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14. ABSTRACT

Organizational managers have studied employee job satisfaction for decades because of its anticipated relationship to organizational outcomes (satisfied personnel tend to quit less and do better work). Many studies prove this theory. Furthermore, employee motivations such as affective disposition, career orientation, and organizational commitment moderate the link between job satisfaction and organizational outcomes. (For example: job satisfaction affects organizational turnover directly; it also affects organizational commitment, which in turn affects organizational turnover). Current job satisfaction literature extensively investigates these linkages through various moderators, but a gap exists in the premise of these studies. The gap is where job satisfaction fits within a holistic organizational system framework.

This paper seeks to advance job satisfaction scholarship by refining its conceptualization as one component of a greater interactive and complex multi-level system. It explores the ongoing debate concerning how exactly to define job satisfaction, how to measure it, and why it matters to organizations. Further, it examines several moderators at multiple levels (individual, unit, and organization) through the lenses of general systems theory, work design theory, and human resource management all in the context of time (static vs dynamic). Finally, it offers some managerial implications and recommendations for further research. Ultimately, managers can better leverage their organizational knowledge and strengths, enabling them to achieve desirable organizational outcomes by elevating their perspective from job satisfaction as simply a concept in isolation to that of one component within a holistic framework.

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Job Satisfaction and General Systems Theory

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Job Satisfaction and General Systems Theory

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Abstract

Organizational managers have studied employee job satisfaction for decades because of its anticipated relationship to organizational outcomes (satisfied personnel tend to quit less and do better work). Many studies prove this theory.[1] Furthermore, employee motivations such as affective disposition, career orientation, and organizational commitment moderate the link between job satisfaction and organizational outcomes. (For example: job satisfaction affects organizational turnover directly; it also affects organizational commitment, which in turn affects

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[1] Dong Liu, Terence R. Mitchell, Thomas W. Lee, Brooks C. Holtom and Timothy R. Hinkin, *When Employees Are Out of Step with Coworkers: How Job Satisfaction Trajectory and Dispersion Influence Individual- and Unit-Level Voluntary Turnover,* The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 55, No. 6 (December 2012), pp. 1360. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23414259

organizational turnover).[2] Current job satisfaction literature extensively investigates these

linkages through various moderators, but a gap exists in the premise of these studies. The gap is

where job satisfaction fits within a holistic organizational system framework.

This paper seeks to advance job satisfaction scholarship by refining its conceptualization

as one component of a greater interactive and complex multi-level system. It explores the

ongoing debate concerning how exactly to define job satisfaction, how to measure it, and why it

matters to organizations. Further, it examines several moderators at multiple levels (individual,

unit, and organization) through the lenses of general systems theory, work design theory, and

human resource management all in the context of time (static vs dynamic). Finally, it offers some

managerial implications and recommendations for further research. Ultimately, managers can

better leverage their organizational knowledge and strengths, enabling them to achieve desirable

organizational outcomes by elevating their perspective from job satisfaction as simply a concept

in isolation to that of one component within a holistic framework.

<u>Introduction</u>

Job satisfaction is a highly studied phenomenon because of its implications to

organizational makeup and performance. Most job satisfaction research, however, rarely places it

within a greater organizational system framework. Rather its literature explores specific links to

job satisfaction serving as both an input and/or output depending on the linkages.[3] This practice

can help to clarify subsystems within an organization, but is seldom stated outright as such.

Perhaps most writers on job satisfaction assume this holistic organizational system framework as

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[2] Lillie Lum, John Kervin, Kathleen Clark, Frank Reid and Wendy Sirola, *Explaining Nursing Turnover Intent: Job Satisfaction, Pay Satisfaction, or Organizational Commitment?,* Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 19, No. 3 (May, 1998), pp. 305-320. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3100174

[3] Tom D. Taber and George M. Alliger, *A Task-Level Assessment of Job Satisfaction,* Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 16, No. 2 (Mar., 1995), pp. 115-116. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3004079

the theoretical starting point for their research, but without acknowledging it, an information gap exists which ought to be addressed for organizational managers' utility.

Organizations are 'complex' systems, their components and subsystems interact in such a way as to require degrees of probability in order to construct usefully predictive models.[4] Several job satisfaction researchers attempt to construct exactly those type-models through their study of moderators. It is useful then to analyze these moderators through the lens of general systems theory in order to properly place them within a greater systems framework. General systems theory provides the necessary hierarchy of complexity to demonstrate our need for predictive models. Additionally, the theories of work design and Human Resource Management (HRM) help to illuminate the multiple levels of an organization, their dynamic natures over time, and their managerial implications. As counterpoint to the information gap of placing job satisfaction within an organizational framework, much scholarship contextualizes job satisfaction in an employee's work environment.[5] While this addresses many situational relationships within an organization, it is an incomplete organizational systems framework due to its deliberately limited scope of specific work/job facets.

