



A Study on the Factors Influencing Employee Engagement and Its Work Outcomes: Evidence from Kabul University

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Abstract: This research, informed by Social Exchange Theory (SET), explores the factors and outcomes of employee engagement, with a specific focus on differentiating engagement at the job level from engagement at the organizational level. This study examines how employee communication, employee development, and co-supportive employee behavior influence key work outcomes through the mediating roles of job and organizational engagement. Data were collected from 133 out of 200 administrative and academic members at Kabul University using a structured questionnaire and stratified random sampling. Multiple regression analyses revealed that co-supportive employee behavior was the only significant predictor of both forms of engagement, exerting a stronger effect on the job engagement. Employee communication and employee development showed insignificant direct effects. The findings further indicate that both job and organizational engagement significantly enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but have no significant effects on organizational citizenship behavior or intention to quit. Mediation analysis confirmed that the two engagement dimensions significantly mediated the relationships between factors and most outcome variables, except for the intention to quit. Overall, this study contributes to the engagement literature by empirically distinguishing between job and organizational engagement in a higher education context and by highlighting the critical role of peer support in fostering desirable employee attitudes and behaviors in Afghan academic institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement describes the degree to which individuals devote their physical effort, mental focus, and emotional commitment to their roles at work (Huang et a, 2022). Engaged

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employees are typically more committed, productive, and willing to exert discretionary effort, contributing to organizational success (Mansor et al., 2023; Chandani et al., 2016). Previous research shows that engagement reduces turnover intentions, enhances innovative behavior, and positively influences employee attitudes and performance outcomes (Elamin et al., 2024). Organizations with engaged employees also report stronger customer loyalty, improved retention, and better financial performance (Harter et al., 2014).

Sustaining employee engagement requires continuous organizational support. When the work environment fails to foster engagement, productivity may decline and turnover may increase (Ram & Prabhakar, 2011). Global evidence further shows that many organizations still have more disengaged employees than engaged ones (Gallup, 2024). These results emphasize the need to recognize the factors that promote employee engagement and to understand its impact on key organizational outcomes.

Within academic institutions, employee engagement is particularly important because staff play a central role in maintaining educational quality and institutional effectiveness. For example, research in Kenyan higher education institutions found that many employees performed only the minimum required tasks and that low engagement contributed to higher turnover (Mariba et al., 2024). These findings emphasize the need to better understand engagement in university settings.

In Afghanistan, employee engagement within higher education institutions remains largely unexplored. Kabul University, the country's largest public university, has recently reported declining job satisfaction among employees, particularly regarding career development opportunities and the work environment (Rahimi et al., 2025). These conditions may reduce employee motivation, commitment, and performance, indicating potential challenges related to job and organizational engagement.

Although previous studies have examined employee engagement and its outcomes in different organizational contexts, empirical research on engagement within Afghanistan's higher education sector remains very limited. In particular, little is known about how workplace factors such as employee communication, employee development, and co-supportive employee behavior influence engagement, and how job and organizational engagement may mediate key employee outcomes.

This study provides empirical evidence on employee engagement within Afghanistan's higher education sector, an environment that has received very inadequate research consideration. It examines both job engagement and organizational engagement as mediating mechanisms linking workplace factors with important employee outcomes.

Employee engagement refers to the extent to which employees physically, mentally, and emotionally dedicate themselves to their work while performing their job responsibilities (Kahn, 1990). Kahn was the first to define engagement as the psychological presence of an employee during organizational tasks, aiming to identify the psychological conditions that

influence when individuals choose to engage or disengage in their work. He conceptualized personal engagement as a combination of self-expression and self-employment in work roles.

Subsequent research has expanded on this concept. Shuck and Wollard (2009) synthesized multiple definitions and described employee engagement as a dynamic state in which employees exhibit positive thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that focus on achieving organizational goals. Engaged employees are characterized by job satisfaction, pride in their work, a positive attitude, and a sense of occupational impact. This study differentiates job involvement from engagement: job involvement is conceptualized as the degree the extent to which employees are mentally and emotionally involved in their tasks and feel a sense of connection to their jobs (Hngoi et al., 2024), whereas engagement reflects a broader psychological presence, including deep mental absorption, emotional commitment, and a sense of purpose (Kossyva et al., 2023). Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2014) identified two key aspects of engagement: state engagement, reflecting absorption, focus, enthusiasm, and energy; and behavioral engagement, expressed through proactive behavior, sustained effort, adaptability, and persistence. Saks, Gruman, and Zhang (2022) reviewed organizational engagement and compared it to job engagement—the extent to which individuals are absorbed in their own tasks—and organizational engagement, which reflects identification with and commitment to the broader organization. Farndale et al. (2014) further emphasized this distinction, describing work engagement as energy and enthusiasm in daily responsibilities, and organizational engagement as pride and a willingness to act as a brand ambassador.

