



Can Canadian institutions drive **better enrolment** through a **more engaged workforce**?

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Today's topics

1. The student is a customer
2. Employee engagement & student satisfaction
3. Employee × customer synergy
4. Analyzing Canadian post-secondary workers
5. Implications for practice:
building employee engagement to foster
student enrolment

Funding disclosure

This project received partial financial support from The Taft University System Grant Program and the Bow Valley College Employee Development Fund.

Research ethics disclosure

This project involved human subjects and was reviewed and approved by the WHTU Institutional Review Board prior to research activities. Principal researcher is TCPS 2 CORE-2022 certified.

A high-angle photograph of a modern library atrium. Several students are seated at round white tables with orange chairs, working on laptops and books. A wooden handrail and metal railing run along a staircase in the background. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a daytime setting.

The student is a customer



Employee engagement × customer return

Glassdoor ratings × customer satisfaction¹

- Meta-analysis of 293 worker surveys and 300,000 customer surveys
- Each Glassdoor star correlated with 3.2% higher customer score²

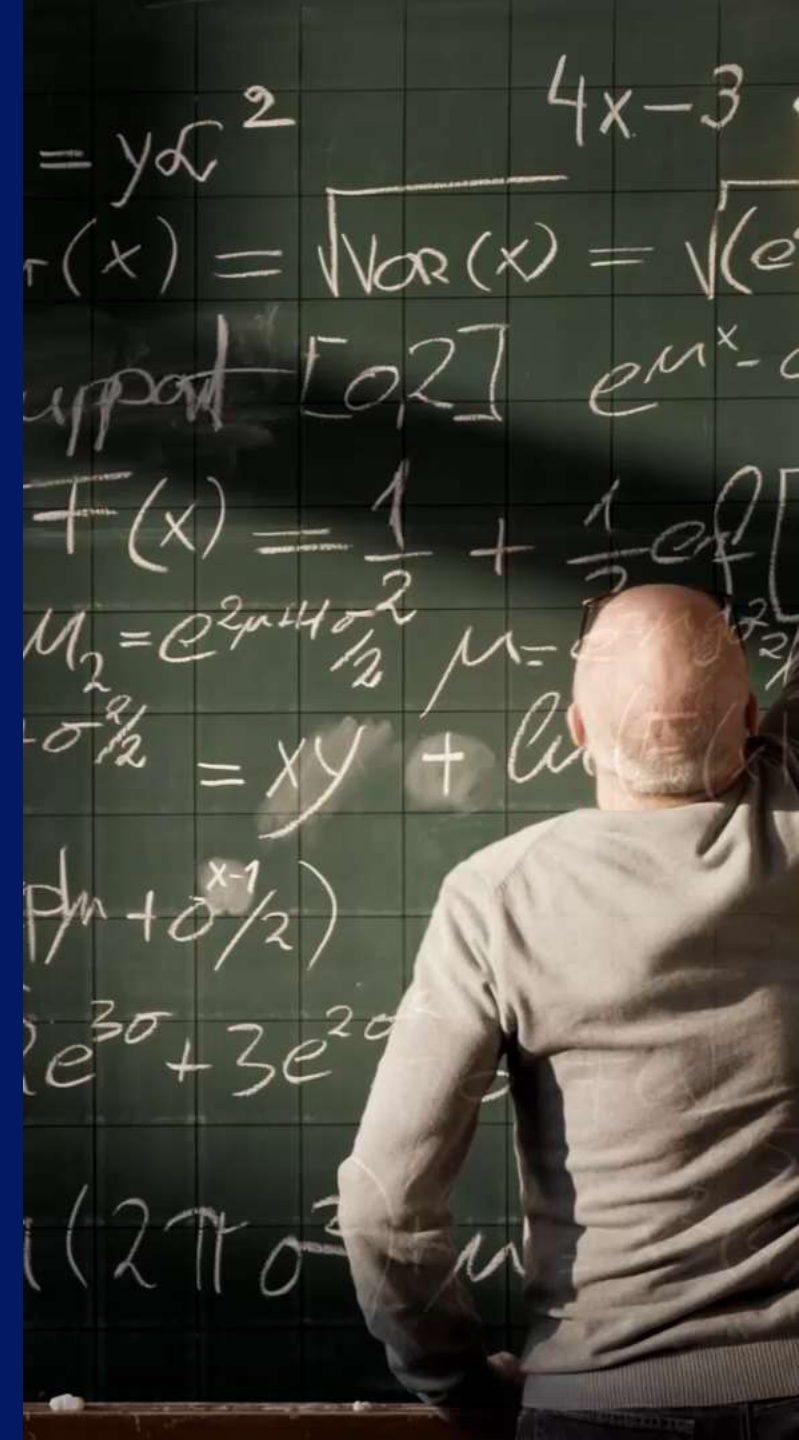
Engaged workers create mixed experience

- Increased empathy and focus with clients linked with higher employee job satisfaction
- Came at expense of higher wait times



