DETERMINANTS OF SUBJECTIVE JOB SATISFACTION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: CONTRASTING MANAGERS AND REGULAR EMPLOYEES

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Abstract
This paper investigates the determinants of subjective job satisfaction in Sudan based on data collected in a private business firm. The analysis distinguishes between factors affecting the satisfaction of managers and regular employees. This is done under the assumption that the derivers of satisfaction for the two categories (managers and non-managers) are different. Logistic regression model was used to investigate the determinants of subjective job satisfaction for managers and non-managers separately. The results show that predictors of job satisfaction in developing countries are similar to those in developed countries with the exception of health condition. Factors such as gender, age, experience and workload distinguish satisfaction from dissatisfaction. However, the results indicate that some of these factors (e.g. education and workload) do not affect the job satisfaction for managers.

Key words: *job satisfaction, subjective job satisfaction, logistic regression*

1. INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction is the individuals' subjective appraisal of different aspects of the job (Locke, 1976). It describes individuals' feelings about their work in terms of liking/disliking. In other words, it is the employees cognitive, emotional, and evaluative reactions to their jobs. Improvements in the objective aspects of the job yield higher levels of job satisfaction (Tansel and Gazioglu, 2013). This may occur because dissatisfying aspects of the job are reduced while satisfying aspects are given more attention by management.

Job satisfaction is indeed becoming an increasingly popular subject in the economic literature, as it is relevant to understanding employees' behavior and to predict labor market mobility. Moreover, job satisfaction has a huge effect on other aspects of the job such as performance, commitment, motivation and productivity. This has been well established in the literature by a number of authors (e.g. Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985; Freeman, 1978; Akerlof et al., 1988; Clark et al., 1998). Thus, job satisfaction is one of the most investigated job attitudes.

The literature on job satisfaction provides information from investigating different factors related to job satisfaction. Researchers have been particularly interested in investigating the relationship of job satisfaction with other socio-economic variables. Some factors are standard predictors, and are known for distinguishing satisfaction from dissatisfaction. These include gender (Clark, 1997), age (Clark et al. 1996), wage growth (Clark 1999), income and unemployment (Clark and Oswald, 1994; 1996), employment size and work environment (Idson, 1990), Health condition (Faragher et al., 2005), job matching (Belfield and Harris, 2002) and service sector (Brown and McIntosh, 2003). Additionally, there has been more attention on the relationship between the firm size and job satisfaction of employees as early as 1980. Most of the studies on this area show that low levels of job satisfaction are associated with large firms (e.g. Stafford, 1980; Kwoka, 1980; Dunn, 1980; Idson, 1990; Clark, 1996; Tansel and Gazioglu, 2013).

In anyway, most of the studies on job satisfaction are concentrated on developed countries, especially Britain and the USA. In turn, there has been little –but growing- attention on job satisfaction in developing countries. There is a need for through understanding of the different aspects of job satisfaction in growing economics too such as in northwest Africa countries. The complex nature of

the job market in these countries[1], which is rather different than in the developed countries my very well produce different evidence regarding the predictors of job satisfaction. Otherwise, it may confirm what has been previously established in this subject matter.

Moreover, most of the studies conducted on this area do not separate the factors affecting job satisfaction from the position of the employees' perspective. Instead, they assume similar effect of a given factor across all positions in the organization. For example, it is well known that, for regular employees, excellent education and good experience generally associate with low levels of job satisfaction. That is to say, highly educated and experienced regular employees tend to reflect a significant level of dissatisfaction. However, it is plausible to expect no significant effect of this with the sub-group of managers. This is because, employees usually progress to managerial positions on the basis of their education and experience. Thus, in many jobs, managers tend to posses good experience and relevant educations, and hence experience and education may not distinguish job satisfaction from job dissatisfaction within the sub-group of managers. Furthermore, under expectation, individuals that are in control of their professional development and career growth are normally happier with the aspects of their profession than those who feel that they are not empowered to decide on their career path. Thus, it is reasonable, especially in developing countries, to suspect that the effect of the standard predictors of job satisfaction may differ across employees' positions in the same organization.

One strategy to address this problem is to investigate the factors that affecting job satisfaction separately for the different employees' positions in the organization under study. This strategy is adopted in this paper.

