

## Current Look at the Job Satisfaction: A Review of Research

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The objective of this paper is to explore thoroughly the psychological aspects of "job satisfaction" and to focus the importance, sources and consequences of the employees' satisfaction at work places. In fact job satisfaction is considered as one of the major issues which constitute the core of industrial and organizational harmony. Its importance has been realized by the administration and management because researchers have discovered that the main cause of industrial disturbances is dissatisfaction on the part of workers. Job satisfaction is also essential for employees' physical and mental health. Thus, the studies of job satisfaction are significant for the benefit of employer, the employee and the society at large. Hence, the author tries to review recent literature, regarding the job satisfaction in order to increase the employees' satisfaction at work place, to justify their participation and contribution for the development of an organization and to overcome the negative consequences of the employees' dissatisfaction.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the modern scientific age of industrialization Job satisfaction has received a considerable attention of researchers and administrators. Industrial psychologists have studied the construct of job satisfaction as both an independent and a dependent variable. The topic of employees satisfaction has attracted long standing interest in industries and organization (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). There have been more than 5,000 articles and dissertations published on the topic of job satisfaction. A vast literature has accumulated on job satisfaction and it continues to be a vital area of research and discovery.

Hoppock (1935) was the first industrial psychologist to provide the concept of job satisfaction. He defined job satisfaction as, "any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that causes a person truthfully to say, I am satisfied with the Job". The concept has been redefined and reformulated in many different ways. Locke (1976) attempted to capture the affective nature of job satisfaction in his definition, "a pleasurable positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience". Berry (1998) states that, "job satisfaction is an individual's reaction to the job experience". Deosthalee (2002) holds that "job satisfaction is a general attitude, which is the result of many specific attitudes in the areas, namely, specific job factors, individual characteristics, and group relationships outside the job". More recently Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (2003) argue that "job satisfaction is the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs. It is an attitude or emotional response to one's tasks as well as to the physical and social conditions of the workplace".

From a review of available literature on the issue it is clear that job satisfaction represents a cluster of feelings about one's work and attitudes or psychological dispositions the employee holds towards his/her job. It has been argued by a number of psychologists that job satisfaction is a global term which includes not only the adjustment made by the employees in their work

environment but also the adjustment of the individuals in several areas of life. Hence, as psychologists, we need to pay more attention to this current issue.

The aim of this paper is to review different psychological aspects of job satisfaction including the employees' aspirations and needs fulfillment, various factors affecting job satisfaction and outcomes of employees' satisfaction at work place.

### **IMPORTANCE OF JOB SATISFACTION**

It is generally recognized that job satisfaction is the most important and frequently studied issue in the field of industrial psychology and management. The importance of job satisfaction research is evidenced by the number of reviews of the empirical literature (Locke, 1976; Ronen, 1977). It is considered as a very important factor in worker's morale, performance, regularity, and to some extent productivity. Employees' attitudes relating to job satisfaction are important to the field of organizational behavior and the practice of human resource management. The assumption that the job satisfaction leads employee to stay longer, be absent less and perform better (that is, ' a happy worker is a good worker') has intuitive appeal, and is of direct practical importance for managers (Millward, 2005). Today the most organizations devote considerable efforts to the measurement of job satisfaction among their employees, to improve working conditions.

The significance of job satisfaction can also be related with mental health of human beings. According to Srivastava (1990) it is generally agreed that poor job satisfaction, i.e. dissatisfaction in the work one does, is more often accompanied by poor mental health and may be manifested in a number of unhealthy conditions. Job satisfaction is of great significance for efficient and profitable functioning of any organization. Satisfied workers are the greatest asset of any organization and dissatisfied workers the biggest liability. In fact, no organization can successfully achieve its goals unless and until those who constitute the organization are satisfied in their jobs. It is believed that workers dissatisfied with their job may be militant in their attitudes towards the management. The

amount of co-operation that the management may derive from the employees would depend greatly on the extent of satisfaction amongst them. In fact employees' satisfaction with job is the criteria to judge the administrative quality of an organization.

The importance of job satisfaction can be viewed in the context of two decisions people make about their work. The first is the decision to belong, that is, to join and remain a member of an organization. The second is the decision to perform that is to work hard in pursuit of high levels of task performance (Schermerhorn, et al., 2003). The organizational commitment is also a result of job satisfaction. The positive indicators of commitment are productivity and health. The more satisfied an employ is with his job, the more he will produce and the healthier he will be Khan (2005). Thus, job satisfaction is important for the individuals, the organization which employ them, and the society as a whole.

## **T**HEORIES OF JOB SATISFACTION

There are many types of theories explaining the phenomenon of job satisfaction. Some of them, more popular and heavily researched theories are reviewed here.

