

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN JOB SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY AT MOSTI

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ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction can be described as a pleasurable moment enjoyed by any employee in conducting his or her job; shown by his or her attitude. It is imperative for public organisations to acknowledge this issue since it will affect the employees' performance and productivity. Job satisfaction can happen on any employee, regardless of gender. Overall, there is no significant difference between male and female officers in MOSTI in terms of their job satisfaction. Nevertheless, these officers have provided contrary perspectives on the facets that have influence their happiness at their workplace. This paper will discuss the gender differences in job satisfaction among the officers in MOSTI, Putrajaya, via looking at the overall perspectives, as well as at the facets of job satisfaction.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, facets of job satisfaction, gender differences, Professional and Managerial group, Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Short Form)

INTRODUCTION

Happiness at the workplace is very crucial in today's world. Nowadays, employees tend to make their offices their second home. Civil servants need to work harder to please the public as their customers. Therefore, it is necessary to look into the civil servants' enjoyment at their workplace, as it may affect their performance and productivity, especially in front of the public.

Job satisfaction can be defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job, an affective reaction to one's job, and an attitude towards one's job (Marzabadi and Tarkhorani, 2007). Robbins (2003) defined job satisfaction as an individual's general attitude towards his or her job. Vechhio (2002) described job satisfaction as "one's thinking and feeling (that is, one's attitude) toward work". Marzabadi and Tarkhorani (2007) argued that job satisfaction is more than just about feeling and thinking, as it also covers beliefs and behaviours that shape their attitude. In short, job satisfaction is about employees' mind-set and emotions at their work. Job satisfaction occurs to anybody who is working, regardless of gender. Nevertheless, the prevalence might be different in terms of the facets for men and women.

A number of studies reviewed show a mixture of results when assessing the difference between working men and women in terms of job satisfaction. The facets or factors that build job satisfaction have been proven to produce a significant difference between male and female employees (see Jung, Jae Moon and Sung, 2007; Kim, 2005; Garcia-Bernal *et al.*, 2006; Haviland, 2004; Kiefl and Kler, 2007; Mason, 2001; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2003).

However, in terms of overall job satisfaction, contrary views have been explained by Soleman (2005) and Rashed (2006). Mirza (1996), Santhapparaj and Syed (2005) shared the same views; gender is not significantly related to job satisfaction. A significant difference does not necessarily dominate this situation, even though the number of studies supporting this idea outnumbered its opposition. Moreover, both studies have been conducted in the Middle East (Israel and Kuwait to be precise) and Malaysia. The gap between the west (pro-significant difference) and the east (non-pro difference) studies, more or less, affects the stand for Malaysian public sector i.e. which studies has been prevailed among in this country, the east side or the west side.

A Preview on Gender and Job Satisfaction

Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2003) mentioned that on average, women tend to have a higher level of satisfaction, as compared to men. In their study, the score for women's satisfaction in 1991 was 5.711, while those for men were 5.309. After ten years, in the same study, higher satisfaction score is still owned by women (5.411 as opposed to 5.206). Here, the women's dominance in job satisfaction score is still relevant, although the gap between the genders is getting smaller. Generally, both have illustrated a downward trend of job satisfaction, and again, it is not obvious for men.

Working men and women do have different perception in determining the facets that make them feel satisfied. Some female civil servants in Korea are found to be satisfied in terms of their wages and work environment. It may happen if they are comparing themselves to unemployed women, rather than their male colleagues. As for the male civil servants, higher positions in the managerial level makes them more satisfied (Jung, Jae Moon and Sung, 2007).

In the same environment, Kim (2005) found quite similar results out of 5,714 respondents in Seoul Metropolitan Government. Women are more satisfied with their pay, promotion, job security, social reputation, worth in providing public service and the work itself. However, this study was done further on two main points that determine their satisfaction, i.e. important motive in worklife and work orientation. For the motive, women are more concerned on their worth to provide public service, while men are focused on promotion, reputation and prestige. Work orientation for women is about valuing intrinsic rewards, while for men are not. Kim (2005) also outlined the reasons why women in the Korean public sector are more satisfied. They are due to the comparisons made upon themselves with the women who are working in private sector; and the different values held by women and men in terms of job characteristics.

In another study by Garcia-Bernal *et al.* (2006), a significant difference in job satisfaction has been occurred in terms of interpersonal relations and work conditions. Men are linked with the former, while women are correlated with the latter. Nonetheless, both have the same facets that are satisfying, which are personal development of the job and economic aspects. In terms of the arrangement of the factors for job satisfaction, gender has no effect at all.

