

Measuring Job Satisfaction from the Perspective of Interpersonal Relationship and Faculty Workload among Academic Staff at Public Universities in Kelantan, Malaysia¹

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the influence of interpersonal relationship and faculty workload on job satisfaction among academicians in public universities in Malaysia. By using systematic random procedures data was collected from 320 lecturers from four public universities in Kelantan, Malaysia through self-administered research questionnaires. Data was analysed using descriptive analysis to describe the demographic profiles of the respondents, and using Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the relationship between variables. From data analysis, the result indicated that there was positive significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction, whereas daily workload and satisfaction was inversely correlated. The organization should consider these variables in promoting job satisfaction among employees in order to enhance organizational citizenship.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, interpersonal relationship, workload.

Introduction

Job satisfaction has been widely studied in the management literature (Spector, 1997) due to its relevance to the physical and mental well-being of the employees. Job satisfaction can be an important indicator of how employees feel about their jobs and a predictor of work behaviours such as organizational citizenship, absenteeism and turnover. An understanding of the factors involved in job satisfaction is crucial to enhance the happiness of workers (Okpara, Squillace & Erundu, 2005). In a similar vein, job satisfaction among academics is very important because it contributes to the quality of teaching, high job commitment and pave a right direction in producing high quality students. Understanding academics' job satisfaction will help the institutions to find mechanism in order to retain academic talents, lower absenteeism and turnover rate, as well as attracting new best brain into the academic line.

Phenomenon of the Study

Most of the past researches on job satisfaction were less interest in examining academicians as subject of the study. However, in recent years, a clear increase has been observed in the number of studies related to the job satisfaction among academicians. One probable reason for this trend is the reality that higher education institutes are labour intensive sector and their budgets are predominantly devoted to personnel and their effectiveness is largely dependent on their employees (Kusku, 2003).

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible to initiate significant improvement in higher education system by establishing the Malaysian Qualifications Agency and the Malaysian Qualifications Framework. Today, there are 20 public Universities with 25 private universities and 435 private institutions of higher learning offering their services to the potential candidates from within as well as foreign countries. This make the role of academics or educators is vital in producing high quality graduates. Lecturers or academicians have their own professional, occupational and personal interests in relation to their universities, including freedom to pursue excellence, the right to make decisions in relation to curriculum and research agenda. As Chen, Yang, Shiau & Wang (2006) stated that, with educators being the employees of educational organizations, the satisfaction they gain from their work and working environment promotes high education and research quality.

¹ This paper was presented at 20th IBIMA Conference in Kuala Lumpur on 25-26 March 2013.

This finding was supported by Smith (2007) who highlighted that the most satisfying jobs are mostly professions, especially those involving teaching, and creative pursuits. Since a high job satisfaction lead to high quality lecturer and, is the cornerstone of successful educational system; this study is meant to examine the antecedent factors that influence job satisfaction of lecturers in order to achieve a high quality of teaching and learning in public universities. This paper presents the findings from an empirical study that measures job satisfaction as a consequence of interaction between interpersonal relationship at workplace and faculty workload among groups of academicians in selected public universities in Malaysia.

Research Objectives (RO)

RO1: To test the effect of interpersonal relationships on job satisfaction.

RO2: To test the influence of faculty workload on job satisfaction.

Material and Methods

Employees' satisfaction is crucial to be studied since it is considered as an important factor in enhancing organizations' performance and competitiveness. The study of job satisfaction and performance of Government Employees in UAE by Mohamed E Ibrahim, Sabri Al Sejini and Oaima Abdul Aziz Al Qassimi (2004) discovered that self-rated performance, position and nationality were significant factors affecting some job satisfaction facets (i.e., pay and benefits, professional development, and work environment). Employees will demonstrate pleasurable positive attitudes when they are satisfied with their job (Jain, Jabeen, Mishra & Gupta: 2007). Thus, high job satisfaction of employees will increase the productivity of an organization in turn will increase the organizational overall performance.

