

Enhancing Employee Engagement and Commitment Through Employee Relations: Evidence from the Apparel Sector

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Abstract

The inspired and committed workforce is the most important segment of an organization's productive capacity. Therefore, managing employee relations effectively is essential to organizational success. Managing employee relations has a deep psychological perspective, which in turn impacts employee engagement and commitment of an organization. The article, therefore, aims to examine how employee engagement and commitment are affected by several important employee relations efforts, including recognition and reward programs, effective communication, leadership philosophies, teamwork, and conflict resolution in the apparel sector in Sri Lanka. Descriptive and regression statistical techniques were used to analyze data gathered from 91 (n = 90) respondents by employing a structured and pretested questionnaire. The results revealed a high positive correlation between managing employee relations and employee engagement and commitment among the apparel sector in Sri Lanka. According to the findings, employee relations significantly influence employee engagement and commitment levels, with a focus on the value of strong management support, capable leadership, and organized dispute resolution techniques. These components demonstrated statistically significant positive relationships with employee commitment and engagement, suggesting their usefulness in raising trust, motivation, and general job satisfaction. On the other hand, factors such as team cohesion, communication effectiveness, and recognition and incentive systems, while positively associated with employee engagement and commitment, did not exhibit statistically significant effects. It suggests that even though these practices are appreciated, their impact may be limited without effective implementation or alignment with the organizational context. The findings emphasize how important it is for businesses to adapt employee relations best practices to their unique operational and cultural contexts in addition to implementing them. Strengthening management and leadership capabilities and investing in fair conflict resolution procedures should be prioritized, while continuous evaluation and adaptation of recognition and communication strategies can assist in optimizing their long-term impact on employee engagement and commitment.

Keywords: Employee engagement, Employee commitment, Employee relations, Apparel industry

Introduction

In the contemporary business landscape, technology breakthroughs and globalization have drastically changed operational frameworks, forcing organizations to quickly adapt to remain competitive. Despite these developments, employee relations remain a critical component of an organization's success (Guest, 2017).

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This is particularly true for labor-intensive organizations, where human capital plays a critical role in achieving operational efficiency and long-term sustainability. The apparel sector, known for its high-pressure working environment and high employee turnover, is one where positive employee relations can greatly impact organizational success.

Employee relations refer to the initiatives and practices that promote pleasant relationships between management and employees. According to Gennard and Judge (2005), employee relations are the policies, practices, and procedures used to manage the relationship between employees and employers, both individually and collectively, to achieve organizational goals. When employees perceive strong organizational support and positive workplace relationships, they are more committed, satisfied, and motivated (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Multiple studies suggest that employee relations are related to extremely positive outcomes, particularly in terms of employee engagement and their organizational commitments (John, 2020). Khan et. al. (2013) explain how employee satisfaction and motivation are directly linked to productivity and operational efficiency, especially in labor-intensive industries. In contexts such as apparel manufacturing, where manual labor is central to production processes, the study shows that ensuring employees are content and committed significantly contributes to maintaining a smooth and efficient production process. Poor employee relations eventually hinder an organization's ability to remain competitive in a fast-paced, international marketplace, leading to increased absenteeism, high turnover rates, conflicts at work, and decreased productivity.

The Apparel Industry, a key player in Sri Lanka's garment sector, exemplifies these dynamics. For example, according to the Joint Garment Association Forum (JAAF), Sri Lanka's garment industry generated USD 4.7 billion in export revenue in 2024, which is approximately 44% of the country's total export revenue (LNW, 2025). As one of the leading manufacturers in the country, the company faces significant challenges in managing a diverse workforce, ensuring fair compensation, and maintaining a safe and respectful work environment. The apparel industry in Sri Lanka is known for its hierarchical organizational structures, rigorous deadlines, and repetitive tasks, all of which can lead to stress and discontent at work. These challenges are exacerbated by the competitive nature of the global apparel market, where cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency are essential to sustaining profitability. Several studies and industry analyses highlight the challenges faced by apparel manufacturers in achieving these objectives (Abhayagunaratna, 2024; Tanveer, 2023)

This study aims to investigate the relationship between employee relations and employee engagement & commitment in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. By examining the theoretical foundations of employee relations, including recognition and reward systems, management support and leadership styles, team cohesiveness and collaboration, communication effectiveness, and workplace negotiation and conflict resolution, this study seeks to offer practical insights into how these factors can be leveraged to enhance the performance of the apparel industry. The ultimate objective is to provide actionable recommendations for cultivating employee relations, which will help the business succeed in the long run and remain competitive in the global apparel industry.

