

Effects of Motivational Factors on Job Satisfaction: An Empirical Study on Malaysian Gen-Y Administrative and Diplomatic Officers

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Abstract. Purpose - This study examines the relationship between motivator and hygiene factors of the two-factor theory and job satisfaction of Gen-Y.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach - Totally 128 full time Gen-Y employees of the Malaysian Administrative and Diplomatic officers completed a questionnaire measuring their motivator and hygiene factors and job satisfaction. The motivators were measured by work values questionnaire (WVQ) with 25 items, and job satisfaction was measured with a 15-item questionnaire adapted from Warr et al., (1979). The scales for all questions were seven point Likert scales. Factor analysis, T-Test, regression, and One-way ANOVA were applied in the data analysis.

Findings - The results revealed that employees' motivators are related significantly to their intrinsic job satisfaction. However, employees' hygiene factors are not significantly related to extrinsic job satisfaction. This result is inconsistent with the previous study of Furnham A. and Eracleous A. (2009) and supports Locke's (1976) criticism of Herzberg's theory.

Research limitations - The limitation of this study was that it used self-report measure in investigating motivational factors as well as job satisfaction and therefore the defensive bias in self-reporting was not controlled.

Originality/Value - This paper revealed that hygiene factors might not affect a person's extrinsic job satisfaction in the Malaysian context and specifically among Malaysian Gen Y. Further research should be performed to find other factors influencing Gen Y's job satisfaction.

Keywords: Motivation, Two-factor theory, Job satisfaction, Gen-Y

1. Introduction

Work psychologists have long been interested to expose the reasons behind individual differences in motivation and job satisfaction. Even recently, various studies have examined how motivational factors correlate with job satisfaction (e.g. Furnham and Eracleous, 2009; Tietjen and Myers, 1998; Parsons and Broadbridge, 2006). Judge, et. al (2002) suggested future research on the effects of Big Five on the Herzberg's et al., (1959) two-factor job satisfaction theory, which since 1970s have received minimal attention of the researchers (Furnham and Eracleous, 2009). Motivation and job satisfaction are often discussed side by side as it is expected that the extent that an individual is satisfied with his/her work directly depends on the presence of some motivational factors such as pay, bonus, perks, and other circumstances that motivate him/her (Furnham and Eracleous, 2009). The rationale behind current theories of motivation and job satisfaction is to provide a framework for organizations to be able to influence their employees, to motivate and increase the level of their enthusiasm about their job.

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This study is designed to support Locke's (1976) criticism of Herzberg's two-factor theory by looking into the point that presence of motivators will result in job satisfaction but absence of hygiene factors will not lead to job dissatisfaction.

2. Literature Review

Motivation is what people desire to do, the inducement or incentive. The term motivation also can be referred to what makes people tick or the needs, fears and aspirations within people that make them behave as they do currently (Walker and Miller, 2010). Bartol and Martin (1987) have classified the motivation theories into three major categories: needs theory, cognitive theory, and reinforcement theory. The two most famous theories are Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Two-factor theory.

Among the motivation theories, Maslow's hierarchy of needs in 1943 in his famous paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" has appeared in the literature many times during the past six decades; due to his theory, hierarchy of needs consists of five basic levels: physiological, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, which generally should be satisfied accordingly (Maslow, 1943).

Two-factor theory or Herzberg's (1959) motivation-hygiene theory developed by Frederick Herzberg introduced the two factors namely "Motivators" and "Hygiene", which lead job satisfaction at work place. Motivators include recognition, achievement, possibility of growth, advancement, responsibility, and the work itself. On the other hand, hygiene factors include salary, interpersonal relations at work, supervision, company policies and administration, working conditions, factors in personal life, status, and job security (Tietjen and Myers, 1998). According to Herzberg, the presence of motivators brings job satisfaction and the lack of hygiene factors results in job dissatisfaction. Moreover, the presence of hygiene factors does not result necessarily in increase of job satisfaction, but only reduce or eliminate job dissatisfaction of the employees.

