

Factors Affecting Lecturer Job Satisfaction: Case of Vietnam Universities

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Abstract

This paper studies factors affecting lecturer job satisfaction in some universities in Vietnam. The study uses data collected from the questionnaire survey with 167 responses. As a result, three out of six variables (including Salary and Fringe benefits, Recognition, and Communion) have influential relationship with lecturer job satisfaction in the linear regression analysis. The paper also gives some recommendations for the universities to improve its policies and working environment to enhance lecturer job satisfaction level.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, Lecturer satisfaction, Vietnam

1. Research Background

Improving customer satisfaction is one of leading interests of every organization. The more customers feel satisfied with service or product, the more benefits the organization will gain. However, it is said that internal customers (employees) are more important than external customers to the success of companies.

Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) estimated that about 7,855 articles have examined the topic of job satisfaction during the period of 1976 – 2000. Many authors have researched on employee satisfaction or customer satisfaction in different sectors.

In higher education, lecturer job satisfaction is the most significant aspect and is important for the improvement and effectiveness of the higher education system. The ability to retain lecturers is becoming a challenging issue for all higher education institutions (Tack and Patitu, 2000) and lecturer retention is dependent upon lecturer job satisfaction. In many developing countries, the teaching force is mired in bureaucracies and centralized education systems that support neither the effective performance of teachers nor their career progression in their job (VSO, 2002). If these faculty members are not satisfied with their profession, they will not be able to increase their performance and will not contribute to higher education. Thus, increase in job satisfaction could lead to higher effectiveness in performance, hence, employees are less likely to leave the organization.

Because lecturers are biggest human capital resource of a university, understanding factors that contribute to lecturer job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) is essential to improving the information base needed to support a successful educational system. Satisfaction with teaching

as a career is an important policy issue since it is associated with teacher effectiveness, which ultimately affects student achievement (Ashton and Webb, 1986). Highly satisfied lecturers will generally be innovative and motivated to establish and maintain an environment conducive to learning (Truell, Price and Joyner, 1998).

Several studies have examined the job satisfaction of academic members in higher education in developed countries; however, evidence from developing countries like Vietnam is seriously lacking. This paper studies lecturer job satisfaction in higher education, focusing on case of some Vietnam universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of employee satisfaction

Employee satisfaction or job satisfaction is defined in many different ways. Employee satisfaction is the terminology used to describe whether employees are happy, contented and fulfilling their desires and needs at work. Many measures purport that employee satisfaction is a factor in employee motivation, employee goal achievement, and positive employee morale in the workplace (Heathfield, 2016).

In the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, employee satisfaction is defined as the happiness that workers feel when they are satisfied with their job and work conditions, used as one way of measuring a company's success (Dictionary, 2016). In Luddy (2005) research, job satisfaction is as the emotional reactions and feelings towards different aspects at work of the staff, which emphasize the causes of job satisfaction including job title, level of supervision, relationships with colleagues, job content, the structure of the organization, and so on. Job satisfaction is an attitude towards ones' job and it is basically the affective, cognitive and evaluative actions towards their job (Baron, Greenberg and DeNisi, 1983).

Due to the popularity of job satisfaction within the field of occupational and organizational psychology (Spector, 1997), various researchers and practitioners have provided their own definitions of what job satisfaction is. Nonetheless, the two most common definitions describe job satisfaction as: "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values (Dunnette, 1976); and "the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs".

In general, most definitions cover the affective feeling an employee has towards their job. This could be the job in general or their attitudes towards specific aspects of it, such as: their colleagues, salary, or working conditions (Thompson and Phua, 2012). In this research, job satisfaction or employee satisfaction is the general psychological state and attitude of employees towards their work.

2.2. Employee job satisfaction

There are different factors affecting job satisfaction in the literature. The Job Descriptive Index – JDI (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969) refers to five job aspects including type of work, salary, the opportunities for promotion, the supervision, and the co-workers. The INDSALES assesses satisfaction with customer, promotion, salary, company working policy, supervisor, and co-workers (Churchill, Ford and Walker, 1974). The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire -

MSQ (Weiss, 1966) consists of twenty dimensions of the job measuring satisfaction: ability utilization, achievement, activity, advancement, authority, company policies and practices, compensation, co-workers, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, responsibility, security, social service, social status, supervision-human relations, supervision-technical, variety, and working conditions. Spector (1997) lists common dimensions affecting job satisfaction: Appreciation, Communication, Coworkers, Fringe benefits, Job conditions, Nature of the work, Organization, Personal growth, Policies and procedures, Promotion opportunities, Recognition, Security, and Supervision.

