

# A Review of Research on Job Satisfaction

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## ABSTRACT

This article briefly describes the concept of job satisfaction, its categorization, and the theories related to job satisfaction. And finally, it provides ideas related to the future research direction of job satisfaction.

## KEYWORDS

Job Satisfaction; Equity Theory; Two-Factor Theory.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction (Job satisfaction, JS) is also known as job satisfaction, Hoppock in 1935 First proposed job satisfaction, he believes that job satisfaction is the psychological and physiological aspects of employees, the feeling of satisfaction with the environmental factors, that is, the subjective response of workers to the work situation. Hoppock put forward the concept of job satisfaction, and one after another, scholars at home and abroad first proposed job satisfaction, he believes that job satisfaction is the psychological and physiological aspects of employees, the feeling of satisfaction with the environmental factors, that is, the subjective response of workers to the work situation. Hoppock put forward the concept of job satisfaction, and one after another, scholars at home and abroad participated in the study of job satisfaction. After Hoppock put forward this concept, there are scholars at home and abroad participated in the study of job satisfaction, due to the scope of the study, the purpose of the study, and the theoretical framework of the study being different, the academic community does not have a definite concept of job satisfaction, but scholars generally agree that job satisfaction is the degree of satisfaction that an individual obtains in the work. These different definitions can be broadly categorized as follows:

### 1.1. Comprehensive Definitions

A general explanation of job satisfaction only, characterized by the fact that job satisfaction is a single concept without dealing with the dimensions, causes, and processes of job satisfaction, is an attitude held by the employee towards their job itself and the environment and is an emotional reflection of the employee's total job role. The most common way to measure employee job satisfaction is to ask employees directly about their level of satisfaction, without having to split it into different dimensions. Gap Definition (Expectational Definition).

This category of definers in this category view employee satisfaction as the difference between the value they expect to receive and the value they receive in a given work environment. Employee job satisfaction is considered to be the degree of satisfaction of an individual as a professional about their life satisfaction and overall satisfaction and is the evaluation of job satisfaction after comparing the expectations of the combination of salary, working environment, etc. with the actual combination of

salary and working environment. Holding such a definition the research scholar is American psychologist Vroom, he believes that employee job satisfaction depends on the degree of individual expectations and the actual achievement of the degree of coincidence of expectations, the failure to achieve the expectations will produce a sense of unsatisfactory, only when the extent to expectations of the work is greater than the expectations of his expectations, will result in a feeling of job satisfaction.

## **1.2. Referential Definitions**

This type of definition considers job satisfaction to be the result of employees' interpretation of the characteristics of their job according to their frame of reference, as an effective response to the dimensions of reference of their job. It is argued that the "objective" characteristics of the organization or work environment are not the most significant factor influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors, but rather the "subjective" feelings and interpretations of these objective characteristics, which are affected by the individual's self-referential frame. Instead of the "objective" characteristics of an organization or work environment being the most important factor influencing employees' attitudes and behaviors, employees' "subjective" feelings and interpretations of these objective characteristics are the most important factors, and these feelings and interpretations are influenced by the individual's self-referential frame of reference. Zhang (2003), a researcher who holds such a definition, defines job satisfaction as job satisfaction is the result of an individual's interpretation of job characteristics according to their frame of reference, in which there are many factors involved in the ability of a certain work environment to influence job satisfaction.

## **1.3. Definition of Dimensionality**

Definitionalists of this type view job satisfaction as an employee's emotional response to this particular dimension of work. There are conflicting accounts of the types of job satisfaction dimensions. Smith (1969) and others categorized job satisfaction into five dimensions: the job itself, promotion, supervisory oversight, salary, and workmates. Vroom (1964) identified seven dimensions including the organization itself, promotion, job content, direct supervision, monetary treatment, work environment, and work associates.

Cavanagh's comprehensive definition of job satisfaction, which is widely accepted and used today, is that job satisfaction is the degree to which an individual demonstrates that they like their job.

