

Job satisfaction as a multidimensional concept: A systematic review study

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Abstract

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Background: Some researchers have argued that job satisfaction has been vaguely defined in the organizational literature. Also, there is a lack of consensus over the meaning of job satisfaction in literature. The aim of this study was to clarify dimensions of job satisfaction's concept based on a systematic review study.

Materials and Methods: The present study used a systematic review to clarify job satisfaction's concept. Some databases including Pubmed and Medline were searched, carefully using proper keywords. A total of 38 articles were reviewed, all were published between 1986 and 2009, with the majority being of quantitative nature and design. Data on the following items were extracted: country, setting, subjects, the definition of job satisfaction, theoretical background for measuring job satisfaction and the dimensions of job satisfaction.

Results: The results of this study showed that job satisfaction has been born in mind both conceptually and operationally. In both aspects, job satisfaction was assumed to be influenced by personal and organizational dimensions. The main focus was on identifying and controlling different factors to provide job satisfaction for individuals. Yet, individuals' contributions to satisfy themselves were ignored.

Conclusions: We explored that job satisfaction is a multi dimensional concept. This contains individual abilities, attitudes, beliefs and value system. To achieve job satisfaction, it is important that the staff have the characteristics of positive feelings and attitudes, commitment, and responsibility.

Keywords: analysis, Iran, job satisfaction, review

Introduction

A review of literature showed that job satisfaction has been extensively studied in numerous disciplines, including nursing, business, psychology, and sociology [1]. Job satisfaction is a concept that has developed from organization theory [2] and is a complex phenomenon with many affecting components [3]. Unfortunately, a major problem in a review of job satisfaction literature is to define precisely the concept of

job satisfaction [4]. Job satisfaction is an elusive, even mythical, concept that has been increasingly challenged and refined particularly since the Herzberg, Mauser and Snyderman study [5]. Ma et al have reported that the first major study of job satisfaction in nursing was conducted by Nahm at the University of Minnesota in 1940 [6]. This

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review of literature has highlighted dynamism in the conceptualization of job satisfaction over time [7]. An individual's job satisfaction can vary in time and space, in other words between countries, geographical regions, hospitals and wards in the same hospital [8].

Then the definition of job satisfaction varies from person to person and within any one person from time to time [6, 9]. Each researcher seems to work on a limited aspect of the field and defines his/her variables in terms of the concepts with which s/he can work most easily. Those different approaches and conceptual ideas often make it difficult to compare the results of various studies[4]. some researchers have argued that job satisfaction has been vaguely defined in the organizational literature [10]. Also, there is a lack of consensus over the meaning of job satisfaction in nursing, [7] how it is attained or how people perceive it. Today, one of the most important missions of all organizations is improving their employees' job satisfaction; staff satisfaction measuring is the most important goals of each institution. To achieve these goals, the concept of job satisfaction should be transparent and clear. Therefore, this study aimed to explain and clarify the concept of job satisfaction.

Materials and Methods

The present study used a systematic review to clarify job satisfaction's concept. This study initiates the research process with an analysis of the literature. Its purpose was to capture the overall essence of a concept and how it is defined and used in the literature.

This study was completed through a broad, extensive review of the literature using the search terms "job satisfaction," "job dissatisfaction," "concept analysis", and "job dis/satisfaction" without limitations to

nursing or health care organizations. All articles that are available through Medline, CINAHL, SID (Scientific Information Database), ERIC, and PsychInfo were retrieved using these terms via electronic search engines and were reviewed for inclusion, with no limitation to publication date. Additional articles were identified through the subsequent reference mining of the aforementioned articles. The inclusion criteria for the chosen literature were (a) works written in English or Farsi, (b) the inclusion of the search term(s) in the title or keywords, and (c) scholarly works published in a peer-reviewed journals. Studies that were described in one-page reviews or letters were excluded. Given that our access to full text articles involving the Iranian population was limited, all available studies that fit the above inclusion criteria were involved in the review, regardless of study quality.

A total of 38 articles were consulted, all were published between 1986 and 2009, with the majority being of quantitative nature and design. Data on the following items were extracted: country, setting, subjects, the definition of job satisfaction from each paper, theoretical background for measuring job satisfaction, the dimensions of job satisfaction, and job satisfaction consequences and antecedents. There was no discovery, however, of research that was solely dedicated to the analysis of the job satisfaction concept in nursing or other disciplines.

