An Examination of Faculty Job Satisfaction in the United Arab Emirates using a Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract
This study aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of job satisfaction among faculty members at KU. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study employed a phenomenological design. Thematic and content analysis methods were used to analyze the qualitative data obtained. The sample comprised 12 faculty members who participated in the study. The qualitative findings revealed a range of experiences and perceptions among KU faculty members regarding their job satisfaction, compensation, and training opportunities. While many participants expressed positive sentiments towards their job roles and the compensation they receive, there were also negative perspectives highlighted. Recommendations were proposed to address areas for improvement, aiming to enhance the overall job satisfaction of faculty members at KU. It is anticipated that the insights derived from this research will inform policymakers within higher education institutions, enabling them to implement strategies aimed at improving job satisfaction, compensation practices, and training opportunities for faculty members.
Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Compensation Pay, Training, Motivation, Academic Faculty

Introduction
The role of faculty members within higher educational institutions is recognized as demanding and stressful, despite their demonstrated commitment to their positions (Al Serhan & Houjeir, 2020). These individuals serve as educators, mentors, and advisors, responsible for guiding students' learning journeys (Khan et al., 2020). The profession of faculty entails significant challenges in delivering high-quality education Al Kurdi et al (2021), a task further complicated by the notable increase in educational institutions, particularly in higher education, across the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over the past two decades (Ababneh, 2020). The Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) in the UAE reports that there are currently 76 licensed

institutions under its purview CAA (2018), indicating a corresponding rise in the number of academicians.

Job satisfaction is crucial within the higher education work environment Information Resources Management Association (2017), as dissatisfied educators are less likely to be productive and committed (In, 2016). Recognizing this need, the UAE has made significant strides in improving higher education quality, driven by initiatives such as Vision 2021, which emphasizes smart learning and the development of human capital (Dubai Education Exhibition & Conference, 2014). His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum have both underscored the importance of investing in education to meet the needs of the growing population (Dubai Education Exhibition & Conference, 2014).

The Ministry of Education and Youth in the UAE has outlined a vision of high-quality education that equips individuals with essential skills and fosters self-learning and creative thinking (Kirkpatrick, 2017). This emphasis on educational quality, compounded by societal demands (Dubai Education Exhibition & Conference, 2014; Soomro & Ahmad, 2012), places added pressure on faculty members to align with the educational goals outlined in "Education Vision 2020" (Kirkpatrick, 2017).

Background of Study

Job satisfaction within educational environments is crucial, given that faculty members serve as the cornerstone of higher education institutions (Nawi et al., 2016). Key issues such as limited or inadequate training opportunities and disparities in compensation must be effectively addressed, as they significantly impact the formulation and implementation of training policies and procedures. Numerous studies have highlighted job satisfaction challenges among faculty members, underscoring the difficulties associated with retaining them (Ellis, 2013; Mustapha & Ghee, 2013). Flexibility in workload, facilitated by workplace policies, necessitates adequate training and competitive remuneration; failure to meet these criteria leads to various issues (Dennison, 2012; Derby-Davis, 2014). Despite efforts to provide professional development opportunities, constraints such as limited availability, inappropriate types, and untimely provision often fail to enhance faculty job satisfaction (Noble-Britton, 2014). Merely offering training does not guarantee increased satisfaction among faculty members; rather, opportunities for professional growth, coupled with enhanced responsibility and control, are more likely to yield positive outcomes. Job satisfaction issues persist among faculty members due to inadequate training opportunities (Lockhart & Stoop, 2018), contributing to tardiness, absenteeism, and staff turnover (de Lourdes, 2017). It is undeniable that addressing faculty job satisfaction is paramount in academia for achieving positive outcomes and resolving challenges. However, existing research often lacks specificity regarding the areas of satisfaction and tends to be overly generalized.

The research presented here makes significant contributions to methodology, theory, and practical application. With the continued expansion of higher education faculty recruitment in the UAE, the importance and urgency of this study are heightened. The influx of faculty members surpassed 16,000 in 2019 Tabrez (2021), underscoring the pressing need to address job satisfaction issues to retain these personnel effectively. High turnover rates among faculty members, driven by dissatisfaction, have been documented Ababneh (2020), emphasizing the imperative for educational institutions in the UAE to address this issue. While existing literature has explored faculty job satisfaction, there remains a gap in recent studies examining any evolving trends and distinctions. Furthermore, there is a dearth of qualitative

research focusing on UAE faculty members' positive perceptions regarding compensation and training, which are pivotal factors in enhancing job satisfaction.

