

Theories of Job Satisfaction: Foundations, Frameworks and Contemporary Implication

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Introduction

Job satisfaction has been one of the most widely studied topics in organizational behavior because it directly affects employee performance, motivation and retention. The concept of job satisfaction is linked with other concepts such as motivation and commitment. Over the years psychologists and management experts have proposed various theories to explain why some employees feel happy and fulfilled at work while others do not. Most of the studies have looked at the relationship between job satisfaction and factors such as age, education, job level, working condition, absenteeism rate, etc. There are several theories that have attempted to explain the concept of job satisfaction, some of which are not only related to job satisfaction but also to motivation theories. However, these theories of job satisfaction are very helpful for the researcher to understand in deep the concept of job satisfaction and how the job satisfaction is measured with the help of these theories. This research paper present the most important theories of job satisfaction.

Keywords

Job satisfaction, concept, workload, motivation, expectation

Theories of Job Satisfaction

The researcher has explained the several of job satisfaction:

Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory

Abraham Maslow developed this model of human motivation. This theory is one of the most well-known theories of motivation. Abraham Maslow¹⁴ in year 1943 states that “people have a complex set of exceptionally strong needs and the behavior of individual at a given moment is usually determined by their strongest need”.

The salient features of this theory are as follows.

1. The urge to fulfill needs is a prime factor in motivation of people at work. Human beings strive to fulfill a wide range of needs. Human needs are multiple, complex and interrelated.
2. Human needs form a particular structure or hierarchy. Physiological needs are at the base of the hierarchy while self-actualization needs are the apex. Safety needs, social needs and esteem needs are positioned in between. As one proceeds from base towards apex, needs become less essential.
3. Lower-level-needs must at least partially be satisfied before higher-level-needs emerge. A higher-level need does not become an active motivating force until the preceding lower-order needs are satisfied.
4. As soon as one need is satisfied, another need emerges. This process of need satisfaction continues from birth to death. Man is wanting animal.
5. A satisfied need is not a motivator. It is the unsatisfied needs which regulate an individual's behavior.
6. Various needs levels are inter-dependent and overlapping. Each higher level need emerges before the lower level need is completely satisfied.

These are arranged in a hierarchy that requires the lower more basic needs to be satisfied before the increasingly less basic ones above.

Maslow introduced five basic needs which have become known as the hierarchy of needs. These are:

- 1) Physiological needs.
- 2) Security needs.
- 3) Social needs.
- 4) Esteem needs.

5) Self-actualization needs.

Maslow's hierarchy is usually illustrated as a pyramid with physiological needs at the base, self-actualization at the top. Safety needs, social needs and esteem needs are positioned in between.

Physiological needs are the lowest forms of needs in the hierarchy but tend to have the highest strength in terms of motivation, although independent of each other these needs may be satisfied in various ways or act as channel for other needs. Physiological needs are the biological needs which need to be satisfied by individual to sustain their life. Therefore, these needs are also known as survival needs.

Physiological and safety needs are considered the basic lower-order needs. Once physiological needs are reasonably satisfied, a person wants protection from physical dangers and economic security. These are the needs for safety, stability and protection from the fear of losing a job, property, food and shelter.

Social needs include needs for love, affection, friendship, belongingness, social interaction and needs to be parts of the family or social group. Individual looks for an environment where they are understood, respected, valued and wanted by the people. Esteem needs are of the two types self-esteem and esteem of others. Self-esteem needs include self-respect, self-confidence, competence, achievement, knowledge and independence. Esteem of others includes reputation, status, recognition, autonomy, etc. These needs produce satisfaction such as power, self-confidence, status and prestige.

Self-actualization needs are the highest need in the need hierarchy. These include the need to develop potentialities and skills in order to become what one believes one is capable of becoming. These are the needs for realizing one's full potential, for continued self-development, for being creative.

Maslow suggest that people can become so focused on satisfying the current level of need that they may treat it as a higher priority, for a time, than a lower need. Hierarchy of needs theory is based on the premise that individuals seek to satisfy unmet needs and that will most often seek to satisfy the next level of needs once the needs below it have been satisfied. This theory of motivation states that when a lower need is satisfied, then the next highest need becomes dominant and the person's attention is turned to satisfy this higher need. However, the need for self-actualization can never be satisfied.

