interviews found that autonomy and flexibility offered jobs have a positive influence on job satisfaction. Hence, the newly appointed lecturer explained that: “I really wanted to become a lecturer who receives recognition and acknowledgment by society. I did some research about the background of a lecturer

in a state university and found there is work independence and flexibility which provides the perfect atmosphere suited for the learning environment.

A university is where student-centered learning centre and it encompasses features that are slightly different than schools. Hence, the students and lecturers are given independence to develop their balance of academic or professional and personal life. The academicians were entertained by several non-financial rewards that are not entitled to other employees, especially the work autonomy taking place as the main factor of attraction for potential academic staff. Another academician confirmed that academic freedom and university autonomy navigate towards the positive influence of job motivation and satisfaction. “The freedom of university system provides to the academicians creates free-thinking professionals who expose the ideas with logicity. Also, the university autonomy highly influences to the quality and quantity of research outputs of both academicians and graduates.”

Similarly, the recommendations made by UNESCO concerning the status of higher-education teaching personnel explain that academicians of higher education are entitled to the maintenance of academic freedom (UNESCO, 1997 as cited in Udagama, 2022). Further, it states that university academic staff are allowed to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom of carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.

Hence, all teaching personnel in higher education should be eligible to fulfill their functions without discriminating against any academic work assigned by the university.

The findings identified that there is a substantial impact on the autonomy of the academic and whole university system as it contributes to better educational outcomes and productivity of labour market.

6.2. Recognition

Being a university lecturer is a dream or goal for many people including fresh graduates, because the academicians are entitled with substantial amount of financial and non-financial benefits in any

nation. Since the contribution of academic staff is considerably high as their contribution is directly linked with the substantial development goals of a country, the faculty members are recognized, well-known and accredited by the society. The findings exemplify that the reputation of university recognition and the value of the profession utterly directed faculty members to apply and be recruited to state universities.

A participant acknowledged that, “The state universities have a classic history of their own and were established or founded by well-known scholars. Moreover, the university staff is renowned by the societies as the faculty members representing in both quantity and professional quality with knowledge, qualifications and empirical experiences in order contribute to the success of a nation.”

Along with job security, flexibility, professional esteem, independence, and other financial and non-financial benefits, reputation and recognition established for the profession of academics have been a common motivational factor for job satisfaction. Hence, the employees who are satisfied with the recognition and reputation of an organization, are more likely to remain in the workplace. “Since higher education is central to the creation of a knowledge-based society, the academic staff in state universities are granted several rewards to enhance job satisfaction as they are involved with disseminating the knowledge as a part of the process in the development of the nation. Further, the government tends to increase the allowances and introduce certain rewards to the academicians as their role is recognized by the universal level”.

As per the response from the participants, the employee recognition of state universities has a high and favorable impact on job performance and satisfaction. Additionally, each state university in Sri Lanka creates its name with several achievements and performances to attract students and academicians. The flexible working hours, career development, training opportunities and other financial allowances create the recognition of state universities and the achievement of undergraduates and performances of talented academicians have enhanced the reputation of state universities.

6.3. Professional Development

Since higher education is considered the mainstay of a nation’s development, the effective and structural reforms of educational institutions at all levels are paramount to any country. Thus, the development of educational institutions, curriculum, undergraduate learning mechanisms and especially, the development of academic staff are the core factors to ensure the quality of higher education. A respondent explained that, “The state university system has established several mechanisms to ensure and enhance the quality of profession in academicians. For instance, during the COVID-19 period, universities conducted certain training and development programs to enhance teaching quality through online platforms including Zoom, Microsoft Teams and the Learning Management Systems of universities. Further, universities organize certain workshops periodically, and universities introduce certain information systems including lecture profile management, online attendance systems and hall reservation systems and workshops for researchers who intend to enhance the academic and research landscape. Similarly, the workshops are conducted by the Staff Development Centres which are established in every state university with well-known resource persons.”

Except for other professions, academicians have been entitled to 45 leaves to attend conferences, seminars and training programs per year in addition to casual and vacation leaves. Further, academic staff are allowed for sabbatical leaves, and study leaves (Travel grants for postgraduate studies abroad) and significantly, academicians are eligible for sabbatical leave with or without pay for study or undertaking the employment abroad or for the combined purpose of study and employment (Chapter X, n.d.).

A participant stated that, “By availing to bond and agreement, many academic staff are migrating to foreign countries to complete their higher studies in prestigious universities. Excluding many other professions, state university academicians have certain privileges mainly to enhance their qualifications and experiences.” Another respondent mentioned that, “The state university system has established certain professional development schemes and several non-financial

rewards to motivate academicians to enhance their professional advancement. Especially, the research allowance is one of the main factors to which academicians are entitled. The research allowance is a motivational factor to each academic staff member, to develop their research and experimental skills, and to introduce new findings, results and outcomes, suggestions and recommendations to various fields.”