Job satisfaction ought to be directly considered a component of any individual, work related group, or organizational systems framework. Further, job satisfaction literature should nest its studies within the greater interactive landscape of organizations by acknowledging its component nature outright. This serves multiple purposes: it furthers job satisfaction research by reinforcing the complexity of organizations as a whole system. It clarifies moderator relationships for work design theory and HRM outcome models and it garners recognition of the

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[4] Richard A. Johnson, Fremont E. Kast and James E. Rosenzwei, *Systems Theory and Management,* Management Science, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Jan., 1964), pp 370. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2627306

[5] Earl Naumann, *Organizational Predictors of Expatriate Job Satisfaction*, Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1st Qtr., 1993), pp. 62-63. https://www.jstor.org/stable/154971

concept of 'job satisfaction' by cross disciplinary studies interested in organizational systems theory. Job satisfaction is one component of a greater interactive and complex multi-level system, the more organizational managers see it as such, the more effective their efforts at organizational impact will become.

Section 1 - Theoretical Frameworks

General systems theory, work design theory, and Human Resource Management (HRM) provide a lens through which to analyze job satisfaction and its moderators. These theories and tools lend strength to analysis and provide greater utility to organizational managers in their pursuit of desired organizational outcomes. Each construct has several derivatives, all of which have varying degrees of applicability to job satisfaction. Excluding these additional derivatives here is not deliberate, rather this section provides a brief introduction to the overall concepts in order to tie them directly to job satisfaction, its linkages, and their overall place within an organizational system. The introduction of each theory is meant to guide our analysis within the proper context, and ultimately provide practical implications to organizational managers.

1A: General Systems Theory

A system is "an organized or complex whole; an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole."[6] Modern understanding of general systems theory originates from the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Kenneth Boulding, who pioneered the discipline in the early 1950s.[7] Broadly, general systems theory strives to develop systematic theoretical models or frameworks for describing wide-ranging relationships of the empirical

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[6] Richard A. Johnson, et al, *Systems Theory and Management,* Management Science, 367.
[7] idem

world.[8] A useful method for constructing such frameworks involves "structuring a hierarchy of levels of complexity."[9] Basically, building from simple and readily apparent empirical relationships, to greater and more complicated ones, until ultimately the interrelationships become so complex that we are only able to model them with degrees of probability. A commonly cited example of a 'complicated' dynamic system is that of clockwork, as opposed to 'complex' systems such as weather patterns, the human body, or business organizations. Organizations are complex systems; any action managers take will have first, second, and third order effects because of the interrelationships of its component parts. Job satisfaction is just one of these component parts and must be considered as an inherent part of a complex organizational system in order to properly construct predictive models for managerial use.

Mary McMahon and Wendy Patton developed one of the more encompassing Systems Theory Frameworks (STFs) for conceptualizing career theory in 1999 (see Figure 1 below). The inner circle of this STF is the individual, depicting several intrapersonal influences on career decision making. The second circle comprises the individual's social system and wider societal influences. Finally, the outer circle bounds them all in time. Each of the components are dashed lines indicating recursion and open systems (responsive to and partly defined by their environment). The lightning bolts represent chance, as with any complex framework, chance represents unknown elements/interactions and will play a role in trying to predict outcomes.

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[8] Ibid, 369

[9] idem

Figure 1 - Systems Theory Framework for Career
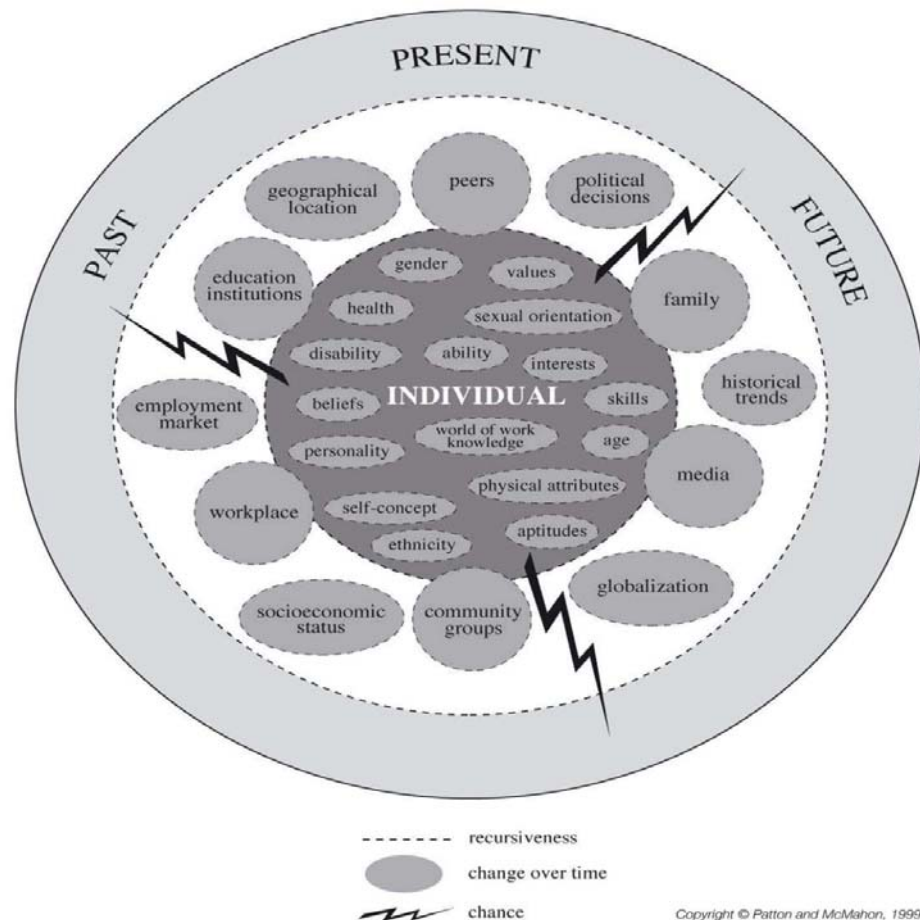
Development[10]

