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## **Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction in the Nexus between Career Development and Unprofessional Engagement among Civil Servants in Nepal**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the relationships between career development (CrD), job satisfaction (JbS), and unprofessional behaviour (UpE) in public institutions. Employing a causal-comparative research design, it also examines how job satisfaction mediates the CrD-UpE connection among civil servants in Nepal. Utilizing a quantitative approach and convenience sampling, the study includes 385 civil servants from various government organizations. Data validity and reliability were assessed, and analysis was conducted using SPSS 20 and AMOS 22, including structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings confirm positive links between CrD and JbS and CrD and UpE. Additionally, they underscore the role of JbS in mitigating UpE, highlighting the value of investing in career development to enhance job satisfaction and reduce unprofessional behaviour, particularly among Nepalese civil servants. The study emphasizes the robustness of these relationships and offers practical insights for enhancing career development programmes and fostering employee job satisfaction to minimize unprofessional conduct in public organizations.

**Keywords:** Professional development, employee satisfaction, unethical conduct, public servants, mediation effect, government organizations

### **Introduction**

In today's dynamic and competitive environment, both public and private organizations recognize the essential role played by their employees in attaining and maintaining a competitive edge (McDonald & Hite, 2023; Qaralleh et al., 2023). Consequently, fostering employee career development has become a strategic imperative (Shahriari et al., 2023; Sheraz et al., 2019). These initiatives empower



individuals to unlock their full potential and, in turn, make substantial contributions to organizational success and longevity (Riyanto et al., 2021). Within this context, job satisfaction, a critical factor in employee well-being, becomes a pivotal element in shaping levels of workforce engagement (Ng et al., 2021; Ashraf, 2019). In addition, career development in HR helps employees grow, advance, and succeed within an organization through planned activities (Trivellas et al., 2015). It includes career planning, skills development, and more to boost job satisfaction, retention, and a skilled workforce (Berhanu, 2023; Plomp et al., 2016). Job satisfaction is the overall contentment and fulfillment individuals derive from their work, influencing motivation, performance, and well-being (Kumari et al., 2021). Satisfied employees tend to perform better, stay longer, engage more, reduce stress, innovate, enhance customer satisfaction, and foster a harmonious workplace (Ahamd, 2023; Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014). Professional engagement is the commitment, enthusiasm, and involvement individuals have in their roles, impacting job satisfaction and performance (Wang et al., 2020; Gupta, 2015). It is determined by factors like passion, motivation, autonomy, and teamwork (Hilton et al., 2023).

Furthermore, unprofessional behavior refers to actions by employees that go against workplace standards and cause disruptions (Kroukamp, 2006; Roberts & Davenport, 2002). Reasons for such behavior may include job dissatisfaction, low pay, lack of recognition, unclear career paths, poor leadership, heavy workload, burnout, limited autonomy, work-life balance issues, training gaps, and a greater focus on monetary aspects (Lartey, 2021; Ali et al., 2019). A research gap exists in understanding how job satisfaction precisely mediates the connection between career development and unprofessional engagement, including the specific factors involved and the influence of organizational context and individual attributes (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2023; Wood et al., 2012). On the other hand, there is a lack of empirical studies, particularly regarding the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between career development and reduction of unprofessional engagement, especially within public institutions in the context of Nepal. Further research is needed to pinpoint these nuanced elements to develop more effective interventions and strategies for promoting professionalism in the workplace.

However, the present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between career development and unprofessional engagement of employees within the public institutions. Furthermore, the study intended to discern how career development influences job satisfaction and, subsequently, how job satisfaction impacts the occurrence of unprofessional conduct in the workplace. Additionally, the study sought to identify additional factors contributing to unprofessional engagement and to provide practical guidance

for organizations on fostering professionalism through their career development programs and job satisfaction instruments.

