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The Impact of Career Planning, Employee Autonomy and Managerial Recognition on Job Satisfaction in Chinese Vocational Colleges

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Abstract

The management ability of administrative staff in higher vocational colleges is related to the development and operation of higher vocational colleges. The impact of job satisfaction is an essential subject of human resource management. This paper takes the administrative staff of municipal higher vocational colleges as the research object and collects data through questionnaires and interviews. Using the weighted average method to calculate statistics, conduct empirical research on the relationship between career planning, employee autonomy, and manager and job satisfaction of higher vocational colleges. The study results found that higher vocational colleges should pay attention to the motivation of administrative staff to improve the autonomous work behavior of employees.

Keywords: Administrative Staff, Career Planning, Employee Autonomy, Manager, Impact on Job Satisfaction

Introduction

The proliferation of social media caused by increased Internet usage has resulted various accusations against a company that resulted in the loss of employees, which subsequently increase organization's operating cost (Jingnan et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to research on job satisfaction of employee in retaining its human capital. Locke (1969) introduced the concept of job satisfaction, in which he constantly stressing a happy emotional state is the outcome based on the evaluation of one's work to achieve or promote the realization of one's work value.

Vocational and technical education mainly trains applied-skilled talents that meet the front-line needs of production, construction, management, and service. With vocational and technical education becoming a vital part of China's higher education system, the organizational structure of higher vocational colleges is becoming larger and larger. However, most administrative staff adopt the traditional "assignment type" management mode. They are very passive in their work, with more prominent characteristics of working following the rules, less autonomy, and not strong initiative. They spend a lot of time and energy on the daily affairs of official document processing, reception management, and meeting management.

In addition, the administrative management work is also very random, new situations often appear in the management, and the focus of work is adjusted at any time. What is more, the administrative work is short-lived, and the duration of work tasks is often concise, sometimes only a few minutes. After a single task is completed, there will be no accumulation of experience and procedures. When facing a new task, the original problems will appear again, resulting in the ineffective improvement of work efficiency. Under these circumstances, most administrative staff have personal experience; there are many administrative tasks, little time for personal freedom, strong randomness of work, many things to do, and very few things that can be said. This will make them often struggle to cope, and it is not easy to have the opportunity to think independently.

Professional quality improvement in the work is minimal, and there is no sense of accomplishment. From the current actual situation, it is found that the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges generally have problems such as job burnout, low work efficiency, lack of responsibility at work, and poor work attitude, which need to be solved urgently (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Empirical evidences proved that job satisfaction has been an important factor in staff turnover intention (Jingnan et al., 2021; Teo et al., 2021; Tongchao et al., 2022), including teachers (Tongchao et al., 2022). With the continuous improvement of modern enterprise management systems, many higher vocational colleges have increased their career planning management. By introducing the theory of career planning in human resource management into higher vocational colleges, it intervenes in the career development of managers. It effectively develops and utilizes existing human resources in colleges and universities to realize the reasonable allocation of human resources (Huang & Pan, 2007).

Hence, it is crucial for higher vocational colleges to understand the importance of human resource management plays role in shaping its staff satisfaction. With this in mind, this study focused on the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges as the research object, analyzes the career planning, employee autonomy, and manager recognition of the administrative staff of Higher Vocational Colleges from the aspects of executive compensation, promotion opportunities, leadership care, and harmonious relationship between colleagues, and puts forward practical advice on the problems existing in the process of running the college. To be specific, this study strives achieve the following research objective:

RO1: To examine the importance on multiple aspects of career, employee autonomy, manager and job satisfaction to administrative staff of higher vocational colleges.

Literature Review

Career Planning

Career planning means that employees establish their own career development goals according to their subjective factors and objective environment. Then formulate corresponding work, training, and education plans, and according to a specific time arrangement, through the joint efforts and cooperation of employees and organizations. This makes each employee's career goals consistent with the organization's development goals and makes the employee's development consistent with the organization's development. Therefore, career planning management includes two aspects: one is employee career self-management, employees are their masters, and self-management is the key to career success;

second is to organize and coordinate employees to plan their career development and provide employees with necessary education, training, job rotation, and other development opportunities to promote the realization of employees' career goals. Thereby promoting the stability and development of higher vocational colleges (Cheng & Guo, 2015).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been a popular topic in both academic and practical research, and it significantly affect various aspects of employee's work related attitude and behavior (Ran et al., 2021). Research has been done on job satisfaction in the context of job performance, employee alienation, authentic leadership, self-efficacy, educational assortative matching, remote work communication, teamwork, optimistic expectations, emotion and beliefs, job crafting, workplace spirituality, organizational citizenship behavior (Bryan & Vitello-Cicciu, 2022; Dubey et al., 2022; Kakkar et al., 2022; Matagi et al., 2022; Poghosyan et al., 2022; Tempieri, 2022; Vettori et al., 2022; Yesilkaya & Yildiz, 2022). For example, the work of Lee et al (2019) provides some evidence of intersectionality, where they found that diversity management and satisfaction on pay are most important to minority women and least important to White men.

