

A Review of Job Satisfaction

Yanhan Zhu¹

¹ School of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing, China

Correspondence: Yanhan Zhu, School of Political Science and Public Management, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China. E-mail: littleyan@yahoo.cn

Received: September 20, 2012 Accepted: October 13, 2012 Online Published: December 31, 2012

doi:10.5539/ass.v9n1p293

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v9n1p293>

The research is sponsored by the Humanities and Social Science Fund of China Ministry of Education "Study on the Effects of Exchange Relationship Perception on Individual Behavior" (Project grant No. 12YJC630329), "the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (Project grant No. SWU1209373)"

Abstract

Job satisfaction, as an academic concept, has aroused wide attentions from the fields of management, social psychology, and practical operations in recent years. This paper reviews more than a decade of researches on the antecedents and outcomes of job satisfaction. Starting from the definition of job satisfaction, the author discusses the several models for the measurement of job satisfaction. Then, the author discusses the achievements of job satisfaction and mentions a model describing the job satisfaction. Finally, the author presents a paradox of job satisfaction and job performance.

Keywords: job satisfaction, the relationship model

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction, as an academic concept, has aroused wide attentions from the fields of management, social psychology, and practice in recent years. As a matter of fact, researches on this concept have a long history in the diversified academic field. There are various definitions of this concept in colorful and competitive academic fields.

2. The Job Satisfaction: An Attitude

Eagly and Charken described the attitude as: a psychological inclination shown by assessing the degree of liking or disliking a particular entity. Robbins and Mary Coulter clearly defined the attitude as an evaluative statement in the classical teaching textbook *Management* in 2004 for Business Administration, i.e. an evaluative statement of certain things, people, and events. This statement could be approval or disapproval. It reflects the inside feelings of individual towards a particular object. The attitude, as a constitutional concept, is consisted of three parts, i.e. the cognitive components, the affective components, and the behavioral components. Here, the cognitive components of the attitude are composed by the faith, the opinion, the knowledge or the information. The affective components of the attitude are the feelings and the emotions. The behavioral components of the attitude are the inclination of an individual to take action towards certain people or event in certain way. In practice, managers are not interested in all attitudes of employees. They only care about the attitudes that have connections with the work. Here, the most important attitude is the job satisfaction. Usually, to discuss the employees' attitudes means a discussion of job satisfaction.

2.1 The Definition of Job Satisfaction

The formal definition of the job satisfaction could be traced back to the studies of Fisher and Hanna in the year 1931. Based on amounts of case studies, they described the job satisfaction as: a product of non-regulatory mood tendency. In the year 1974, Churchill et al. published an article called *Measuring the Job Satisfaction of Industrial Salesmen* and made it clear that: the job satisfaction, as a constitutional concept, contains the features of the job and the features of job-related environment. In a positive measurement of the constitutional concept of the job satisfaction, Churchill et al. gave an operational definition of the job satisfaction, i.e. the work-related affection states covering five aspects, namely the supervisors, the jobs, the work colleagues, the compensation, and the promotion opportunities. In the year 1976, Locke improved the study of Fisher and proposed the

