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A STUDY ON THE FACTORS AFFECTING JOB SATISFACTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Abstract:

Job satisfaction of academic staff in Higher Education Institute (HEI) is important because it influences their motivation and performance that are so very influential in delivering quality education services. This research aims to explore the factors that affect job satisfaction of academic staff on the basis of a study in a HEI in the Sultanate of Oman. In the process of exploring the factors, first a wide range of the literature were reviewed to identify the most common factors that affect job satisfaction of academic staff. It was followed by interviews of selected six academic staff members in a College in the HEI in Oman. The literature review and the interview data analysis revealed six factors that would affect job satisfaction of academics: Remuneration and development, Management support, Students, Colleagues, Workload, and Status of job. A quantitative questionnaire survey was then conducted in the same university to study the influence of the six factors on job satisfaction of academic staff. From the analysis of the survey data it was found that all the six factors were positively associated with job satisfaction. Among them the work load was most strongly associated with job satisfaction followed by the perception about colleagues, status of job, management support, and remuneration and development. The perception about students was found to be relatively weakly associated with job satisfaction.

Keywords:

Job satisfaction, academic staff, higher education institute, The Sultanate of Oman

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction of academic staff members in higher education institutions (HEI) is the central theme of this paper. The importance of academic staff members' job satisfaction can be observed from different perspectives. Machado-Taylor et al. (2010) explained the importance of satisfaction and motivation of faculty members in terms of their contribution to the HEI and society. Their performance influences student learning process and it determines the level of student satisfaction. The quality of the academic institution can be improved through the enhanced performance of faculty members (Comm and Mathaisel, 2003). Job related dissatisfactions and in extreme case job related frustrations might lead to the faculty member to be less productive in their job and less dedicated towards the institution (Ahsan et al., 2009). In order to overcome such negative consequences, the reasons and factors that influence academic staff job satisfaction have to be considered at the first place. This paper aims to explore the factors affecting teaching faculties' job satisfaction on the basis of a study in a HEI in the Sultanate of Oman.

2. Factors affecting Academic Staff Job Satisfaction in Higher Education Institutes

There are numerous factors reported in the literature that contribute to the level of job satisfaction of academics in HEI. Some major studies that reported the factors have been reviewed and it has been summarized in Table 1. Considering the observation of the most common factors, an initial literature review based conceptual framework has been developed for this research (Figure 1).