Problem Statement

In the highly competitive apparel industry, fostering employee engagement and commitment is crucial for sustaining productivity and growing the business. While a variety of factors contribute to these outcomes, the specific influence of employee relations components such as recognition and reward systems, management support and leadership styles, team cohesiveness and collaboration, communication effectiveness, and workplace negotiation and conflict resolution remains underexplored. Understanding how these factors collectively impact employee commitment and engagement can provide valuable insight for organizational development and human resource strategy initiatives in the apparel sector.

Research Questions

1. How does employee relations influence employee engagement and commitment?
2. What is the effect of employee recognition and reward systems on employee engagement and commitment?
3. How do management support and effective leadership style influence employee engagement and commitment?
4. In what way do team cohesion and collaboration impact employee engagement and commitment?
5. How does communication effectiveness affect employee engagement and commitment?

6. What role do workplace negotiation and conflict resolution strategies play in shaping employee engagement and commitment?

Research Objectives

1. To analyse the influence of employee relations on employee engagement and commitment.
2. To examine the relationship between employee recognition and reward systems and employee engagement and commitment.
3. To analyse the influence of management support and effective leadership style on employee engagement and commitment.
4. To evaluate the impact of team cohesion and collaboration on employee engagement and commitment.
5. To assess how effective communication affects employee engagement and commitment.
6. To investigate the role of workplace negotiation and conflict resolution strategies in shaping employee engagement and commitment

Literature Review

Successful organizations depend on strong employee relations, particularly in labor-intensive industries like apparel manufacturing, where human capital is fundamental. Employee relations, which are defined as the programs and procedures that promote amicable interactions between management and employees, have a direct impact on significant outcomes, including employee retention, productivity, and satisfaction with work (Armstrong, 2014). Effective employee relations are now more important than ever for preserving operational effectiveness and competitiveness in the ever-changing global industry landscape. To investigate the relationship between employee relations and employee engagement & commitment, this literature review integrates theoretical frameworks alongside empirical data. It focuses on important concepts in employee relations and their elements, such as employee recognition and reward, management support and leadership styles, team cohesiveness and collaboration, communication effectiveness, workplace negotiation and conflict resolution, and their impact on employee engagement and commitment.

Employee Relations

Creating a sense of belonging and building community among the employees is one important aspect of employee relations. However, the difference between industrial relations and employee relations is one of the main challenges to managing employee relations. Although these have some similarities, they are not the same because the industrial relations deals with employees either individually or collectively, while the employee relations deals with employees either collectively or through their unions (John, 2020).

Managing employee relations is gaining increasing importance because of the central role of employees in driving organizational success. In general, employee relations refer to the efforts of a business to develop a positive relationship with its employees. For instance, McNamara (2025) defines employee relations as the efforts of an organization to sustain constructive and positive relationships with its employees. These initiatives include matters such as employee recognition and rewards, management support and effective leadership style, team cohesion and collaboration, communication effectiveness, and workplace negotiation and conflict resolution

Several theoretical models support employee relations and their function for boosting performance. According to Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory, motivators, including recognition and career progress, have significance in encouraging employee engagement & commitment, whereas hygiene factors, including working conditions and relationships, are vital for preventing dissatisfaction. This dual viewpoint emphasizes how productive employee relations and effective employee relations concurrently address dissatisfaction, making them more committed. McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y offer further insight about how perceptions held by managers affect employee relations. Workplace dynamics are frequently stressed as a result of Theory X, which holds that employees are unmotivated and need continual supervision. On the other hand, positive relationships are fostered by Theory Y, which holds that workers are naturally driven and thrive in environments of trust and collaboration. Organizations that employ a Theory Y approach frequently experience increases in engagement, morale, and productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2019). These theoretical foundations offer a framework for comprehending how employee relations impact organizational results.

Dimensions of Employee Relations

The literature supports that employee relations of an organization can be effectively measured through key dimensions such as employee recognition and reward systems, management support and effective leadership style, team cohesion and collaboration, communication effectiveness, and workplace negotiation and conflict resolution (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Brun & Dugas, 2008; Salas et al., 2015).

