

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND FACULTY JOB SATISFACTION IN VIETNAMESE HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Several studies have examined the job satisfaction of university faculty in developed countries, little is known about job satisfaction faculty in the developing countries like Vietnam. The purpose of this study was conducted to explore the relationship between job satisfaction and demographic characteristics of university academic members in Vietnamese higher education. The study used a questionnaire to survey with 188 academic members from four public universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Results of this study showed that most academics were only a moderate level of job satisfaction. However, female faculty members were less satisfied than male counterparts. The present analysis also found that there was significant difference in job satisfaction level based on country of graduation; no evidence is adduced to support a gender, age, marital status, rank, academic qualification, length of employment, and discipline influence on job satisfaction of academic members.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, demographic characteristics, Vietnamese higher education; academic members, developing country.

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is a major concern of managers in business, executives in industry, and teachers and administration in educational organization. Although there is no universal definition of the concept (Evans, 1997) most of the definitions that exist in literature have a common theme. Different authors have different approaches towards defining job satisfaction. The most used definition of job satisfaction of Locke (1976), who described job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Job satisfaction is an achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values (Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). A more definitive describes job satisfaction an attitude developed by an individual towards the job and job conditions (Luthans, 1994). Spector (1997) refined the definition of job satisfaction to constitute an attitudinal variable that measures how a person feels about his or her job, including different facets of the job.

There is a relationship between job satisfaction and very different variables. They include life satisfaction (Ho & Au, 2008), demographic and personality characteristics (Miller et al., 2009; Telman & Unsal, 2004), performance (Luthans, 1994), organizational characteristics (Glisson & Durick, 1988) leadership, climate and culture of the university (Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; Hagedorn, 2000; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Several studies of higher education sector are used different factors to measuring job satisfaction of academic members. Oshagbemi (1997) employed eight scales designed to measure satisfaction of university teachers in the United Kingdom, namely teaching; research; administration and management; present pay; promotions; supervision/supervisor behaviour; behavior of co-workers and physical conditions/working conditions. The study of Kusku (2003) measured the job satisfaction of academics in a university in Turkey using the seven determinants general satisfaction, management satisfaction, colleagues, other working group satisfaction, job satisfaction, work environment and salary satisfaction. According to Ssesanga and Garrett (2005), measured the job satisfaction of academics of higher education in Uganda using nine general elements of their work comprising teaching, research, governance, remuneration, opportunities for promotion, supervision, co-worker's behavior, working environment and the job in general. A study of Chen et al., (2006) measured the job satisfaction of teachers in a private university in China using six satisfaction factors, namely organization vision, respect, result feedback and motivation, management system, pay and benefits and work environment.

There are more articles and dissertations have examined the topic of job satisfaction, but it is a continuing topic for research. Most of the research that has been conducted in the field of job satisfaction has focused on organizational business and industrial setting (Platsidou & Diamantopoulou, 2009). However, in recent years, a clear increase has been observed in the number of studies related to the job satisfaction of academics. Unfortunately, evidence from job satisfaction of academic members in higher education of the developing countries is seriously lacking and is a gap which needs to be filled (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005; Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009; Garrett, 1999; Hean & Garrett, 2001). Hence, this study investigated how gender, age, marital status, rank, academic qualification, length of employment, country of graduation and discipline existed significant differences of job satisfaction among academic members in Vietnamese higher education. The present study was designed to answer the following research questions: 1) what is the general level of job satisfaction of academic members in Vietnam? 2) Do any significant differences exist in the level of job satisfaction with regard to demographic characteristics?

METHODOLOGY

Dependent and Independent Variables

Job satisfaction has been identified as the dependent variable in this study. This study measured the job satisfaction of academics of higher education in Vietnam using seven satisfaction factors, namely recreation and sport equipment, medical facility, in-service teaching training, bonus and welfare, curriculum reform and evaluation, teaching load, and administration load.

