

Collegiality, Professional Status, and their Relationship to Job Satisfaction among Employees in Open Distance Learning (ODL) Institutions

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between work environment and job satisfaction among administrative staff in a Malaysian ODL institution. Specifically, it focused on the impact of collegiality (positive co-worker relationships) and professional status on job satisfaction. Using a quantitative survey design, data was collected from 69 administrative staff. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between work environment and job satisfaction ($r = .896, p < .001$). This suggests that employees who perceive a supportive and positive work environment are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs. The study highlights the importance of fostering positive work environments in ODL institutions to enhance employee well-being and performance.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Collegiality, Professional Status.

Research Background

Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions, characterized by their unique educational delivery methods and diverse student populations, face distinct challenges in fostering a positive work environment. A supportive and conducive work environment is crucial for enhancing employee productivity, reducing stress, and ultimately, ensuring the success of ODL institutions. This study focuses on two key dimensions of the work environment: collegiality and professional status. Collegiality refers to positive relationships and interactions among colleagues, while professional status encompasses employees' perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and recognition within the organization. Understanding the relationship between these dimensions and job satisfaction is essential for ODL institutions to create a thriving and productive workplace.

By investigating the interplay of collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction, this study aims to provide valuable insights for ODL institutions. These findings can inform strategies for improving employee well-being, enhancing motivation, and fostering a positive workplace culture that supports the unique needs and challenges of ODL environments.

Problem Statement

Despite the growth and increasing importance of Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions, there is a limited understanding of the experiences of employees working in this sector. ODL employees often face unique challenges, including flexible work schedules, diverse student populations, and demanding workloads. To ensure the success and effectiveness of ODL institutions, it is crucial to understand the factors that influence employee satisfaction and well-being in this context. This study investigates employees' perceptions of the work environment within Malaysian ODL institutions, focusing on collegiality and professional status. By examining how these factors impact employee satisfaction, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by ODL employees. The findings can inform strategies to enhance employee well-being, productivity, and overall institutional effectiveness.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the perceptions of administrative staff regarding collegiality and professional status within the ODL institutions.
2. To assess the level of job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.
3. To investigate the relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of administrative staff regarding collegiality and professional status within the ODL institutions?
2. What is the level of job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions?
3. Is there a significant relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions?

Hypotheses

1. **H0:** There is no significant relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.
2. **H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.

Significance of the Research

The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for ODL institutions' management and human resource departments in understanding the critical role of the work environment in enhancing job satisfaction among administrative staff. Employee attitudes, as precursors to behaviour, can signal potential organizational issues (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Consequently, management should prioritize employee well-being and consider revising HR policies to align with factors that influence job satisfaction. This research contributes to the broader understanding of job satisfaction determinants, enabling not only ODL institutions but also other organizations to foster positive work environments. By focusing on both intrinsic and extrinsic job factors, organizations can boost employee motivation, engagement, and performance (Siagian, 2015).

Robbins and Judge (2015) identified five key indicators of job satisfaction: alignment of work with personal interests and abilities, equitable compensation, supportive supervision, positive co-worker relationships, and opportunities for professional growth. These factors can guide organizations in developing effective motivational programs, reward systems, and overall workplace improvements. To achieve high performance, organizations must prioritize employee well-being and create a conducive work environment (Robbins & Judge, 2015). By investing in employee satisfaction, organizations can enhance productivity, efficiency, and overall organizational success.

Literature Review

Understanding the complex relationship between work environment and employee experiences in Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions is crucial given the unique challenges and demands of this sector. A positive work environment is not only essential for fostering individual employee satisfaction but also for driving motivation, commitment, and productivity, ultimately contributing to the overall effectiveness of ODL institutions. As ODL continues to evolve, cultivating a supportive work environment becomes increasingly vital for fostering innovation and adaptability among staff.

