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Perceived Fairness of Performance Appraisal: Does it Shape Bankers' Attitudes towards their Job and Organization?

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aimed to assess the effect of perceived fairness of performance appraisal (PA) on bankers' attitudes, namely job satisfaction, job involvement, work engagement, and organizational commitment.

Methodology: The research employed a convenience sampling method to gather data from 207 front-line bank officers working in 10 private commercial banks in Bangladesh. For the analysis of the collected data, the study used statistical tools such as ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and regression, using SPSS version 25.

Findings: The study found that fair PA has a significant positive impact on all four types of attitudes. From the control variables (i.e., experience, age, gender, education, and marital status), only education level is found to have a significant negative association with job satisfaction and job involvement.

Practical Implications: By highlighting the significance of a fair performance appraisal (PA) system, the study provides insights for bank administrations on improving the positive attitudes of their work force. This, in turn, may boost bankers' performance and foster success for the banks as a whole.

Originality/Value: In a first-of-its-kind endeavor, the study contributes valuable theoretical insights by exploring the influence of fair PA on diverse types of desirable employee attitudes towards jobs, work, and the organization. Moreover, the study explains the findings in the context of social exchange theory as well as equity theory.

Limitations: A small sample size, convenience sampling, and cross-sectional self-reported data are the main limitations.

1. Introduction

Performance appraisal (PA) is recognized as a crucial HRM tool used for assessing and managing the employee performance of an organization. Today's organizations extensively use appraisal systems to provide their employees feedback on how they are performing and to recognize their efforts in achieving predetermined targets (Ryu & Hong, 2020). A lot of critical managerial decisions depend on employee performance which is determined in PA, such as performance pay and rewards, promotions, increments, demotions, dismissals, training and development, employee counseling, etcetera (Nutakor, 2019). However, effectiveness of PA largely depends on how it is carried out, particularly its level of fairness (Phuong, 2018) and quality performance feedback (Iqbal et al., 2019). It is generally assumed that employees will be dissatisfied and demotivated if they believe the processes and evaluation techniques utilized in PA are unfair and biased (Gu et al., 2020). The employees who perceive their PA

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as "unfair" are unlikely to help their organization achieve its objective of improving employee and organizational performance (Tweedie et al., 2019). On the contrary, if PA is perceived as just and fair, employees tend to experience greater levels of trust and satisfaction with the PA system (Harrington & Lee, 2015) and are likely to exhibit desirable attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Rubel & Kee, 2015). Moreover, timely and accurate PA feedback proves advantageous for both organizations and individuals, contributing significantly to job and organizational attitudes when it is received and understood effectively (Lam et al., 2002).

Indeed, employee attitudes and behaviors are considered the key determinants of organizational success in any organization. Particularly, employee attitudes are a key concern of any management as they significantly shape how employees behave and perform, and influence the overall performance of an organization (Ogilo et al., 2020). This is far truer in the service sector where attitudes and the resulting behaviors of employees are directly observable and connected with customer outcomes (Mahmoud et al., 2021). Service firms, particularly banks, stand apart from other manufacturing businesses due to their direct interaction with customers, which results in immediate evaluation of their service quality (Zameer et al., 2015). Banking firms are commonly known as the lifeblood of an economy and their performance and service to customers heavily rely on their employees' workplace attitudes (Karim & Baset, 2020).

The banking sector in Bangladesh, following the attainment of independence in 1971, commenced operations with a total of 6 nationalized commercial banks, 3 state-owned specialized banks, and 9 foreign banks. This sector has grown rapidly over time along with the economy of the country. Currently, there exist 61 scheduled banks consisting of 6 state-owned commercial banks, 3 specialized banks, 43 private commercial banks, and 9 foreign commercial banks. Besides, there are 5 non-scheduled banks which are set up for a particular purpose and operate under a particular act (Bangladesh Bank, 2023). As a result of intense competition and increased customer expectations regarding service quality, the banking industry in Bangladesh is experiencing significant pressure (Karim & Baset, 2020). Service quality, service innovations, and resulting customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical factors that a bank must prioritize to achieve success (Karim & Rahman, 2022; Rashid et al., 2020). To outperform rivals through outstanding banking services, a banking firm must have a cadre of professional bankers with a constructive mindset and favorable workplace attitudes. Therefore, this study might be a timely inquiry to find how to promote favorable attitudes of the bankers in Bangladesh.