The term job satisfaction may be used to refer to satisfaction in one or more aspects of the job. For example, it could be used to refer to satisfaction with the salary alone or to refer to satisfaction with the salary, position and the working hours together. In this paper, the term job satisfaction is used to describe the overall subjective satisfaction with all job aspects together.

2. DATA AND METHODS

The data used in this paper were collected -by management- in one of the private sector companies in Sudan. The data were collected for the purpose of studying the effect of various factors on job satisfaction. It contains typical measures collected for job satisfaction studies (e.g. gender, age and years of experience).

For statistical analysis, there were 120 usable observations out of 128 (the total number of employees in the firm). In addition, seven employees, who were employed at the firm for less than one year, were ruled out of the analysis here[2]. This left us with113 observations valid for estimation in this paper. There were 39 respondents who were supervisors and managers and the rest (74) were regular employees at a non-managerial level. Accordingly, respondents were divided into two groups: managers and non-managers.

All respondents were asked to report their overall job satisfaction level as one of four categories. These are: highly satisfied, satisfied, unsatisfied and very unsatisfied. Combining the first two categories into a single category and the last two categories into another one, the variable subjective job satisfaction was turned into a categorical variable with only two categories: satisfied and unsatisfied. These two categories were defined in the analysis as follows:

[1] In most developing countries, there are higher rates of unemployment than in developing countries. Additionally, most available jobs usually do not match the education and experience of the job seekers. Also, the usual factors that affect job hunting (e.g. advertisement, experience, education, etc…) may have little effect in the actual chance of obtaining a job in a developed country. For instance, in many developing countries, it is well known that good personal relationships with employers often lead to securing a job faster than having the relevant experience and/or education.

[2] Five of these employees were employed for less than 3 months and the other 2 were employed for 5 and 7 month respectively. In this analysis, it was assumed that these short periods of time do not necessarily enable employees to report reliably on the measures that are being addressed in this study.

$$SJS_i = \begin{cases} 1, & if\ employee\ i\ is\ satisfied \\ 0, & if\ employee\ i\ is\ not\ satisfied \end{cases}$$
(1)

Where

$SJS \equiv$ Subjective job satisfaction.

The objective of this study is to investigate the predictors of subjective job satisfaction in a developed country (Sudan) for different employees' positions (managers and non-managers). The variable's manipulation that is introduced above permitted the application of logistic regression with "subjective job satisfaction" as the dependent variable. However, to achieve the objective of this paper, the model was estimated separately for managers and non-managers.

This method allows one to refer to any potential difference in the impact of the factors on managers and non-managers.

A number of variables used in the estimation. Namely, these were: gender, age, marital status, health status, years of experience, salary, years of education, subjective work load, relevance of job to respondent's career, level of difficulty to obtain current job and years spent looking for work prior to current job.

3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows the results of our logistic regression model. The table presents the results separately for managers and non-managers. The figures displayed in the table are odds ratios. In both models (managers and non-managers), the dependent variable is subjective job satisfaction (with two categories: satisfied=1 and unsatisfied=0).

Focusing on the non-managers' model, most variables have a significant effect on job satisfaction. For example, gender, age, years of experience, salary and years of education ($\hat{b}_1$= 1.291, p < 0.10; $\hat{b}_2$= 1.493, p < 0.05; $\hat{b}_3$= 0.788, p < 0.05, $\hat{b}_4$= 1.746, p < 0.05; $\hat{b}_5$= 0.663, p < 0.05). These results confirm that, in general, predictors of job satisfaction in developing countries are similar to those in developed countries. However, two known predictors of job satisfaction are not significant. These are: marital status and health condition ($\hat{b}_1$= 0.708, p > 0.10; $\hat{b}_2$= 1.031, p > 0.10). These latter results reflect a slight dissimilarity between factors affecting job satisfaction in developed and developing countries.

Turning to the managers' model, the results are rather different. A few variables, which are significant in the non-managers model, are not significant here. Namely, these are years of education, low workload, Current job does not match career and Years spent looking for work prior to current job ($\hat{b}_1$= 0.703, p > 0.10; $\hat{b}_2$= 1.118, p > 0.10; $\hat{b}_3$= 0.609, p > 0.10; $\hat{b}_4$= 1.095, p > 0.10).

These results indicate that the effect of these factors towards job satisfaction for managers is not as important as for regular employees. The explanation for this may be that those who are typically in management have, in general, similar responses on these variables, and as a result these variables do not distinguish satisfaction from dissatisfaction within management.