Research highlights that organizational engagement is critical to an organization's overall success. Ruck, Welch, and Menara (2017) argued that engagement drives innovation, competitiveness, and organizational effectiveness, whereas upward employee voice and internal communication strengthen emotional engagement and trust. Malinen and Harju (2017) demonstrated that organizational engagement often has a stronger effect on volunteer satisfaction and commitment than job engagement. Recent studies have also shown that organizational engagement is positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, citizenship behaviors, and performance, while being negatively related to turnover intentions (Saks, Gruman, & Zhang, 2022).

Several factors influence engagement. Effective employee communication positively predicts engagement and is associated with higher engagement levels (Krishnan & Wesley, 2013). Employee development similarly promotes engagement, as shown in a review of 64 empirical studies that highlighted the work environment, social exchange, and individual characteristics as key antecedents (Kown et al., 2024). Co-supportive employee relationships show weaker but positive correlations with engagement (Makera, Nasidi, Kamaruddeen, & Jemaku, 2019).

Engagement is consistently linked to positive organizational outcomes. Saks (2006), using the Gallup Workplace Audit across 7,939 business units, found strong associations between engagement and customer satisfaction, productivity, profitability, employee retention, and

safety. Mulyana et al. (2024) also identified employee engagement as a central factor enhancing individual commitment and organizational performance. Other studies show that engagement is positively related to job satisfaction (Soon, 2015), organizational commitment (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014), and organizational citizenship behavior, while negatively related to counterproductive work behavior (Ariani, 2013). Engagement is also associated with reduced turnover intentions (Reedy & Anjali, 2017) and improved work outcomes, highlighting its role as a mediator between various antecedents and organizational performance.

Despite the growing recognition of its importance, engagement remains a complex and evolving concept with diverse definitions, antecedents, and consequences. Systematic reviews have revealed six main conceptualizations, dominated by the Utrecht Work Engagement construct and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, with engagement positively influencing morale, task performance, extra-role performance, and overall organizational effectiveness (Bailey et al., 2017).

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by Homans (1958), provides a foundational framework for understanding employee engagement. Rooted in utilitarianism and behaviorism, SET conceptualizes social behavior, including workplace interactions, as an exchange of material and non-material resources, such as approval, effort, or support. Individuals seek to maximize rewards (e.g., recognition, support, career growth) and minimize costs (e.g., stress, effort). In organizational settings, employees adjust their behavior based on their perceived balance between rewards and costs. When exchanges are perceived as fair, behaviors stabilize, leading to cooperation, productivity, and positive work outcomes. Engagement emerges when employees perceive that the balance between what they give and receive is meaningful and equitable (Andrew et al., 2012; Ahmad, Nawaz, Ishaq, Khan, & Ashraf, 2023).

The SET emphasizes that employee engagement is a reciprocal process: organizations invest in employees through recognition, support, fair treatment, and growth opportunities, and employees respond with higher levels of effort, commitment, and emotional involvement. For example, Huang, Lee, McFadden, Murphy, Robertson, Cheung, and Zohar (2015). The findings indicate that when employees observe strong organizational support, especially in terms of safety, they feel appreciated, leading to greater job satisfaction and engagement. In turn, job satisfaction acts as a mediator between perceived support and work outcomes, such as reduced turnover. Similarly, Yin (2018) and Haynie et al. (2019) found that when employees believe their engagement will be reciprocated with organizational rewards or fair treatment, they are more likely to demonstrate positive behaviors, including improved task performance and greater organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and reduce negative behaviors, including burnout or counterproductive work behavior (CWB).

SET also integrates the concept of organizational justice. Employees who perceive procedural and distributive fairness are more likely to feel obligated to reciprocate through their engagement (Haynie et al., 2019). Likewise, Cook, Rice, and Cheshire (2006) highlighted

that social behavior develops through interactions, in which responses from others reinforce individual actions—supporting the notion that perceived support and fairness drive reciprocal engagement.

In summary, Social Exchange Theory provides a robust theoretical basis for employee engagement, explaining why employees respond positively when organizations invest in their well-being, recognition, and fair treatment. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that supportive work environments foster both job and organizational engagement, which, in turn, leads to enhanced work performance, commitment, and retention (Andrew et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2015; Ahmad et al., 2023; Yin, 2018; Haynie et al., 2019).

