

Gender and employees' job satisfaction-an empirical study from a developing country

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Keywords

Saudi Arabia, Job satisfaction, intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors

Abstract

In recent decades, the study of employees at work has been increasingly concerned with their level of satisfaction and the factors that contribute to this satisfaction. However, the difference in the level of satisfaction between male and female workers has received limited attention. This study attempts to assess the level of job satisfaction among Saudi male and female employed in the private and government sectors. A questionnaire was designed for this study and distributed in the three main regions in the Kingdom in private companies as well as governmental agencies. A random sample of 1000 employees completed the survey. Promotion and compensation were found among the most important factors of dissatisfaction among the Saudi employees.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction has been widely studied over the years. There is an extensive support in the research literature for the relationship between workplace factors such as pay, promotion, relations with coworkers, job security, etc. and job satisfaction. This relationship can differ depending on the group being investigated. Tziner and Vardi (1984) define work satisfaction as an effective response or reaction to a wide range of conditions or aspects of one's work such as pay, supervision, working conditions, and/or the work itself. Others define it as an effective orientation towards anticipated outcome (Wanous & Lawler 1972) or a statement that describe the feelings of employees about their work (Arches 1991).

The search for understanding the causes of job satisfaction is an ongoing area of interest for social scientists and managers. It is generally recognized as a multifaceted construct that includes employee feelings about a variety of both intrinsic and extrinsic job elements (Howard & Frink 1996). Intrinsic determinants pertain to the nature of, and activities inherent to, a position or set of tasks, such as intellectual stimulation or feeling of accomplishment. Extrinsic determinants focus on external factors such as relations with coworkers or job security. Therefore, job satisfaction is a subjective variable that does not lend itself readily to quantification. It is experienced when employees fulfill whatever needs or considerations they deem important in their work. It is argued that the extent of employee job satisfaction reflects the cumulative level of met worker expectations, that is, employees expect their job to provide a mix of features (e.g., pay, promotion, autonomy) for which the employee has certain preferential values (Porter & Steers 1973).

The range and importance of these preferences vary across individuals, but when the accumulation of unmet expectation becomes sufficiently large there is less job satisfaction and greater probability of withdrawal behavior. The preference for intrinsic and extrinsic determinants is not entirely random; they are systematically related to employees' demographic characteristics, the most important of which seems to be gender.

This study attempts to determine the perceived relationship between gender and job satisfaction of employees (males and females) in the private and government sectors in Saudi Arabia, using selected intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

The contribution of this study will be significant, since its results should be beneficial to government and business leaders. Findings can be especially important to policy makers in order to develop a positive organizational culture that leads to job satisfaction and in turn to enhance the performance of people and the organizations that will contribute to the economic growth in Saudi Arabia.

2. Literature Review

Research on job satisfaction has been developed over the years and has probably been the most often-researched work attitude in the organizational behavior literature, as it is responding to a very critical subject that needs more attention from organizations' decision makers. The topic of job satisfaction is important, because of its job related implications such as productivity, loyalty, absenteeism or turnover. Mottaz (1985) linked job satisfaction to workers' productivity, absenteeism, turnover and organizational effectiveness.

Despite many extensive studies on the issue, many causal relationships concerning antecedents to and consequences from job satisfaction are still open to question (Cranny, Smith & Stone 1992). Most research efforts to explain this organizational behavior topic have been dominated by the person-environment fit paradigm (Mottaz 1985; Kristof 1996), which states that the more an employee's work environment fulfills his/her needs, values, or personal characteristics, the greater the degree of job satisfaction.

Zeitz (1990) found that perceptions that employees have about numerous aspects of their work environment (management climate, job content, reward fairness, employee influence on work group, and promotion opportunities) explained job satisfaction. The results from the research of Agho, Mueller & Price (1993) suggested that the importance of environment or situational characteristics and job characteristics are influencing employees' satisfaction. A qualitative study (Bussing, Bissels, Fuchs & Perrar 1999) suggested that job satisfaction is developed through assessment of the match between expectations, needs, and motives and the work situation. Based on this assessment, a person builds up satisfaction or dissatisfaction with his work.