## **Literature Review**

Career development refers to the lifelong process of managing and planning one's career path to achieve personal and professional goals. It encompasses a series of activities and decisions made throughout a person's working life to enhance their skills, knowledge, experience, and opportunities in the world of work (Akhter & Naveed, 2023). Career development involves various aspects, including self-assessment, goal setting, skill development, education, training, career planning, job enlargement, work-life balance, and retirement planning (Jia-Jun & Hua-Ming, 2022). Effective career development can lead to increased job satisfaction, higher earning potential, and a sense of fulfillment in one's professional life (Smet, 2021). It is an ongoing process that evolves as individuals gain experience, and their goals and circumstances change (Dewi & Nurhayati, 2021). The career development plays a crucial role in the success and growth of organizations and it involves helping employees plan and navigates their careers within the organizations (Yarbrough et al., 2017).

Besides that, job satisfaction is a subjective and diverse concept, with individuals prioritizing various factors. While some find satisfaction in meaningful work, others may place greater importance on financial rewards or work-life balance (Sheraz et al., 2019). Organizations frequently endeavor to boost job satisfaction among their employees, recognizing its association with heightened employee engagement, reduced turnover rates, and enhanced productivity (Vorina et al., 2017). The scope of job satisfaction in organizations encompasses a broad array of activities and responsibilities and these activities are focused on comprehending, assessing, and improving employee satisfaction within an organization (Abraham, 2012). A contented workforce tends to exhibit higher levels of engagement, productivity, and dedication to the organization's objectives, underscoring the critical role of job satisfaction in human resource management (Tepayakul & Rinthaisong, 2018).

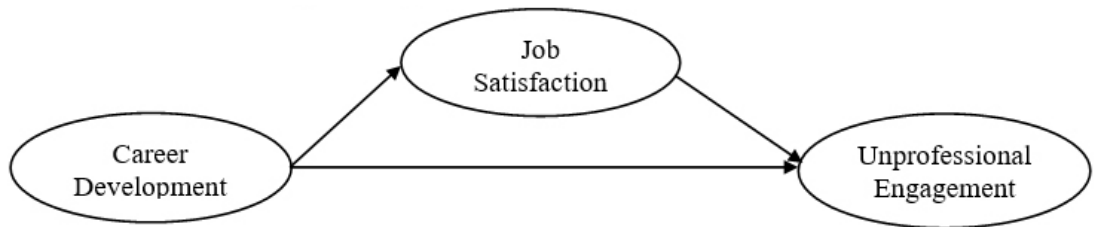
Similarly, unethical engagement of employees refers to instances where employees exhibit behavior, attitudes, or actions that do not align with the professional standards and expectations established by the organization (Anitha, 2014). Such behavior is typically considered inappropriate and disruptive to the workplace environment, and it can negatively impact productivity, morale, and the overall organizational culture (Neault & Pickerell, 2011). Employee unprofessional behavior can arise from various underlying causes and factors. Identifying these causes is crucial for organizations and managers to effectively address the issues

(Chhetri, 2017). Unprofessional behavior may manifest as chronic lateness, frequent absenteeism, rudeness, insubordination, violations of company policies, and other actions that disrupt the workplace or reflect negatively on both the individual and the organization (Zahari, Said & Muhamad, 2022). Addressing unprofessional behavior in the workplace requires ongoing effort and commitment from both leadership and employees. It involves creating a culture that values professionalism and providing the necessary support and resources (Kingshott & Dincer, 2008). By doing so, organizations can cultivate a respectful and productive work environment conducive to achieving their goals.

Based on a comprehensive review of both theoretical and empirical prior studies, the current study identified numerous variables within the respective field. The application of Job Satisfaction Theory in this research is grounded in its assertion that employees who experience contentment are more likely to exhibit increased work engagement and are less prone to engaging in unprofessional behaviors (Hoppock, 1935). However, the primary objective of this study is to establish a standardized conceptual framework aimed at investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between career development and unprofessional engagement among public servants within the context of Nepal.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Study*