definition of the job satisfaction with far-reaching influences, i.e. the job satisfaction is a kind of pleasant or positive affection state, which grows in the process of evaluating an individual's work experience. At this point, the job satisfaction is gradually taken as an affective reflection to the work. In the year 1985, Organ and Near recognized that the job satisfaction could be defined in perspective of affection or explored in perspective of cognition. Based on the perspective of cognition, the job satisfaction is interpreted as an understanding of a psychological process of recognition, including the consciousness, the perception, the reasoning, the judgment, and other aspects. In the year 1989, Brief summarized previous researches and proposed a paradox, i.e. the job satisfaction is usually interpreted as an academic term containing affective elements, and the affective contents, however, are not measured effectively. The measurement of job satisfaction mainly focuses on the cognition. In the year 1993, Moorman in his *The Influence of Cognitive and Affective based Job Satisfaction Measures on the Relationship between Satisfaction and Organizational Citizenship Behavior* clearly pointed out: from the affective perspective, the job satisfaction is an overall positive affective evaluation; from the cognitive perspective, the job satisfaction is a more logic and rational evaluation of working conditions. Cognition does not depend on affective judgment. The cognitive perceptive of job satisfaction is an evaluation of working conditions, opportunities, and output. The measures of job satisfaction do not include the description of feelings. In summary, the affection-based job satisfaction is an overall positive affective evaluation on the job. According to this definition, the job satisfaction is about whether the job stimulates employees' pleasant emotions and positive feelings. The affection-oriented job satisfaction is to measure the feelings and emotions of employees in working. The positive feelings or emotions mean high job satisfaction. The cognition-based job satisfaction is a more logic and rational evaluation on the working conditions. According to this definition, the cognition-oriented job satisfaction contains a comparison process. It is a relative concept. The evaluation is from the comparison with references. It does not depend on emotional judgment. It is the evaluation on working conditions, development opportunities, as well as working output. Here, the cognition-based job satisfaction is to measure whether the nature of job, the working conditions, and development opportunities satisfy individuals' needs. Relevant indicators are mostly about the evaluations on jobs, instead of the descriptions of feelings. In the year 1996, Motowidlo defined the self-reporting-style job satisfaction as: a judgment of the friendliness of working environment. In the year 1998, on the basis of paradox theory, Brief defined the job satisfaction as: the statement of internal state, reflected by affection or cognition, about liking or disliking the job and the degree. Coming into the 21st century, Weiss put forward a definition of the job satisfaction in the year 2002, similar to the one by Motowidlo. The definition of the job satisfaction by Weiss was clearer, i.e. the job satisfaction is an individual's positive measurable judgment on his or her working conditions. Weiss et al. regarded the job satisfaction as an internal state, which was an affective evaluation on the job by liking or disliking and the degree. Thus, the job satisfaction is about the attitude. In the year 2006, Harrison and his colleagues published an article *How important are job attitudes? Meta-analytic comparisons of integrative behavioral outcomes and time sequences* and pointed out that the job satisfaction is a kind of job attitude.

Reviewing the studies of job satisfaction, it can be found that the institutional concept of job satisfaction, describing employees' working attitudes, evolves gradually concerning the definitions. The development of definition follows the line from single perspective to multiple perspectives and also reflects a cognitive process from overall perception to specific cognition. According to studies of job satisfaction, some scholars argued that the job satisfaction is a single concept and employees produce the overall attitude or opinion to the work. The representatives of this view are Hoppock et al. In the year 1935, Hoppock in his doctoral thesis *Job Satisfaction* described the job satisfaction as the employees' subjective reflections to working scenarios, i.e. the affective reflection of employees in working or the subjective feelings about their working environment. Hoppock thought that the job satisfaction is the subjective evaluation, psychologically and physically, on the job and the working environment. In the year 1976, Locke defined the job satisfaction as the positive and pleasant affective state, which an individual hold about his or her job. In the year 1977, Kalleberg argued that the job satisfaction is an employee's normal attitude to his or her job. The employee balances his or her satisfaction or dissatisfaction to different parts of the job and finally forms an overall conclusion about the job, satisfying or not. In the year 2005, Lussier defined the job satisfaction as the employees' overall attitude to the work. Differing from the overall perception above, other scholars in relevant studies agreed that the job satisfaction is a specific element concept. It reflects employees' evaluations on every specific aspect of their work. Thus, the measures of the job satisfaction should not be general but focus on specific aspects of the work. Accordingly, in the year 1962, the researcher Vroom pointed out that the job satisfaction has seven aspects, i.e. the compensation, the supervisor, the colleagues, the working environment, the job content, the promotion, and the organization self. A study by Smith et al. shows that the job satisfaction has five aspects, i.e. the compensation, the job, the promotion, the supervisor, and the colleagues. To sum up, regardless the researchers study the concept of job satisfaction from

which perspectives, their definitions of the job satisfaction are more or less about personal affections. If the employees have positive and pleasant feelings in work, their attitudes to the work will be defined as job satisfaction. Otherwise, if the employees have negative and unpleasant feelings in work, their attitudes to the work will be defined as unsatisfied (Yuewei Chen, 2005).

