

An Empirical Assessment on Job Satisfaction of Public Knowledge Employees in Bangladesh

Farhana Ferdousi*

School of Economics & Management, Wuhan University, Luo Jia Shan, Wuhan, 430072, China.

* E-mail of the corresponding author: dfferdousi@gmail.com

Abstract

Globalization, reorganization of public sectors and sustainable development of human resource management propel researchers and practitioners to exert considerable attention on employees' job satisfaction for sustainable and socially responsible organizational development. But little could be known about the satisfaction of knowledge employees, especially in the public sectors. This paper deals with the assessment of the level of job satisfaction and job satisfaction factors of public knowledge employees in Bangladesh. The flow and essence of the paper have been drawn from the empirical analysis of the data of 64 respondents from 7 agricultural and livestock research institution under the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and 4 related universities in Bangladesh. The relationships among variables were assessed by factor analysis, reliability, descriptive statistics, correlations, regression and ANOVA. The major finding is that the job satisfaction of public knowledge employees is significantly dependent upon work motivation and fair treatment.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, knowledge employees, public sectors

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction of employees has received considerable attention to researchers and practitioners not only in the field of business study but also in the field of psychology. Locke (1976) has calculated that at least 3,350 articles had been written on the topic by 1972. Extending his calculations to 1985 yields an estimate of 4,793. Ghazzawi (2008) has estimated that until the 1990's more than 12000 studies on job satisfaction were published. One of the reasons of this popularity is that job satisfaction is assumed to have major implications as it is a multidisciplinary and everlasting relevant construct covering all professions, work, jobs and contexts (Spagnoli, Caetano, & Santos, 2012). It also receives attention from managers and researchers as it is assumed that job satisfaction may affect a variety of behaviors such as organizational commitment (Rutherford, Boles, Hamwi, Madupalli, & Rutherford, 2009; Tsai & Huang, 2008; Yousef, 2002), extra-role behavior (Bowling, 2010) absenteeism (Tharenou, 1993), sabotage (Chen & Spector, 1992), turnover or intentions to quit the job (DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Rutherford et al., 2009) and contribute to the well being of employees (George & Jones, 2008).

Moreover, globalization has introduced some critical changes on the nature of work and work environment. Enormous pressures hang on today's organization to retain competent employees. Although a review of published studies suggests that the empirical evidence fails to support the assertion that job satisfaction has a direct effect on productivity (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985; Kahn & Morse, 1951; Katz & Khan, 1978; Mitchell, 1979; Vroom, 1964; Wechsler, Kahane, & Tannenbaum, 1952), job satisfaction has been found to be related to retention and other membership-related behaviors (Wright & Davis, 2003). Job satisfaction has been found to have an important, albeit indirect, influence on organizational productivity by reducing costs associated with abject employee behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover (Farrell & Stamm, 1988; Lawler Iii, 1994; Spector, 1997). It is assumed that the benefits that employees receive from their organization influence the effort, skill, and creativity that employees are willing to provide their employer (Wright & Davis, 2003). Indeed, job satisfaction is an important source of work motivation and can be used as a tool to energize employees to get things done and thereby get the organization to 'work better and cost less. Therefore, human resource managers are often concerned about job satisfaction because it is positively associated with workforce motivation, retention, and performance, as well as with reduced turnover and litigation (Kim, 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Consequently, study on employees' job satisfaction is getting increased attention than before. But among all the previous studies little could be known about the satisfaction of knowledge employees, especially in the public sectors. Knowledge employees in this study refer to "intellectual workers who enrich human knowledge both as creators and as researchers; they apply it as practitioners, they spread it as teachers, and they share it with others as experts or advisers. They produce judgments, reasoning, theories, findings, conclusions, advice, arguments for and against, and so on (Cuvillier, 1974). As argued by Despres & Hiltrop (1995), as a form of productive activity, knowledge work is increasing at accelerating rates in most areas of the world. But research on them is lagging behind. Knowledge workers in developed nations work under favorable condition (well

established system, opportunity for professional growth, scope of using one's talent, well remuneration etc.), but in developing countries they have to work with many constraints. Moreover, public organizations in such countries are not only less efficient but also their resources and initiatives are locked in to red tape syndrome. Therefore, some form of exploratory research is needed in developing countries like Bangladesh to examine the level of job satisfaction among public knowledge employees and to identify which areas of dissatisfaction need improvement in order to energize them to get things done more effectively and efficiently.

