

# AN EMPIRICAL TEST OF JOB SATISFACTION:

## *Antecedents and Satisfaction Types*

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## **Overview**

A survey was conducted with sales associates and managers of two mid-western department stores. The relations between experience, education, family stress, family support and job satisfaction were studied using both multiple regression and stepwise multiple regression analyses. Family stress, family support and retailing experience were significant predictors of job satisfaction. An objective of this study was to determine whether separating job satisfaction into two types, Extrinsic and Intrinsic, would provide further explanation of the job satisfaction variable. First factor analysis yielded a four-factor solution—two extrinsic (outside work environment and pay/promotion) and two intrinsic (internal satisfaction/autonomy) factors. The four factors were analyzed using stepwise multiple regression with Organizational Commitment as the criterion variable. The extrinsic job satisfaction variable related to the outside work environment was the first variable to enter the equation and the intrinsic job satisfaction

variable related to internal satisfaction was the second and last variable. Dividing job satisfaction into the two major types was useful for data interpretation. The study provides a theory base for a job satisfaction model and for further research. The implications are also discussed.



## ■ Introduction

Job Satisfaction (JS), first systematically studied in the 1930s (Hoppock, 1935; Kornhauser and Sharp, 1932), is one of the most studied variables in seeking to understand employees' behaviors and attitudes toward their companies. Early research, mostly based on human relationships, posits that individuals develop positive job attitudes if their jobs allow them to fulfill their needs (Herzberg, 1968; Maslow, 1954). Modern sociology and psychology research shows that JS can be a very complex variable and its effects have been widely expanded to include management in different settings (Perry and Wise, 1990).

According to popular definition, JS is the pleasurable or positive feeling resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience (Locke, 1976). The appraisal is a process of a worker comparing his/her job performance or job experience with his/her own expectations (Babakus et al., 1996), which consist of a series of mental activities. First, individual characteristics (information from his/her own experience and education background) combined with information from family and social environments outside of the workplace will form an expectation of the job in the employee's mind. Then, after a period of working, the actual information from the workplace (supervisor, coworker, job content, pay, promotion, etc.) will generate the actual perception of the job. Finally, by comparing the actual information with initial expectations, the degree of JS will be determined. Different levels of JS will result in different job outcomes. The level of satisfaction is a function of the correspondence between an individual's personal expectations, aspirations, and needs and the degree to which the organization fulfills aspirations (e.g., Klein and Maher, 1968; Lofquist and Dawis, 1969). From this viewpoint, we understand that many factors will influence the final extent of JS. JS, on the other hand, is not the only result. Other job outcomes are organizational commitment, work performance and propensity to leave or for labor turnover (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Koeske and Kirk, 1995). Hartline and Ferrell's (1996) study found that, to increase customers' perceptions of service quality, managers must increase employees' JS.

Much research has been focused on the different aspects of JS (Babakus et al., 1996; Yuan, 1996). JS has also received extensive attention in the sales force literature (Behrman and Perreault, Jr., 1984; Brown and Peterson, 1993). Among those studies, many concentrated on the antecedents of JS such as role conflict and role ambiguity (Good, Page and Young, 1996). There are many studies involving its potential consequences (Sager, 1994; Yuan, 1996; Williams and Hazer, 1986; Brown and Peterson, 1993; Lucas, Babakus and Ingram, 1990; Good, Page and Young, 1996). However, in the field of retailing, little research was found on the following items, which will be studied in this research and may have special implications for retail management: 1) family's effect on JS (in this article, "family" means the relatives and friends of employees); 2) individual characteristics' effects on JS; 3) different types of JS and their differential importance.

## ■ Conceptual Development

### *Family's effect*

Previous research divided family effects on JS into two aspects: family support and family stress (also known as work-family conflict). They have been widely studied in recent years, but separately, and have never been studied together in a retailing setting (Boles and Babin, 1996; Kohli and Jaworski, 1994; Good, Page and Young, 1996; Savery, 1988). Adams, King and King (1996) conducted related research that focused on industrial workers. They found work interfering with family was negatively related to JS, family emotional support was positively related with life satisfaction, and JS had a positive relationship with life satisfaction. However, they did not study directly the relationship between family support and JS.

