



THE SIMILARITIES IN JOB SATISFACTION ACROSS CULTURES

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ABSTRACT:

In a globalized work environment, the heated discussion on performance and the role of job satisfaction of employees is leaping forward as the options of these human assets are expanding more and more through the electronic social media. The labor market today is no more delimited by the geographical boundaries or cultural differences. As a result, job satisfaction and career orientation are hot topics on today's human resources managers' agenda. These managers need to plan for career paths, talent retention as well as continuous development of their people. Moreover, research has clearly indicated that job satisfaction decreases turnover, improves productivity while decreasing operating cost as well as recruiting and training costs in both time and money.

This study was conducted for the purpose of analyzing the similarities in job satisfaction patterns across five different nations with different cultural backgrounds, and that span around the globe, using a common research tool.

The results of the study indicate a comparative total satisfaction that differentiates each setting while also revealing a number of similarities, thus allowing managers a certain level of formalization and uniformity.

KEY WORDS : *Job Satisfaction, Similarities in nations, Managing human resources*

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized work environment, the heated discussion on performance and the role of job satisfaction of employees is leaping forward as the options of these human assets are expanding more and more through the electronic social media. To compete in this globalized economy, organizations need to gain competitive advantages to guarantee sustainability of operations and achieve their strategic objectives. As international generalizability is at the heart of frequent methodological dilemmas [1]. More research is needed to highlight how management models, tools, techniques and practices of motivating employees that vary across borders, may actually result in different job satisfaction levels across these borders [2]. Moreover, cultural differences among geographically dispersed nations are expected to contribute toward diverging career orientations. On one hand, this expectation is resulting in, and pushing for the use of different

models, tools, techniques and practices by the respective management teams [1] in striving for improving the performance of what is considered a capital at work [3] through minimizing its operating costs [4]. On the other hand, organizations seeking differentiation are in search for employees whose performance is beyond expectations and who can add value through their motivation and exposure to various situations [5]. These motivated employees are expected to persevere in exerting efforts with a certain direction and intensity, towards achieving pre-set goals [6] [7]. While the job satisfaction refers to the attitude of the employees that occurs when subjected to the work situations' characteristics [8], motivation is a behavior [6]. Therefore, investigating the extent of job satisfaction levels of employees in an organizational context becomes an indicator for managerial decision-making at the human asset management function.

This study was conducted for the purpose of analyzing the similarities in job satisfaction patterns across five different nations with different cultural backgrounds, and that span around the globe, using a common research tool. The results of the filed study



conducted in Lebanon in the Middle East, are compared to those of the Dominican Republic in Central America, Hong Kong in China, Singapore in South East Asia and the United States in North America.

This paper is organized as follows, the first section discusses the different facets of job satisfaction in the literature available. Section 2 highlights the cultural frameworks of the different countries, and section 3 puts forth the methodology. Section 4 presents the results and their analysis. Finally, section 5 puts forth the contributions and limitations as well as the conclusion to the study.

1 – LITERATURE REVIEW

The first section in this study summarizes the available literature on job satisfaction. This available literature is abundant as both issues of job satisfaction and employees' motivation have been repeatedly analyzed over the past decades by many researchers. Job satisfaction's importance is related to its positive impact on employees' attitude in the workplace where high expectations are placed on employees' performance as a result of the increasingly competitive environment [6]. These factors force managers to exhibit and employ various styles of leadership "*for different staff and trying to understand the different motivations*" [9:321]. The result is a work setting where employees' motivation is expressed by either positive feelings that boost motivation about the job, or negative ones that do not [6].

Job satisfaction is composed of three facets. These include first the non-work or demographic factors, extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors and job facets. The inter-correlation of these four facets generates inter-relationships among the factors of the different factors of job satisfaction.

The first facet of job satisfaction is demographic factors. It includes many variables among which are: gender, age, and education of the employee [10]. First, the literature review highlights that gender does impact the level of job satisfaction [11][12][13][14][15][16][17]. However, the impact of gender on job satisfaction appears to be cross cultural and across different categories of employment, from academia to business, passing by various medical fields of work, in both public and private sectors.