In summary, for the researches on the job satisfaction, scholars presented different opinions from various perspectives. The development of defining the job satisfaction follows a line from one single perspective to multiple perspectives.

Table 1. The development of the definition of the job satisfaction

Perspective	Time	Representative
Single perspective (affection)	From 1930s to late 1970s	Fisher & Hanna; Locke
Multiple perspective (affection and cognition)	From 1980s to now	Organ & Near; Moorman et al.

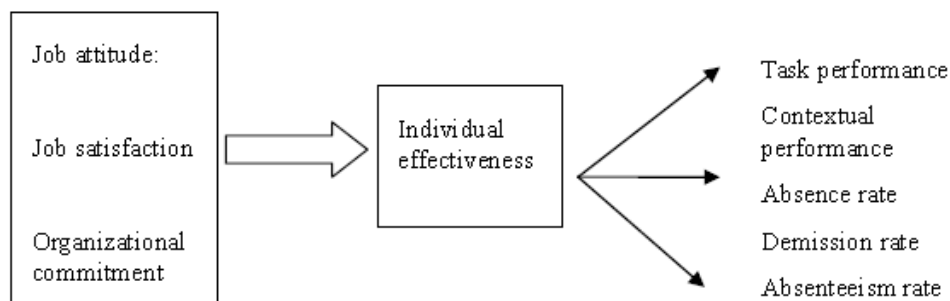


Figure 1. The model by David et al.

3. The Models of Job Satisfaction: Antecedents and Outcomes

To study a concept, the academia usually chooses to define the concept. Besides, the significance of their research is whether the concept is capable of explaining the objective phenomena in actual world. Therefore, to explore the antecedents and the outcomes of the concept becomes an essential part for the complete research on the job satisfaction.

For the researches on the antecedents of the job satisfaction, Wexley et al. proposed the well-known job satisfaction determinants model in the book *Organizational Behavior and Personnel Psychology*, shown as follow in Figure 2.