Job satisfaction is simply defined as "how people feel about their jobs and different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs"(Spector, 1997). As already mentioned above the best-known popular theory of job satisfaction in the past five decades has been the one of Herzberg, Mausner, and Synderman, (1959). Herzberg et al., (1959) have claimed that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction considerably depend on different sets of work related conditions and therefore job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are affected by different factors (Furnham, et. al, 2002). As Brief (1998) stated job dissatisfaction is not necessarily the opposite of job satisfaction while positive and negative effects at work are independent of one another.

The two-factor job satisfaction theory of Herzberg et al., (1959) has affected many organizations to build opportunities for personal growth, enrichment, and recognition for their employees and that is why nowadays many managers use job promotion and entitlement techniques to motivate their employees rather than the conventional salary and benefit tools.

However, in the 60's and 70's, many empirical studies did not support Herzberg's et al., (1950) job satisfaction theory (e.g. Hulin, 1971; Wernimont, 1966; Korman, 1971) and some studies even criticized this theory (e.g. Locke, 1969; Locke, 1976) as impractical because distinguishing between hygiene and motivator factors is very hard as they are highly related. In addition, Waters and Waters (1972) who performed an empirical study to support Herzberg's two-factor theory concluded that fulfilled motivator needs have more tendencies to result in job satisfaction and that job satisfaction can be more easily predicted than job dissatisfaction. Meanwhile Kerr, Harlan, and Stogdill (1974) have claimed that Herzberg's theory is more than an error in attributing satisfaction to motivator and dissatisfaction to hygiene factors. Among all criticisms of the two-factor theory, the one of Locke's (1976) has grabbed much attention in the literature. Tietjen and Myers (1998) best summarize his criticisms as the following:

- The assumption of contrast between physical and psychological nature of the human-being in Herzberg theory;
- The assumed unidirectional relationship between hygiene and motivator factors and physical and psychological needs in Herzberg's theory;
- It is difficult to distinguish between Herzberg's motivator and hygiene factors and separate them in all cases;
- Employees might act defensive when they are asked about factors such as advancement or recognition. It is very likely that employees blame their supervisors, sub-ordinates or fellow colleagues for dissatisfying situations;
- In testing Herzberg's theory frequency of data is used instead of its intensity;
- Individual differences and more precisely individual values might be denied in Herzberg's theory.

This study focuses on Gen-Y to distinguish their motivation effects on job satisfaction. For Gen-Y the best defining characteristic is that, they have grown up with the Internet and technology (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008) and they are connected 24 hours a day (Smola and Sutton, 2002). This generation is grown up by Baby Boomers and they have been raised to feel that they are wanted, necessary, and valued. From an early age, their families focused huge amounts of time, attention, and financial resources on them and involved them in family discussion and decision-making. All the way through their childhood, their parents and teachers have built their self-esteem (Crow and Stichnote, 2010). Nowadays much attention has been given to this generation as they have just entered the workforce and they are substituting the baby boomers. Therefore, appropriate strategies must put forth to get the most from this new generation. The literature about the two-factor theory is generally devoid of empirical evidences of this theory's implication among Gen-Y. This paper aims to increase the understanding of the relationship between this generation's motivational factors and their job satisfaction.

3. Methodology and Research Design

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in figure 1.

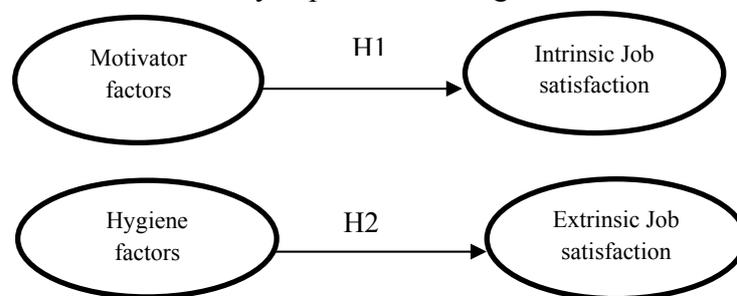


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature and empirical studies about the relationship between motivational factors and job satisfaction we built the following hypotheses:

H₁: There is significant relationship between Gen-Y's motivator factors and their intrinsic job satisfaction.

