

Adult Learners and Job Satisfaction: The Role of Participation in Adult Education

• Shrikant Singh¹

Abstract

The impact of adult education on job satisfaction was a critical focus of this study, considering the evolving nature of the workforce and the growing need for continuous professional development. This paper examined how adult education initiatives contributed to job satisfaction among employees across various industries. Using a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study explored the correlation between participation in adult education programmes and levels of job satisfaction. Key findings indicated that employees who engaged in continuous learning opportunities reported higher job satisfaction, enhanced skills and greater prospects for career advancement. The study also discussed the implications for employers, suggesting that investment in adult education led to improved employee retention, productivity and overall organizational performance. It highlighted the necessity of accessible, relevant educational programmes tailored to adult learners' needs and emphasized the importance of supportive learning environments in fostering job satisfaction.

Keywords: *Adult education, job satisfaction, continuous learning, professional development, organizational performance, lifelong learning.*

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving economic landscape, continuous professional development has become essential for both employees and employers. The advent of new technologies, shifting market demands, and the increasing complexity of job roles require employees to continually update their skills and knowledge. Adult education, encompassing both formal and informal learning opportunities beyond traditional schooling, plays a critical role in this ongoing professional development.

¹Research Scholar (Education Training), Mahila Mahavidyalaya Affiliated to CSJM University Kanpur, Kanpur. ORCID ID : <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0180-5588>. ✉ shrikantbeorank1@gmail.com

By enabling individuals to enhance their competencies, adapt to changes, and advance in their careers, adult education contributes significantly to both personal and organizational growth (Knowles, 1984).

Job satisfaction is a multifaceted concept reflecting employees' overall perceptions of their jobs and work environments. High levels of job satisfaction have been linked to numerous positive outcomes, including increased productivity, lower turnover rates, and improved mental health and well-being (Robertson, Birch, & Cooper, 2012). Understanding the factors influencing job satisfaction remains crucial for organizations striving to foster a motivated and engaged workforce. A growing body of evidence suggests that adult education positively impacts job satisfaction. Participation in continuous learning initiatives not only enhances employees' skills and knowledge but also contributes to their sense of personal fulfilment and career progression (Billett, Choy, & Hodge, 2020). Employees who engage in lifelong learning often report higher job satisfaction due to increased competence and confidence resulting from newly acquired skills, as well as improved career advancement opportunities arising from additional qualifications and certifications (Puri & Abraham, 2021).

The effectiveness of adult education programmes in enhancing job satisfaction is significantly influenced by the degree of organizational support. Employers who invest in their employees' continuous learning through financial assistance, flexible scheduling and supportive learning environments are more likely to amplify the positive effects of adult education on job satisfaction (Van Noy, James, & Bedley, 2016). Organizational policies that prioritize professional development and cultivate a culture of continuous learning are critical to achieving these benefits. While existing research highlights the positive impact of adult education on job satisfaction, gaps remain in understanding the specific mechanisms through which these benefits are realized. Moreover, there is a need for more comprehensive studies that include diverse industries and populations to ensure the generalizability of findings. Longitudinal research could further clarify the long-term effects of adult education on job satisfaction.

Literature Review

Adult education, also referred to as continuing education or lifelong learning, encompasses all forms of learning undertaken by adults beyond traditional schooling. This includes professional development courses, higher education, vocational training and informal learning opportunities. The significance of adult education lies in its

potential to enhance skills, facilitate career transitions, and contribute to personal growth and societal development (Knowles, 1984).

Knowles (1984) proposed andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn, emphasizing self-directed learning, experience-based activities, and the relevance of learning to real-life tasks. Mezirow (1991) suggested that adult learning involves a process of critical reflection that leads to a transformation in perspective, enabling individuals to make meaning of their experiences. Bryson and Anderson (2006) emphasized the role of experience in the learning process, advocating for a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Job satisfaction refers to the level of contentment employees feel about their work, which significantly impacts organizational performance, employee retention, and overall well-being (Robertson et al., 2012). High levels of job satisfaction are associated with increased productivity, reduced turnover, and improved mental health.

Research consistently indicates that adult education positively influences job satisfaction. Billett et al. (2020) found that participation in workplace learning programmes enhances employees' skills, leading to greater job satisfaction. Similarly, Smith and Rae (2018) reported that lifelong learning contributes to higher job satisfaction by fostering a sense of personal achievement and professional growth. Several studies highlight skill enhancement as a crucial mediator between adult education and job satisfaction. Employees who acquire new skills through continuous learning are better equipped to perform their tasks, resulting in increased job satisfaction (Noe, Tews, & Dachner, 2010). Adult education also facilitates career advancement by providing employees with the qualifications and knowledge required for promotions and new roles. Puri and Abraham (2021) found that employees who engaged in professional development programmes reported higher job satisfaction due to improved career prospects.