Employee attitudes are commonly classified into four categories, such as job satisfaction, job involvement, work engagement, and organizational commitment. Generally, the first three types of employee attitudes relate to jobs and their contents, whereas organizational commitment represents employee commitment towards the organization. Previous studies have examined the association between perceived fairness of PA and employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction (Bae, 2023), work engagement (Gupta & Kumar, 2013), and organizational commitment (Rubel & Kee, 2015). However, existing literature overlooked linking perceived PA fairness with all four types of attitudes. Considering the research gap and the importance of favorable employee attitudes towards their performance, the study aims to examine the role of perceived fairness of PA on bankers' attitudes (job satisfaction, job involvement, work engagement, and organizational commitment).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Attitudes

Employee attitudes are commonly classified as job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment, (Mackay et al., 2017). Moreover, work engagement was coined by (Kahn, 1990) as another kind of employee attitude.First, job satisfaction pertains to how individuals feel about their job and its various aspects (Umrani et al., 2019). When employees are satisfied, they hold positive feelings that they gain through evaluation of their job or work-attributes (Gheitani et al., 2019), such as the type of job, managerial approach, interactions with colleagues, equitable compensation, workplace environment, job security, and career advancement opportunities, etc. (Torlak et al., 2021). Job satisfaction is considered a primary catalyst for attitudes and behaviors in a work setting (Gheitani et al., 2019), such as organizational commitment (To et al., 2022), job performance (Qureshi et al., 2019), citizenship behavior (Torlak et al., 2021), turnover intention (Li et al., 2019), and deviant behavior (Dewangan & Verghese, 2023). Second, job involvement represents the extent to which individuals psychologically associate themselves with their current job (Mudrack, 2004). Job involvement is usually affected by organizational and individual factors and is believed to be a predictor of job performance since those who have a strong attachment to their job tend to focus their thoughts on work and discover more opportunities to carry out job-related activities (Rich et al., 2010). Third, organizational commitment is exemplified by an employee's loyalty to their workplace, wholehearted adoption of the organization's goals and values, and enthusiastic participation in its activities (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). Organizational commitment, as conceptualized by Allen and Meyer, is a complex construct that comprises three distinct commitments - affective commitment (i.e., an employee's emotional attachment to the organization), continuance commitment (i.e., the perceived high costs of leaving the organization), and normative commitment (i.e., a sense of duty and obligation to remain with the organization) (Allen & Meyer, 1990). A committed employee exhibits a greater level of identification, involvement, trust, and acceptance of an organization's goals and values, and is likely to exert great effort on behalf of the organization and have a strong desire to remain a member (Rameshkumar, 2020). Finally, work engagement can be described as a dynamic and enthusiastic mental state marked by qualities such as energy, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The individuals who exhibit higher levels of work engagement typically display energetic, dedicated, and passionate behaviors towards their job, demonstrate persistence when faced with challenges, and are deeply absorbed in their work (Greenier et al., 2021). Engaged employees are known to channel their efforts towards the tasks that are aligned with the organization's objectives for an extended period, demonstrating their commitment to achieving the goals (Lai et al., 2020).