Employee Recognition and Reward Systems

It has been demonstrated that reward and recognition systems significantly boost employee morale and productivity. A study published in Harvard Business Review emphasizes that even minimal recognition can lead to a substantial improvement in employee morale. Employee recognition and reward systems show how much workers value their work, which affects engagement and motivation (Brun & Dugas, 2008). Employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to collaborate with peers, take ownership of their responsibilities, and align their efforts with organizational objectives (Pfeffer, 1994).

Management Support and Effective Leadership Style

Effective leadership practices are crucial for enhancing employee engagement and team effectiveness. Research conducted by Mazzetti & Schaufeli (2022) on “the impact of engaging leadership on employee engagement and team effectiveness” illustrates that leadership based on psychological theories of motivation can improve business performance and employee well-being. According to Schaufeli (2017), operational leadership is critical for enhancing followers’ work engagement. Eisenberger et al. (2002) argue that positive employee relations depend on trust and job satisfaction, both of which are fostered by supportive management and effective leadership.

Team Cohesion and Collaboration

Effective team collaboration and competition dynamics can shape teamwork engagement. According to Moczulska et.al. (2024) study published in Current Psychology, both employee collaboration and competition within teams can foster higher levels of engagement. Patricia et al. (2014) have revealed that employee work engagement, both at the individual and team levels, is relevant to understanding employee performance and wellbeing. According to Anne et al. (2016), both individual and teamwork engagement were associated with high levels of perceived team performance.

Communication Effectiveness

Employee satisfaction and organizational performance are profoundly affected by employee engagement. Fostering employee engagement needs effective internal communication. A comprehensive review demonstrates how strategic communication techniques can improve employee motivation and overall organizational climate. Robbins & Judge (2019) found that organizations that actively listen to employee concerns and address them promptly report higher levels of satisfaction and retention. Carter (2024) investigates different communication strategies, their impact on employee motivation, and the overall organizational climate. This study highlights the importance of strategic communication in enhancing employee engagement by reviewing the literature and examining case studies. Clear and open communication reduces misconceptions and increases transparency, while team cohesion and collaboration foster a feeling of belonging and shared purpose (Salas et al., 2015).

Workplace Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Conflicts inevitably occur in any workplace when workers with different origins, viewpoints, and personalities work together to achieve shared objectives. Therefore, using constructive conflict resolution techniques is crucial to sustaining workplace harmony (Rahim 2020). Furthermore, fairness and a positive work atmosphere are maintained through efficient negotiating and conflict resolution techniques. Many organizations employ different strategies to mitigate the harmfulness of workplace conflicts, understanding that workplace conflict is costly, and allowing these disputes to escalate unchecked may have significant impacts on employees’ morale, their productivity, and the overall organizational culture (Robyn, 2023).

Employee Engagement and Commitment

It is reasonable to say that the concept of employee engagement and commitment is multifaceted. There

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are multiple operationalizations and definitions. Most definitions essentially incorporate an employee's emotional commitment to their employer for their employer, and their enthusiasm for their work. Employee engagement refers to an employee's enthusiasm and emotional commitment to their work and organization. Engaged workers are more imaginative, productive, and committed to organizational goals, making employee engagement an essential element for overall performance and growth of an organization. According to a 2023 survey by the Stepstone Group, 60% of engaged workers report excellent achievement levels and perceive their work has more meaning (Franziska, 2023). On the other hand, organizational commitment refers to the psychological attachment and loyalty that a worker has to their organization (Bizunesh, 2023). It encompasses the willingness of an employee to remain with the organization while backing its goals. According to Mowday (1998), organizational commitment is the relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement with the overall employing organization as and not with a department or particular workgroup.

Meyer and Allen (1991) distinguished three categories of commitment: namely, affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment relates to an employee's emotional connection, identification, and participation in the organization. Employees' sense of responsibility to the organization is known as normative commitment, whereas perceived costs of leaving the company are linked to continuance commitment. Each of these dimensions is shaped significantly by the nature and caliber of organizational relationships.

Affective Commitment

Affective commitment, characterized by an employee's emotional attachment and identification with the organization, is strengthened when employees experience positive interpersonal relationships at work. When supportive supervisors, open communication, and trust in leadership cultivate a sense of belonging and loyalty, employees are more likely to stay in the business and contribute to it to their maximum. This emotional engagement is further strengthened by an inclusive and respectful working culture (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Continuance Commitment.