Milkovich and Boudreau¹⁵ in 1988 state that one of the major problems with this approach is that it is extremely difficult to identity which needs is proponent at any given time. Research indicates that needs vary by age, geographic location (urban/rural), socioeconomic status, and gender differences, to name a few.

Herzberg's Motivation Theory

This theory is also known as Herzberg's Two-factor theory or Herzberg's Motivator-hygiene theory. Motivator hygiene theory is a 'content theory' that Frederick Herzberg and his associates created when they studied the job attitudes of 200 accountants and engineers from eleven industries in Pittsburgh area of the United States using interviews. They were asked to describe a time when they had felt satisfied or dissatisfied at work and the reason behind that. From the investigation, Herzberg suggested two factors Hygiene and motivational factors.

The table illustrates the theory which is explained the Hygiene and motivational factors

Herzberg Theory

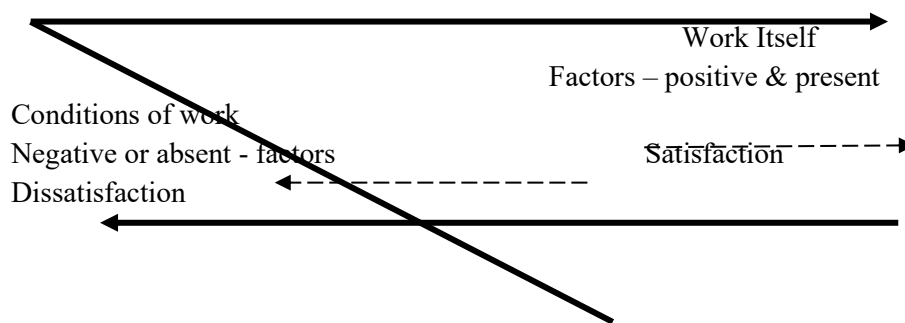
Hygiene/ Dissatisfies/Extrinsic factors	Motivators/Satisfiers/Intrinsic Factors
Policy & administration	Achievement
Supervision	Recognition
Interpersonal relationship	the work itself
Working condition	Responsibility
Salary	Growth for advancement
Status	Promotion.
Security	

According to Herzberg, factor that cause dissatisfaction are called hygiene factors. Hygiene factors do not provide satisfaction to the employees but their absence leads to job dissatisfaction. Therefore, these factors are called as dissatisfiers. These factors are extrinsic to the job. These factors simply maintain a zero level of motivation and necessary to maintain a reasonable level of satisfaction among employees. On the other hand, motivational factor are intrinsic parts of the job. Any increase in these factors will satisfy the employees and help to improve performance. But a decrease in these factors will not cause dissatisfaction.

Herzberg found that the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction, 'hygiene factors', do not necessarily cause job satisfaction, but may cause dissatisfaction. On the other hand if the motivating factors exist, that does not mean that when some of the job satisfaction factors are lacking this will lead to dissatisfaction. That is, there are certain factors that cause job satisfaction, while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction.

Herzberg's theory clearly argues that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction result from different causes; satisfaction depends on motivators while dissatisfaction is the result of hygiene factors.

Herzberg's Hypothesis



Source: Yeung Kwok – Piu: *A study of job satisfaction of Secondary school Principals in Hong Kong, 2004, Unpublished Ph.d Thesis submitted to University of South, 2004, Australia, P. 33*

The theory concludes that of job satisfaction leads to greater productivity, then it makes sense that any improvements in motivators should lead to an improvement in performances and efficiency, Herzberg suggest that the work itself, responsibility and advancement bring about the most long –term improvements in job satisfaction, although recognition and achievement are more short-term in their effects on job could be improved by restricting them to increase the opportunities available to the employee to achieve goals that are meaningfully related to the job.

Researches based on the Two-factor Theory in the educational setting were very popular up to the 1980s. Many of the studies in the area of job satisfaction replicated Herzberg's work to verify the validity of his two-factor theory. Some studies supported Herzberg's theory. These studies had been done by researcher like Sergiovarmi¹⁷ in 1967, Schackmuth¹⁸ in 1979, Gazie¹⁹ in 1986 and Azumi and Lerman²⁰ in 1987. Some studies rejected the theory or yielded findings that were inconsistent with the theory and these studies are done by Armstrong²¹ in 1971, Medved²² in 1982 and Wisner²³ in 1984.