Key research objectives are explained below:

1. To examine the factors influencing employee engagement at Kabul University, specifically employee communication, employee development, and co-supportive employee behavior.
2. To investigate the mediating role of job engagement and organizational engagement in explaining work outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and organizational citizenship behavior.

The main purpose of this study is to find the role of employee engagement as a mediating variable and its influencing factors. The study examines how employee engagement affects work outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, and organizational citizenship behavior. Employee engagement is conceptualized in two dimensions—job engagement and organizational engagement—consistent with the frameworks proposed by Kahn (1990), Saks (2006), and Andrew et al. (2012). Social exchange theory is a foundational framework for understanding employee engagement and work outcomes. Here, influencing factors such as employee communication, employee development, and co-supportive employees) are independent variables, employee engagement (job engagement and organizational engagement) is used as the mediating variable, and organizational outcome is used as the dependent variable. This study offers insights to researchers in both academic and organizational settings about how independent and dependent variables are connected, as well as the role of the two main types of employee engagement, which act as mediating factors in that relationship.

Figure 1 illustrates the research model used in this study, showing the two dimensions of employee engagement—job engagement and organizational engagement—as hypothesized by Kahn (1990), Saks (2006), and Andrew et al. (2012). This aligns with the two key roles employees fulfill within an organization: their job role and their organizational role.

The factors influencing employee engagement, often referred to as drivers of engagement, are key workplace elements that collectively promote high levels of commitment and involvement. Identifying these core factors is essential for motivating employees to perform their jobs and organizational roles effectively and efficiently.

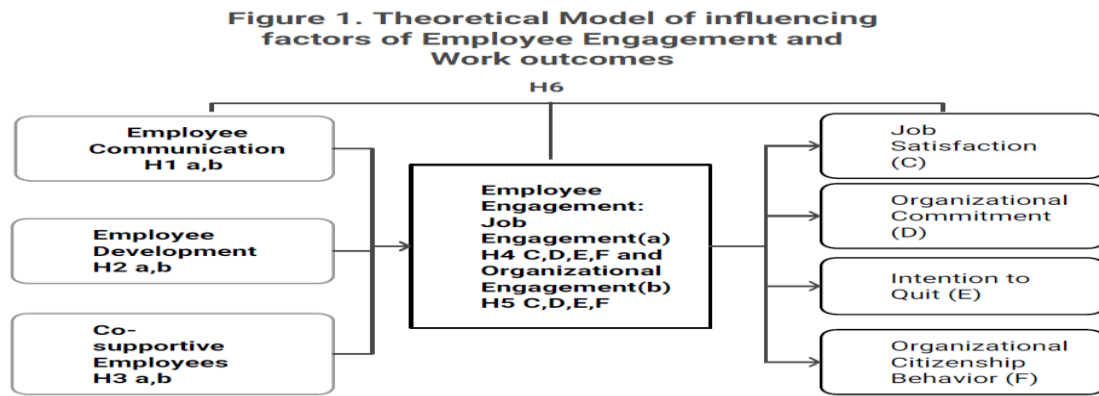


Figure 1. Theoretical Model of influencing factors of Employee Engagement and Work outcomes

The Relationship Between Employee Communication and Employee Engagement

Effective communication plays a vital role in promoting employee engagement, as employees require clear direction from leadership to understand how their responsibilities support the organization's overall goals. Poor communication is often considered a major obstacle to engagement. Effective internal communication conveys organizational values, gains employee support, and drives alignment toward shared goals, making it a critical factor in maintaining high levels of engagement (Verčič & Men, 2023). "Recent empirical studies confirm that when internal communication clearly conveys organizational goals and builds alignment, employees are more likely to engage (Nguyen, 2023). Furthermore, strategic internal communication fosters perceived issue alignment with organizational values, thereby reducing turnover intentions (Cho-Li et al., 2025). Therefore, hypothesis one was developed as follows:

H1: Employee communication has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement, influencing both (a) job engagement and (b) organizational engagement.

The Relationship Between Employee Development and Employee Engagement

Employee development involves improving an individual's skills and competencies to enable effective performance in their present role and prepare them for potential future positions within the organization. It includes activities such as formal education, on-the-job experiences, mentoring, and evaluations of skills, personality, and abilities, all aimed at supporting professional growth (Dachner, Ellingson, Noe, and Saxton, 2019). In recent years, organizations have increasingly implemented employee development interventions to improve their engagement. These efforts often involve training focused on mental health, such as mindfulness, as well as leadership and coping skills, aiming to promote positive psychological well-being. Although these individual-focused programs can temporarily enhance engagement, their long-term impact may be limited without broader organizational support (Kwon; Jeong; Park and Yoon, 2024).

