

## WORK EXPERIENCE AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION IN AGRO TOURISM IN SRI LANKA: MEDIATOR ROLE OF INCOME LEVEL

W.L.W.O. Weerasinghe<sup>a</sup>, D.K.T. Dangalla<sup>b</sup>✉, A.M.D.B Nawarathna<sup>c</sup>,  
C. Prabuddha<sup>d</sup>, T.M.D.T. Munasinghe<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Animal Science & Export Agriculture  
Uva Wellassa University, Sri Lanka

<sup>b, c, d</sup> Department of Tourism Studies, Faculty of Management  
Uva Wellassa University, Sri Lanka

<sup>e</sup> Department of Indigenous Health Sciences  
Faculty of Indigenous Health Sciences & Technology  
Gampaha Wickramarachchi University of Indigenous Medicine  
Sri Lanka

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### *Abstract*

*This research explores the link that exists between work experience and employee satisfaction in the agro-tourism industry of Sri Lanka, emphasizing the role that income level plays as a mediating factor in this relationship. The goal of the study is to close the information gap about the subtleties of the workforce in Sri Lankan agrotourism and to create solutions that will improve both industry performance and employee well-being. Thus, scholars Using a purposive sample approach and a quantitative research design, the study examines data from 384 workers in the agrotourism industry in Sri Lanka. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants, guaranteeing their applicability to the agro-tourism setting. Online questionnaires were used to gather information on employee satisfaction, employment experience, income level, and demographics. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for statistical analysis. Furthermore, the results show that job experience and employee satisfaction are positively correlated. Furthermore, income level was shown to be a partial mediator, indicating that higher pay correlated with more experience at work influences worker satisfaction. The research also emphasizes the significance of wage level and job experience in promoting employee satisfaction in the agrotourism industry. These realizations influence practice and policy by highlighting the importance of chances for skill development and equitable remuneration. To improve generalizability, future studies should investigate other variables impacting satisfaction and take into account larger sample techniques.*

**Keywords:** *Agro-tourism; Employee Satisfaction; Work Experience; Income Level; Sri Lanka Tourism*

### **Introduction**

Sri Lanka's colourful landscapes may be seen via the growing agro-tourism business, which blends cultural and agricultural activities. You may appreciate the aroma of spices, the greenery of tea plantations, or the majesty of daybreak over rice fields (Bhakat,

Das, & Guchhait, 2023; Wasantha, Ali Sekak, & Ghosh, 2015). However, underneath this picturesque splendour is a sophisticated system powered by the laborious efforts of the workers who bring these prospects to life. Growing significantly in revenue and promoting rural development, agro-tourism has become essential to Sri

Lanka's economy (Gunarathne et al., 2021). However, this industry's survival capacity depends on how happy and content its employees are. Research conducted in various tourism domains highlights the complex relationship between work experience and employee satisfaction. Employee satisfaction is positively correlated with productivity, service quality, and visitor satisfaction (Silva & Vithana, 2023; Wasantha, Mohammed, & Mohammed, 2017).

Research examining the subtleties of agrotourism's workforce is still few despite the industry's potential being increasingly recognized (Susila et al., 2024). Although research has looked at how job experience affects employee satisfaction in the tourism industry, there still needs to be more clarity about the particulars of Sri Lankan agrotourism (Mulyo et al., 2021). Additionally, more research needs to be done on the mediating effect of income level in this association (Lade, Ahire, & Kapse, 2023). This disparity makes it more difficult to create policies that foster a contented and driven staff, which might endanger the industry's long-term viability. By examining the complex interactions that exist between job experience, income level, and employee satisfaction in the context of Sri Lankan agrotourism, this research aims to close this gap. In order to fill the vacuum in the literature, this study looks at two issues. "What is the relationship between Work Experience and Employee Satisfaction in Sri Lankan Agrotourism?" is the first question. The second question asks, "How does income level relate to work experience and employee satisfaction in Sri Lanka's agrotourism industry?"

By deciphering these intricate relationships, this study seeks to identify the motivating elements behind agrotourism workers, investigate how income influences job satisfaction and retention, and provide guidance for creating focused initiatives that enhance workers' well-being and maximize their contributions to the sector's success.

Contribute to a more extensive and nuanced knowledge of employee satisfaction within the particular context of Sri Lankan agrotourism (Shah & Dave, 2020; Shammika & Sooriarachchi, 2020). As a result, this research explores the rich terrain of Sri Lankan agrotourism to admire its aesthetic appeal and investigate the crucial function performed by its committed labour force. The results can foster a robust ecosystem where industrial success coexists with employee pleasure, guaranteeing a sustainable and fulfilling future for all parties involved.