Before we examined the literature, we had the following questions in mind: What is the nature of job satisfaction? How is job satisfaction defined? How has job satisfaction been conceptualized? How it has been measured? After the review and analyses of the literature, we found out that none of the articles had specified the paradigm(s) for their studies/construct

explicitly. However, we noticed that there is a positivist paradigm laying emphasis on descriptions, explanations, predictions and control of patterns and regularities in employees' job satisfaction [11]. As the result, the following themes were elicited.

Results

1. Job satisfaction as an affect

Many researchers have suggested that there is a clear consensus in the definition of job satisfaction. Their "consensus" in definition is that job satisfaction is "an affective (emotional) reaction to one's job [12-17]. Generally considered to be an individual's perceptual/emotional reaction to important facets of work [18]. Job satisfaction describes how we feel about a job [19] is a positive affective orientation toward employment [20,21]. Like other emotional judgments, job satisfaction arises from a variety of feelings related to the characteristics of the job, like feelings about the working conditions [22].

As an affective phenomenon, job satisfaction may be influenced by both positive and negative affects [23]. Positive affectivity and negative affectivity are two examples of personality variables [24].

2. Satisfaction as an attitude

A definition of job satisfaction as the attitude one holds about one's job is also prevalent [12]. However, there is a consensus among some researchers that job satisfaction consists of a positive attitude towards the job [25,26]. Defined as an attitude, job satisfaction is "a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation." [12]. Positive attitudes are equated with satisfaction and negative attitudes with dissatisfaction [4].

3. Job satisfaction as an expectation

Job satisfaction is described as the evaluation of one's job and the employing company as

contributing suitably to the attainment of one's personal objectives [4]. Previous studies have shown that what makes a job satisfying or dissatisfying depends not only on the nature of the job but also on the expectation from their job [27-29]. Therefore satisfaction becomes a function of the perceived discrepancy between intended and actual performance, or the degree to which one's performance is discrepant with one's set of values [30]. Generally, job satisfaction can be defined as the difference between the amount of rewards workers receive and the amount they believe they should receive [15].

4. Job satisfaction as a belief system:

Values are defined as enduring beliefs that guide the individual's attitudes, judgments, and behaviors [31]. Values have been described as beliefs that are experienced by the individual as standards that guide how he or she should function [32]. The reason for focusing on values as opposed to attitudes, for example, is that unlike attitudes, values do not correspond to a particular object or situation and are relatively stable over time. Values may thus not only be important determinants of organizational features and behavioral norms, but also of less clarity but important aspects like employees' expectations of the organization, organizations' expectations of their employees, social climate, and social identities [33]. The importance of re-assessing the nursing job satisfaction literature using these work values is highlighted by the results of studies suggesting that job satisfaction decreases when intrinsic work values are not met [31].

5. Satisfaction as a multidimensional construct

Some researchers defined job satisfaction as a "multifaceted construct [34] encompassing specific facets of satisfaction related to pay, work, supervision, professional

opportunities, benefits, organizational practices and relationships with coworkers [1]. Whilst definitions can provide a broad understanding of what job satisfaction entails, it remains a complex concept illustrated by the multiple variables that have been studied in relation to it [35]. In some studies, job satisfaction is treated as a separate variable; in others, it is a consequence of multiple interrelated variables [20]. Yet in reality, job satisfaction is a complex multidimensional concept [36], because of a multitude of variables associated with it [37], but there is a lack of consensus as to which are the most consistently important [7]. Thus, workers may find satisfaction with one aspect while at the same time they may dislike another [38]. The review of studies shows that there is no consensus model for the dimensions of nurses' job satisfaction [13].

6. Satisfaction as a dependent concept

As a dependent variable, job satisfaction is considered as a concept affected by factors

such as individual, organizational characteristics, and mechanics of the job [15]. Most researchers focused on organizational, circumstantial and personal factors to predict work satisfaction [39]. Several theories suggest that various features of the job environment are causes of job satisfaction [40]. A range of findings derived from quantitative as well as qualitative studies have been reported in the literature regarding sources of job satisfaction among nurses [14]. These sources include working conditions [41], interactions with patients/colleagues/managers [42], work itself [43], remuneration [44], self-growth and promotion [30], praise and recognition [45], control and responsibility [44], job security [46] and leadership styles and organizational policies [30], Job autonomy, recognition for performance, routinization of work [43], Flat organizational structures involving a nursing director with a strong position in the management executive, and decentralized decision-making [31] (table 1).

