

MENTAL CONDITION AND CAREER SATISFACTION IN MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

Changes in a government structure such as organization realign, redesign, restructure and downsize on an ongoing basis, affects the mental conditions of the workers to survive in the working environment. Besides workers have to cope with the increasing workloads after a few changes in government policies and at the same time the pressures of modern life. The element of threat in the career including job loss can be mentally devastating and may influence the mental well-being of the workers. Career satisfaction should be taken into consideration because workers usually spend more than 10 hours working in the workplace, facing work-related stress and can affect their mental conditions. The study is aim to investigate the correlation between career satisfaction and Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL): mental conditions in Malaysian Government. The study also aims to determine the significant differences between career satisfaction of public servants by gender, salary, age and working duration. Career satisfaction Questionnaire and WHOQOL-BREF Questionnaire were used as instruments to support theory for this research. The findings show meaning dimension scored the highest followed by competence, orientation, supervision, professionalization, work-related stress, and financial dimension in career satisfaction level among public servants. Career satisfaction was measured using self-reported by 215 employees from government agencies that was randomly selected from the sampling frame. As the result of the data analysis, the researchers found that the public servants were satisfied with their jobs in their overall level of career satisfaction. It is proven in this study that mental conditions among public servants are moderately influenced by career satisfaction. Further research is required to cover other factors that can also affect the career satisfaction level and at the same time close the current gaps in our understanding of career satisfaction and its relationship with HRQOL domain mental conditions.

Keywords: health-related quality of life, public servant, mental conditions, career satisfaction, working duration.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Over the last few decades, workers face many challenges in the workplace that can give direct impact on their career satisfaction. Although the top management provides the workers with ideal working environment as possible, there are still many examples of challenges at the workplace that affect their workers. Career satisfaction is an important variable in the area of organizational behavior and without career satisfaction it is not possible to achieve organizational goals (Safi et al., 2016). According to Isgor and Haspolat (2016), mental conditions of the police officers, teachers, justice employees, engineers, and health staff were determined to be significantly higher rather than the

mental conditions of the public workers. Employer provides wages and all benefits to their workers, it is the indicator and source of social support, social status and satisfaction with identity and life. However, it may have undesirable effects on employed person (Neshaei & Akbari, 2016). It is important to understand the consequences of low career satisfaction from both medical and economic perspective. Therefore, the main objectives of this study are to examine; the highly rated dimension of career satisfaction in Malaysian Government; the significant differences between career satisfaction by gender, salary, working duration and age; and to investigate the correlation between career satisfaction with mental condition.

One of the previous studies was a study on marital satisfaction, job satisfaction and mental conditions of secondary school teachers in Nigeria (Ofovwe et al., 2013). Higher workload has become a norm in many organizations which may jeopardize the workers' career satisfaction. Job satisfaction among male employees was better than female employees because females were dominated in many aspects by male employees in jobs (Nahar et al., 2013). As mentioned earlier, there are few researches that have been conducted in the knowledge area measuring career satisfaction and mental conditions especially for public servants. Most of the researchers in career satisfaction and HRQOL have been conducted in overseas country such as United States and Norway. However, there is a few research in this field has been conducted in Malaysia. In the previous research, it can be understood that career satisfaction level gives impact on the workers' health. It is supported by Sachiko & Isamu (2016), in a study conducted on the Japanese working environment where employees who working more than 55 hours per week will increase their career satisfaction and at the same time, increasing working hours impair workers' mental conditions for those who overvalue career satisfaction. In fact, this statement was also supported by Nahar et al. (2013) the findings in Bangladesh on working environment where career satisfaction has been associated both with mental conditions problem and psychological well-being. The researchers have an interest to conduct a study on the same field by adding more literature about the topic in Malaysia working environment.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Career Satisfaction

Malaysia government is concern about the public servants' career satisfaction in all aspects and come out with reliable policies and procedures to cater this issue. In Eleventh Malaysia Plan, the government plan to improve labor productivity and create more job opportunities that require highly-skilled workers. If the organization can enhance the workers' career satisfaction, it will directly or indirectly increase the good image of the organization and at the same time increase the workers' motivation and productivity level (Sarimah & Faridatul, 2010). Jahrami et al. (2013) found in his study that workers with high career satisfaction were the people who find their jobs interesting. Amador et al. (2008) added people who hired for a job that matching with their skills will increase their long-term job satisfaction.