Valence Theory

Victor H. Vroom²⁴ developed the multiplicative model of job satisfaction in year 1967. According to him people will be motivated to do things to reach a goal if they believe in the worth of that goal and if they can see that what they do will help them in achieving it. This theory states that individual's motivation toward doing anything will be determined by the value they place on the outcome of their effort (whether positive or negative), multiplied by the confidence they have that their efforts will help in achieving a goal.

Victor. H. Vroom asserted that an individual's behavior is affected by:

- What the person wants to happen;
- That person's estimate of the probabilities of various events occurring, including the desired outcome;
- The strength of a person's belief that a certain outcome will satisfy his or her needs.

The theory can be stated in the following formula:

MOTIVATION (Force) = VALENCE X EXPECTATION

Here force means strength of person's motivation, expectancy is the probability that a particular action will lead to a desired outcome and valence means the strength of the person's desire or preference for a particular event or outcome. The anticipated value of rewards serves as a motivator and increases the level of search behavior. Vroom's concept of force is equivalent to motivation. Willingness to expend effort depends on the positive or negative value attached to an outcome. Thus, according to Vroom's theory, motivation is the sum of the product of valence and expectancy. Vroom's model of job satisfaction suggests that the attractiveness of a work role for a person is directly related to the extent to which it provides him with rewarding outcomes and inversely related to the extent to which it provides him aversive outcomes. Thus, if money constitutes a reward for a person then the more money he makes from his work, the more attracted he will be to his work role. If rejection by other people constitutes an aversive outcome, then the more he is rejected by his co-workers, the less attracted he will be to his work role. Proponents of the valence theory also point out that a state of dissatisfaction is not necessarily a bad thing because it arouses search behavior. Employees are attracted by incentives because of perceived value/valences and satisfaction. Job satisfaction is measured by the total amount of outcome valences and employee expectations of the future. Valence theory holds that a person's motivation is determined by forward-looking beliefs about what will occur. People will engage in actions in which they expect to be successful. Valence theorists argue that it is not the magnitude of reward that is significant, but rather the degree to which an individual expects to be rewarded. Vroom²⁵ perceived job satisfaction as a future gratification and he stated "Job satisfaction is a valence of outcomes or an anticipated future need"

Vroom takes the individual's valence or liking for an object as the starting point of this explanatory scheme; a given valence is then explained in terms of another valence. Vroom gave no explanation of what an appraisal is, or where the first appraisal or valence came from. However, desires and satisfactions are not psychological primaries. They result from estimating the relationship between one's perceived object or outcome and one's value standards. The causal concepts are perception, value and value judgment; the results are emotions such as desires, satisfaction attraction, and etc.

Equity Theory

Equity theory of motivation was formulated by J. Stacy Adams²⁶ of the United States in 1965. Equity theory is one of the major formulations relevant to financial compensation. Adam's recent formulation of equity theory is the most explicit and extended of theories which received widespread attention among persons concerned with compensation theories and practices. According to this formulation, the theory considers the following:

1. The nature of inputs and outputs,
2. The nature of the social comparison process,
3. The conditions leading to equity and inequity and the possible effects of inequity,
4. The possible responses one may make to reduce the conditions of inequity.

Inputs include any and all factors perceived by a person to be relevant for getting some return on his personal investment. The important point is that the person actually perceives them as something of value that he brings or puts into a relationship. In contrast, outcomes include any and all factors perceived by the person as returns to himself, that is, factors that have utility or value to him. A person is said to consciously or unconsciously compare his output/input ratio to that of another person or persons. This comparison person does not necessarily have to be any one individual; it could be a broad class of individuals who are perceived by the person as relevant for comparison. Equity is said to occur when a person perceives that the ratio of his outcome to his inputs is equal to other's outcome/input ratio. Conversely, the person experiences inequity when he perceives that his ratio is not equal to others.

Equity theory is based on the premises that people enter into an exchange will another they compare their situation with that of others around them. The others that are chosen –the referent group and it will be people or policies that the person considers to be relevant to him or her. People compare the ratio of their inputs and their outputs with those of their referent group, using the concept of distribute justice (the perceived fairness of a distribution of rewards), one or other of the parties in the exchange may feel they are getting short-changed.