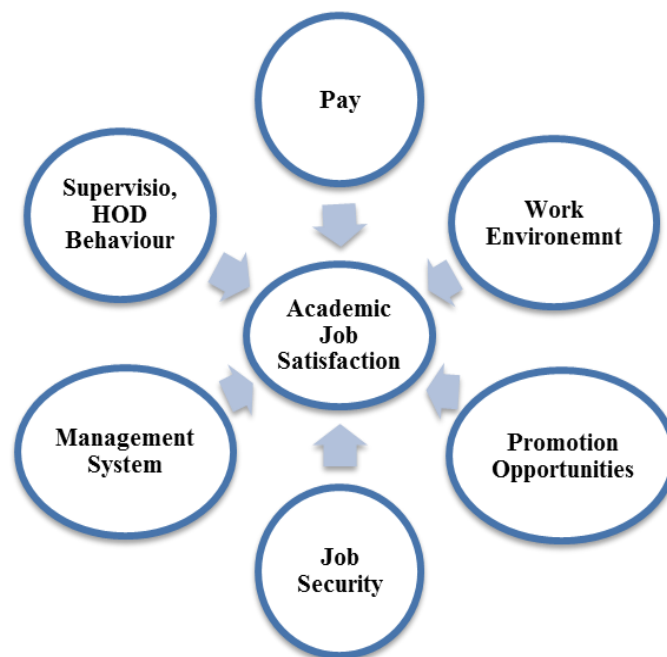


Figure 1. The Major Factors Derived from the Literature

Table 1. Factors Affecting the Level of Job Satisfaction

Factors	Authors										
	Chen et al. (2006)	Aggarwal and Medury (2012)	Awang and Ahmed (2010)	Ghaffar et al. (2013)	Yong (2002)	Strydom (2011)	Saba and Zafar (2013)	Rehman et al. (2013)	Khalid et al. (2012)	Oshagbemi (1999)	Toker (2009)
Remuneration and benefits, financial security	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√
Organization vision	√	√									
Performance feedback and motivation	√	√									
Management system	√	√	√								
Work environment, work condition	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√		
Respect and moral values	√	√									√
Workload			√								
Relationship with co-workers										√	
Job potential			√								
Job security				√		√	√				√
Promotional opportunities				√			√	√	√	√	
Demography (age, gender, years of teaching)					√						
Knowledge					√						
Control					√						
Psychology					√						
Task, activity					√						√
Emotional well being						√					
Autonomy						√					
Physical resources, working facilities						√				√	
Challenges and accomplishments						√					√
Work itself							√				
Supervision, HOD behavior								√	√	√	√
Teaching										√	
Research										√	
Administration and management										√	
Independence											√
Variety in job											√
Social status											√
Social service											√
Authority											√

From the literature review it was also noticed that there was not any best model that could represent the factors but an appropriate model can be developed based on the context of the intended research (Chen et al., 2006). Therefore, in this research an attempt was made to identify any other specific factors in the local context of Oman. A qualitative approach was used to explore the contextualized factors that may influence academic staff job satisfaction in Oman. A number of semi-structured interviews were conducted with six academic staff from the College of Science in a public university in Oman. Each of the interviews lasted around 45 minutes and the conversation were written and noted. From the interview it was found that the identified factors from the literature had fallen under the core categories and themes of factors that could be derived from the interview data analysis. A refined conceptual model could then be developed as shown in Figure 2.

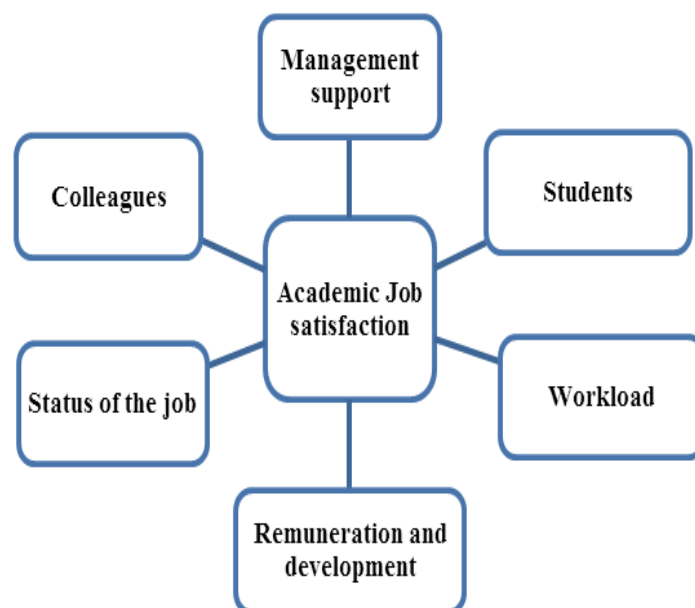


Figure 2. The Refined Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

The research started with the literature review to understand the factors that influence academic job satisfaction in HEI. This was followed by the study on the factors influencing academic staff job satisfaction through the interviews with six academic staff in a public university in Oman (as mentioned in Section 2). Exploring the local context, a refined conceptual framework (Figure 2) was developed in which job satisfaction was taken as the dependent variable and the six factors as independent variables. A quantitative research approach was then used to test the relationships between the dependent and independent variables in the conceptual framework. A structured questionnaire survey was administered for data collection. In the questionnaire, each of the constructs in the conceptual framework was operationalized with a practical set of questions which were quantified by employing the technique of five-point likert scale (1 as the inferior extreme and 5 the superior).

The population frame of the study was College of Science in one of the public universities in Oman. The college was chosen because it was the largest college among six colleges in the University and there were altogether 158 faculty members in the college. A total of 100 questionnaire sets were distributed to all departments of College of Science randomly and only 35 (that is 35%) participants returned the survey in a week time. Then in order to increase the number of respondents one of the researchers personally approached the faculty members and explained to them the value and significance of their participation to complete this study. With the effort the number of respondents was then increased from 35 to 46 responders (that is 46%). Collected data were analysed by using the statistical tools of correlation and regression analysis.