2. Methodology

The main objective of this study is to identify the level of job satisfaction of public knowledge employees in Bangladesh and to identify the relative importance of job satisfaction factors. Knowledge employees in this study are all from the public and non-profit sector organizations especially from the agricultural sector of the government and doing some kind of research job. Among 105 questionnaires, 64 usable questionnaires are used for this study. Respondents are selected from 7 agricultural and livestock research institution under the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock and 4 related universities. Twenty three respondents hold faculty position and 41 respondents hold the position of Scientific Officer, Senior Scientific Officer, Principle Scientific Officer and Project Director.

A structured questionnaire in a 5-point scale has been used in the survey. In the measurement, scale 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. Among the 33 variables two variables namely 'many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult' and "my efforts to do a good job are often blocked by red-tape" use measurement scale from reverse direction. To get the more reliable job satisfaction output, all the respondents for this study are taken from the similar educational background that is either agriculture and fisheries or livestock. The dimensions of job satisfaction for this study have been developed from the review of the literature and paying attention to unique personality characteristics of knowledge employees. Based on the work of Agho, Mueller, & Price (1993) and Spector (1985), eight dimensions of job satisfaction are chosen those are: pay, promotion, security, supervision, benefits & rewards, work ability & operating procedure, co-workers and nature of works. The widely used instruments for measuring job satisfaction are: Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) that measure mentally challenging work, equitable rewards, opportunities for promotion, supportive working conditions, and supportive colleagues (Huang, 1999). A new job satisfaction instrument for human services, the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) was developed by Spector (1997) and used for 19 human service samples. From the above instruments for measuring job satisfaction 33 items are chosen for the present study.

3. Review of literature

In the literature, job satisfaction is typically referred to as an emotional affective response to a job or specific aspects of a job (Locke, 1976; Smith, 1969). Locke (1976) defined employee satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience". Locke noted three "schools" of thought about the causes of employee satisfaction: physical economic (physical working conditions), social (supervision and cohesive work groups) and nature of work (mentally challenging tasks and work-related variables). As argued by Spector, employee satisfaction can be assessed as a global feeling about the job or as attitudes about various facets of the job. Spector (1985) assessed nine facets: pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication. Smith (1969) suggests that "employee satisfaction is feelings or affective responses to facets of the situation". And five facets considered by them are: pay, promotions, co-workers, supervision and the work itself. As argued by Agho et al., (1993), to better understand the factors influencing employee satisfaction, one has to study the combined effects of environment, job characteristics and personality variables. Classic theories often emphasize job satisfaction as resulting from congruence between what employees want from their jobs and perceptions about what they actually receive (deLeon & Taher, 1996; Emmert & Taher, 1992; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Wright & Davis, 2003). Wright & Davis (2003) examined the influence of the public sector work environment on public employee workplace experiences and feelings of job satisfaction. They showed that the work environment is made up of two components: job characteristics; as the direct antecedents of employee job satisfaction and work context. Their study analyzed the effects of three components of the work context—organizational goal conflict, organizational goal specificity, and procedural constraints—and four job characteristics— job specificity, routineness, feedback, and human resource development (HRD)—faced by public employees.