#### *1. Family support*

Family support is often included as one of the aspects of social support (support from supervisors and coworkers are the other two) (Wolken and Good, 1995; Deeter-Schmelz and Ramsey, 1997; King et al., 1995). Its effect on job stress or tension is often studied. Like other social supports, family support is believed to be able to reduce tension of retail employees (e.g. Wolken and Good, 1995; Seers et al., 1983).

There is a growing consensus that social support will come from both work and non-work sources. This support is primarily in the form of either emotional support, for example, listening and providing empathy, or instrumental support, for example, tangible assistance aimed at solving problems (Beehr and McGrath, 1992; Caplan et al., 1975).

Social support from work-related sources has been studied by many researchers (e.g. King et al., 1995; Paul and Ebadi, 1989; Babin and Boles, 1996) since it probably figures more importantly in the occupational stress process than that from non-work-related sources (Beehr, 1995). In organizational science, for example, social support from non-work sources is often regarded as a minor factor. In studies examining non-work social support, this kind of support is more strongly associated with general health and well-being and weakly associated with work-related strains (Adams, King and King, 1996).

However, non-work sources are still very important (Adams, King and King, 1996). Prominent among the non-work sources of social support is that of family members. Indeed, as a primary source of non-work support (Beehr, 1985), family members have a unique opportunity to provide both emotional support and instrumental support to the worker outside of the work environment (Caplan, 1976).

Kaufmann and Beehr (1989) reported that emotional support from family and friends was significantly related to a composite of variables that they labeled as strain relations (job satisfaction, boredom and depression etc.), but instrumental support from family and friends was not. King et al. (1995) also suggested that the level of emotional sustenance from family members might be important to JS for women. In order to find out the actual situation in retailing, H1a is proposed. **H1a: Family support is positively related to JS.**

## **2. Family stress (work-family conflict)**

Conflict between an individual's work and his/her home responsibilities has been labeled as family stress or work-family conflict. The characteristics of the work force have changed, with a great number of dual-career and single parent households; this increases the potential of conflict occurring between work and family responsibilities and makes work-family conflict an important work-related issue. This conflict is not limited to married individuals only. Single people also face the challenges of balancing work with friends, parents and/or other commitments outside the workplace. Conflict between work requirements and family concerns is found across all work environments. Among the different occupations, the unique nature of selling, with its time demands, psychological strain, work-related role stress and performance orientation, can put unusual pressure on the salesperson (Dubinsky et al., 1986). Although the effects of role stress have been extensively studied for these employees, work-related consequences of work-family conflict have not been clearly determined, particularly in a customer-contact position (Good, Sisler and Gentry, 1988; Boles and Babin, 1996).

Models of work-family conflict propose that (1) work-family conflict arises when demands of participation in one domain are incompatible

with demands of participation in the other; (2) this conflict can have an important effect on the quality both of work and family life (Burke, 1988; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). In a survey of police officers, Burke (1988) found that higher levels of work interfering with family would lead to more psychological burnout and alienation and less job satisfaction. Bacharach, Bamberger and Conley (1991) found the same situation for nurses and engineers. Boles, Johnston and Hair, Jr. (1997) found that the conflict between work and family was highly related to JS, and a large number of studies have indicated that work stress and work-family conflict could negatively affect the attitudes of employees toward their jobs (Babin and Boles, 1996; Sager, 1994). Thus, H1b is provided. **H1b: Family stress is negatively related to JS.**

From the literature reviewed above, it seems that family stress is more strongly related to JS in some cases. What is the situation in a retail setting? Because family's effect includes not only the emotional influence but also economic stress and family burden, it is necessary to study whether and to what degree they are related to JS. This study intends to investigate which effect is dominant, and can be reliably used as the main family factor to study JS. So H1c is proposed. **H1c: Family stress is more related to JS than is family support.**

### *Individual's effect*

JS is influenced by personal characteristics. Hackman and Oldham (1975) suggested that individuals often "interpret" their jobs and organizations based on personal characteristics, such as their own beliefs and values, which could also affect their job satisfaction. So, these characteristics are part of one's expectations before job attitudes are formed, making their relationship with JS essential to the study. Yuan (1997) studied characteristics of public spirit, age, education, race, and sex. This study focuses on work experience and education, since they are important sources of individual information for forming job expectations.