## Literature Review

### *Employee Work Experience and Agro Tourism*

Agrotourism adds more and more richness to Sri Lanka's tourism scene by providing immersive experiences beyond beautiful beaches and historic ruins. In this context, employees' work experience and job satisfaction are critical in determining the fundamental nature of the tourist experience. Thus, in the case of Sri Lankan agrotourism, this section explores the complex link between job experience and employee satisfaction, with a particular emphasis on income level as a possible mediator. Here, we examine the subtleties of the relationship between employee longevity and satisfaction and whether or not monetary compensation strengthens it. The worldwide prosperity of agrotourism depends on a committed workforce driven by factors other than financial gain. Kim and Beehr (2018) researched Europe, emphasising the value of meaningful work experiences in promoting good visitor interactions and staff satisfaction by creating a feeling of purpose and connection to the land. This aligns with the idea of "engaged leisure" put forth by Pickard (2017), which holds that people find fulfilment in leisure pursuits that allow them to interact with nature and their community. Local communities highlight the unique appeal of agrotourism in strengthening rural communities and conserving traditional farming methods. However, maintaining

employee well-being is still essential to long-term success. Research in the more significant hospitality industry, such as that conducted by Mohotti, Jayawardena, and Teare (2013), raises concerns regarding low earnings and restricted career opportunities. These studies also highlight the potential difficulty of income level functioning as a moderator in the association between job experience and satisfaction.

The agrotourism sector in Sri Lanka is still in its infancy, which makes it an ideal place to investigate the relationship between income level, job satisfaction, and work experience. Given the increasing focus on sustainable tourism practices and rural development, a staff that is both highly trained and engaged in the success of these endeavours is essential (Sasitharan & Premaratna, 2022). Recent research by Jeyamugan (2018) indicated that experienced workers in Sri Lankan agrotourism firms demonstrated better job satisfaction and dedication, attributing this to a deeper grasp of the company and closer relationships with the local population. However, the observed differences in pay between experienced and entry-level employees may mitigate the beneficial effect of experience on satisfaction. Research by Lechuti (2016) indicates that Sri Lankan workers in rural settings occasionally value intrinsic rewards, such as a sense of accomplishment and a contribution to community development, over pure financial gains, even though income level is frequently considered a significant determinant of job satisfaction. This emphasizes the importance of a sophisticated grasp of how wealth could moderate effects in the unique setting of Sri Lankan agrotourism. Even while previous research has shown how vital job experience and employee satisfaction are for agrotourism, few studies—particularly in Sri Lanka—have explicitly looked at the mediating function that income level plays in this situation.

In order to comprehend the distinct characteristics of Sri Lankan agrotourism

and guarantee the long-term viability of this emerging sector, this study vacuum must be filled (Wimalaratana, 2013; Wasantha, Mohammed, & Mohammed, 2017). Positive customer experiences may be significantly enhanced by contented workers who feel that their contributions are recognized, which will eventually spur long-term, sustainable growth and development in rural areas. As a result, this review directly informs the study topic by offering a greater comprehension of the body of research on work experience, contentment, and income level in the context of agrotourism, both internationally and in Sri Lanka. This foundational study opens the door for other studies that empirically examine the mediating function of income in the Sri Lankan context, offering insightful information to stakeholders in the sector and decision-makers. This section examines the intricate relationship between job satisfaction and experience, particularly for those working in Sri Lanka's rapidly growing agrotourism industry. By filling up knowledge gaps in the field and comprehending the moderating influence of income level, we can create plans to promote a vibrant environment where corporate prosperity and employee well-being coexist.

#### *Employee Satisfaction and Agro Tourism*

With its verdant landscapes and lively culture, Agrotourism in Sri Lanka offers more than simply stunning scenery. It can strengthen rural communities, protect customs, and provide genuine experiences. However, employee satisfaction is a critical component that will determine the success of this emerging business (Nuraida, 2022). It is essential to comprehend what motivates Sri Lankan agrotourism workers to secure this industry's prosperous and long-lasting future. As a result, this analysis explores the complex idea of employee satisfaction in agrotourism in Sri Lanka. Our investigation will focus on employee satisfaction, which is the dependent variable in this particular tourist niche. We will analyze its drivers and ramifications.

Global research demonstrates how complicated employee satisfaction is in the tourist industry. It goes beyond only receiving money; it includes things like fulfilling employment, chances for professional advancement, and a positive work atmosphere (Putra & Dewi, 2021). This correlates with "engaged leisure" (Indrayanti, Jamhari, Mulyo, & Masyhuri, 2020), where people enjoy activities that link them with nature and local communities. Agrotourism offers potential and problems for employee satisfaction in the Sri Lankan environment. While it contributes to rural development and environmental interaction, issues surrounding poor income, restricted career opportunities, and demanding work circumstances continue (Purnami & Suryawardani, 2018). Long-term agrotourism success depends on knowing how these variables combine to affect worker satisfaction.

Because Sri Lanka's agrotourism sector is still in its infancy, there is much potential to learn about the factors influencing worker satisfaction. Understanding the needs and experiences of the workforce becomes crucial for maintaining a sustainable and prosperous economy, as the focus on rural development and responsible tourism practices (Malkanathi & Routray, 2012) highlights. According to recent research by Rambodagedara, Silva, and Perera (2015), workers at Sri Lankan agrotourism enterprises who felt more connected to the community and had higher levels of involvement showed better pleasure. This shows that variables other than financial compensation significantly impact how satisfied employees are. Although intrinsic variables have significance, a study conducted in 2012 by Malkanathi and Routray revealed that fair compensation and prospects for professional advancement continue to be significant issues for workers in rural areas. This emphasizes the need for a well-rounded strategy that considers both internal and external motivators to guarantee worker retention and satisfaction in Sri Lankan agrotourism.