In this study, factor loading and Cronback's alpha coefficient were conducted to assess the validity and reliability of this constructed measurement for job satisfaction of academic members (see Table 1). According to Hair et al., (2006), instruments used in exploratory study have reliability of 0.6 and 0.7 or more (Nunnally, 1978). The Cronbach alpha estimated for this study shows acceptable level of 0.90. Hence, based on the validation of construct reliability which is concluded that research construct of job satisfaction is reliable.

The independent variables of this study is demographic characteristics, including gender, age, marital status, academic rank, academic qualification, length of employment, discipline, and country of graduation. Very little study is available concerning the relationship between job satisfaction and country of graduation.

Sample

The population for this study was comprised of academic members in the four public universities of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, namely University of Technology, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Science, and University of Information Technology. Those universities were a member of Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh City. A random sample of 200 questionnaires administered to potential subjects selected from the four universities, 188 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 94 per cent. According to Dillman (2000) and Malaney (2002), acceptable response rates range between 30 per cent and 60 per cent and are acceptable to most researchers for analysis purpose.

Of the 188 respondents, 27.7% were female and 72.3% of male faculty. Almost respondents consisted of 61.2% faculty were from 31 to 40 years old. Regarding marital status, 45.7% were single, 53.7% academics were married. In terms of their academic qualification, 42% had master's degrees, and 46.8% faculty had attained a doctoral degree. Almost 88.3% of the respondents were lecturers and only 1.6% were associate professor. There were 36.2% faculty who had from 6 to 10 years, 22.3% had from 11 to 15 years and only 9% academic members had from 16 or more years teaching experience. For country of graduation, 4.8% of academics graduated in America, 16% were Europe, only 2.1% were Oceania, and almost of 77.1% were Asia. Regarding academic members' discipline, 40.4% faculty were technology areas, 19.7% were social sciences and humanities fields, 34.6% were science fields, and only 5.3% faculty were field of information technology.

Data Analysis Method

Questionnaire survey was used to gather data in this study. The participants are weighted on a 4-point Likert's scale to measure job satisfaction of academic members (1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = satisfied, 4 = very satisfied).

All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 13.0 software. The statistical methods employed to analyze data are included. Descriptive analysis is computed to examine the general level of job satisfaction of academic members. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is enabled to examine significant difference between the demographic characteristics and the job satisfaction of academic members.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Level of Job Satisfaction of Academic Members in Vietnam

In terms of Table 1 the results showed that academic members indicate only a moderate level of job satisfaction ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.80$), mirroring the results of the studies by Eyupoglu and Sanner (2009), Malik (2011).

Regarding the seven dimensions of job satisfaction of academic members from four universities in Ho Chi Minh City, job satisfaction of academic members had the highest teaching load ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.86$), subsequently followed by job satisfaction of administration load ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 0.88$), job satisfaction of curriculum reform and evaluation ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.19$) job satisfaction of in-service teaching training ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.93$), job satisfaction of medical facility ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 1.06$), bonus and welfare ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.75$). Job satisfaction of recreation and sport equipment had the lowest ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.75$). Thus, university managers should invest more time, budget, facilities, and technologies in enhancing academic members' job satisfaction of regulations in higher education institutions.

Table 1
Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the job satisfaction level and dimensions of job satisfaction

Dimensions of job satisfaction	M	SD	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
Recreation and sport equipment	2.44	1.07	.797	0.90
Medical facility	2.66	1.06	.825	
In-service teaching training	2.81	0.93	.787	
Bonus and welfare	2.46	1.07	.840	
Curriculum reform and evaluation	2.85	1.19	.782	
Teaching load	2.97	0.86	.779	
Administration load	2.92	0.88	.728	
Level of job satisfaction	2.73	0.80		

The Relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Job Satisfaction

Gender and job satisfaction

The findings of Table 2 showed that no difference has been found between the level of satisfaction of male and female academics ($F = 2.350$, $p = .127 > 0.05$), mirroring the results of studies by Ali and Akhter (2009), Noordin and Jusoff (2009), Paul and Phua (2011), Schulze (2006), Ssesanga and Garrett (2005), Stevens (2005), Warren and Johnson (1995), Wong and Heng (2009). However, male academic members ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.82$) are generally more satisfied with their job than the female academic members ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.74$) in this study.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and gender

