

Job Satisfaction of Public Administrative Personnel in Greece

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Abstract

In the present study participated a total of 67 permanent and contract administrators employed in three separate sections at the Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs. Participants completed the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985) and demographic and work-related questions. The aims of the present study were (a) to measure the degree of job satisfaction of administrative officials employed in institutions of the Greek Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs and the various facets of it and (b) to examine specific demographic and work-related variables concerning their effect on each facet of job satisfaction as well as its totality. The study showed moderate levels of job satisfaction among participants. Age was found to be the only demographic variable to impact significantly on job satisfaction, while three facets of job satisfaction, one intrinsic (nature of work) and two extrinsic (supervision) and (co-workers) indicate high scores of job satisfaction.

Keywords: *Job satisfaction, Public sector, Administrative Personnel, Two-factor theory, Job satisfaction survey*

1. Introduction

Job Satisfaction is the most studied variable than any other in organizations (Spector, 1997). Although the phenomenon of job satisfaction has been broadly researched, especially with regard to education employees, (Blood, Ridenour, Thomas, Qualls and Hammer, 2002; Malik, Nawab, Naeem and Danish, 2010; Platsidou and Agaliotis, 2008; Tarasiadou and Platsidou, 2009), survey results are different and sometimes even conflicting with each other. At first reading, literature sources and research material show that the diversity of results starts from the fact that there is no any universally accepted definition of the concept of job satisfaction.

According to Spector (1997), «job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs» (p. 2). According to Locke, job satisfaction is defined as “anything that can positively impact the employee towards work or the conditions of work” (Davis, 2004, p. 496). Weiss (2002) concludes that “job satisfaction is an attitude”, because recent researchers define it as a behaviour. Therefore, job satisfaction is the positive (or negative) judgment of an employee for his/her job or working conditions (p. 175).

According to Evans “research in this field is subject to an additional threat to construct validity, arising out of the ambiguity of the concept of job satisfaction” (1998, p. 6). A possible ambiguity of the concept of job satisfaction may lead to misunderstandings and invalid results, which create problems for its measurement.

Another problem in the study of job satisfaction is that there is a great number of various instruments that measure it, for example the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith *et al.*, 1969), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss *et al.*, 1967), the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman and Oldham, 1974), etc. Each researcher has to choose carefully the most suitable, i.e. the one that meets researcher’s objectives.

2. The Present Study

In order to serve the purpose of the present research, have been selected a specific theoretical framework and methodological tool.

For the construction of the theoretical approach, has been chosen the *two-factor theory*, also known as *Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory*, because it is one of the most specific and complete theories for the understanding of job satisfaction (Statt, 1994). Therefore, this theory has been used in the present study for understanding the dual nature of job satisfaction and motivation (Sachau, 2007). According to this, the examined specific dimensions of job satisfaction have been divided into *extrinsic* (hygiene) and *intrinsic* (motivation) factors (e.g., Ololube, 2007).

The methodological tool is the “Job Satisfaction Survey” (JSS) developed by Paul Spector (Spector, 1985). This instrument has been chosen because it is a common tool in various studies (e.g., Blood *et al.*, 2002; Liu *et al.*, 2004) and as Spector (1985) indicates, “it was designed specifically for human service, public and nonprofit sector organizations, although it may be applicable to others as well” (p. 694). Based on the above, researchers evaluate it as a suitable tool for measuring job satisfaction in the public sector.

The most important reason however was the assignment of the nine facets of JSS, which compose job satisfaction, with some of the extrinsic (hygiene) and the intrinsic (motivation) factors, proposed by Herzberg. Therefore, there is a reasonable connection between the theoretical framework and the methodological tool in studying job satisfaction.

More specifically, the five of nine dimensions of JSS are: pay and remuneration (pay), monetary and non-monetary fringe (fringe benefits), immediate supervisor (supervision), operating policies and procedures (operating procedures). Co-workers are defined as extrinsic factors.