H₂: There is significant relationship between Gen-Y's hygiene factors and their extrinsic job satisfaction

Totally 1,215 questionnaires were distributed among Malaysian Gen-Y administrative and diplomatic officers, and 137 were received out of which nine were discarded and finally 128 (52 males, 76 Females, mean age =28 years old, SD=1.85) valid responses were obtained. According to Israel, (1992) since the population size is estimated to be 2,500 people, the sample size of 128 employees will give results with precision level of $\pm 10\%$. Participants were unpaid and recruited through a group email. Each email included a URL link to the online survey. Moreover, participants

were informed that this research is sought to gather data from all employees working in managerial positions in the Malaysian government, and they were requested to forward the email containing the survey link to their colleagues.

For measuring motivation, the work values questionnaire (WVQ) (Furnham et al., 2005) was used. This questionnaire consists of 25 items. It asked the respondents to report the extent to which motivational components are important to them on a seven-point scale.

The job satisfaction scale consisting of 15 items was adapted from Warr, Cook, and Wall, (1979). Respondents were given seven choices starting from “Extremely dissatisfied” to “Extremely satisfied”. Meanwhile the overall satisfaction of the respondents has been recorded also based on a seven-point Likert scale.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Factor Analysis

In KMO and Bartlett's test, the KMO adequacy is .812, which is far greater than .6. According to Coakes et al., (1997), Bartlett's Sphericity is significant. That is its associated probability is less than .05, and it indicates the acceptance of the components in the questionnaire. Table 1 represents the total variance explained result from factor analysis. Looking at this table, we consider only two factors to be used for farther interpretation (which is also preferable for our study). In running factor analysis, the minimum factor loading is set to .4. (according to Hair et al., (2006)), by doing this three components were left with less than .4 loading factor which included effortlessness and simplicity in motivation components and job security in job satisfaction components, indicating these three questions need to be discarded from the questionnaire. Meanwhile we observed no cross loading among the factors.

Table 1: Factor Analysis - Total Variance Explained

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues | | | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings | | | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings | | |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1 | 9.568 | 23.336 | 23.336 | 9.568 | 23.336 | 23.336 | 9.459 | 23.071 | 23.071 |
| 2 | 7.405 | 18.061 | 41.397 | 7.405 | 18.061 | 41.397 | 7.513 | 18.325 | 41.397 |

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The objective of this study is to find out the relationship between employees' motivational factors and their perceived job satisfaction. Moreover, the level of satisfaction between male and female employees as well as employees in different ranks is also investigated.

4.3. Independent Sample T-Test

The result of T-Test, which we applied to measure the difference of satisfaction between male and female employees, implied that no significant difference between the responses of the two groups exists while the significance level was .213; this indicates the female employees have the same level of satisfaction as their male counterparts. This result can be interpreted that both groups get the same level of opportunities to work as administrative and diplomatic officers in the government of Malaysia.

4.4. One Way ANOVA Test

We applied One-Way ANOVA test to measure the difference of job satisfaction among officers (M41), senior officers (M44), and middle managerial levels (M48). According to the sig. values of .557, .685, and .243 between M41 and M44, M41 and M48, and M44 and M48 respectively, which are all higher than .05 there is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between employees working in different grades.

4.5. Cross-tabulation Results

The cross tabulation test ran on the nominal data of gender and overall satisfaction revealed that 34 male and 49 female are either satisfied or very satisfied with their job and this indicates that most female and male employees feel satisfied with their job.

4.6. Multiple Regression Analysis

As table 2 implies, the motivators explain 3.9% of the variance in intrinsic aspects of job satisfaction and at the significance level of 0.026. From this result, we conclude that presence of motivators can result in job satisfaction, which is consistent with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 2: Model Summary

| Variables | Beta | Sig. | R-Square |
|---|-------|------|----------|
| Motivator factors -> Intrinsic Job Satisfaction | .197 | .026 | .039 |
| Hygiene factors-> Extrinsic Job Satisfaction | -.080 | .370 | .006 |

However, based on the results in table 2, the hygiene factors resulted in 0% of the variance in extrinsic job satisfaction and the significance is far higher than .05. These results indicate that the absence of hygiene factors would not necessarily result in job dissatisfaction. This result is obviously inconsistent with the one of Herzberg et al.'s (1959).