In literature, there are many factors that affects employees' job satisfaction. Ooi, K.B., et al, (2005) has examined the Total Quality Management (TQM) practices on job satisfaction amongst employees of Malaysian semiconductor assembly and test organizations. The finding indicated that teamwork, organizational trust, organizational culture and customer focus were positively correlated with employees' job satisfaction. Another study done by Roelen, Koopmans & Groothoff (2008) measured satisfaction against workload, work pace, task variety, working conditions, work times, salary, supervisor, colleagues, and work briefings. The finding confirmed positive correlation between all variables and job satisfaction.

The influence of interpersonal relationship on job satisfaction

Part of satisfaction of employees is the social contact that allows the employees a reasonable amount of time for socialization (e.g., over lunch, during breaks, between customers etc.). This will help them develop a sense of belonging among co-workers and teamwork. The management may contain the rudeness, inappropriate behaviour and offensive comments from employees if there is a good interpersonal relationship with its employees. Wan, Sulaiman & Omar (2012) pointed out that a good superior-subordinate relationship was an important determinant of promotion decisions. The effect of supervisor relations was significant for intrinsic, extrinsic, and general job satisfaction and was the strongest explanatory variable for extrinsic job satisfaction (Waskiewicz, 1999). Saidon, (1998) discovered that the relationship with co-workers (subordinates or peers) affect job satisfaction and turnover intention among lecturers. It is supported by Zainudin Awang & Junaidah Hanim Ahmad (2010) and Danish & Usman (2010) who found a positive significant correlation between workplace relationship and job satisfaction. Indeed, working in an environment of cooperation and mutual respect is also important to increase the lecturers' job satisfaction. Therefore this study proposes that:

H1a: There is positive significant relationship between interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction.

The influence of daily workload on job satisfaction

Having large piles of work in a given target timeline will result in employees becoming stressed out from their work as well as their organization. Teaching is an exciting task to be carried out with a high quality of teaching if a lecturer is capable of performing a given workload well.

Porter & Umbach (2000) and, Glazer & Henry (1994) discussed that faculty workload covers multi factors besides teaching hours e.g. committee involvement, research time, community service, administrative hours, student evaluation, course preparation etcetera. According to Chin, Yian & Yen (2003) found that the lecturers had a total workload of between 43 to 46 hours per week. About 47 % of the respondents were involved in research activities and publication.

Houston, Meyer & Paewai (2006) discovered that staffs were moderately satisfied with the freedom to choose their own method of work, their level of responsibility, and the amount of variety in their job. Shahzad, Mumtaz, Hayat, & Khan (2010) have conducted a research to test the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship of compensation and workload with academic quality in the public educational institutions in Pakistan. They found a positive impact of faculty compensation and negative impact of faculty work load on the faculty satisfaction. This finding was supported by Amal Altaf & Mohammad Atif Awan (2011) who found that job overload has a negative impact on job satisfaction. The variable of workload and its relationship with job satisfaction also studied by Zainudin Awang & Junaidah Hanim Ahmad (2010) who confirmed a negative significant relationship between workload and job satisfaction among lecturers of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kelantan. Therefore this study proposes that:

H2a: There is negative significant relationship between workload and job satisfaction.

Method

Sampling Procedure:

This study was conducted on lecturers in four public universities in Kelantan namely Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). This study measured job satisfaction among fulltime lecturers who met criteria of having at least three years working experience in their current position. Samples were identified through lists of faculty members for each institution from their websites. Then the selection process was done by means of systematic random procedure. The data has been collected from 320 respondents using self-administered questionnaires. This sampling procedure allows an equal chance for lecturers to be selected as samples of the study.

Data analysis

In this study, descriptive statistics was utilized to describe demographic profile of respondents and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between variables. Correlation coefficient (r) takes a range of between -1.000 to +1.000 that describes the relationship between two variables whereas Guilford Rules of Thumb was used as reference in describing the strength of the correlation.

Instrumentation

Interpersonal relationship, being one of the determinants of job satisfaction was measured using an 8 items instrument developed by Zainuddin (2010). It has a high alpha reliability of 0.969. Faculty workload was measured using an 11 items measurement and have reliability value of 0.872. The dependent variable; Job Satisfaction was measured using a 10 items instrument by Zainuddin (2010) and has reported high alpha reliability of 0.951. Respondents stated their response by indicating their response on the Likert scale that running on the continuum from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree).