## **2. DIMENSION OF JOB SATISFACTION**

Scholars mainly use the definition of job satisfaction as the basis for the division of its dimensions, including three, four, six, seven, and eight dimensions. For example, as early as 1935, Hoppock also divided job satisfaction into four dimensions including fatigue, leadership style, job monotony, and working conditions when he defined job satisfaction. However, in 1973, Vroom divided job satisfaction into seven dimensions which included the organization itself, promotion, job content, direct supervisor, monetary treatment, job treatment, work environment, and work colleagues. Meanwhile, Mueller (1990) divided job satisfaction into eight dimensions, including salary and benefits, interpersonal relationships, recognition, decision-making level, whether family and work are in conflict, development channels, and learning and exchange opportunities. In 2017, Soderlund divided job satisfaction into three aspects: job content, wage and salary, and job promotion.

## **3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

In terms of examining the determinants of job satisfaction, most domestic and international studies have been in the context of a particular motivational theory. Based on the literature review, it is

observed that many studies are based on one or several of the following motivational theories to study employees' job satisfaction. Among the motivation theories, the job characteristics theory, ERG theory, two-factor theory and equity theory are more widely used and have a significant impact on the theory and practice of business and education management, which are of great theoretical significance for the analysis of employee job satisfaction.

### **3.1. Job Characteristics Theory**

Hackman and Wageman are the founders of modern job characteristics theory. Based on summarizing previous research, they argued that employees' responses to jobs have been determined by their perceptions of job characteristics, rather than by the objective characteristics of the job. On this basis, Demerouti et al. (2014) carried out a comprehensive integration of various types of job characteristics and proposed a more comprehensive job characteristics model-JD-R job characteristics model, which divides the general sense of the work environment according to its characteristics into two categories of job characteristics: job requirements and job resources, and job requirements refer to the amount of effort that employees need to make to Job requirements refer to the efforts that employees need to make to effectively complete their work, including physical and psychological efforts. Work resources refer to the material and psychological resources that employees need to obtain from the organization to complete their work effectively. The theory suggests that work demands are "inhibitory factors" that deplete employees' physical and psychological energy, for example, the existence of time pressure to accomplish work goals can make employees feel tired, insecure, and other negative states. Work resources, on the other hand, are "facilitating factors" in the work, which can enable employees to "recover" from the energy consumed by work requirements, satisfy the physiological and psychological needs of employees, and promote the realization of work goals, which not only improves the job satisfaction and work performance of employees, but also contributes to the improvement of employees' work satisfaction and performance, and also facilitates the improvement of employees' work performance. Not only can it improve employees' job satisfaction and performance, but also helps to promote employees' personal growth and development. At the same time, the theory suggests that employees' job satisfaction is generated by stimulating three psychological states in employees, namely: job meaning, sense of responsibility, and understanding of work results.

### **3.2. ERG Theory**

Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Alderfer proposed the ERG theory, which is the theory of survival needs (existence), relationship needs (Related), and growth needs (Growth). According to Li (2009), survival needs include the need for survival and security in the hierarchy of needs theory; relationship needs indicate the relationship with others, and even the acceptance of this relationship by others, which corresponds to the social needs in the hierarchy of needs theory; and growth needs include all the needs for personal growth and development, including the need for respect and the need for self-worth realization in the hierarchy of needs theory. The theory suggests that multiple needs can exist simultaneously. The theory retains the hierarchy of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, but it is more flexible and believes that the hierarchical order of needs of different individuals can be different from the hierarchy of needs theory, at the same time, it also believes that individuals can have various levels of needs in the same period, and in addition, the contribution of the ERG theory is more reflected in practice, which encourages business managers to pay more attention to the growth of employees, pay attention to the needs of higher levels, preventing the need for employees to grow and develop, and preventing the need for employees to grow and develop, and avoiding the need for employees to grow and develop. It encourages business managers to pay more attention to the growth of their employees and their higher-level needs, to avoid employees falling back to lower-level needs when their higher-level needs are not satisfied, which may lead to lower job satisfaction.

Since human needs change over time, ERG theory requires managers to consider the hierarchy of employees' needs.

