

Employee satisfaction: Work-related and personal factors

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In recent times, huge interest has been given by organisations to examine conditions or factors that foster greater job satisfaction. The interest is to be believed that the behaviours of satisfied employees will make positive contributions to the organisational effectiveness and performance. The current study intended to reveal the relationships between employees' job satisfaction and work environmental and personal variables. Three hundred and thirty-three employees were surveyed. T-Test and ANOVA were used to analyse the differences among employees' work and personal variables with job satisfaction. The findings of this study could be served as a guideline for managers who intent to improve their employees' job satisfaction.

Keyword: Job satisfaction, motivation, supervision, organisational performance

1. Introduction

Employee is one of the key factors of the organisation success. No organisation can succeed without a certain level of commitment and effort from its employees. Organisations often attempt to satisfy its employees to gain their commitment and loyalty. However, it is not easy for the organisations to be successful in making individual satisfied because people work for a wide variety of different reasons, some want material success while others might emphasize job challenging. From an individual standpoint, job satisfaction might be one of the most desirable outcomes that employees could obtain. From a pragmatic managerial and organisation effectiveness perspective, it is important to know how to measure the level of job satisfaction and how job satisfaction relates to other organisational variables. Research indicates that job satisfaction may not necessary lead to individual performance but does also lead to the organisational-level improvement (Luthans, 2001). In recent times there has been a convergence of interest on the efforts by organisations to examine conditions or factors that foster greater job satisfaction and that will make positive contributions to the organisation (Bartolo and Furlonger, 1999). Why job satisfaction? Robbins (2003) said that impressive evidences exist concerning the significant of job satisfaction. A satisfied workforce leads to higher productivity because of fewer disruptions such as absenteeism, turnover, and negative behaviours. Society in general also benefits because satisfaction on the job contributes to satisfaction off the job.

The current study intended to reveal the relationship between employees' job satisfaction and work environmental factors and personal variables. More specially, the purposes of this study were to: a) measure the employee job satisfaction toward worked-related variables, including work itself, supervision, coworkers, pay, fringe benefits, opportunity for advancement, contingent rewards, and communication; b) determine the degrees of importance among the variables that influenced the levels of satisfaction from the employees' perspectives; and c) investigate the relationships between job satisfaction and employees' personal variables such as age, gender, educational, and position levels.

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2. Literature Review

2.1 Job Satisfaction

In reviewing the literature, it would be difficult to search for the universal definition of job satisfaction. Several researchers defined job satisfaction in different terms. For example, Hoppock's (1935) defined job satisfaction as "...any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that causes a person truthfully to say, 'I am satisfied with my job'" (in Green, 2000). For Ivancevich and Donnelly (1968), job satisfaction was "the favorable viewpoint of the worker toward the work role he presently occupies" (in DeMato, 2001). Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) said job satisfaction was "feelings or affective responses to facets of the situation" (in Steers, Porter, and Bigley, 1996). Although there was no consensus on ways of defining job satisfaction, job satisfaction generally was considered to be an employee's attitude about his or her job based on factors present in the work environment. In other words, job satisfaction was a result of employee's perception of how well his/her job provides those things that were viewed as important.

Employees' behaviour would be expected to influence organisational operations and performances according to the employees' degree of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction. A strong relationship between job satisfaction and organisational commitment has been found over the years (Carrell, Jennings, and Heavrin, 1997) while individual job dissatisfaction results in behaviours detrimental to the organisation such as absenteeism, turnover, tardiness, strikes and accidents (Rue and Byars, 1999). A weak-to-moderate negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover has been reported by some studies. High job satisfaction will not keep turnover low, but it does seem to help. On the other hand, if there is a considerable job dissatisfaction, there is likely to be high turnover. Obviously, other variables influence employee's decision to quit besides job satisfaction. Those variables are age, geographical constraints, family responsibilities, bad economic conditions, and very specialized skills, for example. Some people cannot find a new job or dare not to change a job, so they stay regardless of how dissatisfied they are. Although employees are satisfied, some are willing to leave for better opportunities at other organisations. On the overall basis, however, it is accurate to say that job satisfaction is important to employee turnover. A low turnover rate is usually desirable to the organisation because of the recruitment and training costs and the drawbacks of inexperience (Arnold and Feldman, 1986; Green, 2000). Also, employees who are satisfied with their jobs are less likely to be absent than employees who are dissatisfied. Additionally, it is important to understand that although high job satisfaction will not necessary result in low absenteeism, low job satisfaction is more likely to increase absenteeism. Absence is influenced not only by job satisfaction but also by, for example, pressure or lack of pressure to attend (Luthans, 2001).