Collegiality

Employees are more likely to remain with a company if they have positive relationships with their co-workers (Fu, 2014). According to Yousef (2016), interactions with co-workers significantly influence employee job satisfaction and organizational engagement. Spell & Eby (2014) found that a positive colleague connection is a key indicator of employee happiness. Employees' decisions to stay with a company are often influenced by their relationships with co-workers (Spell & Eby, 2014). Gao et al. (2014), suggest that prominent employees may choose to stay with an organization due to peer support, even if they have alternative options. Hayes et al (2015), found that work environment characteristics, including coworker relationships, significantly impact job satisfaction and turnover decisions.

Belias and Koustelios (2014), argue that job satisfaction is linked to interactions between employees, co-workers, and supervisors, as well as the organization's culture. While individual differences may influence leadership style preferences, positive co-worker relationships are essential for a harmonious workplace (Herzberg, 1959). To foster a positive work environment, colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates must respect one another and avoid discrimination, sexual harassment, or segregation based on age, gender, or race (Ramjee, 2018; Bakotic, 2016; Awan & Tahir, 2015).

For a positive work environment, managers and employees must have a good working relationship. When an employee cannot get along with their boss or co-workers, it is difficult to maintain enthusiasm for work. Organizational or commercial performance is also influenced by working relationships (Ramjee, 2018). Employee support from their boss and co-workers can motivate them to perform their jobs effectively. Positive working relationships can lead to job satisfaction, which can impact organizational performance (Bakotic, 2016). Employees with good relationships with co-workers and peer support may be more willing to perform tasks outside of their job descriptions and feel comfortable within the organization (Awan & Tahir, 2015).

Awan and Tahir (2015) found that co-worker relationships at the same hierarchical level, without authority over one another, are crucial for creating a positive work environment. Effective communication, mutual respect, and collaboration among colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates are essential for a progressive work environment.

Professional Status

Shi (2017) found a positive correlation between job security and social well-being. Employees in precarious employment situations may work harder to maintain their social standing. Dailey Hebert, Mandernach, Donnellisallee, and Norris (2014) emphasized the importance of career development and advancement in fostering job satisfaction and employee engagement. Opportunities for career growth and development are crucial for cultivating employee efficiency and commitment (Dailey Hebert et al., 2014; Hasan & Mauliah, 2016). A study of sales representatives across four continents by Hohenberg and Homburg (2016) revealed that individual performance and cultural factors influence the attitudes and behaviours of sales representatives. While the sample was primarily composed of sales representatives from different cultures, the results demonstrated that the behaviour of sales representatives and their performance significantly impact their overall attitudes and behaviours. To effectively manage diverse salesforces, organizations should adopt tailored approaches rather than relying on one-size-fits-all strategies (Hunter, 2014). This can help to mitigate the potential negative impacts of internal and external factors on the organization's service delivery.

Relationship Between Work Environment and Job Satisfaction:

Research has consistently shown a positive correlation between work environment and job satisfaction (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015; AbuAlRub et al., 2016; Goh & Lopez, 2016; AlHamdan et al., 2017). Factors such as nurse accommodation (AbuAlRub et al., 2016), participation in hospital affairs (Goh & Lopez, 2016), nursing quality (Goh & Lopez, 2016), and adequate staffing (Goh & Lopez, 2016) have been found to influence job satisfaction. While Herzberg's two-factor theory suggests that work environment factors (hygiene factors) can only prevent dissatisfaction, recent research indicates that they can also positively impact overall job satisfaction (AbuAlRub et al., 2016; AlHamdan et al., 2017).

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among employees in Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions. A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 randomly selected employees from various departments within an ODL institution in Malaysia, ensuring a representative sample of the target population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The research instrument, adapted from Paul E. Spector's Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 2006), consisted of 17 items measuring collegiality, professional status, and overall job satisfaction. Data was collected using Google Forms and analysed using SPSS 22. Descriptive statistics were computed to examine employee perceptions, while Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between variables. Data cleaning and reliability analysis were conducted prior to the main analysis. Results will be presented in tabular format, including frequencies, means, and percentages for relevant variables.

Finding and Discussion

This study assessed employee perceptions of their work environment and job satisfaction. To measure work environment, a weighted mean was calculated based on employees' responses to statements regarding collegiality and professional status. Job satisfaction was measured using a separate set of statements. Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was then used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between work environment and job satisfaction.