One country may have different factors that contribute to the level of job satisfaction between men and women when compared to another. The country's nature on gender's treatment can be a possible cause of the difference. Haviland (2004) has compared three

different nations in the assessment of gender-effect on job satisfaction. The involved nations are the US, Sweden (assumed as female-friendly nation) and Japan (female-unfriendly country). The difference of job satisfaction between genders in the US prevailed despite work values and job rewards. These two factors, however, influenced the level of job satisfaction in Sweden and Japan.

In terms of work values, the women of the US (for 1998 sample) and Sweden are higher if they are compared to men, while women in Japan have lower values. As for the job rewards, women in the US are satisfied in having interesting job or a job that helps others/society, more than men. The prevalence is for 1989 and 1998 samples, where both samples have shown to have no difference. The similar result occurs for Sweden, where promotion is one of the facets that determine their job satisfaction. A different situation occurred in Japan, where men are more exposed to rewards rather than women i.e. they know which job will provide them with a potential for promotion (Haviland, 2004).

Wages, job security, and hours worked are part of the facets in determining job satisfaction among the employees. Kiefl and Kler (2007) used these facets in their study, and found out that only one facet has not brought any difference between men and women, which is the wages. Both are found to be satisfied with this facet. Satisfaction with job security seems to be different in terms of longer working hours (for male) and higher hourly wages (for female). The male employees tend to be less satisfied with their hours worked rather than the females, since the males are the part-time employees, and they are interested in having full-time job, while the female employees are comfortable with their current positions.

In a study conducted by Mason (2001), the difference between male and female employees on overall job satisfaction exists, where the managerial women are happier at the workplace rather than managerial men (1.66 as opposed to 1.61 in terms of the mean score). The facets of satisfaction are also different, where the male managers are more satisfied in terms of comparable pay, fair treatment, autonomy and job interest, whilst the female managers feel happier with their career advancement, feedback from the agents, external equity pay, co-workers and performance.

Nevertheless, there are some studies that are unable to find the correlation between overall job satisfaction and gender. In an observation conducted by Soleman (2005), it is discovered that there is no significant difference between gender and overall job satisfaction. Conversely, a significant difference between male and female social workers is obvious in terms of opportunities for promotion ($F = 9.42, p = 0.002$), workload ($F = 6.06, p = 0.015$) and quality of supervision ($F = 4.22, p = 0.041$). Rashed (2006) also shares the same view; there is no significant difference between male and female civil servants, regardless of high satisfaction score for the males as opposed to the females (3.4 against 3.32). Here, the significance prevailed only in terms of the facets, and not on overall job satisfaction. Moreover, male and female employees have the same level of happiness.

In another study by Mirza (1996), neither gender nor marital status has been correlated to job satisfaction. Santhapparaj and Syed (2005) found that there is no significant relationship between gender and job satisfaction ($p = 0.099$). However, female respondents are more satisfied with pay, promotion, fringe benefits, working conditions and teaching support. Generally, they have enjoyed their working environment and have low expectation in terms of wages and career advancement.

In a nutshell, the level of job satisfaction is different between male and female employees. Different factors have different impacts on their views and perspective. Generally, men are more satisfied with physical rewards, such as promotion, while working women are more concerned with inner values in conducting their jobs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Respondents' Profile

The structure of personnel at MOSTI consists of two main groups; Managerial and Professional group and Support group. Nonetheless, this study focuses on the Managerial and Professional group, as they are the mediators between top and lower level of management. Table 1.1 signifies the division of the Managerial and Professional group in terms of gender and the grade of the post held.

Table 1.1
Number of Employees for Managerial and Professional group, in accordance to Gender and Post held

| Grade of the Post | Gender | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| | Male | Female |
| Grade 54 | 17 | 5 |
| Grade 52 | 18 | 6 |
| Grade 48 | 15 | 14 |
| Grade 44 / 41 (Administrative and Diplomatic Officer) | 33 | 24 |
| Grade 44 | 4 | 7 |
| Grade 41 | 7 | 24 |
| Grade 41 / 44 / 48 (Senior Private Secretary of Deputy Minister) | 1 | - |
| Grade 41 / 44 / 48 (Press Secretary) | - | 1 |
| Total | 95 | 81 |

Source: Human Resource Department, MOSTI (2009)

From the total of 176 employees in this group, 11 were selected for the pilot test. After deducting the pilot test respondents, the total employees left were 165. This is to reduce the priming effect. Everyone in the Managerial and Professional level was selected as respondents in this study. Additionally, this study is a cross-sectional study, as the data is collected just once via self-administered questionnaire.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The job satisfaction questionnaire is adapted from Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (short form). This questionnaire was developed by Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1967). Back-translation technique has been used in order to convert the language used i.e. from English to Malay language. The Malay version was verified by faculty members from the Faculty of Language in a local university.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 11.0 is used to process the data that have been collected. An independent T-test was performed in order to test the difference between male and female officers in MOSTI, in terms of overall job satisfaction, frequency to rectify the facets of job satisfaction, and mean to rank the five most prevailed facets of job satisfaction for both officers in MOSTI