Other studies of higher education have used different factors to measure job satisfaction. For example, Oshagbemi (1997) employed eight dimensions to measure satisfaction with respect to different components of university teachers' overall job satisfaction in the United Kingdom: teaching, research, administration and management, compensation, promotions, supervisor behavior; behavior of co-workers and working conditions. Küskü (2003) measured faculty job satisfaction in Turkey using seven determinants: general satisfaction, management satisfaction, colleagues, other working group satisfaction, job satisfaction, work environment, and salary satisfaction. Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) measured faculty job satisfaction in Uganda using nine general factors: teaching, research, governance, remuneration, opportunities for promotion, supervision, co-worker's behavior, working environment, and overall conditions. Chen et al. (2006) measured faculty job satisfaction in a private university in China using six factors: organization vision, respect, result feedback and motivation, management system, compensation and benefits and work environment.

According to Velnampy and Sivesan (2012), job satisfaction can be determined by ten variable including payment, happy to work, promotion, subordinate supervisor relationship, direction of supervisor, achievement, appreciation, participation in decision-making, proud to work and enough description. In the study of Ali Ahmad et al. (2014) on the relationship between human resource management practices and job satisfaction among faculty members of both public and private universities in Pakistan, the determinants of job satisfaction comprise training and development, performance appraisal, career planning, and compensation.

2.3 Research framework and hypotheses

Based on the literature review, the six following dimensions are used for analysing job satisfaction in this research, including salary and fringe benefits, promotion and contingent rewards, supervision, operating procedures, co-workers, and communication. These dimensions are Spector (1997) dimensions with some combination and changes for being suitable with Vietnam context.

Table 1: Dimensions of job satisfaction based on Spector (1997) research

Dimensions	Brief description
Salary and Fringe benefits	Satisfaction with salary, salary increase and monetary and non-monetary fringe benefits
Promotion and Contingent rewards (recognition)	Satisfaction with promotion opportunities, appreciation, recognition and rewards for good work
Supervision	Satisfaction with person's direct supervision
Operating procedures	Satisfaction with operating policies and procedures
Co-workers	Satisfaction with co-workers
Communication	Satisfaction with communication within the organization

In view of the apparent relationship between job satisfaction and its impact factors, this paper proposes following hypotheses:

Salary and Fringe benefits

Although money is important to individuals, research has shown that individuals earn more does not mean they feel satisfied in their jobs (Spector, 2008). High salary is necessary, however, the more important factor is the fairness of paying salary that has strong correlation with job satisfaction and employee motivation. Spector (1997) divides fringe benefits into monetary and non-monetary benefits. Increasing intrinsic and extrinsic fringe benefits that attract an employee's attention may subsequently increase their performance and induce higher levels of organizational commitment (Suliman and Iles, 2000). In Vietnam, we combine these two dimensions into one because Vietnamese employee seems to care more about the total benefits, not only salary. This is specially true for people working in public education institutions.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a *positive* relationship between 'salary and fringe benefits' and lecturer job satisfaction.

Recognition

Perceptions of fairness are important determinants of people's behavior and reactions to work (Spector, 2008). According to Martins and Coetzee (2007), employee motivation and organizational culture are affected by how an employee's needs and objectives are integrated with the needs and objectives of the organization. Promotions provide opportunities for personal growth, more responsibilities and increased social status (Robbins, 1993). Job satisfaction is likely to be experienced by individuals who perceive promotional opportunities to be fair (Robbins, 1993; Spector, 1997).

Employee dissatisfaction may result if an employee perceives that their efforts are not recognized or that their rewards are not equitable, tied to their performance or tailored to their needs (Robbins, 1993). Contingent rewards support the reinforcement theory of motivation, in terms of which performance-relevant behaviors will increase in frequency if rewarded (Spector, 2008). In this research we combine this two factors into one called Recognition

Hypothesis 2 (H2): There is a *positive* relationship between Recognition and lecturer job satisfaction.

Relationship with supervisors

A direct supervisor's behavior is also a determinant of job satisfaction (Spector, 1997). Employee satisfaction increases when the direct supervisor is understanding, friendly, offers praise for good performance, listens to employees' opinions and shows personal interest in them (Robbins, 1993). So, hypothesis 3 is proposed.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): There is a *positive* relationship between relationship with supervisors and lecturer job satisfaction.