The other dimensions, promotion opportunities (promotion), appreciation - recognition and rewards for good work (contingent rewards), job tasks (nature of work) have been defined as intrinsic factors, while the last facet of JSS, communication, has not been examined because it cannot be incorporated neither to extrinsic nor to intrinsic factors of Herzberg’s theory.

The above distinction was made in order to determine, while assessing facets, which of the factors, i.e. the extrinsic (hygiene) or the intrinsic (motivation), display high or low scores of extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction respectively (e.g., Markovits *et al.*, 2007).

3. Literature Review

During the 60’s and 70’s conducted many surveys on job satisfaction (Kantas, 1998). These surveys were based on theories which attempt to explain the sources and causes of job

satisfaction in the two-factor theory of Herzberg. Also the Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristic Model is one of the most specialized theories for understanding Herzberg's theory (Statt, 1994). Based on Maslow's theory, Herzberg made the two-factor theory, a comprehensive theory of motivation based on the concept of job satisfaction (Stanton, 1987).

After completing an extensive literature review of more than 2,000 job satisfaction studies, Herzberg *et al.*, (1957) noted that the variables contributed to satisfaction seem to be different from the those contributed to dissatisfaction. Herzberg and his associates tried to give answers to the question of *what does create the behavior of an employee*. After a series of studies Herzberg *et al.*, (1959) developed two distinct lists of factors. The authors referred to factors that influence job satisfaction as "motivator factors" and to factors that cause dissatisfaction as the "hygiene factors". The motivators include: achievement, recognition, responsibility, work itself, advancement and personal growth. Conversely hygiene factors include: company policy and administration, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, status, security and salary (Herzberg *et al.*, 1959, p. 44-49).

According to Herzberg (1987, p. 9), the basic distinction between motivators and hygiene factors is that, "the factors producing job satisfaction (and motivation) are separate and distinct from the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction". They underline that these separate factors must not be considered as opposites of each other, but as House and Wigdor (1967) state as "two distinct continua" (p. 370). Moreover, Herzberg (1987) clarifies that, "the opposite of job satisfaction is not job dissatisfaction, but, rather, *no* job satisfaction, and similarly, the opposite of job dissatisfaction is not job satisfaction, but *no* job dissatisfaction" (p. 9).

Herzberg's theory had a great impact on the practice of business administration providing new ideas (Kantas, 1998). However, it received a lot of criticism mainly for its methodology (Behling *et al.*, 1968; Brenner *et al.*, 1971). On the one hand, researches that used Herzberg's method confirm the *duality* of the theory, on the other hand, studies based on different methodology show opposite results (Behling *et al.*, 1968). Many researchers criticized Herzberg's methodology (e.g., Ewen *et al.*, 1966; Vroom, 1964), assuming that it is methodologically bound (House and Wigdor, 1967) and biased so as the theory to be supported (Sachau, 2007).

The academic discussion about the *two factor theory*, which lasted for at least ten years, is also known as the *Herzberg Controversy* (Bockman, 1971). Whitsett and Winslow (1967) opposed to Herzberg's critics concluding that "the large number of conflicting results of studies researching the Motivation-Hygiene theory is due 1) to the widespread misinterpretation of the theory, 2) to the mythological weaknesses and 3) to the misinterpretation of the results" (p. 395). Russell (1981) adds that Herzberg's theory criticism has to be attributed to the matter of "false inter-subjectivity" of researchers (p. 47).

Today, according to Sachau (2007), Herzberg's theory has been re-used especially for the research of *positive psychology*. Sachau (2007) points out the fact that Herzberg's theory has been many times misinterpreted attempting to clarify what exactly this theory has proposed. He finally concludes that it might be better conceptualized as a *metatheory* or worldview of satisfaction.

4. Research Aims

The aim of the present paper is to study job satisfaction of administrative officials at the Greek public sector.