While this STF captures several critical aspects of career theory and perhaps comes closest to

modeling human career behavior, even it does not address job satisfaction directly. Ideally, job

satisfaction/work design theorists could use this framework as a template for a greater

organizational framework where job satisfaction would be nested.

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[10] Wendy Patton and Mary McMahon, *The Systems Theory Framework of Career Development and Counseling: Connecting Theory and Practice*, International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2006), pp 153-166. 10.1007/s10447-005-9010-1

1B: Work Design Theory

Sometimes also called Job Design Theory, work design concerns itself with the inputs, processes, outputs and context of work in organizations.[11] Managers of work design primarily aim to improve or augment employee motivation and work performance, among other aspects of employees' lives. The theory presumes observable and repetitive patterns of employee behavior, processes and contextual features such that they may be categorized and modified.[12] A variant of this theory is the Job Characteristics Theory which focuses on various facets of the work and job environment; notably, job satisfaction is typically considered an output in this theory.

Most job characteristic theorists agree on five core facets: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback as critical predictors of work and personal outcomes.[13] The individual must also process these job facets psychologically in order to have meaning for an organizational model.[14] Several researchers argue that more predictive models should include additional elements in their calculus. Other significant job characteristics such as role ambiguity, task complexity, and role conflict as well as other behavioral, structural, and demographic characteristics will grant better understanding of the overall organizational system that work design managers seek to modify.[15]

Work design theory regularly places the locus of control on the organization, rather than the individual. This is noteworthy when considering work design theory in the context of general

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[11] Timothy P. Munyon, James K. Summers, M. Ronald Buckley, Annette L. Ranft and Gerald R. Ferris*, Executive work design: New perspectives and future directions,* Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 31, No. 2/3, Putting Job Design in Context (FEBRUARY 2010), pp. 433. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41683920

[12] idem

[13] Dong Liu, et al*, When Employees Are Out of Step with Coworkers: How Job Satisfaction Trajectory and Dispersion Influence Individual- and Unit-Level Voluntary Turnover,* 1374.

[14] GREG R. OLDHAM and J. RICHARD HACKMAN, *Not what it was and not what it will be: The future of job design research*, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 31, No. 2/3, Putting Job Design inContext (FEBRUARY 2010), pp. 473. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41683922

[15] Earl Naumann, *Organizational Predictors of Expatriate Job Satisfaction*, 64-65.

systems frameworks, as individuals themselves should be considered open subsystems within an organization (as shown in Figure 1 above). Job satisfaction should also be considered more than merely an output in a greater organizational systems model, as job satisfaction dynamically interacts with both the individual and the organization holistically. The next section will discuss the ongoing debate regarding job satisfaction.

1C: Human Resource Management

Human Resource Management (HRM) is an organizational mechanism to promote goal achievement and make it more orderly and integrated.[16] Specifically, it is designed to manage employment relations, leveraging workers' capabilities and commitment through policies and processes (see Figure 2 below).[17] HRM, at the center of the figure, is often the responsible agency for managing and executing each of the multi-colored organizational programs depicted by arrows. One of its underlying theoretical models is that of the ability-motivation-opportunity model which focuses on programs designed to enhance each of the three dimensions for employees. These programs will have greater or lesser effect depending on the organizational outcome HRM administrators are pursuing.[18]

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[16] Barbara Townley, *Foucault, Power/Knowledge, and Its Relevance for Human Resource* Management, The Academy of Management Review, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Jul., 1993), pp. 518. https://www.jstor.org/stable/258907

[17] John Bratton and Jeff Gold, *HRM - Human Resource Management 6th Edition: Theory and Practice*, Published by Macmillan Education UK, 2017, pp 5.