Relationship with colleagues

Having friendly and supportive co-workers leads to increased job satisfaction (Robbins, 1993). An employee's coworkers, the groups they belong to, and the culture to which an individual is exposed all have the potential to influence job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): There is a *positive* relationship between relationship with co-workers and lecturer job satisfaction.

Operating Procedures

Operational procedures include all of regulations, rules, procedures and requirements in work with which employees have to comply. The more transparent, simple the work is, the more employees feel satisfied (Spector, 1997).

Hypothesis 5 (H5): There is a *positive* relationship between operating procedures and lecturer job satisfaction.

Communication

The formation of specific goals, feedback on progress towards these goals, and reinforcement of desired behavior all stimulate motivation and require communication. The fewer distortions, ambiguities, and incongruities occurring in communication within organizations, the more satisfied employees will feel with regard to their work (Robbins, 1993).

Hypothesis 6 (H6): There is a *positive* relationship between communication and lecturer job satisfaction.

3. Research Method

A questionnaire was developed based on Spector's research (1997) of the influential factors of job satisfaction with some small modifications for the questionnaire to be suitable with education field in Vietnam. The structure of the questionnaire survey includes two parts: Part 1 with demographic information, Part 2: Lecturer job satisfaction. A five-point Likert-type scale was applied to measure items used in the questionnaire developed for this study.

This scale includes 37 items representing six influential dimensions affecting employee satisfaction, namely Salary and Fringe benefits (7 items), Recognition (8 items), relationship with colleagues (4 items), relationship with supervisors (4 items), operating procedures (4

items), and communication (5 items); and five items representing overall satisfaction of lecturer job satisfaction.

A self-administered questionnaire survey was created to collect empirical data from faculties in the universities in Hanoi. An online survey was created and conveniently sent to email addresses of universities' lecturers (about 400 email addresses). Finally, 170 responses were received. Of which, 167 responses can be used for further study after data screening, which represents about 41.7 % response rate.

4. Research Results

167 responses were received which represents about 41.7 % response rate. This is a normal rate of response for the survey. There are 41.7 % male and 58.3 % female participated in the survey.

The purpose of reliability analysis is to test the reliability of the elements and scale consistent with the questions provided. In this study Cronbach's α is used to test the reliability of factors which are used to test the hypotheses.

Table 2: Reliability Test with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of factors

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Item
Recognition	.924	10
Relationship with co-workers	.892	8
Relationship with supervisors	.863	4
Salary and Fringe benefits	.898	4
Operating Procedures	.853	4
Communication	.778	4
Overall lecturer job satisfaction	0.71	5

From Table 2, all Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of each dimension are bigger than 0.7. Then data are continued to be used to test hypotheses with correlation analysis and linear regression.

Exploratory Factor Analysis was done for this research. All factor loadings of items were bigger than 0.5. So, all the items will be used for further analysis. In addition to that, KMO and Bartlett's test was also used with the results in Table 3 and Table 4 below:

Table 3: The appropriateness test of independent variables of job satisfaction

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.656
Approx. Chi-Square	1886.075
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df
	780
	Sig.
	.000

KMO = 0.656, that means evaluating factor analysis of independent factors is appropriate. Sig. (Bartlett's Test) = 0.000 (<0.05) proves that observed variables have correlation in whole scale.

**Table 4: The appropriateness test of dependent variables of job satisfaction
KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.795
Approx. Chi-Square		130.857
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	10
	Sig.	.000

Also, KMO = 0.795, that means evaluating factor analysis of dependent factor is appropriate. Sig. (Bartlett's Test) = 0.000 (<0.05) proves that observed variables have correlation in whole scale.

The correlation analysis was conducted and the result showed that there were high correlation coefficients among the six factors and there are significant correlations between the lecturer job satisfaction and all six factors.

Regression analysis was conducted with summarized result in Table 5. Adjusted R-square value of .63 indicates that 63 per cent of the variance in lecturer satisfaction can be explained by six variables including salary and fringe benefits, recognition, supervision, operating procedures, co-workers, and communication.