4. Analysis Results

Table 2 presents the reliability of the measures (questions in questionnaire) that were used to quantify the respective constructs. As Cronbach's Alpha value for each of the constructs is more than 0.6, all the measures were found to be reliably representing their corresponding constructs. Table 2 also presents the one sample t-test on the aggregate mean values of all the constructs. All the sample means are significant, and across-the-board observation is that the academic staff did not seem to be very satisfactory regarding their perception on each of the constructs. All the mean values are less than 4 (4 being "agree" and 5 "strongly agree" in the used five point likert scale), and the workload was perceived to be even less than satisfactory with the mean value of less than 3. In a relative sense, job satisfaction with the mean value of 3.77 is the highest among all, and it indicates that the academic staff still prefer to be with their job although it is not very satisfactory. Another observation is that they were not very unhappy with their students and colleagues (mean values of 3.63 and 3.31 respectively) and the status of their job was not considered very inferior (mean value of 3.28). Perception on management support was just above the neutral point of 3, and regarding the remuneration and development, they perceive it neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory.

Table 2. Reliability and One Sample Mean Test

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	t-test	Sig. (2-tailed)
Remuneration and Development	.847	5	3.01	.780	26.172	.000
Management Support	.819	5	3.12	.715	29.570	.000
Students	.865	6	3.63	.624	39.490	.000
Colleagues	.900	6	3.31	.680	32.975	.000
Workload	.897	7	2.96	.782	25.660	.000
Status of Job	.839	4	3.28	.777	28.614	.000
Job Satisfaction	.937	7	3.77	.810	31.543	.000

On the part of correlation analysis, all the variables have positive and significant correlations with job satisfaction (see Table 3). All the variables have strong positive

correlation with job satisfaction except the students which has moderate correlation. It denotes that all the variables are positively associated with job satisfaction, and among them the work load is most strongly correlated to job satisfaction followed by the variables such as colleagues, status of job, management support, and remuneration and development.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Result

	Rem and Dev	Mngmt Support	Students	Colleagues	Workload	Status of Job	Job Satisfaction
Rem and Dev	1	.763**	.412**	.720**	.772**	.763**	.676**
Mngmt Support		1	.362*	.844**	.689**	.760**	.702**
Students			1	.494**	.407**	.457**	.535**
Colleagues				1	.708**	.800**	.717**
Workload					1	.766**	.751**
Status of Job						1	.704**
Job Satisfaction							1

Further, the analysis was extended with the regression analysis. As all the independent variables were found to be significantly correlated with each other (see Table 3), in order to avoid the situation of multicollinearity, separate regression models were developed for each of the independent variables (see Table 4). The regression analysis results revealed that except students, almost 45% to 55% of the variation in job satisfaction could be explained by the variation of the respective independent variables. However the variable of student is found to explain only 27% of variation. Obviously the adjusted R^2 values generally reflect the similar results of the correlation analysis in terms of relationship between the explanatory variables and job satisfaction, but the regression analysis also revealed the additional information about the predictive power of each of the explanatory variables.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variables	R^2 and Adj R^2	Overall Model Significance (ANOVA)	Coefficients	Durbin-Watson
Rem and Dev	0.457 and 0.444	F-value: 36.996 p-value: 0.000	Constant: 11.582 (t-value: 4.615; p-value: 0.000) Slope: 0.983 (t-value: 6.082; p-value: 0.000)	2.233

Mngmt Support	0.492 and 0.481	F-value: 42.664 p-value: 0.000	Constant: 9.025 (t-value: 3.314; p-value: 0.002) Slope: 1.113 (t-value: 6.532; p-value: 0.000)	2.105
Students	0.286 and 0.270	F-value: 17.645 p-value: 0.000	Constant: 8.707 (t-value: 2.042; p-value: 0.047) Slope: 0.881 (t-value: 4.201; p-value: 0.000)	1.813
Colleagues	0.514 and 0.503	F-value: 46.489 p-value: 0.000	Constant: 6.610 (t-value: 2.235; p-value: 0.031) Slope: 0.996 (t-value: 6.818; p-value: 0.000)	2.470
Workload	0.563 and 0.554	F-value: 56.800 p-value: 0.000	Constant: 10.266 (t-value: 4.649; p-value: 0.000) Slope: 0.777 (t-value: 7.537; p-value: 0.000)	2.216
Status of Job	0.496 and 0.484	F-value: 43.241 p-value: 0.000	Constant: 9.529 (t-value: 3.622; p-value: 0.001) Slope: 1.285 (t-value: 6.567; p-value: 0.000)	2.257