The second factor among the demographic variables is age. The relationship between age and job

satisfaction is reported to be positive [18][19][20][21][22][23] by most and U-shaped by others [24][25][26]. The third demographic factor under consideration is educational background. In the reviewed literature, some researchers report it to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction [15][17][23][27][28], while others report no relationship [29], and yet others report a negative one [22][30][31][32].

The second facet of job satisfaction includes the extrinsic factors. These include the factors of the job such as empowerment, job title and position, communication, training, salary, supervision, management support and organizational culture. First, empowerment is reported to be positively correlated with and influencing intrinsic satisfaction [29][33][34][35][36][37]. Second, job title and position are found to be positively correlated to job satisfaction [29][32][37]. Third, communication is reported to have a direct positive impact on employees' satisfaction [9][34][37][38][39]. Fourth, training is reported by many scholars to be positively correlated with employees' job satisfaction [9][37][40][41][42][43][44][45], while the fifth factor (salary) is reported as correlated by most and not correlated by some researchers. While [17][23][29][32][37][46][47][48], among many others; [14][49] report salary to be not related to satisfaction on the job, whereas [50] relates satisfaction with pay to the perception of equity, and [15] report the relationship to be U-shaped. The sixth extrinsic factor of job satisfaction is supervision. The reviewed literature reports a positive correlation between supervision and job satisfaction [15][32][51][52][53]. The seventh factor of extrinsic job satisfaction is management support which is found to be positively correlated to employees' satisfaction on the job [9][38][41][52]. Finally, organizational culture and job satisfaction are reported to be positively correlated [34][45][54].

The third facet of job satisfaction is the intrinsic set of factors. These relate to the worker's personal interests and on-the-job experiences [6][55]. They are "*primarily predicted by work content variables (task characteristics) such as skill variety and autonomy*" [56:40]. They include work itself, on-the-job experience, tenure, job status, social valuation, job autonomy, work-life balance, organizational commitment, and emotional exhaustion [6]. Many researchers report work itself to be positively correlated to job satisfaction [29][32][37][52][57]



[58][59], although work stress is commonly reported to negatively impact job satisfaction [6]. The second factor, on-the-job-experience is constantly reported to be positively correlated with job satisfaction [23][37][59][60][61]. Third, tenure and job satisfaction are reported by many researchers to be positively correlated [12][15][17][23][29][32][62].

Fourth, while job status is reported by many scholars to positively impact the feeling of security on the job and thereby job satisfaction [29][32][37], many others clearly report that it does not necessarily correlate with it [63][64]. Fifth, is the factor of social valuation of the job. Employees in general are reported by scholars to have a high positive correlation between the peer-group social valuation of their job and their personal job satisfaction [65][66][67][68][69][70][71][72]. The sixth factor the intrinsic job satisfaction facet is job autonomy. Most of the researchers report job autonomy to be positively correlated to job satisfaction [1][37][41][47][52][73][74][75] while some others report it as being specifically high among contractual part-time employees [63]. The seventh factor is work life balance. While most scholars report the prevalence of a work-life balance as an instigator of job satisfaction [6][37][76], they also agree that overtime work can lead to job dissatisfaction [6][37][76][77][78][79]. The eighth factor of intrinsic job satisfaction is commitment. This factor is reported by many scholars to be positively correlated with job satisfaction [1][8][34][42][45][47][56].

Finally, emotional exhaustion is reported to be negatively correlated to employees' satisfaction on the job [77][78][79][80].

The interaction of the above mentioned three facets of job satisfaction results in a dimension that includes a worker's feeling of enjoyment on the job. These dimensions include pay, promotion, work itself, co-workers, and supervision [6].

In conclusion, reviewing the available literature on job satisfaction reveals different results and directions among scholars. More importantly, the literature presents a limited number of field studies conducted on the Middle East region and within Lebanese framework more specifically. And as the Lebanese framework presents a setting that is unique in its formulation, the researcher is attempting to add a brick by filling a gap in the knowledge on job satisfaction level and comparing them to other economies in order to provide business decision-makers with insights into the potential of

generalization of formalized human resources management.