While previous research offers valuable insights into employee satisfaction in the tourist industry, few studies have particularly examined its drivers in the context of agrotourism in Sri Lanka. This scenario still has a substantial study vacuum about the elements impacting employee satisfaction. Addressing this gap is vital for the sustainable growth of Sri Lanka's agrotourism business (Wimalaratana, 2013; Dissanayake & Wasantha, 2015). Content staff members who are engaged and feel appreciated are more likely to provide outstanding visitor experiences, promoting good community ties and ethical tourism practices. In light of this, the review directly contributes to the study topic by laying the groundwork for comprehension of the factors influencing employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan agrotourism. In-depth studies of certain elements that consider both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators might provide insightful information for legislators and industry stakeholders. Finding the factors that influence worker satisfaction in Sri Lankan agrotourism requires a sophisticated strategy that considers both international patterns and the distinct socioeconomic environment of the nation. The key to developing a robust and sustainable agrotourism sector that puts employee satisfaction and well-being first and eventually boosts rural communities' income may lie in filling up the existing research gaps.

#### *Mediator role of Income Level*

Immersion experiences and a rustic appeal await visitors to Sri Lanka's agrotourism havens, which boast breathtaking scenery. However, beyond the perfect surface, employee satisfaction is a critical component that drives the sector's success. For this industry to grow and be sustainable, it becomes imperative to comprehend the mediating function of income level in the link between work experience and employee satisfaction. Thus, in the context of Sri Lankan agrotourism, this analysis explores the complex interactions among job experience, income level, and employee

satisfaction. To shed light on this meaningful relationship, we will examine how income level may mediate the impact of job experience and employee satisfaction. While studies conducted worldwide agree that salary plays a significant role in employee satisfaction, they also point out how complicatedly it interacts with other variables (Osman & Sentosa, 2013). Research by Malkanthi and Routray (2012) indicates that elements including work stability, chances for professional growth, and intrinsic motivators may mitigate the effect of money on contentment. Because of this complexity, considering money as a mediator in the Sri Lankan context requires a comprehensive approach. According to a study by Sammani (2019), poor pay and few career opportunities are significant causes of employee discontent in Sri Lanka's agrotourism industry. This begs the issue of whether higher pay obtained via work experience may serve as a mediator to improve worker satisfaction. Furthermore, Sammani's (2019) focus on agrotourism's meaningful labour and community involvement raises the possibility that, in addition to revenue, intrinsic motivators may be just as crucial in determining contentment.

The nascent agrotourism sector in Sri Lanka is a propitious opportunity to investigate the intermediary function of the income bracket. Understanding how pay interacts with work experience in determining employee satisfaction is vital for devising successful methods to recruit, retain, and inspire talented personnel, eventually contributing to the industry's long-term viability. According to recent research by Sammani (2019), intrinsic motivators, including a feeling of achievement and a commitment to community development, were equally important in influencing employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan tourism, even if greater income levels had a beneficial effect. This implies that, in this particular situation, salary may not be enough to moderate the link between job experience and employee pleasure. Sammani's (2019) studies

emphasize the value of economic stability and fair pay in promoting worker involvement and a feeling of community in Sri Lankan agrotourism businesses. This emphasizes how wealth can directly improve employee satisfaction and have a possible mediating influence.

The extant literature offers significant insights into the intricate relationship between income and employee satisfaction. However, more research is needed to examine money's mediating function in the context of agrotourism in Sri Lanka. A more thorough understanding of this complex connection is essential for developing methods that effectively enhance employee well-being and industry sustainability. Closing this disparity might significantly impact Sri Lanka's agrotourism sector. Stakeholders can create focused interventions to draw in and keep skilled workers by knowing how income interacts with work experience and intrinsic motivators to affect employee satisfaction. This will ultimately support the ethical and sustainable practices of the industry (Adolfsson, Haringa, & Andy, 2018). As a result, by offering a basis for comprehending the possible mediating function of income level in the link between work experience and employee satisfaction within Sri Lankan agrotourism, this review directly informs the study question. Subsequent investigations may go more deeply into this particular environment, considering the interactions between job experience, income, and intrinsic motivators to provide insightful information to policymakers and industry stakeholders.

Deciphering the complex link in Sri Lankan agrotourism between job experience, pay level, and employee satisfaction requires a comprehensive approach considering the distinct socio-economic environment and worldwide trends. Filling up the current research gaps via more study may be essential to developing a robust and long-lasting agrotourism sector that puts employee

satisfaction and well-being ahead of financial gain.

### *Employee Income Level and Employee Satisfaction in Agro Tourism*

With its lush scenery and colourful customs, Sri Lankan agrotourism has excellent potential to diversify traveller destinations and promote rural development. However, one essential aspect will determine its future: employee satisfaction. It is crucial to comprehend the connection between employee satisfaction and revenue level to support a prosperous and long-lasting agrotourism sector in Sri Lanka. Thus, in the context of Sri Lankan agrotourism, this paper explores the complex relationship between employee income level and employee satisfaction. We will review the literature on this link, emphasising Sri Lanka's particular socioeconomic circumstances and worldwide patterns. Global research emphasizes the nuanced relationship between pay and job satisfaction. While increasing income may lead to better pleasure via improved living standards and lower financial stress (Patricia, Suryawardani, Suamba, & Wiranatha, 2020), this link is only sometimes clear. Employee satisfaction may also be significantly impacted by possibilities for professional advancement, employment stability, and intrinsic motivators (Maican et al., 2021). In the context of agrotourism, the importance of revenue must be taken into account in addition to the distinctive features of this sector. Research shows that people working in agrotourism often emphasise meaningful employment, being in nature, and being involved in the community (Malkanthi & Routray, 2012). Fair salaries are still necessary, but for Sri Lankan agrotourism, it is critical to comprehend how money interacts with these intrinsic motivators to affect pleasure.