[18] Kaifeng Jiang, David P. Lepak, Jia Hu and Judith C. Baer, *How Does Human Resource Management Influence Organizational Outcomes? A Meta-Analytic Investigation of Mediating Mechanisms,* The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 55, No. 6 (December 2012), pp. 1264. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23414255

Figure 2 – HRM Policies and Processes[19]

Viewing HRM within its greater socio-economic context, Abraham Maslow's 1954 need-gratification theory of wellbeing becomes a useful construct. Postulating that higher needs become salient as lower needs are gratified, Figure 3 below shows his theoretical hierarchy in the form of a pyramid.[20] This theory is particularly important to HRM because of its motivational implications. Both individual and organizational systems are influenced by the hierarchical level in which they fall. Job satisfaction, as a component of both individual and organizational systems models, will also be influenced by the various hierarchical levels depicted below.

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[19] Graphic drawn from financial website published in 2014: http://skfinancial.com/5-tips-efficient-human-resource-management

[20] Xu Huang and Evert Van de Vliert, *Where Intrinsic Job Satisfaction Fails to Work: National Moderators of Intrinsic Motivation*, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Mar., 2003), pp. 161
https://www.jstor.org/stable/4093657

Figure 3 - Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs[21]
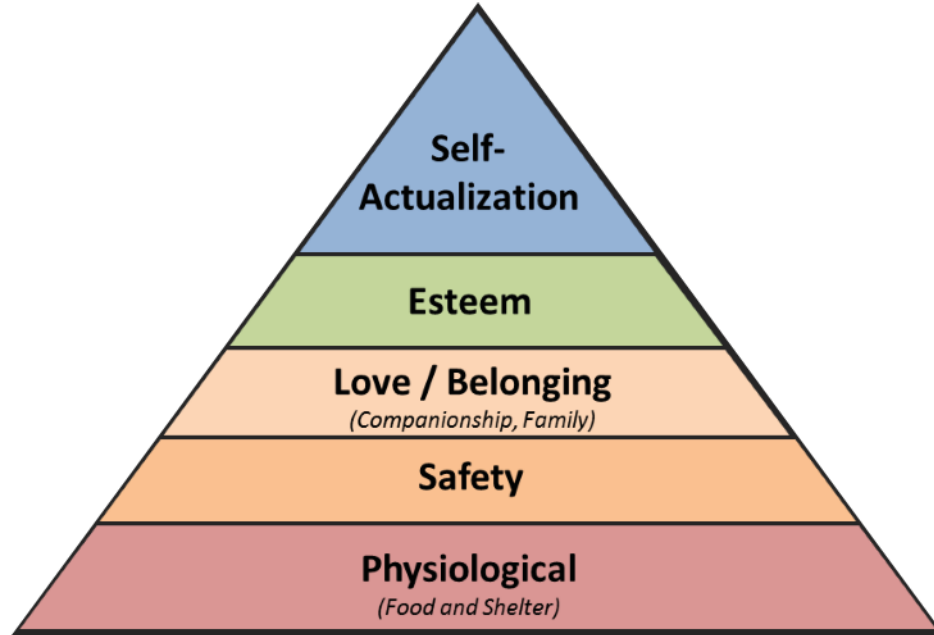
Section 2 – Job Satisfaction Debate

This section explores the competing definitions of job satisfaction, how it is measured, and why it matters to organizations. If we are to fit job satisfaction into a holistic organizational framework it is useful to understand its properties, which vary depending on how we define it. Furthermore, how we define it will determine how/when organizations should best measure it, particularly given the degrees of invasiveness different methods provide. How and when to implement job satisfaction metrics will provide the necessary feedback mechanisms to organizational managers. Lastly, this section examines the most explored pragmatic topic, job satisfaction's organizational relevance.

Most organizations accept the fact that job satisfaction has an impact on work performance and turnover; what exactly that impact is, varies depending on the organization and

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[21] Graphic drawn from website published in 2018: https://www.princetonpolicy.com/ppa-blog/2018/5/21/a-conservative-hierarchy-of-needs

its context. Recognizing the underlying correlation is the first necessary step to then exploring

job satisfaction's various moderators. The prevailing job satisfaction literature is content to

correlate job satisfaction to organizational outcomes, through various moderators such as

organizational commitment, affective disposition, and career orientation, but this only brings us

so far. Exploring these moderators simply serves to create incomplete subsystems within the

context of a holistic framework. It is the recognition of job satisfaction's place within the greater

organizational system which needs addressing in order to become more useful to organizational

managers.

2A: Competing Definitions of Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is often defined as the extent to which an employee has a positive

affective (emotional) orientation or attitude towards their job, either globally (in general) or

towards particular facets of it.[22] This definition of global job satisfaction finds few detractors;

however, many researchers offer alternative definitions and categorizations, particularly when

assessing facet satisfaction. Alternative definitions of job satisfaction argue its theoretical basis

as primarily a cognition, a stable personality trait, an emotion, a mood, or an attitude.[23] These

can be categorized into 'state', 'trait', or 'mood' theories which become particularly important

when researching multi-level causal progression such as those from task experiences, to facet

satisfaction, to global satisfaction.[24]

Two additional categorizations, beneficial for measuring facet satisfaction, are intrinsic

and extrinsic satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction derives from performing the work and

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[22] Duncan Cramer, *Job Satisfaction and Organizational Continuance Commitment: A Two-Wave Panel Study,* Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Jul., 1996), pp. 389.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/2488549
[23] Tom D. Taber and George M. Alliger, *A Task-Level Assessment of Job Satisfaction,* 104.
[24] Ibid 106

experiencing feelings of accomplishment, self-actualization, and identity with the task.[25]

Extrinsic satisfaction derives from the rewards bestowed by peers, superiors, or organizations

and can take the form of recognition, compensation, advancement and so forth.[26] These

categorizations become particularly valuable for work design theory and HRM seeking effective

motivational elements for their employees.