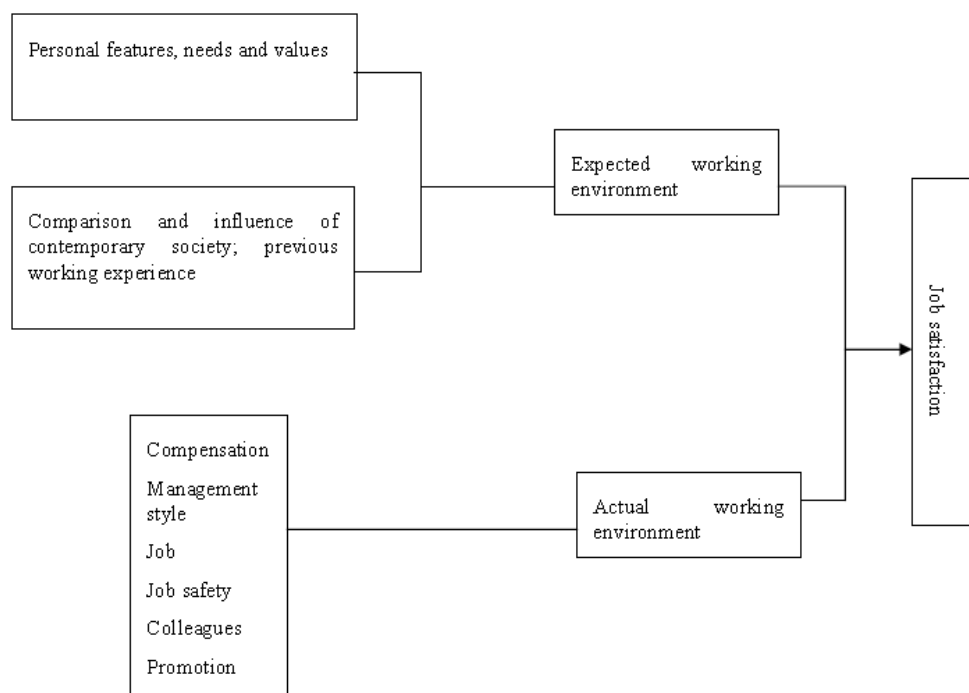


Figure 2. The Model by Wexley et al.

Seashore et al. argued that the influencing factors of the job satisfaction could be divided into two types, i.e. the environmental factors and the individual factors. In an article *Job Satisfaction Indicators and Their Correlates*, they proposed the relationship model of job satisfaction. Here, the environmental factors include the internal environment of the organization, the industrial environment, the political environment, the economical environment, etc. The individual factors include the demographic characteristics, the capabilities, the characters, the perceptions, etc. For the outcomes of the job satisfaction, the job satisfaction will affect three aspects, i.e. the employees' individual reflection (such as job performance, demission, etc.), the organization's reflection (absenteeism rate, turnover rate, etc.), and the social reflection (gross domestic product, social stability, etc.). In detail, it is shown in the Figure 3.

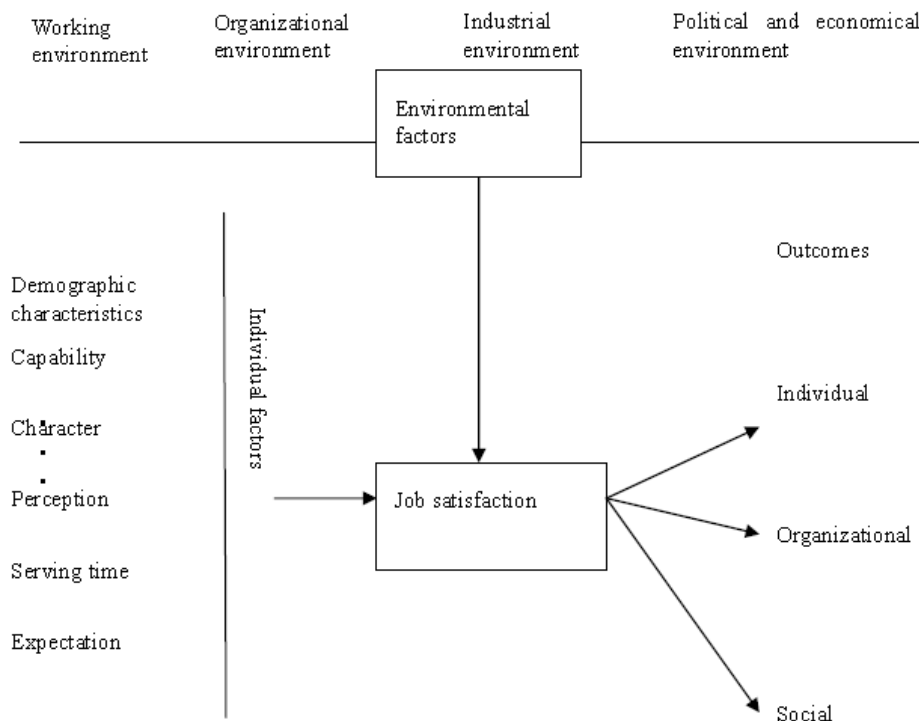


Figure 3. The model by Seashore, S. E., & Tobor, T. D.

