

Investigating the Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Employees' Productivity: An Exploratory Study in Amman's Five-Star Hotels

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ABSTRACT

Managers of hospitality organisations have long believed it is significant for their employees to work in a positive work environment. They recognise the important relationship between their employees' job satisfaction and their job performance. While everyone accepts this notion, there is little empirical support for this. Further, while many positive outcomes for both the individual and the organisation are claimed to be associated with job satisfaction, there is even less empirical data to support this belief within the hospitality industry. Despite the significant interest in the linkage between job satisfaction and job performance/productivity in social and organizational psychology literature, not many tourism and hospitality researchers have examined this relationship. This research investigates the relationship between job satisfaction and productivity among front-line employees in Amman's five-star hotels in order to help management develop better policies and practices that can help to keep employees satisfied in their jobs. Among 120 questionnaires distributed to employees, 89 questionnaires have been retrieved as valid ones with a retrieval rate of 74%. The study findings show a significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and employees' productivity. This also suggests a positive association between job satisfaction and reduction in absenteeism and stress among the employees. This research moderately addressed this gap in the literature and has important implications for the advancement of theory regarding satisfaction- productivity relationship within the hospitality industry.

Key Words: Job Satisfaction, Productivity, Job Performance, Hotel Employees, Jordan.

1. Introduction

Research into job satisfaction has been conducted over the past decades in an effort to improve employees' job performance and the recruitment and retention of employees. These studies concluded that staff who are satisfied in their jobs are less likely to consider changing positions and more likely to remain in their chosen career (Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman, 1959; Oshagbemi, 1996; Spector, 1997).

Consequently, there are tangible benefits for both organisations and employees in enhancing job satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to describe a framework that will guide research on the relationship between job satisfaction and employees' productivity within the hospitality industry. It aims to examine how front-line hotel employees' perception of their jobs associates with and predicts their outcomes in terms of job performance.

Despite recognition of the importance of workforce development as evidenced by the vast research on job satisfaction and productivity, there are few hospitality studies on this topic. In particular hotel employees' job satisfaction and its relation to performance. The study findings will provide insights into how front line hotel employees' job satisfaction can be enhanced, and thus, improve productivity.

2. Literature Review

Job satisfaction is a concept that has developed from organisation theory (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). According to Burrell and Morgan, the first organisational theory was termed 'scientific management', and was based primarily on the work of Frederick Taylor at the beginning of the 20th century (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Taylor believed that a scientific approach could be applied to the work place in an effort to increase productivity. The relationship between job satisfaction and job productivity has been of constant attention in organizational and social psychology literature (Judge, Bono, Thoresen, & Patton, 2001).

Previous studies were based on the theory that individuals improved their performance as a result of increased job satisfaction (Gruneberg, 1979). This approach of the relationship was credited to human relations movement that assumed that higher morale and satisfaction would lead to improved productivity (Judge et al., 2001). This assumption was supported by most attitude researchers in social psychology literature who believed that attitudes had behavioral consequences (Judge et al., 2001). They argued that attitudes, i.e., attitudes to the job, led to behaviors, i.e., performance on the job.

Later, many researchers challenged this assumption and suggested that performance led to satisfaction, they argued that people who were better able to do their jobs and performed well had higher job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Contrary to satisfaction leading to productivity approach, this reversed direction of the relationship was based on the assumption that attitudes followed behavior (Judge et al., 2001).

Hotel Managers are a fundamental link to the job satisfaction of their employees. They are in the key position to promote change and ensure a positive work environment therefore enhancing production and keeping their staff satisfied. If employees have access to information, support, resources, and opportunities for growth in the workplace setting, the employees will have a stronger sense of meaning and will increase their confidence level, autonomy, and belief that they influence the work being completed (Faulkner & Laschinger, 2008). Job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which employees like or dislike their jobs (Cortese, Colombo & Ghislieri, 2010). A few studies have examined work environment factors that may contribute to hotel workers job satisfaction. An individual contributor to hotel workers job satisfaction may be work unit cohesion, supportive relationships, teamwork, and positive experiences with preceptors and mentors are work environment factors that have been correlated with hotel workers job satisfaction (Anderson, Linden, Allen, & Gibbs, 2009; Giallonardo, Wong, & Iwasiw, 2010; Winter- Collins & McDaniel, 2000).