II – FRAMEWORK

Five countries are used in this comparative study. The following section will highlight the different cultural backgrounds of these five countries. We will first discuss the case of Lebanon in the Middle East, then that of the Dominican Republic in Central America, followed by Hong Kong in China, then Singapore in South East Asia and conclude with the United States in North America.

First, Lebanon is a geographically small country situated on the east of the Mediterranean and is classified as a developing economy with a GDP of \$14,610 [81]. Its population of four millions enjoys a high rate of literacy (93%) and an extreme interest in higher education, entrepreneurial initiatives and living. It enjoys a developed educational system, a broad advertising sector, world-class banking facilities, and a highly developed customer-oriented services sector. Lebanon is under-developed in industrial and agricultural sectors due to the limited natural resources. The economy is challenged with a large level of brain drain due to un-employment inciting emigration among its young adults who rarely come back. The major direction of these skilled laborers or emigrates seeking work and stability is mainly the GCC countries and central African nations for work, or North Europe, North America and Australia for immigration and residency. Thus, with a current emigrate population of 13 million, the question arises as to whether these human assets are actually making the right decision by leaving their nation and whether the job satisfaction of employees in other nations is worth the trip.

The second country under analysis is the Dominican Republic. It is a small country located in the Atlantic Ocean, at mid-way between the North and South American continents. Its population is a mixture of races and accounts for more about 9.5 million with a majority of poor citizens and a high rate of unemployment [82]. Its economy is primarily agricultural and touristic based and its GDP reached \$10,204 in 2012 [81]. Thus, employees are motivated to perform by fear of losing their job although very few are highly educated.

The third country is the Chinese territory of Hong Kong. This special location of the Hong Kong



allows it to enjoy a special socio-political system. Its emerging class society is striving to achieve success and create an identity that differentiates it from China and other countries while bringing them closer to the Western model. Its GDP reached \$51,936 in 2012 [81] with a population of 7 million inhabitants. Employees in Hong Kong in general feel that they are in a transitory office where information flow and legal aspects acquire an important consideration [83].

The fourth country under study is Singapore. It is a small country of 5 million inhabitants and a GDP of \$61,803 [81]. Its population has aggressive consideration for group decision, as well as high social responsibility, and social attitude. The general employee is highly skilled, very loyal and is willing to sacrifice personal interest for the sake of the company. Moreover, performance, personal progress, achievement both personal and work related, are socially highly prized [83].

Finally, the last country under study is the United States of America. A youth-oriented culture of 316 million inhabitants that created an economy with a GDP of \$49,965 [81]. The general perspective on its population is the short-term perspective emphasizing analytical processes individualistic behavior and support to achievement and initiative, within high work ethics environment [83].

These five countries do not enjoy many similarities in either socio-economic systems or political-economics. However, in between them, they seem to share a number of similarities when it comes to human resources. Therefore, and in an attempt to uncover these similarities among employees in these five different countries, the interest of the researcher to compare job satisfaction levels among these countries.

III – METHODOLOGY

1 Research Hypotheses

Research has shown that employees' job satisfaction is the result of the interaction between the reasons for which people like, or not, their job, and work itself [7]. Global trends today are pushing toward improved productivity and quality of work life. Both factors are important components of the job satisfaction matrix as they lead to improved work results, decreased turnover, improved feeling of security and stability, etc.. Guided by the literature on job satisfaction, where the facets are globally

common, the researcher decided to look for and identify job satisfaction levels, and compare them, in order to highlight managerial implications if any. Thus, the following hypotheses were postulated:

H1 – There is no difference in total job satisfaction levels among different countries.

H2 – There is no difference in the factors of job satisfaction among different countries.

2 Scale development

For the purpose comparing similarities in job satisfaction, the researcher needed a tool to use in measuring employees' responses. The choice was set on the measure entitled "Job Satisfaction Survey" as tested and published by Spector (1997), for many reasons. First, this measure scale is already tested for validity and reliability. Second, it is licensed by Spector [11] for noncommercial academic research. Finally, it was used in similar studies that measured job satisfaction of employees in Singapore [84], the Dominican Republic [70], Hong Kong [85], and the United States of America [11]. The results of these studies will constitute the base for comparison.

