



The Herzberg's Theory: Hygiene Factors and Job Satisfaction at a Public Agency in Federal Territories of Malaysia.

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ABSTRACT

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, many employees are switching from traditional office settings to working from home, which has drastically changed the way they operate. Organizations are now faced with the difficulty of making the shift back to the office significant concerning employee preferences, workplace relations and the nature of working conditions. Going back to work brings with it both chances and obstacles. Some employees are excited to get back in touch with peers and restore the office atmosphere, while others have become used to the convenience and comfort of working from home. The organization needs to work through these opposing viewpoints to develop a balanced strategy that promotes employee job satisfaction. Therefore, these papers measure the level of factors that influence working conditions and interpersonal relationships and the relationship between job satisfaction. Quantitative measurements had been used to analyse data on respondent variables. Data was collected from 138 participants at a public agency in the Federal Territories of Malaysia and the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) has been used to analysed data.

1. Introduction

Malaysian employees are the second least happy among six Southeast Asian nations, only behind Singapore and ahead of the Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Indonesia, according to a new Jobstreet and Jobsdb by SEEK survey (Irone, 2024). The claim that among six Southeast Asian countries, Malaysian employees are the second least satisfied raises serious concerns about employee happiness and well-being in Malaysia. Nevertheless, Malaysia is happier in general than China and Indonesia, coming in at number 79 on the World Happiness Index 2023 Report with a score of 5.384 (Murugiah, 2023). Employers must make sure that employees are as satisfied as possible with their jobs. To increase job satisfaction, the issue of employee job satisfaction must be addressed.

Employees reported feeling dissatisfaction when their work is closely related to their working environment. For instance, an engineer who oversaw the office and kept records when the supervisor was away. The engineer felt irritated with his supervisor since she was too busy to teach him and became upset when he tried to ask questions. The way his employer oversaw him made this engineer feel like a failure in a profession that offered no opportunities for advancement. According to Herzberg, these are signs of job dissatisfaction (Lohana & Ignatius, 2018).

Negative actions among employees and superior have a substantial effect on overall job satisfaction and workplace morale for both themselves and their coworkers. According to Noor and Main (2018), most employees at one of the departments in the Penang government agency rated their work conditions and supervision at a moderate level of job satisfaction. Employees that talk too much, do not monitor enough, get angry easily, and cause heartache are some reasons why they do not feel happy.

The government of the physical workspace has a significant impact on employee job satisfaction and general wellbeing. Unfortunately, employees who work in hazardous and unpleasant conditions run the risk of experiencing severe job dissatisfaction and increased hazards. Inadequate lighting, ventilation, exposure to hazardous materials, and a lack of appropriate safety equipment are examples of poor working conditions that compromise employee health and safety and also foster a hostile work environment. This is also supported by Geethika and Chandrika (2015) that the awful nature of physical working conditions may be the source of job dissatisfaction. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors affecting job satisfaction in a public agency in the Federal Territories of Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Job Satisfaction

The comprehensive concept of job satisfaction has attracted a lot of interest from researchers and industry professionals since it is commonly acknowledged as a crucial factor in determining employee happiness, organizational effectiveness, and overall business performance. One of the most important factors in determining individual and organizational results is job satisfaction, which is the degree to which workers find fulfilment and pleasure in their work (Andrade et al., 2019). The concept of job satisfaction has been defined in various ways, each focusing on a certain facet of the construct. According to Locke (Rickless, 2020), one of the definitions of job satisfaction that is most frequently used is "as a positive emotional state that results from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". Furthermore, the most crucial factor in determining an employee's wellbeing is their job satisfaction, according to Ajayi, Asuzu, and Bello (2018). It might be characterized as a person's positive emotional response to their work or the enjoyable state that arises from their work. It includes a variety of elements of the work environment, such as opportunity for development, work-life balance, positive emotional reaction, alignment with values, and contentment with a position of employment.

Herzberg's Theory

First and foremost, the two guiding concepts of Herzberg's theory are the variables that lead to employee job satisfaction which are hygiene (extrinsic variables) and motivation factors (intrinsic variables). Motivational factors include advancement, responsibility, the work itself, recognition, and achievement. On the other hand, hygiene variables include things like pay, salary, interpersonal relationships, physical working environment, job security, and organization policies and administration (Herzberg, 1966).