2.2 Fair Performance Appraisal

The topic of PA has garnered significant attention from both academics and professionals in the field of human resource management (HRM) (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2020). PA is usually defined as the practice of evaluating employees' performance using various methods and processes, and offering them feedback on the quality and level of their work (Mbwambo & Lyamuya, 2021). According to Brefo-Manuh & Anlesinya (2023), a PA system involves monitoring and assessing the performance of employees, pinpointing strengths and weaknesses, and giving feedback to employees and the organization in order to achieve better performance outcomes. The evaluation process usually impacts various aspects of managing human resources, including employee development, compensation, motivation, staff turnover, employee-manager relations, HR planning, the hiring process, and overseeing work performance (Zwiech, 2021). However, the acceptance and effectiveness of appraisal process largely depends on the employees' perception of its fairness (Abdullah & Malik, 2022). Considering the interchangeable use of the two terms *fairness* and *justice*, fair PA represents different forms of justice perceptions pertaining to the performance evaluation (Ryu & Hong, 2020), such as procedural justice (i.e., due PA process) distributive justice (i.e., fairness in ratings and allocation of rewards based on PA), and interpersonal justice (i.e., fairness in interactions between the evaluators and appraisees; constructive and respectful feedback), informational justice (i.e., fairness in sharing information with justification) (Brefo-Manuh & Anlesinya, 2023; Dal Corso et al., 2019; Nair & Salleh, 2015). Perceived fairness in PA has a direct effect on employees' motivation and job performance, thereby impacting organization's operations and competitive standing (Zwiech, 2021). On the other hands, if employees perceive that performance appraisals are unfair, it can damage the relationship between employees and managers, decrease employee loyalty, promote negative work attitudes and behaviors, and thus potentially have many adverse effects on the organization (Brefo-Manuh & Anlesinya, 2023; Prather, 2010).

2.3 Perceived Fair in Performance Appraisal and Employee Attitudes

These employee attitudes are believed to be greatly shaped by fair appraisal system, which can be explained by the equity theory (Adams, 1965) and the social exchange theory (SET) (Blau, 1964). According to equity theory, when employees are treated fairly and equitably, they tend to have favorable attitudes towards their job and exhibit effective work behavior (Na-Nan et al., 2020). Thus, fairness of PA can lead to positive work attitudes, such as job involvement, job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment.

On the other hand, the SET is effective in explaining reciprocal relationship between organizations and employees (Helfers et al., 2019). Based on this theory, Moilanen & Ikäheimo (2019) argued that fairness practices cultivate social obligations and foster reciprocity. This theory posits that individuals tend to react in a manner that reciprocates fair and unfair treatment of others (Karim, 2021). Accordingly, an organization can treat its employees fairly through fair PA, which will stimulate them to reciprocate the fair treatments towards their organization by displaying desirable work attitudes and behavior. Fairness of performance appraisal will promote employees' welfare and wellbeing, which will oblige them to exhibit positive work attitudes and behavior (Meng & Wu, 2015). Likewise, Krishnan et al. (2018) argued that fair appraisal will generate reciprocal employee obligations, resulting in favorable employee attitudes, such as organizational commitment. Therefore, it is assumed that fair PA will result indesired employee attitudes in the workplace. Thus, the study assumes the following hypotheses:

H1: Fair PA significantly promotes job satisfaction.

H2: Fair PA significantly promotes job involvement.

H3: Fair PA significantly promotes work engagement.

H4: Fair PA significantly promotes organizational commitment.

