

The relationship between job satisfaction and academic rank: a study of
academicians in Jharkhand

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Abstract

While there have been several studies related to job satisfaction, very few of them have been conducted in higher education in Jharkhand. The present work provides an empirical evidence to ascertain the implications of academic rank on the job satisfaction of academicians in Jharkhand. Data were obtained for 192 academicians from one institution of higher learning in Jharkhand. Results indicate that job satisfaction does not progressively increase with academic rank as might be expected. Out of the 20 aspects of the job examined, only 4 aspects, namely advancement, compensation, coworkers, and variety, were statistically significant with academic rank. In general, results indicate the degree of low satisfaction levels that exist among academicians in Jharkhand.

Keywords

job satisfaction, academic rank

Introduction

Job satisfaction is a topic which has been researched for more than half a century and still continues to be an area of intense interest for researchers. The main reasons for this interest may be due to the implications of job satisfaction for such job related behaviors as productivity, absenteeism, turnover, and employee relations. Improving employee satisfaction is also an important method to improve the financial standing of organizations (Aronson, et al., 2005). In this respect job satisfaction is an organizational variable which should be understood and constantly monitored for the welfare of any organization. In fact, most organizations do wisely monitor the satisfaction levels of their employees (Terpstra and Honoree, 2004). Hence, job satisfaction is an important attribute which organizations desire of all their employees (Oshagbemi, 2003).

Job satisfaction has been defined in a variety of ways, however, the most widely used definitions found in the literature are those, put forth by such researchers as Dawis and Lofquist (1984) and

Porter, et al., (1975). A review of the published literature indicates that there appears to be a general agreement that job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a job that results from the comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired (Oshagbemi, 2003).

Although a wide range of research exists related to job satisfaction along with its causes and consequences in various settings (mostly profit oriented) much of this research has been conducted in the west with even less evidence available from non-western nations (Maghrabi, 1999). Several studies have been concentrated on the workers of the industrial sector to the neglect of workers in higher education (Oshagbemi and Hickson, 2003). However, there has been a growing interest in job satisfaction in higher education over the past several years, mainly due to the realization that higher educational institutes are labor intensive and their budgets are predominantly devoted to personnel and their effectiveness is largely dependent on their employees (Kusku, 2003), both academic and administrative.

Researches designed to investigate the effect of academic rank on the job satisfaction are relatively few (Oshagbemi, 1997). However, the existing evidence suggests that job rank/occupational level/job level is a reliable predictor of job satisfaction with workers at higher ranks being generally more satisfied with their jobs compared to those at lower ranks (Oshagbemi, 2003). Increase in job satisfaction likely occurs because higher-level jobs tend to be more complex and have better working conditions, pay, promotion prospects, supervision, and responsibility (Cranny et al., 1992; Robie et al., 1998; Aronson et al., 2005). It certainly makes intuitive sense that if higher-level employees are not happy, their dissatisfaction is likely to “trickle down” to lower level employees, setting up conditions for economic, financial, moral, and other problems to escalate (Aronson et al., 2005). It thus appears that a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job level conveys certain economic advantages to business organizations (Aronson et al., 2005).

Near et al., (1978) examined the relationship between age, occupational level, and overall job satisfaction and found that the strongest predictors of job satisfaction were rank and age. Holden and Black (1996) indicated clear differences in productivity and satisfaction by academic rank amongst psychologists employed as faculty members in medical school, with full professors having displayed higher levels of productivity and satisfaction when compared to associate professors and assistant professors. In a study that examined the effects of rank on the job satisfaction of UK academics, Oshagbemi (1997) found that overall job satisfaction increased progressively with rank. However, in a similar study, Serife and Tulen (2009) observed that there was no progressive increase in job satisfaction with academic rank for academicians in Cyprus. Basak and Ghosh (2011) examined the job satisfaction of school teachers for schools in Kolkata with respect to their environment. Mehraj (2013) found that Government teachers at the elementary level in India are the most satisfied among teachers working in government and private schools in India. Seher et al. (2014) indicated that Assistant Professors are more satisfied than Research Assistant (PhD) in Marmara Technical University, Turkey. Tahir and Sajid (2014) compared job satisfaction levels of college teachers of a private management institution in Delhi

and a college of Delhi University and reported that the job satisfaction levels were average with a significant difference between job satisfaction of male and female college teachers.

The term “rank” as used in this study refers to an individual’s job status in an organization and indicates an employee’s job level or job seniority in a particular occupational classification as suggested by Oshagbemi, (2003) also. Within the context of universities in Jharkhand, “academic rank” indicates whether an academician is assistant professor on contract (bottom of the academic ladder), assistant professor, associate professor, or professor (top of the academic ladder).