2.2 Determinants of Job Satisfaction

Researchers have found that a number of variables are related positively to job satisfaction while others are more of an indicator of job dissatisfaction. A review of the literature indicates that most studies have focused on personal variables and work-related factors. The personal variables include factors such as age, gender, and education. The relationship between age and job satisfaction tends to be a U-shaped function where job satisfaction with younger employees is initially high and then drops for several years, and finally raises again with employees age (Waskiewicz, 1999). Older people seem to be generally more satisfied with their jobs than younger ones (Wangphanich, 1984). However, Coll and Rice (1990) found that age was not related to job satisfaction (in Green, 2000). While research on the relationship between gender and job satisfaction also was unclear, Hollen and Gemmell (1976) compared job satisfaction levels of community-college male and female professors and reported males

express higher levels of overall job satisfaction than females (in Wangphanich, 1984). In the study of job satisfaction of faculty members at NIDA, Sagol Jariyavidyanont (1978), found no significant differences in those faculty's job satisfaction among gender, age, education, and work experiences. A review of literature that included education as a variable indicates that the relationship between education and job satisfaction can be negative or positive. For example, Carrel and Elbert (1974) reported negative relationship between education and job satisfaction. They concluded that employees, who have high level of education, are dissatisfied with performing the routine tasks required in most jobs. On the contrary, Quinn and Baldi de Mandilovitch (1980) concluded that there was a positive relationship between educational level and overall job satisfaction (in Green, 2000). Work-related factors were also found to influence job satisfaction. The work itself plays a major role in determining how employees are satisfied with their jobs. Employees tend to prefer challenging jobs that let them apply their abilities and skills and embody a diversity of tasks, freedom, and performance feedback (Arnold and Feldman, 1986). Locke (1976) found that the interesting and challenging of the work itself led to the higher level of job satisfaction (in Soranun, 1994). Having friendly and cooperative coworkers is a modest source of job satisfaction. Ducharme and Martin (2000)'s findings revealed that affective coworker support significantly enhance employee job satisfaction (in DeMato, 2001).

Pay could be one of the important determinants of job satisfaction because it helps fulfill so many of employee needs including their basic needs and upper-level needs. Employees often see pay as a reflection of how management views their contribution to the organisation (Luthans, 2001). Also, fringe benefits contribute to job satisfaction, but would not be as influential as pay. Derlin and Schneider (1994) stated that researchers in some studies have concluded that pay and fringe benefits are an important variable to be considered in the study of job satisfaction (in Waskiewicz, 1999). Opportunity for advancement seems to have a varying effect on job satisfaction. This is because opportunity for advancement takes a number of forms and has a variety of accompanying rewards (Luthans, 2001). A positive environment and opportunities to grow intellectually and broaden their skill base has become more important than traditional promotion opportunities. Employees who are given opportunities to learn to widen their knowledge and improve their skills are more satisfied with their jobs (Waskiewicz, 1999; Luthans, 2001). Styles and quality of supervision also play an important role on job satisfaction. A number of research indicated that employees' attitude was directly related to the quality of supervision provided to them (i.e. DeMato, 2001). In terms of organisational communication, Brunetto (2002) found that there is a positive relationship between the satisfaction with organisational communication and employee commitment.

3. Research Method

This research was designed to apply the quantitative technique to conduct the research by using self-administration questionnaire. Such questionnaire was developed base on the framework of Smith, Kendall, and Hulin (1969) or JDI and Spector (1994) or JSS because of their validity and reliability. The target respondents were asked about their attitudes toward specific aspects of job satisfaction which were the work itself, supervision, coworkers, pay, fringe benefits, opportunity for advancement, contingent rewards, and communication. Also, the target respondents were asked to determine the degrees of importance on the research variables.

The sample of this study was comprised of all employees who had been working for a multinational cooperation in Thailand. The total number of employees was 579 employees. The questionnaires were delivered by hand to section managers and were distributed to all 579 potential respondents by their respective section manager. At the end of the collection data,

three hundred and thirty-three questionnaires were returned representing the returned rate of 57.51%.

4. Results

The results indicated that 76.58% was males and 23.42% was females, 48.65% of the respondents' age less than 30 years, 42.43% graduated bachelor degree, 81.98% was non-managerial workers, and almost 32.43% had been working for the company less than 3 years.

Table 1 indicated that the respondents expressed moderate level of job satisfaction with the whole job situations with mean score of 3.43. The attitudes were not diverse as standard deviation was at 0.52.