Engaged professors × student satisfaction

- 351 faculty and 8,667 students in southeast United States
- More engaged professors indirectly contribute to improved institutional revenue and organizational performance



Negative employee engagement × negative client experiences

- Banking sector workers¹: reduced customer loyalty after high employee turn-over and poor employee morale
- Restaurant employees²: Poor employee engagement linked to lower customer spend and customer experience
- University workers³: Increased bureaucracy, role ambiguity, inadequate resources lead to counterproductive workplace behaviours

Kahn's theory of employee engagement

- Meaningfulness: finding purpose and value in one's work contributions
- Psychological safety: feeling secure and respected to share and contribute freely.
- Psychological availability: being physically and emotionally ready to engage in work



Study of Western Canadian Post- Secondary Workers

Research Design

- Qualitative case study¹
- Front-line student service workers² at Western Canadian PSIs
- One-on-one interviews (8-12 participants) and focus group interview (4-6 participants)
- Thematic analysis³ with data triangulation⁴



Respondent group

- 11 total participants (quota of 8-12)
- Diverse jobs: recruitment, admissions, transcripts, advising, student success, housing, financial aid
- 6 from colleges, 5 from universities
- 8 participants from Alberta, 3 from BC
- 8 from rural communities, 3 from urban centres¹



One-on-one interview findings

- Individual + institutional alignment
- Interpersonal dynamics + workplace culture
- Overwhelm + emotional labour

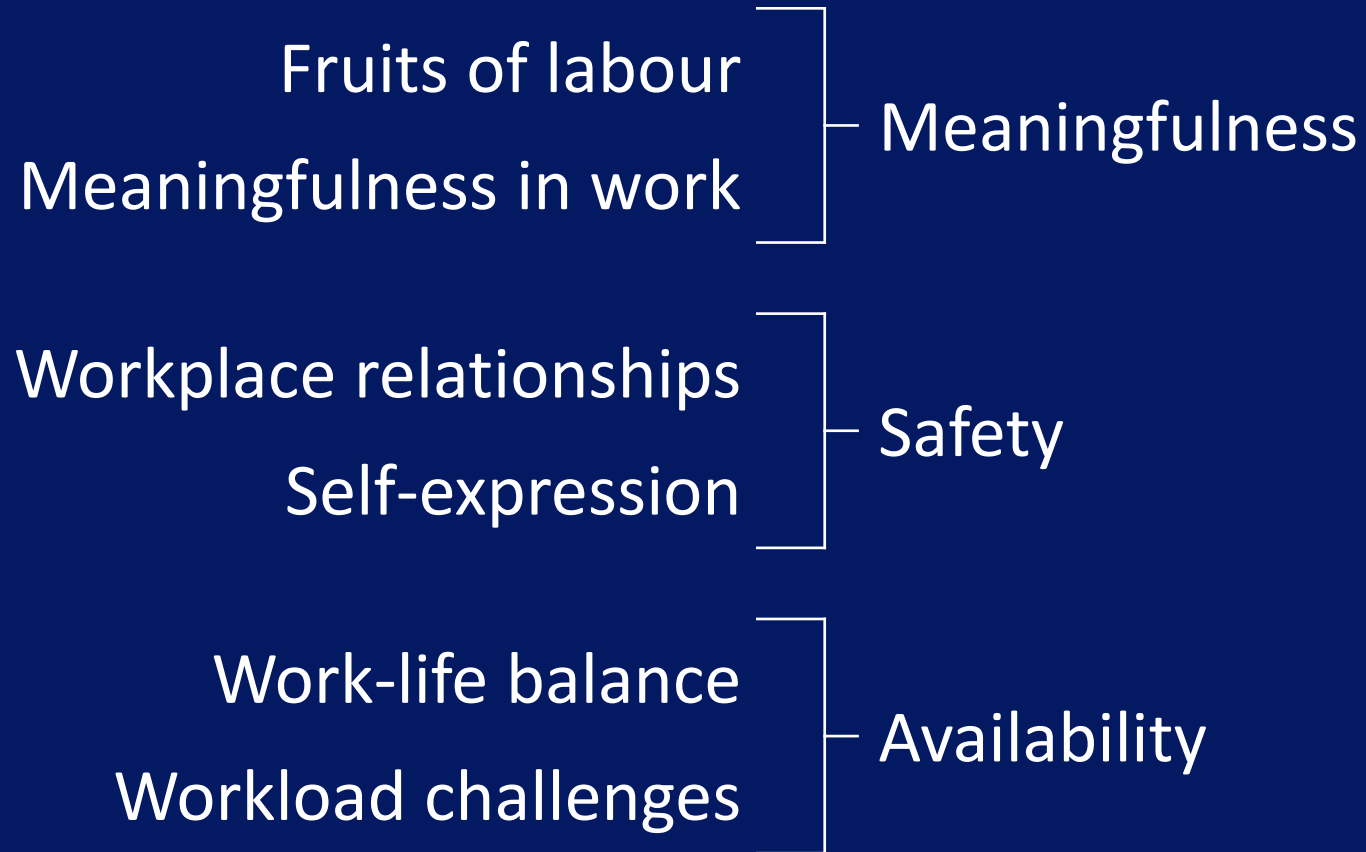


Focus group findings

- Job fulfillment + institutional connection
- Personal wellbeing + psychological availability
- Workplace dynamics + psychological safety
- Work environment + physical space



