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Ong Choon Hee, Shahariah Haris Ong, Lim Lee Ping, Tan Owee Kowang, Goh Chin Fei

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## Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction in the Higher Learning Institutions in Malaysia

Ong Choon Hee, Shahariah Haris Ong, Lim Lee Ping, Tan Owee Kowang, Goh Chin Fei

Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia.

Corresponding Author: [ongchoonhee@gmail.com](mailto:ongchoonhee@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the importance of job satisfaction in the higher learning institutions in Malaysia and identify the factors that influence job satisfaction. This study used Herzberg Two-factor Theory to determine how relevant hygiene and motivator factors are related to job satisfaction among the Malaysian faculty members. Among the factors identified are company policy, supervision, work condition, salary, recognition, the work itself, growth and achievement. This study also provides theoretical implications to guide future research and offers practical implications to the management in the development of job satisfaction among faculty members. Given that employee job satisfaction is vital and important to the high learning institution, factors influencing job satisfaction need to be given extra attention so that high quality of education and positive student's learning outcomes can be sustained and achieved successfully.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, Higher Learning Institution, Herzberg Two-Factor Theory.

### Introduction

In recent years, the increasing competitive global economic changes have led to rapid changes in the world of work. These challenges and competitions in the global market have caused the demand of competent and high performance workforce in the organizations (Mosammod et al, 2011). In order to survive and thrive under an environment of extreme uncertainty, workforce in Malaysia needs to improve its quality of services rendered and products produced (Edward et al, 2009). The overall organizational performance depends heavily on the effectiveness and efficiency of its workforce. In order for organizations to achieve high performance, it is absolutely necessary for the organization to have a highly satisfied workforce. In order to run an organization smoothly, effectively and efficiently, the most valuable and indispensable factor an organization need is a competent, effective and productive human resource (Mosadeghrad, 2003). Effective organization should have a culture that encourages maximum employee satisfaction (Bhatti and Qureshi 2007). These satisfied employees will affect the customers and organizational productivity (Potterfield, 1999). Many studies

have identified that employee's job satisfaction is one of the factors that contributed to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Cordeiro (2010) claimed that the success of the organization is depending on hiring and retaining satisfied employees. In a study of Froeschle and Sinkford (2009), it was found that the increased job satisfaction has helped staff retention in colleges and universities. In the educational context, the relevance of job satisfaction and motivation are very crucial to the long-term growth of any educational system around the world (Schulze, 2006). Fauziah et al (2009) studied on the level of job satisfaction amongst Malaysian academic staffs, and expressed that successful educational programs were depending on the important contributions of effort, involvement and most importantly on the overall academic staff professionalization. She further emphasized that academic staff job satisfaction, commitment and retention are crucial to the effectiveness of the academic institutions. A positive and healthy university climate translates commitment into increased academic staff's job satisfaction. In 2011, Maria et al, pointed that academic staff job satisfaction and motivation play an important role in contributing towards positive outcomes of the institutions and students' learning. An organizational climate that is healthy will not only increase job satisfaction of the academic staffs, but also improve learning motivation and increase productivity of the university.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is an important element of success in an organization (Amburgey, 2005). This topic has not only captured the interest of organizational employees, but also of researchers around the globe (Lu et al, 2005). The main reasons why this topic is important to be highlighted is due to the success of an organization depends on the hard working, loyal, motivated and satisfied workforce. They are among the main determinants of success of an organization (Bushra et al, 2011). Bushra et al (2011) defined job satisfaction as a level where a worker is happy, pleased or satisfied with his or her profession. It is a positive and pleasant feeling about a person had obtained from his or her career's performance (Belias et al, 2014). Job satisfaction is necessary for the workforce well-being as it reflects what is the individual reaction towards their job (Raja et al (2014). If job satisfaction is absent, it is believed that it will create disgruntled employees who definitely unable to perform at the best of their capabilities (Muhammad et al, 2009). Job satisfaction is the worker's positive feeling in their work. It is an important element that employees tend to be more productive and motivated when they are satisfied and happy (Parasuraman et al, 2001). Job satisfaction is also attained when one is feeling pleasure of achieving an achievement at work (Locke, 1976). Locke (1976) also defined job satisfaction as the cognitive, affective and evaluative reaction employees have towards their job. Motivation guru, Herzberg (1968) further defined job satisfaction in terms of motivator and hygiene factors. They concluded that among factors that can cause job satisfaction are responsibilities, growth, recognition and achievement, whereas factors that can cause job dissatisfactions are company policy, pay and the relationship between leaders and subordinates. It is vital for each and every organization to create a great working experience for their employees. Happy and motivated workforce will guarantee company's long term success (Shriar, 2014) and it is believed that job satisfaction by all workforces in any industry is very much directly related to their level of motivation. Thus job satisfaction is not only important to staffs, but also to the employers as job satisfaction is able to enhance motivation that will in turn increase productivity and reduce staff turnover.