This study focuses on the job satisfaction of knowledge employees in the public sectors; and knowledge employees have unique personality characteristics. As argued by Root-Bernstein (1989) knowledge workers who undertake pioneering research typically dislike bureaucracies, resent administration and work most creatively when satisfying their own curiosity. In line with this, Rosenbaum (1991) finds that knowledge workers tend to

have high needs for autonomy, significant drives for achievement, stronger identity and affiliation with a profession than a company and a greater sense of self-direction, making them likely to resist the authoritarian imposition of views, rules and structures.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Data analysis and findings

This study uses 33 items of job satisfaction to measure overall satisfaction of the employee. Factor analysis of 33 variables in the instrument formed ten main factors with eigenvalues greater than one (Table 1). These 10 factors account for 71.18% of the variance in the data on attitudes toward job satisfaction. To realize the level of job satisfaction along with the variables in the factors clearly, the study further analyzes mean values of the job satisfaction variables (Table 1). In the 5-point measurement scale, this study considers the value that is greater than 3 is indicating the satisfaction of the employee. Correlation and regression analysis have been conducted to assess the relationship and impact of all the job satisfaction factors on overall job satisfaction. Although correlation analysis (Table 2) finds four factors namely salary (.323), job loyalty (.283), work motivation (.461) and fair treatment (.464) have significant and strong correlation with employees overall satisfaction but their regression coefficient (Table 3) shows only two factors work motivation (.353) and fair treatment (.377) having significant impact on overall job satisfaction. As the other factors do not have significant contribution on the overall job satisfaction, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) is carried out. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that all ten factors as a whole are significant towards the overall job satisfaction of public knowledge employees (Table 4). It is found that R-squared is 0.389, meaning that 38.9% of the variability of the attitude toward job satisfaction among the employee in the observed organizations is accounted for by the variables in the model. The reliability test has also been conducted to verify the internal consistency of the variables obtained in the sample. The Cronbach's alpha value (α) is found 0.864, which is higher than the minimum acceptable level suggested by Nunnally (1978).

4.2 Interpretation

In Table 1, the first factor, salary accounts for the most variance (20.90%) that consists of six variables. Eigenvalue for this factor is 6.897, which indicates that this factor contains more information than the other factors. This factor provides the maximum insights of job satisfaction of public knowledge employees in Bangladesh. It broadly includes the areas of job satisfaction such as, salary, company policies regarding increments and promotion and task significance. The six variables contain in the factor "salary" are: income is higher than other similar job, satisfied with present salary, satisfied with increment allocation method, satisfied with the chances of income increase, satisfied with chances of promotion, work allows me to help people directly. Last variable namely "work allows me to help people directly" have relatively lower factor loading (less than 0.50) that arise suspect about their membership to this factor. Among all the variables six variables have loaded less than ≤ 6 and four variables have loaded ≤ 5 (loading marked by underlines & bold) demonstrating suspect about their membership to that factor.

The mean values of these six variables are 1.58, 2.03, 2.28, 2.20, 2.05, and 3.84 respectively (Table 1). In the 5-point scale these mean values represent somewhat negative level of job satisfaction except the last variable. Hence, the policy makers in the government sector in Bangladesh should give greater importance on these variables concerning salary, increment and promotion policy to increase job satisfaction of public knowledge employees to those kinds.

The second important factor is loyalty to the job that accounts for 8.31 % of the variance and it broadly covers areas of job satisfaction including task distribution, training and development and loyalty to the organization. The variables are namely, satisfied with work allotments, satisfied with employee training and development, would not leave the job if similar job offer are available in other organization. It has an eigenvalue of 2.743. The mean values of these three variables are 2.69, 1.91 and 3.53 respectively that characterize also negative to low job satisfaction of public employees.

Third and fourth factors namely benefits and work motivation also have eigenvalue more than 2 and fourth factor has two variables which load lower than .50 on that factor demonstrating insignificant membership in that factor. The other six factors are almost equal in their ability to account for the variation of level of job satisfaction with comparatively low eigenvalues. The communality values of the variables under ten factors (Table 1) indicate that each variable is much in common with other variables that formed the factor.

