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Job Satisfaction Level of Academic Members in Vietnamese Higher Education

ABSTRACT: Job satisfaction is an elusive and complex concept that has been a subject of intense research since the emergence of organizational studies. In recent years, several studies have examined the job satisfaction of academic members in higher education, little is known about lecturers' job satisfaction in the developing countries like Vietnam. The purpose of this study is to ascertain job satisfaction level of academic members in Vietnamese universities. The study used a questionnaire to survey with 200 academic members from five member colleges of Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh City was selected as a statistical sample. The findings of study showed that most academic members of Vietnamese universities were satisfied with their job. Male faculty members were more satisfied than their counterparts. Academic members were generally satisfied with teaching support equipment, working insurance, teacher promotion, gender equality, in-service teaching training, in-service research training, work autonomy, colleague academic interaction, colleague social relationship, teaching load, research pressure, development aim of school, leadership style, campus landscape, and administration efficiency. Recommendations on the study's finding to the university management and policy makers are discussed to enhance the faculty job satisfaction.

KEY WORD: Job satisfaction, developing country, higher education, academic members, Vietnamese universities, and university management and policy makers.

RESUME: "Tingkat Kepuasan Kerja Anggota Civitas Akademika di Perguruan Tinggi Vietnam". Kepuasan kerja merupakan konsep yang kompleks dan sulit dipahami yang telah menjadi subjek penelitian intensif sejak munculnya studi organisasi. Dalam beberapa tahun terakhir, banyak studi telah meneliti kepuasan kerja civitas akademika di perguruan tinggi, sedikit yang diketahui tentang kepuasan kerja para dosen di negara-negara berkembang seperti Vietnam. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memastikan tingkat kepuasan kerja anggota civitas akademika di perguruan tinggi Vietnam. Penelitian ini menggunakan kuesioner untuk survei dengan 200 anggota akademik dari lima kolej, yang ada di lingkungan Universitas Nasional Vietnam Kota Ho Chi Minh, terpilih sebagai sampel statistik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar anggota civitas akademika di universitas Vietnam puas dengan pekerjaan mereka. Para dosen laki-laki lebih puas daripada rekan-rekan mereka yang perempuan. Anggota civitas akademika pada umumnya puas dengan dukungan peralatan mengajar, asuransi kerja, promosi pendidik, kesetaraan gender, layanan pelatihan mengajar, layanan pelatihan penelitian, otonomi kerja, interaksi akademik kolega, relasi sosial kolega, beban mengajar, tuntutan penelitian, tujuan pengembangan sekolah, gaya kepemimpinan, lanskap kampus, dan efisiensi administrasi. Rekomendasi dari temuan penelitian ini kepada manajemen universitas dan pembuat kebijakan adalah agar dibahas untuk meningkatkan kepuasan kerja para dosen.

KATA KUNCI: Kepuasan kerja, negara berkembang, perguruan tinggi, anggota civitas akademika, universitas Vietnam, serta manajemen universitas dan pembuat kebijakan.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is one of the most stressful occupations (Johnson *et al.*, 2005). In many developing countries, the teaching force is mired in bureaucracies and centralized education systems that support neither the effective performance of teachers nor their career progression in their job (VSO,

2002). But, if these faculty members are not satisfied with their profession, they will not be able to increase their performance and will not contribute to education sector of higher education institutions.

Therefore, A.A.S.G. Syed *et al.* (2012) recognized that faculty satisfaction is the most significant aspect in higher education

and is important for the improvement, efficacy, and effectiveness of the upper education system. Thus, most measures of school performance were significantly linked to employee satisfaction with schools with more satisfied teachers being more effective than those with less satisfied ones (Osrtroff, 1992).

The goals of higher education, according to J. Johnes & J. Taylor, are to provide in-depth knowledge, seek academic development, educate students, and to coordinate national development demands (cited in Chen *et al.*, 2006). These goals can not be accomplished efficiently and are barriers to ability utilization if low satisfaction or dissatisfaction exists amongst the academics in higher education sector. According to S.H. Chen *et al.* (2006), the quality in teaching and learning can only enhanced if the faculty members are satisfied and content, and the health of an educational institution depend on the job satisfaction of its employees (*cf* Wood, 1976).

Job satisfaction of academics play role important for some reasons. Firstly, an understanding of the factors involved in job satisfaction is crucial to improving the happiness of workers (Okpara, Squillace & Erondy, 2005). Secondly, understanding whether academics are satisfied or dissatisfied towards their work can lead to improvements and innovations in their teaching. Furthermore, job satisfaction has serious implications for relations between the academics and the management of the higher educational organizations they belong to (Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009).