Spector [11] JSS scale is composed of 36 measure items that assess nine different job satisfaction factors. It uses four items for each factor, with 19 of the items being reversed questions (refer to Table 1). The responses to the questions vary between 1= Disagree Very Much and 6= Agree Very Much. The reversed measure items were coded in the data-entry process, using the formula $Item_2 = 7 - Item$. The results for all the nine factors of job satisfaction were summated. The total scores of job satisfaction vary between 36 and 216. The field study followed the concept of the descriptive model and Okpara's [23] procedures.

Table 1: Spector's JSS Factors of Job Satisfaction and corresponding scale items



JSS Factor	Definition (Satisfaction with)	Scale Item Number
Pay	pay and pay raises	1 – 10r – 19r – 28
Promotion	promotion opportunities	2r - 11 – 20 – 33
Supervision	one's immediate supervisor	3 – 12r – 21r – 30
Fringe benefits	fringe benefits	4r – 13 – 22 – 29r
Contingent rewards	rewards given for good performance	5 – 14r – 23r – 32r
Operating conditions	rules and procedures	6r – 15 – 24r – 31r
Coworkers	coworkers	7 – 16r – 25 – 34r
Nature of work	the type of work done	8r – 17 – 27 – 35
Communication	communication within the organization	9 – 18r – 26r – 36r

Note: r refers to reversed questions (negatively worded).

3 Sampling and Population Description

The data collection process in Lebanon was done through self-administered questionnaires. For the accuracy of the results, the data was collected through random sampling of employees from different economic sectors. In order to guarantee representativeness, the sampling process followed the guidelines of the various sectors' contribution to the Lebanese economy (GDP 2008) as published by the International Monetary Fund [86], (refer to Table 2). For high confidence interval (99%), a large response rate was secured ($n \geq 30$) [87]. The number of sampled respondents was 1000 with 620 usable responses, and a response rate of 62%. The data collection process was done between February and April 2011.

Table 2 – Various sectors' contribution to the

Sector	GDP 2008	Samples Size	Usable Responses	Response Rate
Agriculture	6%	61	20	33%
Banks	23%	230	219	95%
Construction	10%	100	35	35%
Government	9%	91	46	51%
Industry	8%	80	52	65%
Housing	5%	50	18	36%
Trade	25%	248	170	69%
Transportation	8%	82	29	35%
Other	6%	58	31	53%
TOTALS	100%	1000	620	62%

Lebanese Economy (% of GDP)

Source: GDP 2008 from IMF – July 2010.

The reliability test was performed using SPSS 21.0. Cronbach's alpha test analysis shows a result of .628. The factor analysis test was run using SPSS and the results show a high KMO (.856) test result with a Bartlett's Sphericity of 6664.765 at high significance (Sig.= .000). The commonalities' test using the extraction method (PCA) results show that all the items of the scale ranged between .457 and .714, thus can be retained, while the initial The respondents were 311 females representing 50.16% and 309 males (49.84%). The largest age group of respondents was 25-39 years of age (56.45%), while those less than 25 years were 23.06% and those between 40 and 60 being 19.04% and only 1.45% of more than 60 years of age. The educational levels of the respondents were distributed as follows. Among respondents, 7% hold a high-school degree or less, 19% of high-school or technical equivalent and 74% holding undergraduate university degrees. Most of the respondents were mainly office employees (62%), with 31% being first line managers and only 7% occupying middle managerial positions. Eigenvalues ranged between 19.322 and .795 (with only four items scoring below 1.0).

The researcher tested the postulated hypotheses using the collected data from respondents in Lebanon, and SPSS 18. The correlation between the various factors of job satisfaction were analyzed (see Table 3).