Table 1: Definitions of job satisfaction concept presented in literature

Job satisfaction concepts	Author(s) and years	Definition
Satisfaction as an affect	- Willem A, Buelens M, Jonghe ID (2007) - Lu H, While A.E, Barriball K.L (2007) - Yang FH, Chang CC (2008)	An individual's perceptual / emotional reaction to important facets of work.
Satisfaction as an attitude	- Weiss HM (2002) - Lunderen S, Nordholm L, Segesten KM (2005) - Azoury NBR, Doumit M.A. A (2003)	A positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation.
Job satisfaction as an expectation	- Jiang N (2008) - Liu LF (2007) - Daehlen M (2008)	Difference between the amount of rewards workers receive and the amount they believe they should receive.
Job satisfaction as a belief system	- Hegney D, Plank A, Parker V (2006) - White C (2006) - Verplanken B (2004)	values is highlighted by the results of studies suggesting that job satisfaction decreases when intrinsic work values are not met.
Satisfaction as a multidimensional construct	- Ruggiero JS (2005) - Finn CP (2001) - Lu KY, Chang LC, Wu HL (2007)	Job satisfaction is a complex multidimensional concept. There is no consensus model for the dimensions of job satisfaction.
Satisfaction as a dependent concept	- Siu OI (2002) - Adamson B, Kenny D, Wilson-Barnett J (1995) - Adams A, Bond S (2000)	Various features of the job environment are affecting job satisfaction.

Discussion

Nursing and non-nursing literatures have emphasized that we should establish the conditions to keep the people satisfied. The internal and external factors influencing this concept have been extensively investigated. It is even attempted to promote or manipulate satisfaction through understanding influential internal and external factors. The review of literatures indicates that researchers studied this concept from two points of view. Some studied it from theoretical points of view while the others paid attention to its operational dimensions. A majority of the researchers defined job satisfaction as a positive affect and attitude to the job. The pioneer researchers of job satisfaction view job satisfaction as negative and positive attitudes to the job.

This definition provides an integration of affective and cognitive dimensions of job satisfaction and introduces the third dimension which is known as job satisfaction as an attitude [47]. Later, another important component known as evaluative or comparator dimension was added to job attitude. That is, an employee compares the present situation and his/her job qualities with his/her ideal and mental expectations and makes an evaluation[48]. Some authors refer to attitude as an affective status; however, a distinction must be made between feeling and attitude. Feeling may be considered as an affective reaction to job and attitude as a kind of thought about the job attitude as deeper as and more stable than feeling. Not unlike feelings, attitude is influenced by the reactions of the society to the profession. However, this was not mentioned in the literature. Also the role of personal value and belief system as an important dimension in job satisfaction was given less appropriate attention.

The review of literatures shows that the concept of job satisfaction has been discussed from personal points of view. Different types of this concept including expectations, feelings, and attitudes have been mostly influenced by personal opinions. Whereas, sometimes organizational and social factors can influence individual expectations, attitudes, and feelings and influence this concept. The review of literatures indicates that people feelings and their attitudes to society and organization were not greatly emphasized. Collective feelings (all personnel feeling) make a professional identity which can influence people individual dimension.

Another less discussed issue in the literature is the people own attempt to create, preserve, and promote their job satisfaction. Job satisfaction should not be considered as a passive concept which occurs arbitrarily (automatically). However, the person should create the means and instruments needed for job satisfaction within him/herself (internally). Attempting and planning to achieve job satisfaction are the most important aspects of this concept. In fact, job satisfaction could be achieved by critical thinking and persons' intelligent plans. If it occurs, other activities which are done by managers in organization or in the society will result in job satisfaction. So, this process is "intentional" and individuals play the vital role. One of the most important determining factors of job satisfaction which can be an important part of this concept is the dimension of value and belief system. Value and belief system can make the work meaningful and purposeful. Value and belief system are the factors influencing their feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. This dimension was not discussed in the literature. But some of the studies claimed that the values are more stable than feelings and

attitudes [49] and influence personal norms [50] that result in specific behaviors [51]. Also, in nursing discipline, one of the factors which can make the nurses' difficult job tolerable and even joyful is the spiritual dimension [52]. The results of the majority of studies indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between employees' satisfaction and their performance. If doing the job in right way has to be viewed as a value, job satisfaction influencing the personnel performance can also be assumed as a value. Therefore, it is a fundamental principle that anyone must struggle to achieve job satisfaction.

Conclusion

In this study we explored that job satisfaction is a multi dimensional concept. This contains individual abilities, attitudes, beliefs and value system. To achieve job satisfaction, it is important that the staff have the characteristics of positive feelings and attitudes, commitment, and responsibility. In addition, they should have intelligent struggles, critical thinking and special planning for attaining competencies and job satisfaction. It guides staff for managing and controlling their satisfaction, and it generates pleasant feelings, positive attitudes, responsibility and accountability to self and others.

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