Literature Review
Job Satisfaction

The concept of job satisfaction has been elucidated through diverse perspectives by numerous scholars. According to Rai (2018), a thorough understanding of job satisfaction encompasses various factors such as an employee's attitude, including their monetary compensation, opportunities for promotion and recognition, supervision and relationships within the team, fringe benefits beyond monetary rewards, and the nature of the work itself. The concept of has been characterized and delineated in various manners. Boamah et al (2018) stipulated that job satisfaction is primarily determined by an individual's level of contentment with their occupation. This encompasses their overall liking of the job as well as specific elements or dimensions of the job, such as the nature of the labor or the quality of supervision. There are alternative perspectives that argue against the simplicity of the aforementioned description, positing instead that the experience of one's employment entails diverse psychological responses (Hulin & Judge, 2003). Previous studies have observed that there is variation among job satisfaction measures in terms of the degree to which they assess affective job satisfaction (Thompson, 2013) or cognitive aspects of work satisfaction (Castaneda, 2014).

A comprehensive definition of the concept of JavaScript is currently unavailable. According to Erida (2018), multiple scholars have provided varying definitions of job satisfaction. One such definition characterizes job satisfaction as a positive psychological state resulting from individuals' contentment with their work or professional experiences. When considering the role of teachers, the concept of job satisfaction encompasses the evaluation of educational workin a favorable or negative manner (Krallis & Souto, 2014). In education domain, Zieger et al. (2019) asserted that teacher satisfaction's characteristics can be measured by the extent to whichthey exhibit confidence, motivation, satisfaction with compensation, and effectiveness in theirrole as an educator at the university level. Teacher satisfaction is a crucial aspect of the education system that directly impacts student success. When teachers are satisfied with their jobs, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and committed to their students' learning. Additionally, satisfied teachers create a positive classroom environment that fosters student growth and development. Therefore, understanding and addressing the factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction is essential for improving the overall quality of education. The dimensionof job satisfaction in this study is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which is measure individual satisfaction according to the following elements:

i) **Psychological needs** – The fundamental requirements of persons pertain to their biological needs (Qasimov & Israyilova, 2017). The psychological requirements of individuals exhibit variations and often adhere to a hierarchical structure, wherein basic physiological demands take precedence over social needs at a more advanced level (Aktas & Şimsek, 2015).

ii) **Safety needs** – These factors encompass the necessity for safeguarding, assurance, organization, legislation, boundaries, and constancy (Cüceloğlu, 2016). The fulfillment of these wants is anticipated to ensure the long-term contentment of the basic needs (Uysal et al., 2017).

iii) **Belongingness needs** – These needs encompass several factors such as work group dynamics, familial connections, affectionate bonds, and interpersonal relationships.

These needs are alternatively referred to as social needs. At this stage, individuals actively pursue companionship, romantic partnerships, and tend to incorporate others into their personal coping strategies (Uysal et al., 2017).

iv) **Esteem needs** – encompasses several aspects of an individual's self-esteem, including their sense of achievement, mastery, independence, status, domination, prestige, and management responsibility. Individuals in this context exhibit a desire for recognition and a sense of inclusion, seeking to integrate themselves into a web of interpersonal connections (Griffin & Van Fleet, 2013).

v) **Self-actualization needs** – According to McGregor (2017), self-actualization needs refer to individuals' pursuit of personal progress, self-fulfillment, and the realization of their full potential in life, sometimes accompanied by the desire for peak experiences.

Teacher Motivation

The motivation of teachers is a topic of great interest that has garnered significant attention from scholars in the disciplines of learning and education. In recent years, there has been a notable surge in scholarly research focused on the topic of teacher motivation. This area of study has been recognized as a pivotal component that is intricately linked to other important variables within the field of education, such as work satisfaction and teaching competencies. Research has demonstrated that exploring the subject of teacher motivation is vital for comprehending educational change, the psychological satisfaction of teachers, their instructional methods, and overall teacher welfare (Pourtoussi et al., 2018; Roohani & Dayeri, 2019). According to the research conducted by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), it has been shown that teacher motivation can serve as a catalyst for positive academic outcomes in educational institutions, and can also be influenced by leadership style. Therefor examining the current research in the field should provide a new insight on this concept.