### **Maslow's Hierarchy of Need Theory**

Abraham Maslow (1970) developed hierarchy of needs theory also known as the 'self-actualization theory' concerning human needs and their effects upon human behavior. The theory suggests that all human beings are motivated by five innate needs arranged in a hierarchy from the lowest (or strongest) to the highest (or weakest). According to Maslow's hierarchy the higher order needs are self-actualization and esteem and the lower order needs are physiological, safety and social (see Fig. 1).

Figure - 1

## HIGHER ORDER AND LOWER ORDER NEEDS IN MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

<b>HIGHER ORDER NEEDS</b>	<b>Self-Actualization</b> Highest need level; need to fulfill oneself; to grow and use abilities to fullest and most creative extent.
	<b>Esteem</b> Need for esteem of others; respect, prestige, recognition, need for self-esteem, personal sense of competence, mastery.
<b>LOWER ORDER NEEDS</b>	<b>Social</b> Need for love, affection, sense of belongingness in one's relationships with other persons.
	<b>Safety</b> Need for security, protection, and stability in the physical and inter-personal events of day-to-day life.
	<b>Physiological</b> Most basic of all human needs; need for biological maintenance; need for food, water, and sustenance.

Source: Adapted from John R. Schermerhorn, Jr., James G. Hunt, and Richard N. Osborn, *Organizational Behavior*, John Wiley & Sons, USA, 2003 pp.111.

Only the nature of one's job and the opportunities, facilities, challenges and sense of security it provides can satisfy these needs, which leads to provide job satisfaction. Thus, the jobs which can satisfy more of the needs mentioned by Maslow would

be the jobs affording greater satisfaction on the part of the employees.

## TWO-FACTOR THEORY

One of the earliest theories explaining the dynamics of job satisfaction is Frederick Herzberg's two factor theory also known as the motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg, 1966, 1968). This theory suggests that motivator factors are the source of job satisfaction and motivate workers to perform at their optimum capacity. The motivator factors are an integral part of the work itself and include sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility, and opportunities for personal growth and advancement. In the view of Herzberg, when these opportunities are not available, low job satisfaction causes a lack of motivation and performance suffers.

The theory directs attention to an entirely different set of factors, 'the hygiene factors' to produce job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. These factors are associated more to the setting in which people work than to the nature of the work itself (see Fig.2).

**FIGURE - 2**  
**Sources of Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in Herzberg's two-factor theory**

Hygiene factors	Motivator factors
Organizational policies	Achievement
Quality of supervision	Recognition
Working conditions	Work itself
Base wage or salary	Responsibility
Relationship with peers	Advancement
Relationship with subordinates	Growth
Status	
Security	

Source: Adapted from John R. Schermerhorn, Jr. James G. Hunt, and Richard N.Osborn, Organizational Behavior, John Wiley & Sons, USA, 2003 pp.114.

## Adams' Equity Theory

Equity theory is based on the social comparison phenomenon and is best applied to the workplace through the writing of J. Stacy Adams (1963, 1965). The theory argues that a major input into job performance and job satisfaction is the degree of equity ( or inequity) that people perceive in their work situation. Inequity occurs when a person perceives that the ratio of his or her outcomes to inputs and the ratio of relevant other's outcomes to inputs are unequal. Schematically this is represented by Luthans (1989) as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Person's outcomes}}{\text{Person's inputs}} < \frac{\text{Other's outcomes}}{\text{Other's inputs}}$$

$$\frac{\text{Person's outcomes}}{\text{Person's inputs}} > \frac{\text{Other's outcomes}}{\text{Other's inputs}}$$

Equity occurs when

$$\frac{\text{Person's outcomes}}{\text{Person's inputs}} = \frac{\text{Other's outcomes}}{\text{Other's inputs}}$$

In essence, the ratio is based upon the person's perception of what the person is giving (inputs) and receiving (outcomes) verses the ratio of what the relevant other is giving and receiving. The theory states that if the person's perceived ratio is not equal to the other's, he or she will be dissatisfied with job. Thus, the job satisfaction of employees and increased quantity or quality of their

work depends upon the feelings of equity offered by fair and equitable work setting.