Although C.J. Cranny, P.C. Smith & E.F. Stone (1992) estimated that over 5,000 articles and dissertations have examined the topic of job satisfaction and it is a continuing topic for research, job satisfaction has been an important topic over the years (Akfopure *et al.* 2006). 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). Perhaps this area has not received so much attention, because a high level of job satisfaction generally

has been presumed to exist in a university setting (Pearson & Seiler, 1983).

However, in recent years, a clear increase has been observed in the number of studies related to the job satisfaction of academics (Neumann, 1978). Several studies have examined the job satisfaction of academic members in higher education of the developed countries; unfortunately, evidence from developing countries is seriously lacking and is a gap which needs to be filled (Hean & Garrett, 2001; Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005; and Eyupoglu & Saner, 2009).

Hence, this study identifies and discusses factors, considerations, or aspects of Vietnamese university academic's job which contribute most to their satisfaction. The present study was designed to shed light on the following research questions: (1) What is the general level of job satisfaction of academic members of higher education in Vietnam?; and (2) How are differences of the job satisfaction level between male and female academic members in Vietnamese universities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the late 1950s, a number of researchers have theorized about the nature of job satisfaction and developed models which attempt to explain differences of job satisfaction (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005). 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 in organizational research is Locke in 1976, who described job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences and as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values (cited in Nguni, Slegers, & Denessen, 2006). Job satisfaction is an attitude developed by an individual towards the job and job conditions (Luthans, 1994). P.E. 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.

Generally, most researchers think that job satisfaction could be fundamentally the result of effective behavior management. As a conceptual framework, this study was theoretically grounded in V.H. Vroom's determinants of job satisfaction were supervision, work groups, job content, wages, promotional opportunities, and hours of work (Vroom, 1964); and F. Herzberg's motivator and hygiene factors included achievement, recognition, work, responsibility, advancement as motivator; while policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relationship, working conditions, salary, status, and security were the hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1976).

N. Telman & P. Unsal (2004) recognized that the factors affecting job satisfaction into internal, external, and personal. Internal factors include characteristics related to the basic nature of work. External factors are the conditions such as physical work, promotion conditions, relationships with superiors and co workers, creativity, job security, organizational structure and culture. Personal factors include factors such as demographic characteristics (gender, age, length of service, educational level, etc.), personality traits and incentive, knowledge and skills. Furthermore, satisfaction of academic members in higher education institutions is also shown to be affected greatly by the institutional variables, including leadership, collegial and student relationship, climate and culture of the university (Hagedorn, 2000; Grunwald & Peterson, 2003; and Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

Several studies of higher education sector are used different factors to measuring job satisfaction of academic members. T. Oshagbemi (1997) employed eight scales designed to measure satisfaction with respect to different components of university teachers' overall job satisfaction 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 F. Kuskü (2003) measured the job satisfaction of academics in a university in Turkey by using the seven determinants: general satisfaction, management satisfaction, colleagues, other working group satisfaction, job satisfaction, work environment, and salary satisfaction.

According to K. Ssesanga & R.M. 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. S.H. Chen *et al.* (2006) measured the job satisfaction of teachers in a private university in China by using six satisfaction factors, namely: organization vision, respect, result feedback and motivation, management system, pay and benefits, and work environment. The study of F. Luthans (2005) suggests that pay, promotion, work, supervision, and fellow worker are the main determinants of the job satisfaction.

There are several recent studies that addressed job satisfaction among academic members serving in the higher education context. The study of T. Oshagbemi (1997) comprised academics from 23 universities in the United Kingdom that teaching, research-related activities, and several miscellaneous dimensions of the jobs contribute significantly to both job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of university academics. For job satisfaction among academic staff from thirteen universities in Turkey, H. Saygi, T. Tolon & H. Tekogul (2011) found that co-workers and promotions were considered more important than the pay. The most important factor in job satisfaction was co-workers, with working as a team and sharing also rated as important.

In another study, M. Springfield-Scott (2000) showed that sex and rank affected faculty job satisfaction; while age, race, and tenure did not affect faculty job satisfaction in Piedmont, North Carolina University. In North Cyprus, S.Z. Eyupoglu & T.

Saner (2009) explored that the job facets advancement, compensation, co-workers, and variety were found to be statistically significant with job satisfaction. Beside, this study also explained that academic in North Cyprus indicate only a moderate level of overall job satisfaction.