Bloomfield (2014) believed that job satisfaction is what the employees feel about their work and is based on numerous factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the individual. Job satisfaction is very important as it is mostly influenced by the capabilities of the person towards completing a task and the way the organization values its workforce. Based on numerous researches that have been conducted for decades (Altman, 2002; Roberts, 2004), even though the definition of job satisfaction varies between a researcher to another, a commonality exists among them that job satisfaction is a job related emotional reaction. It is important for employee job satisfaction to be met as they will help organizations to grow, develop, flourish and improve in accordance to the market trend and compete internationally in an efficient manner (Bushra, 2011).

### **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg developed this theory from a series of interviews he performed with accountants and engineers. Among the questions asked were what satisfied these people at work and what dissatisfied them at work? From his research, he found that there are two factors that influence job satisfaction. He labelled the factors that led to satisfaction at work as motivator and factors that led to dissatisfaction at work as hygiene factor. According to Herzberg (1968), satisfied employees are those who felt their motivational and hygiene factors were met. Motivational factors include nature of their jobs, work achievement, promotion opportunities, recognition and potential career growth, whereas hygiene factors include company policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions. The aspects or dimension of job satisfaction are divided into two principal groups namely job environment itself which includes how people are treated, the nature of job tasks, relation with other people in the work place and rewards. The other group is about the individual factors that the person brings to the job. Noraani (2013) further highlighted that academicians derive their satisfaction from such factors like salaries, fringe benefits, educational policies and administration, working conditions, advancement opportunities, and responsibilities within the job description. This theory was reviewed by Harvard Business School in 2008, and Herzberg believed that the hygiene factors may lead to job dissatisfaction if employers did not put much concern on the relevant contributing factors. It is also mentioned that if job satisfaction is attained by all employees within an organization, it will assist employees to reduce work stress, high turnover and absenteeism. Satisfied employees are believed to be more creative, productive and committed to a given task.

### **Hygiene Factor**

As Herzberg (2008) highlighted, hygiene includes supervision of leaders on followers, salaries, working conditions and interpersonal relationship. Employee's morale is boosted when they feel that their leaders show appreciation in what they deliver, and when leaders hear their suggestions to improvise a work process. Herzberg believed that this hygiene factors will not motivate employees, but is able to help employees in reducing job dissatisfaction when they are properly implemented. In order to implement hygiene factors effectively, leaders in organization need to ensure that friendly working environment is created for their employees. Below are some of the hygiene factors that influence job satisfaction.

***Company Policy***

Herzberg further iterated that there are various variables that lead to employee's satisfaction. The first variable is the administration of the company. Naeem (2013), in his research which was conducted in different organizations in Pakistan further supported the theory of Herzberg when he found that there is a significant positive relationship between organizational culture and promotion policies with employees satisfaction. This shows that leaders who set the organizational culture and policies need to ensure that the policies are not vague and without ambiguity. Leaders have to explain the necessities and must be willing to listen to employee's opinion over improvement of policies in order to create better working environment. The policies set must be fair, just and impartial (Naeem, 2013).

***Supervision***

The second important factor that affects job satisfaction is supervision. The supervisory role is important in creating a happy workforce as leaders are the people who are managing and have total responsibilities at the workplace for their employees. Mills (2005) highlighted that leaders are crucial as they are the ones who implement strategies, decision making and action successfully. Not only their role is to satisfy the shareholders but to reach a set target, take care of the human capital attentively.

***Work Condition***

The work condition in which academicians work at matter a great deal to them and, ultimately, to their students. Academicians are more satisfied and plan to stay longer in institutions that have a positive work context. Furthermore, although a wide range of working conditions matter to them, the specific elements of the work environment that matter the most are not narrowly conceived to working conditions such as clean, well-maintained facilities and access to modern instructional technology. Instead, it is the social conditions such as culture, leadership, and relationship among colleagues that predominate in predicting academicians' job satisfaction and career plans (Edward, 2009). More importantly, providing a supportive work context appears to contribute towards positive student's learning outcomes.