Gender	M	SD	F	$Sig.$
Male	2.78	0.82	2.350	.127
Female	2.58	0.74		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Age and job satisfaction

There had no statistically significant difference between job satisfaction of academic members in VNU-HCMC and age ($F = 2.003, p = .138 > 0.05$). This result is supported by the studies of Ghafoor (2012), Malik (2011), Santhapparaj and Alam (2005), Springfield-Scott (2000). However, academic members of under 30 years old group ($M = 2.87, SD = 0.69$) were more satisfied than other age groups. Based on the findings of Muchinsky (1978), Paul and Phua (2011), Oshagbemi (1997), Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) found that young lecturers may feel satisfied with their jobs because of the novelty of their situation. These studies also recognized that the rise in job satisfaction at 45 years and above could come from reduced aspirations due to the recognition that there are few alternative jobs available once their careers are established.

Table 3
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and age

Age (years old)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Under 30	2.87	0.69		
31 – 40	2.72	0.89	2.003	.138
Over 40	2.47	0.31		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Marital status and job satisfaction

From Table 4, no significant statistical difference between single, married and widowed academic member was found for job satisfaction ($F = 0.787, p = .457 > 0.05$). This result is supported by the studies of Paul and Phua (2011), Saygi et al., (2011), Wong and Heng (2009). On the other hand, this finding also showed that single ($M = 2.80, SD = 0.84$) were more satisfied than married ($M = 2.73, SD = 0.77$). However, the study of Noordin and Jusoff (2009) found that female academic members in the single and married reported higher level of job satisfaction than those in the divorced category. In study of Fetsch and Kennington (1997) recognized that married faculty to be more satisfied than single or widowed faculty.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and marital status

Marital Status	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Single	2.80	0.84		
Married	2.68	0.77	0.787	.457
Widowed	2.73			

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Academic qualification and job satisfaction

As shown in Table 5, there had no significant difference between job satisfaction of academic members and academic qualification ($F = 2.719, p = .069 > 0.05$). This result is similarly

supported by the studies of Blank (1993), Kledaras and Joslyn (1992 -1993), Malik (2011), Paul and Phua (2011), Wong and Hung (2009). In this study, the satisfaction levels of academic members holding bachelor's degree ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.82$) were marginally than those holding masters ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 0.63$) and doctoral degrees ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.91$). However, Blank (1993), Eyupoglu and Saner (2009), and Schroder (2008) reported that academic members in higher education institutions with doctorates displayed significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than their counterparts with a master's or bachelor degree.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and academic qualification

Academic qualification	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Bachelor's degree	3.01	0.82		
Master's degree	2.59	0.63	2.719	.069
Doctoral degree	2.78	0.91		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Academic rank and job satisfaction

Academic rank had no significant difference the level of job satisfaction ($F = 0.416$, $p = .660 > 0.05$), mirroring the study of Eyupoglu and Saner (2009). On the contrary, several studies of Abdul (2013), Ghafoor (2012), Holden and Black (1996), Malik (2011), Oshagbemi (2003), Springfield-Scott (2000), Ssesanga and Garrett (2005), Wong and Heng (2009) indicated a progressive increase in job satisfaction in relation to academic rank among academic members in higher education sector. However, lecturers had the highest job satisfaction in their job ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.59$). This result was inconsistent with results found in the literatures. For instance, Springfield-Scott (2000) found that associate professors and professors were consistently more satisfied than assistant professors, instructors/lecturers, and adjuncts. Faculty at higher academic ranks generally being more satisfied with their jobs compared to those at lower ranks (Oshagbemi, 2003).