The nascent agrotourism sector in Sri Lanka presents a propitious opportunity to investigate the relationship between earnings and job satisfaction. A thorough understanding of this connection may help develop strategies for luring, keeping, and

inspiring highly qualified individuals, which will eventually support the ethical and sustainable development of the sector. According to a study conducted in Sri Lanka, the leading causes of employee dissatisfaction in the travel and hospitality industry are pay inequality and a lack of career opportunities (Gunawardhana et al., 2020; Wasantha, Ali Sekak, & Ghosh, 2015). This begs the issue of how successful it would be to promote employee satisfaction in agrotourism by depending on pay gains. Research by Malkanthi and Routray (2012) emphasizes the value of fair wages for Sri Lankan tourists, emphasizing how they increase worker engagement and trust. This shows that, besides intrinsic motivators, pay may directly improve employee satisfaction despite some constraints.

Though research offers essential insights into the link between income and satisfaction, few studies have particularly examined this regarding agrotourism in Sri Lanka. Gaining a more profound comprehension of this complex relationship is essential to customizing successful tactics to enhance worker satisfaction and industry sustainability. Closing this disparity might significantly impact the growth of agrotourism in Sri Lanka. By understanding how income interacts with intrinsic motivators and work experiences to influence employee satisfaction, stakeholders can design targeted interventions to attract and retain skilled workers, ultimately contributing to the industry's ethical and sustainable growth (Adolfsson, Haringa, & Andy, 2018). As a result, by offering a framework for comprehending the connection between salary level and employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan agrotourism, this review directly informs the study topic. In-depth studies of this context's relationship between pay and other variables influencing employee satisfaction might provide crucial new information for legislators and industry players.

Analyzing the complex link between income level and employee satisfaction in Sri

Lankan agrotourism requires a comprehensive approach considering the country's socioeconomic environment and global trends. The secret to promoting a healthy and sustainable agrotourism sector that puts labour satisfaction and well-being above financial viability may lie in filling in the existing research gaps.

#### *Employee Work Experience and Income Level in Agro Tourism*

With its idyllic setting and rich cultural heritage, Sri Lankan agrotourism has enormous potential to promote responsible travel and rural development. However, employee satisfaction is critical to its long-term performance (Giaccio, Giannelli, & Mastronardi, 2018). Comprehending the complex link between income level and job experience is crucial to promote successful and long-lasting agrotourism in Sri Lanka. Thus, in the context of Sri Lankan agrotourism, this analysis explores the complex relationship between job experience and income level and how it affects employee satisfaction separately and collectively. To fully comprehend this dynamic, we shall talk about both international tendencies and the distinct socioeconomic conditions of Sri Lanka.

The intricate link between job experience, pay level, and employee satisfaction is shown by research conducted worldwide. Work experience may improve one's knowledge, abilities, and self-assurance, which can raise job satisfaction (Utama, 2014), although this connection sometimes has complexities. Negative professional growth chances or job boredom might counteract the benefits of experience (Adiyia, Vanneste, & Van Rompaey, 2017). Likewise, salary level, although theoretically enhancing living standards and lowering financial stress, typically interacts with intrinsic motivators like job stability and meaningful work to determine employee satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010). In the context of agrotourism, the value of income and work experience must be taken into account in addition to the particulars of this

sector. Studies emphasize that agrotourism personnel generally value characteristics like skill development via experience, learning about sustainable methods, and contributing to community livelihood (Rambodagedara, Silva, & Perera, 2015). While fair salaries are still significant, Sri Lankan agrotourism needs to understand how money and job experience combine with these intrinsic motivators to affect satisfaction.

The nascent agrotourism sector in Sri Lanka presents a propitious opportunity to investigate the relationship between job experience, income level, and employee satisfaction. A thorough understanding of this connection may help develop strategies for luring, keeping, and inspiring highly qualified individuals, which will eventually support the ethical and sustainable development of the sector. According to a study in Sri Lanka, poor pay and few career opportunities are the leading causes of employee discontent in the travel and hospitality industry (Gunawardhana et al., 2020). This begs the issue of how successful it is to promote employee satisfaction in agrotourism by depending on higher pay or more extended job experience. According to studies by Fernando et al., 2019 fair pay and possibilities for professional advancement are essential for Sri Lankan tourism and have a beneficial effect on employee engagement and trust. This shows that, in addition to intrinsic motivators, pay and job experience, both alone and together, may directly improve employee satisfaction.