Overall, the results confirm our hypothesis that the usual predictors of job satisfaction may have a different effect on different sub-groups relating to different positions in the same organization.

Variables	**Managers**	**Non-managers**
Female	1.113*	1.291*
Age	1.250*	1.493**
Not married	0.749	0.708
Bad health	1.028	1.031
Years of experience	0.829*	0.788**
Salary/1000	1.689***	1.746**
Years of education	0.703	0.663**
Medium workload	1.056	1.034
Low workload	1.118	1.206*
Current job does not match career	0.609	0.594*
Current job was difficult to obtain	0.762	0.890
Current job was easy to obtain	0.871*	0.713*
Years spent looking for work prior to current job	1.095	1.321*
N	**39**	**74**

Table 1. Logistic regression models of subjective job satisfaction

Note: The table presents odds ratios. In both models, the dependent variable is subjective job satisfaction (satisfied=1 and unsatisfied=0). The reference categories of the independent variables are male, married, high workload, current job matches career and current job was extremely difficult to obtain respectively. * p< 0.10, ** p< 0.05, *** p< 0.01.

4. CONCLUSION

The results in this paper suggest the following. First, some of the standard predictors of job satisfaction, which have been established in the literature in developed countries, affect the job satisfaction of employees from developing countries. However, there is also evidence, from our analysis, that health condition, which is known to be a good predictor of job satisfaction, do not seem to significantly affect the job satisfaction of employees from a developing country.

Second, the derivers of job satisfaction in the same organization differ across positions (managers/ non-managers). This is to say that some of the standard predictors of job satisfaction seem to only affect the job satisfaction of non-managers. In turn, some of the standard factors affecting job satisfaction are not important in the sub-group of managers. These are:

1) Education: this is often predictive of job satisfaction. However, at a management position, the effect of education on job satisfaction may be conditional on other factors such as salary (e.g. a high salary may eliminate the negative effect of long education on job satisfaction). Thus, at management positions, the relationship between education and job satisfaction may not be clear with the presence of other factors in the model; 2) Workload: this is usually negatively associated with job satisfaction. However, a typical management position has high workload. Thus, this factor may not be important in determining job satisfaction within managers; 3) Whether current job matches career: it is noncontroversial that a job which is not relevant to one's career may be negatively correlated with one's job satisfaction. However, individuals who are in management usually consider their current position to be relevant and central to their career. Thus, this is not indicative of job satisfaction at a managerial level; and 4) Years spent looking for work prior to current job: this variable is included in

the model under the assumption that those who spent longer time looking for their current job are usually more satisfied with it than those who obtained it within relatively short period of time. While this is clear at non-managerial levels, it seems to disappear at management positions. This is may be because employees usually become managers after relatively long period of time, which may be long enough to eliminate the effect of this factor.

These results have important policy implications for the business managers in developing countries. Understanding the nature and derivers of managerial and non-managerial employees' job satisfaction will not only help improving satisfaction levels in several respects but it will also help understanding causes of satisfaction at a sub-group level. As a result, this will layout the foundation for more effective policies to increase productivity and reduce turnover which is important from the point of view of the business owners.

While the literature on job satisfaction, in developing countries, is slowly rising, in our opinion, we still remain ignorant on the actual causes of job satisfaction in developing economics. This is because, in developing countries, the standard influential factors of job satisfaction may be correlated with other factors in the labor market (e.g. unemployment rates and average salary for different categories of jobs). Thus, studying job satisfaction in firms in developing countries may benefit from investigating linked data from the job market. One factor that may be impedimental to conduct these types of studies is the availability of reliable data sets that link data on employees' characteristics and their jobs to external data from the job market. Most of the data that is collected for the purpose of investigating job satisfaction (as in this research) are limited to the job/employee's characteristics. Thus, analyses using such types of data may not capture the correlation between standard determinants of job satisfaction and factors from the job market.

The validity of the conclusions of this paper could be checked with other data from similar business firms. However we do not expect much change in the conclusions since the position structure (in relation to managers/ non-managers) in business firms do not change as much if at all. Also, the analysis could be done in other countries in order to check the validity of conclusions in different cultural settings. These are deferred to future studies depending on the availability of appropriate data.

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