GENDER AND JOB SATISFACTION AT MOSTI: THE RESULT

Since this is a population study, the questionnaire has been distributed to 165 respondents, starting from Grade 41. However, only 84 respondents responded to the questionnaire, representing 51% of total population. Here, the majority who have answered the questionnaire are female officers (56% = 47 respondents).

Through the investigation made, it has been found that there is no significant different between male and female officers in MOSTI in terms of the overall job satisfaction ($p = 0.392$). Even so, male officers are more satisfied than the females (mean score of 3.8662, as opposed to 3.8) (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2
The Difference between Male and Female on Job Satisfaction

| Mean | | t-Test for Equality of Means | | |
|--------|--------|------------------------------|----|-----------------|
| Male | Female | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| 3.8662 | 3.8000 | 0.861 | 81 | 0.392 |

The result of this study is in converse with some of the studies viewed before. The prevalence of a significant difference between male and female in terms of their level of satisfaction is acknowledged (Jung, Jae Moon and Sung, 2007; Kim, 2005; Garcia-Bernal *et al.*, 2005; Haviland, 2004; Kiefl and Kler, 2007; Mason, 2004; Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza, 2003). On the other hand, Rashed (2006) and Mirza (1996) have stated that there is no difference between male and female civil servants in Kuwait and Malaysia respectively, illustrating that both male and female have a similar level of satisfaction. Therefore, the level of overall job satisfaction among the officers in MOSTI is similar and this has strengthened the evidence found by Rashed (2006) and Mirza (1996).

Additionally, the result attained has opposed the finding established by Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2003), where male officers in MOSTI felt happier at their workplace rather

than the females. However, the gap of happiness between male and female officers at MOSTI is smaller (mean = 0.0662) if compared to the previous study by Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2003) (i.e. mean = 0.205). This has shown that the female officers' enjoyment of working is almost at par with the male officers.

Most of the previous studies also mentioned about the gender differences in facets of job satisfaction. Female employees tend to have higher job satisfaction in terms of working conditions (Jung, Jae Moon and Sung, 2007; Garcia-Bernal *et al.*, 2005; Santhapparaj and Syed, 2005), worth in providing services or ability to help others (Kim, 2005; Haviland, 2004), the work itself (Kim, 2005; Haviland, 2004; Santhapparaj and Syed, 2005), job security (Kim, 2005; Kiefl and Kler, 2007), pay (Jung, Jae Moon and Sung, 2007; Kim, 2005; Mason, 2001; Santhapparaj and Syed, 2005), promotion (Haviland, 2004; Mason, 2001; Santhapparaj and Syed, 2005), performance and co-workers (Mason, 2001), as well as fringe benefits (Santhapparaj and Syed, 2005).

All these findings are prevailed in the facets of job satisfaction among male and female officers in MOSTI. However, neither male nor female officers dominated all the facets, since both of them shared equally in determining the things that make them satisfied (i.e. 10 facets for the male officers, 10 for the females). In addition, the result attained is consistent with the earlier studies, where the female officers are more satisfied with their job, social reputation, ability to help others, job security, wages, advancement, interpersonal relations and working environment. The females are also happier with their ability to use their own judgment and method to conduct their job. Table 1.3 demonstrates the evidence.

Table 1.3
The Difference between Male and Female Officers on Facets of Job Satisfaction (in %)

