JOB SATISFACTION: A SURVEY OF HOTEL EMPLOYEES IN KUCHING

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FACULTY OF SOCIETY, SCIENCES
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ABSTRACT

This study examined job satisfaction of hotel employees in Kuching. Its primary objective was to determine the factors that contribute to satisfaction of hotel employees. In addition, it determined the demographic profile of hotel employees. A survey questionnaire which was based on items similar to those of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was used in this study. A total of 60 hotel employees participated in the study. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for frequency, percentage, mean and significant relationship. The study showed that the general satisfaction level of the hotel employees has increased since 6 months ago. Seven job satisfaction factors were identified and labeled as colleagues/ or workers, supervision, communication, physical work conditions, fringe benefits, pay and promotion. The findings support the assumption that not one but many factors determined job satisfaction. Correlation between job satisfaction and demographic variables such as gender, age and occupational level produced some significant relationships. Implications and recommendations for management and future researchers were made.
ABSTRAK

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction, the extent to which employees achieve gratification from their work is one of the most studied concepts in the area of organisational behaviour. Earlier studies such as Brayfield and Crockett (1955), Vroom (1964), Lawler and Porter (1967), and Gannon and Noon (1971) on job satisfaction revealed that job satisfaction increased productivity. There were also other studies such as Breaukh (1981) and Hammer, Landau and Stern (1981) which showed that highly satisfied employees showed signs of good health and low rate of absenteeism compared to highly dissatisfied employees. Other research focused on its impacts on the employee such as performance on the job, rate of absenteeism and employee commitment. Studies of Porter and Steers (1973), Muchinsky and Tuttle (1977), and Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino (1979) implied a relationship between job satisfaction and productivity, that is, employees were not willing to show commitment to the organisation if they were not satisfied with the working conditions provided by the employees. As a result, there was a high rate of absenteeism and turnover. Situations such as these are quite costly to the organisation because replacements for new employees require time for recruitment, selection and training.

Statement of the Problem

Satisfaction is an emotional response. The meaning of the concept of job satisfaction can only be inferred from one's positive and negative feelings, as well as
attitudes toward one's job. Job satisfaction is related to job behaviour. Employees may become a burden to society when they are terminated in their jobs as a result of their negative job behaviour, which is brought about by lack of job satisfaction. Besides, employees who have low job satisfaction may contribute less to society since their skills and knowledge are under-utilised.

While recognising the effects job satisfaction has in the organisation and in the person, this inquiry attempts to explore the underlying variables of job satisfaction. There are many studies that attempted to isolate variables associated with job satisfaction of employees in business, industrial and educational sectors (Houser and Chace, 1993; Agho, Mueller and Price, 1993; Marriott, Sexton and Staley, 1994; and Morgan, McDoragh and Ryan-Morgan, 1995).

No study was located which indicated that the job satisfaction of hotel employees has been investigated. No definitive evidence is available to illustrate that this group of persons is satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, this study is to find out the factors that influence job satisfaction of employees in the hotel industry. Also, this study aims to fill the research gap as not much of research has been carried out on job satisfaction of hotel employees in the Malaysian context.

**Objectives of the Study**

This study examined the following questions developed to answer job satisfaction of employees in the hotel industry. First, what factors determine employees' job satisfaction? What is the level of job satisfaction of the employees? Is there any relationship between job satisfaction and demographic variables?
The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To measure the level of satisfaction of employees in the workplace.
2. To identify the factors of job satisfaction of employees in the hotel industry.
3. To determine if there are any relationship between demographic variables and job satisfaction.

Assumptions of the Study

The study is based on the following assumptions:

1. that there may not be only one factor but many factors that determine job satisfaction.
2. that employees have different levels of job satisfaction in the workplace.
3. that certain demographic variables influence job satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

Studies on job satisfaction have been confined to the business, industrial and educational sector. The present study extends the research to the service/ or hotel sector. Identifying components of hotel employees' job satisfaction can further employers' knowledge of the determinants of employees' satisfaction. This is because employers seldom find out the factors that meet the job satisfaction of their employees in the workplace. The information gathered in this study will help employers formulate strategies and intervention programmes for their employees. Also, the study hopes to contribute to the literature on job satisfaction which are of value to some investigators.
Limitations of the Study

There were limitations to this study. First, there was difficulty in getting cooperation from the target respondents. There were many letters of permission sent to conduct the survey. The upper level management of the companies contacted were against other parties conducting studies on their organisation. Also, some of the companies contacted did not respond at all. Therefore, this study had to change its target respondents many times until a permission to conduct the survey in this hotel was obtained. However, it has been agreed that the name of the company was not to be published.

