

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SCIENCES

METHODS AND APPROACHES FOR MEASURING JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract: Companies in the 21st century face a multitude of challenges resulting from technological, economic, social and ecological changes. To continue to withstand the resulting competitive pressure, companies must adapt quickly to changing conditions. To ensure this, it is essential to recruit and retain the right staff. This point is heavily dependent on the prevailing level of job satisfaction. This not only affects the well-being of employees, but also has a direct impact on operational key figures. The key to success is therefore to invest specifically in improving job satisfaction. To ensure this, it is essential to first measure the current level of job satisfaction and then, based on the given framework conditions, to improve it further and to generate a long-term competitive advantage. A variety of methods are used to measure job satisfaction, from standardized questionnaires to qualitative approaches. Quantitative measuring instruments such as standardized questionnaires are convincing due to their comparable and efficient data collection, so that intrinsic and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction can be considered in a differentiated manner. In comparison, qualitative methods such as interviews and narrative approaches provide deeper insights into subjective experiences with individual contextual factors. In the following research paper, job satisfaction is examined in more detail in order to present a selection of methods for its measurement.

Keywords: job satisfaction, measurement methods, measurability

INTRODUCTION

For decades, job satisfaction has been a central topic in organizational psychology and economics. Long-standing studies clearly show that satisfied employees demonstrate higher productivity, lower turnover and greater loyalty to the company, meaning that job satisfaction is a key factor in creating a positive corporate culture and sustainable competitiveness (Fischer, Eufinger 1991, pp. 115–132).

Globalization and digitalization also create an ongoing immense competitive pressure, which companies must withstand in order to continue to be successful. Against this background, there is also a strong interest from a business perspective in strengthening job satisfaction on a sustainable basis. The importance of job satisfaction goes beyond individual and company benefits and is increasingly recognized as an important building block for social well-being and the promotion of humane working conditions (Bruggemann 1974, pp. 281–284).

Since job satisfaction is a significant factor in personnel management, methods and approaches for measuring job satisfaction are indispensable. The current state of empirical research on measuring job satisfaction shows that methodology and interpretation vary greatly and are constantly evolving. In the following paper, based on the definition and the influencing factors of job satisfaction, the focus will be on illuminating the broad range of methods and approaches for measurement. The research goal is to gain a practical understanding of how job satisfaction can be pursued as a strategic goal and sustainably increased.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present publication is based on a literature review which focuses on the understanding of the methods and approaches for measuring job satisfaction. First, the factor of job satisfaction is defined in more detail using the existing definition and models as well as naming some influencing factors. In the next step, the focus is on the methods of measuring job satisfaction and their significance.

DEFINITION OF JOB SATISFACTION

According to Bruggemann (1975), the concept of job satisfaction includes the correspondence of personal expectations and the professional framework conditions of a work situation. (Bruggemann et

al. 1975, p. 19). Neuberger and Allerbeck further define job satisfaction as a theory based on stimuli and reactions, and thus present it as a series of subjectively assessed situations of a person within the world of work. The resulting interpretation in turn has an influence on future behavior in relation to everyday work (Neuberger, Allerbeck 1978, p. 32). There is another notion according to which job satisfaction represents both a positive and a negative attitude towards work, resulting in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. (Six, Felfe 2004, p. 605).

FACTORS INFLUENCING JOB SATISFACTION

Basically, subjectively perceived job satisfaction varies depending on personal and situational influences. Personal influencing variables consist of dispositional factors, which represent individual and stable personality traits and relate to an employee's personal or inner characteristics and attributes. Dispositional factors are, for example, the ability to cope with stress, emotional stability, values as well as the experience of competence and are based on a positive or negative attitude. In contrast to external factors, such as job conditions or pay, dispositional factors have an indirect effect, as they tend to strengthen or weaken the degree of job satisfaction. The consideration of dispositional factors is essential, as they deepen the understanding of job satisfaction and help to explain the causes of difference in employee satisfaction. Measures to increase job satisfaction can also be developed in a more targeted and customized manner (Drabe 2015, pp. 85–87).

