Job Satisfaction among Academic and Non-Academic Staff in Public Universities in Malaysia: A Review

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Abstract

Many previous studies have solely focused on measuring job satisfaction in one category only either among academic or non-academic staff. However, in an educational institution, the two categories of workforce work hard in developing the university. Hence, it is crucial to measure the level of satisfaction in these jobs. Taking this into account, this study intends to identify the factors that contribute to job satisfaction among academic and non-academic staff in public universities. This study adapts the research frameworks from Lacy and Sheehan (1997), and Smerek and Peterson (2006) to measure job satisfaction among academic and non-academic staff, respectively.

Keywords: employee satisfaction, academic staff, non-academic staff

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Job Satisfaction in Universities

Universities create and cultivate knowledge for building a modern world. To continue competing successfully in the global economy, universities need a rapidly changing and more technically demanding work environment, which requires a more educated and highly skilled workforce compared to the current situation. In addition to meeting the requirements of an institution, the issue of job satisfaction should be promoted among the staff at each institution in order to have a positive impact on the employees as well as the institution. Satisfaction is something abstract and cannot be measured precisely. However, satisfaction will occur when people do things to the best of their abilities. According to Rashid and Rashid (2011), satisfaction has been extensively studied in management literature due to its importance to the physical and mental well-being of an employee. Meanwhile, in 2010, Machado-Taylor et al. pointed out that job satisfaction and motivation among academic staff play an important role in contributing to positive outcomes in the quality of the institutions and the students' learning.

Educational institutions are professional service organizations and contribute services through the organization's members without exception. Therefore, the relationship between job satisfaction among employees and employee organizational commitment is present and significant (Daneshfard & Ekvaniyan, 2012). The concept of job satisfaction began in 1911 with the research by Taylor (1911) where it was stated that rewards such as the earnings of the job, incentive payments, promotion, appreciation, and opportunities for progress could lead to increased job satisfaction (Aslan, 2001).

1.2 Problem Statement

Job satisfaction is a gauge in determining the success of an organization. If an organization can provide satisfaction to its employees, it does not only improve the image of the organization but it can also increase the motivation and productivity of all employees. The success of an organization or firm is not dependent on the number of employees but much depends on the quality of the staff. In fact, customer satisfaction is related to employee satisfaction. Before organizations can satisfy the customers, they should ensure their employees' satisfaction first so that the employees can provide quality services towards customer satisfaction. Most studies on job satisfaction among academic staff only take into account the general job satisfaction factors that contribute to satisfaction and dissatisfaction. According to Lacy and Sheehan (1997), research should be carried out on

satisfaction among academic staff given the current rapid growth in the education system. It is also noted that most of the studies solely focus on measuring job satisfaction in only one category (e.g. academic or non-academic). For instance, studies by Lacy and Sheehan (1997), Santhapparaj and Alam (2005), and Khalid, Irsyad, and Mahmood (2012) only measure job satisfaction among academic staff while studies by Salau, Adeniji, and Oyewunmi (2014), Yapa et al. (2014), and Seng and Wai (2015) solely focus on non-academics. As we know, in a university, there are two types of workforce, which are academic and non-academic. They are interdependent and it is crucial to measure their satisfaction towards their jobs. Hence, the aim of this study is to identify the factors that lead to satisfaction among academic and non-academic staff in public universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Role of Job Satisfaction among Academic Staff

Academic workforce plays a vital role in determining the success of the vision and mission of a university. This is supported by Bentley et al. (2013) who agree that the core academic workplace helps a university to succeed. It is crucial to satisfy the needs and support the increasing number of academic staff in a university in order for them to deliver the best service for the university. This is true because the success of a university relies on the academic workforce (Bentley et al., 2013). Khalid et al. (2012) believe that universities are known as the highest source of knowledge where the future workforce is trained to be experts in various fields. In fact, Basat and Govender (2015) indicate that it is compulsory for higher education to be taught in a healthy atmosphere in order to increase a faculty's job satisfaction. Noordin and Jusoff (2009) added that a healthy atmosphere in a faculty can be affected by many factors such as healthy working conditions, relationships with colleagues, support in research and teaching, appropriate salary, promotion opportunities, etc. Furthermore, it also increases the overall productivity that the educational institute fosters (Noordin & Jusoff, 2009). A study conducted by Baloch (2009) found that a healthy climate at a university increases not only the job satisfaction among academicians but it also increases the academicians' performance. Welch (1999) and Currie (1998) believe that nowadays, academicians work in a pressure mode where they are tasked with many responsibilities while being required to strengthen their teaching and learning as well as research in order to compete with technological changes at the same time, According to Ahsan et al. (2009) by appreciating the staff's needs and providing them with a convenient state can lead to job satisfaction. As supported by Kellison and James (2011), providing this support to the staff will create good inner feelings towards the organization thus leading to being motivated in their jobs. Moreover, when the feeling of satisfaction occurs in staff, it will make the staff to tenure their service and become more productive at work (Sathapparaj & Alam, 2005). That is why factors such as efficiency, productivity, relations among staff, absenteeism, and burnout are always mentioned when measuring job satisfaction among staff (Mehrad et al., 2015). Many studies have been done focusing on measuring job satisfaction among academic staffs, for instance Olorunsola (2012), Genremichael and Rao Prasada (2013), Kellison and Jones (2011), and Ahsan et al. (2009). A study by Rani and Muzhumathi (2012) used an instrument of work-family conflict to investigate the relationship between life satisfactions with Role Pressure Organization (Organizational Role Stress) among women who are working in India. The findings of the study showed that the profession as a doctor was more prone to stress and had an effect on the role of the organization. Many higher education institutions (both public and private) in Malaysia have been developed to meet the demand for higher education. To be exact, Malaysia has 20 public universities, 53 private universities and six foreign university branch campuses; 403 active private colleges, 30 polytechnics, and 73 public community colleges as at 2011 (studymalaysia.com, 2016). According to Mustafa (2013), the role of the academic staff is vital in promoting and producing excellent graduates. Given this huge responsibility, it is crucial that academicians are satisfied with their work as well as the organization they work with. That is why it is vital to measure job satisfaction among academic staff in order to know their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction towards their job.

