

JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK ETHICS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN A SOUTH AFRICAN AND A ZIMBABWEAN GROUP

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and work ethics using participants from a South African and Zimbabwean University. 200 participants took part in the study. 60 academic and 40 non-academic members of staff were randomly drawn from each of two universities, one from each country. Significant correlations were reported between overall satisfaction and having a lot of money and investing it, working like a slave at everything one does until satisfaction, hard and succeeding, life meaningfulness and leisure time, leisure time interesting than work, and learning better on the job by striking out boldly on their own than by following the advice of others. Overall, a comparison between the South African and Zimbabwean group showed that the two groups differ on 25 out of the 65 variables with the South African group exhibiting higher mean scores.

Keywords: job satisfaction; protestant work ethics, human capital, work attitudes

1. INTRODUCTION

Human capital is an indispensable factor in the day-to-day survival of organisations. The quality of the human capital that an organisation has at its disposal affects the efficiency with which organizations produce specific products or services. However, organisations do not only exist to combine and transform scarce factors of production into products and services destined to fulfil the basic societal needs but to provide some of employment, work. Work occupies much of our day-to-day life. It provides the economic basis of our lifestyles, defines and shapes our self-concept (Greenberg and Baron, 2003). Given this importance, it is therefore essential that organisations provide jobs with motivational structures that shape the right work attitudes in order to make it interesting and worthwhile. One of the work attitudes which has a significant impact on personal, social and work life is job satisfaction (Sempene, Rieger and Roodt, 2002).

The importance of job satisfaction as a work attitude can be evidenced by the attention that the construct has received in the academic literature (Singh, 2010; Bowles and Cooper, 2009; Robbins, 2005; Crafford, Moerdyk, Nel, O' Nell and Schlechter, 2006) describe job satisfaction as the quality of life at work as experienced by the employee and also as a condition that could be promoted by social responsibility programs executed by the employer.

It can be regarded as a relatively constant attitude that is formed mainly by social and interpersonal processes in the working environment (Taylor, 2008). In short, job satisfaction relates to feelings that an individual holds towards his or her job (Robbins, 2005). Much of the research on job satisfaction focuses on primary factors, that is, attributes of “good” jobs as explanations of worker satisfaction. This approach argues that two types of job characteristics are of crucial importance in the attainment of satisfaction among workers: the job's internal rewards (such as having a diverse and challenging work) and the job's external rewards (such as fair compensation and fringe benefits (Nel, Werner, Haasbroek, Poisat, Sono and Schultz, 2008). Saari and Judge (2004) regard job satisfaction as a person's attitudes towards his or her job, which may vary along a continuum from positive to negative. However, Saari and Judge (2004: 386) holds that job satisfaction does not only depend on a match between the characteristics of the job and the needs of the individual. It also depends on individual expectations, self-evaluation, social norms, social comparison, input/output relations, commitment and priming. The conflicting conceptualization of job satisfaction led to Wanous and Lawler's (1972: 616) conclusion that:

There is a serious lack of good theory about the very meaning of employee satisfaction' Hence the conflicting results found in many ... and different terms being used interchangeably with other terms such as 'morale, employee satisfaction, attitudes and opinions'

However, employee-satisfaction in one form or another has been related to such variables as turnover, absenteeism, productivity, group cohesiveness, general hygiene factors, job rewards, personnel rights, labour unrest and performance appraisal (Jichul and George, 2012; Punnett, Greenidge, and Ramsey, 2007). Previous research has also focused on the relationships between job satisfaction and the following variables; performance, autonomy, supervisor support, equitable wages, social stimulation, working environments and personality variables among many others (Woodward, Shannon, Lendrum, Brown, Mcintosh, Cunningham, 2000). A different view relating to how employees can derive satisfaction from their jobs centres on the need for hard work. Hard work yields good results and is ultimately expected to somehow create feelings of satisfaction with the job. The belief in the value of hard work can be manifested and captured by the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) beliefs.