Personal growth and fulfilment are also significant outcomes of adult education. Watkins and Marsick (2014) emphasized that lifelong learning contributes to an individual's sense of achievement and self-worth, which, in turn, enhances job satisfaction. The role of organizational support in strengthening the link between adult education and job satisfaction cannot be overstated. Van Noy et al. (2016) found that employees who received employer support - such as financial assistance and time off for learning - reported higher levels of job satisfaction.

Despite its benefits, participation in adult education is often hindered by barriers such as time constraints, family responsibilities, and financial limitations (Cross, 1981;

Kyndt, Dochy, & Nijs, 2009). Without organizational support, many employees find it difficult to pursue continuous learning opportunities (Tannenbaum, Beard, McNall, & Salas, 2010). There remains a need for longitudinal studies to establish causal relationships between adult education and job satisfaction.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of adult education on job satisfaction among employees across various industries. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- Determine the extent to which participation in adult education programmes influenced job satisfaction among employees.
- Analyze the role of skill enhancement and career advancement as key outcomes of adult education that contributed to higher job satisfaction.
- Evaluate the moderating effect of organizational support—such as financial assistance, flexible scheduling, and a learning-friendly culture—on the relationship between adult education and job satisfaction.
- Explore adult learners' experiences of personal growth, increased confidence, and motivation as drivers of job satisfaction.
- Offer practical recommendations to employers on designing and implementing effective adult education initiatives that enhanced employee satisfaction, performance, and retention.

Hypotheses

This study tested the following hypotheses:

- H1: Participation in adult education programmes was positively correlated with job satisfaction among employees.
- H2: Employees who participated in adult education programmes reported higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those who did not participate.
- H3: Organizational support for adult education positively moderated the relationship between participation in adult education programmes and job satisfaction.
- H4: Skill enhancement gained through adult education programmes was a significant predictor of job satisfaction.
- H5: Career advancement opportunities resulting from adult education programmes were positively associated with job satisfaction.

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both

quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of adult education on job satisfaction.

Sample

The study included a total of 82 valid survey respondents and 30 qualitative interview participants, all of whom were employees from various industries in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure appropriate representation from key sectors, including healthcare (22%), education (18%), technology (20%), manufacturing (15%), and others (25%). Demographic diversity was also maintained in terms of gender, age groups and education levels.

Instrumentation

Quantitative Instrument (Survey)

The structured questionnaire consisted of three sections:

1. Demographic Information – Including gender, age, industry, and educational qualifications.

2. Participation in Adult Education – Measured through binary and frequency-based items:

“Have you participated in any adult education or continuing education programmes in the past five years?” (Yes/No)

“How often do you engage in professional development activities?” (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

3. Job Satisfaction Scale – Comprised of Likert-type items rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Example statements included:

“I feel satisfied with my current job role.”

“I have adequate opportunities for growth and development.”

“I am more confident in my job after participating in adult education.”

“My employer supports my continued learning and professional development.”

“Learning new skills has improved my job performance and satisfaction.”

Qualitative Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 participants who volunteered after completing the survey. An interview guide was developed with open-ended questions designed to explore:

- Motivation for participating in adult education
- Perceived impact on their job satisfaction and career

- Organizational support received
- Barriers faced in accessing education

Validity and Reliability

To ensure content validity, the survey items were adapted from established literature and reviewed by experts in education and organizational psychology. A pilot test was conducted with 10 participants to refine item clarity and wording.