Since more and more women are entering the workforce, the study of the differences between male and female job satisfaction will be of great interest. Women are under the pressures of doing household tasks and meeting expectations in the workplace regarding time, energy and work commitment (Hochschild 1997). Major & Konar (1986) argued that, through the socialization process, men and women develop different attitudes toward occupational achievement and work contentment that often lead to systematic inter-gender variations in perceptions and behavior.

3. Empirical Study

Methodology

Data for the study were collected in the major cities of Saudi Arabia using a structured self-administered questionnaire. Both Arabic and English versions of the questionnaire were distributed. The questionnaire was initially designed in English and later translated into Arabic using a unique procedure developed for the study.

Population and Sampling

Two samples, which represent male and female Saudi employees, were drawn from the private and government organizations from different regions of Saudi Arabia. We have focused

our study on the three sectors in which most women are employed: Healthcare, Education, and Banking.

Selection of Instruments

A questionnaire was developed and sent to private and government organizations mainly in the three main cities of the country (Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam/Khobar). The questionnaire was divided in two parts: the first part includes general information about the employee (gender, age, educational background, income, etc.) and the second part was designed to assess employee perceptions about intrinsic factors (example: responsibility, job importance, autonomy, job burnout) and extrinsic factors (example: earnings, promotion opportunities, supervisor, work conditions) that have an effect on job satisfaction, using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" or 1 "very dissatisfied" to 5 "very satisfied", depending on the question. The items of the questionnaire either were from the literature review or put by the researchers. The questionnaire was translated to Arabic. Thus, the questionnaire was in both Arabic and English.

Data Collection and Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSSx). Basic statistics, item mean scores, factor analysis procedures and product moment correlations are among the statistical analyses that were conducted.

Analysis and Results

The main purpose of this research was to understand the determinants of the work performance among women employees in Saudi Arabia. It also sought to identify demographic variables that have influence on the work performance.

Reliability of the Instrument

Based on Cronbach's alpha, the reliability coefficient score obtained for the overall measures is 0.889. This study supports previous research reported in the methodology section of this study with regard to the high reliability of the instrument used.

Demographic Variables

The distribution of respondents (Table 1) by job sector showed that the majority of the respondents (63.6%) were governmental employees, aging between 30-40 years old (40.3%) and 70% of them are married. The population is divided between male (62%) and female (38%). Concerning the educational level, 68.4% said that the highest degree they earned was a Bachelor degree. Only 27 respondents (2.7%) finished their graduate studies. As far as monthly income is concerned, 21.4% of the respondents reported earning less than SR 5,000, around 75% made between SR 5,000 and 20,000 and only 5% are earning more than SR 20,000.

The majority (32%) has been employed for the duration of between 1-5 years. Only 8.6% of the respondents have an experience of over 20 years-period. Response to the item "Company Activity" was used to determine the discipline area of respondents. The majority (54.7%) of the respondents are in the educational sector, followed by the health sector (28.5%) and banking (16.8%).