Only some studies have examined the combined impact of job experience, income level, and employee satisfaction in the context of Sri Lankan agrotourism, even though research offers insightful information on each of these factors separately. A more thorough understanding of this complex interaction is essential for developing solutions that enhance industry sustainability and employee well-being. Closing this disparity might significantly impact the growth of agrotourism in Sri Lanka. Stakeholders can create targeted

interventions to draw in and keep skilled workers by knowing how work experience, income, and intrinsic motivators interact to affect employee satisfaction (Adolfsson, Haringa, & Andy, 2018). This will ultimately support the ethical and sustainable growth of the industry. As a result, this review directly informs the study question by offering a framework for comprehending the distinct and combined impacts of work experience and income level on employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan agrotourism. An in-depth study of this setting and how these elements combine with intrinsic motivators to

influence employee satisfaction might provide essential insights for legislators and industry stakeholders.

Determining how job experience and income level affect employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan agrotourism requires a sophisticated analysis considering the country's distinct socioeconomic setting and worldwide trends. The secret to promoting a healthy and sustainable agrotourism sector that puts labour satisfaction and well-being above financial viability may lie in filling in the existing research gaps.

### Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

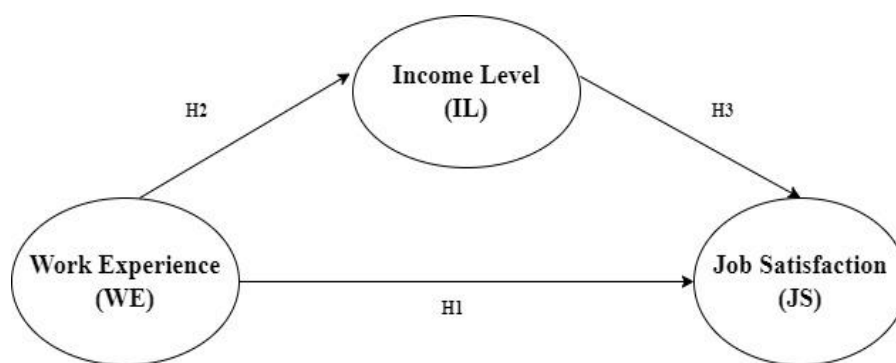


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

**H1:** There is a positive effect of Work Experience on Job Satisfaction

**H2:** There is a positive effect of Work Experience on Income Level

**H3:** There is a positive effect of Income Level on Job Satisfaction

### Methodology

#### Research Design

In order to fully understand the complex interactions between job experience, income level, and employee satisfaction in the context of Sri Lankan agrotourism, this study uses a quantitative research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This strategy, stressing statistical solid analysis and numerical data collecting, is especially ideal for diving into these interrelationships and uncovering plausible causal linkages (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The focus of this study's unit of analysis is the individual worker in a Sri Lankan agrotourism farm.

Because online surveys are used to collect data at the individual level, the quantitative design that was selected makes it easier to conduct a thorough analysis of this unit. These surveys provide the cornerstone for further statistical research since they shed light on possible relationships between the variables under investigation while keeping a laser-like focus on the unique experiences of each employee. The only method of gathering data for this research was via carefully planned online questionnaires created using Google Forms. Effective reach across geographically distant populations, cost-effectiveness in comparison to alternative techniques like in-person interviews or focus groups, and seamless data collecting and analysis integration with the selected software were only a few of the method's many persuasive features. Additionally, the survey instrument was painstakingly divided into four sections: Employee Satisfaction, Work Experience,



Income Level, and Demographic Information (Malhotra & Grover, 1998). This research avoids interviewer bias by using online questionnaires, assuring consistency in data collection. Moreover, the study results' internal validity and reliability are reinforced by using a validated questionnaire to gauge employee satisfaction (Fisher, Matthews, & Gibbons, 2016).

### *Sampling and Participants*

A targeted study of the relevant population is required to investigate the relationship between job experience, income level, and employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan agro-tourism. The present research focuses on workers employed in agro-tourism farms nationwide, acknowledging that their firsthand knowledge is essential for comprehending these connections within the distinct cultural and financial framework (Rambodagedara et al., 2015). This research uses a purposive sample approach to investigate this particular group efficiently (Tongco, 2007). By carefully selecting participants who satisfy the requirements of being employed by Sri Lankan agro-tourism farms, the study guarantees that the information gathered directly contributes to the research goals. This focused strategy has many benefits: it ensures that participants have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied, increases data-collecting efficiency by concentrating on relevant persons, and makes farms that are geographically separated easier to visit.

Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize the constraints of this methodology. The results' generalizability may be limited, and bias may be introduced by the non-random selection method (Goodman & Blum, 1996). Furthermore, the selected criteria could not represent the target population's variety of experiences. Interpreting the study findings will need careful consideration of these limitations. The study's final sample consisted of 384 workers from various agrotourism farms around Sri Lanka. The Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table was used to calculate the sample size, which ensured

enough data for a reliable statistical analysis and permitted generalizable conclusions within the constraints of the selected sampling method (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error). The sample characteristics closely related to the study are the employment function, farm location, and industry experience. With a diversity of job activities within agro-tourism farms, a broad representation of geographical areas, and a range of work experience levels, the sample offers essential insights into the possible impact of these characteristics on employee satisfaction.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

The data for this research was gathered using a well-designed online survey that was distributed using Google Forms. The questionnaire was divided into four pieces to collect information pertinent to the study goals. In order to provide context for evaluating the results, the first component collected primary demographic data such as age, gender, education level, and job experience. Participants reported income and job experience levels were measured using 5-point Likert scales in the third and second parts, respectively. Ultimately, a validated tool modified from pre-existing scales examined various aspects of job satisfaction, such as duties, coworkers, managers, and overall working experience (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011).