#### *1. Work experience*

Many researchers have studied the relationship between work experience and work performance, while little was done on the direct relation between work experience and JS. Different results can be found in the literature. In common sense, experience is one of the most important information sources of the process of JS appraisal. Workers with more experience may complete work more efficiently, encounter less stress in their work, and are more likely to be promoted. Koeske and Stuart (1995) found that those workers with more experience perceived greater client improvement.

Research on career stages has also suggested that salespeople's per-

spectives on their jobs and profession evolve over time, which in turn supports the hypothesis that variables such as age and organizational tenure may be related to JS (Brown and Peterson, 1993). Bhuian, Alshammari and Jefri (1996) studied Organizational Commitment (OC), JS and Job Characteristics (JC) of expatriates in Saudi Arabia and found that experience is negatively associated with JS. To directly predict the influence of experience, we suggest that if an employee has more work experience, he/she will be more satisfied with his/her work. Hypothesis two is then proposed. **H2: Experience is positively related to JS.**

### *2. Education*

Education is always included as a personal characteristic in JS studies. When it is separated from other personal characters, findings are mixed, with either positive, negative, or no relation with JS found. Yuan's (1997) study found that education had no effect on the JS of federal government employees. Bergmann (1981) studied three organizations: retail, banking, and insurance, and implied that in general, education has very little significant or systematic effect on JS. However, highly educated managers were more satisfied with compensation (in terms of comparison, company practices, and amounts) than were less educated top managers. Bhuian, Al-Shammari and Jefri (1996) found that education was weakly related to JS in Saudi Arabian expatriates. As we assume that higher education can make people more knowledgeable, realistic and relatively easy to adjust their expectations, we propose hypothesis three. **H3: Education is positively related to JS.**

## *Importance of different types of JS*

It is well known that there are different types of JS and they contribute different importance to the outcome. Lucas et al. (1987) studied JS by dividing it into two components: Intrinsic JS (IJS) and Extrinsic JS (EJS). Their results showed that EJS played a more important role in turnover of retail managers. The negative relationship between JS and turnover is consistently found (Brown and Peterson, 1993). Thus H4 is introduced. **H4: Extrinsic JS is more important than Intrinsic JS in predicting the outcome of Organizational Commitment (OC).**

To test this hypothesis, two problems need to be solved. First, the different types of JS need to be identified. In Lucas, Babakus and Ingram's (1990) study, major components of EJS are: fair pay, financial reward, working conditions, insurance, medical etc., and major components of IJS are: sense of pride or accomplishment, liking of work, opportunities for personal growth, and opportunities for career growth. Other researchers define three types: intrinsic, extrinsic, and general satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction refers to actually performing the work and experiencing feel-

ings of accomplishment and self-actualization, e.g., career opportunity, advancement. Extrinsic satisfaction is derived from the rewards given to an individual by the organization, peers, or superiors that can include compensation and job security. General satisfaction refers to the aggregation of satisfaction with various job facets (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). In our study, we simply defined JS as internal and external aspects of JS.

The second problem is to determine which job outcome to use in testing the differential importance of EJS and IJS. According to former literature, OC, which is one's identification with and loyalty to an organization (Good, Sisler and Gentry, 1988), can be a good indicator of the job outcomes. Some authors (e.g., Bateman and Strasser, 1984) have argued that OC precedes JS whereas others have argued that JS is the antecedent. The preponderance of conceptual and empirical evidence appears to favor the precedence of JS in the relationship. Brown and Peterson (1993) found in their research that OC was primarily a consequence, rather than an antecedent of JS. OC and JS consistently have been strongly and positively correlated in sales force contexts as well as in other occupational settings (Bateman and Strasser, 1984).