Another study by Niraula and Kharel, (2025) highlights that building supportive relationships and implementing strategic training practices can significantly boost employee engagement in Nepal's commercial banking sector. It offers practical guidance for managers to focus on their development efforts. The findings show a strong link between development and

increased engagement. All the above details indicate that employee development is a strong driver of employee engagement. Therefore, we recommend the succeeding hypothesis:

H2: Employee development has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement, influencing both (a) job engagement and (a) organizational engagement.

The Relationship Between Co-Employee Support and Employee Engagement

Esaki, Liu, and Vito (2023) found that coworker support significantly predicts engagement in human service organizations. Similarly, research has shown that workplace friendliness fosters psychological safety, which in turn enhances engagement and innovation (Do et al., 2025). Moreover, in digital and platform-based work contexts, supportive peer relationships boost commitment and reduce turnover, consistent with social exchange dynamics (European Management Journal, 2024). Furthermore, Najwani et al., (2016) find that co-worker relationships are a significant determinant of engagement, as they foster collaboration, trust, and motivation in the workplace. Hence, the hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Co-employee support has a positive and significant impact on employee engagement, influencing both (a) job engagement and (b) organizational engagement.

Employee Engagement (Job engagement and organizational engagement) and its Work Outcomes

According to Knezović and Đilović (2020), both job and organizational engagement contribute positively to employees' emotional commitment and their willingness to go beyond formal job duties. However, only organizational engagement showed a negative correlation with employees' intentions to quit. These findings suggest that companies can gain multiple advantages by actively promoting and enhancing employee engagement. Also, Zhu et al. (2023), Na-Nan et al. (2020), Kissi et al. (2024), Sinisterra et al. (2024), and Putri and Setianan (2019) express that job engagement and organization management have a positive and strong relationship with organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational behavior citizenship. However, both are negatively correlated with intention to quit. So, the hypotheses are below:

H4: Employee engagement (job engagement) has a significant impact on (C) job satisfaction, (D) organizational commitment, (E) intention to quit, and (F) organizational citizenship behavior.

H5: Employee engagement (organization engagement) has a significant impact on (C) job satisfaction, (D) organizational commitment, (E) intention to quit, and (F) organizational citizenship behavior.

Employee engagement serves as a mediating factor between the impacting factors and work-related outcomes.

(Hu et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2023; Kissi et al., 2024; Otoo, 2024; Prieto-Díez et al., 2022), Similarly, confirm that employee engagement, both job and organizational engagement,

strongly mediates the relationship between individual factors and work outcome variables. This indicates that impacting factors influence work outcomes primarily through their effect on employee engagement, as they used the same impacting factors and work outcomes in the research.

H6: Employee engagement, comprising both job engagement and organizational engagement, acts as a mediator between influencing factors (1-Employee development, 2-Employee Communication, 3-Co-employee support) and resulting outcomes (1-Job Satisfaction, 2-Organizational commitment, 3-Intention to Quit, 4-Organizational citizenship behavior).

RESEARCH METHOD

It is a quantitative approach because it focuses on factors influencing work outcomes. This usually involves testing relationships between variables using surveys and statistical analysis. It is an Explanatory study design because it aims to explain how and why certain factors influence employee engagement. The study was conducted at Kabul University. This study involved 133 HR officials from Kabul University, including deans of faculties, assistant deans, heads of departments, academic registrars, human resource managers, and other administrative staff and authorities. selected through stratified random sampling.

Data was collected using a standardized structured questionnaire. Part A collected demographic information, including age, gender, work experience, and job position, which was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Part B comprised 59 items, internal communication by 14 items, employee development, co-supportive employee behavior, organizational and job engagement with 5 items each, job satisfaction with 6 items, organizational commitment with 6 items, intention to quit with 3 items, and organizational citizenship behavior with 10 items. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” An independent-samples t-test was used to analyze differences between job engagement and organizational engagement. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was employed to test the study’s hypotheses and to determine which influencing factors had the strongest relationships with the employee engagement dimensions.