Additional objectives are:

- individual facets of job satisfaction and
- the impact of four demographic and two work-related factors, in each individual facet of job satisfaction and as a total.

5. Method

5.1 Sample

In this research participated a total of 67 people, all administrative officials in various Institutions of the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs in central Thessaloniki. Specifically, the survey includes employees of the Social Insurance Institution (IKA), 36% (24 persons), employees of Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), 58% (39 people) and workers at the Labour Inspectorate (SEPE), 6% (4 people).

The sample consisted of 15 men (22%) και 52 women (78%). In the total sample, the age groups of the respondents are distributed as follows: 14 (21%) belong to the age group of ≤ 25 years (Group A), 10 (15%) to the age group of 30-34 (Group B), 13 (19%) to the age group of 35-39 (Group C), 14 (21%) to the age group of 40-49 (Group D) and finally 16 (24%) belong to the age group of ≥ 50 (Group E).

With respect to years of service, 40 people (60%) worked as administrators in their service for more than 5 years, while 27 people (40%) were "new" employees with seniority less than (or equal to) 5 years. Regarding their marital status, 41 people (62%) were married and 25 (37%) single. As to the level of study, 28 people (42%) were high school graduates while the remaining 39 (58%) were graduates from University. Finally, regarding the employment status of the respondents, 39 (58%) were permanent employees, while 28 (42%) were working with contract.

5.2 Research Tool

For the collection of survey data, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire, divided into two parts. The first part contained questions on demographic and work-related factors. Specifically the demographic factors were included the following questions: (a) gender, (b) age, (c) marital status and (d) level of education. Questions concerning working characteristics included: (e) tenure (as administrators in their service), and (f) the type of employment relationship (permanent or contract staff).

The second part of the research about the nature of job satisfaction, it has been used the 36-item "Job Satisfaction Survey" (JSS) questionnaire (Spector, 1985). It has been used as such and translated into Greek by the researcher.

Participants were also asked to rate on a 6-point *Likert scale* the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the recommendations of the questionnaire (1 = Disagree and 6 = very much agree). In the questionnaire there were 19 negatively worded items. Negatively worded items were reversed: score 6 changed to 1, 5 to 2, etc (Spector, 1985).

5.3 Data Collection

The distribution and collection of the questionnaires was in May-June 2008. The questionnaires were given to each employee and they were anonymous. On the first page of each

questionnaire, the purpose of the research was mentioned as well as clear instructions for its completion.

Before distributing the questionnaires, was a *pilot research* for obscure or unclear questions. Pilot study indicated that questions were explicit and no further clarifications were needed. 67 questionnaires were given and 67 were returned, giving a response rate of 100%.

5.4 Data Analysis

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was considered very satisfactory, as the reliability indicator *Cronbach a*, was found to be 0.94 (max. 1). Initially, in order to study the degree of total job satisfaction of public officials and individual dimension, was estimated the averaged total job satisfaction as well as the averages of eight of the nine dimensions of JSS. It is useful to underline once more that the ninth dimension i.e. communication was not included because it cannot be seen neither as an extrinsic nor as an intrinsic factor, according to Herzberg's two-factor theory.

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to study relationships among the individual dimensions of job satisfaction. From the results of the indicators was found a significant correlation for $p < 0.01$ in the majority of sub-dimensions of job satisfaction. The only exceptions are the correlation between the dimension of the operating procedures and the supervision, which was not found to be statistically significant ($r = 0.191$, $p > 0.05$) and the correlation between supervision and fringe benefits, which was found to be significant ($r = 0.295$, $p < 0.05$).

Furthermore, in order to examine the impact of demographic and work-related variables in each of the individual variables of job satisfaction and as a total, a series of ANOVA analyzes are presented, in which as dependent variables are defined the dimensions of job satisfaction (factors motivation and hygiene factors) and as independent variables are defined the demographic and employment characteristics of the sample.