### **Career Development and Unprofessional Engagement**

Employees' career development and unprofessional engagement are two interconnected aspects that can significantly or insignificantly impact an individual's professional journey and the success they achieve in their chosen field (Shrestha, 2019). Unprofessional behavior can hinder career growth and damage professional relationships, while a commitment to career development can motivate individuals to address and rectify unprofessional engagement (Adhikari, 2022; Al-Saggaf et al., 2015; Shore, 2005). Moreover, better career development programs can positively influence employee behavior by providing a structured framework for growth,

skill development, feedback, and recognition (Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2007). These programs can foster a culture of professionalism and engagement, reducing instances of unprofessional conduct within the organization (Kingsly, 2015; Grobler & Joubert, 2004). However, the present study designed working hypothesis as per the assumption of positivity.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): Career development has an impact on reducing unprofessional engagement among employees.

### **Career Development and Job Satisfaction**

Career development programs indeed have a substantial impact on employees' job satisfaction by providing various opportunities for growth, skill enhancement, recognition, and advancement (Abu-Tineh et al., 2023). Additionally, when career development programs incorporate flexible work arrangements or support for work-life balance, they can significantly enhance employees' overall job satisfaction (Sinambela et al., 2023). Organizations that prioritize career development not only benefit from a more satisfied and engaged workforce but also enjoy improved retention rates and a competitive edge in attracting top talent (Akhter & Naveed, 2023). Consequently, investing in these programs is not just a matter of employee development but also a strategic move that can lead to long-term success and prosperity for the organization (Grinshtain et al., 2023). Furthermore, achieving career goals and reaching higher positions within the organization can give employees a profound sense of accomplishment and fulfillment. This satisfaction often extends beyond the workplace and has a positive impact on their overall quality of life (Yusuf et al., 2023). Thus, the current study formulated its working hypothesis based on the assumption of a positive relationship.

Alternative Hypothesis (H2): Career development has a substantial and positive influence on employees' job satisfaction.

### **Job Satisfaction and Unprofessional Engagement**

The nexus between job satisfaction and unprofessional engagement refers to the relationship between how satisfied employees are with their work and the extent to which they exhibit unprofessional behaviors or attitudes in the workplace, like gossiping or disrespecting colleagues (Lindgreen, 2004). Typically, there is a negative association, meaning that higher job satisfaction is associated with lower levels of unprofessional engagement, as content employees tend to behave more professionally (Pelletier & Bligh, 2006). However, in some cases, a positive correlation may occur, where higher job satisfaction leads to more unprofessional engagement, possibly due to overconfidence or reduced motivation for maintaining

professionalism (Salminen & Ikola-Norrbacka, 2010). The present study developed its working hypothesis with the presumption of a positive association.

Alternative Hypothesis (H3): Job satisfaction has an impact on reducing unprofessional engagement among employees.

### **Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction**

Understanding the mediating role of job satisfaction in the nexus between career development and unprofessional engagement can have practical implications for organizations. It highlights the importance of creating an environment that fosters career growth and job satisfaction to reduce unprofessional behaviors, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more productive workplace (Barr et al., 2009; Subedi, 2005). The relationship between career development and job satisfaction, as well as job satisfaction and unprofessional engagement, can be influenced by various mediating factors, such as organizational culture, leadership, and individual personality traits. A positive organizational culture and effective leadership can help reduce unprofessional engagement, even among highly satisfied employees (Lamichhane, 2021). Moreover, providing greater career development programs may ensure a higher level of employee job satisfaction, and satisfied employees tend to maintain professional engagement and behavior within an organization (Ejaz et al., 2023; Shah, 2018). Therefore, the current study formulated alternative hypotheses to explore how job satisfaction mediates the nexus between career development and unprofessional engagement among employees are as:

Alternative Hypothesis (H4): Job satisfaction serves as a mediator between career development and the reduction of unprofessional engagement among employees.

### **Methods and Procedures**

This section outlines the research methodology to address the research gap, answer questions, and test hypotheses. It covers the research design and methods, population, sampling and sample size, data validity and reliability, and data analysis methods.