Continuance commitment is defined by an employee's awareness of the costs of quitting an organization. In contrast to affective commitment, it is driven more by necessity than emotional attachment. Strong relational networks, including peer support groups, mentorships, and cooperative relationships, help employees develop significant social capital. On the other hand, poor relationships or a lack of support might cause employees to feel trapped, with no other options because of the dangers of leaving (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In the end, even though strong organizational relationships might not always indicate a wish to stay, they can raise the cost of leaving to a point where staying is justified.

Normative Commitment

Normative commitment is a consequence of employees feeling obligated to stay with an organization because they feel they should. Organizational culture, ethical standards, and the caliber of social interactions at work contribute to this commitment. This sense of commitment is reinforced by ethical leadership, a culture of loyalty and reciprocity, and positive leader-member relationships (Wang et al., 2014). When employees perceive that the organization has invested in their professional growth or treated them fairly, they often feel obliged to reciprocate through continued service (Meyer et al., 2002).

Employee Relationships and Employee Engagement and Commitment

Employee relationships play a fundamental role in shaping employee engagement and commitment by influencing how connected, supported, and respected workers feel at work. Good relationships with coworkers, supervisors, and the organization strengthen employee commitment by promoting a sense of moral obligation and loyalty (Wang et al., 2014), by increasing the perceived cost of leaving valuable social networks (Meyer & Allen, 1997), and through emotional attachment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Therefore, whether employees stay because they want to, need to, or feel they should be greatly influenced by the nature of their relationships at work. Guest (2017) emphasizes that organizations with robust employee relations experience lower absenteeism, reduced turnover, and improved workplace harmony.

When combined, employee relations elements with employee engagement and commitment offer a thorough framework for evaluating how well an organization's employee interactions are working.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature, this study proposes the following conceptual framework to study how employee relations connect with employee engagement and commitment in an organization:

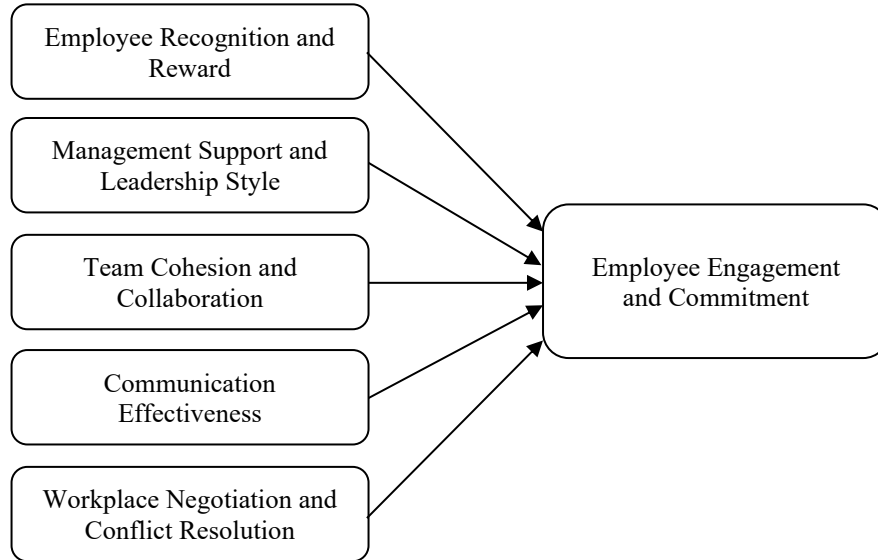


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Each independent variable is hypothesized to have a direct impact on employee engagement and their commitment. The following hypotheses are also formulated accordingly.

H₁: Improved employee relations are directly correlated with increased employee engagement and commitment.

H₂: Employee recognition and reward systems are positively associated with employee engagement and commitment.

H₃: Management support and effective leadership style positively influence employee engagement and commitment.

H₄: Higher levels of team cohesion and collaboration lead to increased employee engagement and commitment.

H₅: Effective communication within the workplace is positively related to employee engagement and commitment.

H₆: Constructive workplace negotiation and conflict resolution strategies positively impact employee engagement and commitment

Methodology

Research Design

This research primarily employs a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between employee relations and employee engagement & commitment within the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. The research relies on primary data collection through a structured questionnaire, designed to capture various aspects of employee relations initiatives, employee engagement, and employee commitment.