Variable	Count	%	Variable	Count	%
Age			Region		
Less than 20	21	2.1	Eastern	846	84.6
20 - 30	349	34.9	Western	31	3.1
30 - 40	403	40.3	Northern	23	2.3
40-50	188	18.8	Southern	19	1.9
Over 50	39	3.9	Central	81	8.1
Education			Monthly Income*		
Elementary	25	2.5	< SR 1,000	40	4.0
Intermediate	21	2.1	SR 1,000 - 4,999	174	17.4
High School	78	7.8	SR 5,000 - 9,999	288	28.8
Diploma	165	16.5	SR 10,000-14,999	305	30.5
University Degree	684	68.4	SR 15,000-19,999	142	14.2
Other	27	2.7	Over SR 20,000	51	5.1
Job Experience			Company Size		
Less than 1	76	7.6	Less than 10	19	1.9
1 - 5	317	31.7	10 - 50	377	37.7
5-10	235	23.5	50-100	117	11.7
10-15	182	18.2	100-250	106	10.6
15-20	104	10.4	250-500	80	8.0
Over 20	86	8.6	Over 500	301	30.1
Company Type			Status		
Government	636	63.6	Married	707	70.7
Semi-Government	56	5.6	Divorced	215	21.5
Private (Saudi)	284	28.4	Single	60	6.0
Private (Foreign)	24	2.4	Widow	18	1.8
Week Working Hours			Company Activity		
Less than 29	167	16.7	Education	547	54.7
30 - 35	321	32.1	Health	285	28.5
36-39	126	12.6	Banking	168	16.8
40-48	311	31.1	Gender		
Over 48	75	7.5	Male	620	62.0
			Female	380	38.0

* SR means Saudi Riyal. US\$ 1.00 = SR 3.75

Table 1: Sample Demographics (N=1000)

Importance of Job Satisfaction Factors

Table 2 shows the respondents' ratings of the importance of various factors included in the survey concerning job satisfaction. A five point Likert-type scale was used as the response format for the job satisfaction variables, with assigned values ranging from 1 being "Strongly Disagree" to 5 being "Strongly Agree".

The respondents (male and female) had mentioned a number of factors that lead to their dissatisfaction (Mean less than 3), such as promotion, compensation, clarity of organizational goals as well as career development compared to others in similar position in other companies. Other factors ranking high in importance (Mean superior to 3) are the respondents' relationship with supervisor and co-workers, and authority. Other reasons that respondents have mentioned to be important in their responses include the climate and the training activities in the institution. Apparently, Saudi male and female workers are quite satisfied with their jobs.

Questions	Total sample (N=1000)		Male sample (N=620)		Female sample (N=380)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	3.79	0.997	3.80	1.001	3.78	0.992
2	3.04	1.401	2.99	1.424	3.12	1.359
3	3.41	1.165	3.41	1.197	3.41	1.114
4	3.55	1.160	3.55	1.181	3.56	1.125
5	2.77	1.573	2.70	1.293	2.87	1.943
6	2.99	1.360	2.94	1.352	3.06	1.373
7	2.57	1.316	2.55	1.345	2.60	1.270
8	2.96	1.368	2.93	1.394	3.00	1.324
9	3.20	1.304	3.16	1.306	3.25	1.301
10	2.66	1.343	2.69	1.350	2.62	1.331
11	2.82	1.705	2.82	1.386	2.82	2.127
12	2.55	1.265	2.57	1.267	2.52	1.261
13	2.63	1.285	2.63	1.297	2.63	1.267
14	3.99	1.060	3.99	1.033	3.97	1.104
15	2.83	1.264	2.80	1.216	2.88	1.338
16	2.90	1.565	2.95	1.696	2.82	1.323
17	3.16	1.245	3.13	1.270	3.20	1.203
18	3.89	1.360	3.87	1.527	3.93	1.030
19	3.50	1.119	3.48	1.147	3.53	1.071
20	3.68	2.320	3.65	1.915	3.73	2.862
21	3.23	2.183	3.23	2.049	3.24	2.387
22	3.49	1.178	3.51	1.160	3.46	1.207
23	3.67	1.508	3.63	1.190	3.73	1.917
24	3.63	1.227	3.60	1.203	3.68	1.265
25	3.65	1.194	3.65	1.168	3.65	1.237
26	3.49	1.190	3.45	1.173	3.57	1.215
27	4.22	0.965	4.18	0.968	4.30	0.956
28	3.49	1.049	3.49	1.078	3.49	1.003
29	2.56	1.226	2.57	1.239	2.54	1.205
30	2.75	1.213	2.67	1.252	2.83	1.188
31	2.72	1.203	2.65	1.234	2.78	1.200
32	3.20	1.109	3.12	1.191	3.29	1.033
33	3.44	1.206	3.34	1.271	3.54	1.167
34	3.44	1.322	3.36	1.395	3.51	1.266
35	3.16	1.187	3.07	1.217	3.24	1.201
36	3.59	1.250	3.50	1.325	3.67	1.201
37	3.41	1.060	3.39	1.128	3.37	1.044
38	3.40	1.081	3.36	1.135	3.40	1.084
39	3.34	1.117	3.31	1.133	3.32	1.176
40	3.25	1.121	3.19	1.182	3.30	1.099
41	3.31	1.058	3.22	1.098	3.41	1.067
42	3.21	1.251	3.12	1.273	3.32	1.269
43	3.12	1.218	3.01	1.262	3.26	1.197
44	3.00	1.220	2.86	1.254	3.18	1.198
45	3.05	1.188	2.97	1.215	3.13	1.201
46	3.39	1.121	3.34	1.174	3.42	1.115
47	3.17	1.153	3.10	1.203	3.24	1.138
48	3.39	1.169	3.28	1.235	3.51	1.122
49	3.76	1.003	3.68	1.076	3.81	1.001
50	3.41	1.068	3.33	1.132	3.49	1.036