Table 1. Below shows several satisfaction models that focus on the academic staff in universities

Authors	Description
Lacy and Sheehan (1997)	According to the researchers, several countries such as Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Mexico, and Sweden have been using an instrument to measure the satisfaction of academic staff. This study considered the working atmosphere and the general work satisfaction. The findings of this study demonstrated that the causes of satisfaction among academicians are university atmosphere, morality, sense of community, and relations among colleagues.
Khan et al. (2012)	This study was conducted based on work-family conflict and workload for lecturers in public universities in Islamabad. The study used the instruments by Calrson, Kacmar, and William (2000) who developed the scale of work-family conflict, and the Inventory Workload by Maslach and Jackson (1986).
Rani and Muzhumathi (2012)	The study used an instrument of work-family conflict to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction and Role Pressure Organization (Organizational Role Stress) among women who are working in India. The findings of the study showed that the profession as a doctor was more prone to stress and had an effect on the role of the organization.
Maslow (1954)	Maslow (1954) published the Motivation and Personality theory that explains how a person is satisfied with a variety of personal requirements in the employment context. Maslow divided the requirements into five stages. It was ranked into level 1, which is psychology, level 2 (security), level 3 (affection and belonging), level 4, and level 5, which is their ability.
Rubaish, Rahim, Abumadini, and Wosornu (2011)	The objective of this study is to collect and suggest the instruments for job satisfaction among academics (Academic Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (AJSQ). This study identified eight factors that contribute to job satisfaction among the academic staff namely authority, supervision, policy and facilities, the work itself, interpersonal relationships, commitments, income, and workloads.
Amazt and Idris (2011)	This study mainly focusing on the effect of management and decision-making styles towards lecturer's satisfaction at public universities in Malaysia. The result indicated that most of the Malaysian public universities used behavioral decision-making style and communication was the dominant style of management. The finding revealed there was a direct-effect of decision-making styles on lecturers' job satisfaction. In addition, the predictor for job satisfaction was Hygiene factors.
Chua (2010)	The findings showed that committed lecturers prefer becoming a lecturer at the institute. They also do not regret entering IPGKBL and feel proud to be there. The findings also showed that the lecturers are very satisfied with aspects of work evaluated primarily on the liberty provided in selecting teaching methods and the opportunity to use their abilities.
Herzberg (1959)	According to Herzberg, job satisfaction can be affected by 2 factors, which are intrinsic and extrinsic elements. He posited that intrinsic elements include actual content of work namely achievement, responsibility, and recognition. All these items are referred to as 'motivational' factors and have a strong relationship with job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the extrinsic factors normally refer to the work environment, salary, size of the class, assessment of the staff, and benefit. All these elements are known as the 'hygiene' factors in relation to job satisfaction. Herzberg's findings indicate that motivational factors can lead to satisfaction and hygiene factors can lead to dissatisfaction when people do not fulfil or meet the requirements made by the company they work with.

2.2 Role of Job Satisfaction among Non-Academic Staff

While understanding the job satisfaction among academic staff is important, job satisfaction among non-academic staff should also be taken into consideration. According to Ismail and Abdul (2012), both academic and non-academic staff play an important role in educational institutions. This is because the strength of a university is not only dependent on the quality of teaching and learning, but the administration also plays an important role in managing all matters related to the administration of the university. There are several studies that focus on job satisfaction among non-academics such as Smerek and Peterson (2006), which examines the satisfaction among the non-academic staff working in a university. The findings of the study indicate that the work itself is the main factor for job satisfaction. Table 2 below shows some of the studies conducted which focus on non-academic staff.