The overall job satisfaction of public knowledge employees in Bangladesh is at the negative level showing an average job satisfaction value of 2.78. Although the mean value of job satisfaction variables, demonstrates dissatisfaction of public knowledge employees regarding the salary, promotion and opportunities for growth & development, they self-content themselves, however, that their work is very important and valuable for the society and variable related to the nature of work (task identity, task significance, work impact) score higher

(more than 3.5 to 4.5) than others. They also satisfied with the level of job security provided by the organization. Notable dissatisfaction found on the variable indicating training and development. Although their overall satisfaction score less than 3 but their mean score remain above 3.5 on the variable that they would not leave the job if similar job offers are available in other organizations. The reasons behind this perhaps are the socio-economic context of Bangladesh and very nature of government services. Higher unemployment rate and complex procedures in government sector employment which sometimes are heightened by the corrupt practices in recruitment & selection, influences the decision not to leave the job once someone has been recruited. Moreover, job securities of public services also motivate the public employees not to leave the job even if they are dissatisfied. Therefore, their dissatisfaction is reflected by the behavior indicating low morale, (taking bribe, seeking extra benefit and advantage), absenteeism and lower productivity than their private counterparts. Therefore, to retain honest and potential employees, public organizations must create a work environment that keeps their employees happy or satisfied. Otherwise, low morale and underinvestment in skill development will place the public sector at great disadvantage in competing against the private sector for talented labor.

The result of coefficient (Table 3) analysis more specifically shows that the job satisfaction of knowledge employees is significantly dependent upon work motivation and fair treatment. Although salary seems to be a strong motivator but this study shows that government employees are not only motivated by salary, there are some other factors associated with salary that has influence on job satisfaction. The result of coefficient analysis also finds negative beta coefficient demonstrating inadequate level of benefits and complex bureaucratic mechanism that the public employees have in common with the findings of other studies. Studies (Rainey, 1989; Steel & Warner, 1990) showing dissatisfaction of public employees argue that one purported cause of this dissatisfaction has been that whereas public organizations have missions that often provide greater opportunities for employees to achieve altruistic or higher order needs, the very structure of these organizations—purportedly characterized by greater red tape and conflict—hinders the realization of these opportunities (Wright & Davis, 2003). This study also finds consistency with the above views.

5. Conclusion

Consistent with other previous studies (Baldwin & Farley, 2001; Rainey, 1989; Steel & Warner, 1990; Wright & Davis, 2003), this study also found notable dissatisfaction among public knowledge employees regarding the salary, promotion and opportunities for growth & development. The overall job satisfaction of public knowledge employees in Bangladesh was at the negative level. Quantitative analysis of this paper suggests reinvestigation of salary, promotion and increment policy, training and development program, fair/ethical work environment and motivation toward the work itself as they have strong impact on employee overall satisfaction. Finally, regression analysis also confirms that government sectors have ample scope to improve job satisfaction by enhancing fair/equal treatment in terms of awarding benefits / opportunities and acknowledging knowledge employees appropriately for their assigned and completed tasks.

6. Future Research

In the edge of globalization, managing information and knowledge have been considered as a strategic option and a shift from a traditional bureaucratic administration toward better public management (New Public Management) imposes a serious challenge to the government organizations to reduce cost and manage human resources efficiently and effectively. Therefore, this study has practical implications for public sector organizations if they really want to get better output from employees and want to retain talent employees in the edge of globalization where knowledge management have been critical for sustainable organization development. However, the samples for this study are smaller and do not represent the population appropriately, therefore, there is an ample scope to conduct further study with a larger sample base.

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Table 1: Result of Factor Analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation of Job Satisfaction Variables

Factor (Eigenvalue)	Variables	Loadings	Variance % (Cumulative)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Communalities
Salary (6.897)	Income is higher than other similar job	.901	20.899 (20.899)	1.578	.7304	.834
	Satisfied with my present salary	.872		2.031	.8723	.871
	Satisfied with increment allocation method	.869		2.281	.9167	.858
	Satisfied with increment allocation method	.778		2.203	.6709	.776
	Satisfied with the chances of income increase	.701		2.046	.8053	.799
	Satisfied with the chances of promotion	.466		3.844	.9296	.603
	Work allows to help people directly					
Job loyalty (2.743)	Satisfied with work allotments	.724	8.312 (29.210)	2.688	.7741	.594
	Satisfied with employee training and development	.715		1.906	.6599	.689
	Would not leave the job if similar job offer are available in other organization	.661		3.531	.9080	.634
Benefits (2.484)	Satisfied with welfare facilities	.766	7.528 (36.738)	2.159	.7004	.691
	Satisfied with retirement benefits	.696		2.625	.7868	.774
	Satisfied with autonomy given for work related decisions discretion	.534		2.984	.8260	.713
	My talents are used well	.531		2.906	.8677	.664