4.1 Current job satisfaction on work environmental factors

Table 2 showed that the respondents currently experienced high level of job satisfaction toward the work itself (3.67), supervision (3.55), and coworkers (3.70), and had moderate level of job satisfaction toward pay (3.05), fringe benefits (3.35), opportunity for advancement (3.34), contingent rewards (3.33), and communication (3.42).

TABLE 1: OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION

	N	Mean	SD	Degree
<i>Overall Job Satisfaction</i>	330	3.43	0.52	Moderate
Valid Number (N)	330			

Note: Mean 1.00-2.49 means the employees have low level of job satisfaction. Mean 2.50-3.49 means the employees have moderate level of job satisfaction. Mean 3.50-5.00 means the employees have high level of job satisfaction.

TABLE 2: CURRENT JOB SATISFACTION ON WORK-RELATED VARIABLE

Factor	Independent Variable	Descriptive Statistics				
		N		Mean	SD	Degree
		Valid	Missing			
1.	<i>The Work Itself</i>	333	0	3.67	0.61	High
2.	<i>Supervision</i>	333	0	3.55	0.85	High
3.	<i>Coworkers</i>	331	2	3.70	0.62	High
4.	<i>Pay</i>	331	2	3.05	0.85	Moderate
5.	<i>Fringe Benefits</i>	331	2	3.35	0.84	Moderate
6.	<i>Opportunity for Advancement</i>	331	2	3.34	0.75	Moderate
7.	<i>Contingent Rewards</i>	332	1	3.33	0.70	Moderate
8.	<i>Communication</i>	332	1	3.42	0.73	Moderate

4.2 The degrees of importance influencing employee job satisfaction

As shown in Table 3, employees perceived Pay (4.15); Fringe benefits (4.07); Coworkers (4.03); and Opportunity for advancement (3.98) were the most four important factors influencing their job satisfaction.

TABLE 3: THE DEGREES OF IMPORTANCE INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION

Factor	Independent Variable	Statistics		Mean	SD	Degree
		N				
		Valid	Missing			
1.	<i>Pay</i>	330	3	4.15	0.82	Important
2.	<i>Fringe Benefits</i>	330	3	4.07	0.77	Important
3.	<i>Coworkers</i>	330	3	4.03	0.69	Important
4.	<i>Opportunity for Advancement</i>	330	3	3.98	0.88	Important
5.	<i>Communication</i>	330	3	3.93	0.82	Important
6.	<i>The Work Itself</i>	330	3	3.77	0.71	Important
7.	<i>Supervision</i>	330	3	3.77	0.85	Important
8.	<i>Contingent Rewards</i>	330	3	3.62	0.88	Important

4.3 Job satisfaction and Personal variables

This section focused on testing the difference in employees' personal variables with their current level of job satisfaction. To identify those differences, T-Test and ANOVA were used in analyzing the data.

The results from Table 4 indicated that there were no significant differences between male and female toward the current level of job satisfaction with the whole job situations (overall job satisfaction) and with job components (job-component satisfaction).

There were no significant differences among the age ranges toward the current level of job satisfaction with the whole job situations and with job-component satisfaction in exception of the work itself ($F = 2.73, p = 0.04$: Table 5). To further identify which among the respondents' age was significantly different toward the current level of job satisfaction with the work itself, multiple comparison making use of the Least Significant Method (LSD) was used. In terms of job-component satisfaction toward the work itself indicated that mean of age less than 30 (mean = 3.60) was significantly different with mean of age between 40-49 (mean = 3.89).

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TABLE 6: ANOVA - DIFFERENCE OF EDUCATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

	Education	N	Mean	F	Sig.
Overall Job Satisfaction	Under Bachelor	176	3.40	0.556	0.645
	Bachelor Degree	140	3.47		
	Master Degree	13	3.43		
	Doctorial Degree	1	3.69		
The Work Itself	Under Bachelor	178	3.61	1.690	0.169
	Bachelor Degree	141	3.75		
	Master Degree	13	3.73		
	Doctorial Degree	1	4.00		
Supervision	Under Bachelor	178	3.48	1.030	0.380
	Bachelor Degree	141	3.64		
	Master Degree	13	3.58		
	Doctorial Degree	1	4.00		
Coworkers	Under Bachelor	177	3.67	0.261	0.853
	Bachelor Degree	140	3.73		
	Master Degree	13	3.75		
	Doctorial Degree	1	3.75		
Pay	Under Bachelor	177	2.96	1.576	0.195
	Bachelor Degree	140	3.16		
	Master Degree	13	3.06		
	Doctorial Degree	1	3.25		
Fringe Benefits	Under Bachelor	177	3.28	1.014	0.387
	Bachelor Degree	140	3.43		
	Master Degree	13	3.33		
	Doctorial Degree	1	4.00		
Opportunity for Advancement	Under Bachelor	177	3.40	0.938	0.423
	Bachelor Degree	140	3.26		
	Master Degree	13	3.35		
	Doctorial Degree	1	3.25		
Contingent Rewards	Under Bachelor	177	3.30	0.659	0.578
	Bachelor Degree	141	3.35		
	Master Degree	13	3.46		
	Doctorial Degree	1	4.00		
Communication	Under Bachelor	177	3.45	0.735	0.532
	Bachelor Degree	141	3.41		
	Master Degree	13	3.15		
	Doctorial Degree	1	3.25		