In contrast to personal factors, situational factors relate to external conditions and have a direct influence on job satisfaction. In addition to workplace design such as ergonomic workstations, lighting conditions and room design, situational factors also include work content. Meaningful activities therefore have a positive influence on job satisfaction, whereas monotonous and draining tasks have a negative effect. Management style is also a decisive factor for the level of job satisfaction. Other situational factors include remuneration, opportunities for professional development and working hours (Drabe 2015, pp. 77–85).

In the further course of researching the influencing factors, the interactionist view, i.e. the interaction between personal and situational factors, has become established. For example, according to the person-job fit approach, there is a correlation between the personal factor of work motivation and the situational factor of task characteristics, as intrinsically motivated employees feel greater job satisfaction if their field of work is perceived as meaningful and challenging. On the other hand, if a situational factor such as the task characteristic remains the same, this can be less satisfying for a person with lower intrinsic motivation (Drabe 2015, p. 87).

It should be noted, however, that the empirical study of the interactionist view has been carried out only to a limited degree (Drabe 2015, pp. 87–91).

EXPLANATORY MODELS FOR JOB SATISFACTION

A large number of models and theories of job satisfaction exist in the field of organizational psychology and economics, which can be used as a basis for further empirical studies. The following section takes a superficial look at individual models in order to further promote a basic understanding of the topic of job satisfaction.

Frederick Herzberg developed the two-factor theory in 1959 and based on it, he attempted to explain which factors affect job satisfaction and how. He distinguishes between motivational factors and hygiene factors. Motivational factors such as recognition, appreciation, growth and development opportunities are directly linked to opportunities for personal development and have a positive effect on job satisfaction. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, relate to work environment and the general conditions of work. They are not directly linked to a high level of job satisfaction but prevent the development of job dissatisfaction. The hygiene factors include, for example, remuneration, functional work equipment, sufficient infrastructure and working conditions that do not cause illness. The two-factor theory recommends that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction should not be viewed one-dimensionally, but rather two-dimensionally in the sense of two separate dimensions. Translated, this means that the absence of dissatisfaction does not directly lead to job satisfaction, as both the motivator factors and the hygiene factors need to be fulfilled. (Ferreira 2019, pp. 37–39).

Despite widespread acceptance and practical application, there are several points of criticism regarding the two-factor theory. On the one hand, methodological weaknesses are criticised, as well as the unclear distinction between motivation and hygiene factors. The two-factor theory also simplifies the complexity of job satisfaction, but this has led to the theory being further developed by other models and supplemented by other perspectives. Despite the points of criticism, Herzberg's two-factor theory is a model that is often used in practice, as it sheds light on the different dimensions of job satisfaction. (Ferreira 2019, pp. 40–41).

Another occupational psychological model is the Job Characteristics Model, which was developed in 1976 by researchers J. Richard Hackman and Greg R. Oldham. It describes how certain job characteristics influence the motivation, satisfaction and performance of employees and consists of five central job characteristics that normally have a positive effect on a person's experience and behavior in work environment. The five work characteristics are:

1. Variety of requirements (the use of different skills)
2. Completeness of tasks (the ability to complete a task in its entirety)
3. Task significance (the awareness that the work is important)
4. Autonomy (scope for control and freedom of choice)
5. Feedback (clear feedback on performance)

According to Hackman and Oldham, these five work characteristics have an effect on three psychological states, which in turn should lead to increased motivation, job satisfaction and performance. The three psychological states are divided into:

1. perceived meaningfulness of work
2. perceived responsibility
3. awareness of the results of one's own work (Ferreira 2019, p. 42).

The Job Characteristics Model is regularly used in personnel development, as it helps to increase work performance and commitment and therefore ultimately job satisfaction through suitable measures. The points of criticism of this model include the simplification of motivation, measurement problems due to subjective perception and the strong emphasis on individual job characteristics, as the model is primarily orientated towards the design of individual jobs and less towards interpersonal cooperation. Nevertheless, it is used very frequently and is considered empirically proven (Ferreira 2019, pp. 43–44).

METHODS FOR MEASURING JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction generally has not only a personal but also a high economic value. Measuring job satisfaction enables companies to make data-based and targeted decisions in order to achieve strategic goals in the long term. The measurement data can also be used as an early warning system for problems as well as a tool for promoting positive effects such as innovation and creativity and also improving the work culture and employee loyalty.

The measurement of job satisfaction has evolved over time from simple surveys to complex, multidimensional models. There are various methods to measure employee job satisfaction, which differ in their depth and approach (Ferreira 2019, pp. 71–74).