Table 3: Lebanon's Inter-correlations within the JSS

	Pay	Promotion	Supervision	Fringe benefits	Conting't rewards	Operating cond.	Coworkers	Nature of work
Pay								
Promotion	.55							
Supervision	.18	.13						
Fringe benefits	.58	.46	.11					
Contingent rewards	.61	.46	.37	.51				
Operating conditions	.06	-.04	-.16	.11	.01			
Coworkers	.13	.15	.48	.09	.26	-.12		
Nature of work	.26	.25	.36	.19	.32	-.14	.36	
Communication	.31	.27	.36	.35	.39	-.03	.47	.26



IV – RESEARCH RESULTS & ANALYSIS

The results of testing the job satisfaction in Lebanon using Spector’s (1997) JSS questionnaire are analyzed hereafter. The results reveal that there exists a positive high correlation between the three factors of contingent rewards, fringe benefits and promotion, with pay, being (r=.61), (r=.58), and (r=.55) respectively; and that there is also a high positive correlation between contingent rewards and fringe benefits (r=.51). Moreover, the research results reveal the presence of a few moderate positive relationships between several of the factors of job satisfaction. First fringe benefits is positively correlated with promotion (r=.46), while contingent

Table 4: Spector’s Inter-correlations within the JSS

	Pay	Promotion	Supervision	Fringe benefits	Conting’t rewards	Operating cond.	Coworkers	Nature of work
Pay								
Promotion	.53							
Supervision	.19	.25						
Fringe benefits	.45	.36	.10					
Contingent rewards	.54	.58	.46	.38				
Operating conditions	.31	.31	.17	.29	.46			
Coworkers	.19	.23	.42	.16	.39	.22		
Nature of work	.25	.32	.31	.20	.47	.30	.32	
Communication	.40	.45	.39	.30	.59	.44	.42	.43

Reference: Author’s own work.

rewards is positively correlated with both promotion (r=.46) and supervision (r=.37). Second, coworkers is positively correlated with supervision with r=.48. Third, nature of work is equally positively correlated with supervision and coworkers (r=.36 for both), and finally communication is positively correlated with coworkers (r=.47), contingent rewards (r=.39), supervision (r=.36), fringe benefits (r=.35) and pay (r=.31). Furthermore, the results reveal the presence of weak negative correlations between operating conditions on one side and the job satisfaction

factors of promotion, supervision, coworkers, nature of work and communication.

The above results are similar to what Spector (1997) reports as a result of analyzing the total job satisfaction of employees in the four different countries, namely Singapore, Hong Kong, USA and Dominican Republic (refer to table 4)

Furthermore, comparing the results reported by Spector (1997) to those of Lebanon, reveals many similarities (refer to Table 5 below). The dissimilarities lie mainly in the factors of operating conditions and communication.

Table 5: Comparison of Spector’s and Lebanon’s Inter-correlations within the JSS

	Pay	Promotion	Supervision	Fringe benefits	Contingent rewards	Operating cond.	Coworkers	Nature of work
Pay								
Promotion	-.02							
Supervision	.01	.12						
Fringe benefits	-.13	-.10	-.01					
Conting’t rewards	-.07	.12	.09	-.13				
Operating cond.	.25	.35	.33	.18	.45			
Coworkers	.06	.08	-.06	.07	.13	.34		
Nature of work	-.01	.07	-.05	.01	.15	.44	-.04	
Communication	.09	.18	.03	-.05	.20	.47	-.05	.17

Note: The comparison numbers are based on deducting Lebanon’s results from Spector’s(1997) results Reference: Spector, 1997, p.4.

The total summated job satisfaction – by factor – was compared between the five countries under consideration. The results show that the Lebanese employees are least satisfied on the job in general (refer to table 6), however, it is also obvious that employees of Hong Kong, Singapore, USA and Lebanon are very close in their overall job satisfaction levels. Also, there is evidence of minor discrepancies between employees from different sectors. First, the employees in the Dominican Republic, rank the highest among the group. They are highest satisfied with pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, coworkers, nature of work and communication, as compared to the others;