In this study, a causal-comparative research design was employed by the researcher to assess the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between career development and unprofessional engagement among employees in public institutions. To enhance methodological stiffness, a quantitative research approach was utilized (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). The research cohort, comprised of civil servants, underwent a selection process employing convenience sampling methodology. Primary data collection was executed through the distribution of a survey questionnaire, structured with a combination of open-ended queries and a



5-point Likert scale. Besides that, to ensure the relevance and representativeness of this research, the researcher meticulously selected the study population, which comprised civil servants from diverse government departments and agencies across Nepal. This group encompassed individuals of varying job levels, including entry-level employees, non-gazetted officers, gazetted officers, and senior gazetted officers, allowing us to gain a comprehensive perspective on career development, job satisfaction, and unprofessional engagement throughout the civil service hierarchy. This study also aimed to include participants from different government departments. Moreover, this study ensured geographic representativeness by including civil servants from various regions of Nepal, encompassing both urban and rural areas, thereby addressing potential regional disparities in career development opportunities and job satisfaction.

The sample size calculation was performed using the formula prescribed by Cochran (1977):  $n = z^2 * p * q / d^2$ . For this study, the sample size was estimated as follows:  $n = (1.96)^2 * (0.5) * (0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 384.16$ , rounded up to 385, which represents the taken sample size for this study. In this equation,  $n$  represents the required sample size,  $z$  corresponds to the critical value for a 95% confidence level (approximately 1.96),  $p$  is the estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic under study (0.5),  $q$  is the complementary probability ( $1 - 0.5 = 0.5$ ), and  $d$  represents the desired margin of error, indicating the acceptable level of variation in the population parameter estimate (0.05). The study comprised two sets of questions: one for demographic responses and the other for the study variables assessed using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

In order to ascertain the data's validity and reliability, the study computed Cronbach's Alpha (0.872), Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure (0.848), and Bartlett's test of sphericity Chi-Square (3238.555). Notably, all these statistical measures exhibited highly significant p-values (0.000), as per Pearson's seminal work in 1920. These calculations confirm the reliability and validity of the study's data. The study presented results using tables and diagrams and utilized descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies, mean/standard deviation) along with inferential statistics like structural equation modeling (SEM) through SPSS 20 and AMOS 22. Furthermore, the researcher followed ethical guidelines (Sarantakos, 1998) and methodological standards (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007) in data collection, using surveys and interviews for research purposes. The study adheres to the publisher's guidelines and follows APA 7th edition for literature citation and referencing. To maintain academic integrity, Turnitin was employed in this study to ensure compliance with the 20 percent similarity threshold (Shirazi et al., 2010).

## Results

This study consisted of two main phases of analysis. The initial phase involved assessing demographic responses using descriptive statistics, which included calculations of frequency and percentage, as well as measures like minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. In the subsequent phase, responses related to the variables underwent inferential statistical analysis, including techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM) and hypothesis testing. To perform SEM, principal component analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted using IBM AMOS 22. On the other hand, in accordance with the data presentation and analysis requirements, the tables and figures used in this study are as follows:

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of the Respondent*

Demographic Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%	Demographic Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Gender			Years of Job Experience		
Male	261	67.8	up to 5 Years	28	7.3
Female	124	32.2	6 to 10 Years	131	34.0
Age Group			11 to 15 Years	166	43.1
18-28 Years	27	7.0	16 and Above	60	15.6
29-38 Year	97	25.2	Current Job Level		
39-48 Years	190	49.4	Entry Level	148	38.4
49 and Above	71	18.4	Non-Gazetted Officer	178	46.2
Education Level			Gazetted Officer	34	8.8
Primary Level	43	11.2	Senior Gazetted Officer	9	2.3
Secondary Level	134	34.8	Retired	16	4.2
Bachelor Level	152	39.5	-	-	-
Master and Above	56	14.5	Total (N)	385	100