## ■ Methodology

### *Sample and Data Collection*

The sample was comprised of retail sales associates and managers from the branches of two major department stores in the mid-western region of the United States. The human resource managers were contacted for permission to conduct the study. A draft of the questionnaire and an explanation of the study were sent to the human resource managers to be considered for approval. Upon agreement to participate in the study, lists of employees' names were provided by the retailers. The surveys were coded for follow-up purposes. The researchers sent stamped, pre-addressed questionnaires for sales associates directly to the department managers with an explicit protocol for dissemination. A cover letter explaining the research project and indicating approval for the project from the human resource manager was included with the survey; the letter also ensured confidentiality and indicated that participation was completely voluntary. On completing the survey, the respondent folded, stapled, and placed the pre-addressed and stamped questionnaire in the mail to the researcher.

## *Instrument*

A self-report questionnaire was developed based on the review of literature. Scales, which were previously reported to be reliable and valid, were used to measure the variables in the present study. Items measuring family support came from five items. Ray and Miller (1992) used the same items to measure this support, and their alpha coefficient was .92. Questions such as "My family/friends can be relied on when things get tough for me at work" and "It is easy to talk with my family/friends" are examples of questions measuring family support. The items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

To measure family stress, four items were chosen to fulfill this purpose. Questions such as "My personal demands are so great that it takes away from my work" measured family stress. The items were developed by Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991) with a reported reliability coefficient of .83. The items were measured on the same seven-point Likert scale.

JS was measured by the short form of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss et al., 1967) which has 20 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very dissatisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). "The chance to do something that makes use of my abilities" and "The chance to try my own ideas" are typical questions to measure the degree of JS. These items were previously tested as part of Sims and Keon's (1997) work, with alpha coefficient reported as .87.

OC was measured with 15 items developed by Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979) on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7). Questions such as "I really care about the fate of this organization" and "I am willing to put a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization" are used to measure this variable. Reliability coefficients for the instrument are .86 and .91 respectively (Pierce and Dunham, 1987; Good, Sisler and Gentry, 1988). Retail experience was measured as total years of retail experience, years of experience in the company, and years of experience in the current position. Education level was divided into eight levels.

## ■ Results

### *Sample Characteristics*

Five hundred and ninety-two surveys were disseminated and 193 people returned completed surveys, yielding a useable response rate of 32.6%. Proportionately more women (81%) than men (18%) were in the sample.

A majority of the sample was sales associates (84%) with the balance managers (16%). The average age was 36.9 years with the largest group between ages 20 and 29. Approximately half of the sample was married and 52% did not have children. Over half (55%) were classified as full-time employees. A majority (53%) were in retailing between two and 10 years, while 33% were in retailing for more than 10 years. Over 40% were with the company for less than two years and 53% were in their current position for less than two years. The employees were highly educated: 44% had earned a college degree while 7% had obtained a master's degree. Over half of the sample (56%) earned less than \$15,000.

### *Instrument Characteristics*

To identify the internal consistency of the individual scales in the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used. The coefficient alpha scores for the scales ranged from .75 to .91. All were in acceptable range, which reflected the reliability of each scale.

### *Hypotheses Testing*

The results of the four hypotheses tested are presented individually. Stepwise multiple regression was used to test the first three hypotheses. Table 1 indicates the correlation between each pair of variables. Table 2 shows the results of the predicted relationship between the criterion variable of JS and the predictor variables of Family Support, Family Stress, Educational Level (Edu) and Retailing Experience of total years (Yeartotal), years with the company (Yearco) and at current position (Yearpos).

**TABLE 1. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES**

	JS	Stress	Support	Edu	Yeartotal	Yearco	Yearpos
JS	1.000						
Stress	-.243	1.000					
Support	.182	-.080	1.000				
Edu	-.064	.130	.176	1.000			
Yeartotal	.163	-.039	-.141	-.164	1.000		
Yearco	.176	-.100	-.081	-.209	.813	1.000	
Yearpos	.087	-.132	-.080	-.150	.596	.773	1.000

Analysis indicated that Family Stress, Family Support and Retailing Experience of total years are the main independent variables, which account for 11.8% of the variance in JS. This shows that strong relations

TABLE 2. PREDICTION OF JS BY MAIN VARIABLES

Criterion Variable	Predictors	Beta	Sig T	R <sup>2</sup>
JS	Stress	-.220403	.0017*	.11756
	Support	.190056	.0073*	
	Yeartotal	.180817	.1104*	

\* $p < .05$

exist between them and JS. On the contrary, the other three variables (Educational Level, Retail Experience in the company and at current position), are not included in the regression equation.