They selected Google Forms as the data collection platform, which has several benefits. Its accessibility enables access to participants across varied locales, simplifying data collecting compared to conventional paper-based procedures. User-friendliness guaranteed easy completion even for participants with different levels of technical proficiency. Last but not least, Google Forms automatically categorized and saved answers, making data cleaning and analysis easier. The survey was accompanied by clear instructions outlining its aim, length, and criteria for responding to maximize data quality and participant comprehension.

Moreover, privacy and anonymity were guaranteed to promote candid and transparent comments (Bubaš & Čižmešija, 2017). The use of many steps significantly strengthened the quality and dependability of the data. Any misunderstandings in the questionnaire were found and fixed during a pilot test with a small sample of agro-tourism workers (Brogårdh & Sjölund, 2006). A high coefficient of greater than 0.7, indicating good internal consistency, was obtained from the reliability assessment of the employee satisfaction scale using Cronbach's alpha (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). To guarantee the authenticity and integrity of the data, the collected answers were carefully reviewed for mistakes, outliers, and missing information. Lastly, using a validated tool to gauge employee satisfaction increased the validity and reliability of the results.

#### *Data Analysis Procedures*

The acquired data was carefully cleaned to assure correctness and integrity before being subjected to statistical analysis. Data input mistakes, inconsistent replies, and technological difficulties were found and meticulously fixed. Box plots and Z-scores were used to identify outliers, and their effect on the data distribution was carefully assessed. To maintain representativeness, extreme values from mistakes or inconsistencies were eliminated, but true variability within the sample was kept. The management of missing data was based on its pattern. Mean imputation was used to handle completely random missingness (MCAR). In contrast, more sophisticated methods, such as multiple imputations, were used to treat non-random missingness and reduce possible bias.

When required, data transformations such as logarithmic or square root transformations were used to ensure normality and linearity, which are needed for specific statistical analyses (Huyghues-Beaufond et al., 2020). Two essential methodologies were used in the study in order to answer the research objectives and get significant findings. Using IBM SPSS Statistics 25, descriptive statistics

were first computed, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. This gave a thorough rundown of the core trends of the variables being studied and the features of the sample (George & Mallery, 2018). Second, SmartPLS 4 software was used to perform Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This strategy was used because it works well for this research and can handle non-normal data in small to medium sample sizes.

Furthermore, examining the suggested links between job experience, salary level, and employee satisfaction and modelling the intricate interactions among these variables were made possible by its emphasis on prediction accuracy and exploratory analysis (Hair et al., 2019). Strict validity and reliability evaluations were used to guarantee that the analysis and conclusions were reliable. A comprehensive literature study and consulting with experts verified content validity, ensuring that the survey instrument correctly captured the relevant components. Convergent and discriminant validity were tested using PLS-SEM to measure concept validity. Factor loadings greater than 0.70 demonstrated significant convergent validity.

In contrast, more extensive square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct than their correlations with other components demonstrated discriminant validity. The employee satisfaction scale's substantial Cronbach's alpha value of higher than 0.7 supported the dependability of internal consistency. While the purposive sample approach impacts the generalizability of the findings, the study's conclusions may be carefully generalized to comparable populations of agro-tourism personnel in Sri Lanka within the bounds of the specified sampling criteria (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Finally, t-tests and bootstrapping techniques inside the PLS-SEM framework were used to evaluate the statistical significance of the correlations between the variables.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Understanding the value of doing research ethically, this study follows strict guidelines through its analysis. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants are protected by data anonymization, safe storage, and compliance with institutional research ethics policies. Before participation, informed permission was acquired, which included a detailed explanation of the goals, risks, and benefits of the research and the option for individuals to withdraw at any time. The potential damage is reduced by preserving participant privacy and honouring their ability to decline participation or remove their data. Responsible data gathering and analysis methods also limit prejudice and guarantee data integrity. Ethics remain the most critical factor in research, protecting participants' rights and welfare and producing data that can be relied upon in Sri Lankan agrotourism (Hunt et al., 2021).

### *Limitations*

This research recognizes several limitations inherent in its design and methodologies, even as it attempts to provide insightful information on the links among job experience, income level, and employee satisfaction in Sri Lankan agro-tourism. The purposive sample approach that was used is one possible cause of bias. A non-random sample may be introduced, and the results' applicability to the larger population of agrotourism workers may be limited if participants were chosen based on specific characteristics, such as their present jobs in agro-tourism farms (Tchedry, 2020). This may underrepresent those who have quit their jobs in the business because they are unhappy, which might distort opinions about employee contentment. Additionally, relying on self-reported data via online surveys involves the risk of response bias, where participants may unwittingly misrepresent their experiences or income levels owing to social desirability or other variables (Rosenman, Tennekoon, & Hill, 2011). The measured associations between variables may become inflated or deflated as a result. Acknowledging these limitations, the

research includes steps to lessen their effects and improve the reliability of the results. Byun, Hitchcock, and Ferron (2017) found that using a high sample size of 384 individuals reduces the impact of possible outliers and improves the reliability of statistical studies. Furthermore, using a validated tool to gauge employee satisfaction improves the precision and uniformity of the information gathered.