## **J**OB CHARACTERISTICS MODEL

Job characteristics model (JCM), introduced by Hackman and Oldham (1976) argues that the causes of job satisfaction are to be found in the objective characteristics of a job. The model recognizes five core job characteristics contribute to certain psychological states. According to the theory, jobs that are enriched to provide these core characteristics are likely to be more satisfying and motivating than jobs that do not provide these characteristics. Summary of the each of job characteristics and psychologically states in JCM, adapted from Nadler, Hackman and Lawler (1979) is given below:

### **C**ORE JOB DIMENSIONS

1. *Variety of skill.* This refers to the degree to which the job requires the person to do different things and involves the use of a number of different skills, abilities, and talents.
2. *Identity of the task.* This involves a complete module of work; the person can do the job from beginning to end with a visible outcome.
3. *Significance of the task.* This is concerned with the importance of the job. Does it have a significant impact on other, both internal and external to the organization?
4. *Autonomy.* This refers to the amount of freedom, independence, and discretion the person has in areas such as scheduling the work, making decisions, and determining how to do the job.
5. *Feedback.* This involves the degree to which the job provides the person with clear and direct information about job outcomes and performance.

### **C**CRITICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES

1. *Experienced meaningfulness.* This is concerned with the extent to which the person experiences the work as important, valuable, and worthwhile.

2. *Experienced responsibility.* This is concerned with the degree to which the individual feels personally responsible or accountable for the results of the work.
3. *Knowledge of results.* This involves the degree to which the person understands on a regular basis how effectively he or she is performing in the job.

## **F**ACTORS AFFECTING JOB SATISFACTION

Several researches have been aimed at studying the number of factors related to job satisfaction. Most of the studies on this issue indicate two major groups of factors: 'personal factors' related to the employee's personal traits of individual employees and 'organizational factor's related to the features of organizational work environment. The major personal and organizational factors affecting job satisfaction are summarized here.

### **P**ERSONAL FACTORS

#### **i) Seniority and Status**

The longer people have been in a given job and the higher their status, the greater their satisfaction (Zeitz, 1990). Job satisfaction seems to change a great deal as people become senior. In general, job satisfaction is higher among senior workers than junior workers, it gradually increases with the more years of job experience.

#### **ii) Core self-evaluation**

Individuals' basic assessment about themselves and their self-worth is termed as core self-evaluation, that is an important determinant of job satisfaction (Baron & Byrne, 2004). Such core self-evaluations involve four basic factors: self-esteem generalized feelings of self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Persons with positive core self-evaluations tend to express higher job satisfaction than do those with negative core self-evaluations in many different setting (Judge et al, 1998). Research findings (e.g., Judge, Bono, and Locke, 2000) suggest that this is because

persons high in core self-evaluation select more complex jobs. Such jobs offer more favorable characteristics. (e.g., they are more challenging, offer more autonomy and variety in the tasks). These favorable characteristics, in turn, lead to high levels of job satisfaction, so it does appear that the factor of core self-evaluation play key role to satisfy employees with their jobs.

### **iii) Education**

According to Berry (1998) the decline in job satisfaction has been attributed to the increasing number of highly educated young people entering the work force. Traditionally, we have believed that education leads to high level and high paying jobs. Although such jobs have always been comparatively rare. As a result, work that does not actually require a high education is being performed by people with higher degrees. Lower job satisfaction among young educated workers might be a result of this trend, particularly among those who are educationally overqualified for their jobs.

Mottaz (1984) proposed that education helps to develop values for certain dimensions of work, but these dimensions may not be present in the work that is available. His research demonstrated that education can have effects on some work values. Dissatisfaction also was more likely when these intrinsic work values were not realizable, as in a lower-level job.

### **iv) Personality**

Recent research suggests that people may be more or less inclined to satisfy or dissatisfy with their jobs because of their personal traits. The persons having stable trait of negative affectivity tend to experience more negative emotions and distress, dwelling on the negative aspects of any situation. Some researchers have reported that these individuals also to be less satisfied with their jobs (Levin & Stokes, 1989).

## **ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS**

### **i) Security**

Since security is a fundamental need, it is more important to the wages one gets or the changes for advancement. It is not sufficient for a man to have his physical needs satisfied. A part from this he also wants to ensure that he will continue to be satisfied in future. The man with security feels that he is valued by the employer and that he has the abilities and the opportunities to keep his job. Security is a positive factor which contributes to job satisfaction (Srivastava,1990).

### **ii) Pay**

The importance of pay as a factor in job satisfaction has been greatly emphasized by management. Many employers feel that a pay raise will make happy every one in the job. The wage level itself has been found to predict satisfaction. Employees who receive high wages say they are more satisfied with their pay and are less likely to quit their jobs (Levin, 1993). Money not only helps people attain their basic needs but is instrumental to provide upper-level need satisfaction. Employees often see pay as a reflection of how management views their contribution to the organizations.

### **iii) Promotions**

Promotional opportunities seem to have a varying effect on job satisfaction. This is because promotions take a number of different forms and have a variety of accompanying rewards. For example, individuals who are promoted on the basis of seniority often experience job satisfaction but not as much as those who are promoted on the basis of performance (Luthans, 1989).