There are a lot of conclusions about the researches on the antecedents and the outcomes of the job satisfaction, shown in the Table 2 as follow. However, for the researches on the relationship of the job satisfaction and the job performance, there are contrary conclusions in the academic field and the practical field.

Table 2. The antecedents and the outcomes of the job satisfaction (edited by the author)

Antecedents	Outcomes
Personal characteristics (demographical characteristics; characters)	Job performance
Role perception (fuzziness; conflict)	Organizational commitment
Management behavior (Leader – member exchange relationship etc.)	Demission inclination
Job characteristics	Demission
Job performance	Organizational citizenship behavior
And so on	And so on

4. The Job Satisfaction and Job Performance: A History Review of a Paradox

In the field of organizational behavior, the surface relationship or the actual relationship between the job satisfaction and job performance is a hot topic and draws many attentions. The satisfied employees and the efficient employees have become the focus of the academic field and the practice field. The research on the relationship of satisfied employees and efficient employees experiences the process of positive correlation to negative correlation. Whether it is satisfaction that leads to efficiency, or efficiency that leads to satisfaction? Or, is there other concept that exists between the two concepts and affects the correlation? Focusing on this controversial proposition, this paper tries to summarize and analyze the history of researches on the correlation

of the job satisfaction and the job performance.

Early in 1930s, the potential relationship of employees' attitudes and job performance, along with the promotion of interpersonal relationship movement, as the result of Hawthorne experiment, has aroused more attentions in the academic field. In the mid of 1950s, Brayfield and Crockett published a research article *Employee Attitudes and Employee Performance* in *American Psychological Bulletin*, which was the most influencing review of researches at that time. It explored the correlation of the job satisfaction and the job performance and pointed out that the correlation of the two variables was "small or did not exist". However, subsequent studies showed the limitations of the research by Brayfield and Crockett, i.e. the sample was too small since it just used the 9 research results available in publication and the review was too subjective. Even with those drawbacks, it is still undeniable that the research by Brayfield and Crockett was the review of studies with highest reference frequency before the year 1985 in the field. Following the research review by Brayfield and Crockett, many other influencing narrative reviews of literature have issued, discussing the relationship of the job performance and the job satisfaction from different perspectives to certain degree. Here, the research by Herzberg et al. is the most optimistic one. These relevant reviews have one particular character, i.e. all of them are driven by theories. Researchers begin to consider the nature and the characteristics of the relationship and pay attention to the intermediary or the adjustment factors of the relationship. Then, there are seven conceptual models for the study of the job satisfaction and the job performance. In detail, it is shown in the Figure 4.