Working conditions

A broad term that includes a variety of characteristics related to the workplace and the work environment (Saputra & Mahaputra, 2022). Working conditions can be defined as the physical and psychological conditions that workers are exposed to while working. Conditions at work can include everything from the physical workspace to the terms and conditions of employment for an individual. Indeed Editorial Team (2024) has listed 20 elements that can contribute to an employee's working conditions, which are physical environment, working hours and patterns, wages and salary, workload, overtime arrangements, holiday entitlement, employee benefits, support for working parents, Interpersonal relationships, Inclusion and diversity, managerial support, employee assistance programs, communication, training, progression, and development opportunities company culture, disciplinary procedures, the consequences of making a mistake, occupational stress and job security.

Similarly, environmental factors such as air temperature are equally critical to worker job satisfaction. Establishing the ideal temperature for employees is crucial for companies because it creates the ideal atmosphere for maximum productivity, a goal shared by all employers with their workforce. Also, Shafi et al. (2023) identifies a few key elements of working conditions, which include workload, work-life balance, the ability to work comfortably, worker safety, and workplace collaboration. On the other hand, employees may become quickly distracted by their discomfort and attempt to warm up or cool down if the temperature is too high or low (Edwards, 2018). Employees are more likely to feel appreciated and satisfied with their jobs when they work in locations that are safe, tidy, and comfortable.

Interpersonal relationships

The quality of interactions and connections that employees have with their colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates within the workplace (Herzberg, 1966). Strong interpersonal relationships such as when employees feel respected, valued, and supported by their peers and supervisors, make them more likely to experience positive job satisfaction. Damianus, Theogenia and Mirriam (2018) stated that harmonious working relationships are a necessary condition for both management and employee to be happy in the workplace. When an employee cannot get along with their superior or even with other employee, it would be difficult to look forward to going to the office every day. Ramjee (2018) has identified three categories of relationships that exist in the workplace which are social interactions, coworker relationships, and management flexibility. Management flexibility refer to the attempt on the part of management to establish a balance between work and personal or family life. It is not appropriate to confine employees to the office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. without taking into account their unexpected events, especially those pertaining to personal or family concerns. Coworker relationships, on the other hand, refer to pleasant working relationships between coworkers. Within the firm, employees must be allowed to communicate and interact freely with other employees. Last but not least, social relationships are related to group bonding. In this scenario, workers who get along well with one another establish coffee, breakfast, or lunch groups. He then recommends team building as a way to improve such working relationships.

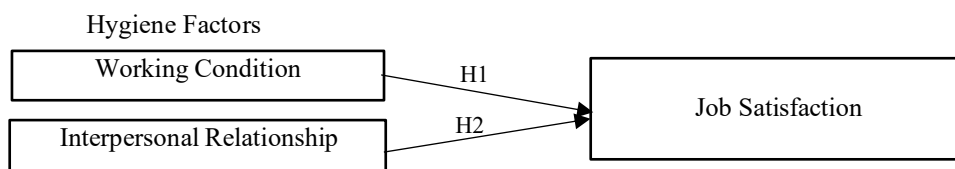


Figure 1: Research Framework of Herzberg's Hygiene Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction

H1: There is relationship between working condition and job satisfaction

H2: There is relationship between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction

3. Methodology

Quantitative approaches have been used in this study for both data collection and analysis. The study uses a descriptive statistical research design and correlation is one of the study's investigation types. The correlation relationship will indicate the relationship between working conditions and interpersonal relationship job satisfactions. Convenience sampling has been chosen as the method for this study consisting of 138 participants at a public agency in the Federal Territories of Malaysia. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part is the demographic profile of the respondents, while the second part is composed of several sections concerning independent variables (hygiene factors) and dependent variables (job satisfaction). This questionnaire used the first part of the nominal scale and the second part of the questionnaire used Likert five points from 1 = strongly disagreed to 5 = strongly agreed.