There are 3 research questions posted in this research. It include:

1. What are the perceptions of administrative staff regarding collegiality and professional status within their ODL institutions?
2. What is the level of job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions?
3. Is there a significant relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions?

Meanwhile, the hypotheses:

1. **H0:** There is no significant relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.
2. **H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation and Variance for Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

Legends: 4.21-5.00 - Very good /Very satisfied; 3.41-4.20 - Good/satisfied; 2.61-3.40 -

Variables	No. of respondents	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Collegiality	69	2.00	5.00	3.9601	.63274	.400
Professional status	69	1.67	5.00	4.0338	.68156	.465
Job Satisfaction	69	1.40	5.00	3.9464	.78301	.613
Work Environment	69	2.10	5.00	3.8083	.61354	.376
Valid N (listwise)	69					

Somewhat good/Somewhat satisfied; 1.81-2.60 - Bad/Dissatisfied; 1.00-1.80 - Very bad/ Very dissatisfied

The data presented in the table1 shows descriptive statistics for four variables: Collegiality, Professional status, Job Satisfaction, and Work Environment. These variables were measured using a Likert scale with a minimum score of 1 and a maximum score of 5.

- **Collegiality:** Employees reported a mean score of 3.9601 on this variable, indicating a generally positive perception of collegiality. The standard deviation of .63274 suggests a moderate level of variability in responses.
- **Professional status:** Employees rated their professional status higher than collegiality, with a mean score of 4.0338. The standard deviation of .68156 indicates slightly more variability in responses compared to collegiality.
- **Job Satisfaction:** Employees reported a high level of job satisfaction with a mean score of 3.9464. The standard deviation of .78301 suggests a relatively high level of variability in responses.
- **Work Environment:** Employees perceived the work environment positively, with a mean score of 3.8083. The standard deviation of .61354 indicates moderate variability in responses.

The data suggests that employees in this ODL institution generally have positive perceptions of their work environment, including collegiality and professional status. Additionally, they report high levels of job satisfaction. However, there is some variability in responses across all variables, indicating that individual experiences may differ.

The result presented above has answered the Research Question 1: what are the perceptions of administrative staff regarding collegiality and professional status within their ODL institutions?

- **Collegiality:** Administrative staff in the ODL institutions generally have positive perceptions of collegiality
- **Professional Status:** It suggests an even more positive perception from the employees. This indicates that many administrative staff feel valued and respected in their roles.

Research Question 2: What is the level of job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions?

- **Job Satisfaction:** The mean score of 3.9464 for job satisfaction indicates a high level of overall satisfaction among administrative staff.

The data suggests that administrative staff in these ODL institutions generally have positive perceptions of both collegiality and professional status, and they report high levels of job satisfaction. However, there is some variability in responses, indicating that individual experiences may differ.

Table 2

Correlation between work environment and job satisfaction

			Job Satisfaction	Work Environment
Spearman's rho	Job Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.896**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	69	69
	Work Environment	Correlation Coefficient	.896**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	69	69

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The **table 2** above shows the correlation between work environment (measured by collegiality and professional status) and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.

In order to answer the research question 3, the result shows a Significant Positive Correlation: The finding reveals a significant positive correlation between work environment and job satisfaction ($r = .896$, $N = 69$, $p < .001$). This indicates that as the perception of the work environment improves (higher scores on collegiality and professional status), job satisfaction tends to increase (higher scores on job satisfaction).

This finding demonstrates a strong Relationship: The correlation coefficient of .896 suggests a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This implies that a significant portion of the variation in job satisfaction can be explained by variations in the work environment.

As such, hypothesis H1 is accepted. It means that there is a significant positive relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions.

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha for Variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
Job satisfaction	.912	.913	5
Collegiality	.879	.880	9
Professional status	.761	.764	3

The table presents the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the three variables in the study: Job Satisfaction, Collegiality, and Professional status. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, which assesses the extent to which the items within a scale are interrelated and measure a single construct.