5. Discussion

Workload

Further analysis on the mean values of each of the measures of work load revealed that only one item had scored a bit higher than the average with a mean = 3.651, which is teaching delivery and syllabus. On the other hand, most of the academics indicated that they were not satisfied with the time spent on administration work with a mean of 2.651 followed by time spent on assignment marking and grading with a mean of 2.791.

In this research it was found that the workload is the factor that is most strongly associated with job satisfaction. If faculty members are given their own academic job of their interest, it seems that it would help enhance their job satisfaction. The relationship between workload and job satisfaction have been clearly described in the literature. For example, Ahsan et al. (2009) studied the impact of job stress on academic job satisfaction through measuring a number of factors. Workload was one of the factors and their research findings indicate a positive relationship between job stress and workload and a negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction. Similar result was found in another study by Mustapha (2013) who aimed to investigate the relationship between daily faculty workload and job satisfaction found a negative significant relationship – that means continuous excessive workload would not score good in terms of perception on job satisfaction.

Perception about Colleagues

Analysis on the mean values of each of the measures of colleagues revealed that in terms of relationship between academic staff and their colleagues, the mean score indicates the highest of 3.465 on personal relationship with colleagues and the lowest of

3.233 on the academic communication among colleagues. Other items were support from colleagues towards completing individual activities, overall teamwork activities in the department, colleagues' attitude towards their jobs and colleagues interest in teaching with mean scores of 3.349, 3.326, 3.279 and 3.279 respectively.

In this research it was found that good perception about colleagues is strongly and positively correlated to job satisfaction, and it seems that good collegial communication and relationship would provide a feel-good work environment and it would help enhance job satisfaction. This finding is generally supported by the literature. Sohail and Delin (2013) stated that, a friendly relationship between academic staff increases the job satisfaction level and the unfriendly relationship increases their dissatisfaction level. Schulze (2006) found that academics are generally satisfied with their colleague's behavior. The highest satisfaction item of the study was the personal relationship between them and ranked lowest ranked item on the communication amongst them.

Status of the Job

In this research the academic job status was measured by four items considering two different perspectives; the status in academic circle and in their families and society. Both items mean score was above the average which indicates that most of the academic staff are satisfied with their status in academic circle as well as around their families and society. It was found that job status is strongly positively correlated to job satisfaction. The literature also support that, the status of job had has a direct contribution to the job satisfaction. For example, Strydom (2011) found that most of the academic staff in South Africa agreed that they have highly regarded status in the community. Academic rank also seems to have an impact on job satisfaction as it has been observed in the results and the literature. Oshagbemi (2003) indicated that, academic rank have a strong correlation with the overall job satisfaction of academic staff.

Management support

The management support is considered to be one of the main factors that influence academic staff job satisfaction. It strengthens the relationship and increases the trust between them. As it has been observed earlier in this research, the result indicates a highly strong positive relationship between management support and job satisfaction.

In this research the management support was measured with appreciation and recognition, teamwork activities, facilities provided, non-academic social activities and the relationship with their line managers. The mean scores from the highest to the lowest were relationship with line manager, appreciation and recognition, teamwork activities with the management, facilities provided for academic staff and non-academic social activities with a mean of 3.512, 3.302, 3.093, 2.929, 2.953 and 2.767 respectively.

Schulze (2006) stated that the direct relationship of the academics with the line managers and Head of Department (HOD) is one of the crucial aspects that should not be neglected. A study in UK indicates that less than fifty percent of academics staff stated that they are satisfied with recognition received by the management and university as a whole for the work they have achieved (Schulze, 2006). This has also been supported in a study that was carried out by Houston et al. (2006), where the findings points that, a lower positive responses was achieved in regards to their feelings of being acknowledged and appreciated for the good work done. A similar result was also found in other studies,

for example, Maniram (2007) investigated the factors affecting job satisfaction and the results indicated that most of the academic staffs were dissatisfied with this aspect of their job and consequently it negatively affected their job satisfaction.