Michael Beer of Ohio State University, further delineates job satisfaction from morale.

Job satisfaction is an individual perception, which can aggregate up but is distinct from morale,

which is a group phenomenon akin to esprit de corps with different properties than job

satisfaction summation.[27] He argues many writers improperly categorize their results as morale

when they are actually measuring job satisfaction. There is additional debate regarding group

satisfaction, sometimes called "organizational climate" and whether it can actually be

distinguished from individual satisfaction.[28] These are important when considering job

satisfaction literature in the context of organizational systems which traditionally encompass

multiple groups of individuals.

2B: Methods/Measures of Job Satisfaction

Methods of measuring global job satisfaction date back to Robert Hoppock's 1935 four

question battery shown in figure 4 below. Despite its age; the speed, applicability and reliability

of this measure remain both valid and relevant today.[29] Because it is less intrusive than more in-

depth measurements, like the 1969 Job Descriptive Index (JDI) which consists of 72 items across

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[25] Earl Naumann, *Organizational Predictors of Expatriate Job Satisfaction*, 63.

[26] idem

[27] Michael Beer, Organizational Size and Job Satisfaction, The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Mar., 1964), pp. 34. https://www.jstor.org/stable/255232

[28] Paul M. Muchinsky, *Organizational Communication: Relationships to Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction,* The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec., 1977), pp. 593-594.
 https://www.jstor.org/stable/255359

[29] Charles W. Mc Nichols, Michael J. Stahl and T. Roger Manley, *A Validation of Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Measure*, The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Dec., 1978), pp. 737. https://www.jstor.org/stable/255715

five facets of satisfaction, many organizations often prefer this type of methodology.[30] While the

JDI and others such as the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (1969) and the Index of

Organizational Reactions (1976) measure facet satisfaction (work, pay, co-workers, supervision,

opportunity for promotion) they only approximate global job satisfaction algebraically, and this

has repeatedly been shown *not* to be equivalent to measuring it directly.[31] This has implications

for a general systems theory approach to job satisfaction in that mathematical approximations are

likely to be incomplete without factoring in the context of the whole.

Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Questions

A. Which one of the following shows *how much of the time* you feel satisfied with your job?
   1. Never.
   2. Seldom.
   3. Occasionally.
   4. About half of the time.
   5. A good deal of the time.
   6. Most of the time
   7. All the time.

B. Choose the *one* of the following statements which best tells how well you like your job.
   1. I hate it.
   2. I dislike it.
   3. I don't like it.
   4. I am indifferent to it.
   5. I like it.
   6. I am enthusiastic about it.
   7. I love it.

C. Which *one* of the following best tells how you feel about changing your job?
   1. I would quit this job at once if I could.
   2. I would take almost any other job in which I could earn as much as I am earning now.
   3. I would like to change both my job and my occupation.
   4. I would like to exchange my present job for another one.
   5. I am not eager to change my job, but I would do so if I could get a better job.
   6. I cannot think of any jobs for which I would exchange.
   7. I would not exchange my job for any other.

D. Which *one* of the following shows how you think you compare with other people?
   1. No one dislikes his job more than I dislike mine.
   2. I dislike my job much more than most people dislike theirs.
   3. I dislike my job more than most people dislike theirs.
   4. I like my job about as well as most people like theirs.
   5. I like my job better than most people like theirs.
   6. I like my job much better than most people like theirs.
   7. No one likes his job better than I like mine.

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[30] Paul M. Muchinsky, *Organizational Communication: Relationships to Organizational Climate and Job Satisfaction*, 595.

[31] Tom D. Taber and George M. Alliger, *A Task-Level Assessment of Job Satisfaction*, 102-103

<u>Figure 4</u>[32]

While these methods are suitable for measuring aspects of the 'state' and 'trait' theories

of job satisfaction they are not adequate to assess its 'mood' theories. Most multi-item job

satisfaction measures are belief-oriented so do not satisfactorily weigh emotional content.[33]

Thus, the relationship between affect and typical measures of overall job satisfaction may be

incomplete. The 'faces' measure asks respondents to choose one of 11 drawings of facial

expressions which represents their feelings at the time.[34] One limitation to mood theory

measurements is the transient nature of moods, they therefore require more frequent analysis,

even up to several times per day.[35]

The degrees of invasiveness of these assessment measures have implications for work

design and HRM if they are to be incorporated into organizational processes/practice.