Based on the Result, it is Shows that

- **Job Satisfaction:** The Cronbach's Alpha for job satisfaction is .912, which is considered to be very high and indicates strong internal consistency. This suggests that the five items used to measure job satisfaction are highly correlated and effectively measure a single underlying construct.
- **Collegiality:** The Cronbach's Alpha for collegiality is .879, which is also considered to be high. This indicates that the nine items used to measure collegiality are generally consistent and measure a single construct.
- **Professional status:** The Cronbach's Alpha for professional status is .761, which is considered to be acceptable, although not as high as for job satisfaction and collegiality.

Discussion and Implications

This study examined employee perceptions of the work environment at an Open Distance Learning (ODL) Institution, focusing on collegiality and professional status.

Collegiality

The important of collegiality at the work place has been study and recognised by the previous researcher. For instance, the Workplace relationships significantly impact employee well-being and organizational performance (Betzler & Loschke, 2021).

In another study indicated that positive co-worker interactions foster job satisfaction, while negative relationships can create a hostile work environment (Betzler & Loschke, 2021). Findings from this study indicate that ODL personnel generally enjoy positive working relationships. This positive dynamic is crucial for fostering job satisfaction and should be nurtured. These results align with Bulińska and Bagieńska's (2021) research highlighting the positive impact of employee interactions on job satisfaction. Interpersonal trust, a key component of positive coworker relationships, contributes to employee well-being by fostering positive expectations and attitudes within the work group (Bulińska & Bagieńska, 2021).

Professional Status

Administrative employees at ODL institutions generally hold a positive view of their professional status. This finding aligns with research suggesting that perceived professional status is associated with increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Author A, Year; Author B, Year). While Imam and Javed (2019) focused on the relationship between job security and employee happiness, the current study contributes to the understanding of professional status as a distinct factor influencing employee attitudes.

Employee Job Satisfaction

Consistent with positive perceptions of the work environment, ODL Institution employees reported high overall job satisfaction (M = 3.95). This finding aligns with previous research highlighting factors such as working conditions, job security, autonomy, interpersonal relationships, career advancement, and compensation as key determinants of job satisfaction among non-academic staff (Dompelage et al., 2019).

To gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing job satisfaction at ODL Institutions, future research should explore the relative contributions of Herzberg's motivators and

hygiene factors. While the current study provides a general overview of job satisfaction, delving into specific factors can offer more nuanced insights for organizational improvement.

Relationship Between Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

A strong positive correlation was found between work environment and job satisfaction among ODL Institution employees ($r = .896$, $N = 69$, $p < .001$), indicating that employees perceiving a more positive work environment reported higher job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous research (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). These results underscore the critical role of a positive work environment in enhancing employee job satisfaction at ODL Institutions and potentially in similar organizations.

Limitations

The generalizability of this study is limited by its relatively small sample size ($N = 69$) and focus on a single ODL institution. The voluntary nature of survey participation may have introduced non-response bias, potentially affecting the representativeness of the sample. Additionally, the use of a Likert scale questionnaire could have influenced responses due to social desirability bias, where participants may have responded in a way they believed would be viewed favourably.

Future research should consider employing a larger and more diverse sample to enhance generalizability. Additionally, incorporating mixed methods, such as qualitative interviews or focus groups, could provide richer and more nuanced data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between work environment, professional status, and job satisfaction among ODL employees.

Conclusion

Based on the research, there is a strong evidence to support that there is a significant relationship between collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in ODL institutions. This suggests that improving the work environment, particularly in terms of fostering positive relationships and enhancing professional status, can lead to increased job satisfaction among employees in this sector. It is sure that this finding can contribute to a thriving workplace culture that supports employee well-being, engagement, and ultimately, the success of ODL institutions. For the employees, this positive working environment may Promote a healthy work-life balance and reduce stress, improve employee morale, and enhance productivity.

This research contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the relationship between work environment, collegiality, professional status, and job satisfaction among administrative staff in Open Distance Learning (ODL) institutions. The findings extend previous research on job satisfaction determinants, highlighting the importance of specific factors within the work environment. The study offers valuable insights for ODL institutions, which often face unique challenges in creating a supportive and productive workplace. By understanding the critical role of collegiality and professional status in fostering job satisfaction, ODL institutions can develop targeted strategies to enhance employee well-being and performance.

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