Combined theme findings





Implications for practice

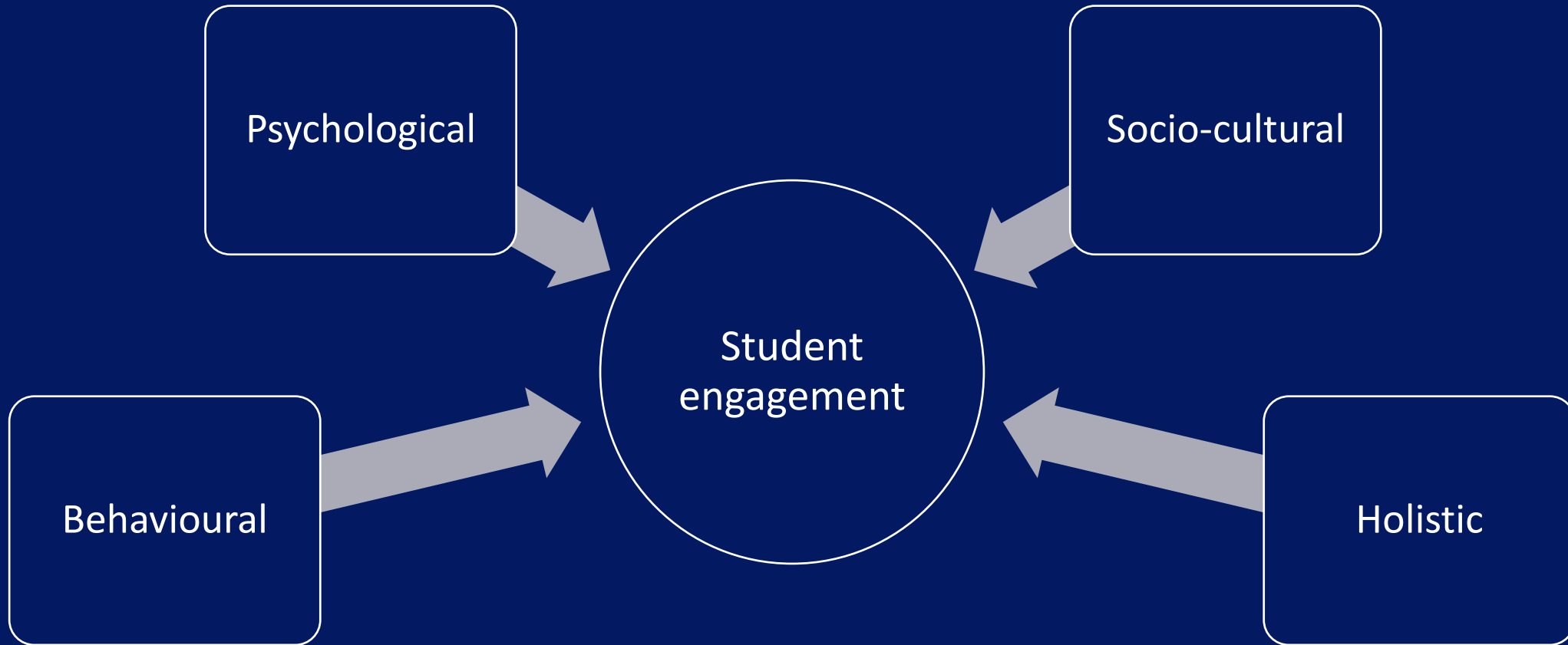
Factors that nurture employee engagement

- Trusting, reliable support network from colleagues
- Nurturing and transparent relationship with supervisor
- Seeing outcomes of their emotional labour
- Seeing their impact on the institution
- Sense of control over work
- Voice to contribute

Factors that detract from employee engagement

- Negative coworker interactions
- Toxic supervisor behaviour
- Overwhelm
- Unhealthy work-life balance
- Bureaucracy
- Emotional labour without outlet/payoff

Implications for practice



Implications for practice



Wrap-Up

- Students are customers
- Employee engagement directly affects customer experience
- Workers thrive with healthy psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability
- Students thrive in environments that support their behavioural, psychological, sociocultural, and holistic needs
- Creating a space that supports workers helps create a space where workers support student recruitment, retention, and completion.