In their study with academic members of ten private universities in Bangladesh, T. Ali & I. Akhter (2009) recognized that faculty members are overall satisfied with their present condition, except the factors like-training facilities, and some physical facilities and distribution of courses. Further, it has been found that there is no significant difference between male and female faculty members regarding job satisfaction.

In Asia – Pacific area, regarding the relationship between faculty job satisfaction and demographic variable of academics in a public higher education in Singapore, E.P. Paul & S.K. Phua (2011) indicated that satisfaction over interpersonal relationships with students and co-workers, the autonomy and flexibility that the job offered. Conversely, they expressed dissatisfaction over the amount of administrative / non-academic work they had to shoulder, heavy workload, salary, presence of “red tape”, and other corporate practices and dealing with disruptive students. Age and job position affected the job satisfaction levels of the respondents.

However, variables such as gender, academic qualification, length of employment, and marital status showed no significant difference. The study of F. Noordin & K. Jusoff (2009) comprised two hundred and thirty-seven of academics from a public university in Malaysia that overall the academic staff of the university has a moderate level of job satisfaction. In addition, current status, marital status, age, and salary appear to have significant impact on the respondents’ level of job satisfaction. In their research with 173 teaching staff from three private universities in Malaysia, A.S. Santhapparaj & S.S. Alam (2005) found that pay, promotion, working condition, and support of research have positive and significant effect on job satisfaction. On the

other hand, benefits and support of teaching have negative effect, and female faculty members are more satisfied than their counterpart.

Regarding the relationship between incentives, rewards, and recognition on employee motivation and job satisfaction of two hundred and nineteen of academic member of Hue University in Vietnam, N.C. Nguyen *et al.* (2013) found that significantly positive relationship between reward and recognition, satisfaction with supervision and the job characteristics with job satisfaction as well as a very positive and significant relationship was also observed between job satisfaction and personal motivation.

In another study, M. Gautam, K. Mandal & R.S. Dalal (2006) surveyed faculty members of Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Jammu, India that job satisfaction is a multidimensional phenomenon with a number of factors operating simultaneously. The overall job satisfaction of the faculty members is fair and moderate. Moreover, the younger faculty members are more satisfied as compared to those with a longer service period although the relationship is not linear. Again, R.D. Sharma & J. Jyoti (2010) comprised one hundred and twenty faculty members of Jammu University in India that professors were more satisfied than lecturers and job satisfaction decline in the middle age. Addition, intrinsic, extrinsic, and demographic factors were effecting academic staff’s job satisfaction.

Very few studies have been conducted in the area of job satisfaction in Vietnamese higher education sector. Hence, the findings this study will contribute to fill in the literature gap in developing countries in general as well as Vietnamese higher education in particular.

METHOD

About the Dimensions of Job Satisfaction. To measure the job satisfaction level of academic members in Vietnamese

universities, twenty-one dimensions of university job were carried out the study. It consists of research room space and equipment, internet and computer, teaching support equipment, library (e-journals), recreation and sport equipment, working insurance, teacher promotion, gender equality, in-service teaching training, in-service research training, salary, bonus and welfare, work autonomy, colleague academic interaction, colleague social relationship, teaching load, research pressure, development aim, leadership style, campus landscape, and administration efficiency.

About the Sample and Instrument. The population for this study was comprised of academic members from five member colleges in VNU-HCMC (Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh City). They are the University of Technology, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, the University of Science, the University of Information Technology, and the University of Economics and Law. A random sample of 230 questionnaires administered to potential subjects selected from the five member colleges in VNU-HCMC, 200 usable questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of 87 per cent. Participants of this study comprised full-time academic members who were working on campus.

Questionnaire survey was used to gather data in this study. Structured questionnaire was constructed to provide answers to two research questions generated under introduction. The participants are weighted on a 4-point Likert's scale to measure job satisfaction of academic members. The scale ranged from 1 to 4 representing: 1 = very dissatisfaction, 2 = dissatisfaction, 3 = satisfaction, 4 = very satisfaction.

About the Data Analysis Method. All collected data were analyzed with the help of computer program of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 13.0. The statistical methods employed to answer two research questions. Descriptive analysis is computed to examine the general level of job satisfaction of academic members. T-test is enabled to examine the job satisfaction

level between male and female faculty in Vietnamese universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First, about the Participants of the Study.