Coined by Max Weber in 1904, the PWE is the belief that work is valuable, important, and a central life interest (Sung Ho, 2008).). It is nearly always referred to as a set or system of beliefs mainly but not exclusively concerning work (Weber, Gordon and Wells, 2002). Individuals adhering to the PWE agree with statements such as the following:

- Hard work makes one a better person.
- Wasting time is as bad as wasting money. (Hence the popular saying that 'time is money')

- Other things equal, it is better to have a job with a lot of responsibility than one with little responsibility.
- A good indication of one's worth is how well that person does a job (Becker, Sascha, Wößmann and Ludger, 2007).

Although the job satisfaction construct has been studied extensively, very few studies have documented the importance of hard work in the creation of job satisfaction among employees.

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and protestant work ethics among a selected group of academic and non-academic employees in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Why this sample? Firstly, the increasing academic staff turnover necessitates investigation. Secondly, a few or no studies have been done on this topic. Thirdly, academics are responsible for developing the intellectual capital of a nation. Therefore, understanding what gives them job satisfaction will ensure better employment policies and staff retention practices thereby ensuring the long term development of institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

3. JOB SATISFACTION

Several theories of job satisfaction have been developed over years, some of which relate closely to theories of motivation in explaining the theory of job satisfaction. Two of the most well-known theories of job satisfaction are: Herzberg's two factor theory and Locke's value theory. The two-factor theory attempts to explain how job satisfaction is influenced by intrinsic factors such as responsibility and achievement, while job dissatisfaction is influenced by extrinsic factors such as salary and working conditions. Herzberg regards the extrinsic factors as context or hygiene factors. Grobber, Warnich, Carrel, Elbert and Hartfield (2006) refers to the hygiene factors as dissatisfies and argues that some conditions of work operate to dissatisfy people when they are not present or are inadequately managed. The intrinsic factors that relate to the work itself are called motivational factors. The central assumption of the two-factor theory is that if an individual does not imply dissatisfaction but rather no satisfaction. However, the absence of dissatisfaction does not imply satisfaction with the job but only dissatisfaction (Crafford, et al., 2006). With respect to the academic profession, the two-factor theory shows that satisfaction comes in the form of teaching, scholarly achievements and creativity among the academic staff. Faculty members will be satisfied with pay, departmental features and interpersonal relationships. Hence, among the academic staff job satisfaction is related to intrinsic factors and dissatisfaction is related to extrinsic factors (Toker, 2011).

Comparative theories involve concepts such as needs and values. Employees evaluate what they get out of their jobs and determine whether this aligns with their needs and values. Examples of these are Locke's value theory (1976) and Maslow's need fulfilment theory (1984). The value theory holds that satisfaction is the result of what workers expect to get for their efforts compared to what they actually get. The basic premise of the need fulfilment theory is that employees have physiological needs, safety and security needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs. The satisfaction of such needs lead to job satisfaction. An employee must satisfy lower level needs before going to next level of needs. Among the academic staff, generally, tenured and well-paid employment provides satisfaction of the lower needs; their prestigious and autonomous work provides them with esteem needs and needs for self-actualisation. Other theories of job satisfaction focus on the cognitive processes and personality traits of employees. Employees' job satisfaction is based on their perception of what is happening in the job environment itself. This indicated the importance of individual difference in personality and the cognitive processed that colour the individuals' awareness of their job satisfaction (Heather, Raymond, Amy, Lonsbary, 2007).

Who tends to be satisfied with their jobs? Most white collar personnel such as the managerial, technical and professional people tend to derive more satisfaction form their jobs than blue-collar personnel namely: physical labourers and factory workers (Greenberg and Baron, 2003). Furthermore, older people and those with more job security tend to be more satisfied with their jobs than younger and less experienced employees. In contrast, women and members of minority groups tend to be more dissatisfied with their jobs that men and members of majority groups. Job satisfaction was seen follow a U-shaped relationship with tenure in current position (Shields and Ward, 2001), overall job satisfaction increase as the years of experienced increased (Herrera, 2003).

4. PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC (PWE)

Bozkurt, Bayram, Furnham and Dawes (2010) found out students with high protestant ethic scores not only worked longer and accomplished more work but also worked at a much faster rate than those with low protestant ethic scores. However, an-examination of these findings using a different, more realistic and meaningful electronic sorting task showed no statistical relationship between the PWE scores and either performance at, or satisfaction with, the task. Moodrack (2008) questioned the usefulness of the PWE scale as an indicator of work attitudes and behaviours. Tang and Baumeister (1984) further discovered that when given a task called 'work,' high PWE scorers were more motivated to perform it than low scores. High PWE scorers were less affected by positive or negative feedback than low PWE scorers. On the other hand low PWE scorers showed greater intrinsic motivation when give negative feedback. These findings are useful in PWE behaviour modification programs in the work-place (Townsend and Thompson, 2013).

Hoorn and Maseland (2013), in a cross-sectional study showed that unemployed young males have lower PWE scores than employed male subjects and that active pursuit employment tended to be more frequent among those with higher self-esteem, stronger PWE values, and lower apathy. Hoorn and Maseland (2013) further discovered that employment status has a part to play. Those who were employed and then become unemployed tended to show a decrease in their PWE score, while those who went from unemployment into employment showed a significant increase in their PWE scores. They also found that PWE beliefs in both the employed and unemployed were correlated with feelings that one needed a job, the perceived attractiveness of work, self-perceptions of competence, life satisfaction and the perception that the unemployed lack motivation.

The fact that PWE believers are highly individualistic implies that they are more likely to be competitive than co-operative. Furnham and Quilley (1989) used two versions of the prisoner's dilemma game to investigate the co-operation/competition strategies of PWE believers. The results showed that PWE believers are more competitive than co-operative. Eisenberg and Shank (1985) noted that their competitiveness made them achieve low scores and obtain the least reward. Hence high PWE scorers should be able to distinguish between those solutions in which competitiveness is the best strategy from those in which it is the worst in order to achieve better.

A number of studies (Heaven, 2011; Komari and Djafar, 2013) have demonstrated a significant relationship between PWE beliefs, and locus of control. Individuals with PWE beliefs tend to have an internal locus of control that is; they believe that the events that occur in their lives are a result of their own behaviour, ability, personality and effort. Spector (1982) in a review paper, noted that locus of control is related to motivation, effort, performance, satisfaction, perception and job, compliance in authority and supervisory style, as well as an important moderator between incentives and motivation, satisfaction and turnover. For instance, internal tend to prefer piece-rate systems while externals tend to be more satisfied with direct supervision, and to be more compliant in social demands than internals. Similar studies on employment and unemployment and labour market discrimination have demonstrated different levels of internality and externality as a function of work experience. In organizational settings which encouraged personal initiative in career development (personnel policies and promotion practices), internals more than externals played a more active role in their career progress (Leong, Huang and Mark, 2013).

Greenberg (1978) reported that when a competition was perceived to be fair, high PWE scorers chose to distribute rewards according to the equity principle, but when the competition was unfair high PWE scorers attempted to re-establish fairness by compensating the unfairness with the unfair disadvantage.

Low PWE scorers followed the equality principle fairly strictly, keeping approximately half the available reward whether they lost or won. Luna-Arocas and Li Ping Tang (2004) noted that respondents who were asked to allocate salary amounts with high PWE scores paid on an equity basis by taking into account both quantity and duration of work, while those with low PWE scores ignored quality, paid workers equal amounts but did take duration into account. High PWE scorers tended to distribute more rewards on the basis of worker controlled inputs (such as time ability) compared to low scorers. The findings suggest that high PWE scorers may have more sympathy than low scorers for slower less capable workers, who are willing to work hard (Luna-Arocas and Li Ping Tang, 2004). Interestingly is the finding that high PWE scorers practice social loafing, that is, they are particularly poor group members because in order to attain an equitable position they regularly under-perform. However, when put in a group which appears to be more productive than them, they tend to extend themselves (Smirt and Kurau, 2011).

Does workaholism indicate high PWE? Workaholic attitudes to work, time, success, and denial of leisure/pleasure would seem to be closely linked to PWE beliefs. However, according to Furnham (2012), some workaholic traits seem counter-productive such as the inability to delegate or relax and thus workaholism is unlikely to lead to success. Furthermore, the idea that workaholics are neurotic obsessionals full of self-doubt suggests that their beliefs and behaviours are pathological, which is not the case with PWE beliefs and behaviours as currently conceived (Furnham, 2012).