Additionally, the implementation of these measures provides organizational managers with a

much-needed feedback mechanism in order to determine if their policies are having the desired

effects on job satisfaction. When looking at a holistic organizational system, it is vitally

important to have such feedback mechanisms in place.

<u>2C: Job Satisfaction Relevance to Organizations</u>

Creating and maintaining a favorable workplace requires a thorough understanding of

how employees respond to the various task dimensions of their assigned jobs both over a period

of time and under varied work conditions. Towards this end, job satisfaction represents an

important yardstick by which researchers have tried to assess the effects of job conditions upon

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[32] Charles W. Mc Nichols, et al, *A Validation of Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Measure*, 738.
[33] Cynthia D. Fisher, *Mood and Emotions while Working: Missing Pieces of Job Satisfaction?,* Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 21, No. 2, Special Issue: Emotions in Organization (Mar., 2000), pp. 187. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3100305
[34] idem
[35] ibid, 186

individuals.[36] Low job satisfaction is regularly associated with higher rates of quitting and absenteeism, whereas high job satisfaction correlates with improved job performance.[37] Further, job satisfaction has emerged as the most widely studied *predictor* of turnover.[38] Moreover, job satisfaction is relevant to work design and HRM in its employees' psychological evaluation of work conditions such as responsibility, task variety, or communication requirements.[39] Finally, general systems theory helps us place job satisfaction within its greater organizational context.

Even with only partial knowledge of an organizational holistic system, managers can still directly impact desired organizational outcomes (i.e. turnover, absenteeism, work performance) through the direct link job satisfaction provides. General systems theory contextualizes this impact with degrees of probability due to the complexity inherent in an organization. This probability confers some risk for unintended outcomes when implementing or withholding policy. Full knowledge of all second and third order effects is not a likely goal for organizational managers, but a holistic framework, fitting job satisfaction in as one component of the greater system is quite possible and would be valuable to organizational managers. Mapping subsystems piecemeal, through moderators, as job satisfaction literature has done to date has utility; but as a tool for managers, it comes with some risk, if not properly placed in the context of a greater interactive system.

Section 3 – Moderators of Job Satisfaction Links

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[36] Ralph Katz, *Job Longevity as a Situational Factor in Job Satisfaction*, Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Jun., 1978), pp. 204. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2392562

[37] Robert D. Mohr and Cindy Zoghi, *High-Involvement Work Design and Job Satisfaction*, ILR Review, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Apr., 2008), pp. 275. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25249148

[38] Dong Liu et al, *When Employees Are Out of Step with Coworkers*, 1360.

[39] Christian Dormann and Dieter Zapf, *Job Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis of Stabilities,* Journal of Organizational Behavior, Vol. 22, No. 5 (Aug., 2001), pp. 483. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3649554

Job satisfaction and its moderators are all component parts of an interactive and complex organizational system. Many moderators and their relationship to job satisfaction can be partially teased out in prevailing job satisfaction literature. In fact, these studies often provide clarity of (linear) links reinforcing the interconnectivity of the component parts of the complex organizational systems. Some limitations, chiefly due to the complex nature of organizational systems, is that they often miss or unable to determine the exact type of interaction between components (causation versus correlation).[40] What nearly all seem to neglect is actually mentioning their component places within a greater organizational system. Analyzing through the lens of general systems theory we are able to more clearly map the greater whole.

One counterpoint to the scholarship's absence of placing job satisfaction within its complex organizational metasystem merits mention. Several studies contextualize job satisfaction in an employee's work environment, some quite extensively.[41,42] The 'work environment' could certainly be categorized as a greater organizational system. However, in the context of these studies the work environment is characteristically limited to specific work/job facets in order to demonstrate linkages and relationships. This deliberate limitation of scope inherently creates an incomplete organizational systems framework, though they can (and do) produce robust subsystems which should be included in the greater framework. Through the lenses of general systems theory, work design theory, and HRM we analyze the below moderators at multiple organizational levels and in the context of time.

3A: Organizational Commitment

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[40] Duncan Cramer*, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Continuance Commitment: A Two-Wave Panel Study*, 391, 396-7.

[41] Earl Naumann, *Organizational Predictors of Expatriate Job Satisfaction*, 62-63.

[42] Lillie Lum, et al, *Explaining Nursing Turnover Intent: Job Satisfaction, Pay Satisfaction, or Organizational Commitment?* 317.

Organizational Commitment (OC) is defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization."[43] It is a multi-dimensional construct with predominantly two components: affective and continuance commitments. Affective commitment "refers to the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization," while continuance commitment "refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization."[44] These commitment types become important for managers to assess their organization's HRM policies within the greater context of the job market for their employees. Even when managers have a positive job satisfaction measurement, they may still have employees quitting; perhaps the employees do not care for the organization because of its poor organizational socialization. Alternatively, employees may identify with the organization, but the cost of departure is not high enough to prevent seeking other employment.