### **3.3. Two-factor Theory**

In the late 1950s, the American psychologist Herzberg (Mintzberg) proposed the two-factor theory. He referred to the factors associated with job satisfaction as satisfaction factors or motivational factors, and the factors related to job dissatisfaction as dissatisfaction factors or health factors. It is assumed that job satisfaction is a feeling that employees have about their jobs, which is determined by motivational factors, and that the positive aspects of health care factors are not a sufficient condition for generating job satisfaction. Therefore, only motivational factors can motivate employees to increase their job satisfaction and productivity. Herzberg's two-factor theory has been widely adopted in empirical studies of employee job satisfaction. Still, Yu (2008) gives a different view of what the two factors contain, arguing that what health and motivational factors contain may be different for different countries due to differences in social systems, national conditions, and national traditions.

### **3.4. Equity Theory**

According to Adams' (1963) equity theory, job satisfaction arises from employees comparing their gains with others, which means that almost all of their dissatisfaction and satisfaction stems from their perceptions of fairness after "comparison". When employees compare with others, or with their work in the past, they will have a judgment and attitude towards their reality. According to equity theory, for most people, the factors that affect job satisfaction include compensation, the job itself, advancement, management, workgroup, and working conditions.

The above theories of motivation summarize the impact of motivational factors on employee job satisfaction from different perspectives, and in general, the greater the role of motivation, the higher the motivation of the employee and the higher the job satisfaction. The above theories guide the development of job satisfaction scales and finding countermeasures.

## **4. MEASUREMENT OF JOB SATISFACTION**

Currently, many large multinational corporations have measured employee satisfaction as an evaluation criterion for their management diagnosis, and most of the measurement methods accepted by the corporations mainly contain the following two main types, namely, the single holistic assessment method and the sum of job elements rating method. In terms of the single overall assessment, refers to the respondents answering the question based on their overall work feelings. Wonder (2018) pointed out in his study that when measuring job satisfaction, the results are highly similar regardless of whether using unitary items or multidimensional assessment items. However, some scholars still point out that the single overall assessment method cannot help the organization to truly understand the specific problems that exist in employee satisfaction and cannot provide targeted strategies for managers to carry out improvement work. Employee satisfaction is categorized into multiple dimensions under the sum-of-job-factors scoring method, which results in high and low levels of employee satisfaction. In practice, it is more complicated than the previous method, but it can obtain more reliable evaluation results and provide more practical optimization paths for enterprise managers, thus helping enterprises to solve the problems of employee satisfaction.

The research conducted in the domestic academic field on employee satisfaction is still in the primary stage. Gao et al. (2017) conducted a satisfaction survey with Jinan bus drivers as the object, Ma et al. (2019) analyzed the relationship between boundary management matching and job satisfaction, and Lin et al. (2020) carried out a satisfaction survey with nurses as the object of the study, and the above scholars used a single overall evaluation method to carry out their research activities. Zhang et al. (2020) analyzed the satisfaction of community health workers using the holistic evaluation method

with community health workers as the research object. Zhang (2020) introduced the job description index method, which is simple and easy to operate and does not have to consider the limitations of the respondent's education level when conducting a study on the job satisfaction of kindergarten teachers. In addition, some other measurement methods are utilized more, such as the interview measurement method, key events measurement method.

## 5. INFLUENCING FACTORS OF JOB SATISFACTION

The research content on job satisfaction can be summarized into three types: the first one is the research on the influencing factors and moderating variables of job satisfaction; the second one is the research on the outcome variables of job satisfaction; and the third one is the research on the measurement of job satisfaction. Currently, more research is on the factors influencing employee job satisfaction.

Hoppock (1935) in his study pointed out that job satisfaction is mainly influenced by two main factors, namely the job itself and the surrounding environment, such as the diversity of the job itself, the management style of the company, and so on. Vroom (1962) pointed out that employee satisfaction is mainly influenced by factors such as the job, promotion opportunities, etc. Seashore and Taber (1975) in their study summarized the influencing factors of employee satisfaction into 12 major types, which mainly include demographic characteristics, perceptions, political environment, and internal environment of the organization. At the level of personal factors, the influences on employee satisfaction mainly include employee gender and employee marital status, but there are large differences in the impact of such factors on employee satisfaction. Locke (1996) pointed out that ten influences collectively constitute employee job satisfaction, which mainly includes working conditions, coworker relationships, advancement, benefits, compensation, and recognition. Judge et al. (2008) found that employees' core self-evaluation also has a significant impact on enhancing employee satisfaction; meanwhile, Cristiano (2019) in his study found that there is a significant association between gender and employee satisfaction.

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