Job Satisfaction Factor	Dominican Republic	Hong Kong	Singapore	United States	Lebanon
Pay	17.2	15.0	14.0	11.9	11.9
Promotion	16.4	14.2	13.4	11.8	13.2
Supervision	20.0	16.0	13.4	19.0	17.9
Fringe Benefits	16.8	14.4	14.2	14.4	12.1
Contingent Rewards	17.8	14.9	17.3	13.6	12.8
Operating Conditions	12.3	12.1	17.0	13.5	11.8
Coworkers	20.0	15.6	13.4	18.1	17.3
Nature of Work	22.2	14.9	17.1	19.1	17.1
Communication	18.1	14.9	14.9	14.2	15.4
Total	160.9	133.3	134.7	135.8	129.6
Sample Size	148	136	182	12,748	620
Population (in Millions)	9.5	7	5	316	4
Sample % of Population	.00156%	.00194%	.00364%	.00403%	.01550%

5 –CONTRIBUTIONS & LIMITATIONS

while they rank below average on operating conditions. Second, the employees of Hong Kong rank around the average of the remaining four countries in all factors except for pay and promotion which rank above average. Third, the employees of Singapore rank much higher than the average of the remaining four, on their satisfaction with the contingent rewards, operating conditions, and nature of work, while they rank around the average in pay, promotion and fringe benefits satisfaction. However, they rank (at 13.4 & 13.4) much below average (18.225 & 17.1) in supervision and coworkers respectively. Fourth, the employees of the United States of America rank higher than the of work, while they ranked around the average in fringe benefits and operating conditions, but lower in average of the other four compared countries in their satisfaction with supervision, coworkers and nature

Table 6. Comparison of job satisfaction factors between Spector’s different tests and Lebanon.

Source: Dominican Republic, Honk Kong Singapore and USA from Spector (1997, p.27).

pay, promotion, contingent rewards and communication. Finally, the employees of Lebanon ranked higher only in their satisfaction with supervision, but around the average in promotion, coworkers and communication, and below the average in pay, fringe benefits, contingent rewards operating conditions and nature of work.

This field study has undoubtedly attempted to shed some light on the job satisfaction of the Middle-East employees in general, and the Lebanese more specifically. It has quantified the perceived values of the different job satisfaction dimensions as seen by the employees from the different economic sectors of Lebanon as compared to others in different economic settings. The study’s contribution to managerial decision makers relates to the better understanding of the components of job satisfaction, as well as to the potential of providing employment dimensions that are more attractive and more suitable toward improving productivity, work efficiency and turnover rates.

The analyzed results on the level of total job satisfaction reveal that Lebanese employees rate at 60.0% from total job satisfaction while their USA counterpart rating is 62.87%, Hong Kong’s 61.72%, Singapore 62.37% while Dominican Republic rates at 74.49%; which are not far from each other except for the Dominican Republic. This shows that the possibility of applying common Human Resources policies, procedures and motivational tools exists, and is highly probable to be successful.

The study, as any limited field exercise is limited in nature and thus faces a number of limitations. The first limitation of this study relates to its cross-sectors spectrum. The study does not take into consideration the variability of job satisfaction of employees among different business or economic



sectors. Further research should dwell in depth on the differences among the various economic sectors of the Lebanese economy. The second limitation touches on the employees' different levels and positions, thus future research shall attempt to study the existence or not of differences among job positions. Third, the study was unfolded in different countries at different time intervals, which may take into account the changes in economic, financial, socio-political changes affecting populations and their mood. And finally the fourth limitation pertains to the limited sample size that could be extended to cover more respondents for better generalizability of results.

CONCLUSION

This study conducted for measuring job satisfaction similarities among different cultures and countries has shed some light on the common aspects of people's beliefs, attitudes. The topic of job satisfaction is definitely not new to both scholars and practitioners. However, the norm in the reviewed literature is to look for the differences. Most studies look at what segregates people rather than looking at what common denominators are there among them; while practitioners are searching to generalize their policies and use them across their organizations that are spreading globally. Thus this study can play the role of a basic tool in enhancing the knowledge about the potential of generalizing the policies and procedures within companies that span across borders and cultures. The results of measuring the different levels of job satisfaction among the five countries under study, and with the exception of the Dominican Republic, fall at less than 5% variation from each other.

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