Sampling Strategy

A convenience sampling method was used to select participants from the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. A

total of 130 respondents were initially approached, out of which 92 submitted completed questionnaires, while 02 responses were found to be incomplete and excluded from the final analysis. Therefore, 90 responses were used to study. The sample consisted of managers, executives, supervisors, and sewing technicians who are currently working in the apparel industry.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured and pretested questionnaire was employed as the primary data collection tool. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: section 01 contained 05 questions to understand employees' demographic information, such as age, gender, experience, job designation, etc., section 02 contained 25 questions to measure the key dimensions of employee relations, section 03 used to explore the employee commitment and engagement with the support of 05 questions, and section 04 had two open-ended questions for additional qualitative insights. The pre-testing phase involved 10 respondents to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity of the questionnaire. The final data collection was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire during January-February 2025.

Measurement Scale

All closed-ended questions were designed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 05 (*Totally Agreed or Satisfied*) to 01 (*Totally Disagreed or Dissatisfied*). This scale allowed for a standardized assessment of participants' perception and experiences related to workplace well-being, mental health, and employee productivity.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 25) software. Various statistical analyses were employed to examine relationships between variables and test hypotheses. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic data of the respondents. Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between employee relations and their engagement and commitment. Regression analysis was used to assess the predictive relationship between independent and dependent variables. In addition to these statistical analyses, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to examine differences between multiple groups, and the One-Sample t-Test was used to compare the sample mean with a known population mean or hypothetical value. The results of the analysis are presented in tables, followed by concise descriptions and interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

All respondents participated voluntarily, and their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained before data collection, ensuring that participants were aware of the purpose and scope of the research.

Results, Analysis, And Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

The data highlights a female-dominated workforce, with 64.4% of respondents identifying as female and 35.6% as male. This is indicative of widespread patterns in the apparel industry and emphasizes the necessity of gender-sensitive regulations. Regarding marital status, a significant portion of the workforce is married (77.8%), while 22.2% are unmarried, indicating that they are a more mature, family-oriented workforce that needs work-life balance and family support initiatives.

The job position distribution reveals that the majority of employees are sewing technicians (37.8%) and executives (55.6%), suggesting that the sample is operationally focused and underrepresented in managerial roles. In terms of educational attainment, over half of the respondents (52.2%) have completed GCE Advanced Level (AL) education. Another 24.4% hold a Diploma, while only 11% have achieved a Tertiary level education. When analyzing work experience, the data shows that a substantial proportion of employees in the sample have long tenures: 34.4% have between 6 to 10 years of experience, while 22.2% each fall into the 11 to 15 years and over 16 years categories.

Reliability and Validity

The reliability test for workplace well-being initiatives, workplace culture and leadership, and mental health measures was conducted to assess their consistency and accuracy. The results reveal that the Cronbach's Alpha (α) values of employee recognition and reward systems (.856), management support and effective leadership style (.796), team cohesion and collaboration (.772), communication effectiveness (.860), workplace negotiation and conflict resolution (.811), and employee engagement and commitment (.709) are more generous than 0.7, indicating that the multi-item scales are reliable for perform further analyses.

Factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the validity of the collected dataset. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO value of 0.856 confirms that the sample is excellent ($KMO \geq 0.8$), indicating the sampling is adequate for factor analysis. The validity results fell within the accepted range. The p-value is significant (<0.05) in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi-Square = 228.584, $df = 15$), which indicates that there is enough correlation between independent and dependent variables to proceed with factor analysis. All variables have communities above 0.5 and strong loading (0.75-0.81), indicating they share common variance. Both these tests indicate that factor analysis is appropriate and valid for this study. Also, it indicates that the variables are well-correlated and measure one strong common theme.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix in Table 01 reveals that all independent variables – ERR (employee recognition and reward systems), COM (communication effectiveness), MSL (management support and effective leadership style), TCC (team cohesion and collaboration), and NCR (workplace negotiation and conflict resolution) – have positive and significant correlation with the independent variable, and EEC (employee engagement and commitment).