The findings of table 1 show that out of the 200 academic members, 72.5% were male and remaining 27.5% of female faculty. The respondents consisted of 61% were from 31 to 40 years old. Regarding marital status, 45% of faculty were single, 55% were married. In terms of their academic qualification, 42.5% of faculty had master's degrees, and almost 46.5% had attained a doctoral degree. Almost 90.5% of academic members were lecturer.

The distribution of length of employment shows that 36.5% had from 6 to 10 years, and 8.5% academic members had from 16 or more years teaching experience. For national graduation, 5% of faculty graduated from America, 11.5% were from Europe, only 2.5% were from Oceania, and almost of 76% academic staff graduated in Asia. Regarding academic members' discipline, 38% faculty were technology areas, 18.5% were fields of social sciences and humanities, 32.5% were science sectors, 5% were information technology areas, and remaining 6% faculty were fields of economics and law.

Second, about the Level of Job Satisfaction of Academic Member in VNU-HCMC. In terms of table 2, the results indicate that the range of twenty-one dimensions of university job were between 2.16 and 3.25 for *M* (Mean) scores, and 0.52 and 1.10 for *SD* (Standard Deviations) scores. The average scores of academic members job satisfaction of VNU-HCMC (Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh City) were *M* = 2.89 and *SD* = 0.50. This finding reported that academic members of VNU-HCMC were satisfied with their university job. Mirroring the results of the studies by J.X. Castillo & J. Cano (2004); F. Noordin & K. Jusoff (2009); S.Z. Eyupoglu & T. Saner (2009); S.R. Ghazi *et al.* (2010); N. Malik (2011); A.A.S.G. Syed *et al.* (2012); and F. Mehboob, M.A. Sarwar & N.A. Bhutto (2012).

Regarding the twenty-one dimensions of job, academic members of VNU-HCMC had

Table 1:
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents of the Study

Characteristics	n (200)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Female	55	27.5
Male	145	72.5
Age (years old):		
Under 30	54	27.0
31 - 40	122	61.0
Over 40	24	12.0
Marital status:		
Single	90	45.0
Married	110	55.0
Academic qualification:		
Bachelor's degree	22	11.0
Master's degree	85	42.5
Doctoral degree	93	46.5
Academic rank:		
Teaching Assistant	19	9.50
Lecturer	181	90.5
Length of employment (years):		
Less than 1	23	11.5
1 - 5	42	21.0
6 -10	73	36.5
11 - 15	45	22.5
16 or more	17	8.5
National graduation:		
America	10	5.0
Asia	152	76.0
Europe	33	16.5
Oceania	5	2.5
Discipline:		
Technology	76	38.0
Social Science and Humanities	37	18.5
Science	65	32.5
Information Technology	10	5.0
Economics and Law	12	6.0

the highest satisfied with career promotion ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.10$); subsequently followed by satisfaction with development aim of school ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.67$); teaching support equipment ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.74$); colleague social relationship ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.52$); work autonomy ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.52$); working insurance ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.79$); leadership style ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.70$); colleague academic interaction ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.59$); campus landscape ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.89$); teaching load ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.87$); administration efficiency ($M = 2.94$, $SD =$

1.07); research pressure ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.87$); in-service teaching training ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.93$); in-service research training ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.81$); and gender equality ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.79$).

However, the findings of table 2 also shows that academic members of VNU-HCMC had the lowest satisfied with salary ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 0.76$); subsequently followed by recreation and sports equipment ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.07$); bonus and welfare ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.08$); research room space and equipment ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.05$);

Table 2:
Results of Mean (*M*), and Standard Deviations (*SD*) of Job Satisfaction Level of Faculty Members

No.	Dimensions of Job	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>Average</i>	2.89	0.50
S-1	Teacher promotion	3.25	1.10
S-2	Development aim of school	3.19	0.67
S-3	Teaching support equipment	3.16	0.74
S-4	Colleague social relationship	3.13	0.52
S-5	Work autonomy	3.12	0.52
S-6	Working insurance	3.08	0.79
S-7	Leadership style	3.07	0.70
S-8	Colleague academic interaction	3.02	0.59
S-9	Campus landscape	3.00	0.89
S-10	Teaching load	3.00	0.87
S-11	Administration efficiency	2.94	1.07
S-12	Research pressure	2.93	0.87
S-13	In-service teaching training	2.86	0.93
S-14	In-service research training	2.84	0.81
S-15	Gender equality	2.82	0.79
S-16	Library (e-journals)	2.70	0.86
S-17	Internet and computer	2.69	0.72
S-18	Research room space and equipment	2.68	1.05
S-19	Bonus and welfare	2.52	1.08
S-20	Recreation and sports equipment	2.46	1.07
S-21	Salary	2.16	0.76

internet and computer ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 0.72$); and library ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.86$). Thus, university management and policy makers should invest more time, budget, facilities, and technologies in enhancing academic members' job satisfaction in higher education institutions.