Table 2: Importance of Job Satisfaction Factors (Mean and SD)

I further explored the underlying factor structure in the variables through principal components analysis with varimax rotation. I retained factor loadings of 0.5 and above. The results are presented in Table 3. Thirty Six of the variables loaded on nine factors that together accounted for 57 per cent of the variance. Additional work will be done later in further exploring the factor structure for use in subsequent analysis.

	Factor
Supervision	
My superior is fair and supportive	0.765
My supervisor is quite competent in doing his job	0.817
My supervisor shows enough interest in the feelings of subordinates	0.847
My supervisor is fair to me	0.755
I respect my supervisor	0.594
Career Development	
There is an adequate means of appraising my performance	0.442
I can develop my career within this institution	0.528
There is an opportunity to work for this institution until I retire	0.659
Career development is taken seriously in my institution	0.587
I feel my job is secure	0.604
Conflicts Management	
Conflicts are constructively/positively resolved in the organization	0.583
We are generally encouraged to resolve our conflicts rather than let them	0.684
There are helpful ways of preventing conflicts from getting out of hand in	0.678
There is little conflict between departments	0.639
Training	
I have received the training I need to do a good job	0.773
The training I receive is of high quality	0.819
I get the training I need to further develop my skills	0.756
Autonomy	
I can set my own pace of work	0.526
I decide myself when to take leave	0.554
I decide myself the way the work is done	0.767
I decide myself the order of work activities	0.741
I can interrupt my work at any moment	0.543
Communication	
The goals of this organization are not clear to me	-0.740
I often feel that I do not know what is going on within the organization	-0.737
Work assignments are often not fully explained	-0.762
Relationship with colleagues	
The people I work with are friendly	0.485
I find I have to work harder at my job than I should because of the	-0.703
I am not challenged by the people I work with	-0.707
There is too much bickering and fighting at work	0.684
Financial Rewards	
I am satisfied with the company's compensation program	0.615
I believe I can move up in the company and earn more	0.677
Raises are too few and far behind the expectation	0.744
Promotions	
There is really enough chance for promotion on my job	0.766
Those who do well on the job stand a fair chance of being promoted	0.680
People get ahead as fast as others do in other places	0.640
I am satisfied with my chances for promotion	0.683

Table 3: Factor Structure of Importance of Job Satisfaction Variables

4. Discussion & Conclusions

This study explored the influence of different workplace-related factors on the job satisfaction of male and female employees in Saudi companies. Results suggested that both male and female have the same concerns that lead to their dissatisfaction like the promotion and compensation. Thus, decision maker should put more emphasis on these two variables especially in order to increase the level of satisfaction of their employees and reduce any

unwanted behavior like turnover. Further research should be conducted to identify the satisfaction factors by company activity, i.e., education, health and banking.

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