The study investigated multiple constructs related to employee behavior, engagement, and organizational outcomes using validated measurement scales adapted from previous research. Employee communication was assessed through items adapted from Hayase (2009). Employee development, adapted from Kim, Lee, & Jin (2024). while co-supportive employees, adapted from Bai & Zhou (2025). Employee engagement was measured as both job and organizational engagement. Job engagement is adapted from Schaufeli et al. (2002), whereas organizational engagement is adapted from Saks (2006). Work outcomes included job satisfaction, adapted from (Katabalo & Mwita, 2024; Ramli, 2018); organizational commitment, adapted from DeWangan, Tripathi, & Pandey (2025); intention to quit, adapted from Xia, Sun, Zhang, & Zhang (2022), and organizational citizenship behavior, adapted from Neves, Palma-Moreira, Andrade, & Au-Yong-Oliveira (2024). Each variable was assessed using

multiple items to ensure reliability and validity, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee engagement and related outcomes.

Sampling Size

We used Yamane’s (1967) formula for a finite population. It is explained in detail below:

$$N = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \quad N = \frac{220}{1+220*0.05^2} = 133$$

Where:

- n = Required sample size
- N = Population size
- e = Margin of error (e.g., 0.05 for 5%)

FINDINGS

Demographic profile

Male respondents account for 132 of the total respondents, and only 1 respondent is female, meaning that 99.2% of the survey data are male and 0.08% are female. Within the age range, the majority of respondents (63.9%) were between 26 and 33 years old, representing the largest age group in the sample. This was followed by 24.8% of participants who were 50 years or older, and 9.0% who were 42 to 49 years old. The smallest proportion (2.3%) belonged to the 18-25-year age group. The majority of participants (63.9%) reported having 1 to 5 years of work experience, indicating that most of the sample had relatively early career exposure. A significant portion (24.1%) had 5 to 10 years of experience, while 7.5% had 10 to 15 years. A smaller proportion (3.8%) reported having less than one year of experience, and only 0.8% of the respondents had more than 15 years of work experience. The largest group of respondents (33.8%) held the position of Head of Department, followed by Dean of Faculty (20.3%) and Assistant Dean of the Faculty (13.5%). A smaller but equal proportion of participants (12.0%) were either Lecturers or Academic Registrars. Additionally, 6.0% of respondents were Administrative Officers, and a small fraction (2.3%) served as Human Resource Managers.

Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the variables. The eighth one, Intention to Quit, was reverse-coded because it used reverse-scored responses based on its question type. A moderate correlation of 0.481 is observed between job engagement and organizational engagement ($P > 0.001$), and a paired t-test yields the same result as the correlation, $t = 0.481$, $P > 0.001$.

The findings indicate that although there is a correlation between job and organizational engagement, both dimensions yielded nearly identical mean scores among participants. Specifically, organizational engagement had a mean of 20.3684, while job engagement recorded a mean of 20.3534, as presented in Table 3.

Data Normality

The normality test is an important step in statistical analysis used to determine whether the collected data follows a normal distribution. This is necessary because regression analysis, which is applied to examine relationships among variables in this study, assumes normally distributed data to ensure valid and reliable results (Sirait et al., 2025).

One standard method for testing normality is the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. If the values for all variables exceed the threshold of 0.05, the normality assumption can be accepted (Sulhan, Gustini, Sambella, and Hali, 2024).

Table 1. Tests of Normality

Tests Construct	Kolmogorov-Smirnova		Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.
Communication	.052	.200*	.991	.189
Employee development	.164	.143	.952	.131
Co-Supportive Employees	0.275	0.12	.923	0.23
Job Engagement	.052	0.23	.925	0.12
Organizational Engagement	.171	0.08	.912	0.09
Job Satisfaction	0.235	0.07	.924	0.06
Organizational Commitment	.061	0.12	.942	0.21
Intention to Quit	.173	0.23	.951	0.22
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.275	0.31	.991	0.32

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Source: SPSS .27

All the above significance values for the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests are greater than 0.05, so our data is normal and follows the normality assumption.

Reliability Test

Ramli (2019) states that to determine whether a measurement instrument consistently produces stable results across repeated administrations, a reliability test is conducted. If the questionnaire items are unreliable, they do not provide consistent measurements, and therefore, the results cannot be trusted. Reliability is evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha based on the following criteria: (a) a value of Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.6 indicates that the construct is reliable, while (b) a value below 0.6 suggests that the construct is not reliable.

Table 2. Reliability test

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Communication	14	0.923
Employee development	5	0.914
Co-Supportive Employees	5	0.890
Job Engagement	5	0.917
Organizational Engagement	5	0.948
Job Satisfaction	6	0.928
Organizational Commitment	6	0.934
Intention to Quit	3	0.927
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	10	0.940

Source: SPSS .27

In Table 2 above, all variables are checked separately with their five items; all show alpha values above 0.6, and all are above 0.9. These results suggest that the measurement scale is both valid and reliable for further analysis.

KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy)

The retained factors should account for at least 50% of the total variance. The suitability of the sample size can be assessed using the KMO statistic, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.5 (Birmingham City University, 2017).

From the SPSS test results, the TVE factor analysis is 75%, and the KMO for the independent variable is 86%, and for the dependent variable is 84%, indicating that the construct is suitable for further factor analysis and that the sample is adequate. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced an approximate Chi-Square value of 3205.462 with 990 degrees of freedom and a significance level of 0.001, confirming that the correlations between items are sufficiently large for conducting factor analysis.

Multicollinearity test

A is conducted to identify the correlation among independent variables. This can be evaluated using the Tolerance value and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Generally, a VIF value greater than 10 indicates the presence of multicollinearity, while a VIF value below 10 suggests that multicollinearity is not an issue. In terms of Tolerance, a value less than 1 is considered acceptable. These interpretations are based on the output from the SPSS analysis (Helman, 2024).

From the SPSS test, the VIF is 1.496, and the Tolerance is 0.669, indicating no Multicollinearity problems between the independent variables.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of the study variables

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Communication	20.2331	1.24248	133
Employee development	20.2406	1.56743	133
Co-Supportive Employees	20.2481	0.94071	133
Job Engagement	20.3534	0.77063	133

Organizational Engagement	20.3684	0.81160	133
Job Satisfaction	90.0902	1.20892	133
Organizational Commitment	20.2707	0.95448	133
Intention to Quit	19.2632	2.91780	133
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	19.9850	2.00750	133

Source: SPSS.27

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the study's hypotheses, where both job engagement and organizational engagement were regressed against the three individual engagement factors.

Table 4: Overview of multiple regression findings related to employee engagement predictors

Variables (Factors of Engagement)	Job Engagement	Organizational Engagement
Employee Communication	0.285	0.395
Employee Development	0.349	0.400
Co-Supportive Employees	0.516	0.415
R ²	0.271	0.214
F	16.016	11.702

Note: P value is 0.001

The regression results presented in Tables 4 and 5 indicate that the individual factors of employee engagement explain a significant proportion of variance in both dimensions of engagement. In particular, these predictors accounted for 27.1% of the variance in job engagement ($R^2 = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$; see Table 4) and 21.4% of the variance in organizational engagement ($R^2 = 0.214$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5: Results of multiple regression analyses identifying the predictors of job engagement

Predictor variables	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Standardized Coefficient B	t-Value	Sig Value	Collinearity	
					Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.2417		9.411	0.001		
Employee Communication	-0.062	-0.100	-0.886	0.377	0.442	2.262
Employee Development	0.048	0.098	0.853	0.395	0.428	2.336
Co-Supportive Employees	0.422	0.516	5.11	0.001	0.553	1.808

Note: N=133, R² = 0.271, Adjusted R² = 0.254, F=16.016, $p < 0.001$

Table 6: Multiple regression analysis results of factors predicting organizational engagement

Predictor variables	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Standardized Coefficient B	t-Value	Sig Value	Collinearity	
					Tolerance	VIF
Constant	2.564		9.124	0.001		
Employee Communication	0.095	0.145	1.235	0.219	0.442	2.262
Employee Development	0.078	0.151	1.262	0.209	0.428	2.336
Co-Supportive Employees	0.200	0.232	2.211	0.029	0.553	1.808

Note: N=133, R² = 0.214, Adjusted R² = 0.196, F=11.702, $p < 0.001$

With respect to the study's hypotheses, the regression analysis results indicate that co-worker support significantly predicts both aspects of employee engagement. As shown in Table 5, co-employee support exhibited a strong positive effect on job engagement ($\beta = 0.516$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, Table 6 reveals that co-employee support also significantly predicted organizational engagement ($\beta = 0.232$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, employee communication and employee development have an insignificant impact on job and organizational engagement; only co-supportive employees have a significant impact on both, but stronger on job engagement than on organizational engagement. Based on these findings, Hypotheses H3a and H3b are supported, while Hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, and H2b are not supported.