Table 6
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and academic rank

Academic rank	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Teaching assistant	2.88	0.72		
Lecturer	2.71	0.82	0.416	.660
Associate professor	2.57	0.43		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Length of employment and job satisfaction

For length of employment, there is no significant differences between job satisfaction of academic members and length of employment ($F = 1.658$, $p = 0.162 > 0.05$). This result is same

as discussed in the studies of Castillo and Cano (2004), Paul and Phua (2011), Schroder (2008), Wong and Heng (2009). However, academic members with 6 to 10 years teaching experience ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.95$) had the highest and academic members with 16 or more years teaching experience ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.33$) had lowest job satisfaction.

Table 7
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and length of employment

Length of employment (years)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Less than 1	2.70	0.51		
1 – 5	2.83	0.87		
6 -10	2.86	0.95	1.658	.162
11 – 15	2.56	0.69		
16 or more	2.44	0.33		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Country of graduation and job satisfaction

Regarding the relationship between job satisfaction of academic members and country of graduation, this finding of Table 8 shows that there is significant difference between job satisfaction of academic members and country of graduation ($F = 2.350$, $p = .005 < 0.01$). Furthermore, Table 2 also recognizes that both academic members who attained the highest degrees in Oceania ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.27$) and Europe ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.11$) to be more satisfied than those who were Asia ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.74$). However, unfortunately, there has not yet been much empirical research about the relationship between job satisfaction and country of graduation. The results of this study cannot be compared to results of others. This study, therefore, contributes to fill in the literature gap of job satisfaction of academic members in higher education institutions and country where highest degrees attained.

Table 8
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and country of graduation

Country of graduation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
America	2.76	0.44		
Asia	2.65	0.74		
Europe	3.04	1.11	2.350	.005
Oceania	3.07	0.27		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

Discipline and job satisfaction

There had no significant difference between job satisfaction of academic member and discipline ($F = 1.606, p = .190 > 0.05$). This result was inconsistent with results of Hemmasi (1992), Neal (1990), Neumann and Finaly (1991), Opp (1992); Sabharwal and Corley (2009), Terpstra and Honoree (2004), Ward and Sloan (2000). Furthermore, the study of Kledaras and Joslyn (1992 - 1993) found that academic members from different faculties and institutions may differ significantly in what they consider important for job satisfaction. However, academic members of information technology field had the highest job satisfaction in their job ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.06$), and academic members of science field had the lowest job satisfaction in their job ($M = 2.60, SD = 0.67$).

Table 9
Descriptive statistics and ANOVA results of job satisfaction and discipline

Discipline	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Technology	2.82	0.86		
Social Science and Humanities	2.67	0.80	1.606	.190
Science	2.60	0.67		
Information Technology	3.09	1.06		

Note. The mean difference is significant at the $p < .05$

CONCLUSION

Understanding the factors that contribute to job satisfaction of university academic members in the developing countries like Vietnam is vital in order for them to achieve high standard of teaching and to produce quality research and publications. This study was to explore the relationship between job satisfaction of university academic members and demographic characteristics. Through the findings described in this study, academic members from four public universities of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam enjoy only a moderate level of job satisfaction. However, female faculty members were less satisfied than male counterparts. The present analysis also found that there was significant difference in job satisfaction level based on country of graduation.

Furthermore, the findings of this study showed that academic members were found less satisfied in terms of recreation and sport equipment, bonus and welfare, and medical facility. Policy makers and management of university need to re-examine their current institutional policy and make the necessary changes to enhance job satisfaction of academics. They should invest more time, budget, facilities, and technologies in enhancing academic members' job satisfaction in higher education institutions. In addition, university management and policy makers should take more interest this dimensions than other factors in the process of policy development for institution.

It is hoped that the barrier to the job satisfaction of academic members are found in this study may be useful for management institutes to develop work environment and culture that would

allow higher levels of faculty job satisfaction and can contribute to a great extent to improve the level of academic members in developing countries in general and Vietnamese higher education in particular.

LIMITATIONS

In this study, the data obtained through questionnaires were all self-reports from the participants to determine which aspects of their position are satisfying and dissatisfying, hence, the findings may be subject to response consistency effect. On the other hand, this study cannot be generalized to all academic members in Vietnam, the findings of this study are restricted to the three universities which the samples were drawn.

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