Significance of the study

The study is significant in that it sheds light upon the level of satisfaction (and dissatisfaction) of academicians in Jharkhand and provides some insight in improving the relationships in order to maintain an innovative and dynamic higher education system that the Jharkhand economy is so dependent on.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to provide empirical evidence to ascertain the effects of academic rank on the overall job satisfaction of academicians in Jharkhand, with overall job satisfaction being measured in terms of both the intrinsic (occupational) and the extrinsic (environmental) factors of satisfaction.

Research Methodology

To investigate the effects of academic rank on the job satisfaction of academicians of Jharkhand, the following research methodology was employed.

Study tools

To measure the job satisfaction of the academicians, the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967) was used. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) is one of the most widely used instruments in the measurement of job satisfaction as indicated by Scarpello and Campbell (1983) and its validity and reliability have been proven over the past four and half decades that it has been in use. The MSQ short form consists of 20 items/facets which measure three types of job satisfaction, namely, overall job satisfaction, intrinsic satisfaction, and extrinsic satisfaction. Of these 20 facets, 12 measure intrinsic factors/occupational conditions (ability utilization, achievement, activity, authority, creativity, independence, moral values, responsibility, security, social status, social service, and variety) and six of them measure extrinsic factors/environmental conditions (advancement, company

policies and practices, compensation, recognition, supervision-human relations, and supervision-technical). The aggregate of the intrinsic and extrinsic facets plus the two facets co-workers and working conditions (20 facets) measure overall job satisfaction. Respondents were asked to express the extent of their satisfaction with each of the 20 items on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 meaning very dissatisfied to 5 indicating very satisfied. The questionnaire was accompanied with a personal information form in order to determine the demographic variables of the academicians who participated in the study.

Sample

The population for this study comprised of academicians from a single institute of Jharkhand. A total of 250 academicians were randomly approached with 192 agreeing to take part in the study, resulting in a response rate of 76.8%. The questionnaires were administered in both the soft and the hard copy format.

Statistical methods

Analysis consisted of the computation of descriptive statistics in order to examine the different job satisfaction levels of the academicians across the different academic ranks.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the mean scores and standard deviations for the job satisfaction of academicians amongst the various academic ranks.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviations according to Academic Rank

Variables	Overall job satisfaction		Intrinsic satisfaction		Extrinsic satisfaction	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Professors	3.83	0.48045	4.07	0.48145	3.51	0.69872
Associate Professors	3.61	0.70333	3.80	0.64622	3.26	0.97233
Assistant Professors with PhD	3.88	0.57814	4.02	0.58019	3.64	0.80659
Assistant Professors on contract	3.77	0.55072	3.95	0.54655	3.44	0.77535

As indicated in Table 1, the overall job satisfaction mean score is highest for assistant professors with Ph.D. Next level of satisfaction is with Professors. Associate professors are least satisfied. For intrinsic satisfaction, the mean score for professors is highest, followed by Assistant Professors with Ph.D. Associate professors are again least satisfied.

Assistant Professors with a Ph.D., showed the highest mean score for extrinsic satisfaction, followed by professors and assistant professors on contract, with associate professors scoring the lowest means.

Further, to test any significant difference between job satisfaction and rank, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted and the results are presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Since, significance level (0.05) is less than p-value (0.188) in Table 2, p-value (0.228) in Table 3 and p-value (1.168) in Table 4, all the null hypotheses are accepted.

Therefore, as observed, job satisfaction ratings do not increase as academic rank increases.

Table 2: ANOVA results for hypothesis 1; there is no significant difference between academic rank and overall job satisfaction.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups(SSB)	1.59	3	0.53	1.611	0.188
Within Groups (SSW)	61.847	188	0.329		
Total	63.437	191			

Table 3: ANOVA results for hypothesis 2; there is no significant difference between academic rank and intrinsic satisfaction

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups(SSB)	1.391	3	0.464	1.458	0.228
Within Groups (SSW)					
	59.782	188	0.318		
Total	61.173	191			

Table 4: ANOVA results for hypothesis 3; there is no significant difference between academic rank and extrinsic satisfaction.

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value
Between Groups(SSB)	3.31	3	1.103	1.702	1.168
Within Groups (SSW)	121.877	188	0.648		
Total	125.187	191			

Conclusion

This study examines the effects of academic rank on the job satisfaction levels of academicians in one institution of higher education in Jharkhand. Results indicate that professors, assistant professors, and assistant professors on contract enjoy only moderate levels of job satisfaction, while associate professors enjoy even a lower level of job satisfaction. Also, it was found that job satisfaction did not increase progressively with academic rank which is inconsistent with results found in the literature (Holden and Black, 1996; Oshagbemi, 2003) who reported a progressive increase in job satisfaction with the rank. Further, it has been observed that overall job satisfaction, intrinsic job satisfaction and extrinsic job satisfaction do not have any significant difference with respect to the rank of the academicians.

Recommendation

Statistical significance level of rank with different facets of job satisfactions may further be explored.

Limitations

Only one institution of higher learning in Jharkhand was considered.

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