Another was the lack of research culture in Kuching compared to West Malaysia. People in Kuching were not comfortable with interviews and also in filling of questionnaires. Therefore, before distributing the questionnaires, a detailed explanation on the purpose of the study was given to the respondent. In addition, the researcher had to stress that the name of the respondents and the company will remain confidential.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents literature which relates to job satisfaction. The review is divided into the following categories: 1) Concept of Job Satisfaction; 2) Theories of Job Satisfaction; 3) Factors of Job Satisfaction; and 4) Job Satisfaction and Demographic Variables.

Concept of Job Satisfaction

There has never been any agreement by researchers on the definition of job satisfaction. Research related to job satisfaction has resulted in numerous definitions. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as the appraisal of one’s job in attaining or allowing the attainment of one’s important job values, provided these values are congruent with or help fulfill one’s basic needs. From this definition, it clearly shows that job satisfaction is concerned with degree of happiness one gains from the job. It also deals with some attitudes on the part of the individuals, as positive attitudes toward the job result to satisfaction. Locke also found out that job satisfaction depends on intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Job satisfaction refers to the positive and negative feelings and attitudes which determine workers' satisfaction, impression or appreciation of their work. An individual who has high job satisfaction generally likes or values the job highly and feels positively toward it (Feldman and Arnold, 1983).
McCormik and Ilgen (1985), defined job satisfaction as a specific subset of attitudes that individual has toward his or her job. Thus, satisfaction leads to good performance and positive attitudes toward work.

According to Hudson and Sullivan (1990), job satisfaction is a summary attitude that people experience about their work. It is the result of their job tasks, the characteristics of the organisation in which they work, and individual differences in needs and values. He added that the degree of satisfaction is determined by the nature of job tasks, technology, organisational characteristics, workers participation in decision making, individual differences and prior expectations.

White and Bednar (1991) states that job satisfaction basically refers to how much employees like their jobs. Thus, employees who like their jobs will feel satisfied and will maintain working in their organisation. According to them, job satisfaction and employee morale are often used interchangeably. However, the important distinction between these two concepts is that job satisfaction refers to the attitudes of a single individual toward his job situation and morale refers to the overall feelings of the group, department or organisation. Aamodt (1991) argues that job satisfaction does not only refer to the attitude an employee has toward his job but it is related to an employee's attendance and tenure.

Bhagi and Sharma (1992) and Muchinsky (1993) referred to job satisfaction as the attitude of a worker toward his job which is sometimes expressed as positive or negative to the work itself, the rewards (pay, promotions, recognition), or the context (working conditions, benefits). However, Chusmir and Parker (1992) said that job satisfaction is an indication that the job is fulfilling intrinsic needs, such as personal
fulfillment or growth and other less tangible rewards. This implies that the individual is satisfied with his own ability toward work or the job content rather than the job context.

Job satisfaction is an emotional response to job tasks, as well as to the physical and social conditions of the workplace. It also has to do with the fulfillment of the person's expectation. It is likely to be higher for a person who perceives a balanced relationship with the organisation (Schermernhorn, Templer, Cattaneo, Hunt and Osborn, 1992).

Robbins (1993) defined job satisfaction in a different way. He defined job satisfaction as the difference between the amount of rewards workers received and the amount they believed they should receive. It means that the individuals will compare what they actually received and what they should receive in determining their level of satisfaction. Reece and Brandt (1993) viewed job satisfaction as the compatibility between the wants and needs of the employee and the characteristics of the job. So, employees felt satisfied when their necessities and wants were provided by their company.

Theories of Job Satisfaction

Need Hierarchy Theory. Need Hierarchy Theory which was developed by Abraham Maslow (1954) is one of the well-known needs theory that describes aspirations and wants of human beings. Maslow assumed that there were five basic categories of needs arranged in a hierarchy, from lower level needs to higher level needs. The five major categories of needs are physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualisation needs.
The physiological needs are basic survival needs which satisfy fundamental biological drives, such as the need for food, air, water, shelter, sleep, and reproduction (sex). Money is a fundamental instrument for workers to gain their food, clothes, house and the like. Therefore, pay plays an important role to fulfill workers' basic needs. Safety needs include freedom from threat, danger or deprivation, the need for law, order and for protection from physical harm. Thus, workers need safety equipment, long-term employment, life and health insurance plans and security forces which the company should provide.