Firestone, Garza and Harris (2005) carried out a study on PWE beliefs, job satisfaction, productivity and the major determinants of PWE beliefs. The study revealed that a positive correlation exists between moral importance of work and pride in craftsmanship and various dimensions of job satisfaction. A significant positive correlation exists between work values and productivity. The results further showed biographical factors to be better predictors than job attitudes. Hence Firestone, et al. (2005) concluded that children develop a strong work ethic when parents exert firm discipline, delegate work assignments, encourage personal responsibility, establish standards of personal conduct as well as encourage religious commitment. Firestone et al. (2005) however, suggested that job enrichment, participative management, and job autonomy do not promote the work ethic.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

A correlational research design was used, correlating job satisfaction items and those of the PWE.

5.1 Participants

200 subjects participated in this study. 120 academic and 80 non-academic staff members were sampled and chosen in this study. The academics were lecturers drawn from a University in South Africa and another in Zimbabwe. 60 academic and 40 non-academic employees were randomly sampled from each of the two universities. Questions were centred on participants' current jobs.

5.2 Procedure

Questionnaires were administered in institutional and organisational premises after permission to undertake study was granted by the relevant authorities. Participants were given a six-page questionnaire to complete. The questionnaires were collected a day after the date of issue. Participants were required to indicate their responses for Section A on a three-item Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire scale ranging from 1 to 3 (not satisfied, neutral and satisfied). For section B (on Protestant Work Ethics) participants also had to respond to a three-item Likert-scale ranging from 1 to 3 (Disagree, Neutral and Agree).

5.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed on the principles of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Buitendach and Rothmann, 2008). The (MSQ) measured the extent to which participants were satisfied with their current jobs. The questionnaire included questions on working conditions, importance of skills learnt, interpersonal relationships and the physical conditions. It also included a single global rating question on overall satisfaction. The questionnaire also comprised questions on work ethics. Participants indicated their response in the section for job satisfaction using 1 for not satisfied, 2 for neutral and 3 for satisfied. In the work ethics section participants indicated their response using the following scale: 1 - for disagree, 2 - for neutral and 3 - for agree. Circling the digit corresponding to the desired response indicated responses. The questionnaire also included a section on biographical information.

6. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The data was analysed using STATISTICA version 8, a statistical analysis software programme (Statistica for windows: 2007). Standard deviations and means were calculated for each of the response categories. Correlation coefficients were calculated to investigate the relationships between job satisfaction, work ethics and various biographical variables.

Table 1: Correlations between the overall job satisfaction facet, PWE and Job satisfaction variables

	Overall Job Satisfaction	Significance Level
A person without debts who inherit a lot of money Should invest it for the future rather than spent it (PWE) .	-0.021	0.05
One should work like a slave at everything he or she Undertakes until he/she is satisfied with the results (PWE) .	-0.16	0.05
If you work hard you will succeed (PWE) .	-0.14	0.05
By working hard an individual can overcome most Obstacles that life presents and make his or her own way In the world (PWE) .	-0.14	0.05
Life would be more meaningful if we had more leisure time (PWE) .	-0.18	0.05
A person can learn better on the job by striking out boldly on their own than by following the advice of others (PWE) .	-0.15	0.05
The valuability of the skills learnt in finding a better job (JS) .	0.45	0.05
The provision of a chance for one to do the things that they are best at (JS) .	0.55	0.05
The pleasantness of the surroundings And the significance of the job in the broader context (JS) .	0.33	0.05

7. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and work ethics among a selected group of academic and non-academic employee in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Table 1 above reveals significant correlation overall job satisfaction and the PWE variables.