H₁: There is a significant difference in career satisfaction by gender.

H₂: There is a significant difference in career satisfaction by salary.

H₃: There is a significant difference in career satisfaction by work duration.

H₄: There is a significant difference in career satisfaction by age.

2.2 Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL)

The internationally most well-known and influential explanation about health is World Health Organization (WHO) definition states that "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely absence of disease or infirmity". Workers' health not only measure on their physiological health but also includes mental conditions. There should be urging to broadening

the perspective of HRQOL research on life domain, positive psychology, adaptation and not only focus on diseases (Fischer & Sousa-Poza, 2007). Thus, the researchers want to find whether there is a relationship exists between life domains such as career satisfaction with HRQOL and focus only on mental conditions.

2.3 Career Satisfaction and Mental condition

Many researchers have found that low career satisfaction correlate with mental condition. Nadinloyi et al. (2013) found that the overall index of mental conditions have a relatively strong negative correlation with career satisfaction. Aazami et al. (2015) had conducted series of self-administered questionnaires of 587 Malaysian women working in the public sector on self-perception of career satisfaction and mental conditions and the findings found that career satisfaction correlate with mental conditions problems such as psychological distress, sleep disorders, headaches and gastro-intestinal problems. Workers who have higher career satisfaction are more likely reported that they have better mental conditions since working in the organization and even have lower depression levels (Ejaz & Noelker, 2006). Other career satisfaction studies indicated career satisfaction, as it relates to job stress, is desirable for an individual's mental condition (Nobile & McCormick, 2005). Mistry (2010) confirmed that mental condition shows a significant relationship with low level of career satisfaction.

As said before, job-related stress has shown an inverse relationship with career satisfaction and has affected the mental condition such as arguing and snapping with other workers, blaming others for tension, aggressive behavior, high job turnover and absenteeism. Blake et al. (2007) found that employees who face low career satisfaction caused by work-related stress, job insecurity, low co-worker support or psychological demands will affect their mental conditions such as they often hopeless, feeling sad and nervous. Further research is needed to explore the impact of career satisfaction that place the employees at greater risk of stress and the chronic psychological impact resulting from engaging in unhealthy behaviors in reaction to stress.

H₅: There is a relationship with career satisfaction and mental conditions.

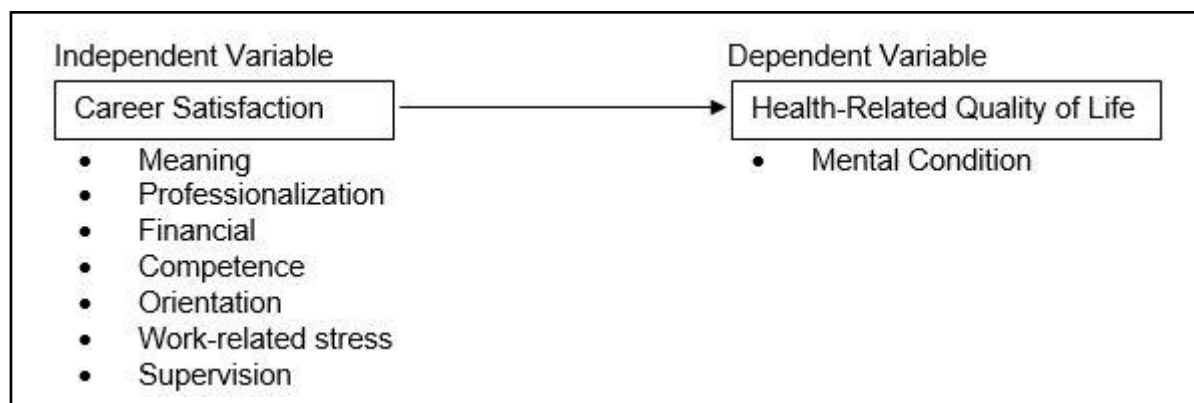


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame in this study was the directory of public servants in Malaysian Government. The questionnaire was developed using two established questionnaires set that relate to the study. The career satisfaction questionnaire was adapted from DSP Career satisfaction Questionnaire while the HRQOL questionnaire was adapted from WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire.