Job satisfaction is commonly conceptualized as an effective variable that results from an assessment of an individual's job experiences. Job satisfaction is conceptualized in general as employees' attitude toward their jobs. To conclude, the concept of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction can be defined in a simple manner as the degree to which people like or dislike their jobs (Ferguson, J; Ashcroft, D and Hassell, K, 2011). Several researchers reported that employees who perceive higher job demands have less job satisfaction. Dunn, Wilson, and Esterman (2005) found lack of time to get work done was associated with lower job satisfaction. Other studies found that high workload was clearly related to lower levels of employees' job satisfaction (Kalisch, Lee and Rochman, 2010; Khowaja, Merchant and Hirani, 2005; Roelen, Koopmans and Groothoff, 2008). Khowaja and colleagues (2005) also found that stress from high workload was noticeably associated with job dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the effect of job control on job satisfaction is frequently studied using the construct of autonomy. Researchers found employees who perceive they have more autonomy are more satisfied than those who feel less autonomy (Dunn et al., 2005; Hayes, Boner and Pryor, 2010; Kovner, Brewer, Wu, Chang and Suzuki, 2006; Zangaro and Soeken, 2007). Employees' empowerment is also related to job satisfaction (Ning, Zhong, Libo and Qiuji, 2009). According to Nabirye, Brown, Pryor, and Maples (2011), individual factors can also affect employees' job satisfaction such as age, coping strategies, experience, and educational level. Personality traits of optimism, self esteem, and being proactive also may influence job satisfaction (Chang, Li, Wu and Wang, 2010).

Shirey (2006) explains that to be able to work in an effective work environment, employees should be valued and treated respectfully and fairly with a strong sense of trust among all employees from the highest position to the lowest position within the organisation. According to Shirey, most organisations should encourage their employees to be effective decision-makers and risk-takers and provide personal and professional growth. The organisational culture should also support communication and collaboration and recognizes employees as assets and make them feel physically safe with a sense of family being evident. Waters (2010) also agrees and points out that it is also pivotal to the organisation success. According to Waters, when the work condition is adapted to the needs of the worker, productivity improves and overall employee satisfaction improves, leading to worker retention.

3. The Study/Methodology

From the previous discussion, it is clear that the relationship between job satisfaction and employees' productivity do exist. However, there is a lack of studies regarding the hotel employees' job satisfaction in relation to their performance. To address this paucity of attention, a survey was constructed with the primary aim of investigating the relationship between hotel employees' job satisfaction and their work productivity. The target group was front-line hotel employees in three five-star hotels in Amman. A pilot test was conducted with 20 employees to obtain feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire. Based on the pilot test, some wordings and sequence of questions were modified to ensure respondents could understand and choose an appropriate answer.

A total of 21 variables were generated, the questionnaire was designed in English and Arabic and consisted of two sections. The first section was aimed at ascertaining socio-demographic characteristics of hotel employees.

The second section, contained variables to measure job satisfaction in relation to productivity. Hotel employees were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements describing issues that may relate to their job satisfaction. Employees were presented with a five point Likert-type scale to express their opinions, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Amman the main city and capital of Jordan was chosen as a case study for the empirical research, with a host of several international five-star hotels to choose from. 120 questionnaires were distributed in person to employees at three five-star hotels on different days and at different times over three months period. The participation was voluntary and only the employees who were willing to participate in the survey were asked to complete the questionnaires. To ensure a high return and usable rate, questionnaires were collected on location and checked for completeness. Two trained graduate students helped collect the data during the surveys. In total, 89 usable questionnaires were obtained with a retrieval rate of 74%.

Few problems were experienced during the implementation of the survey. Due largely to gaining access to premises and permissions as well as some employees reluctant to participate due to time constraints i.e. some employees did not have time to participate and being busy or not interested. A profile of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Employees

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	51	57.3	57.3	57.3
	Female	38	42.7	42.7	100.0
	Total	89	100.0	100.0	
Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 30	18	20.2	20.2	20.2
	30 - 49	51	57.3	57.3	78.0
	50 and above	20	22.5	22.5	100.0
	Total	89	100.0	100.0	
Marital Status					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	18	20.2	20.2	20.2
	Married	67	75.2	75.2	75.2
	Divorced\Widowed	4	4.5	4.5	100.0
	Total	89	100.0	100.0	
Education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school	3	3.4	3.4	3.4
	College degree	22	24.7	24.7	24.7
	University	62	69.7	69.7	69.7
	postgraduate	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	89	100.0	100.0	
Monthly Income					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than JD 300	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
	JD 300 - 499	41	46.1	46.1	50.8
	JD 500 - 699	29	32.5	32.5	83.1
	JD 700 - 899	11	12.5	12.5	96.6
	JD 900 or over	6	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	89	100.0	100.0	

Work Experience					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than a One Year	30	33.7	33.7	33.7
	One Year – Three Years	48	53.9	53.9	53.9
	Over Three Years	11	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	89	100.0	100.0	

4. Analysis and Results

Table 1 shows that 57.3 per cent of respondents were males while the remaining 42.7 per cent were females. 77.5 per cent were under 50 years old. The majority of respondents 75.2 per cent were married, with almost 70 per cent having at least a university degree. Nearly half of the employees 46.1 per cent were making between JD 300 – 499 a month and 53.9 per cent having work experience between one and three years.