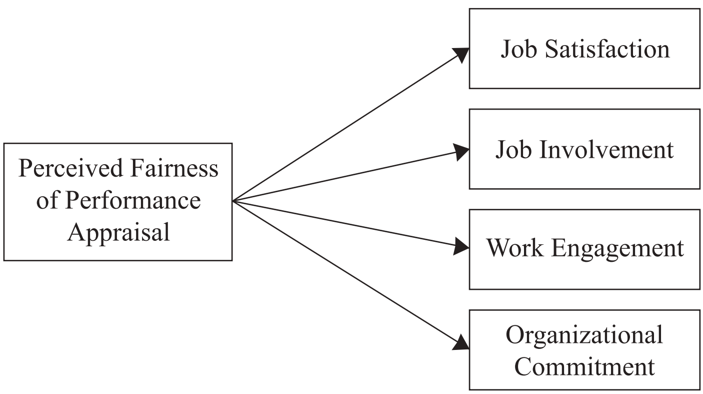

Figure 1.
Research Model
Source: Authors Generated

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The study included all the managerial employees at the branch level working in 10 private commercial banks located in Dhaka City, Bangladesh. A structured questionnaire was created using Google Forms and sent to potential respondents via email addresses collected from known bankers. Each email contained a message explaining the study's objective, instructions, and a request for participation, with a deadline of four weeks to complete and return the survey. Using a convenience sampling method, a total of 207 usable responses were received, representing a response rate of 51.75% out of 400 distributed questionnaires. All responses were found to be usable for the study as they were mandatory to complete, without any missing values. Therefore, the sample size for the study is 207.The profiles of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics.

Demographics	Description	Frequency (N = 207)	Percentage (%)
Year of Experience in Banking Sector	Less than 05 Years	75	36.2
	06-10 Years	69	33.3
	11-15 Years	37	17.9
	16-20 Years	21	10.1
	21 & Above Years	5	3.5
Gender	Male	147	71.0
	Female	60	29.0
Age	20-30 years	75	36.2
	31-40 years	107	51.7
	41-50 Years	20	9.7
	Above 50	5	2.4
Marital Status	Married	50	24.2
	Unmarried	157	75.8
Level of Education	Bachelor	12	4.2
	Master	194	93.7
	MPhil	1	0.5
	PhD	0	0.0

Source: Authors Generated

3.2 Measures

To measure the variables in this research, five-point Likert scales were utilized, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. Perceived fairness of PA was measured with 6 items based on Kavanagh et al.'s (2007) study. A sample item was "my rating was free from bias" with a = 0.95 for the scale. A four-item scale with an alpha value of 0.972, adopted from Jang et al. (2021), was used to measure organizational commitment. An item of the source was "I feel a strong sense of belonging to our organization". The level of work engagement was evaluated using a shorter scale of 9 items developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). "My job inspires me" was a sample item reported in the work engagement scale. Job involvement and job satisfaction were measured with 4-item and 5-item scales respectively based on the study by Lambert and Paoline III (2010). Sample items for the last two constructs were" I live, eat, and breathe my job" and" I feel fairly well satisfied with my job" respectively.

3.3 Analytical Tools

The study utilized SPSS version 25.0 to input and analyze the data. It analyzeddescriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, and correlations) as well as inferential statistics (i.e., regression analysis) to test the formulated hypotheses. In the initial phase, the study evaluated the reliability of each construct by analyzing their Cronbach's Alpha values which were reported within brackets in Table 2. Since all the alpha values (ranging from 0.733 to 0.821) were greater than 0.70, they confirmed reliability of the constructs. Additionally, Harman's single-factor test was conducted on the gathered data to investigate the potential presence of common method variance (CMV). The test indicated that no more than 27.156 % (< 50%) of variance is accounted for by a single factor, thereby validating that CMV is not a concern in this study.

3. Results

The constructs' mean values, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

SL	Latent Variables	Mean	S. D.	1	2	3	4	5
1.	PFPA	3.5878	.47647	(.733)				
2.	Organizational Commitment	3.3829	.58851	.465**	(.778)			
3.	Work Engagement	3.4209	.50574	.499**	.278**	(.795)		
4.	Job Satisfaction	3.8435	.51525	.489**	.359**	.108	(.821)	
5.	Job Involvement	3.5676	.58211	.483**	.407**	.056	.328**	(.753)

Note: S.D = standard deviation; PFPA = perceived fairness of performance appraisal; * and ** denote significance of the correlations at 5% and 1% (2-tailed). Cronbach's Alpha values are figures within brackets.

Source: Authors Calculated

The correlation coefficients as shown in Table 2 indicate that the explanatory variables are positively and significantly correlated with the explained variable.