Social needs refer to need for friendship, affiliation, love and acceptance. People need to interact with other people for harmony. Thus, the relationships with labour unions, co-workers, customers, government, formal institutions are very important to each employee in the organisation. Self-esteem needs include self-confidence, recognition, respect and appreciation. Personal recognition is very important in determining job satisfaction. Thus, workers need monetary and non-monetary awards such as bonuses, trophies and plaques, reminders of an employee's important contributions to meet the personal growth, the development of one's full potential, and the fulfillment associated with the accomplishment. Self-actualisation needs are unique in that once activated, they can never be fully satisfied or fulfilled. Thus, individual try to achieve their self-actualisation through promotion, pay and status of the job.

The second assumption is people move up the hierarchy of needs from lowest (physiological) to highest (self-actualisation). Individuals will not move up to higher level needs such as recognition, achievement and self-actualisation unless the lower needs are fulfilled.
As a result, Maslow concluded the following:

1. The unfulfilled needs will dominate people’s behaviour. Therefore, needs will no longer motivate behaviour if they have been fulfilled.
2. The needs are fulfilled from the most basic to the highest needs in the hierarchy.
3. The basic needs are the most important to fulfill first.

One of the weaknesses of Maslow’s theory is that the theory was only based on his assumptions about human motivation rather than findings from research. Another is, those needs which were described by Maslow may not be in hierarchical order and also, the needs may change over time.

The implication of this theory is to enable management to identify the location of employees’ needs in the hierarchy. Thus, management may attempt to improve employees’ job satisfaction by satisfying their needs. Determining the location of employees’ needs might save costs and time to satisfy employees. Another implication of the need hierarchy is management can address the higher order needs to its employees. Hence, the need hierarchy has been cited as the impetus for organisation to change, create a pleasant work environment and practice participative management (Dipboye, Smith and Howell, 1994).

Two-Factor Theory. Herzberg, Mauzner and Snyderman (1959) studied the causes of motivation and job satisfaction among engineers and accountants. They interviewed 203 respondents about their jobs by recalling job related incidents and their feelings toward them.

The results showed that certain factors were associated with satisfaction and others with dissatisfaction. Satisfaction was influenced by motivational factors such as achievement, advancement, responsibility, growth and recognition. Since these factors
may be related to the objectives of job situation then they were called content factors or first-level factors. Dissatisfaction was influenced by hygiene factors such as supervision, administration and company policies, interpersonal relationship with supervisors, peers and subordinates, working conditions, job security, status and pay. These factors were related to the job context, so they were labeled as context factors or second-level factors.

They also formed two categories of work variables: satisfiers and dissatisfiers, and named their theory as Two-Factor Theory or Motivator-Hygiene Theory. The theory assumes that everyone has two types of needs, hygiene needs (extrinsic factors) and motivator needs (intrinsic factors). They also hypothesised that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction were separate and sometimes unrelated phenomena, not polar opposites on the same continuum, and two different sets of factors affected job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction.

The Two-Factor Theory states that when a job provides a lot of satisfiers, in terms of advancement, autonomy and the like, the employee will feel satisfied at work. However, when these factors were absent from a job, the employee would not feel dissatisfied but will feel neutral or indifferent. There is some feeling of neutrality or indifference if a job gives good pay or pleasant working conditions.

There are a number of positive effects based on Herzberg’s theory:

1. It has helped the researchers and managers to identify the critical factors which influenced employees at work and their feelings toward their jobs.
2. It has increased awareness of the importance of intrinsic factors such as advancement, responsibility, autonomy and achievement as factors influencing motivation, satisfaction, and performance.
3. Many researches and experiments were undertaken to enrich jobs and improve satisfaction and motivation (Feldman and Arnold, 1983).

However, Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory has been criticised because it lacks the relationship between satisfaction and productivity. His study only looked at satisfaction and not the relationship between productivity and satisfaction. Also, this theory did not represent overall measure of satisfaction.

There were few studies which failed to replicate Herzberg’s findings such as Ewen (1964), Hinrichs and Mischkind (1967) and Hulin and Smith (1965). These studies found both content and context factors which led to feelings of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

The theory was also criticised because of some concerns in the method of data collection. Herzberg assumed that the respondents would report their conditions accurately which made them satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs. Unfortunately, people described favourable or good feelings that they attributed to their accomplishments (recognition, achievement). Conversely, they blamed others or work environment (supervision, working conditions) in describing dissatisfaction feelings (Dipboye, et al., 1994).