Table 7: Overview of multiple regression findings regarding the impact of employee engagement on work outcomes

Variables	Job satisfaction	Organizational Commitment	Intention to Quit	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
Job Engagement	0.437	0.384	-0.163	0.180
R²	0.191	0.147	0.027	0.032
F	30.949	22.650	3.574	4.374
Organizational Engagement	0.514	0.418	-0.102	0.217
R²	0.264	0.175	0.010	0.047
F	47.054	27.726	1.378	6.493

Notes: $p < 0.10$ and values in the table are standard Beta coefficients

Table 7 also provides a summary of the regression analysis findings for the two dimensions of employee engagement, namely job engagement and organizational engagement — highlighting their explanatory power regarding the study's work outcomes variables. Job engagement accounted for a modest but significant proportion of variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.191$, $p < 0.001$), organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.147$, $p < 0.001$), intention to quit ($R^2 = 0.027$, $p < 0.001$), and organizational citizenship behavior ($R^2 = 0.032$, $p < 0.001$). In comparison, organizational engagement described a larger share of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.264$, $p < 0.001$) and organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.175$, $p < 0.001$), but less in intention to quit ($R^2 = 0.010$, $p < 0.001$) and organizational citizenship behavior ($R^2 = 0.047$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the findings suggest that, when judged by statistical significance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are the two outcomes most consistently predicted by both engagement dimensions.

Furthermore, the results indicate that both job engagement and organizational engagement significantly predict the study's work outcome variables. Specifically, they were found to predict job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.437$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.514$, $p < 0.001$), organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.418$, $p < 0.001$), intention to quit ($\beta = -0.163$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = -0.102$, non-significant), and organizational citizenship behavior ($\beta = 0.180$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.217$, $p < 0.001$). The results suggest that job and organizational engagement significantly and positively influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In contrast, they show a negative but statistically insignificant relationship with intention to quit, and no significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior. In terms of hypothesis testing,

H4c, H4d, H5c, and H5d are supported, whereas H4e, H4f, H5e, and H5f are not supported by the empirical findings.

6.3 Examination of the Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

To test the final hypothesis to assess the mediation effect, multiple regression analysis was conducted. This hypothesis posited that employee engagement—comprising both job engagement and organizational engagement—acts as a mediator between a set of impacting factors and various work outcomes. The analysis proceeded in two stages: first, the work outcomes were regressed on the impacting factors alone; then, in the second stage, the regression was repeated with the engagement variables included as control variables to assess their mediating role.

Table 8: Summary of findings on the mediating role of employee engagement

Variables	Work outcomes on factors alone			Work outcomes on factors with engagement measures control		
	Standardized Beta	R ²	F	Standardized Beta	R ²	F
Job satisfaction	0.622	0.386	82.449	0.667	0.445	105.74
Organizational Commitment	0.465	0.216	36.169	0.524	0.275	49.693
Intention to Quit	-0.021	0.001	0.060	-0.083	0.007	0.902
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	0.135	0.018	2.432	0.199	0.040	5.410

Notes: $p < 0.001$, and values in the table are standard Beta coefficients

Based on the results presented in Table 8, the mediating role of employee engagement is evident through the changes in R² values. Specifically, for job satisfaction, the explanatory power of the factors rose from 38.6% to 44.5% when job engagement and organizational engagement were included in the model ($p < 0.001$). For organizational commitment, the explained variance increased from 21.6% to 27.5% ($p < 0.001$) with the inclusion of engagement measures. In the case of intention to quit, the predictors accounted for just 0.1% of the variance initially, increasing marginally to 0.7% ($p < 0.10$) when engagement was controlled. Conversely, for organizational citizenship behavior, the proportion of explained variance decreased from 13.5% to 4% despite the inclusion of engagement variables ($p < 0.001$).

Overall, the regression findings support Hypothesis H6, indicating that employee engagement, specifically job and organizational engagement, plays a significant mediating role between the factors affecting employee engagement and the work outcome variables. Both job and organizational engagement play a significant mediating role between job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior, but they have an insignificant mediating role for intention to quit.

DISCUSSION

on key work outcomes, with job engagement and organizational engagement serving as mediating variables. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), the study provides new empirical insights from Kabul University, Afghanistan, an underrepresented context in engagement research. It contributes by empirically distinguishing between job engagement and organizational engagement.

The regression analysis revealed several noteworthy patterns. First, employee communication and employee development showed insignificant direct effects on both job engagement and organizational engagement. In the present study, a theoretical model of employee engagement was tested by examining the influence of employee communication, employee development, and co-supportive employee behavior contrast. Co-supportive employee behavior emerged as the only significant predictor of engagement, exerting a stronger influence on job engagement than on organizational engagement. This pattern suggests that, within the context of Kabul University, peer support plays a more critical role than organizational communication or development efforts in stimulating employees' task-related involvement and emotional investment.