Remuneration and Development

Remuneration plays a major role in job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of faculty members in higher education (Strydom, 2011). It is considered to be one of the complex and multidimensional factors in regards to the job satisfaction (Ismail, 2012). The latter further explains that remuneration helps and supports individuals to meet their basic needs through their pay and salary as explained in Maslow's law. Also, remuneration is considered to be one of the extrinsic factors (hygiene) as per Herzberg theory, in which leads to dissatisfaction if absent and does not achieve the satisfaction of an academic staff when it exist. Some of the previous studies have supported the theory and some of them did not. For example, Maniram, R. (2007) found that, remuneration is one of the factors that have a major impact on the job dissatisfaction on educators of Education and Training College. Nevertheless, Ssesanga, and Garrett (2005) disagree with the former and concludes that, any of Herzberg's theory factors can influence both of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of university academics. The former had further considered measuring the remuneration construct through two items and they are, inadequate salary and irregular salary.

Other studies had a contradicting result, where remuneration did not score high relationship with job satisfaction. For example, Awang and Ahmed (2010) indicated that remuneration had a very low correlation with job satisfaction compared to other factors. Another study conducted by Mustapha (2013) found a moderately low correlation between remuneration package and job satisfaction.

The remuneration and development construct in this study consists of five factors related to pay and salary, research funds, support for conference attendance and consulting opportunities for additional income. The highest mean amongst all these six factors scored on pay and salary with the mean of 3.46 and the lowest scored on consulting opportunities for additional income with a mean of 2.55. In this research a positive relationship was found between remuneration and development and job satisfaction. However it comes at the fourth rank (in six constructs) in terms of the strength of association with job satisfaction. So it indicates that remuneration and development should be provided competitively (considering the context in which the HEI exists), but increased amount of remuneration as such beyond the competitive range might not have relatively a strong impact on job satisfaction.

Perception about Students

Students are considered to be a core stakeholder and a direct customer in HEIs (Alhawary and Aborumman, 2011). In this research the perception of academic staff about their students is found to be above the mid-point of 3 in the adopted likert scale. The highest satisfaction level was scored on the relationship of academics with their students with a mean of 3.957 and lowest score was on student's level of knowledge with a mean of 3.326 which is still above the average. It was also found that although there is

a positive association between the perception about student on job satisfaction, the strength of the association is the weakest among the six independent variables. This indicates that although the quality of students is important for academics, but it is not as serious factor as other five factors in terms of having the perception that “because of the bad students I tend to hate my academic job”. In most good HEI, entry requirements screen out the students and therefore there won't be any too bad students to extent that it affects the very job satisfaction of academic staff.

6. Conclusions

This research first considered presenting a number of literature-based models related to the factors that influence job satisfaction of academic staff in HEI. The most common factors that have been derived from the literature were identified to be the pay and salary, working environment, promotion opportunities, job security, management system and supervision, and HOD behavior. Then in order to explore specific factors that were important in the local context of Oman, a qualitative study was conducted in a public university in Oman. The findings revealed six factors that would affect job satisfaction of academics: Remuneration and development, Management support, Students, Colleagues, Workload, and Status of job. Then a quantitative questionnaire survey was conducted in the same university to study the influence of the six factors on job satisfaction of academic staff. The analysis revealed that the academic staff still prefer to be with their job although it is not very satisfactory. It was also observed that the academic staff were not unhappy with their students and colleagues and the status of their job was not considered very inferior. Perception on management support was just fine, and regarding the remuneration and development they perceive it neither satisfactory nor dissatisfactory.

Further on the basis of correlation and regression analyses it was found that all the six factors were positively associated with job satisfaction. Among them the work load was most strongly associated with job satisfaction followed by the perception about colleagues, status of job, management support, and remuneration and development. The perception about students was found to be relatively weakly associated with job satisfaction.

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