Teachers have a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of the classroom, serving as invaluable assets to schools and the learning process by creating an engaging educational environment. Therefore, the alteration in the educational process is not just associated with the school's leader but also with the teachers (Dörnyei, 2018). The motivation of teachers plays a crucial role in contemporary educational institutions. The adverse attitudes exhibited by school administrators towards instructors and their proposals have the potential to generate frustration among teachers, thereby impacting their motivation levels. This can be attributed to the perceived absence of support and recognition from the school administration (Roohani & Dayeri, 2019). Hence, it is imperative to emphasize the significance of teacher motivation and fostering a robust relationship between school administration and instructors as crucial determinants of success in the learning process and the cultivation of a sense of belonging among educators (Patrícia, 2019). Similarly, Safdari (2018) discovered that educators in primary schools concurred on the importance of the majority of motivational tactics. Whereas Herzbergs theory suggests that motivation of employees is based on two main dimensions, namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivations, it is imperative to study the impact of these factors on teacher satisfaction.

Research Methodology

There are various methods and procedures used in this research study to investigate, explore and analyze the data so research questions can be answered. This s provides research methodology of this study. For this study, qualitative research design is selected because the

focus of the research is on exploration of faculty experiences of job satisfaction. It will be studied the lived experiences of faculty concerning satisfaction of job based on in-depth reflective description.

Data Collection Methods
The primary aim of qualitative data collection in this study is to grasp a deeper understanding of the spoken words. Participants in this research consist of faculty members at KU. Hence, qualitative data collection methods, particularly faculty interviews, are utilized to glean further insights into the job satisfaction experiences of faculty members based on their lived experiences. Moreover, the interpretation and understanding of data will involve identifying common themes and significant meanings among the study participants.

The data collection methods employed include interviews, focus-group interviews, observation, and documentation, all of which are detailed in this section of the chapter. Qualitative data collection is favored in this study due to its ability to effectively capture nuanced insights with a smaller sample size, as well as its capacity to gather descriptive and detailed information from participants. Interviews will serve as the main method for collecting qualitative data, allowing faculty members to express their job satisfaction experiences and sentiments through words and statements.

Given the aim of understanding phenomena, qualitative data collection and thematic analysis, as suggested by Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019), are deemed appropriate. Consequently, this study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon of faculty job satisfaction. Throughout the research process, emphasis will be placed on obtaining rich descriptions of faculty members' job satisfaction experiences, particularly focusing on the impact of compensation pay and training opportunities. These unique perspectives offered by faculty members can contribute to understanding how job satisfaction can be enhanced and improved, thereby enhancing overall working experiences.

Qualitative data collection offers a means to obtain detailed and profound insights into individuals' experiences, emotions, beliefs, and attitudes (Crick, 2020; Goodwin, 2020; Hennin ketal., 2020; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014). According to Lichtman (2012), qualitative methods involve the collection and interpretation of data gathered through interviews conducted with participants in natural settings. Such an approach aims to capture the realities experienced by participants, expressed in their own words (Chandra & Shang, 2019; Lichtman, 2012; McNeill, 2006). Qualitative research endeavors to delve into participants' reflections, offering a holistic portrayal of their opinions, views, and experiences through the analysis of verbal expressions (Creswell, 2012).

The interaction between participants and researchers is central to qualitative data collection Briggs & Coleman (2019); Seidman (2006), fostering a deep understanding of faculty members' perspectives on their circumstances, lives, and experiences as articulated in their own words within this study. As Seidman (2006) suggests, the essence of qualitative data collection lies in comprehending the lived experiences of participants. Therefore, the qualitative approach adopted, based on the principles outlined by Joseph Maxwell Fulton et al (2013); Maxwell (2012), is aligned with the goals and framework of this study. The study's objectives guide its aims, while its theoretical underpinnings provide the framework for analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study employs a qualitative approach for data analysis and interpretation. Utilizing qualitative methods allows for a comprehensive exploration of previously unknown insights, particularly through the analysis of interview data. By engaging with focus group participants via interviews, this study can gather detailed information, facilitating flexibility in the research process. The research objectives and questions necessitate a study conducted in a natural setting, focusing on understanding the meanings and experiences of participants, who in this case are faculty members, within their specific contexts. This involves examining the actions, situations, and events in which participants are involved, considering the interplay of various factors, such as the causes of job satisfaction among faculty members. The research questions will be systematically addressed by presenting and analyzing the collected data in a narrative format. This research study employs thematic content analysis of interviews, focus groups, documentation, and observations to elucidate the specific nuances related to the identified problem and issue, such as faculty members' job satisfaction. Furthermore, narrative data presents an opportunity to delve into the detailed context, revealing events that influence faculty members' decisions and shape their professional lives. Transcripts from interviews and focus groups will undergo analysis using a thematic and content analysis approach. The study involves developing textural descriptions followed by the creation of structural descriptions based on the data collected from faculty members and thematic analysis, (Anderson, 2019).