Contrary with the previous researches mentioned earlier such as Judge et al., (2002), employees' hygiene factors were not significantly related to job satisfaction as the R Value is .08 which is quite lower than 1. This means that hypothesis H2 is not supported. This result well supports the criticism of Herzberg's (1959) theory made by Locke (1976) and we conclude that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction do not have different causes and this is inconsistent with Herzberg's (1959) conclusion. The logical reasoning to explain this inconsistency with the Herzberg's (1959) theory might be the different practice of career development for the focus group and the perception of job security among the respondents. While the common promotion practices in organizations were based on competencies and achievements, the respondents on the other hand enjoy seniority-based promotion. Due to that, competition between the colleagues is not a significant factor. Furthermore, as the officers working with the government, job security might not be a factor, which concerns the respondents compared to their counterparts in the private sector.

Emmert & Taher (1992) suggested that job characteristics in the government sector is not significantly related to variations in the professionals' satisfaction, motivation, and involvement, rather they are explained by social satisfaction, fulfillment of employees' intrinsic needs (especially growth needs), and information from others on job performance.

Moreover, numerous scholars suggested that there are differences between the nonprofit, profit-oriented and public sector in several ways, including organization-environment transactions, environmental factors, employee characteristics, internal structure and processes, incentive structures, and reporting structures (Blank, 1985; Brown, 2000; Goodin, 2003; Kearns 1994; Rainey, Backoff, and Levine 1976). Studies on the variances between sectors inclines to emphasize differences in the use of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to attract employees. Specifically, some scholars claimed that extrinsic motivation factors (hygiene factors) like pay and advancement have significantly higher motivating potential for corporate managers rather than public sector managers. Meanwhile, intrinsic rewards have greater motivating potential for public manager and nonprofit managers than for private ones (Khojasteh 1993; Rawls and Nelson 1975; Rawls, Ullrich, and Nelson 1975; Wright 2001).

As analyzed with the independent sample T-Test, there were no significant differences observed between male and female officers regarding their level of job satisfaction and both of the groups were almost equally satisfied with their job. It might also be the indication that both groups are treated equally and given the fair opportunities of advancement in their job.

There were also no significant differences observed in the level of job satisfaction between different grades of position ranking among the respondents based on the one-way ANOVA test. The findings indicate that the respondents were almost equally satisfied with their job across the level of ranking and this result is consistent with the findings of Blank (1985).

5. Summary and Conclusion

The study attempts to explain the characteristics of Gen-Y towards motivation and job satisfaction. The results of this study indicate that the Gen-Y respondents working as administrative and diplomatic officers in Malaysia are satisfied with their current job in the government. The findings of this research could benefit human resource managers in the Malaysian context for better understanding the characteristics of Gen-Y officers and managers towards motivation and job satisfaction. In this context, factors other than hygiene ones may be important to increase the level of job satisfaction among employees.

Limitation of the study is the usage of self-reporting measure to investigate factors of motivation and job satisfaction. Defensive bias in self-reporting was expected, as it was not controlled. This type of bias could be tested by correlating respondents' questionnaire results with another set of questionnaire results of their superior or the spouse for the further research. Meanwhile due to time and resource constraints the response rate of the study was low, further research should examine the relationship between motivation and job satisfaction with a larger sample population in the Malaysian context.

Further research to observe the relationship between motivation and job satisfaction could be implied on other generations of workforce especially the Gen-X and the Baby Boomers and senior level officers in the Malaysian government to gather findings that are more comprehensive on the subject matter. Furthermore, qualitative research may also assist in examining the relationship between motivation, and job satisfaction of the employees in the Malaysian government.

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