6. Findings

The results of the present study try to give answers to its objectives:

6.1 Public employees' job satisfaction and its individual dimensions

The first objective of this paper is to study the degree of total job satisfaction of public employees and its individual dimensions. The first observation (the averages of Table 1) is that public sector employees stated ambivalent or otherwise moderately satisfied with their jobs ($M = 3.39$ in a 6-point scale, $SD = 0.95$) As for the individual dimensions tested, it is found that the dimension of supervision gathered from quite much to very high score extrinsic satisfaction ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.20$). The dimension of co-workers follows, indicating a relatively high score extrinsic of job satisfaction ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.96$). Apart from the two above mentioned dimensions that showed high score of job satisfaction and they belong to the "hygiene factors" (extrinsic factors), the only "motive" (intrinsic factor) that assemble -marginally- high score intrinsic satisfaction ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.37$) is found to be the nature of work.

In contrast, the results of Table I indicate low scores of satisfaction from other dimensions. Specifically, the dimensions of the fringe benefits ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.34$) and contingent rewards ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 1.42$), represent low scores of extrinsic satisfaction. Promotion ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.28$) and pay ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.34$) represent even lower scores of intrinsic and extrinsic

satisfaction respectively. Finally, the lowest level of extrinsic satisfaction is noted by the operating procedures (M = 2.56, SD = 1.05).

Table I *Averages and standard deviations of total job satisfaction and individual dimensions (facets) of this*

<i>Dimensions (facets) of Job Satisfaction and Total Job Satisfaction</i>	M	SD
Pay	2,679	1,3433
Promotion	2,813	1,2846
Supervision	4,817	1,2049
Fringe Benefits	2,914	1,3439
Contingent Rewards	2,914	1,4193
Operating Conditions	2,560	1,0536
Co-workers	4,220	,9609
Nature of Work	4,004	1,3696
Total of all facets	3,390	,9517

6.2 Demographic and work-related factors in relation with the dimensions (facets) of Job Satisfaction and Total Job Satisfaction

The second objective is to study the influence of the demographic and work-related variables in each of the individual facets of job satisfaction and as a total.

The age seems to affect significantly the pay ($F(4,62) = 5.53, p = 0.001$). As shown in Table II, the two largest age groups in the sample (Group D and E) showed higher satisfaction from pay (M = 3.53, SD = 1.18, for Group D and M = 3.21, SD = 1.68 for Group E) in compared with the Group A (M = 1.8, SD = 0.78). Also the effect of age was found to be statistically significant in relation to the facet of co-workers ($F(4,62) = 4.82, p = 0.002$). Specifically, the greatest satisfaction from relationships with fellows was reported by Group E (M = 4.98, SD = 0.77), followed by Group D (M = 3.82, SD = 0.91), while Group A reported significantly the lowest satisfaction scores from this facet (M = 3.77, SD = 1.05).

As for the effect of age on the nature of work, this is statistically significant ($F(4,62) = 2.91, p = 0.028$). The Group E scored higher on satisfaction score from the facet nature of work (M = 4.64, SD = 1.37) than the Group A (M = 3.16, SD = 1.18). Furthermore, it was found that there is a statistical difference in the total job satisfaction and age ($F(4,62) = 3.09, p = 0.022$). Specifically, Group A, scored lowest score of job satisfaction (M = 2.82, SD = 0.79), than the Group E (M = 3.92, SD = 1.13). In other words, older workers appear to receive higher levels of job satisfaction in relation to the youngest. Finally, age was found to be the only demographic variable that impacts significantly on total job satisfaction.