The education world is facing challenges in the increased requirement on preparedness in economic, environmental, and social changes, due to everchanging job demand and technologies (Nazifa et al., 2022). The job satisfaction of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges refers to the attitude and evaluation of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges to their daily teaching extra work, life, and other aspects, that is, the degree of love for the profession they are engaged. The happiness of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges comes from the satisfaction of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges with the work they are committed.

Higher education institutions are important places for cultivating talents. The administrative staff of higher vocational colleges assumes the responsibility of serving various tasks such as teaching and scientific research in higher vocational colleges. The satisfaction of their working environment, work remuneration, and working relationship will directly affect their attitude towards work. If their job satisfaction is low, their work is not active; their attitudes are not correct, they will affect the development of the school's various tasks (Chan, 2006). In recent years, higher education has continued to reform, which is to promote the effective development of education.

However, apart from requiring the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges to perform their duties, do the school's rules and regulations and welfare treatment truly reflect the respect and realization of the fundamental rights of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges? Although the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges is not in the front line of teaching, if there is no logistics service guarantee from the administrative staff, the typical teaching activities of colleges and universities cannot run smoothly. Therefore, only a comprehensive and overall description of the factors affecting employee job satisfaction can comprehensively, and targeted improvement strategies provide empirical evidence (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Research Methods

Self-administered data collection method was employed in this quantitative study. In the process of preparing the questionnaire, the autonomy of employees and the weight of managers are appropriately increased, and the questionnaire is prepared according to the willingness of career planning and job satisfaction. In terms of job satisfaction, job satisfaction was divided into salary returns, promotion opportunities, leadership care, benefits, workflow, colleague relations, job feelings, and organizational affiliation. There were a total of 20 questions in the questionnaire. There were two types of basic information required questions and scoring questions. Five-points Likert scale was employed, respectively mean "very inconsistent," "inconsistent," "general," "consistent" and "very consistent."

Findings

This study used questionnaire survey scoring and interviews to find out the inner relationship between career planning and job satisfaction. The basic situation of the sample showed in Table 1. The author selected five municipal higher vocational colleges and distributed 365 questionnaires. Excluding invalid questionnaires, 312 valid questionnaires were finally collected, and the effective rate of the questionnaires was 85.4%.

Table 1

The Basic Situation of the Sample

Control Variable	Control Variable	No. of People	Percentage%
Gender	Female	175	56.08
	Male	137	43.9
Marriage Status	Married	211	67.6
	Unmarried	101	32.4
Age	21 to 30	83	26.6
	31 to 40	105	33.7
	41 to 50	76	24.4
	51 and above	48	15.4
Education Level	College degree and below	9	2.9
	Undergraduate	156	50
	Postgraduate and above	147	47.1
Position Level	Administrative assistant	78	25
	Clerk	178	57
	Section level (manager)	49	15.7
	Division level and above (manager)	16	5.1
Working Life	Less than 3 years	47	15.1
	3 to 5 years	101	32.4
	6 to 9 years	89	28.5
	More than 10 years	75	24

From the data in Table 1, it can be observed 137 males in the sample, accounting for 43.9%, and 175 females, accounting for 56.08%. 83 people aged 21-30 years old, accounting for 26.6%, and 105 people aged 31-40 years old, accounting for 33.7%. 76 people aged 41 to 50, accounting for 24.41%, and 48 people 51 and above, 15.4%. 211 persons were married in

the sample, accounting for 67.6%, and 101 persons were unmarried, accounting for 32.4%. Nine people with college education or below, accounting for 2.9%, and 156 undergraduates, accounting for the most significant proportion of 50%. 147 people graduate and above, accounting for 47.1%. 47 people with a working life of fewer than three years, accounting for 15.1%, 101 people with 3 to 5 years, accounting for 32.4%, 89 people with 6-9 years, accounting for 28.5%, and 75 people with more than ten years, accounting for 24%. Among the position levels, 78 are administrative assistants, accounting for 25%, 178 clerks, 57%, 49 section level, 15.7%, and 16 division level and above, accounting for 5.1%.

Next, rank order analysis was performed on career, employee autonomy, manager and job satisfaction. The statistical score is calculated by the weighted average method, that was: weighted average = $(x_1f_1 + x_2f_2 + \dots + x_kf_k)/n$, where $f_1 + f_2 + \dots + f_k = n$, f_1, f_2, \dots, f_k , the score was calculated by the product of number and weight showed in Table 2.

Table 2

Score Table of Career, Employee Autonomy, Manager and Job Satisfaction

Scoring Item	Weighted Average Score	Rank Order
Career Planning Willingness	3.01	13
Employee Autonomy	2.87	10
Salary Return	2.91	11
Promotion Opportunity	1.58	2
Benefits	1.99	4
Leadership Care	2.70	8
Workflow	2.02	5
Colleague Relation	1.86	3
Work Feeling	2.99	12
Organization Attribution	2.78	9
Extended Working Hours (Overtime)	1.1	1
Challenging Work	2.49	7
Working Environment	2.4	6

It can be seen from Table 2 that the career planning willingness of the employees and managers of higher vocational colleges is significantly higher than the middle level, and the salary return is slightly higher than the middle level. The top scores are salary return, employee autonomy, work feeling, leadership care, and the bottom scores are workflow, colleague relation, and promotion opportunity.

