

Job Satisfaction Among Academic Staff in Private Universities in Malaysia

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Abstract: This study examines the relationships between pay, promotion, fringe benefits, working condition, support of research, support of teaching, gender and job satisfaction of academic staff in private universities in Malaysia. The required information was collected from 173 teaching staff who were randomly selected from three universities. The regression results indicate that pay, promotion, working condition and support of research have positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. On the other hand fringe benefits and support of teaching have negative effect. The results of Mann-Whitney U test also indicate that female staff are more satisfied than their counterpart.

Key words: Academic staff, Job Satisfaction, Malaysia, Private Universities

INTRODUCTION

The search for identifying the causes of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is an ongoing area of interest for social scientists and managers. The premise being that satisfied workers will be more productive and remain within the organization longer, whereas dissatisfied workers will be less productive and more inclined to quit [1].

Work plays a prominent role in our lives. It occupies more time than any other single activity and it provides the economic basis for our lifestyle. Therefore, job satisfaction is a key research area for numerous specialists and is a heavily researched area in the recent years. One major reason for the continuing interest in job satisfaction, as Wilson and Rosenfeld [2] pointed out, is that positive and negative attitudes towards work may exert powerful effects on many forms of organizational behavior. Relevant research data have demonstrated the importance of job satisfaction in an organization, especially, in terms of its efficiency, productivity, employee relations, absenteeism and turnover [3, 4]. Moreover, job satisfaction is relevant to the physical and mental well being of employees, i.e. job satisfaction has relevance for human health [5]. An understanding of the factors involved in job satisfaction is relevant to improve the well being of a significant number of people. While the pursuit of the improvement of satisfaction is of humanitarian value, Smith and others stated that "trite as it may seem, satisfaction is a legitimate goal in itself" [6]. Therefore, apart from its humanitarian utility, it appears to make economic sense to consider whether and how job satisfaction can be improved.

While there have been several job satisfaction studies, very few of them have been focused on the job satisfaction of the university teachers, in general. Moreover, most of the studies have been reported

before 1981 [7-11]. It is observed that most of these relevant studies were focused on UK Universities. In addition, each of the study was carried out within a university. Even now, since 1996 some studies, specially, about university, have been published in UK by Oshagbemi, focused on UK university teachers job satisfaction [12-19]. Despite numerous studies about job satisfaction on academic staffs in UK and US there is a dearth of research in this area in Malaysia.

Most of the previous studies have made attempt to explain a worker's job satisfaction as a function of the individual's personal characteristics and the characteristics of the job itself. Variables such as age, gender, education status, hours of work and earnings figure were identified as key factors to determine job satisfaction of university teachers. Among these, personal characteristics are gender, age, marital and parental status, working experience, etc. Gender is often included as an individual characteristic in studies of job satisfaction, but no conclusive findings with regard to the levels of satisfaction between male and female have been found [13,17, 19-24,]

In general, age, marital status, number of children, education level and working experience have significant impact on job satisfaction. Moreover, the existing literature shows that the woman are more satisfied with their jobs than men, as reflecting women's lower expectations from their job [19]. Since the majority of research in job satisfaction has been undertaken in the USA and UK, the extent to which research findings in these countries can be applied to the Malaysian cultural context should be tested. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to:

- * Examine the level of job satisfaction of academic staff working in Malaysian private universities.

* To compare and measure the degree of job satisfaction of female and male academic staff.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and Data Collection: A questionnaire survey was conducted in May-July 2003. The population for the study comprised private university academic staff in Malaysia. A total of 400 questionnaires were administered to potential respondents chosen from 3 universities. The universities were selected to include sample institutions from Klang Valley region of the country. Among the 400 survey questionnaires mailed, 31 were returned because of out-of-date addresses. Of the remaining 369 questionnaires, 173 usable responses were received, for a final response rate of 43 percent. The names of the potential respondents were obtained from the *web page of every university*. The questionnaire was designed to collect information on six facets of satisfaction for analysis and respondents were asked to respond on a five point scale.

The responses to the statements about job satisfaction could range from 1.0, Strongly Disagree, to 5.0, Strongly Agree. The responses were summed and averaged because there were different numbers of questions in the sections of the survey. If the questions were stated from a negative perspective, the score were in the reversing order.