4. Finding

Table1: Demographic Profile of Gender

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Male	49	35.5
Female	89	64.5
Total	138	100

The frequency and proportion of respondents' genders are displayed in Table 1. Based on the data, 49 male respondents (35.5%) and 89 female respondents (64.5%) made up the sample of 138 respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Age

Age	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
30 years old and below	43	31.2
31-40 years old	72	52.2
41-50 years old	13	9.4
51 years old and above	10	7.2
Total	138	100

Table 2 indicates that, out of 138 respondents, there were 43 respondents with the range age of 30 years old and below with the 31.2%; 72 respondents with the range age of 31-40 years old with the 52.2%; 13 respondents with the range age of 41-50 years old with the 9.4% and 10 respondents with the range age of 51 years old and above with the 7.2%.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondent's Length of Services

Service	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Below 1 years	17	12.3
1-5 years	44	31.9
6-10 years	25	18.1
11-15 years	32	23.2
16-20 years	10	7.2
21 years and above	10	7.2

Total	138	100
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Table 3 indicates that only 17 respondents with the 12.3% contribute below 1 year of services; 44 respondents with the 31.9% contribute 1-5 years of services, 25 respondents with the 18.1% contribute 6-10 years of services, 32 respondents with the 23.2% contribute 11-15 years of services, 10 respondents with the 7.2% contribute 16-20 years of services and respectively with 21 years and above of services.

Table 4: Demographic Profile of Highest Education

Education	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Masters	16	11.6
Degree	58	42
Diploma	42	30.4
STPM/Asasi/Matrikulasi	4	2.9
SPM/PMR	18	13
Total	138	100

Based on the data presented in Table 4, it can be observed that, of the 138 respondents, 16 have a master's degree (11.6%), 58 have a degree (42%), 42 have a diploma (30.4%), 4 have a STPM/Asasi/Matrikulasi education (2.9%) and 18 have an SPM/PMR education (13%).

Normality Test

In this study, the values of skewness and kurtosis will serve as benchmarks to assess the normality of the data distribution. The outcomes of every variable, including working conditions, interpersonal relationships, and job satisfaction, will be covered in this normality test.

Table 5: Analysis of Normality

Variables	Skewness	Kurtosis	Z-Score Skewness	Z-Score Kurtosis
Job Satisfaction	0.048	0.702	0.23	1.71
Working Condition	0.187	-0.109	0.90	-0.26
Interpersonal Relations	-0.432	0.853	-2.09	2.08

The normality test results for each variable are displayed in Table 5. Z-score skewness and Z-score kurtosis of job satisfaction are respectively 0.23 and 1.71 which is between the range of ± 3 . Z-score skewness and Z-score kurtosis of the working condition are respectively 0.90 and -0.26 which is still between the range of ± 3 . Z-score skewness and Z-score kurtosis of interpersonal relations are respectively -2.09 and 2.08 which is between the range of ± 3 . As a result, the measurement value proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) indicates that the data is normally distributed.

Reliability Test

To obtain precise and consistent findings for every variable, a reliability test was carried out to assess the internal consistency of each instrument in the questionnaire. Salkind (2015) criteria, which offer five degrees of dependability range, were employed by the researcher. The results are displayed in the Table 6:

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha Measurement Value

Reliability	Description
0.80 - 1.00	Very High
0.60 - 0.80	High
0.40 - 0.60	Reliable
0.20 - 0.40	Low
0.00 - 0.20	Very Low

Table 7: Analysis of Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Job Satisfaction	0.867	8
Working Condition	0.822	6
Interpersonal Relations	0.918	6

According to Table 7, the Cronbach's alpha value for job satisfaction, working conditions and interpersonal relations respectively was 0.867, 0.822 and 0.918, indicating that all variables fall within the very high reliability range.

Descriptive Statistic

In this study, descriptive statistics were used to summarize and organize the data so they could be easily understood.

Table 8: Analysis of Descriptive Overall Means

Variables	Means	Standard Deviation
Interpersonal Relations	4.14	.573
Working Condition	4.01	.509
Job Satisfaction	3.92	.507

Table 8 shows the results of the overall means for 3 variables which are interpersonal relations, working conditions and job satisfaction as dependent variables. Sorting the values by highest to lowest means was done. The overall means for interpersonal relations and working condition is respectively (M=4.14, SD=.573) and (M =4.01, SD=.509). The overall means for job satisfaction as dependent variables was (M=3.92, SD =.507).

In conclusion, a mean score of 4.14 for interpersonal relations shows that respondents strongly believe that their interactions and relationships with others are going well. According to this score, most people think that their interpersonal relationships are "good" to "very good," which indicates that they are highly satisfied with how well they communicate, work together, and form social bonds with their peers and superiors. Meanwhile, a mean score of 4.01 for working conditions shows that respondents' perceptions of their workplace are largely favourable. This rating implies that respondents consider their working environments to be "good," indicating contentment with elements including the physical conditions, the hardware and software, the safety, and a healthy atmosphere. Lastly, A mean job satisfaction score of 3.92 suggests that respondents view their overall job satisfaction as generally favourable, although with a slightly

more cautious perspective. With a leaning toward "good," this score indicates that employees consider their job satisfaction to be satisfactory, although lower than in the other areas evaluated.