Table 3.
R Square and Adjusted R Square

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error	Collinearity Statistics	
					Tolerance	VIF
Perceived Fairness of PA	Organizational Commitment	.241	.218	.52041	1.000	1.000
	Work Engagement	.286	.265	.43370		
	Job Satisfaction	.352	.332	.42106		
	Job Involvement	.279	.257	.50165		

Source: Authors Calculated

Table 3 shows R^2 values indicating that organizational commitment explains 24.1%, work engagement 28.6%, job satisfaction 35.2%, and job involvement 27.9% variance in perceived fairness of PA.

Table 4.
ANOVA Results Between Independent and Dependable Variables

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	df	F	Sig.
PFPA	Organizational Commitment	(6, 200)	10.574	.000
	Work Engagement	(6, 200)	13.354	.000
	Job Satisfaction	(6, 200)	18.078	.000
	Job Involvement	(6,200)	12.896	.000

As shown in Table 4, all ANOVA models were found significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating the significance of the regression models.

Table 5.

Regression Coefficients for Predicting Dependent Variables from the Independent Variable

Dependent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		b	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
OC	(Constant)	1.667	.464		3.590	.000
	PFPA	.577	.078	.467	7.442	.000
WE	(Constant)	1.373	.387		3.547	.000
	PFPA	.546	.065	.515	8.459	.000
JS	(Constant)	3.215	.376		8.558	.000
	PFPA	.495	.063	.458	7.893	.000
JI	(Constant)	1.622	.448		3.625	.000
	PFPA	.572	.075	.468	7.65	.000

Note: PFPA = perceived fairness of performance appraisal, OC = organizational commitment, WE = work engagement, JS = job satisfaction, JI = job involvement.

Source: Authors Calculated

Table 5 demonstrates that organizational commitment (H1: b = .457, t = 7.442, $p < 0.001$), work engagement (H2: b = .515, t = 8.459, $p < 0.001$), job satisfaction (H3: b = .458, t = 7.893, $p < 0.001$), and job involvement (H3: b = .468, t = 7.655, $p < 0.001$) were significantly and positively affected by perceived fairness of PA.

The study also measured the impacts of control variables (i.e., gender, education, experience, age, and marital status) on the bankers' attitudes and found that the impacts were insignificant, except that of education level. The educational level was found to have an inverse significant relationship with job involvement and job satisfaction.Moreover, the study, as shown in Table 6, conducted a *hierarchical regression analysis* to assess whether the impacts of the control variables significantly change the impacts of perceived fairness of PA on the four types of bankers' attitudes. The results of the *hierarchical regression analysis* clearly indicate that collective R^2 of all the control variables on organizational commitment, work engagement, job satisfaction, and job involvement were 0.031, 0.031, 0.15, and 0.06, with the largest change in R^2 of job satisfaction. However, these changes in R^2 could not alter the significance levels of the relationship between the perceived fairness of performance appraisal (PA) and the attitudes of the bankers.

Table 6.

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis with Control Variables

	Dependent Variables											
	OC			WE			JS			JI		
Predictors	b	R^2	DR^2	b	R^2	DR^2	b	R^2	DR^2	b	R^2	DR^2
Step1 Control Variables		.031			.031			.15			.068	
Step 2 PFPA	.467***	.241	.210	.515***	.286	.255	.458***	.352	.202	.468***	.279	.211

Note: N = 207; Independent Variable: PFPA = perceived fairness of performance appraisal; Control Variables: Education, Gender, Experience, Marital Status, Age; Dependent Variables: OC = organizational commitment, WE = work engagement, JS = job satisfaction, JI = job involvement.
***$P < 0.001$.