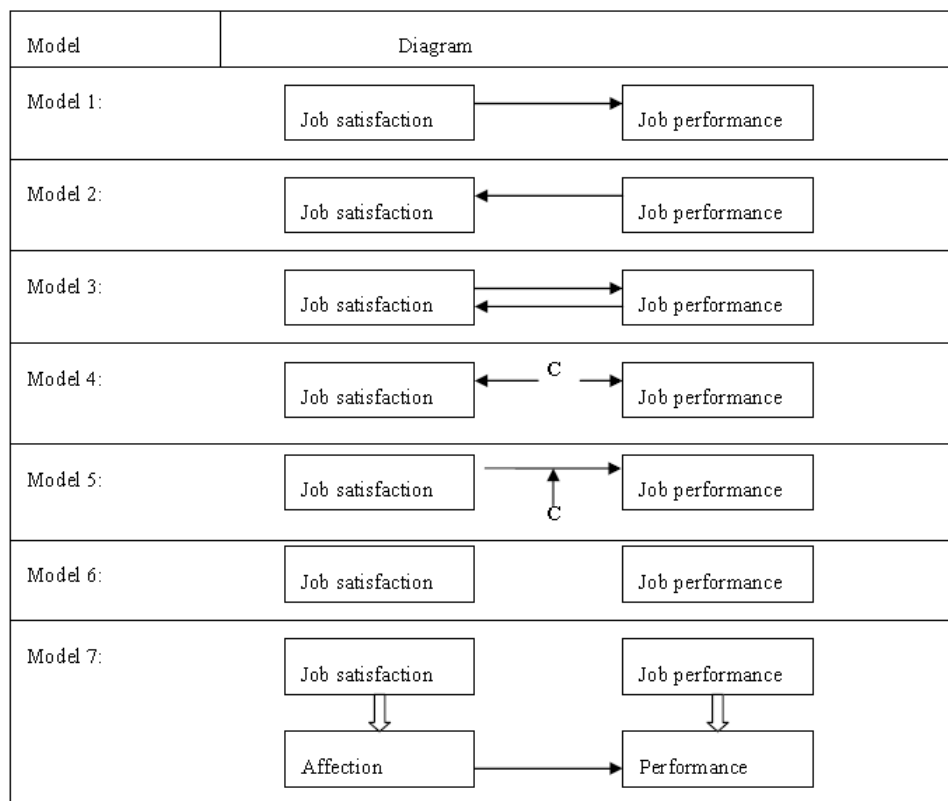


Figure 4. Models for relationship of job satisfaction and the job performance

References

- Brayfield, A. H., & Crockett, W. H. (1955). Employee attitudes and employee performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 52, 396-424. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0045899>
- Eisenberger et al. (1997). Perceived organizational support and discretionary treatment, and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82, 812-820. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.5.812>
- Harrison, D. A., Newman, D. A., & Roth, P. L. (2006). How Important are job attitudes? Meta-Analytic Comparisons of Integrative Behavioral Outcomes and Time Sequences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 305-325. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2006.20786077>
- Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction-job performance relationship: a qualitative and quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 376-407.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.3.376>

- Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction–job performance relationship. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(3), 376-407. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.3.376>
- Liden, R. C., Sparrowe, R. T., & Wayne, S. J. (1997). Leader-member exchange theory: The past and potential for the future. In K. M. Rowland, & G. R. Ferris (Eds.), *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management* (Vol. 15, pp. 47-119). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Lievens, F., Highhouse, S., & De Corte, W. (2005). The importance of traits and abilities in supervisors' disability decisions as a function of method of assessment. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 78, 453-470. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1348/096317905X26093>
- Lunderen, S. M., Nordholm, L., & Segesten, K. (2005). Job Satisfaction in Relation to Change to all RN Staffing. *Journal of Nurse Management*, 13, 322-328. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2934.2005.00565.x>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 879–903. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Seashore, S. E., & Tobor, T. D. (1975). Job satisfaction and their correlation. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 18, 333-368. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000276427501800303>
- Song, L. J., Tsui, A. S., & Law, K. S. (2009). Unpacking employee responses to organizational exchange mechanisms: the role of social and economic exchange perception? *Journal of Management*, 35, 56-93. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0149206308321544>
- Vandenberg, R., & Lance, C. (1992). Examining the causal order of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. *Journal of Management*, 18(1), 153-167. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/014920639201800110>
- Wexley, K. N., & Yukl, G. C. (1977). *Organization Behavior and Personnel Psychology*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.
- Witt, L. A., Andrews, M. C., & Kacmar, K. M. (2000). The role of participation in decision making in the organizational politics-job satisfaction relationship. *Human Relations*, 53(3), 341-358. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0018726700533003>
- Wong, S. C., & Ladkin, A. (2008). Exploring the relationship between employee creativity and job-related motivators in the Hong Kong hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27, 426. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2008.01.001>
- Yu, D., & Liang, J. P. (2002). A new perspective on leader-member exchange. *Chinese Economic Science*, 1, 5-18.
- Zhang, Y., Tsui, A. S., Song, J. W., Li, C. P., & Jia, L. D. (2008). How do I trust they? The employee-organization relationship, supervisory support and middle managers' trust in the organization. *Human Resource Management*, 47, 113-134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20200>