Table 2. Summary of past studies on measuring job satisfaction among non-academic staff

Authors	Description
Ahuja and Gautam (2012)	The study investigates employees' satisfaction by using several indicators of organizational effectiveness. The indicators are supportive working environment, promotion based on achievement, challenging assignments, and higher salaries. These indicators are critical elements of organizational effectiveness and thus contribute to the enhancement of job satisfaction among the employees.
Vlosky and Aguilar (2009)	The study proposes a model to measure work satisfaction that consists of 6 variables, which are a. Control/ autonomy/ influence; b. Challenge; c. Performance measurement; d. Response; e. Mental Instruments; and f. Stability/ safety.
Salau et al. (2012)	This study investigates the relationship between elements of job enrichment and organizational performance among seven non-academic Nigerian public universities. The finding indicates that job depth has a relationship with job training and core job dimension while no relationship exists between motivating elements and performance. As a conclusion, the researchers suggest that universities should increase recognition in order to stimulate the employees to further raise their commitment towards the attainment and realization of the goals and objectives of the institutions/organizations.

Based on the literature review of job satisfaction among academic and non-academic staff, this study adapted the research model from Lacy and Sheehan (1997) to measure job satisfaction among the academic staff. The instruments to measure the satisfaction of academic staff have already been tested in many countries. This model suggests that the causes of satisfaction among academics include university atmosphere, research, teaching, administration, and governance. The framework proposed by Lacy and Sheehan (1997) was chosen for this study due to the factors which the researchers believe are appropriate for measuring job satisfaction among academic staff in Malaysian public universities. Academic staff in Malaysian have to engage in 4 pillars, which are research, publication, consultation, and teaching. Academicians are also involved in carrying out administrative works. In fact, Bentley et al. (2013) believed that all academics across the world engage in similar activities and share the same experience and concern.
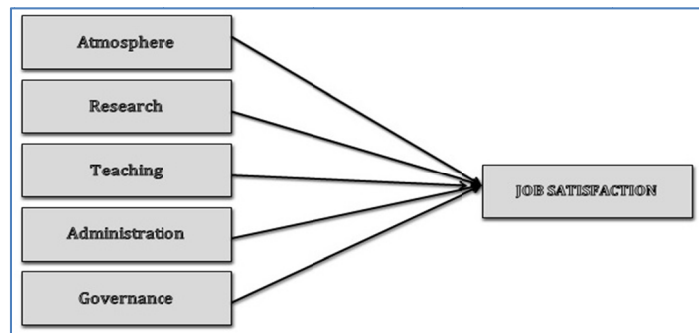

Figure 1. Research framework adapted from Lacy and Sheehan (1997) to measure job satisfaction among academics in public universities in Malaysia

Meanwhile, this study adapted a model from Smerek and Peterson (2006) to measure job satisfaction among non-academic staff. An item under personal characteristics namely minority status and another under job satisfaction, which is union/non-union, were dropped from this study. The items were dropped to better fit the condition of measuring satisfaction among the non-academic staff in public universities in Malaysia.
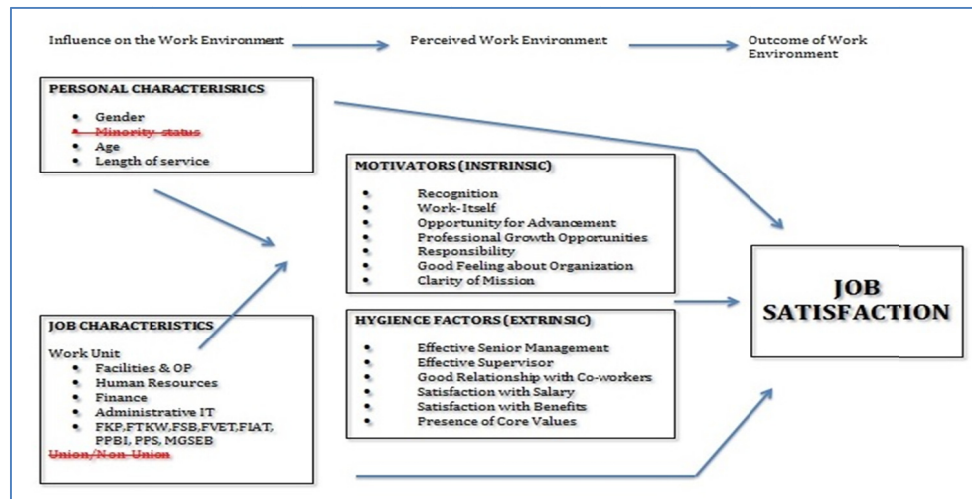
Figure 2. Research framework adapted from Smerek and Peterson (2006) to measure job satisfaction among non-academic staff in public universities in Malaysia

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, when it comes to educational institutions, it is crucial to measure both academic and non-academic staff because they are interdependent in organizing and developing the university. For academic staff, Lacy and Sheehan (1997) proposed four factors that lead to job satisfaction which are atmosphere, research, teaching, and governance and this model has been tested in many countries. Meanwhile, for non-academic staff, this study adapted the framework from Smerek and Peterson (2006) who believed that personal characteristics, job characteristics, motivators, and hygiene factors lead to job satisfaction among non-academic staff.

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