The reliability of the job satisfaction scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which confirmed internal consistency. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data enhanced the credibility and depth of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, and written consent was obtained. All data was anonymized, and personal identifiers were removed to protect participants' privacy. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey received 82 valid responses from a diverse range of industries. The demographic profile of the respondents was as follows:

Gender: 52% female, 48% male

Age Groups: 25–34 years (28%), 35–44 years (35%), 45–54 years (23%), 55+ years (14%)

Industry Sectors: Healthcare (22%), Education (18%), Technology (20%), Manufacturing (15%), Other (25%)

Education Level: Bachelor's degree (40%), Master's degree (35%), Doctorate (10%), Other (15%)

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	52
	Male	48
Age	25-34	28
	35-44	35
	45-54	23
	55+	14
Industry	Healthcare	22
	Education	18
	Technology	20
	Manufacturing	15
	Other	25
Education Level	Bachelor's degree	40
	Master's degree	35
	Doctorate	10
	Other	15

Pie Chart: Gender Distribution

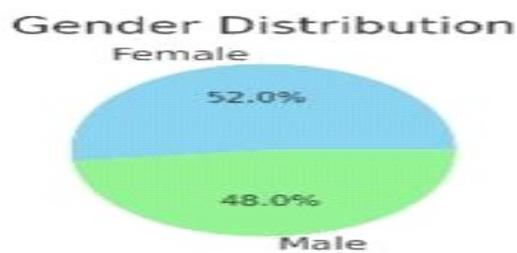


Figure: 1

A pie chart was used to illustrate the distribution of gender among the respondents, showing that 52% were females and 48% were males.

Bar Chart: Age Distribution

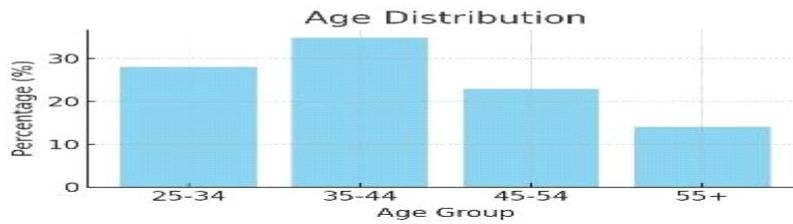


Figure : 2

A bar chart was used to represent the age distribution among the respondents, displaying the age groups as follows: 25–34 years (28%), 35–44 years (35%), 45–54 years (23%), and 55+ years (14%).

Pie Chart: Industry Distribution



Figure: 3

A pie chart was also used to illustrate the distribution of respondents across different industries, showing the following proportions: Healthcare (22%), Education (18%), Technology (20%), Manufacturing (15%), and Other (25%).

Bar Chart: Education Level Distribution

A bar chart was used to display the education levels of the respondents, depicting the distribution as follows: Bachelor's degree (40%), Master's degree (35%), Doctorate (10%), and Other (15%).

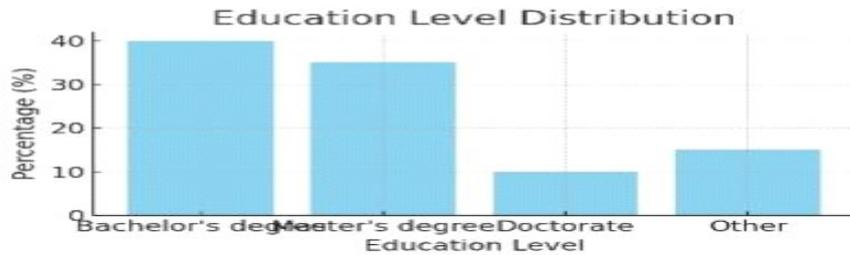


Figure: 4

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Findings

Metric	Value
Average Job Satisfaction Score	3.8 / 5
Participation in Adult Education programmes	68%

The average job satisfaction score was recorded as 3.8 on a 5-point Likert scale, indicating a relatively high level of satisfaction. Additionally, 68% of the respondents had participated in some form of adult education programme during the previous five years.

Bar Chart: Participation in Adult Education Programmes

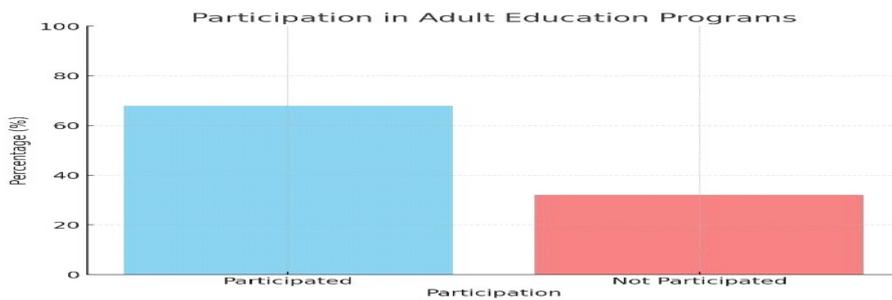


Figure: 5

The bar chart illustrated participation in adult education programmes . A total of 68% of respondents had participated in some form of adult education programme in the past five years, while 32% had not.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Participation in Adult Education programmes and Job Satisfaction	0.45	< 0.01

A Pearson correlation was calculated to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between participation in adult education programmes and job satisfaction. The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.45$, with a significance level of $p < 0.01$. This result indicated a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship - employees who had engaged in adult education were more likely to report higher levels of job satisfaction.