***Salary***

According to Heathfield (2012), salary is a fixed amount of money or compensation paid to an employee by an employer in exchange for a productive work performed. Remuneration system plays an important role in determining an employee's level of job satisfaction. The growing needs of families with higher living costs force workers to seek for higher income that can guarantee their future and life satisfaction. If individuals believe that they are not well compensated, a state of emotional dissatisfaction will develop. According to Lawler (1973), employees' pay satisfaction usually influenced their job satisfaction. Tang et al. (2004) revealed that pay satisfaction is part of job satisfaction, which could lead to higher workers' productivity. Workers are inspired to achieve more, and hence give in all their efforts only if they are satisfied with their pay. Lawler (1973) reported that absenteeism would occur when pay dissatisfaction is present. Based on the research by Mani (2002), 43% of the white collar workers who were absent four or more times in six months were dissatisfied



with their pay, whereas 69% who were absent once or more in six months were not at all satisfied with their pay. Based on many studies conducted, most of them believed that hygiene factors do not directly motivate employees. However, when these factors are missing or inadequate, hygiene factors can cause serious dissatisfaction. Hygiene factors are all about making an employee feel comfortable, secure, happy and lead to job satisfaction. When hygiene factors are not fulfilled, employees will feel something is missing and when this happens over a short period of time, it will cause dissatisfaction among the employees and will definitely hurt the organization badly.

### **Motivator Factor**

The other factor that Herzberg found in influencing job satisfaction is motivation. Motivation affects satisfaction through enhancing individual's need such as recognition, achievement, work itself and responsibility. These needs will create value towards employee's personal growth and learning development. And in contrast to hygiene factors, Herzberg concluded from his research that motivator plays an important role in increasing job satisfaction and are able to increase productivity of the organization (Herzberg, 2008). Below are among the motivational factors that have been identified.

#### ***Recognition***

Recognition is part of the needs of life. The hierarchy of Maslow stated that recognition is one of the important factors that keeps the human being motivated in life (Maslow, 1954). As such the manager should constantly give feedback and recognize efforts made by their employees (Cruz, 2007). They need to communicate effectively, keep them engaged in their position by staying engaged in their efforts. Employees tend to spend more time and put in more efforts as long as their employers appreciate and recognize their contributions (Ballenstedt and Rosenberg 2008).

#### ***The Work Itself***

The nature of the work performed by employees has a significant impact on their level of job satisfaction. According to Luthans (1992), employees derived satisfaction from work which is interesting and challenging, and job that provides them with status. It seems that a work that is personally interesting to employees will likely to contribute to job satisfaction. Similarly, research suggests that task variety may facilitate job satisfaction (Awang et al., 2010). This is based on the view that skill variety has strong effects on job satisfaction, implying that the greater the variety of skills that employees are able to utilize in their jobs, the higher their level of satisfaction (Norizan, 2012). Norizan (2012) also postulated that the most important experience influencing a person's job satisfaction comes from the nature of work assigned to the employees by the organization. She claimed that if the job entails adequate variety, challenge, discretion and scope for using one's own abilities and skills, the employees who perform the job are likely to experience job satisfaction. Besides, job enrichment involves workers in a way that they were given a wider range of more complex and challenging tasks surrounding a complete unit of work. On the other hand, job enlargement is defined as workers were given a greater variety of tasks to perform (not necessarily more challenging) which should make the work itself more interesting and this should give a greater sense of achievement and job satisfaction to the employees.