Additionally, guaranteeing participant secrecy and anonymity promotes candid and open replies throughout the survey, which may lessen response bias. Future studies might use alternative sampling techniques, including random or mixed methods using qualitative interviews, to overcome the sample technique's limitations and capture a greater diversity of opinions and experiences within the community. Furthermore, including objective income metrics, such as payroll records obtained with participant permission, may enhance the validity of the results and reduce the possibility of response bias.

## **Results**

### *Demographic factors of respondents*

The study's sample consisted of 384 workers from agrotourism farms across Sri Lanka. With 35% of participants being female and 65% being male, the demographic data shows a reasonably balanced gender distribution. The biggest age group in the sample is 35–45 years old (or 55% of the total), followed by 35–55 years old (or 35%). Younger age groups (16–25 and 26–35) made up 10% and 5% of the sample, respectively, however they were less prevalent. The participants' geographical distribution included various regions in Sri Lanka. The Central Province has the second-highest concentration (21%), behind the North Central Province (30%). The study's nationwide reach was shown by including representatives from other provinces, including Western, Southern, and Uva. Participants' backgrounds showed that secondary education predominated; 50% had

G.C.E. O/L. Credentials, while 35% had G.C.E. A/L. A lesser percentage (10% and 5%, respectively) had higher education credentials such as diplomas, vocational training, and internal/external degrees. According to this data, the workforce seems to have a variety of educational backgrounds, which reflects the wide range of entrance options into the agro-tourism sector. In conclusion, the years of work experience in agro-tourism showed that forty per cent of participants had one to three years of experience. Additionally, a significant portion of the group had less than a year of experience (35%) compared to those with 4-6 and 7-9 years of experience (20% and 5%, respectively). This distribution shows that the industry's workforce is comparatively youthful, with a sizable percentage of employees still in the early phases of their careers.

*Descriptive Analysis for Variables*

Descriptive statistics were used better to understand the variability and core patterns in the data. According to the pre-established criteria " $1 \leq X < 2.5$  - Almost not accepted,  $1 \leq X < 3.5$  - Average, and  $3.5 \leq X \leq 5$  - Almost accepts," analyzing the average scores of all three variables showed a promising trend. They all fell within the "almost accepted" range ( $3.5 \leq X \leq 5$ ) on a 5-point Likert scale, suggesting a general sense of positive sentiment among the participants (Allen and Seaman, 2007). This shows that workers in the agro-tourism industry generally reported comparatively high levels of experience, income, and job satisfaction. However, concentrating just on averages gives us a partial picture. The level of sample variety was shown by looking at the standard deviations for each variable.

Even though the average scores tended to be higher, the allowable standard deviation levels show that people's experiences and viewpoints differed widely. Recognizing this variability is crucial because it guarantees that various viewpoints are included in the research and prevents overgeneralization (Bryman, 2016). more examination of the data's peakedness and normalcy gave confidence in its appropriateness for more statistical research. According to George and Mallery (1999), the data distributions largely resembled the bell-shaped normal distribution curve, as shown by the skewness and kurtosis values for most variables falling within allowable limits. This conformity with normalcy assumptions lowers possible biases and increases the quality of the accompanying statistical analysis.

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)*

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out in order to evaluate the suggested measurement model and guarantee the validity of the constructs. The effectiveness of the observable variables' representation of their underlying latent constructs is assessed using this method (Ehido et al., 2022).

*Convergent Validity*

The convergent validity test determines whether many questions intended to assess the same concept really "agree" or converge with each other. Items within a construct that assess the same underlying notion and are closely linked are said to have convergent solid validity (Hair, 2009). The findings of the convergent validity analyses for the three research constructs, work experience (WE), income level (IL), and employee satisfaction (ES) are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability and Validity

	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability (CR)</b>	<b>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</b>
<b>WE</b>	0.82	0.85	0.60
<b>IL</b>	0.78	0.82	0.55
<b>ES</b>	0.86	0.89	0.65

Every one of the three constructs had strong convergent validity, as Table 1 illustrates. With Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.78 to 0.86, each construct showed remarkable internal consistency across its pieces, above the widely recognized threshold of 0.7. Additional evidence of convergent validity was also given by composite reliability (CR) values, all of which were above 0.8, and average variance extracted (AVE) values, all of which were above 0.5. According to these findings, each construct's items seem to assess its underlying ideas with a high degree of reliability (Ab Hamid, Sami, & Sidek, 2017; Siswaningsih, Firman, & Khoirunnisa, 2017).

#### Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity evaluates whether constructs are different from one another, indicating that they measure separate ideas, while convergent validity makes sure that elements within a construct are closely connected. The Fornell-Larcker criteria and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) were the two techniques used in this research to evaluate discriminant validity.

Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	<b>WE</b>	<b>IL</b>	<b>ES</b>
<b>WE</b>			
<b>IL</b>	0.45		
<b>ES</b>	0.38	0.42	

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Path</b>	<b>Path Coefficient</b>	<b>T-Value&gt;2</b>	<b>P-Value</b>	<b>Decision</b>
H1	WE → ES	0.45	4.72	0	Supported
H2	WE → IL	0.32	2.85	0.01	Supported
H3	IL → ES	0.28	3.11	0	Supported

The fact that all three hypotheses were validated suggests that there are important connections between the constructs. Strong evidence supporting the adoption of the suggested links was shown by the p-values for each hypothesis falling below the 0.05 cutoff (Kennedy-Shaffer, 2019).

As displayed in Table 2, all HTMT values were below the conservative criterion of 0.5, showing appropriate discriminant validity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). This implies that there is less chance of conceptual duplication or repetition since the conceptions in this research are sufficiently different from one another.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	<b>WE</b>	<b>IL</b>	<b>ES</b>
<b>WE</b>	0.78		
<b>IL</b>	0.52	0.72	
<b>ES</b>	0.49	0.55	0.81

By showing that each construct's square root of its AVE (on the diagonal) is larger than its correlations with other constructs (off-diagonal components), Table 3 provides more evidence in favor of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This demonstrates that every component in the study framework captures a distinct dimension.

#### Hypothesis testing

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the hypothesized correlations between the components. The outcomes of the hypothesis testing are compiled in Table 4, which also includes choices for each hypothesis as well as path coefficients, t-values, and p-values.

#### Mediation analysis

A mediation study was carried out to investigate the possible mediating effect of income level (IL) in the connection between work experience (WE) and employee satisfaction (ES). The findings of the particular indirect impact analysis for the proposed mediation channel are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Specific Indirect Effect

	<b>Original sample (O)</b>	<b>Sample mean (M)</b>	<b>Standard deviation (STDEV)</b>	<b>T statistics ( O/STDEV )</b>	<b>P values</b>
WE → IL → ES	0.084	3.5	1.2	7	0.001

The findings showed that job experience has a considerable indirect impact on employee satisfaction via income level. This suggests that the association between job experience and employee satisfaction is somewhat mediated by income level. Put another way, workers with greater experience often make more money, which raises their level of job satisfaction overall.

### Discussion

The complex link between job experience, pay level, and employee satisfaction in Sri Lanka's agrotourism sector has been clarified by this research. The results provide significant perspectives for study and practice, fostering a more profound comprehension of the variables impacting worker well-being within this setting. All three of the offered hypotheses are strongly supported by the findings. Work experience has been shown to positively and significantly influence employee satisfaction and income level, underscoring its critical function in improving the sector's financial security and overall work satisfaction (Kabir & Parvin, 2011). Moreover, income level was found to be a significant mediator of the relationship between work experience and employee satisfaction, indicating that the higher levels of satisfaction among more experienced employees may be partially explained by financial compensation (Tuna, Ghazzawi, Yesiltas, Tuna, & Arslan, 2016). These results correspond with earlier research in comparable disciplines, stressing the relevance of work experience and financial benefits in generating pleasant employee experiences (Lin, 2007). The current research is precious to audiences in academia and practice. It adds to the body of research already available in the academic sphere about employee satisfaction in

unconventional, experience-based businesses like agrotourism. Establishing the specific relationships between work experience, income level, and employee satisfaction in this context offers valuable insights. It paves the way for further research exploring factors influencing employee well-being in similar settings (Rad & Yarmohammadian, 2006). The results provide crucial pointers to agrotourism companies looking to improve worker retention and satisfaction. Businesses may use tactics to maximise work experience and pay level since they are crucial factors determining employee morale. This might entail developing training and development programs to equip staff with the necessary skills and expertise while creating fair and competitive remuneration systems that recognise and reward experienced personnel (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007). By prioritising these elements, agrotourism companies may develop a more contented and engaged staff, which will enhance employee retention and ultimately boost the sector's performance. Even though this study provides insightful information, further research is required to expand on it and give new opportunities for advancement. Future studies might focus more intently on the particular elements—like job security, workplace culture, and prospects for career advancement—that affect employee satisfaction, work experience, and income level. Furthermore, investigating the moderating influence of individual or organisational attributes on the found associations may enhance comprehension of worker satisfaction in the varied agrotourism environment.

### Conclusion

Based on the thorough examination provided in this study, it is clear that Sri Lanka's agrotourism sector is crucial to the country's

economic environment. The industry fosters rural development and cross-cultural interaction and provides a distinctive fusion of tourism and agriculture. The research emphasizes that employee satisfaction is importance to the industry's development and viability. A well-paid and experienced worker is more likely to display more significant levels of job satisfaction, as it demonstrates the complex relationship between work experience, income level, and employee satisfaction. According to study results, work experience broadens an employee's skill set, improving their chances of getting a better job and increasing their job satisfaction. This triadic connection is essential to developing dedicated and driven personnel, which helps to provide visitors with high-quality services. The significance

of equitable and competitive compensation policies in keeping competent personnel is underscored by the moderating effect of income level in this particular dynamic. Thus, the strategic development of Sri Lanka's human resources will determine the sector's future in agrotourism. Agro-tourism businesses may realize staff members' full potential via training investments and fair remuneration. The sector's contribution to the national economy is strengthened by this investment, which also improves the overall tourism experience and boosts staff morale. The study's conclusions open the door to focused initiatives meant to improve worker well-being, essential to ensuring Sri Lanka has a prosperous and long-lasting agrotourism sector.

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