Third, about the Job Satisfaction Level between Male and Female Academic Members of VNU-HCMC. As shown in table 3, the level of job satisfaction among male academic members ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.48$) and female academic members ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.51$) were found in this study. This finding recognized that male faculty of VNU-HCMC (Vietnam National University of Ho Chi Minh City) were more satisfied than their counterparts. This results were similarly several past studies, namely: C. Hult, R.R. Callister & K. Sullivan (2005); D. Bilimoria *et al.* (2006); I.H. Settles *et al.* (2006); R.R. Callister (2006); and T.A. Seifert & P.D. Umbach (2008).

Comparative ranking of job dimensions

between male and female faculty based on the average scores of the each group. Only two cases, both groups are lowest satisfied in same way with salary (ranked 21st), and internet and computer (ranked 17th). The findings of table 3 also indicated that male and female faculty of VNU-HCMC had different level of job satisfaction toward various factors.

Both male and female faculty members were more satisfied with career promotion, development aim of school, colleague social relationship, and working autonomy. Female faculty were more satisfied with research pressure (ranked 2nd) and administration efficiency (ranked 5th); however, male faculty were ranked 14th and 13th. On the contrary, male faculty were more satisfied with campus landscape (ranked 4th) and their counterparts were ranked 16th. Moreover, both male and female faculty members of VNU-HCMC were dissatisfied with salary, bonus and welfare, library, and recreation and sports equipment.

Table 3:
Comparative Ranking of Job Dimensions between Male and Female Faculty Members

No.	Dimensions of Job	Ranked	
		Male	Female
	<i>Average M (SD)</i>	2.95 (0.48)	2.74 (0.51)
S-1	Teacher promotion	1 st	5 th
S-3	Teaching support equipment	2 nd	10 th
S-2	Development aim of school	3 rd	1 st
S-9	Campus landscape	4 th	16 th
S-4	Colleague social relationship	5 th	3 rd
S-5	Work autonomy	5 th	4 th
S-6	Working insurance	7 th	8 th
S-7	Leadership style	8 th	7 th
S-8	Colleague academic interaction	8 th	12 th
S-10	Teaching load	10 th	11 th
S-11	In-service teaching training	11 th	15 th
S-12	In-service research training	12 th	14 th
S-13	Administration efficiency	13 th	5 th
S-14	Research pressure	14 th	2 nd
S-15	Gender equality	15 th	9 th
S-16	Library (e-journals)	16 th	18 th
S-17	Internet and computer	17 th	17 th
S-18	Research room space and equipment	18 th	13 th
S-19	Bonus and welfare	19 th	20 th
S-20	Recreation and sports equipment	20 th	19 th
S-21	Salary	21 st	21 st

CONCLUSION ¹

Job satisfaction of academic members is important for improvement, efficiency, and effectiveness of the upper higher education sector. It is clear that very little research on job satisfaction of academic members has come from developing countries like Vietnam. Therefore, there is a need for more data to be gathered from developing countries; and for theories to be tested in different cultural contexts, professional, social, and economic environments.

The findings of study showed that most academic members of Vietnamese universities were satisfied with their job. Male faculty members were more satisfied than their counterparts. Academic members were generally satisfied with

teaching support equipment, working insurance, teacher promotion, gender equality, in-service teaching training, in-service research training, work autonomy, colleague academic interaction, colleague social relationship, teaching load, research pressure, development aim of school, leadership style, campus landscape, and administration efficiency.

Moreover, faculty were dissatisfied or neutral with the job dimensions, namely: salary, bonus and welfare, research room space and equipment, internet and computer, library (e-journals), and recreation and sports equipment. Hence, one way of addressing this could be by refresher courses and training workshops must be arranged for university academic faculty to keep them abreast with the contemporary skills and techniques as well as teaching and research; to provide adequate protective equipment.

University management should provide abundant research space and facilitate

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supportive. Provision of sufficient funds to universities for the availability of modern tools, scholarly publications, properly equipped libraries and laboratories. Moreover, higher education management clearly needs to re-examine their current institutional policies on faculty work in order to keep highly productive faculty more satisfied with their job and to make the necessary changes in the policies and practices to enhance job satisfaction.

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.

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