*Source:* Researcher’s Own Survey 2023

Table 1 presents demographic characteristics of the respondents, highlighting the predominant percentages within each group. The data reveals that the majority of respondents are male, comprising 67.8% of the total. Furthermore, the most prominent age group falls within the 39-48 years range, constituting 49.4% of the overall sample. Additionally, a substantial 39.5% of respondents have attained at least a bachelor’s degree. In terms of professional experience, a significant portion (43.1%) falls within the 11 to 15 years category. When considering job level, it’s



noteworthy that 46.2% of respondents occupy positions as Non-Gazetted Officers, signifying a substantial presence within this job category.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Latent Variables*

Items	Min	Max	Mean	Std.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std.	Statistic	Std.
CrD1	2	5	4.06	.567	-.591	.124	2.494	.248
CrD2	1	5	4.05	.625	-.999	.124	3.406	.248
CrD3	2	5	4.04	.594	-.612	.124	2.060	.248
CrD4	1	5	4.02	.651	-.984	.124	2.832	.248
JbS1	1	5	3.61	.878	-.579	.124	.081	.248
JbS2	1	5	3.72	.683	-.372	.124	.779	.248
JbS3	1	5	3.69	.718	-.394	.124	.320	.248
JbS4	1	5	3.69	.754	-.731	.124	1.281	.248
UpE1	1	5	4.21	.679	-.781	.124	1.570	.248
UpE2	1	5	4.06	.706	-.976	.124	2.121	.248
UpE3	1	5	4.03	.529	-.919	.124	5.255	.248
UpE4	1	5	4.04	.704	-.819	.124	1.907	.248

*Note:* Sample Size (Valid N) = 385; CrD = Career Development; JbS = Job Satisfaction; UpE = Unprofessional Engagement

Table 2 presents statistical measures for various items, including minimum (Min), maximum (Max), mean, standard deviation (Std.), skewness, and kurtosis. These statistics offer insights into the distribution and characteristics of each item’s data. Skewness is employed to assess data distribution asymmetry. When skewness falls between -1 and 1, the distribution is considered roughly symmetric. On the other hand, kurtosis gauges tail and peak characteristics within the distribution. A kurtosis near 3 (with excess kurtosis at 0) suggests a normal distribution. Interpreting the statistics for each item, the “CrD” items exhibit left-skewed and peaked distributions. In contrast, the “JbS” items showcase approximately symmetric and normal-like distributions. Similarly, the “UpE” items display left-skewed and peaked distributions. These observations offer valuable insights into the specific shapes of data distributions for each item.

**Table 3***Factors Loading, KMO and Cronbatch Alpha*

Latent Variables	Items	Factor Loading	KMO	Cronbatch Alpha
Career Development (CrD)	CrD2: Training and development programs	.914	.788	.834
	CrD3: Performance management	.891		
	CrD4: Organizational learning culture	.886		
	CrD1: Effective career planning	.878		
Job Satisfaction (JbS)	JbS3: Better compensation	.905	.814	.938
	JbS1: Recognition and rewards	.875		
	JbS2: Work-life balance	.827		
	JbS4: Job security	.609		
Unprofessional Engagement (UpE)	UpE2: Fraud and corruption	.891	.733	.799
	UpE1: Absenteeism	.859		
	UpE3: Poor performance	.697		
	UpE4: Unaccountability	.537		

*Note:* Total items or statements of three latent variables = 12

Table 3 represents the results of a factor analysis or a similar statistical analysis that explores the relationships between latent variables, items, factor loadings, and measures of reliability. For the Career Development (CrD) latent variable, it consists of four items (CrD2, CrD3, CrD4, CrD1) with corresponding factor loadings ranging from 0.878 to 0.914. The KMO value is 0.788, indicating reasonable suitability for factor analysis, and the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.834, indicating good internal consistency. The Job Satisfaction (JbS) latent variable includes four items (JbS3, JbS1, JbS2, JbS4) with factor loadings ranging from 0.609 to 0.905. The KMO value is 0.814, indicating reasonable suitability, and the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.938, indicating very high internal consistency. The Unprofessional Engagement (UpE) latent variable consists of four items (UpE2, UpE1, UpE3, UpE4) with factor loadings ranging from 0.537 to 0.891. The KMO value is 0.733, indicating reasonable suitability, and the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.799, indicating good internal consistency. Overall, these results suggest that the items for Career Development and Job Satisfaction have strong factor loadings and high internal consistency, while the items for Unprofessional Engagement have somewhat lower factor loadings and good but not excellent internal consistency. Further analysis or refinement of the UpE items might be considered.