### ***Growth***

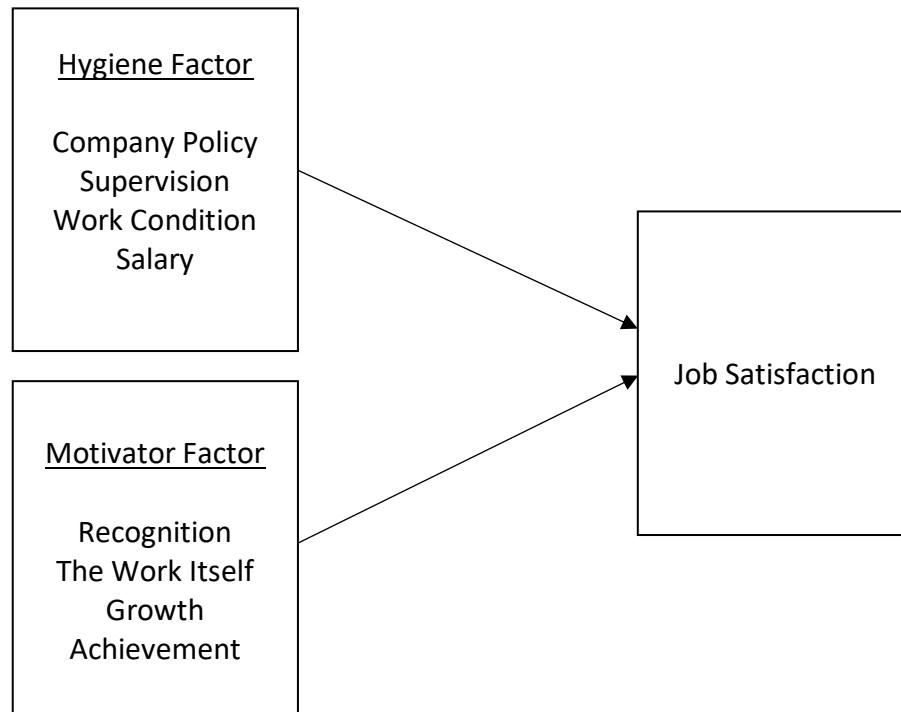
Providing employees with the opportunity for growth is also a major contributor to job satisfaction. This is because performing the same task or job seems uninteresting. Therefore, it is necessary to assign employees with work that can be accomplished but stretches their abilities (Timpe, 1986). It is a good opportunity to see the abilities of lower level employees. Giving employees new projects or goals allows them to become creative and skilful in new areas. This broadens their knowledge while they are becoming a more valuable asset to the company. Lateral movement does not change the status of the employee, but helps them learn more about different aspects of the company. Performing a different job gives the employee a change of pace and direction entirely. The employees may find that they enjoy a different branch of the work better than the one previously held in terms of personal growth.

### ***Achievement***

Employees will feel satisfied when they achieved a set of goal and are recognized for their efforts. This further enhanced the employees to be more innovative, productive, efficient, committed and have belongingness to the organization. Job satisfaction is a worker's sense of achievement and success on the job. It is generally perceived to be directly linked to productivity as well as personal well-being. An employee feels the joy and achievement when he loves what he is doing, doing it well and being rewarded for the efforts. Through this achievement, employees will feel more enthusiastic and happy with the work. Being happy, satisfied and motivated, employees will work better as they enjoyed the feeling of fulfilment. Motivator factors are essential in influencing employee satisfaction. It reflects the employees' crucial need at work. The absence of these factors will directly impact employee job satisfaction and will result in unfavourable outcomes. Demotivated and unsatisfied employees will definitely cause an increase in turnover, absenteeism rate, high customer's complaint in the organization. As such, it is important for employers to pay attention to these factors so that they can produce satisfied, happy and productive workforce.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In developing the proposed theoretical framework, this paper elects to deal with the Herzberg Two-factor Theory of job satisfaction (Herzberg, 2008). Based on the write up and previous findings in the literature review, a theoretical framework was developed as presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework**

### **Research Implications**

This study intends to show a better understanding of the reasons why it is essential to retain employee satisfaction in higher learning education in Malaysia. It also highlighted the factors contributing or influencing employee job satisfaction in the same context. By knowing the underlying reasons, the management of these intuitions will be able to design a programme or policy that will enhance their academicians' job satisfaction. Understanding individual goals, coupled with wider skills and abilities, can lead to greater opportunities. Individuals are seen as valuable assets to an organizations. It is essential for employers to take note on what contributes towards employee job satisfaction. If the institution is not able to do that, it will definitely deter the motivation of these academicians and will interfere their teaching focus. Loss of teaching focus would affect student's academic performance. Besides, the most severe impact to the university is that these lecturers will look for other work opportunities which are more secure and provide them with higher job satisfaction. By implementing the correct strategies to increase job satisfaction, higher learning institutions will be able to enhance employee's loyalty and a promising excellent organizational performance.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the discussion above, it is essential for employers to ensure employee job satisfaction is at the maximum level. They need to address the issue of employee job satisfaction to improve work happiness. The education world now demands for quality staff to produce quality students. As such,



great efforts need to be implemented in producing happy, motivated, satisfied and productive academicians. Satisfied employees deliver better service because they are able to better understand their customers, and in the case of a university, its customers are its hard-earn and quality-demanding students.

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