



## Exploring the Interplay Between Organizational Mission Drift, Motivation and Commitment of Emerging Social Workers

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### Abstract

The mission statement of an organization establishes its purpose and distinguishes it from others in the community. In Sri Lanka, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) conventionally focus on social missions rather than profit. However, the recent economic challenges have compelled many NGOs to incorporate profit-driven activities, resulting in a drift from their core mission. This study applies controlled experiments with non-STEM undergraduates from the University of Peradeniya who are committed to social causes to examine this impact. Our findings reveal that organizational mission drift significantly reduces the commitment of emerging social workers. However, financial incentives were found to be effective in resuscitating social workers' commitment and mitigating the effects of the mission drift. The influence of financial incentives differs significantly between those with low and high levels of prosocial motivation. The results reveal that individuals with lower levels of prosocial motivation demonstrated a marked increase in commitment when financial incentives were offered. These insights underscore the importance of understanding the relationship between mission drift, employee motivation, and commitment for NGOs to maintain their social value, especially during economic crises. The study provides practical implications for NGOs to strategically manage mission-drifted employees effectively by offering compensation, which can strengthen their commitment, mitigate the decline in engagement, and help maintain social and financial motivations even when the core mission drifts.

**Keywords:** emerging social workers, mission drift, NGOs, prosocial motivation, real effort experiment

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