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Predictor Variable	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Significance (p)	R ²
Participation in Adult Education programmes	0.42	< 0.01	0.19

A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.45, p < 0.01$) was found between participation in adult education programmes and job satisfaction. Regression analysis indicated that participation in adult education programmes was a significant predictor of job satisfaction ($\hat{\alpha} = 0.42, p < 0.01$), accounting for 19% of the variance in job satisfaction scores.

Scatter Plot: Participation in Adult Education Programmes vs. Job Satisfaction

A linear regression analysis was conducted to further examine the predictive power of adult education participation on job satisfaction. The results showed that:

Standardized Coefficient ($\hat{\alpha}$) = 0.42

Significance (p) < 0.01

R² = 0.19

This meant that participation in adult education programmes accounted for 19% of the variance in job satisfaction scores. The standardized beta value of 0.42 indicated

a strong, positive influence of adult education on job satisfaction, even when other factors were considered.

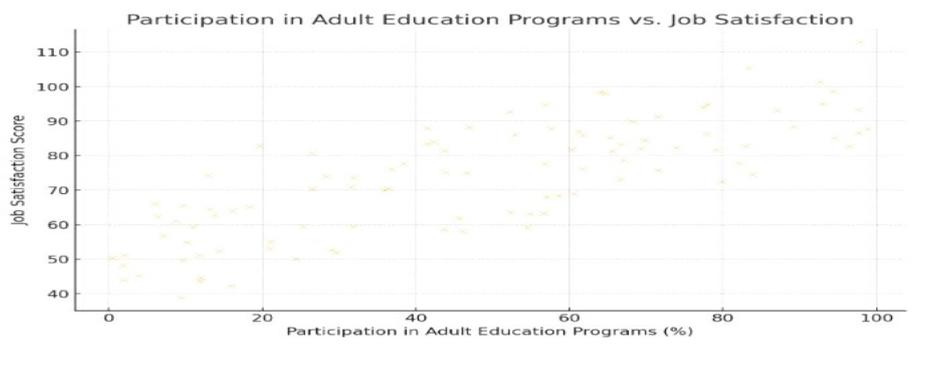


Figure: 6

Key Findings

Table 5: Summarizing the findings:

Participation	Mean Job Satisfaction Score	Percentage Reporting Skill Enhancement and Career Advancement
Yes	4.1	72%
No	3.4	0%

Respondents who had participated in adult education programmes reported higher levels of job satisfaction (mean score = 4.1) compared to those who had not (mean score = 3.4). Professional development opportunities were identified as a major contributor to job satisfaction, with 72% of participants citing skill enhancement and career advancement as key benefits.

Bar Graphs: Summarizing the findings

1. Mean Job Satisfaction Score: The analysis showed that respondents who had participated in adult education programmes reported higher job satisfaction compared to those who had not.

2. Percentage Reporting Skill Enhancement and Career Advancement: A total of 72% of participants in adult education programmes reported skill enhancement and career advancement as key benefits of their participation.

These findings emphasized that gains in competence and professional mobility contributed substantially to job satisfaction.

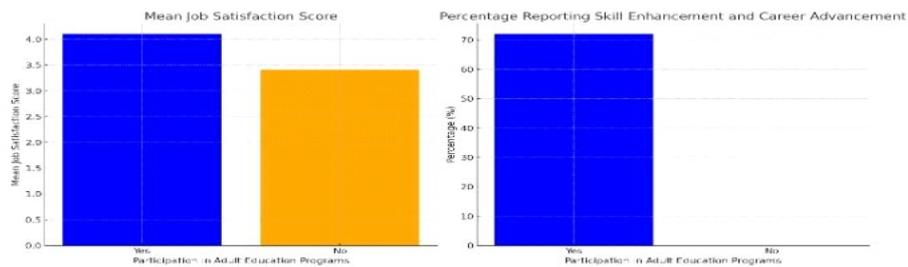


Figure: 7

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts revealed several recurring themes related to the impact of adult education on job satisfaction. Many participants reported that acquiring new skills through adult education programmes boosted their confidence and competence in their roles. Several respondents indicated that adult education facilitated promotions and new job opportunities, which in turn contributed to higher job satisfaction. Participants frequently described personal growth and fulfilment as significant outcomes of engaging in lifelong learning. The level of support from employers such as funding and time off for education were identified as critical factors influencing the positive impact of adult education on job satisfaction.