**Table 4***Estimated Model Fit Indices of CFA*

Indices	P-value	CMIN/DF	RMR	GFI	TLI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Expected Values	≤ 0.05	2-5	≤ 0.05	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08	<.08
Obtained Values	.000	2.059	.017	.968	.981	.988	.0386	.051

*Note:* P-value = Likelihood Ratio, CMIN/DF = Relative X<sup>2</sup>, RMR = Root Mean Squared Residual, GFI = Goodness of Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; Cut off criteria (Gaskin et al., 2014; Hu & Bentler, 1999)

Table 4 displays the expected and obtained values for various indices, likely associated with a statistical model or analysis. The obtained results consistently meet or surpass the anticipated criteria, underscoring the model's robust fit. Specifically, the P-value is notably significant at 0.000, while CMIN/DF aligns with the acceptable range at 2.059. The RMR (.017) and SRMR (.0386) values signify commendable fit concerning model residuals, and the GFI (.968), TLI (.981), and CFI (.988) surpass the targeted thresholds, confirming the model's strong overall and incremental fit. Although the RMSEA (.051) between the ranges of ideal threshold, it still implies an acceptable model fit. In summary, these outcomes indicate that the statistical model effectively elucidates the data, demonstrating statistical significance and reasonable fitting characteristics.

**Table 5***Measurement Model of CFA*

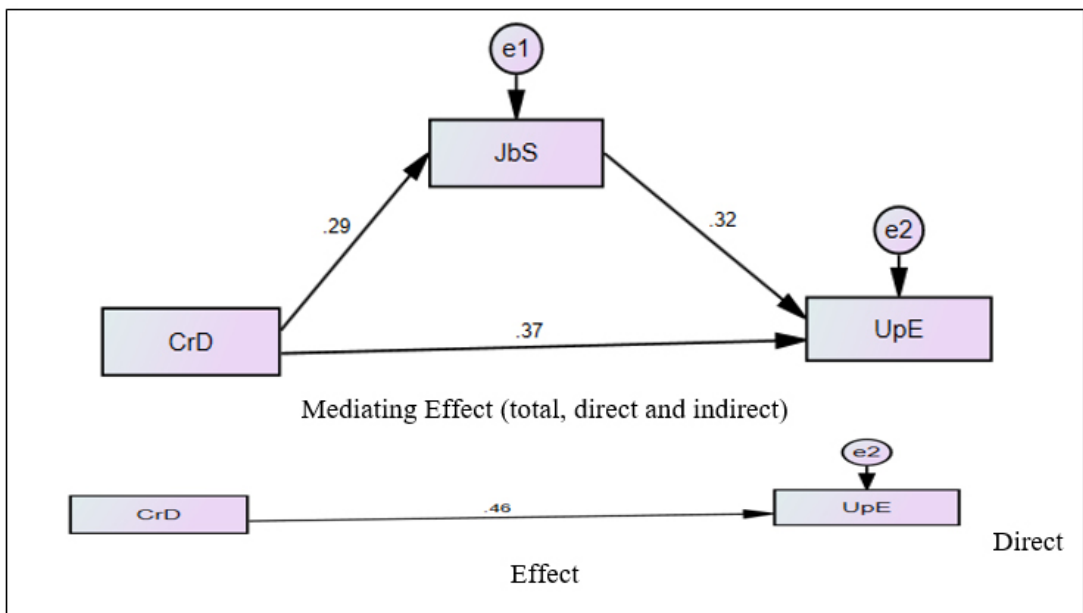
Variables	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	CrD	JbS	UpE
CrD	0.938	0.790	0.237	0.942	0.889		
JbS	0.867	0.636	0.149	0.922	0.317***	0.797	
UpE	0.832	0.629	0.237	0.880	0.487***	0.386***	0.793