These findings refine the broader SET perspective. SET argues that when employees perceive support, fairness, and reciprocity in their work environment, they respond with increased engagement (Homans, 1958; Andrew et al., 2012; Ahmad et al., 2023). While previous studies reported that organizational-level practices such as communication and development consistently foster engagement, the current results imply that the immediate social environment, particularly supportive colleagues, may be the primary driver of engagement in this setting. This context-specific insight highlights the importance of understanding local workplace dynamics when interpreting engagement processes.

Surprisingly, the analysis showed that job engagement was higher on average than organizational engagement. This finding contrasts with Andrew et al. (2012), who reported the opposite. The difference may reflect contextual and cultural characteristics of Kabul University, where employees may feel more connected to their daily tasks than to broader institutional structures. This reinforces the value of studying engagement as a context-dependent, multidimensional construct.

Regarding work outcomes, the analysis confirmed that both job and organizational engagement exert positive, significant effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, their effects on intention to quit were negative but insignificant. These results suggest that while engagement clearly enhances employees' attitudes toward their work and employer, its influence on discretionary behaviors and turnover intentions may depend on additional contextual or structural factors not captured in the current model, and its influence on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) was likewise.

Importantly, the regression findings provided strong support for Hypothesis H6, demonstrating that employee engagement—both job and organizational—plays a significant

mediating role between antecedents and most work outcomes. Job and organizational engagement significantly mediated the relationships with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and OCB. However, mediation for intention to quit was insignificant, indicating that factors beyond engagement (e.g., economic constraints, external labor market conditions) may shape employees' turnover intentions in this context.

These results align with prior literature emphasizing the mediating function of engagement (e.g., Saks, 2006; Bedarkar et al., 2014; Chandani et al., 2016; Mishra et al., 2014; Mokaya et al., 2014; Kwon et al., 2024; Niraula et al., 2025). The present findings extend this work by demonstrating that job-focused and organizational-focused engagement operate differently depending on the type of antecedent and the outcome variable.

Overall, integrating statistical findings with SET shows that supportive peer relationships, rather than formal organizational practices, are central to fostering meaningful employee engagement at Kabul University. This emphasizes the practical importance of academic institutions promoting collaborative, supportive cultures that enhance both job and organizational engagement. By doing so, managers and policymakers can strengthen employee satisfaction, develop organizational commitment, and promote positive workplace behaviors, ultimately improving institutional performance and stability.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the factors influencing and outcomes associated with employee engagement at Kabul University, with a focus on job and organizational engagement based on Social Exchange Theory (SET). The results show that among the three factors as employee communication, employee development, and co-supportive employee behavior, only co-supportive employee behavior significantly predicted both types of engagement, with a stronger effect on job engagement. This highlights the central role of supportive peer interactions in shaping engagement in this context.

Both job and organizational engagement were found to positively influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while their effects on intention to quit and organizational citizenship behavior were insignificant. Importantly, engagement served as a significant mediator between the factors and most work outcomes, supporting the proposed model, though mediation was not significant for intention to quit.

Overall, the study contributes to the limited research on engagement in Afghan higher education by demonstrating the distinct roles of job and organizational engagement and by emphasizing the importance of peer support. The findings offer practical insights for academic institutions seeking to enhance employee performance, satisfaction, and retention through supportive and collaborative work environments.

Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study included that it was conducted only at a public-sector university; it didn't include any private or other universities due to insufficient time. Additionally, the study

didn't have a sufficient number of respondents to complete the questionnaire because it considered only one university in the center of the country. The study only considered the academic sector of the country, which may differ from other sectors that were not included.

Future Research Directions

Comparative studies across sectors

Future researchers could replicate this study across private universities and other sectors in Afghanistan to compare how engagement factors vary across contexts. Future research could utilize longitudinal designs to examine how engagement levels and their impacts evolve, especially in unstable or transitional economies. Further investigation could explore other mediating or moderating variables such as organizational culture, leadership styles, or psychological safety. To enhance generalizability, researchers can conduct cross-cultural studies to determine if the model holds across different national or cultural settings.

Recommendations for University Administrators

It is recommended that organizations, particularly academic ones, provide a supportive, collaborative work environment to enhance employee performance, satisfaction, and retention. Additionally, if academic institutions want to achieve their goals, they must engage their employees in fundamental decisions, whether in their jobs or organizational roles.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Mohammad Ismail Saiel: Conceptualization, research design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript drafting.
2. Ziauddin Rahimi: Research supervision, methodology guidance, and critical review and editing of the manuscript.
3. Zahir Abdul Wahab: Data analysis support, literature review, and manuscript revision.
4. Ziarmal Murad Ali: Data collection assistance, interpretation of results, and proofreading of the manuscript.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The corresponding author can share the data upon request.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this study.

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