Table 1: Correlations between Employee Relations and Employee Engagement and Commitment

		EEC	ERR	ECM	MSL	TCC	NCR
EEC	Pearson Correlation	1	.490**	.495**	.587**	.516**	.518**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90
ERR	Pearson Correlation	.490**	1	.424**	.592**	.580**	.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90
COM	Pearson Correlation	.495**	.424**	1	.579**	.515**	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90
MSL	Pearson Correlation	.587**	.592**	.579**	1	.577**	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90
TCC	Pearson Correlation	.516**	.580**	.515**	.577**	1	.560**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90
NCR	Pearson Correlation	.518**	.548**	.530**	.431**	.560**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90

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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Where: employee recognition and reward systems (ERR), communication effectiveness (COM), management support and effective leadership style (MSL), team cohesion and collaboration (TCC), workplace negotiation and conflict resolution (NCR), and employee engagement and commitment (EEC).

Among all the predictors, management support and effective leadership style show the strongest correlation with employee engagement and commitment ($r = 0.587, p < 0.01$). This suggests that when employees perceive their leaders as supportive and effective, their engagement and commitment level significantly improve.

The correlation between employee engagement and commitment, and employee recognition and reward systems, is also notable ($r = 0.490, p < 0.01$). This finding confirms that employee recognition and rewards play an important role, reinforcing positive behaviour and encouraging employee engagement and commitment. Communication effectiveness correlates moderately with employee engagement and commitment ($r = 0.495, p < 0.01$), indicating that clear, open, and consistent communication contributes to employee engagement. Team cohesion and collaboration correlate 0.516 ($p < 0.01$) with employee engagement and commitment, which reflects how teamwork and sense of belonging in teams can strengthen employee engagement and commitment in the apparel industry. Lastly, workplace negotiation and conflict resolution correlate with employee engagement and commitment at 0.518 ($p < 0.01$), highlighting their importance in fostering a stable and trust-based work environment. These insights support the development of a comprehensive HR strategy focused on reinforcing leadership practices and team dynamics to boost engagement.

Regression Analysis

The regression analysis examines the impact of five predictors of employee relations on employee engagement and commitment. The model statistics in Table 02 show a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.669, indicating a moderately strong relationship between the predictors and independent variables. An R Square value of 0.448 suggests that approximately 44.8% of the variation in employee engagement and commitment is explained by this model, while the Adjusted R Square value of 0.415 accounts for model complexity and confirms that the model still explains a substantial portion of the variance. The Standard Error of the Estimation is 0.30782, implying a relatively good fit of the model to the data. Also, the Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.953 indicates that there is no serious autocorrelation in the residuals.

Table 2: Regression - Model Summary ^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.669 ^a	.448	.415	.30782	.448	13.646	5	84	.000	1.953

a. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Management Support and Leadership Styles, Communication Effectiveness, Employee Recognition and Reward Systems, Team Cohesion and Collaboration

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement and Commitment

The significance of the model is further confirmed by the change statistics. The R Square Change of 0.448 means the full model significantly contributes to explaining the variance compared to the baseline model. The F Change value of 13.646, with 5 and 84 degrees of freedom, and a significance level (Sig. F Change) of 0.000, confirms the statistical significance of the regression model as a whole. In simple terms, there is a significant and statistically significant influence of the five predictors on employee commitment and engagement. This implies that companies that concentrate on improving these elements will probably experience increases in the level of commitment and engagement among their employees.

Table 3: Regression – Coefficients ^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tol.	VIF
1	(Constant)	.974	.334		2.916	.005		
	ERR	.058	.100	.065	.576	.566	.513	1.950

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COM	.083	.090	.101	.927	.357	.555	1.801
MLS	.314	.111	.329	2.835	.006	.487	2.052
TCC	.095	.098	.110	.967	.336	.508	1.969
NCR	.194	.094	.225	2.063	.042	.552	1.813

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement and Commitment

ERR - Employee Recognition and Reward Systems, COM - Communication Effectiveness, MLS - Management Support and Leadership Styles, TCC - Team Cohesion and Collaboration, NCR - Workplace Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Table 3 shows the coefficients that provide insights into the individual contribution of each predictor to employee engagement and commitment. Among the five predictors, management support and leadership styles (MLS) have the strongest and most statistically significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.314$, $p = 0.006$), followed by workplace negotiation and conflict resolution (NCR) ($\beta = 0.194$, $p = 0.042$), indicating that improvements in these predictors are likely to significantly enhance employee engagement and commitment. The other variables – employee recognition and reward systems (ERR), communication effectiveness (COM), and team cohesion and collaboration (TCC) – have positive but statistically insignificant coefficients (i.e., $p > 0.05$), suggesting weaker or less consistent effects.