The data analysis of this study consisted of analyzing each set of the 21 motivational items through factor analysis by using a varimax rotation procedure to delineate the underlying dimensions that were associated with employees' productivity. Table 2 shows the mean values of motivational items that influence job satisfaction amongst employees and affect their job productivity. In Table 2, eight items recorded mean values above 3.5 while the rest 13 items were placed between the ranges of 3.15 to 3.49. The items 'Benefits', Empowerment and Decision Making' and 'Equitable Rewards' recorded the highest mean values of 3.84, 3.77 and 3.62 respectively while the item 'Hotel Policies' scored the lowest mean value of 3.15.

Table 2: Mean Values of Motivational Items

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Q1	89	1.00	5.00	3.5424	1.24301	
Q2	89	2.00	5.00	3.5085	.83338	
Q3	89	1.00	5.00	3.5763	.87002	
Q4	89	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.07688	
Q5	89	1.00	5.00	3.3220	1.01870	
Q6	89	1.00	5.00	3.2542	1.03781	
Q7	89	1.00	5.00	3.1525	1.13538	
Q8	89	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.04474	
Q9	89	1.00	5.00	3.3898	1.02830	
Q10	89	1.00	5.00	3.4915	1.18762	
Q11	89	1.00	5.00	3.2034	1.17907	
Q12	89	2.00	5.00	3.6271	.93963	
Q13	89	1.00	5.00	3.2542	1.14703	
Q14	89	1.00	5.00	3.1864	1.05218	
Q15	89	1.00	5.00	3.3390	1.00471	
Q16	89	1.00	5.00	3.5424	1.14299	
Q17	89	1.00	5.00	3.4407	1.08090	
Q18	89	1.00	5.00	3.8475	.90101	
Q19	89	1.00	5.00	3.5593	.90963	
Q20	89	1.00	5.00	3.4237	1.25504	
Q21	89	1.00	5.00	3.7797	.96061	
Valid N (listwise)	89					

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study used the theory of motivations to investigate the relationship between hotel employees' job satisfaction and their work productivity. The study has important implications for the advancement of theory regarding satisfaction- productivity relationship.

Despite the significant interest in the linkage between job satisfaction and job performance/productivity in social and organizational psychology literature, not many tourism and hospitality researchers have examined this relationship. This research moderately addressed this gap in the literature, but there are other specific topics within the general framework that are worthy of further investigation.

The research revealed that the majority of employees stated they were affected in whole or in part by benefits and equitable rewards offered to them by the management as well as to be involved in the decision making process in order to be satisfied and productive with their jobs. Physical work environment and wages have been suggested as being significant factors in influencing job satisfaction. However, the research findings did not fully support this view, in fact only few hotel employees revealed that they were influenced by their income in relation to their productivity. Investigating the impact of such factors on performance could be suggested therefore, as a possible area for future research.

The findings of this research have significant implications for gaining a greater appreciation of the inherent diversity of hotel employees' psychology. In the absence of more detailed research regarding the relationship between job satisfaction and performance amongst hotel employees, it is a mistake to assume that all hotel employees are alike. Likewise it is a mistake to assume that all hotel employees have the same needs and are affected by the same factors.

Lawler and Porter (1967: p.28) argue that "a measure of the relationship between satisfaction and performance would be a helpful diagnostic tool for examining organizations". Research greatly supports the assumption that it is beneficial for the organization to keep highly productive employees satisfied with their jobs, because increased job satisfaction will encourage further good performance and will reduce turnover and absenteeism among productive front-line employees (Gruneberg, 1979 and Spector, 1997).

Hotel managers should rethink their policies, reward schemes, value systems, and what they expect from their employees by offering them a workplace that is more appealing and attractive. Emphasis should be placed on benefits and equitable rewards and staff should be empowered and involved in the decision making process in order to keep them creative, productive and satisfied with their jobs.

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