Note: Signification Level 0.05

Coworkers	less than 30	30-39	40-49	Mean	Sig.
	100	149	20	3.000	3.742
					3.813

TABLE 7: T-TEST - DIFFERENCE OF POSITION AND JOB SATISFACTION

	Position	N	Mean	t	Sig.
Overall Job Satisfaction	Managerial	59	3.49	1.144	0.255
	Non-Managerial	271	3.41		
The Work Itself	Managerial	60	3.83	2.133	0.034
	Non-Managerial	273	3.64		
Supervision	Managerial	60	3.67	1.340	0.183
	Non-Managerial	273	3.53		
Coworkers	Managerial	59	3.79	1.532	0.128
	Non-Managerial	272	3.68		
Pay	Managerial	59	3.13	0.983	0.328
	Non-Managerial	272	3.03		
Fringe Benefits	Managerial	59	3.52	1.776	0.077
	Non-Managerial	272	3.31		
Opportunity for Advancement	Managerial	59	3.26	-0.834	0.405
	Non-Managerial	272	3.35		
Contingent Rewards	Managerial	60	3.39	0.713	0.476
	Non-Managerial	272	3.32		
Communication	Managerial	60	3.33	-1.029	0.304
	Non-Managerial	272	3.44		

Note: Signification Level 0.05

5. Discussion

Job satisfaction was viewed as the employees' attitudes or feelings about their present jobs and job situations. Results revealed that employees in this study were moderately satisfied with their present jobs. The possible reason for this might be the prestige of the company. The company is one of the biggest multinational corporations with great a reputation. Its employees are seen as talented and professional as treated as such. The employees were highly satisfied with the work itself because they perceived their job as meaningful, interesting, challenging, and enjoyable and they had enough authority and freedom to perform their job. This made them had a sense of pride in doing their job. Moreover, they were very happy that their supervisor provided them with feedback on the effectiveness of their work performance. Also, good encouragement and support were provided by their supervisors. The findings also indicated that employees were highly satisfied with coworkers because their coworkers were highly competent in doing their job. They received good cooperation and supports form their coworkers and there were no bickering and fighting at work. However, employees in this study seemed to be "moderately" satisfied with monetary rewards or benefits. Some respondents perceived that pay was not fair as they perceived that significant differences of salary base among similar positions were existed. Furthermore, some employees also perceived that the benefits they received were not as good as other organizations in the same industry offered. The respondents seemed to have similar attitude toward opportunity for advancement and communication. Most employees felt that they got a fair chance of being promoted and were satisfied with their chances for promotion. In addition, they were encouraged and supported to participate in training and development programs and were highly satisfied with the chance to attend those.

Gender issue seems to have a little impact on employees' attitude in this study. No significant differences between male and female were found. The results were congruent with the results of other study dedicated to the relationship between gender and job satisfaction (i.e. Ivancevich and Donnelly, 1968; Green, 2000; Jariyavidyanont, 1978). Similar to gender, age groups of respondents had little influence toward the current level of job satisfaction and this supported Coll and Rice's study when they stated that age was not related to job satisfaction (in Green, 2000). Education levels and position held in the company produced similar results. Based on the results in this study, it revealed that personal variables seemed to have very little linkage with the levels of job satisfaction. Drawing from the research findings, some recommendations can be given to improved and enhance grater employees job satisfaction and that leads to the high level of organisation performance. *Pay*: From the findings, it showed that pay was recognized as the most important factor influencing employee job satisfaction. Thus improvement in some aspects of pay would increase employees' level of satisfaction with the job for example, standardize the pay systems and pay based on performance or profit.

Fringe Benefits: Fringe benefits was rated as the second important factor affecting employee job satisfaction. Hence, the management should review the current benefits and improve the inappropriate ones in order to enhance job satisfaction. For example, the management may increase the annual budget of outpatient claim, increase the premium of health insurance to cover all medical expenses, provide the educational fund or loan for employees, and provide the housing fund or loan for employees.