		in the workplace				
Work motivation (2.442)	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	.724	7.399 (44.137)	3.688	.9739	.581
	I like the work I do	.619		3.781	.8446	.621
	I am given real opportunities for personal growth	.495		2.797	.7167	.645
	Prefer working with present colleagues	.432		3.422	.6620	.508
Bureaucratic policy and practices (1.979)	Many of our rules and procedures make doing a good job difficult	.845	5.996 (50.134)	2.1252	.8261	.779
	My efforts to do a good job are often blocked by red-tape	.798		2.469	.7553	.800
	In my organization differences in performance are recognized in a meaningful way	.541		2.250	.9428	.652
Supervisor (1.631)	Superior encourages suggestions for improvements	.806	4.943 (55.077)	3.125	.7454	.802
	Superior gives reasonable attention to suggestions	.763		2.750	.7127	.802
	Immediate supervisor is reasonable	.521		3.141	.7097	.569
Work impact (1.474)	My work allows me to make a meaningful impact on my community	.844	4.467 (59.544)	3.859	.8705	.748
	Making an impact on my community is among my most professional motivations	.808		3.563	.7943	.765
Task identity (1.430)	The work I do is important	.795	4.335 (63.879)	4.641	.4836	.761
	Satisfied with recognition by colleagues	.654		2.484	.6899	.779
	I am given real opportunities to improve my skill	.516		2.500	.8165	.754
Job security (1.221)	Satisfied with the level of job security	.714	3.699 (67.578)	3.891	.7992	.715
	Satisfied with general supervision of departments	.643		3.156	.8012	.578
	Able to do better than present work	.565		4.500	.5040	.686
Fair treatment (1.188)	Fair chances given for better work	.763	3.601 (71.179)	2.531	.9080	.787
	Maximum facilities given for working properly	.487		2.422	.6856	.766

Factors with loadings ≤ 0.6 are bold & ≤ 0.50 are underlined.

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis

Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

Table 2: Factor Correlation (Pearson)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	1										
2	.312*	1									
3	.316*	.300*	1								
4	.378**	.303*	.444**	1							
5	.331**	.081	.102	.070	1						
6	.228	.231	.041	.248*	.082	1					
7	.128	.206	.016	-.032	-.096	-.038	1				
8	.327**	.221	.393**	.418**	.076	.040	.067	1			
9	.291*	.216	.198	.269*	-.010	.071	.193	.261*	1		
10	.416**	.295*	.406**	.356*	.276*	.056	-.096	.208		1	
11	.323**	.283*	.188	.461**	-.051	.131	-.002	.180	.086	.464**	1

Notes: 1 is Salary, 2 is Job loyalty, 3 is Benefits, 4 is Work motivation, 5 is Bureaucratic policy, 6 is Supervisor, 7 is Work impact, 8 is Task identity, 9 is Security, 10 is Fair treatment, 11 is Overall satisfaction.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.241	.848		1.464	.149
	Salary	.150	.135	.152	1.111	.272
	Job loyalty	.113	.136	.103	.831	.410
	Benefits	-.175	.147	-.156	-1.192	.239
	Work motivation	.411	.158	.353	2.594	.012*
	Bureaucratic policy	-.221	.116	-.223	-1.896	.063
	Supervisor	-.006	.137	-.005	-.047	.962
	Work impact	.003	.103	.003	.028	.978
	Task identity	-.028	.167	-.021	-.166	.869
	Security	-.102	.150	-.080	-.679	.500
	Fair treatment	.377	.130	.382	2.906	.005**

a. Dependent Variable: Overall job satisfaction

Note: * P<0.05, **P<0.01

Table 4: ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	10.480	10	1.048	3.375	.002 ^a
	Residual	16.458	53	.311		
	Total	26.938	63			

R Square .389; Adjusted R Square .274; Std. Error of the Estimate .55724

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