



Antecedents of employee job satisfaction: Do they matter? ☆



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 February 2015

Received in revised form 1 July 2015

Accepted 1 September 2015

Available online 21 October 2015

Keywords:

Job satisfaction,
Organizational goals, Work–family balance,
Autonomy, Supervisor support, Teamwork
Supervisor support
Teamwork

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the collective effect of (1) the employee–organization relationship, (2) the employee–supervisor relationship, and (3) the employee–coworker relationship on employee job satisfaction. The empirical application considers a data sample comprising 374 valid observations and uses qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in its fuzzy set variant to test the model. A second-stage analysis compares the results with the results of alternative methodologies. The findings reveal that three different paths explain job satisfaction: (1) teamwork, identification with the strategy, and the absence of employee work–family balance; (2) employee work–family balance, autonomy, and identification with the strategy; and (3) supervisor support and identification with the strategy. The study concludes with a discussion of managerial applications.

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1. Introduction

The academic literature has a long history of investigating employee job satisfaction. According to Locke (1976), job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Spector (1997) adds that employee satisfaction is now a common concern among companies. As this emotional state is a key factor in an employee's life, job satisfaction is a stimulating topic to study.

Most academic research on this topic focuses on measuring and assessing job satisfaction (Chang & Cheng, 2014; Fila, Paik, Griffeth, & Allen, 2014; Macintosh & Krush, 2014; Spagnoli, Caetano, & Santos, 2012). Researchers from fields such as industrial-organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management (HRM) devote considerable effort to analyzing the antecedents and consequences of job satisfaction.

Previous studies, however, provide a partial view of job satisfaction since they usually focus on the one-to-one relationship between an antecedent condition and job satisfaction, without taking a global view to show how different factors simultaneously affect job satisfaction. This research posits that a combination of factors (e.g., organization, coworkers, and supervisor) affects employee job satisfaction. Accordingly, this empirical study adopts a qualitative comparative analysis using

fuzzy sets (fsQCA) to explore the association between employee job satisfaction and the different relationships that employees develop in organizations. In addition, this study uses regression and structural equation models (SEM) and compares the results of the different methodologies.

This study contributes to the literature by investigating the collective effect of different employee relationships on job satisfaction. Second, the study extends the literature by using an uncommon methodology in the field of management, the fuzzy set methodology. Finally, the paper compares the results from the fsQCA with those obtained by using regression analysis and SEM to show the commonalities and differences in the application of fsQCA.

2. Theoretical background

Three main relationships affect employee satisfaction: (1) the employee–organization relationship, (2) the employee–supervisor relationship, and (3) the employee–coworker relationship (Tang, Siu, & Cheung, 2014). Following Adams, King, and King (1996) and Allen, Shore, and Griffeth (2003), the employee–organization relationship underlines the importance of employee identification with and commitment to organizational strategy and company goals. This relationship also includes other factors, such as a company's support of employee work–family balance. Authors such as Edgar and Geare (2005) and Fila et al. (2014) consider the employee–supervisor relationship a key factor that influences employee job satisfaction. In this regard, factors such as the extent to which a supervisor delegates and gives autonomy to employees greatly influence employees' assessments of their jobs. Finally, the relationship between employees and colleagues is also an

☆ The authors thank the two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments and suggestions.

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important source of job satisfaction (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001; Sageer, Rafat, & Agarwal, 2012). Fig. 1 shows these relationships.

To foster employee commitment to and identification with organizational goals, organizations must clearly define their objectives (Patterson et al., 2005). Organizational identity refers broadly to what organizational members perceive, feel, and think about their organizations (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Organizational commitment exists when individuals identify with organizational goals. Allen et al. (2003) suggest that employees' organization commitment and identity explain employee satisfaction, and Bart, Bontis, and Taggar (2001) link employee satisfaction to the organizational mission and strategy.

Most employees divide their daily life between work and family. Thus, organizational responses to work–family (WF) conflict influence employees' attitudes toward their jobs (Ornstein & Isabella, 1993). Exploring the relationships among WF conflict, organizational policies, and job and life satisfaction Kossek and Ozeki (1998) find a consistent negative relationship between WF conflict and job and life satisfaction. Dixon and Sagas (2007) further empirically demonstrate the theorized relationship between WF conflict and job-life satisfaction, and Qu and Zhao (2012) investigate the impact of life satisfaction on job satisfaction in different situations of WF conflict.