Correlation

Guidelines and the Table 9 were used by the researchers in this study to show how the factors related to one another (Sundram et al., 2016).

Table 9: Table of Correlation and Strength

R	Strength of Relationship	Direction of Relationship
Exactly +1	A perfect uphill linear relationship	Positive Relationship
+0.90 → +0.99	Very strong uphill linear relationship	Positive Relationship
+0.70 → +0.89	A strong uphill linear relationship	Positive Relationship
+0.40 → +0.69	A moderate uphill linear relationship	Positive Relationship
+0.20 → +0.39	A weak uphill linear relationship	Positive Relationship
+0.01 → +0.19	A very weak uphill linear relationship	Positive Relationship

Table 10: Analysis of Correlation

	Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Job Satisfaction	Working Condition	.605**	.000
	Interpersonal Relations	.583**	.000

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

H1: There is relationship between working condition and job satisfaction

The hypothesis asserts that working conditions and job satisfaction have a positive relationship. According to Razak, Ma'amor, and Hassan (2016), companies need to provide a healthy work environment for employees to guarantee that they have a pleasant working condition, which can enhance job satisfaction and assure higher-quality work from employees. Additionally, for employees who truly value a comfortable and welcoming workplace, working circumstances will have an impact on job satisfaction (Haliza Mohd Said et al, 2017). Table 10 shows that there is a moderate uphill linear relationship in which there is a relationship between working conditions and job satisfaction ($r=.605$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, H1 is accepted.

H2: There is relationship between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction

Satisfactory interpersonal relationships at work, particularly those with superiors, are a major determinant in the overall level of job satisfaction (Lachowski et al., 2018). These relationships can exist between employees in comparable positions as well as between peers. Table 10 shows that there is a moderate uphill linear relationship in which there is a relationship between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction ($r=.583$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, H2 is accepted.

5. Conclusion

Finding out whether there is a relationship between job satisfaction and working conditions in this study is a very significant research subject. It should be mentioned that the Pearson correlation result suggests a moderate uphill linear relationship. Therefore, it could be summarized that there is a relationship between working conditions and job satisfaction. When an employee has good working conditions that are provided by an employer, their job satisfaction will increase. Wamunyu (2016), who contends that employment circumstances would affect job satisfaction because employees care about a comfortable physical work environment, may lend validity to this. In the meanwhile, the research question examines if this study finds a connection between interpersonal relations and job satisfaction. It suggests that there is a moderate uphill linear relationship. Therefore, job satisfaction directly increases when individuals have positive interpersonal relations with others in the organization. The general level of job satisfaction as well as the health of employees are significantly impacted by the quality of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, assessing the level of satisfaction with social relationships at work and determining the factors that affect it can serve as the foundation for taking preventative measures to avoid social conflicts and adverse health effects (Lachowski et al, 2018).

Beyond internal organizational concerns, this study offers broader implications for economic development policy and human capital strategy in emerging economies. As governments and agencies seek to improve service quality, attract foreign investment, and enhance national productivity, ensuring job satisfaction in both public and private sectors becomes foundational. Improved interpersonal relationships and working conditions in government-linked bodies, for example, can serve as benchmarks for SMEs aiming to professionalize operations and reduce staff turnover. The findings also underscore the importance of psychological safety and team cohesion in cultivating resilient, innovative workforces aligned with the goals of Industry 4.0 and sustainable development. For Malaysia and similar economies, fostering such work environments strengthens the business ecosystem by supporting administrative innovation, cross-sector talent mobility, and institutional credibility in international engagements.

In addition, an employee needs the most recent hardware, software, and tools to perform their job well and enjoy a comfortable working environment. This is due to the fact that all employees would want to operate in environments that provide them with increased physical comfort and convenience (Adede et al., 2017). These are also consistent with prior research, which this study highlights the significant role of teamwork in enhancing job satisfaction. Shafi et al. (2023), also identified teamwork as a leading contributor to job satisfaction, emphasizing its role in strengthening workplace relationships. Effective teamwork relies on positive interpersonal dynamics such as communication, conflict resolution, and shared goals.

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Conflict of interest statement

No conflict of interest.

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