Through investigation and research, it can be found that: career planning has a significant positive impact on employee job satisfaction. Establishing a fair, reasonable, and complete salary system and promotion opportunity positively impacts job satisfaction. The extension of working hours (overtime) has a significant negative impact on job satisfaction. Arranging employees to do challenging work has a positive effect on job satisfaction. Leadership care and employees having good and harmonious interpersonal relations strongly impact job satisfaction.

Conclusions

The survey results from questionnaire interviews show that employees realize their career management through career planning, and higher vocational colleges understand the development aspirations, motivations, and career interests of administrative staff through career management. Combining the characteristics of employees in the organizational design, fully realize the matching of staff and positions, maximize the work efficiency and loyalty of administrative staff, and reduce the occurrence of phenomena such as overstaffing and inefficiency. Therefore, this paper puts forward the following suggestions on how to motivate the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges and how to improve the level of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges (Baker et al., 2008).

Higher vocational colleges should appropriately arrange for employees to do challenging work, provide them with various tasks, and use their skills and abilities to complete challenging tasks to make their work more challenging. Low-challenging work will make people feel bored, but jobs that are too challenging to complete can also make people feel frustrated and fail, and in severe cases, they can also cause fear.

It is necessary to improve the internal satisfaction of administrative staff in higher vocational colleges, care for employees, and pay attention to their internal needs. Job satisfaction is the employee's evaluation of the overall work and the perception of the situation, which exists in employees' hearts. This requires that the managers of higher vocational colleges should be guided by the employees' individual internal needs and genuinely grasp the internal needs of the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges. In motivating the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges, more work platforms and opportunities should be provided to truly realize their values and life goals. Only by getting psychological satisfaction in specific work can higher job satisfaction be produced, promoting employees' autonomous work behavior.

For employees, having a good and harmonious interpersonal relationship will improve their work satisfaction. People are engaged in work to make money or obtain visible achievements and meet their social needs. Therefore, having much support from friends and colleagues is also a significant factor in determining satisfaction. When an employee's direct supervisor is empathetic and friendly, he must promptly commend good performance and listen to employees' opinions with an open mind, and employee satisfaction will increase.

Establishing a fair, reasonable and complete salary and general promotion system is one of the essential factors of job satisfaction (material and psychological). The material aspect refers to various factors that can bring actual material benefits, such as salary and benefits. When the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges have an appropriate and complete salary system guarantee, they can get a better psychological feeling of salary due to work and bring the psychological perception generated by material satisfaction. But it needs to be reminded that not everyone works just for money, and the link between remuneration and satisfaction is not a person's total income, but a sense of fairness. Similarly, employees also pursue a fair promotion policy, and promotion provides employees with personal growth opportunities, more responsibilities and improved social status. Therefore, if employees feel that the promotion decision is made based on fairness and justice, they can quickly experience satisfaction from their work.

A good working environment can also improve job satisfaction. Research shows that the physical environment in which employees want to work is safe and comfortable, and temperature, lighting, noise and other environmental factors should not be too strong or too weak. In addition, many employees hope that the workplace is closer to home, the environment is clean, the equipment is modern, and there are good tools and equipment, both for personal comfort and for better completion of the work.

Personality must be matched with work, and the high matching of employee's personality and occupation will bring more satisfaction to employees. Because when people's personality characteristics are consistent with their chosen occupation, they will find that they can adapt to the job requirements and are more likely to succeed in these jobs. At the same time, because of these successes, they are more likely to obtain higher satisfaction from their work (Baker et al., 2008). Therefore, it is also indispensable to include personality and job matching in job satisfaction research.

Implications

This study brings impacts to academic researchers as well as industry practitioners. In terms of academic contributions, this study has extended the understanding on the importance on multiple aspects of career, employee autonomy, manager and job satisfaction on the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges, with specific attention in the Chinese context. Besides, this research also sheds light to industry practitioners. Higher job satisfaction will help vocational college administrators to think carefully about their career trends, better develop themselves, reduce anxiety, anxious burnout, and reduce turnover behavior. Conversely, it may force the administrator to consider leaving the school and seeking another job. In addition, a large part of the administrative staff are older people with low academic qualifications, and there is often a situation of changing positions between new and old. The imbalance of talent level is one of the reasons for the low job satisfaction of administrative staff in higher vocational colleges. Therefore, higher vocational colleges should strictly control the threshold of talent recruitment, especially for the administrative staff of higher vocational colleges, develop unimpeded information communication channels, and formulate scientific and reasonable career plans for them. Higher vocational colleges should allow employees to deeply perceive that their development is closely related to their development to improve overall job satisfaction and stimulate employees' autonomous work behavior.

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