Findings and Discussion

Demographic Profile

From the analysis there were 149 or 46.6 % of female respondents. The highest frequency of respondents were from the age cohort of 31 to 40 years old accounted 126 or 39.4% out of 320 respondents. It was followed by the age of 41 to 50 years old that accounted 84 or 26.3% and the age of 51 and above which accounted 29 or 9.0%. The lowest frequency of respondents were from the age of 30 years old and below which accounted 19 or 6.0%. Based on the result, most of the respondents (78.7%) in this study were married. The majority of respondents (89.9%) were Malay, 6.6% Chinese and the rest were Indians. There were 26% of the respondents having a doctoral degree followed by masters about 70% and the remaining 4.7% were bachelor degree holders. Most respondents (41.9%) having teaching experience between 6 to 10 years and about 21.7% have 11 to 15 years, 11.2% have more than 16 years and only 8.6 % respondents had experienced three years and below. The highest basic monthly salary was above RM5500 which accounted 89 or 28.0% and followed by RM3501 - RM4500 which accounted 88 or 27.9%. While, 49 or 15.0% of respondents had an income range of RM4501 - RM5500 and 21 or 6.6% earned between RM2500 - RM3500.

The correlation between Interpersonal Relationship and Job Satisfaction

The first objective of this study was to test the effect of interpersonal relationships on job satisfaction among respondents. Result from data analysis indicated $r = 0.641$, $p = 0.000$. According to Guildford Rule of Thumb, when $r = 0.641$, $p = 0.000$, it indicates moderately high correlation between both variables. This result answered the first objective and at the same time confirmed a positive significant correlation between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction. Therefore hypothesis Ha1 was supported.

This finding was parallel with the study of Waskiewicz (1999) which indicated that the effect of interpersonal relationship at workplace such as a good treatment received from a supervisor was significantly important for intrinsic, extrinsic, and general job satisfaction and was the strongest explanatory variable for extrinsic job satisfaction. It also consistent with the study of Lin & Lin (2011), that coworkers' relationship has positive effect on job satisfaction. When leader-member relationship and coworkers' interactions are better, the level of job satisfaction will be higher.

The correlation between Daily Workload and Job Satisfaction

The second objective of this study was to test the influence of daily workload on job satisfaction. Result from the analysis indicated $r = -0.536$, $p = 0.000$ and according to Guildford Rule of Thumb, when $r = -0.536$, $p = 0.000$, it showed that there was a moderately strong correlation between workers' workload and job satisfaction. This result answered the second objective, thus confirmed an inverse significant correlation between faculty workload and job satisfaction. Therefore hypothesis Ha2 was supported. This finding is parallel with Zainudin Awang & Junaidah Hanim Ahmad (2010) who found the similar direction that was a negative significant relationship between workload and job satisfaction among lecturers. Lecturers who felt they had a good balance between work and their private life were more satisfied with their works. The university should realize the importance of work life balance and its adverse effect on job satisfaction.

Contribution of the Study

The findings of the research would definitely contribute to the body of knowledge regarding job satisfaction among academicians in the public universities in Kelantan. Since the result of data analysis indicated positive correlation between interpersonal relationship at workplace towards job satisfaction, the organization may utilize it to promote cooperation and cohesiveness among employees and at the same time reduce faculty workload. It is believed that the findings of this study are useful to other researchers to study the job satisfaction among lecturers in higher education institutions by exploring other variables such as management style, working environment, organizational culture and other dimension of job characteristics.

Conclusion

Interpersonal relationships at workplace serve as a critical factor in the development and maintenance of trust and positive feelings among workers. The relationship between supervisor and subordinate or among co-workers needs to be enhanced since it influences job satisfaction. The organization's success as indicated by this study is also influenced by daily workload. The lecturer's workload needs to be considered in order to achieve a reasonable satisfaction as a mean to enhance employee loyalty and a promising organizational performance.

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