In a work setting inputs are what people bring to, or put in to, a job, outputs are the rewards people get as a result if their inputs.

Equity Theory

Inputs include	Outputs include
Experience	Pay
Skills	Benefits
Seniority	Status
Intelligence	Promotion
Age	Job satisfaction
Effort	Recognition good relationship With others job title

The individual decides the relevance of inputs and outputs. This means that the same inputs and outputs can be treated as relevant by one party and irrelevant by another.

Where people see a favorable comparison between their inputs and outputs and those of others, the situation is perceived as one of equity and also known as consonance. Where they see an unfavorable comparison, the situation is perceived as one of inequity and also known as dissonance. According to the Equity theory, a person generally strives to restore inequitable situations to equitable ones to move from dissonance to consonance, in a work setting, consonance is likely to lead to job satisfaction, Dissonance generally has a negative effect on morale-although people may be motivated to take action, it will be a motivation that steams from a negative feeling.

Referent groups may not be related to work; they may be family, friends, or even people in the media and not known by the individual, they could include a vision of themselves in the past or how they expect themselves to be in the future. As noted above, they may also be policies that the person feels apply to him or her. The person making the comparison decides who the referent groups are.

The key ways in which equity can be restored include:

- 1) Altering the quantity and/or quality of inputs. Includes such as working less hard to justify being under-compensated.
- 2) Changing outputs includes negotiation to make the pay structure more equitable.
- 3) Changing the referent group includes the comparison of oneself to the work group rather than with friends.
- 4) Trying to change the inputs or outputs of the referent group.
- 5) Re-interpreting the situation so as to rationalize any differences. It includes coming to think that a task is not as important as was originally thought and therefore now believing that it is being rewarded fairly.
- 6) Leaving the situation altogether includes resigning from the job.

Equity theory also applies where someone feels that he or she is getting more out of a situation for the same inputs as another. The theory suggests that people also try to bring these situations of inequity into equity. Efforts by this group to restore equity could include working harder to justify the higher outcomes, coaching underpaid colleagues so they can improve their inputs, or convincing themselves that they do, in fact, deserve the higher rewards. Although it is more likely to be an employer who ends the relationship when someone is considered over – compensated, there is evidence to suggest that when-overpaid employees are uncomfortable enough about things they will voluntarily withdraw from as inequitable relationship.

Adams listed several things that a person can do to reduce or avoid inequity. He attempt to equalize his and the other's ratio:

1. by cognitively distorting his or the other's inputs and outcomes;
2. by acting on the other to get him to change his inputs or outcomes;
3. a person can change his own inputs or outcomes
4. a person can change his comparison person or leave the field.

Adams postulated that inequity will create tension and that this tension has motivating properties impelling the person to reduce or eliminate it. Moreover, the force of motivation is proportional to the magnitude of the inequity

Affect Theory

Range of Affect Theory was formulated by Edwin A. Locke²⁷ in 1976 is arguably the most famous job satisfaction model. The main premise of this theory is that satisfaction is determined by a discrepancy between what one wants in a job and what one has in a job. Further, the theory states that how much one values given fact of work moderates how satisfied/dissatisfied one becomes when expectations are/aren't met. When a person values a particular facet of job, his satisfaction is more greatly impacted both positively (when expectations are met) and negatively (when expectations are not met), compared to one who doesn't value that facet.

Dispositional Theory

Another well-known job satisfaction theory is the dispositional theory. It is a very general theory that suggests the people have innate dispositions that cause them to have tendencies towards a certain level of satisfaction, regardless of one's job. This approach became a notable explanation of job satisfaction in light of evidence that job satisfaction tends to be a stable over time and across careers and jobs.

A significant model that narrowed the scope of the Dispositional Theory was the Core Self-evaluations Model, proposed by Timothy A. Judge, Edwin A. Locke, and Cathy C. Durham²⁸ in 1997. Judge argued that there are four Core Self-evaluations that determine one's disposition towards job satisfaction: Self-esteem, General Self-efficacy, locus of control, and neuroticism. This model states that higher level of self-esteem means the value one places on his/her self and general self-efficacy, the belief in one's own competence lead to higher work satisfaction. Having an internal locus of control means believing one has control over her/his own life, as opposed to outside forces having control leads to higher job satisfaction. Finally, lower levels of neuroticism lead to higher job satisfaction.

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