Participant Quotes

“The certification programme I completed last year was instrumental in my recent promotion. It made me feel more valued and capable at work.”

“Continuing my education not only improved my skills but also my self-esteem. I felt more confident in taking on new challenges.”

Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative data demonstrated a significant positive relationship between adult education and job satisfaction, particularly through improvements in skill enhancement and career progression. The qualitative insights provided personal narratives and experiences that illustrated how adult education fostered a sense of achievement, confidence and perceived workplace support.

Implication for Employers

The findings suggested that employers could enhance job satisfaction by investing in adult education programmes . Providing opportunities for continuous learning, offering financial assistance, and cultivating a supportive learning environment were found to be critical strategies for improving employee satisfaction and retention.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the impact of adult education on job satisfaction among employees across various industries in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between participation in adult education programmes and job satisfaction. Employees who engaged in continuous learning reported higher levels of job satisfaction, enhanced skills, greater career advancement opportunities and increased personal fulfilment. Employees who had participated in adult education programmes demonstrated higher job satisfaction, which could be attributed to the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. These developments boosted employees' competence and confidence in their roles. Improved skill sets enabled them to perform tasks more efficiently, resulting in a greater sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction. Adult education also provided opportunities for career progression. Many participants reported that additional qualifications and certifications obtained through these programmes facilitated promotions and access to new job roles. This sense of professional growth and development contributed significantly to job satisfaction. In addition to career-related outcomes, personal growth and fulfilment emerged as strong themes in the qualitative analysis. Several employees pursued adult education not only for career benefits but for personal enrichment.

The sense of achievement after completing educational programmes and the motivation derived from lifelong learning, played a crucial role in overall job satisfaction. The level of organizational support was found to be a critical factor in determining the positive impact of adult education. Employers who offered financial assistance, provided time off, and fostered a supportive learning environment amplified the benefits of adult education for their employees. Supportive workplace policies and a culture that valued continuous learning, proved to be essential in fostering job satisfaction. Based on the findings, organizations were encouraged to invest in adult education programmes as a strategic approach to enhancing job satisfaction and employee retention. Providing access to relevant training and development opportunities could improve employee performance, loyalty and morale. Employers were advised to create a supportive learning environment by offering flexible schedules, financial support, and formal recognition of educational achievements.

Finally, adult education initiatives should have been tailored to meet the specific needs of employees and the evolving demands of the industry. Aligning training programmes with employees' career goals and organizational objectives would help maximize the long-term benefits of adult education.

Limitations and Future Research

This study relied on self-reported data, which may have introduced response bias. Future research could incorporate more objective measures of job satisfaction and educational outcomes to strengthen validity. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limited the ability to draw causal inferences. Longitudinal studies would provide more robust evidence of the causal relationship between adult education and job satisfaction. The sample used in this study may not have been fully representative of all industries and geographic regions. Future research should aim to include a more diverse and representative sample to improve the generalizability of findings. Further studies could also explore additional factors influencing the relationship between adult education and job satisfaction. These may include the role of technology in education, the effects of different types of educational programmes, and the impact of organizational culture on learning engagement and satisfaction outcomes.

Conclusion

This study underscored the positive impact of adult education on job satisfaction, highlighting the significance of continuous learning for both personal and professional development. By investing in adult education programmes and fostering a supportive learning environment, employers were able to enhance job satisfaction, improve employee retention and develop a more skilled and motivated workforce. The findings revealed that adults who engaged in ongoing learning opportunities whether through formal education programmes, professional development courses, or self-directed learning tended to report higher levels of job satisfaction. This increase in satisfaction was attributed to several factors, including the acquisition of new skills, enhanced self-efficacy, expanded career advancement opportunities, and a greater sense of personal fulfilment. Furthermore, organizations that invested in the continuing education of their employees benefited from a more competent, motivated, and committed workforce. Such investment not only improved individual job satisfaction but also contributed to overall organizational effectiveness and productivity. Therefore, both individuals and employers should have recognized the value of continuing education as a key component of career development and job satisfaction. Fostering a culture of lifelong learning and providing access to continuing education opportunities emerged as essential strategies for enhancing job satisfaction and achieving professional as well as personal growth.

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