Of the two, the concept most frequently studied has been the attitudinal or affective commitment.[45] OC moderates job satisfaction in a few distinct ways, the prevailing theory is that job satisfaction affectivity develops more quickly than OC and therefore suggests job satisfaction is a determinant of OC. Some argue they are in fact causally linked, but not necessarily to each other. Determining what they are causally linked to becomes the paramount question. Though, because of the complexity of organizational systems and the lack of a framework for reference, this is wickedly difficult to decipher. Moreover, there is no evidence of a temporal relationship between OC and job satisfaction, both concepts are relatively stable when measured separately.[46]

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[43] Stephanie C. Payne and Ann H. Huffman*, A Longitudinal Examination of the Influence of Mentoring on Organizational Commitment and Turnover,* The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), pp. 159. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20159647

[44] idem

[45] Duncan Cramer, *Job Satisfaction and Organizational Continuance Commitment*, 389.

[46] Ibid, 390 & 397

Finally, OC has proven to have a high correlation to turnover intent, several studies even suggest a greater impact than from job satisfaction.[47]

The primary level of measurement for OC is the individual. These individual measurements (like job satisfaction) can aggregate up to the unit and organizational levels however nothing yet suggests these summations take on new properties at higher levels. For work design and human resource managers, one might infer their dispersion (how widely individual measures vary within a group) could have cultural OC impacts at all levels.[48] Namely a high dispersion would equate to a lower prevalent OC culture, and vice versa; this would be particularly important according to the theory of organizational socialization for new employees, who tend to shape their initial OC in part based on the presiding culture.[49] An implication for HRM, suggests the adoption of a formal mentorship program for new employees to positively influence OC through organizational socialization.[50] In the context of general systems theory and with the relationships between job satisfaction, OC, organizational socialization, mentorship and turnover intent described above, we can begin to see a subsystem take shape within a greater organizational systems framework. This framework becomes more necessary, the more scholars attempt to mathematically determine correlation and causation between interrelated components.

3B: Affective Disposition

Affective disposition or emotional/attitudinal outlook, is a core tenet of personality-based influences on job satisfaction. Typically categorized as either Positive Affectivity (PA) or Negative Affectivity (NA), dispositional approaches to job satisfaction argue personality

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[47] Lillie Lum, et al, *Explaining Nursing Turnover Intent: Job Satisfaction, Pay Satisfaction, or Organizational Commitment?,* 305.

[48] Dong Liu, et al, *When Employees Are Out of Step with Coworkers: How Job Satisfaction Trajectory and Dispersion Influence Individual- and Unit-Level Voluntary Turnover*, 1360-1380.

[49] Stephanie C. Payne and Ann H. Huffman*, A Longitudinal Examination of the Influence of Mentoring on Organizational Commitment and Turnover,* 158.

[50] Ibid, 165

influences are its "prime determinants."[51] This has spurred great debate among job satisfaction scholars concerning the extent to which an organization is able to change someone's job satisfaction.[52] If job satisfaction is simply a product of how positive an employee is naturally, then organizational managers can accomplish little in effecting higher job satisfaction in its employees beyond recruiting positive people. Alternatively, situational approach advocates argue job satisfaction is primarily a product of work characteristics.[53] These advocates suggest personality plays a lesser role in determining job satisfaction rates than do work characteristics. Organizational managers tend to rely upon these analysts more so than personality advocates, because managers can control work characteristics to a much greater degree. Other studies of personality dispositions discuss influences such as extraversion, openness or intelligence on job selection (self-selection, recruitment, and promotion) as partial determinants of job satisfaction.[54]

Meta-analysis suggests while there is a direct link from personality (particularly strong in the case of PA) to job satisfaction, it is moderated by working conditions.[55] Further, over time working conditions become critical to *maintaining* positive levels of job satisfaction.[56] This has vital implications for work design and HRM because of the locus of control (namely determining at what level control of job satisfaction determinants fall). Dispositional approaches place the control with the individual, while situational approaches place it with the organization. In the context of time, dispositional approaches initially have control but over time this control shifts to the organization.[57] Through the lens of general systems theory, a second subsystem incorporating

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[51] Yoav Ganzach, *Intelligence and Job Satisfaction,* The Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 41, No. 5 (Oct., 1998), pp. 528. https://www.jstor.org/stable/256940

[52] Christian Dormann and Dieter Zapf, *Job Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis of Stabilities*, 484.

[53] Yoav Ganzach, *Intelligence and Job Satisfaction*, 528.

[54] Christian Dormann and Dieter Zapf, *Job Satisfaction: A Meta-Analysis of Stabilities*, 484.

[55] ibid, 497.