### **iv) Supervision**

Employee's satisfaction with the supervisor may depend on the supervisory style. There are two main dimensions of

supervisory style that affect job satisfactions. One is employee-centeredness. This is measured by the degree to which a supervisor takes a personal interest in the employees' welfare. The other dimension is participation or influence, as illustrated by managers who allow their employees to participate in decisions that affect their own jobs. In most cases this approach leads to higher job satisfaction. For example, a comprehensive meta-analysis concluded that a participative climate created by the supervisor has positive effect on worker's job satisfaction (Miller & Monge, 1986).

#### **v) Work Group**

The nature of the relations among coworkers moderately influences on the job satisfaction. The work group serves as a source of support, comfort, advice, and assistance to the individual worker. A good work group makes the job more enjoyable. In fact, cooperative, sincere and friendly colleagues are always a source of job satisfaction. On the other hand, the reverse conditions (i.e., coworkers are difficult to get along with) may lead to the low job satisfaction.

#### **vi) Working Conditions**

Working conditions are another factor that has moderate effect on job satisfaction. If the working conditions are good (for example, clean, attractive surroundings) the employees will find it easier to carry out their jobs. If the working conditions are poor (for example, hot, noisy surroundings) workers will find it more difficult to get things done.

### **C**ONSEQUENCES OF JOB SATISFACTION

Industrial and organizational Psychologists have long been interested in the major consequences that can be expected from job satisfaction. The most frequently investigated and significant outcomes of job satisfaction are reviewed below:

**i) Absenteeism**

Job satisfaction influences “absenteeism”, or the failure of people to attend work. In general, workers who are satisfied with the job itself have more regular attendance and are less likely to be absent for unexplained reasons than are dissatisfied workers (Scherman et al., 2003). Scott and Taylor (1985) found absence frequency to be more strongly related to satisfaction at work. When job satisfaction is high, absenteeism tends to be low; when job satisfaction is low, absenteeism tends to be high. Similarly in other review, Hackett (1989) concluded that individuals who are dissatisfied with their work are absent more frequently.

**ii) Turnover**

Job satisfaction can also affect turnover, or decision by people to terminate their employment. Simply put, dissatisfied workers are more likely than satisfied workers to quit their jobs (Staw, 1980). Rosin and Korabik (1995) found that job satisfaction and organizational commitment appear to enter into both men’s and women’s decision to quit or stay on a job. When the person is satisfied and committed, he or she is more likely to stay.

**iii) Job Performance**

It seems reasonable to assume that a high level of job satisfaction leads to a high level of job performance. In general, research supports such a relationship. Recent findings derived from meta-analysis yield more positive results. Judge and Bono (2001) found positive correlation between overall job satisfaction and performance.

**iv) Life Satisfaction**

Since the job is a significant part of life, the relationship between job and life satisfaction may exist. Judge (2000) informs that researchers have speculated the three possible forms of the relationship between job and life satisfaction: (i) ‘Spillover’, where job experiences spillover onto the life, and vice versa; (ii) ‘Segmentation’, where job and life experiences are balkanized and

have little to do with one another; (iii) 'Compensation', where individuals seek to compensate for dissatisfaction job by seeking fulfillment and happiness in their non work lives, and vice versa. Judge argues that these different models may exist for different individuals and was able to classify individuals into the three groups. He found that 68% of workers were classified as falling into the spillover groups; 20% of individuals fell into the segmentation group; and 12% fell into the compensation group. Thus, the spillover model appears to characterize most individuals. In fact research suggests that the relationship between job and life satisfaction is reciprocal. Job satisfaction affects life satisfaction, but life satisfaction also affects job satisfaction.

#### **v) Other outcomes of job satisfaction**

In addition to the above, there are a number of other effects brought about by high job satisfaction. Research reports that highly satisfied employees tend to have better mental and physical health, learn new job-related tasks more quickly, file fewer grievances (Luthans, 1989). From an overall standpoint, then, most researchers as well as practicing managers would argue that satisfaction of employees is essential at workplaces.

## **CONCLUSION**

Job satisfaction is the central construct in organizational behavior. It is one of the important factors, which affects not only the efficiency of the workers but also such job behavior as absenteeism and turnover. Generally satisfaction with job is closely related with employees' happiness, personal growth, welfare, betterment and good performance. It is highly significant to the prosperity and effectiveness of the organization. Whereas the employees' job dissatisfaction may lead to industrial unrest. Therefore, the organization can not achieve its goals and targets unless its work force is satisfied with job. In order for organizations to be successful they must continuously ensure the satisfaction of their employees and improve or change those

factors which decrease job satisfaction. Thus, the construct of job satisfaction is deserving of study and application in the field of organization to develop healthy and desirable environment for enhancement and productive functioning at workplaces.

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