One section contained four self evaluation questions to collect information about socio-demographic questions related to characteristics such as age, gender, length of service and rank of the respondents.

Data Analysis Method: Bivariate frequency distribution of the respondents, according to age, tenure, gender and length of services was presented. Descriptive statistics were computed to examine different levels of satisfaction with each of their primary tasks. To study the key factor which significantly affect job satisfaction, multiple regression analysis is used. The analysis enabled us to examine the individual impact of the independent variables on the job satisfaction. Thus, the direct effects of age, gender and experience on satisfaction of Malaysian private universities with each of their primary tasks were investigated. In addition, non-parametric Friedman test and Mann Whitney U test were applied to identify the relationship with overall job satisfaction and the gender groups.

Reliability and Validity of Data: The internal reliability of the items were verified by computing the Cronbach's alpha and it suggested that a minimum alpha of 0.6 was sufficed for early stage of research. The Cronbach alpha estimated for job satisfaction scale was 0.7769, pay scale was 0.8034, promotion scale was

0.7911, fringe benefits scale was 0.8294, support of research scale was 0.7509, support of teaching scale was 0.7591 and working condition scale was 0.8657. As the Cronbach's alpha in this study were much higher than 0.6, the constructs were therefore deemed to have adequate reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Profile: Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents' age, sex, rank, length of service in present university education and areas of academic discipline. The following sub-sections provide the discussion of the respondents' profile.

Gender: The gender distribution of the respondents was predominantly male, of which 64.7% were male and 35.3% were female.

Table 1: Background of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	112	64.7
Female	61	35.3
Age group (years)		
<25	16	9.3
25-34	35	20.2
35-44	69	39.9
45-54	36	20.8
55 and above	17	9.8
Rank		
Assistant Lecturer	23	13.3
Lecturer	81	46.8
Senior Lecturer	33	19.1
Associate Professor	24	13.9
Professor	12	6.9
Length of service (years)		
0-5	85	49.1
6-10	35	20.2
11-20	24	13.9
21-30	20	11.6
31 and above	09	05.2

Table 2: Test of Collinearity

Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Pay	.138	7.271
Promotion	.212	4.707
Fringe Benefit	.317	3.154
Working Condition	.435	2.301
Support of Research	.439	2.278
Support of Teaching	.446	2.244
Gender	.975	1.026
Age	.972	1.029

Age and Service: The majority of the respondents were in the age ranging from 35 to 44 years and above

Table 3: Correlation of Variables

Variables	Pay	Promotion	Fringe Benefits	Working condition	Support of research	Support of teaching
Pay	1.000					
Promotion	0.817	1.000				
Fringe	0.804	0.636	1.000			
Working condition	0.558	0.730	0.462	1.000		
Support of Research	0.670	0.694	0.419	0.572	1.000	
Support of Teaching	0.733	0.537	0.681	0.395	0.394	1.000

Table 4: Regression on Job Satisfaction of Private Universities Academics in Malaysia

Variables	Estimate	Standard Error	P-value
Intercept	0.305	0.249	0.222
Pay	0.686	0.123	**0.001
Promotion	0.474	0.086	**0.001
Fringe benefits	-0.426	0.076	**0.001
Working condition	0.136	0.068	*0.047
Support of research	0.273	0.061	**0.001
Support of teaching	-0.233	0.060	**0.001
Gender	0.133	0.080	0.099
Age	-0.0085	0.030	0.349

Survey conducted in 2003 at Private Universities in Malaysia. R-squared = 0.78 (*) p <.05, (***) p < .001

Table 5: The Relationship Between Gender and Overall Job Satisfaction (Mann-Whitney U Test)

	Pay	Promotion	Fringe Benefits	Working condition	Support of Research	Support of Teaching
Mann-Whitney U	1564.00	1827.50	1725.50	1906.00	1509.00	1535.50
Mean rank						
Male	84.64	86.43	85.74	86.97	84.27	84.45
Female	100.35	90.21	94.13	87.19	102.46	101.44
Sum of ranks						
Male	12442.00	12705.50	12603.50	12784.00	12387.00	12413.50
Female	2609.00	2345.50	2447.50	2267.00	2664.00	2637.50
Z	-1.479	-0.357	-0.793	-0.021	-1.721	-1.608
Sig. (two tailed)	0.139	0.721	0.428	0.983	0.085	0.108

35-44 years group, thereby indicating that universities academicians are predominantly senior persons. The study tried to identify whether age is a significant factor in job satisfaction as suggested by other studies. It was further observed that the percentage of respondents who were in the age group of 25-34 years was about same as the percentage of those who were older than 45-54 years. Only 9 per cent of the respondents were less than 25 years of age. It is found that almost 49 per cent of the respondents were in the teaching profession with 1-5 years of service.