Opportunity for Advancement: Opportunity for advancement was considered as one of the most important factors influencing employee job satisfaction especially for the management level. They recognized opportunity for advancement as the second most important factor affecting their job satisfaction. Consequently, to retain talented employees, the management should provide them with chances for promotion or opportunities for personnel development as following instances: a) a fair chance for promotion; b) succession planning; c) systematic job

rotation; and d) development opportunities in a management career path or a specialist career path.

Communication: Communication was rated as the fifth out of eight factors influencing employee job satisfaction. To improve the communication within the organisation, the management should emphasize on openness and honesty in communication/information, discussion forums for all staffs, and discussion of corporate issues within employee function.

Contingent Rewards: Contingent rewards or performance-based rewards was also an important factor to foster greater job satisfaction even though it was rated as the last out of eight factors. In term of monetary rewards such as bonus, the management should develop the profit-related and performance-related bonus system as many employees claimed that bonus is not related to the company profit and their work performance. In term of non-monetary rewards such as appreciation and recognition, the management should give appreciation and recognition not only to the managerial level but also non-managerial level since a lot of non-managerial level claimed that the management does not value them as one of important parts of the organisation and they are not treated fairly by the management.

6. Conclusion and Limitation

The results suggested that the employees had a moderate level of job satisfaction with the whole job situations (overall job satisfaction). With a closer look, it indicated that the highest satisfaction occurred in the areas of the work itself, supervision, and coworkers. The employees were highly satisfied with the work itself because they found that their job was interesting, challenging, and enjoyable and had enough authority and freedom to perform their job. Supervision also made employees were highly satisfied because of the high competency in doing job of supervisor and the good encouragement, opportunity to express opinions, support, fairness, and interest in the feelings of subordinates provided by supervisor. The employees were also highly satisfied with coworkers because their coworkers were highly competent in doing their job. They received good cooperation and supports from their coworkers and there were no bickering and fighting at work. However, the employees were moderately satisfied with other worked-related variables, including pay, fringe benefits, opportunity for advancement, contingent rewards, and communication. Asking from the employees' perspectives, it appeared that the employees rated pay as the most important factor influencing their job satisfaction followed by fringe benefits and coworkers. However, the employees at the managerial and non-managerial levels perceived different degrees of importance. The non-managerial employees perceived pay, fringe benefits and coworker as the most three important would be because these motivational factors could fulfill their basic needs according to the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Moorhead and Griffin, 1998). On the other hand, the employees at the managerial level rated coworkers, opportunity for advancement, and work itself as the most important factor influencing their job satisfaction. This might be because a good work group or effective team could easily helped them achieved the best results. Similarly, the work itself allowed them to apply their abilities and skills and embody a diversity of tasks, freedom, and performance feedback. Regarding the relationships between the personal variables of the employees and their job satisfaction, it appeared that there was very little relationships between these two variables. The current research was conducted within one multinational company and therefore would not represent employees' attitude for the whole industry. Also, theories in motivation and job satisfaction proposed a number of factors affecting employee job satisfaction but only eight work-related factors were identified in this study. Finally, quantitative research was employed to assess employees' attitude toward their job in the current study. A number of researchers suggested qualitative research should be considered to get an in-depth attitude from respondents.

7. References

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Appendix:

DESCRIPTION OF WORK-RELATED FACTORS	
Factor	Description
<i>The work itself</i>	<i>Tasks of a job of employees. It includes intrinsic interest, variety, opportunity for learning, difficulty, amount, and control over pace and method.</i>
<i>Supervision</i>	<i>Function of control which evaluates current action while in progress and attempts to assure that execution is taking place in accordance with plans and instructions. It includes supervisory style and influence, competence, human relations, and administrative skills.</i>
<i>Coworkers</i>	<i>Relationship between respondents and their coworkers which including competence, helpfulness, and friendliness.</i>
<i>Pay</i>	<i>Monetary form of compensation paid at regular intervals to employees for services rendered. It includes amount, and fairness or equity.</i>
<i>Fringe benefits</i>	<i>Benefits provided by the company to employees such as medical, insurance, pension, provident fund, annual leave, uniform, and transportation.</i>
<i>Opportunity for advancement</i>	<i>Chance for an actual change in the status or the position of employees as well as an improvement in abilities and skills of employees which including promotion opportunities and training and development opportunities.</i>
<i>Contingent rewards</i>	<i>Monetary and non-monetary rewards given for good performance such as bonus and recognition.</i>
<i>Communication</i>	<i>Communication channels/types within the organisation.</i>