STANDARDISED PROCEDURES

On the one hand, questionnaires are used for research purposes to investigate correlations between job satisfaction and other organizational variables. On the other hand, questionnaire-based methods for recording job satisfaction are also used in practice, for example as part of employee surveys. There are numerous scientifically developed and validated questionnaires for measuring job satisfaction that enable a comparable and objective survey across different companies and industries (Ferreira 2019, p. 67).

The Porter Needs Satisfaction Questionnaire (PNSQ) was introduced in 1962 as the first instrument for measuring needs satisfaction in a professional context. Based on Maslow's hierarchical model of needs satisfaction, the focus is on five classes of needs which, when fulfilled, result in job satisfaction. The need classes are as follows:

1. need for security
2. social needs

3. need for prestige
4. need for autonomy
5. need for self-realization (Ferreira 2019, p. 75).

The respondents assess their respective state in relation to each dimension by rating their actual state, the desired state and the importance on a seven-point scale. Within the evaluation, the difference between the actual and target state is determined; the lower the discrepancy, the higher the degree of job satisfaction (Ferreira 2019, p. 75).

By looking at various dimensions of job satisfaction, the PNSQ model enables a detailed analysis of job satisfaction and the associated causes. Due to its practical applicability, it is easy to implement in companies and helps to identify specific weak points in the organisation by comparing needs.

However, there is a limitation with regard to the depth of data research; individual employee situations can only be recorded to a limited extent. It is also only a momentary recording of a subjective assessment on the part of the respondent (Ferreira 2019, p. 76).

Another widely used instrument is the Job Description Questionnaire (ABB), which was developed by Wolfgang Neuberger in Germany in 1978. It is based on the previously developed Job Descriptive Index concept and picks up on various facets taken from empirical research results. These nine aspects include

1. colleagues
2. superiors
3. activity
4. external conditions
5. organization and management
6. professional development
7. pay
8. working hours
9. job security (Ferreira 2019, p. 82).

Due to its sufficient validation and given standardization, the ABB is considered a proven instrument for measuring job satisfaction, as the differentiated view of job satisfaction provides information on entrepreneurial development potential.

One disadvantage is the static nature of the survey, as the respondent's current condition has a strong influence on their subjective views. Furthermore, the comprehensive data collection and evaluation of the questionnaire is time-consuming and resource-intensive (Ferreira 2019, p. 83).

In contrast to previous questionnaires, the Questionnaire for the Evaluation of Job Satisfaction (FEAT) does not record static satisfaction types but takes into account personal and work-related perceptions. The model was developed in 2009 by Yvonne Ferreira based on the Zurich model. The four central core areas are:

1. target/actual comparison
2. perceived controllability
3. regulation of requirements level
4. attempts to solve problems.

The FEAT instrument is a recognized and further developed tool in job satisfaction research, as it can reveal complex correlations by taking external work factors as well as individual psychological aspects into account and reveal potential for improvement.

However, the complexity of the questionnaire can lead to fatigue and a reduced willingness to participate. Similarly, in a constantly changing and digitalised working environment, the questionnaire does not have the same informative value as in a traditional working environment (Ferreira 2019, pp. 85–101).

In general, standardised methods for measuring job satisfaction are convincing due to their efficiency, objectivity and cross-industry comparability of data. Furthermore, there is a high degree of scientific foundation, meaning that many standardised questionnaires have already been validated. Nevertheless, standardised procedures are limited in their depth of information and are characterised by a lack of flexibility. As working conditions change, they need to be regularly updated in order to reflect current issues correctly (Lange et al. 2022, p. 373).

INTERVIEWS

The use of interviews is another method of measuring job satisfaction. A distinction is made between quantitative and qualitative interviews. The former often takes the form of a questionnaire and is therefore considered structured. This means that all questions and their sequence are set out in a fixed order. Due to the strict specifications, the interviewer plays a neutral role, which on the one hand leads to comparable data and simpler evaluation, but on the other hand allows hardly any flexibility, so that individual perspectives are hardly taken into account (Lange et al. 2022, pp. 365–366).