Table 5: Linear coefficients of independent variables in regression analysis

	Beta	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Salary and Fringe benefits	.236	.012	.302	1.200
Recognition	.566	.001	.435	1.648
Relationship with supervisors	.113	.141	.265	2.146
Operating procedures	.152	.067	.300	1.632
Relationship with Co-workers	.137	.073	.306	1.016
Communication	.527	.013	.504	1.320

a. Dependent Variable: Lecturer job Satisfaction

Table 5 shows the significant impact on job satisfaction of three factors having p values less than 0.05. These factors are Salary and Fringe benefits, Recognition, and Communication with beta coefficient of 0.236, 0.566 and 0.527 respectively and appropriate values of Tolerance (> 0.0001) and VIF (<10). Other three factors including Relationship with Supervisors, Operating procedures, Relationship with co-workers showed no significant impact on lecturer job satisfaction (with p values bigger than 0.05).

Regression results are summarized in Table 6. Three hypotheses H1, H2 and H6 are supported by the data while three other hypotheses H3, H4 and H5 are not supported by the data.

Table 6: Testing results

Hypothesis	Content	Result
H1	There is a positive relationship between <i>Salary and fringe benegits</i> and lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported
H2	There is a positive relationship between <i>recognition</i> and lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between <i>Relationship with Supervisors</i> and lecturer job satisfaction.	Not supported
H4	There is a positive relationship between <i>Relationship with co-workers</i> and lecturer job satisfaction.	Not supported
H5	There is a positive relationship between <i>operating procedures</i> and lecturer job satisfaction.	Not supported
H6	There is a <i>positive</i> relationship between <i>communication</i> and lecturer job satisfaction.	Supported

5. Findings and Discussions

We see from Table 6 that only 3 out of six hypotheses are supported by the data. Of which Recognition (H2) has biggest positive impact on lecturer job satisfaction. This dimension contains factors of contingent rewards and promotion opportunities. The merit reward system, advancement prospect have significant impacts on the retention of lecturers at workplace. This finding aligns with the results from other research as mentioned in the previous section. So, in order to improve Recognition factor, universities should develop a transparent performance evaluation system. The obviousness and fairness are two of the most substantial factors to achieve lecturer job satisfaction. Besides, the merit reward should be as clear as possible. When an employee’s voice is respected and listened to, he/she will be motivated to contribute more for organization. The recognition by peers or leaders definitely makes staff feel confident when doing their tasks. Giving praises or compliments and the way leaders do it also affect the faculty job satisfaction. Every single activities relating to reward, promotion has impact on faculty job satisfaction. How to treat employee equally and make them pleased with organization culture and policies is an art in human resourse management.

Additionally, communication (H6) strongly influences on lecturer job satisfaction. In this dimension, 54.24% of faculties declare that their opinions are respected and listened to at workplace. Moreover, 73.33% of them agree that they understand their job responsibilities/duties and the performance expectations for their positions. In addition, most of them (54.24%) believe that they receive adequate training to perform their jobs. It proves that the information interaction in the university workplace is considerable.

Salary and Fringe benefits (H1) is another factor having positive influence on lecturer job satisfaction. This means salary and other fringe benefits like insurance, annual leave, maternity leave, etc. play important role for lecturers to feel please with their job.

The other three factors, including Relationship with supervisors and Relationship with co-workers as well as Operating procedures at the university have no statistical significant relationship with lecturer job satisfaction. This findings are not aligned with some other research about job satisfactions. The reason could be education is really a specific and different from other fields. In academic environment, lecturers work relatively independant from their colleagues. So, relationship with other colleagues (co-workers) has no significant effects on their job satisfaction. Moreover, lecturers have freedom in academic jobs that relationship with supervisors does not affect so much on their job and in turn, on their level of job satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

This paper studies factors affecting lecturer job satisfaction in some universities in Vietnam. The analysis of data collected from a questionnaire survey with 167 responses showed that three out of six variables (including Salary and Fringe benefits, Recognition, and Communiation) have influential relationship with lecturer satisfaction in the linear regression analysis. The universities should improve its policies and working environment relating to these three factors to enhance lecturer job satisfaction level with the priority given to factors having stronger effects on lecturer job satisfaction. So, Recognition, Communication and Salary and Fringe benefits should be the first three factors to focus on. Then, other three factors should be taken into account for enhancing lecturer job satisfaction: Relationship with supervisors, Relationship with co-workers, and Operating procedures.

A limitation of this study is moderate sample size, which includes a total of 167 responses for the survey of lecturers working at universities in Vietnam using a convenient sample. Further research could be done by surveying more lecturers in other universities to have deeper understanding about the issue.

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