Rank: Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents were lecturers (about 49 percent), while a significant percentage were of senior lecturer rank. Relatively few professors appear to be representative of the percentage of these top officers in the academic population.

Normality of Data and Multicollinearity: This study involves a relatively large sample (173 respondents) and therefore, the Central Limit Theorem could be applied and hence there is no question on normality of the data. An adequate examination was conducted to ascertain whether the linearity assumptions are met in order to use correlation and regression. In investigating the normality of the data, non-existence of Multicollinearity is an important assumption to be examined. Tolerance test was carried out for each independent variable by selecting Collinearity diagnostics in SPSS. None of the tolerances for each of the independent variables is, 01 or less than 0.01 (Table 2). The results of collinearity test shows that the data are not seriously multicollinear.

Another method to test multicollinearity is estimating Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each independent variable. They also suggest that, as a rule of thumb, if the VIF of a variable exceeds 10, that variable is

said to be highly collinear and will pose a problem to regression analysis. This condition is adopted to check for multicollinearity among the independent variables. Table 2 shows the variables together with their respective VIF values. From the table, all of the VIF values are well below 10, ranging from 1.026 to 7.271. Therefore, there is really no problem of multicollinearity.

The correlation coefficient is a measure of the closeness of the relationships or association between independent and dependent variables. Multicollinearity problem exists when the independent variables are too highly correlated. For the interval scale of the nature of the variables in this study, Pearson correlation is appropriate. The correlation also ensured that the Pearson's *r* between each pair of independent variables did not exceed 0.85. The results (Table 3) indicate that none of the squared correlations was close to 0.85 to suggest a problem with multicollinearity among the variables. All the relationships were related to the expected direction and were significantly correlated. Therefore, there was no evidence of significant multicollinearity among the research variables.

Regression Result on Job Satisfaction: After examining the multicollinearity and normality for each aspect of the job, an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was conducted, using job satisfaction as the dependent variable. A multivariate regression allows the investigator to assess the relationship between a dependent variable (job satisfaction) and several independent variables, such as demographics and work-related factors.

The results of the multivariate regression on job satisfaction are shown in Table 4. The results show that pay, promotion, fringe benefit, working condition, support of research and support of teaching were significant determinants of job satisfaction. Two factors in the regression analysis were not significantly related to job satisfaction: namely gender and age.

The results of regression show that pay, promotion, working condition and support of research is positively related with job satisfaction. Pay, promotion and support of research are significant at 0.01 levels, where as working condition is significant at 0.05 levels. Fringe benefits and support of teaching are significant at 0.01 levels but negatively affect job satisfaction.

As the two gender groups were not normally distributed, Mann-Whitney U test was performed to test the relationship between gender and job satisfaction with each facet. The results (Table 5) indicates significantly higher satisfaction among females. The results indicates that female staff are more satisfied than male with all the facets, i.e., pay, promotion, fringe benefits, working condition and support of teaching, but these are not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this study is to identify the factors that affects job satisfaction of academic staff working in private universities. The study also examined the effect of age, gender, pay, promotion, fringe benefits, working condition, support of research and support of teaching on the level of job satisfaction among Malaysian private university teachers on their primary tasks.

The results of this study shows that there is a significant association exists between pay, promotion, fringe benefits, working condition, support of research and support of teaching on job satisfaction. However, this study found that the factors like fringe benefits and support of teaching have negative effect on job satisfaction. The possible reason for this negative effect is that generally in private self-financed universities, the management much emphasis students' satisfaction, since they are considered as their customers.

Mann-Whitney U test results showed that female staff were more satisfied with all the facets than their male counterparts, this seems that women enjoyed their working environment and they do not have higher expectation in terms of promotion or salary, in general.

The present study extends interesting insight into assessing the limited body of knowledge on job satisfaction among the private university teachers in Malaysia. However, due to the limited sample and data collected through primary survey, generalization to other sectors or to other government or private universities may not be possible.

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