In contrast to quantitative interviews, qualitative interviews are either semi-structured or completely unstructured. In a semi-structured form, a guideline with predefined topics is used, but both the order of the questions and the depth of the questioning can be adapted, as the interviewer has the option of going into more detail on individual answers. A key advantage here is the combination of structure and flexibility, as this allows new topics to be explored, but the evaluation is considered to be significantly more time-consuming (Lange et al. 2022, p. 366).

Unstructured interviews are characterized by the fact that there is no structured questionnaire, only a topic is specified. The flow of the interview is subject to a dynamic form, depending on the respective answers. The advantage of this is that in some cases very in-depth insights are made possible and therefore there is the opportunity to develop innovative perspectives. However, the comparability of the data obtained suffers due to the open form of the interview (Lange et al. 2022, pp. 367–368).

Another instrument used in qualitative research is the narrative interview. The overarching aim here is to encourage the interviewee to speak without being influenced by subjectively perceived experiences and the resulting perspectives. This is achieved by keeping conversations with interviewees open and flexible and focusing on personal narratives on the part of the interviewee. The interviewer himself tries to convey an atmosphere of trust in the introductory phase in order to express an open invitation to the narration of personal attitudes and experiences by means of an initial narrative request. In the course of the interview, the interviewee acts almost unrestrictedly, as the interviewer only tries to deepen narratives by means of comprehension questions (Küsters 2022, pp. 896–897).

The great advantage of this is that subjective experiences and perspectives can be experienced completely unfiltered, which is not possible in the form of standardized measurement methods. However, this is only possible if the interviewee is very willing to talk. Narrative interviews also involve an enormous amount of effort. With regard to the measurement of job satisfaction, it must also be noted that the resulting interpretation of the narratives is heavily dependent on the interviewers themselves, which in turn can have a negative impact on reliability (Küsters 2022, p. 894).

RESULTS

The findings emphasize the variety of possible methods and approaches for measuring job satisfaction and their respective advantages. However, the corresponding points of criticism are also deliberately mentioned. As a result, it becomes clear that the choice of the appropriate measurement method depends on the cultural and economic context. By incorporating qualitative elements within measurement methods, it is possible to go beyond standardized processes to record not only quantitative but also subjective perceptions and thus develop individual and targeted approaches to improving job satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS

As job satisfaction is subject to a large field of research, only a specific selection of methods and approaches for measuring job satisfaction can be considered in more detail in this paper. Other instruments for measuring job satisfaction can include feedback interviews, employee turnover and productivity measurements, as well as the use of modern digital tools. Further research is needed into the practical implementation of the measurement methods and the challenges that arise. It is also advisable to consider the significance of job satisfaction in the context of New Work and hybrid working models.

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МЕТОДИ И ПОДХОДИ ЗА ИЗМЕРВАНЕ НА УДОВЛЕТВОРЕНОСТТА ОТ РАБОТАТА

Резюме: *Компаниите през XXI в. са изправени пред множество предизвикателства, произтичащи от технологични, икономически, социални и екологични промени. За да продължат да устояват на произтичащия от това конкурентен натиск, компаниите трябва бързо да се адаптират към променящите се условия. За да се гарантира това, от съществено значение е да се набират и задържат подходящите служители. Този момент е силно зависим от преобладаващото ниво на удовлетвореност от работата. То не само влияе върху благосъстоянието на служителите, но и има пряко въздействие върху ключовите оперативни показатели. Следователно ключът към успеха е да се инвестира специално в подобряване на удовлетвореността от работата. За да се гарантира това, е необходимо първо да се измери текущото ниво на удовлетвореност от работата, а след това, въз основа на дадените рамкови условия, да се подобри допълнително и да се създаде дългосрочно конкурентно предимство. За измерване на удовлетвореността от работата се използват различни методи – от стандартизирани въпросници до качествени подходи. Количествените инструменти за измерване, като например стандартизираните въпросници, са убедителни поради съпоставимостта и ефикасността на събирането на данни, така че вътрешните и външните фактори на удовлетвореността от работата да могат да бъдат разглеждани по диференциран начин. За сравнение, качествените методи, като интервюта и наративни подходи, осигуряват по-дълбоко вникване в субективния опит с индивидуалните контекстуални фактори. В статията удовлетвореността от работата е разгледана по-подробно, за да се представи подбор на методи за нейното измерване.*

Ключови думи: *удовлетвореност от работата, методи за измерване, измеримост*

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