Result and Discussions

The primary aim of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the job satisfaction experiences of faculty members at KU, focusing particularly on their perceptions regarding compensation, benefits, and training opportunities. The research seeks to investigate how faculty members perceive and experience job satisfaction within the context of KU, aiming to identify key factors influencing their satisfaction levels. To achieve this goal, the study will conduct 12 focus-group interviews, with interview questions outlined in Appendix D.

The purpose of these interviews is to gather detailed insights from faculty members regarding their opinions and experiences concerning job satisfaction. Special emphasis will be placed on the demographic characteristics and backgrounds of the research participants. Specifically, the study targets faculty members who identify as either male or female, aged over 30 years old, possess a doctoral educational background, hold positions as professors or faculty members, and have accumulated more than five years of work experience. Additionally, participants are expected to be fluent in the English language.

By focusing on these criteria, the study aims to capture a diverse range of perspectives from faculty members that can provide rich and nuanced insights into the factors influencing job satisfaction within KU.

Table1
Demographics Characteristics of Participants

Interviewees	Gender	Age	Educational Background	Years of Experience
1	Female	56	PhD in Computer Science	12 Years
2	Male	45	Petroleum Engineering	10 Years
3	Male	62	PhD in Engineering Management	14 Years
4	Male	65	PhD in Electrical Engineering	18 Years
5	Male	76	PhD in Cyber Security	24 Years
6	Male	48	PhD in Machine Learning	10 Years
7	Male	71	PhD in Chemical Engineering	19 Years
8	Male	39	PhD in Health, Safety, and Environmental Engineering	6 Years
9	Male	55	PhD in Mechanical Engineering	11 Years
10	Male	64	PhD in Electrical Engineering	15 Years
11	Male	53	Petroleum Engineering	8 Years
12	Male	56	PhD in Engineering	10 Years

Interviewee 1: Female, 56 years old, PhD in Computer Science, 12 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 2: Male, 45 years old, PhD in Petroleum Engineering, 10 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 3: Male, 62 years old, PhD in Engineering Management, 14 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 4: Male, 65 years old, PhD in Electrical Engineering, 18 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 5: Male, 76 years old, PhD in Cyber Security, 24 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 6: Male, 48 years old, PhD in Machine Learning, 10 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 7: Male, 71 years old, PhD in Chemical Engineering, 19 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 8: Male, 39 years old, PhD in Health, Safety, and Environmental Engineering, 6 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 9: Male, 55 years old, PhD in Mechanical Engineering, 11 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 10: Male, 64 years old, PhD in Electrical Engineering, 15 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 11: Male, 53 years old, PhD in Petroleum Engineering, 8 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Interviewee 12: Male, 56 years old, PhD in Engineering, 10 years of experience as a faculty member in KU.

Conclusion

The findings of this research study illuminate the perceptions and experiences of faculty members at KU, revealing predominantly positive sentiments among participants. A significant majority, constituting 75% of the respondents, expressed feelings of job satisfaction. Faculty members derived satisfaction from various aspects of their roles, particularly in interactions with students, lecture preparations, knowledge sharing, utilization of equipment and facilities, recognition from management, alignment with strategic directions, and attainment of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Regarding compensation pay, the study found that a substantial portion of participants (66%) held favorable views and expressed satisfaction with the compensation provided by KU. They perceived compensation as facilitating positive experiences within their roles, particularly when coupled with the achievement of performance targets and KPIs. However, there were suggestions for further improvement in compensation practices to enhance satisfaction levels. Similarly, the perceptions of training initiatives were predominantly positive, with 75% of participants reporting favorable experiences. Faculty members highlighted the effectiveness of workshop-style trainings over online or non-workshop formats, expressing confidence and improved understanding after participating in such programs. Trainings were viewed as instrumental in fostering job satisfaction and enhancing job-specific competencies, with workshops identified as the preferred mode for skill enhancement. In summary, the study underscores the importance of various factors, including student engagement, compensation practices, and training opportunities, in shaping faculty members' perceptions and experiences at KU. The findings emphasize the role of supportive organizational practices in promoting job satisfaction and professional development among faculty members.

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