3.2 Survey Instrument

The questionnaire was developed using established questionnaires that relate to the study. The job satisfaction questionnaire was adapted from DSP Job Satisfaction Questionnaire while the HRQOL questionnaire was adapted from WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire. In section A, questions were designed to obtain the demographic information of the respondents such as gender, salary, work duration, and age. The respondents were given multiple choices but only allowed to tick one answer. In section B, questions were designed to request information regarding the level of job satisfaction from respondents. The researchers used a six-point likert scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 5 = Agree, and 6 = Strongly Agree. In section C, the respondents answered the questions regarding their health concerning their mental conditions. In this section, the respondents' answers were measured using five-point likert scale.

3.3 Sample Size

The suggested sample size for a population of 935 public servants is 274 or approximately 29 percent of the population. The researchers distributed 300 questionnaires to the public servants to achieve the sample size estimation. There were only 245 of the questionnaires successfully collected however 55 questionnaires were not returned by the respondents. From the collected questionnaires, only 215 questionnaires were usable and 30 questionnaires cannot be used due to not fully answered, difficult to read and missing pages.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used in this study was disproportionate stratified random sampling. The disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used due to the researchers were allowed to distribute only 50 questionnaires instead of 123 questionnaires at Land and Mines Office Selangor State (LMOS). Another reason was the number of administrative workers probably would not provide adequate representative for each selected government bodies compared to Land and Mines Office Selangor State (LMOS). Steps one involved converting the actual population according to proportionate.

4.0 FINDINGS

The objectives of this research were to examine the relationship between career satisfaction and mental condition in Malaysian Government. The questionnaires were distributed to the public servants who focus on their career satisfaction and HRQOL.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation for Each Dimension of Career Satisfaction

| Satisfaction Factors | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------|-----|------|----------------|
| Meaning | 215 | 4.70 | 0.69 |
| Competence | 215 | 4.62 | 0.65 |
| Orientation | 215 | 4.59 | 0.76 |
| Supervision | 215 | 4.55 | 0.83 |
| Professionalization | 215 | 4.54 | 0.74 |
| Work-Related Stress | 215 | 4.34 | 0.63 |
| Financial | 215 | 4.21 | 0.87 |

Table 1 shows that the highly rated dimension of career satisfaction with highest mean of ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 0.69$). More than half of the respondents agreed with the statements provided to measure meaning dimension such as “My work activities are personally meaningful to me”, “My job gives impact / effect towards other people”, “The work I do is interesting”, and “I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job”. Aliakbari (2015) supported by stated that a person with high level of job satisfaction holds positive meaning about the job, while a person who is dissatisfied holds negative feelings about his or her career. The overall career satisfaction among public servants were ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.58$). It can be concluded that the overall career satisfaction among public servants were satisfied with their current position.

Table 2 Gender Differences and Career Satisfaction

| Gender | Female | Male |
|-----------------|--------|------|
| Mean | 4.52 | 4.44 |
| Std. Deviation | 0.59 | 0.54 |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | 0.27 | |

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

Table 3: Demographic Variables and Career Satisfaction

| Demographic variables | F | Sig. |
|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Salary | 2.90 | 0.036* |
| Working Duration | 3.43 | 0.018* |
| Age | 2.46 | 0.046* |

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

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference between the career satisfaction of public servants in Malaysian Government by gender. The test was not significant, $t(213) = -0.90$, $p > 0.05$. Therefore the study rejects the research hypothesis H_1 and accepts the null hypothesis.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between career satisfaction of public servants in Malaysian Government by salary. The ANOVA generates an F-ratio value of salary (2.90) and $p < 0.05$. Therefore the study accepts the research hypothesis H_2 and rejects the null hypothesis. Group salary below RM1,000.00 and above RM3,000.00 has significant difference using Tukey Test. The finding was supported by Aazami et al. (2015) stated that workers with lower-income group has reported developing mental conditions problems rather than medium-income and higher-income group. Career satisfaction refers to the emotional affective responses to a job situation determined by level of salary whether it meets or exceeds the individuals' expectations (Aazami et al., 2015).