Source: Authors Calculated

5. Discussion

The study discovers that fair performance evaluation significantly promotes favorable employee attitudes, namely job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational commitment, and job involvement. The findings implies that employees respond to equity and organizational justice to form their attitudes towards their jobs and workplace. The finding of positive relation between fairness of PA and organizational commitment aligns with several research findings (Kadiresan et al., 2015; Rubel & Kee, 2015; Salleh et al., 2013). The discovered positive link of PA fairness with work engagement is consistent with the study result of Gupta & Kumar (2013). The finding of association between fair PA and job satisfaction is aligned with Bae (2021)'s study. The findings support the notion of the equity theory that employees tend to exhibit desirable attitudes and behavior when they perceive greater degree of fairness in their performance evaluations. The research also corroborates the idea of the SET that employees reciprocate desirable work attitudes and behavior with fair treatments received from their organizations. Banks should take proactive actions to improve the fairness level of their performance appraisal systems in order to stimulate their bankers' favorable attitudes like job satisfaction, work engagement, job involvement, and organization. In return, it is expected that their front-line bankers will exhibit extra-ordinary in-role and extra-role behaviors to their clients and co-workers, there by improving organizational performance and competitive capability of these banks. For improving performance appraisal fairness, banks may introduce behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS) method for evaluating their bankers' performance. Out of various performance appraisal methods, BARS is generally considered to be a fair appraisal method because it uses specific behavioral examples of job performance, offering a more objective framework for evaluation (PerformYard, 2018).

However, there were a few significant drawbacks to this research, including the limited size of the sample and the use of a convenience sample. It is recommended that future studies on the same association be carried out to address these limitations.

6. Conclusion and Implications

The study makes important theoretical contributions by examining the impact of perceived fairness of PA on various types of attitudes towards works, jobs, and organization. Moreover, the research adds to the understanding of the equity theory by demonstrating how fair treatment within an organization can enhance an employee's motivation to exhibit positive behaviors and attitudes. The study furthers the knowledge of the SET by illustrating how equitable treatment in organizational policies and procedures fosters positive exchange relationships between employers and employees. From practical sense, bank administrators can harness their human capital's full potential by making the appraisal system fair (Jha & Ray, 2022). It is necessary for organizations to develop and implement a fair performance evaluation process, which should be used as the basis for determining employee incentives and promotions.

To sum up, the results of the study indicate that it is crucial to establish a fair performance assessment system in the banking industry to foster commitment and involvement of bankers in their job and organizations, leading to improved employee and organizational performance.

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Appendices

Appendix A.

Regression Coefficients between Control Variable and Organizational Commitment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		b	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.667	.464		3.590	.000
	PFPA	.577	.078	.467	7.442	.000
	Experience	-.030	.039	-.054	-.767	.444
	Gender	-.096	.082	-.074	-1.171	.243
	Age	.017	.062	.020	.267	.790
	MaritalStatus	.130	.092	.095	1.413	.159
	Education	-.206	.138	-.095	-1.499	.135

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational Commitment

Appendix B

Regression Coefficients between Control Variable and Work Engagement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		b	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.373	.387		3.547	.000
	PFPA	.546	.065	.515	8.459	.000
	Experience	.062	.032	.131	1.921	.056
	Gender	-.140	.068	-.126	-2.049	.042
	Age	-.092	.052	-.130	-1.771	.078
	MaritalStatus	-.024	.077	-.020	-.313	.754
	Education	.167	.115	.089	1.457	.147

a. Dependent Variable: Work Engagement

Appendix C.

Regression Coefficients between Control Variable and Job Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		b	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.215	.376		8.558	.000
	PFPA	.495	.063	.458	7.893	.000
	Experience	-.007	.031	-.016	-.239	.812
	Gender	-.050	.066	-.044	-.757	.450
	Age	.068	.050	.095	1.355	.177
	MaritalStatus	.066	.075	.055	.878	.381
	Education	-.631	.111	-.331	-5.659	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction

Appendix D.

Regression Coefficients between Control Variable and Job Involvement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		b	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.622	.448		3.625	.000
	PFPA	.572	.075	.468	7.655	.000
	Experience	-.032	.037	-.058	-.851	.396
	Gender	.079	.079	.075	1.014	.341
	Age	.058	.060	.072	.972	.332
	MaritalStatus	.136	.089	.100	1.531	.127
	Education	-.291	.133	-.135	-2.193	.029

a. Dependent Variable: Job Involvement