[56] idem

[57] idem

affectivity disposition, working conditions, job satisfaction (as an output), and other

organizational outcomes begins to emerge. Lastly, one study (comparing companies in East

Germany before reunification and after) suggests that even drastic societal change does not

influence working conditions within a comprehensive organizational systems model.[58]

3C: Career Orientation

There are four types of Career Orientation (CO): promotion-focused, loyalty-focused,

independent, and disengaged.[59] They are distinguished along each of three dimensions:

"boundarylessness" (short-term employment/employability vs long-term employment/job

security), "proteanism" (self-determined vs organizational career management), and

"advancement" (upward promotion/importance of career success vs lateral advancement/no

importance of career).[60] CO moderates job satisfaction in its link to turnover intention. While the

well documented negative correlation of job satisfaction to turnover intention remains a

cornerstone to job satisfaction literature, several modern studies consider CO as a moderator to

the severity of that correlation. Furthermore, in the context of time, varying types of CO

moderate that correlation differently. For example, static measures (single time/survey) indicate

independent and loyalty-based COs have a flatter (less negative) correlation than promotion-

based or disengaged COs which respond to higher job satisfaction with lower turnover

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[58] idem

[59] Cécile Tschopp, Gudela Grote and Marius Gerber, *How career orientation shapes the job satisfaction–turnover intention link*, Journal of Organizational Behavior , Vol. 35, No. 2 (February 2014), pp. 153. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26610891

[60] idem

intention.[61] Alternatively, dynamic measurements (multiple times/same survey) indicate that

independent COs are more responsive to changes in job satisfaction thereby making the

correlation to turnover intention more volatile (more likely to quit if their job satisfaction is

lowered).[62] Further, job satisfaction changes tend to be *more important* than the *prevailing*

average.[63]

The relationships laid out here have important implications for work design and human

resource managers because of the "psychological contracts" they foster with organizational

working conditions.[64] Specifically any breaches of those contracts is likely to affect its

employees differently depending on their CO. Furthermore, employee motivations change

relative to their CO and so will react differently to varying programs or policies. The dynamic

measures do provide an indirect feedback mechanism. Either way, organizational managers are

well served by recognizing their employees varying COs. General systems theory suggests a

more 'complicated' subsystem based on the relationships of turnover intent, career orientation,

and job satisfaction to be nested within the greater organizational system framework.

Limitations

This paper comprises a brief synthesis of decades of job satisfaction literature, a complete

synthesis may ultimately prove unachievable. Organizations and our understanding of them

evolve over time, so our inquiries/surveys and tools of measurement adapt to the knowledge

available. This can prove problematic when attempting truly longitudinal studies. Limiting the

scope of this paper to job satisfaction and its place in a greater systems theory allowed for more

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[61] Ibid, 151-171
[62] idem
[63] Ibid, 154
[64] idem

focused research but constrained the exploration of its moderators, which are integral

components to any organizational systems framework. Furthermore, several studies used

mathematics to prove/disprove correlation and relationships between components, but the nature

of complex systems is such that even with the aid of computer simulations, predictive models are

limited to degrees of probability. This in turn can has a limiting value on work design theory and

HRM implications for organizational managers.

Managerial Implications

Several specific implications were captured in the work design/HRM analysis of each

moderator; however, some common themes emerge. Organizations are well served by better

knowledge and understanding of their employees and their organization as a whole. Knowledge

of worker orientations, motivations, influences, attributions, and affectivity at the time of

recruitment and throughout their tenure allow for more effective work design/HRM practices.

Further, understanding the job characteristic makeup unique to your organization will help one

identify and leverage its strengths and mitigate its shortfalls. Finally, a clearer picture of the

greater whole, will help an organization to know what questions to ask of its employees and

when. Ultimately, the risk of unintended consequences inherent to organizational managers

implementing (or withholding) policies is reduced by elevating their perspective from job

satisfaction as simply a concept in isolation to one component within a holistic framework.

Recommendations for Further Research

A deeper study of individual moderator and job characteristic components should help determine causal relationships between each component and global job satisfaction; ideally, we might go beyond correlation in order to seek out determinants within the greater organizational systems framework. Additionally, I recommend a broader study of moderators through lens of general systems theory and at varying organizational levels to determine the impact they have on job satisfaction facets as well as more distal organizational outcomes over time. Moreover, the more relationships we catalog, the closer we come to being able to graphically depict a comprehensive organizational systems framework. Ultimately these further studies should aim to provide either positive or negative feedback to work design and human resources managers to better effect desired outcomes.

Conclusions

Job satisfaction is a highly studied phenomenon. It is defined, categorized, and measured in many different ways. Most job satisfaction research, however, fails to place the 'job satisfaction' concept within a holistic greater organizational system framework. Without acknowledging its proper place as a component within a greater interactive and complex multi-level system, an information gap exists in current job satisfaction research. Furthermore, without a holistic map of the organizational system and the interactions of its subsystems, organizational managers incur risk by implementing policies without full knowledge of how their policy will affect all components of the whole. Granted, the more subsystems we map, and the greater their relative complexity, the better our probabilities models become, and the less risk managers incur. Therefore, it is extremely useful to continue our exploration of job satisfaction and its moderators, but it must be underpinned by its component place within the greater whole.

Multiple theories are useful in analysing job satisfaction in this context, but probably none so much as general systems theory (and its variants). Organizations are 'complex' systems, employees are complex systems, job satisfaction (and its various moderators) are components of both complex systems and should be included in their respective systematic frameworks/models.

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