The result of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that there is a significant difference between career satisfaction of public servants in Malaysian Government by working duration. The ANOVA generates and F-ration value of working duration (3.43) and $p < 0.05$. Therefore the study accepts the research hypothesis H_3 and rejects the null hypothesis. Aronson (2005) supported the result of the study where workers who worked for 6 months to 5 years will gain more satisfaction. Aronson (2005) also stated that workers who understand their jobs because of long working experience were satisfied with the job.

The result of one-way analysis of variance ANOVA shows that there is a significant difference between career satisfaction of public servants in Malaysian Government by age. The ANOVA generates an F-ratio value of age (2.46) and $p < 0.05$. Therefore the study accepts the research hypothesis H_4 and rejects the null hypothesis. However, the Tukey Test does not show any standout significant difference between groups in age. The finding is in line with results of other studies conducted by Saner and Eyupoglu (2012) where the level of overall career satisfaction increases and

continues increases until the 51 – 60 age group. Moreover, he added that a rapid increase continues up to the maximum level experienced by the older age group.

Table 4 Pearson Correlation between Career Satisfaction and HRQOL: Mental conditions in Malaysian Government

| HRQOL Domain | N | Sig. (2-tailed) | Pearson Correlation |
|-------------------|-----|-----------------|---------------------|
| Mental conditions | 215 | 0.00* | 0.46 |

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

Table 4 indicates that there is a significant relationship between career satisfaction and HRQOL: Mental conditions in Malaysian Government. Results of the correlation shows that HRQOL: Mental condition is strongly influenced by career satisfaction ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, this study accepts hypothesis H_5 and rejecting the null hypothesis. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Isgor and Haspolat (2016) where there is an association found between career satisfaction and mental condition. Aliakbari (2015) added the higher the level of career satisfaction, the lower the risk of mental condition will be. He also supports the finding by stated that career satisfaction is meaningful and positive correlate with mental condition. Other previous study that supported this finding was Suresh and Taj (2015) where mental condition and career satisfaction are dependent on each other.

5.0 CONCLUSION

From the discussion, public servants in Malaysian Government are satisfied with their jobs. The top management of any government bodies should take into consideration of the career satisfaction. If the workers are facing low career satisfaction or dissatisfaction, their health in psychological aspect also will be affected. The study has proven that career satisfaction shows a significant relationship with HRQOL domains mental condition. From the eight public sectors involved in this study, three government bodies which are Information and Communication Center Selangor (ICT), The Human Resource Management Division (HRM), and Forestry Department Selangor (FDS) are satisfied with their jobs and do not actually reach the satisfied level. The management has to put attention on the two lowest dimensions of career satisfaction found out in this study which are work-related stress dimension and financial dimension.

The management has to educate the workers on how to manage the work-related stress in order to improve their career satisfaction and handle conflict in the workplace. The management should let their workers to take responsibility in order to improve their psychological well-being. The management should give them training to help them identify and build positive attitudes that reduce overall stress at work. The workers also should be given a chance to improve their relationship with management and at the same time improve their communication with management and co-workers. By doing this, the workers can handle work-related stress better and improve their career satisfaction level.

The financial dimension is the lowest satisfied dimension of career satisfaction. The feeling of being underpaid with the high workload affects their career satisfaction. The government should always put more emphasis on this matter because there will be an increment in government servants' salary for every national budget planning and yet the public servants feel that they are underpaid with the workload they have to carry out. Thus, the government should think of other incentives and benefits that will help the workers' survival in the current high standard of living in Malaysia especially in Shah Alam.

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