These results indicate the importance of investing a lot of hard work in one's job order to derive some satisfaction from it. Satisfaction may not just come on its own accord without the necessary toil to accompany it. This is consistent with the popular saying that "to live like a king, one has to work like slave." Flowing from this argument is the implication that those employees who fail to derive satisfaction from their jobs may not be putting enough effort and labour to earn it. This is in line with Buzkurt et al. (2010) findings who reported that when given a task, high PWE scorers were more motivated to perform it than low scorers. This accentuates the positive correlation between the moral importance of work and pride in craftsmanship (Firestone, et.al., 2005). The results also encourage employees to take the initiative in performing their jobs as indicated by the positive correlation between the job satisfaction and 'a person can learn better on the job by striking out boldly on their own than by following the advice of others; item. Employees should work hard to produce and build quality in their work and enjoy the satisfaction that comes out of their sweat as they get identified with good workmanship.

The results also indicate the importance of leisure in the satisfaction equation. The saying that 'all work without play makes John a dull boy' is confirmed by the results which indicate the importance of leisure. However, Pearson (1998) examined the relationships between job and leisure satisfaction and their contributions to the perception of quality of life, and reported that job satisfaction and leisure satisfaction contributed relatively little to the life quality of minorities and other often "disadvantaged" subgroups compared to "advantaged" workers.

With regard to the comparison of the South African and Zimbabwean groups, significant differences were found in the following items: The most difficult college courses usually turn out to be the most rewarding (-4.27; $p < 0.00030$); most people who do not succeed in life are just plain lazy (-3.84; $p < 0.000164$); people who fail at a job have usually not tried hard enough (-2.69; $p < 0.007767$); a good indication of one's worth is how well they do their work (-3.34; $p < 0.001003$); hard work is a good builder of character (-2.95; $p < 0.015050$); by working hard a person can overcome every obstacle that life presents (-2.72; $p < 0.007063$); savings always pay off in the end (-2.15; $p < 0.036688$); hard work is fulfilling in itself (-2.91; $p < 0.004076$); our society would have fewer problems if people had less leisure time 9-4.04; $P < 0.000077$); leisure time activities are more interesting than work (-2.32; $p < 0.020819$); most people spend too much time in unprofitable amusement (-2.32; $p < 0.021525$) & the credit card is a ticket to careless spending (-2.09; $p < 0.037749$). Generally, the South African group had higher mean scores for most of the significant variables. The South African and Zimbabwean group differed on 25 out of the 65 variables.

Regarding the construct validity of the job satisfaction instrument, a VARIMAX rotated factor analysis yielded two factors with eigenvalues greater than one. These explained 69.1% of the total variance.

A loading larger than 0.7 was regarded as significant and if an item loaded on more than one factor, only the highest loading was considered. Items loading significantly on the first factor mostly explained the intrinsic factors that influence job satisfaction such as the valuability of the skills learnt in finding a better job, overall satisfaction and the provision of the chance to do the things that employees are best at. The second factor can be explained in terms of the extrinsic factors that have a bearing on job satisfaction such as the working environment. These findings are consistent with Herzberg's two factor theory which basically attempts to explain how job satisfaction is influenced by intrinsic factors such as responsibility and achievement, while job dissatisfaction is influenced extrinsic employment factors such as salary and working conditions (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2007).

The work ethic VARIMAX rotated factor analysis yielded two factors with eigenvalues larger than one. These two factors explained 20.36% of the total variance. A loading larger than 0.5 was regarded as significant and if an item loaded on more than one factor only the highest loading was considered. Items loading on the first factor mostly relate to the importance of hard working in the attainment of success. The second factor can be explained in terms of the enjoyment of more leisure time and less hard work.

An overall QUARTMAX rotated factor analysis for both job satisfaction and work ethics yielded four factors, based on a scree-test, with eigenvalues larger than one. These factors explained 38.13% of the total variance. A loading larger than 0.5 was regarded as significant. The first, second and fourth factors relate to the centrality of hard work in protestant work ethics. The third factor hints at the importance of leisure.

7.1 Suggestions for future research

Suggestions for further research highlight the need to incorporate other tertiary institutions (as well as other industries) in order to compare the results and to increase the generalizability of the results. The use of the English Language as the mode of communication affected the non-academics some of whom were not conversant with the language. Future studies should also translate the research instruments to suit the mother language of the respondents. The relevance of the PWE in South African context and its correlates should be studied further.

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