EXPECTATIONS AND JOB SATISFACTION: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL APPROACH

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Abstract. Job satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees gain enjoyment from their efforts at the workplace. It is generally believed that higher job satisfaction is associated with better organizational and individual performance, commitment; increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and lower employee turnover. There are many heuristic models explaining differences in job satisfaction, and these include a number of external and internal factors affecting it. The main research question in the current study is “To what extent is job satisfaction influenced?” At the same time, the empirical research also aims to contribute to a better understanding of students’ expectations of work.

Keywords: job satisfaction, expectations of work, students, Lithuania.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is a widely researched subject. A review of the literature suggests that higher job satisfaction is associated with better organizational and individual performance, increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and lower employee turnover. Unmet expectations from work have been found to be associated with low job satisfaction (Hackman, Oldham 1980; Kim 2002; Turnley, Feldman 2000; Taris et al. 2004, 2006).

Research object – expectations from work and job satisfaction.

The goal of research is to disclose the theoretical and practical aspects of expectations from work and job satisfaction.

Research methods – the analysis of scientific literature and empirical research (structured questionnaire survey).

The paper is divided into two main parts. Theoretical background of job satisfaction, work motives and expectations is presented in the first part. Data of empirical research of students’ expectations from work, motives for studies, evaluation of the most important necessary skills and factors influencing students’ work career are introduced in the second part.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers specifically to the attitude an individual has towards his or her job. According to Fogarty (1994) job satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees gain enjoyment from their efforts at the workplace. When an employee has a high level of job satisfaction, it means that they have a positive attitude towards his or her job. On the other hand, there are a number of factors that can affect employees’ job satisfaction such as satisfaction with: supervision at work, work itself, pay and conditions, appraisal, promotion practices and co-workers (Hackman, Oldham 1980).

There are many heuristic models explaining differences in job satisfaction, and these include a variety of variables. In the first place, some studies include individual characteristics of the workers, such as race, gender, age, and educational qualifications. Although these variables seem to have some effect on job satisfaction, they often fail to explain much of the variance (Reiner, Zhao 1999; Ting 1997).

Other studies have shown that variables linked to the organizational context and the job provides explanations accounting for differences in job satisfaction. Herzberg (1966) was one of the first who noted the importance of the work environment as the primary determinant of employee job satisfaction. Using a two-factor model, Maidani (1991) stated that intrinsic factors, such as job content and task variety, contribute to satisfaction, whereas extrinsic factors, such as pay and job security, can act as dissatisfies. Building on his work, Hackman and Oldham (1980) built a new classic model and identified several key factors in the work environment determining job satisfaction. An important element in their model, however, is that satisfaction is determined not only by objective characteristics but also by the needs and work values people have. In other words, obtaining self-fulfilment from a job is especially important for those who attach value to it. Their model has been widely tested, debated, and extended in the literature (Reiner, Zhao 1999).
Scientific literature review lets to disclose the main external and internal factors affecting job satisfaction (Table 1 (Ciarniene, Vienazindiene 2009)).

Table 1. Factors affecting job satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External factors</th>
<th>Internal factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company’s name</td>
<td>Self-expression demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privity of employees about the company’s situation</td>
<td>Educational qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work itself</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility to realize one’s potential</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision and management processes</td>
<td>Seniority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and promotion policies practices</td>
<td>Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favourable work conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive co-workers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisational policies</td>
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</table>

Job satisfaction can be an important indicator of how employees feel about their jobs and a predictor of work behaviours such as organizational citizenship, absenteeism, and turnover. Further, job satisfaction can partially mediate the relationship of personality variables and deviant work behaviours.

One common research finding is that job satisfaction is correlated with life satisfaction. This correlation is reciprocal, meaning people who are satisfied with life tend to be satisfied with their job and people who are satisfied with their job tend to be satisfied with life.

However, some research has found that job satisfaction is not significantly related to life satisfaction when other variables such as non-work satisfaction and core self-evaluations are taken into account.

2.2. Hierarchy of Needs

Some argue that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory laid the foundation for job satisfaction theory. This model served as a good basis from which early researchers could develop job satisfaction theories.

As a base for empirical study, the five dimensions of the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1954) were used to understand student’s needs. Questions of the poll in relation to job attributes were developed from the five dimensions (LaMarre, Hopkins 1984). These dimensions and related indicators are briefly described below.

1. Physiological needs. The first level encompasses the needs involved with basic physiological requirements. Basic income is directly relevant to the satisfaction of these physiological needs. Questions derived from this dimension cover the following areas: an adequate salary; comfortable and flexible work conditions and convenient, efficient, and effective workplace and facilities layout.

2. Safety security needs. The second level in the hierarchy is composed of safety security needs. In terms of this study, it includes job security, protection from physical harm, and avoidance of the unexpected. The following areas were covered for questions in this category: job security, benefits, a non-competitive atmosphere to minimize stressful work environment, a clearly defined assignment to minimize anxiety on misunderstood job responsibilities and a clearly defined workspace.