Each state university follows certain academic staff development policies including formal learning, training and development which are designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, competencies, effectiveness, and productivity in performing their jobs. Further, the University Grant System (UGC) and the government have established several professional development and academic motivational programs. The research allowance is a significant component that academicians are eligible to earn from the research and studies they conduct.

Hence, the results of interviews revealed that the non-financial rewards have a higher influence on job satisfaction compared to the financial rewards. According to the responses, most participants commented that the state university system has flexibility, career development opportunities and reputation as sizable non-financial rewards. Thus, the optimum work-life balance assists in reducing work-family conflicts and improves personal and professional development (Mendis & Weerakkody, 2017).

7. Discussion

The findings of the study have identified as effective factors on job satisfaction of academic staff. The non-financial factors including work autonomy, recognition of the university and professional development recognized as motivational factors identified under Herzberg’s dual factor theory which influence the job satisfaction of employees. Generally, the academic staff members are considered to be the main portion of transmitting the knowledge to the young generation who are willing to accept the development of a nation. The respondents who were aged between 30-35 and started the academic profession recently responded that they were captivated by the academic profession due to the work autonomy and opportunities for career

development established in the state university system. Further, the participants over age 50 explained their intent as, in the seniority order of academicians can obtain certain opportunities instead of a monthly salary.

Manawadu et al., (n.d) explained that if the organization maintains a higher value towards their resources, the employees are highly committed to the organization, and employees’ feelings towards the organization are loyal. In other words, the employees who are not satisfied with the organizational setting will be steered negatively to the organizational demand.

Work autonomy has enhanced the university research output and positively improved employee productivity. Comparably, the policy established to create job autonomy among university academicians has positively generated quality university education, thus, academic autonomy is one of the main policies that enriched academic staff utilizing their professional development and experience in realizing their learning talents and research outcomes. Concurrently, the universities should implement appropriate remedies to avoid the abuses of autonomy for self-centered purposes and to enhance the accountability of outcomes or productivity of academicians.

The academic staff in the higher education system is the key resource for the success of a particular institute, the quality of education, and the learning outcomes of students. Hence, the government and relevant ministries, departments and institutes have established certain policies, reward systems, and mechanisms to obtain the optimum capacity and performance of academic staff without hindering their productivity to ensure the quality of tertiary education in a country. Thus, the reputation and recognition have simply originated in each state university as the university system has recruited the most reliable and professional human resources as academicians. Further, the state university system has established all the physical facilities required to operate higher education with different disciplines and the state universities are becoming the most prestigious research-intensive universities. Hence, the recognition of Sri Lankan state universities is increasing and being recognized at the global level. According to the "Webometrics Ranking of World Universities", universities have been ranked under the global quality of scholar and research

institutions worldwide. Similarly, the webometrics ranking correlates with the quality of education provided and academic prestige (CSIC, 2023). Significantly, the state universities in Sri Lanka have been ranked in the top order compared to other private universities in Sri Lanka. Hence, the recognition of state universities has a much greater impact on attracting academicians beyond private universities.

As per the results, the state universities have provided certain opportunities to pursue the higher educational goals of academicians, training opportunities, scholarship and sponsorship, research grant facilities, and research allowances in order to ensure the personal and professional growth of academic members. According to Wijewantha (2017), continuing professional development is an emerging concept in the higher education system in Sri Lanka at present. The academicians should have continuous career development in order to engage with higher education and undergraduates. Even with the number of workshops and training opportunities conducted by the Staff Development Centres in state universities, the participation of academic staff voluntary or upon nomination is not considerably high (Wijewantha, 2017). However, there are certain benefits of professional development of academicians as they can enhance the teaching practice, develop research interests and research outputs, and improve personal growth and the reputation of academicians.

8. Discussion

The literature indicates that not many studies have been carried out to explore the job satisfaction of academic staff relevant to the non-financial rewards under the qualitative methodology. Hence, more studies should be conducted to identify the most prominent factors that are affecting to job satisfaction of academicians.

Since the academic staff has a keen interest in non-financial rewards entitled to state universities, it is requested to improve non-financial rewards to obtain better employee performance. The study assessed the impact of non-financial rewards received by the academic staff in the Sri Lankan state university system as a means of enhancing the commitment and satisfaction of the job. The first objective of the study was to identify non-financial rewards to inspire human resources to select the

academic profession in state universities. Thus, the study identified certain non-financial factors that influence positively and as per the literature, work autonomy, recognition, and professional development were identified as the main motivational factors of job satisfaction. The second objective of the study is to identify the impact of non-financial rewards on the job satisfaction of academics in state universities.

Hence, the findings elaborated on a positive impact on the job satisfaction of academic staff in Sri Lanka. Based on the non-financial factors existence, an unstructured questionnaire using in-depth interviews was conducted with fifteen university academic staff members, aged between 30-55 in Sri Lankan state universities to discover the objectives of the study.

Nevertheless, the study was conducted based on the human feelings of selected academicians which was not identified through the statistical analysis. Hence, a quantitative analysis includes a considerable sample size to cover the population. Further, the study should be developed to recognize the impact of both financial and non-financial rewards on job satisfaction.

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