Table II Averages and standard deviations of total job satisfaction and individual dimensions (facets) of this in relation to age

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E	F	p
Pay/						5,53	0,001
M	1,80	2,7	2,02	3,53	3,21		
(SD)	(0,78)	(1,16)	(0,78)	(1,18)	(1,68)		
Co-workers/						4,82	0,002
M	3,77	4,07	3,82	3,82	4,98		
(SD)	(1,05)	(0,92)	(0,91)	(0,91)	(0,77)		
Nature of Work/						2,91	0,028
M	3,16	3,57	4,21	4,64	4,64		
(SD)	(1,18)	(1,61)	(0,89)	(1,37)	(1,37)		
Total (Total of all facets)/						3,09	0,022
M	2,82	3,38	3,17	3,55	3,92		
(SD)	(0,79)	(0,95)	(0,7)	(0,79)	(1,13)		

Then gender was found to be marginally significant relatively to pay ($F(1,65) = 4.09$, $p = 0.047$) and statistically significant relatively to the fringe benefits ($F(1,65) = 5.09$, $p = 0.027$). Specifically, as shown in Table III, the male employees reported higher satisfaction scores from pay ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.79$) than their female counterparts ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.14$). On satisfaction from fringe benefits, men workers had significantly higher scores ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.52$) compared to those of women ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.23$).

Table III Averages and standard deviations of total job satisfaction and individual dimensions (facets) of this in relation to gender

	Men	Women	F	p
Pay/			4,09	0,047
M	3,28	2,50		
(SD)	(1,79)	(1,14)		
Fringe Benefits/			5,09	0,027
M	3,58	2,72		
(SD)	(1,52)	(1,23)		

Moreover, the impact of the marital status on job satisfaction of employees in the public section, as shown in Table IV, was found to be statistically significant in terms of their satisfaction from the fringe benefits ($F(1,64) = 6.19, p = 0.015$) offered by the organization in which they work. Specifically, married employees seem to be more satisfied from fringe benefits ($M = 3.25, SD = 1.25$) than singles ($M = 2.44, SD = 1.32$). Regarding satisfaction from the nature of work ($F(1,64) = 4.86, p = 0.031$), married seems to indicate higher scores ($M = 4.31, SD = 1.18$) than unmarried ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.53$).

Table IV Averages and standard deviations of total job satisfaction and individual dimensions (facets) of this in relation to marital status

	Married	Singles	F	p
Fringe Benefits/			6,19	0,015
M	3,25	2,44		
(SD)	(1,25)	(1,32)		
Nature of Work/			4,86	0,031
M	4,31	3,57		
(SD)	(1,18)	(1,53)		

Regarding the effect of the tenure on job satisfaction of employees, as shown in Table V, the results show that it is statistically significant in relation to their satisfaction from pay ($F(1,65) = 12.48, p = 0.01$) and supervision ($F(1,65) = 5.32, p = 0.024$). Specifically, workers with seniority of less than five years, appear to be less satisfied from their pay ($M = 2.03, SD = 1.02$) than

workers with medium and long experience (more than five years) ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.36$). As for satisfaction from the supervisor, employees with seniority of less than five years ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.36$) show lower scores of job satisfaction compared to workers with more than five years ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.02$).

Table V Averages and standard deviations of total job satisfaction and individual dimensions (facets) of this in relation to tenure

	Little experience of work	Medium and long experience	F	p
Pay/			12,48	0,01
M	2,03	3,11		
(SD)	(1,02)	(1,36)		
Supervision/			5,32	0,024
M	4,41	5,08		
(SD)	(1,36)	(1,02)		

The type of employment appear to affect significantly employee satisfaction from their pay ($F(1.65) = 6.21$, $p = 0.015$), supervision ($F(1.65) = 5.6$, $p = 0.021$) and co-workers ($F(1.65) = 4.67$, $p = 0.034$), as shown in Table VI. Specifically from the facet of pay, it was found that there is statistically significant difference between the officials and contractors. Officials ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.36$) appear to be significantly more satisfied from pay than contract staff ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.18$). The same seems to be true for the satisfaction from supervision, as permanent employees ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.06$) seem to be more satisfied than their colleagues working under contract ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.29$). Regarding the satisfaction of the respondents from co-workers, the permanent employees ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.88$) show higher scores of job satisfaction compared to the contract ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.99$). Finally, the variable of educational level was found not to have a significant effect on the facets of job satisfaction or on total job satisfaction.