Rowold, Borgmann, and Bormann (2014) propose that the leadership style of an employee's supervisor positively affects the employee's organizational commitment and job satisfaction. In particular, the extent to which an employee's supervisor provides encouragement and support to the employee concerning the employee's work is a strong determinant of the employee's attitude toward his or her job (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001). Numerous studies investigate this relationship in various job contexts (Yukl, 1989). For instance, Kirkman and Rosen (1999) underline the importance of promoting a supportive work environment and adequate supervisor support, as these factors affect employees' work-related attitudes and perceptions. Tang et al. (2014) further suggest that WF enrichment fully mediates the relationship between job satisfaction and both supervisor and organizational support.

Autonomy refers to the extent to which individual employees can structure and control how and when they perform their specific job. Highly autonomous jobs increase both job performance and satisfaction (Spector, 1986). Accordingly, autonomy and flexibility are common antecedents of job satisfaction (Chang & Cheng, 2014; Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001).

Finally, teamwork involves cooperative work between interdependent groups to obtain an outcome; thus, it reflects the relationship between employees and colleagues (Parker & Wall, 1998). Much of the research interest in teamwork is due to the idea that work teams are able to generate greater returns than individuals alone (Ilgen,

Hollenbeck, Johnson, & Jundt, 2005). Communicating and collaborating within a team, sharing information and knowledge, and prioritizing the group over individual outcomes are important team features that enhance the benefits of teamwork. According to Griffin et al. (2001), job enrichment can result from teamwork, partly explaining the link between teamwork and job satisfaction. Work policies that promote employees' initiatives foster higher levels of autonomy.

All in all, job satisfactions stands as an emotion that involves a person's overall evaluation with respect their work environment. Because previous studies mainly use SEM, hierarchical regression analysis or meta-analytic combinations to examine job satisfaction this study adopts fsQCA to better understand the antecedents of job satisfaction.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Sample and procedure

The sample of the study includes employees of a Spanish pharmaceutical company, and the fieldwork contains information from 463 surveys (March 2013) using both online and paper-and-pencil formats. After the exclusion of incomplete questionnaires, data for the analysis comprises 374 valid surveys (a response rate of 80.78%). The empirical application uses the mean of nearby points to treat missing data points. Managers' interest in the study allows the use of participative strategies, such as a raffle, facilitating a high response rate.

3.2. Scales

The survey includes six scales (*identification with and commitment to organizational goals, work–family balance, autonomy, supervisor support, teamwork, and job satisfaction*) in the form of statements to which respondents indicate their level of agreement/disagreement on a four-point Likert scale. All item loadings are higher than 0.6. As the original language of the items in the scales is English, this study applies forward/backward translation (FBT) to adapt the questionnaire (Chen & Bates, 2005).

An extensive review of the relevant literature supports the validity of the scales (see Table 1).

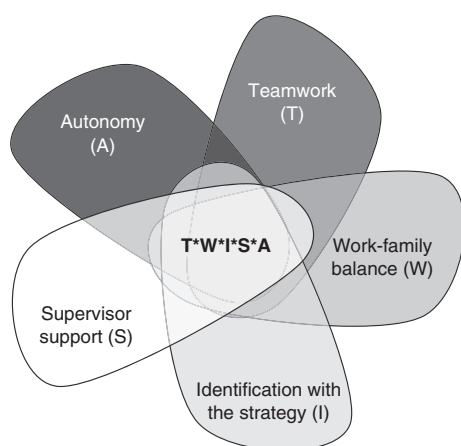
Finally, one single-item overall measure captures job satisfaction. According to Dolbier, Webster, McCalister, Mallon, and Steinhardt (2005) and Wanous, Reichers, and Hudy (1997), from a psychometric perspective, the use of single-item measures to operationalize this construct compares favorably with the use of multiple-item measures.

3.3. Methodology

This study uses fsQCA as the study methodology. QCA addresses complex causality perspectives by assuming asymmetric relationships among observations. This approach facilitates the determination of which combination of antecedent conditions is most likely to cause an outcome. The result is a number of combinations that enable the production of the outcome under analysis (Longest & Vaisey, 2008).

QCA entails the analysis of the necessary and sufficient conditions to produce an outcome (Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993; Wu, Yeh, Huan, & Woodside, 2014) and involves various stages. First, a calibration process transforms variables into sets according to their degree of membership to each of the conditions (Ragin, 2008). A score of "1" indicates full membership, and "0" indicates full non-membership. Breakpoints allow for the calibration of all original values into membership values. Typically, 0.95 indicates full membership, and 0.05 denotes full non-membership. The crossover point (0.5) designates cases with the maximum ambiguity regarding their membership in the set.

The second stage includes the analysis of the truth table, which consists of all logically possible combinations of condition sets (Fiss, 2011). Next, using Boolean algebra, QCA computes the commonalities among the configurations that lead to the outcome. Finally, the Quine–



Source: Self-reported

Fig. 1. Relationships between employees at different levels.

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