All tolerance values are above 0.1, and VIF values are below 10, indicating no serious multicollinearity among the predictors. Overall, the result highlights that while several workplace factors contribute to employee engagement and commitment, leadership support and effective conflict resolution stand out as the most impactful.

Based on the correlation and regression analyses, it is possible to evaluate the support for each hypothesis as follows:

H1: Supported. Collectively, the predictors explain a substantial portion of the variance in employee engagement and commitment ($R^2 = 0.448$), and the regression model as a whole is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This supports H1 by establishing a significant relationship between higher engagement and enhanced employee relations.

H2: Not supported. Despite having a positive coefficient ($\beta = 0.058$), employee recognition and reward systems did not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.566$). This suggests that H2 is rejected in this model, given that rewards and recognition do not consistently or strongly affect employee commitment and engagement.

H3: Supported. Employee engagement and commitment were strongly, positively, and statistically significantly impacted by management support and leadership styles ($\beta = 0.314$, $p = 0.006$). This supports H3 by confirming that strong leadership significantly boosts employee engagement.

H4: Not supported. There was a favorable but non-significant effect of team cohesion and collaboration ($\beta = 0.095$, $p = 0.336$). Despite its theoretical significance, H4 is not supported by the available data due to its lack of statistical significance.

H5: Not supported. Additionally, there was a positive but statistically insignificant effect of communication effectiveness ($\beta = 0.083$, $p = 0.357$), suggesting that there was little evidence of a direct influence on engagement in this case. H5 is therefore not supported.

H6: Supported. Constructive conflict resolution does significantly increase employee engagement and commitment, supporting H6. Workplace negotiation and conflict resolution also showed a significant positive correlation with engagement ($\beta = 0.194$, $p = 0.042$).

In conclusion, based on the available data, hypotheses H1, H3, and H6 are supported; however, H2, H4, and H5 are not.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aims to explore how employee relations initiatives, such as employee recognition and reward

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systems, communication effectiveness, management support, leadership styles, team cohesion and collaboration, workplace negotiation, and conflict resolution collectively impact employee engagement and commitment in the apparel sector in Sri Lanka.

The findings affirm that employee relations significantly influence employee engagement and commitment levels, supporting the first objective of the research and are consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of strong employee relations as the cornerstone of organizational success (Armstrong, 2014). Among the specific variables examined, management support, effective leadership style, and workplace negotiation and conflict resolution approaches had significant positive effects, validating objectives 3 (To analyse the influence of management support and effective leadership style on employee engagement and commitment) and 6 (To investigate the role of workplace negotiation and conflict resolution strategies in shaping employee engagement and commitment). These findings are in line with earlier studies by Rahim (2020) and Schaufeli (2017), which emphasize the value of conflict resolution and leadership in building motivation and trust.

On the other hand, dimensions such as employee recognition and reward programs, communication effectiveness, and team cohesiveness and collaboration demonstrated positive but statistically insignificant relationships with employee engagement and commitment in the apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Using contextual alignment in practice will have a significant impact on engagement. This divergence from the literature (e.g., Brun & Dugas, 2008; Salas et al., 2015) implies that although these variables may have theoretical impact, they might need to be more strongly implemented or contextually aligned in practice to have a meaningful impact on engagement.

Recommendations And Future Research Directions

Based on the empirical findings, several practical recommendations become apparent. In the spirit of Theory Y approaches, organizations should place a high priority on enhancing management support and leadership practices by educating leaders in motivational and participatory management techniques. Additionally, by fostering an equitable and encouraging work environment, the implementation of organized and transparent conflict resolution procedures can enhance employee engagement and commitment. Despite not being statistically significant in this study, team cohesion and collaboration, communication effectiveness, and employee recognition and reward systems remain important according to the literature and should not be neglected.

Management is urged to revisit the design and delivery of reward systems, foster open and strategic communication, and create intentional team-building initiatives to ensure these dimensions are effectively perceived by employees. Ultimately, a comprehensive approach to employee relations – backed by leadership commitment and continuous assessment – can create a successful workplace where employee commitment and engagement are maintained.

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