Table VI Averages and standard deviations of total job satisfaction and individual dimensions (facets) of this in relation to type of employment

	Officials	Contractors	F	p
Pay/			6,21	0,015
M	3,01	2,21		
(SD)	(1,36)	(1,18)		
Supervision/			5,60	0,021
M	5,10	4,42		
(SD)	(1,06)	(1,29)		
Co-workers/			4,67	0,034
M	4,43	3,93		
(SD)	(0,88)	(0,99)		

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The first objective of this research was to measure the degree of job satisfaction of public employees and its various dimensions. The average level of job satisfaction of participants was found (M = 3.39 in a 6-point scale, SD = 0.95). The nature of work is the only motive with high score of intrinsic satisfaction (M = 4.00). The first two facets with the highest scores of satisfaction (supervision: M = 4.81 and coworkers: M = 4.22) are included to the extrinsic factors. In contrast, Markovits et al. (2007), in a similar survey conducted on a sample of 476 civil service employees in government agencies and public health officials in Northern Greece, found higher levels of "intrinsic" satisfaction (satisfaction of the motives: M = 4.76) compared with the "extrinsic" satisfaction (satisfaction of hygiene: M = 4.62), using a seven-scale measurement.

Specifically, regarding the nature of work, were found high levels of satisfaction of public employees in similar surveys abroad (e.g., Steijn, 2004; Kwangho et al., 2007). In the U.S.A, public employees are those who are motivated more by factors related to the nature of the work as it seems that interesting work is an important incentive for those who choose to work in it (Frank and Lewis, 2004).

About the extrinsic factor of supervision, which gathered the highest score of satisfaction (M = 4.81), the research of Bourantas and Papalexandris (1993) demonstrates the limited ability of the head authority of the public sector to reward booster or penalties. In other words, the limited ability of chief to respect the hierarchy levels and define the power relations between superiors and subordinates, does not help to the maintenance of proper social distance (Bourantas, 2002).

In contrast, the factor of hygiene, that makes the lowest score of job satisfaction in this study is the operating procedures (M = 2.56). This finding could perhaps be attributed to the

specificity of the organization and operation of the Greek public administration, which is characterized by a large volume of rules, regulations and bureaucracy (Bourantas and Papalexandris, 1993). Similarly, Wright and Davis (2003), after an investigation into American workers in public agencies in New York, examining specific work variables, concluded that the professional employee satisfaction could be improved if public sector organizations explained to their employees the concept and meaning behind the operating policies and procedures they apply. The ultimate goal is the employees to understand the necessity of working regulations and to combine their specific regulations with their own expectations for efficiency.

The second objective of the present study is the the degree of influence of demographic and occupational variables in each of the sub-dimensions of job satisfaction, as well as in its total. Age was found to be the only variable among demographic and work-related variables that impacts significantly on total job satisfaction. In contrast, according to the interpretations of the findings of Herzberg et al., (1957) on the U-shaped relationship between age and job satisfaction, which are disputed by several researchers (e.g., Gibson and Klein, 1970; Hulin and Smith, 1965; Hunt and Saul, 1975), the results of the relationship between age and total job satisfaction in this study was found to be close to the results of the opponents. Finally, the educational level is the only variable that does not affect significantly total job satisfaction and its dimensions, in contrast with the research of Wright and Davis (2003) who found that among the employee characteristics included in their research (age, education, job tenure, salary grade), the only characteristic related to job satisfaction was the educational level, $p < 0.05$.

The results of this study, despite any limitations (e.g., small number of participants, no possibility to make comparisons with the private sector), provide empirical data for the study of job satisfaction of administrative officials in the Greek public sector, since the studies of this target group are limited in Greece. Additionally, they offer the possibility of comparing them with the results of similar surveys in respective target groups abroad.

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