*Note:* AVE = Average Variance Explained; CR = Composite Reliability; ASV = Average Squared Variance; MSV = Maximum Squared Variance; CrD = Career Development; JbS = Job Satisfaction; UpE = Unprofessional Engagement; Cut off criteria (Gaskin et al., 2014; Ullman & Bentler, 2012; Hu & Bentler, 1999)

Table 5 presents that a correlation matrix and evaluation criteria for the assessment of measurement models. It is noteworthy that all CR values for the variables (CrD, JbS, and UpE) exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, signifying robust reliability. Additionally, the AVE values for these variables surpass 0.50, indicating substantial explanatory power over their respective items and strong convergent validity. Moreover, MSV values fall within acceptable ranges, highlighting that the constructs' variance is primarily accounted for by their own items, supporting discriminant validity. The MaxR(H) values, hovering near 1, emphasize the constructs' strong interrelationships. Notably, the correlations between CrD and JbS (0.317) and between CrD and UpE (0.487) are statistically significant (\*\*\*) , suggesting potential associations between these constructs. In sum, this table underscores the constructs' reliability, convergent validity, and reasonable discriminant validity, while also pointing to noteworthy interconnections between specific constructs that warrant further exploration in subsequent analyses.

**Figure 2**

*Structural Equation Modeling Path Diagram*



*Note:* CrD = Career Development; JbS = Job Satisfaction; UpE = Unprofessional Engagement

The figure above illustrates the mediating relationships among latent variables in the study, namely, career development, job satisfaction, and unprofessional engagement among civil servants in Nepal. This diagram helps validate the study's

hypotheses and confirms the mediating impact through Bootstrap confidence (BC) analysis, examining two-tailed significance for total, direct, and indirect effects between these variables. It indicates that there is significant mediating effect of job satisfaction in the nexus between career development and reduction of unprofessional conduct of the public servants.

**Table 6**

*Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing*

Hypotheses	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Remarks
CrD JbS	.325	.054	5.984	***	Accepted
CrD UpE	.342	.041	8.313	***	Accepted
JbS UpE	.271	.037	7.317	***	Accepted

*Note:* (\*\*\*) Denotes p-value significant at the 0.01 level of significance; Estimate = Beta Coefficient; S.E = Standard Error; C.R. = Critical Ratio; P = P-value

Table 6 presents the results of hypothesis testing conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to examine the relationships between latent variables. It uncovers positive connections between Career Development (CrD) and Job Satisfaction (JbS), indicating a substantial estimate (C.R. = 5.984,  $P < 0.001$ ). Similarly, it identifies a positive link between Career Development (CrD) and Unprofessional Engagement (UpE), supported by a significant estimate (C.R. = 8.313,  $P < 0.001$ ). Furthermore, the table highlights a positive relationship between Job Satisfaction (JbS) and Unprofessional Engagement (UpE), indicated by a noteworthy estimate (C.R. = 7.317,  $P < 0.001$ ). These results collectively affirm robust and statistically significant associations among the latent variables, thereby providing support for the acceptance of all three hypotheses.

**Table 7**

*Mediation Effect Analysis of the Study*

Categories of Effect	Standardized Estimates	P-value	Result
Total Effect	0.463	0.005	Significant Impact
Direct Effect	0.368	0.005	Significant Impact
Indirect Effect	0.095	0.006	Significant Impact

*Note:* Based on the Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (BC)

Table 7 presents the results for total, direct, and indirect effects within the model, using Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (BC). The total effect (0.463,  $p = 0.005$ ) signifies a statistically significant overall impact on the outcome, indicating that the combined influences in the model are statistically meaningful. The direct

effect (0.368,  $p = 0.005$ ) emphasizes the importance of direct relationships between CrD, JbS, and UpE. Conversely, the indirect effect (0.095,  $p = 0.006$ ) highlights significant mediated relationships between CrD, JbS and UpE, which also contribute significantly to the overall outcome. In summary, all three categories of effects demonstrate statistical significance, underlining their essential role in understanding the dynamics and relationships within the model.