3. Social needs. The third level describes a person’s need to “belong” and be accepted by others. People desire social contacts and have a basic need to be affiliated with others. The workplace provides numerous opportunities for people to satisfy these needs through work groups, clubs, and committees as well as the formal and informal interaction with peers, subordinates, and superiors. The areas covered for social needs for the study are as follows: work relations with co-workers that provide harmonious relations with others and organized activities that provide participation.

4. Self-esteem needs. Above social needs, self-esteem needs describe a person’s desire to feel a sense of accomplishment and achievement. People need external validation of their worth in addition to internal self-respect and a sense of importance. There are several ways a person’s job provides the opportunity to satisfy these ego needs: feedback on performance, social recognition, titles, and positions. The following areas are covered for questions in this study: recognition of good performance and opportunities for advancement, challenging tasks with more responsibilities, licensing and professional titles to enhance self-esteem, and influence over others and leadership positions.

5. Self-actualization needs. At the apex of the hierarchy, Maslow described self-actualization as an individual’s urge “to develop and actualize his fullest potentialities and capacities ... what a man can be, he must be” (Maslow 1954). For this study, the following areas are included: self-expression, creativity, and freedom to experiment with new ideas; opportunity to use one’s skills and talents (Kumpikaite 2007; Zakarevicius, Zuperkie- ne 2008; Kumpikaite, Ciarniene 2008; Kaklauskas et al. 2009) and interest, satisfaction of curiosity, and attraction to particular areas.
2.3. Expectations

Unlike Maslow, Vroom does not concentrate on needs, but rather focuses on outcomes. Whereas Maslow looks at the relationship between internal needs and the resulting effort expended to fulfil them, Vroom separates effort (which arises from motivation), performance, and outcomes. He realizes that an employee’s performance is based on individuals’ factors such as personality, skills, knowledge, experience and abilities.

Vroom’s Expectancy Theory assumes that behaviour results from conscious choices among alternatives whose purpose it is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. The relationship between people’s behaviour at work and their goals is not as simple as was first imagined by other scientists. Vroom’s theory is based upon the following three beliefs: valence, expectancy and instrumentality (Fig. 1).

![Diagram](image.png)

Fig. 1. People’ beliefs according to Vroom’s theory

1. **Valence.** Valence refers to the emotional orientations people hold with respect to outcomes (rewards). The depth of the want of an employee for extrinsic (money, promotion, time-off, benefits) or intrinsic (satisfaction) rewards. Management must discover what employees’ value.

2. **Expectancy.** Employees have different expectations and levels of confidence about what they are capable of doing. Management must discover what resources, training, or supervision employees need.

3. **Instrumentality.** The perception of employees whether they will actually get what they desire even if it has been promised by a manager. Management must ensure that promises of rewards are fulfilled and that employees are aware of that.

The expectancy theory says that individuals have different sets of goals and can be motivated if they believe that:

- There is a positive correlation between efforts and performance,
- Favourable performance will result in a desirable reward,
- The reward will satisfy an important need,
- The desire to satisfy the need is strong enough to make the effort worthwhile.

Unmet expectations have been found to be associated with lower levels of identification with the organization and job involvement (Ashforth, Saks 2000), higher levels of voluntary turnover (Buckley et al. 1998; Lance et al. 2000), low job satisfaction (Nelson, Sutton 1991; Turnley, Feldman 2000; Wanous et al. 1992), higher levels of distress (Nelson, Sutton 1991), lower commitment (Wanous et al. 1992), and lower levels of interpersonal trust (Robinson 1996; Young, Perrewe 2000). In the context of work socialization and adjustment, unmet expectations have been found to predict aversive scores on work adjustment (Feij et al. 1995), even more strongly than personal dispositions such as general self efficacy and negative affectivity (Saks, Ashforth 2000).

The degree to which individuals feel that their expectations are met may be construed to reflect their evaluation of the outcome of their exchange relationship with the organization, emphasizing the powerful role possessed by individual psychological contracts (i.e., how well did the organization fulfill one’s pre-entry expectations, Dabos, Rousseau 2004; Lance et al. 2000). Based on their re-entry expectations regarding the outcomes of this exchange relationship, newcomers consciously or unconsciously decide how much they will “invest” in this relationship (e.g., in terms of time, skill, effort, motivation). If this relationship does not reap the anticipated returns (e.g., in terms of job security, variety, satisfaction, opportunities for further development, recognition from others), the exchange with the organization is inequitable (Adams 1965), possibly leading workers to reduce their investments in this exchange relationship to make it more equitable (Taris et al. 2004).