**Factors of Job Satisfaction**

There are many specific and diverse job dimensions, which have been found to be related to job satisfaction, such as the nature of the work, the supervisors, the company, pay and promotional opportunity.

Herzberg, Mausner, Peterson, and Capwell (1957) identified six factors based on some factor analytic studies of job satisfaction which included general satisfaction
and morale, attitudes toward the company and its policies, satisfaction with intrinsic aspects of the job, attitudes toward immediate supervision, attitudes toward satisfaction of aspirations and satisfaction with conditions of present job. Other factors included achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth.

Vroom's (1964) review of Herzberg, et al. (1957) factors included three additional factors. They are attitudes toward promotional opportunity, attitudes toward financial rewards, and attitudes toward co-workers. Moreover, a new job satisfaction measure proposed by Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969) concluded that there were around five areas of job satisfaction: work, pay, promotions, supervision, and co-workers. Locke (1976) found that causes of job satisfaction included five factors which were the same with the findings of Smith, et al. (1969). The difference between Locke (1976) and Smith, et al. (1969) is Locke presented a summary of the dimensions of jobs.

There are a few factors of job satisfaction which were never discussed by Herzberg, et al. (1957), Vroom (1964), Smith, et al. (1969), and Locke (1976). They are instrumental communication, professionalism, role overload and distributive justice (Price and Mueller, 1986) and environment factors and personality variables (Agho, et al., 1993).

**Work and Job Satisfaction.** Work attributes that have been found to be related to work interest and satisfaction by most researches included opportunity to use one valued skills and abilities (White, 1959), opportunity for new learning, creativity, variety, difficulty, amount of work, responsibility, non-arbitrary pressure for
performance, control over methods and autonomy (Hackman and Lawler, 1971), job
enrichment, and complexity (Feldman and Arnold, 1983).

**Pay and Job Satisfaction.** According to Lawler and Porter (1963), almost all
of the occupational groups consider either amount of pay and/ or employment security
to be relatively important. Wages do play a significant role in determining job
satisfaction (Lawler, 1971). Smith and Kendall's (1963) study indicated a strong
relationship between the mean annual earnings of blue-collar workers in twenty-one
plants and their mean job satisfaction.

**Promotion and Job Satisfaction.** Satisfaction with promotions can be viewed
as a function of the frequency of promotion in relation to what is desired and important
to the individual. According to Porter (1962), the desires to be promoted are strong
among business executives. Vroom (1964) suggested that a promotion to a higher
level in the same organisation normally influence supervision, job content, co-workers,
and pay. Locke (1976) proposed that one's desire for promotion included the desire
for higher earnings, the desire for social status, the desire for psychological growth,
and the desire for justice.

**Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction.** Barnowe, Mangione and Quinn's
(1972) study indicated that there was a positive correlation between working
conditions and job satisfaction. Working conditions in an organisation includes
temperature, humidity, ventilation, lighting and noise, hours of work, cleanliness of the
workplace, and adequate tools and equipment affect job satisfaction. In an earlier
studies such as Taylor (1911), he concluded that the working conditions was one of
the sources to ensure high production and high employee morale. Herzberg (1966)
and Whyte (1955) showed that working conditions was related to job satisfaction.
They have found that dissatisfaction on working conditions would soon disappear when the problems were handled.

**Co-workers and Job Satisfaction.** Co-workers also contribute to satisfaction toward individual workers. The interaction of co-workers may lead to either job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. The study of Van Zelst (1951) showed a strong relationship between feeling of being valued by co-workers and job satisfaction. The study of Renwick and Lawler (1978) identified co-workers' relationship, and degree of friendliness of co-workers as important factors compared to other job factors.

**Supervision and Job Satisfaction.** The quality of integration and cooperation will create a favourable working climate. There are two dimension of supervisory style: a) employee-centredness or consideration and b) influence or participation in decision-making. According to Halpin and Winer (1957) and Fleishman, Harris and Burtt (1955), the terms in the employee-centredness or consideration scale involved such supervisory traits as friendliness, praising good performance, listening to subordinate's opinions, and taking a personal interest in them. The terms in the influence or participation in decision-making such as groups that participated in decisions about changes in the work flow displayed a much higher level of job satisfaction was reported by Coch and French (1948) and French, Israel and As (1960).

**Job Satisfaction and Demographic Variables**

Demographic variables might influence job satisfaction. The variables which affect job satisfaction include gender, age, level of education and occupational level.