## Discussion

The study aimed to examine the role of career development and job satisfaction in reducing unprofessional engagement among government employees, including issues such as fraud, corruption, absenteeism, poor performance, and lack of accountability. The findings confirm that when public organizations offer career development opportunities to their employees, it can lead to increased job satisfaction. Higher job satisfaction, in turn, tends to reduce the likelihood of employees engaging in unethical conduct within the organization. Therefore, the finding of the study confirms the positive link between Career Development (CrD) and Job Satisfaction (JbS), consistent with prior research (Sinambela et al., 2023). Employees who perceive career growth opportunities tend to have higher job satisfaction. This underscores the importance of investing in employee career development (Akhter & Naveed, 2023). Similarly, it affirms the positive connection between CrD and Unprofessional Engagement (UpE), aligning with existing literature. When career aspirations are supported, employees are less likely to engage in unprofessional behaviors (Barr et al., 2009). Besides that, career development plays a significant role in reducing unprofessional engagement (Ejaz et al., 2023; Shah, 2018). Moreover, the present study establishes a positive relationship between JbS and UpE, suggesting job satisfaction can mitigate unprofessional behavior, which is similar to the results of Grinshtain, Avidov Ungar, and Barenboim (2023).

On the other hand, the statistical significance of all three categories of effects - total, direct, and indirect - demonstrates the robustness of the relationships within the model. These findings underline the importance of considering both direct and indirect pathways when analyzing the impact of CrD on JbS and UpE. Such insights can inform decision-making and strategies aimed at improving outcomes in the studied context, highlighting the complexity and interconnectedness of the variables under investigation. Finally, present and prior research supports the addition of a new perspective on how CrD, JbS, and UpE are interconnected. These findings have practical implications for public organizations aiming to enhance career development and employee satisfaction to minimize unprofessional behavior and unethical conduct among employees.



## Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between CrD and UpE among employees in public institutions. The findings confirm a positive association between CrD and JbS, as well as between CrD and UpE. Additionally, the study establishes a link between JbS and UpE, highlighting the role of job satisfaction in mitigating unprofessional behavior. These results underscore the significance of investing in employee career development to reduce unprofessional engagement, particularly within the context of Nepalese civil servants. Furthermore, the statistical significance of the total, direct, and indirect effects highlights the robustness of the relationships in our model, emphasizing the need to consider both direct and indirect pathways when analyzing the impact of CrD on JbS and UpE. This provides valuable insights for decision-making and strategies to enhance outcomes in public institutions. In conclusion, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of CrD, JbS, and UpE, offering practical implications for public organizations aiming to minimize unprofessional behavior and unethical conduct among their employees.

The study suggests that government and government organizations should prioritize employee career development to boost job satisfaction and reduce unprofessional behavior. This can be achieved through career planning, training, fair performance management, and fostering a learning culture. Additionally, organizations should improve compensation, recognition, job security, and work-life balance to minimize unprofessional behavior. While the current findings support evidence-based decision-making for ethical work environments in the public sector, a critical lens reveals limitations tied to methodological choices. Reliance on survey questionnaires may introduce biases and the exclusive focus on job satisfaction as a mediator oversimplifies complex dynamics. Future research should adopt more robust methodologies, like longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons, to provide nuanced insights into the interplay of variables influencing professional conduct, offering more comprehensive recommendations for fostering professionalism in diverse organizational contexts.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the study relies primarily on self-reported data, which could introduce response biases and inaccuracies in capturing nuanced behaviors. Secondly, the sample size may not be fully representative of the broader population, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Thirdly, the study's duration may not encompass long-term effects and trends; longitudinal data collection could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Finally, resource constraints imposed limitations on data collection and analysis, potentially omitting valuable variables that require more funding.

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