| Facets of Job Satisfaction | Male | | | Female | | |
|--|------|------|------|--------|------|------|
| | DS | N | S | DS | N | S |
| Being able to keep busy all the time. | 18.9 | 24.3 | 56.8 | 21.3 | 23.4 | 55.3 |
| The chance to work alone on the job. | 8.1 | 5.4 | 86.5 | 4.3 | 10.6 | 85.1 |
| The chance to do different things from time to time. | 8.1 | 16.2 | 75.7 | 13 | 4.3 | 82.6 |
| The chance to be somebody in the community. | 5.4 | 21.6 | 73.0 | 6.4 | 10.6 | 83.0 |
| The way my boss handles his/her workers. | 8.1 | 13.5 | 78.4 | 14.9 | 19.1 | 66.1 |
| The competence of my supervisor in making decision. | 5.4 | 13.5 | 81.1 | 8.5 | 14.9 | 70.2 |
| Being able to do things that don't go against my conscience. | - | 13.5 | 86.5 | 8.5 | 14.9 | 76.6 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| The way my job provides for a steady employment. | 5.4 | 13.5 | 81.1 | 8.5 | 6.4 | 85.1 |
| The chance to do things for other people. | 2.7 | 5.4 | 91.9 | - | 4.3 | 95.7 |
| The chance to tell people what to do. | 2.7 | 10.8 | 86.5 | 6.4 | 12.8 | 80.9 |
| The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities. | 5.4 | 10.8 | 83.8 | 14.9 | 8.5 | 76.6 |
| The way company policies are put into practice. | 8.1 | 10.8 | 81.1 | 12.8 | 10.6 | 76.6 |
| My pay and the amount of work I do. | 13.5 | 13.5 | 73.0 | 4.3 | 10.6 | 85.1 |
| The chances for advancement on this job. | 5.4 | 8.1 | 86.5 | 8.5 | 2.1 | 89.4 |
| The freedom to use my judgment. | 10.8 | 13.5 | 75.7 | 12.8 | 4.3 | 83.0 |
| The chance to try my own methods of doing the job. | 10.8 | 13.5 | 75.7 | 12.8 | 8.5 | 78.7 |

*** Note: DS – Dissatisfied, N – Neutral, S – Satisfied

Table 1.3 (Continued)
The Difference between Male and Female Officers on Facets of Job Satisfaction (in %)

| Facets of Job Satisfaction | Male | | | Female | | |
|--|------|------|------|--------|------|------|
| | DS | N | S | DS | N | S |
| The working conditions. | 10.8 | 5.4 | 83.8 | 10.6 | - | 89.4 |
| The way co-workers get along with each other. | 2.7 | 5.4 | 91.9 | 4.3 | - | 95.7 |
| The praise I get for doing a good job. | - | 24.3 | 75.7 | 4.3 | 31.9 | 63.8 |
| The feeling of accomplishment I get for the job. | 2.7 | 2.7 | 94.6 | 6.4 | 4.3 | 89.4 |

** Note: DS – Dissatisfied, N – Neutral, S – Satisfied

In terms of the rank of job satisfaction's facets, a slight difference has been discovered when compared to the percentage attained previously. Both the officers have shared the same facets, although the rank for these facets is different (i.e. social service, accomplishment, working condition and co-workers to be exact). In addition, it seems that male officers are highly satisfied when they are able to help other people, of which the ability to help others provides the highest value (mean = 3.05), as opposed to other facets. As for the females, the highest score for satisfaction refers to the way co-workers get along with each other (mean = 3.09) (Table 1.4). It seems that the male officers at MOSTI are also concerned about their colleagues, and the interpersonal relations are also crucial for the female officers.

Table 1.4
Top Five Facets of Job Satisfaction (Male and Female)

| The Rank on Job Satisfaction | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Male / Facets | Mean | Female / Facets | Mean |
| Social service (Q. 9) | 3.05 | Co-workers (Q. 18) | 3.09 |
| Accomplishment (Q. 20) | 3.03 | Social service (Q. 9) | 3.04 |
| Co-workers (Q. 18) | 3.03 | Working condition (Q. 17) | 3.02 |
| Working condition (Q. 17) | 2.95 | Career advancement (Q. 14) | 2.91 |
| Job security (Q. 8) | 2.92 | Accomplishment (Q. 20) | 2.91 |

CONCLUSION

Generally, gender and overall job satisfaction is interrelated with one another. Nonetheless, the gender difference on overall job satisfaction is not obvious, since there is no significance difference attained via the analysis made. Both male and female officers in MOSTI have shared the same number of facets that make them happy at work, even though they have different perceptions on them.

The contradiction between findings of previous studies is prevailed, in terms of the places where the studies have been conducted. The current study clarifies which side of the studies abounds in Malaysia, especially in the public sector. Following the footsteps of Israel and Kuwait, there is no significant difference between male and female officers in the level of job satisfaction, and the hypothesis made has been incorrect. It seems that they may have shared the same perception on their happiness at the workplace. Nonetheless, their perceptions on the factors that make them satisfied are dissimilar.

Apart from previous studies, this study provides additional knowledge with regards to gender studies on job satisfaction. Individually, it can help the officers to assess themselves more thoroughly and acknowledge the different opinions and views of the others. The organisation i.e. MOSTI is partly responsible in helping the officers to achieve their preferable state of satisfaction. Thus, this study allows MOSTI to arrange or create some programmes to heighten their satisfaction at the workplace. As a final point, the programme arranged need to cover all of the officers, regardless of gender.

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