The greater the difference between expectations and experiences, the larger the gap to which an individual must respond, and the more likely it is that an individual will take action to reduce or remove this gap, especially when experience does not live up to one’s initial expectations (i.e., things are worse than expected). In this sense, unmet expectations may be considered a stressor that individuals must cope with (Taris et al. 2006).
3. Empirical research

3.1. Description of research

The goal of this study was to investigate students’ expectations from work. The empirical research method was structured questionnaire survey, based on theoretical background (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and factors affecting job satisfaction (Table 1)). The data were gathered via Internet. The main tasks of this research were to find out:
1. What are students’ motives for studies?
2. What needs students want to satisfy from their work?
3. What skills are the most important?
4. What factors have an impact on students’ career plans?

Survey was made in December of 2009. 380 students (334 from university and 46 from college) participated in the poll. The authors of this paper working with these students in different institutions and faculties invited them to take part in the survey. Information about students’ age groups and work experience is provided in Table 2. As we can see 40% of respondents do not have any work experience and 50% have experience up to 3 years.

Table 2. Respondents’ Age and Work Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work experience</th>
<th>In percent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>In percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 year</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21–30</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–3 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Over 35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6–10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31% of students study Management, 5% – Business and administration, 37% – Economics, 21%– Information technologies and 3 percent other specialties. The biggest part (69% of students are the second, 5%–the third and 24% the fourth year. 59% of respondents were female.

3.2. Motives for studies

Students’ motives for studies are presented on Figure 2. Respondents marked these main motives from the list: background (73%), speciality (53 percent), knowledge (52%) and diploma (50%). Looking at the results we can see that students want to prepare themselves for future work, gaining knowledge, getting specialty and a diploma.

3.3. Students’ Expectations from Work

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs was used to explore students’ expectations they want to satisfy from the work.

According to Table 3, we can see that the biggest evaluation from three needs groups (physiological, safety and higher needs) as very important have got good work atmosphere (80%). Work conditions were mentioned as very important for 79% of respondents, salary – 72% of all answers. It means that the most of all students want to satisfy their physiological needs and probably to get financial independence from their parents.

From higher needs students emphasized possibilities to be promoted (63% from all answers) and possibility to use skills and knowledge (62%). The lowest expectations from students’ view deal with wish to belong to some social group (18%) and prestige (22%). Besides, prestige is more important for students having work experience. It was found statistical dependence between these factors (Spearmen’s correlation 0.133, when $p = 0.01$).

3.4. Evaluation of skills

Evaluating students’ skills it was used Katz’s (1974) description of three essential type of skills as technical, human (interpersonal) and conceptual adding personal (Kumpikaitė, Alas 2009).

Looking at Figure 3 we can see that students evaluated their personal skills the most of all. The highest evaluation got responsibility sense. 63% of respondents stated this skill as very well and 30% as well ranked. The average of positive evaluation of interpersonal, conceptual and personal skills is similar. Around 40% of respondents evaluated them well and very well.
The lowest evaluation average is for technical skills. 31% of respondents evaluated them well and very well. However it should be mentioned that even 64% of respondents evaluated their subject skills well. It is one of the highest assessments.

Students having work experience evaluate most of their skills better than students not having it. Weak correlation link (varies from 0.118 (self reliance) to 0.188 (aplication experience)) was found between work experience and skills' evaluation. Almost no statistical difference was found between personal skills and work experience (except activity, where Spearman’s correlation is 0.163, when p = 0.01). It shows that personal skills are not connected with working period. No statistical difference was found between work experience and subject knowledge, ability to show own opinion, ability to work in team and all other personal skills.

### 3.5. Factors Influencing Students’ Work Career

Looking at the results dealing with work career, we can see that the most important effecting factor is education (Fig. 4). Even 63% of students’ suggested like very important and 32% like important. Students’ health is on the second place. 61% of respondents state it as very important. Experience is on the third place. 55% of students point it up as very important. The lowest scores in scale “very important” got educational politics of government (11%) and family (12%).

No statistical difference was found between factors, influencing students’ career and work experience.

#### Table 3. Students’ expectations from work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Physiological needs</th>
<th>Safety security needs</th>
<th>Higher needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Work conditions</td>
<td>Good work atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>80.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little important</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig. 3. Evaluation of Skills](image-url)
Summarizing, we can say that students do not plan their career for a long time but their attitude towards studies and work is positive.

4. Conclusions

Analysis of scientific literature showed strong link between individuals’ expectations and their job satisfaction. Every person has different sets of goals and can be motivated if he/she believes in positive correlation between efforts and performance; desirable reward, which will satisfy an important need and if desire to satisfy the need is strong enough to make the effort worthwhile.

To conclude the results of empirical research about expectations from work and motives for studies, we can say that students state their background as the most important motive for studies. Physiological and safety needs according to students view are the main expectations they want to satisfy from the work. These results confirm the essence of Maslow hierarchy theory of needs.

Evaluating students’ skills using Katz’s methodology we can state that personal skills, especially responsibility, are the most important for their work. And the main factor, influencing students’ career is education. It was not found strong statistical difference according to work experience and analyzed factors.

References


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