Family Support has a significant positive influence on JS with the beta coefficient equaling 0.190056, showing that if the employee gets support from the family or friends, he or she will have a better feeling in his or her job. Therefore, H1a is supported. Family Stress has a negative relation with JS, pointing out its negative influence on JS. Thus, the more stress one feels, the less satisfied one will be in the job. This finding is consistent with H1b. What's more, the absolute value of the regression coefficient (beta = -0.220403) is higher than that of Family Support, showing the evidence to support H1c.

It is noteworthy that the correlations among Yeartotal, Yearco and Yearpos are much higher than average, indicating a very strong relationship between each of the three variables. However, during the stepwise multiple regression process, only Yeartotal was introduced in the final regression equation. The correct interpretation would be that each of the three variables demonstrated high impact, but that the similarity of their effect on JS (high collinearity) dictates that only one of them is needed in the prediction process. Therefore, H2 is supported. Since the independent variable of educational level was not included in the final regression equation, there may be no direct relation between that factor and JS. H3 therefore is not supported.

In order to test H4, it is necessary to validate breaking the instrument into IJS and EJS. With factor analysis, we can extract common factors by a linear combination of the original variables (the individual questions) and then find out whether they are consistent with our discrimination standard on IJS and EJS. We employed the latent root criterion with a cutoff of 1.0 for the eigenvalue; four factors were extracted. Of those four factors, factor one is responsible for the biggest part of explanation of sample variance (35.8%). Variances that are explained by factor two, three and four are 9.3%, 6.6% and 3.7%, respectively. Using VARIMAX rotation, we can find out the loading matrixes for the four factors (Table 3). In each of the loadings, there are key items (coefficient > 0.50) that can be more responsible for the determination of the factor.

TABLE 3. FACTOR ANALYSIS WITH JS VARIABLES

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
q1	.68472			
q3	.68357			
q9	.47457*			
q11	.68243			
q15	.58691			
q16	.57460			
q20	.69628			
q5		.81698		
q6		.79035		
q12		.54495		
q17		.60770		
q18		.53218		
q19		.64934		
q2			.73171	
q4			.63082	
q7			.50564	
q8			.58372	
q10			.61038	
q13				.69467
q14				.74848

\*Although coefficient is less than 0.5, it is the largest one among other factors; therefore, the item is retained

The first rotated factor has significant loadings on seven items. Among these questions, it is easy to see an intrinsic component with respect to our standard. That is, it reveals the internal driving force that initiates the feeling of JS on an employee. Thus, we can label this factor as IJS1. The loadings that are significant on the second rotated factor are also strong loadings (the smallest is 0.53218). Careful analysis of those items indicates that this factor describes the degree of JS issued by outside work environment, and that support comes mainly from the supervisor and coworker. For convenience, we regard it as EJS1. Factor 3 is dominated by items that reflect intrinsic influence on the employee's feeling of JS, specifically concerned with his/her autonomy. IJS2 is used as its abbreviation. Questions 13 and 14 are the key items that determine factor 4, recorded as EJS2, which is characterized as an extrinsic factor of JS generated from stimulation by pay and promotion. We find now some common factors to represent the whole question, and the discrimination is also consistent with the standard discussed previously. The reliability analysis can be used to support the four factors (Table 4). Then it is possible to test H4 further.

We treat the four factors (instead of 20 questions) as independent variables and use OC as the dependent variable. By using stepwise mul-

TABLE 4. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Variable	Number of items	Mean	SD	Coefficient Alpha
IJS1	7	3.42	.78	.8516
EJS1	6	3.34	.81	.8140
IJS2	5	3.43	.76	.7238
EJS2	2	2.45	.99	.6696

multiple regression analysis we can find out the differential importance among these factors. The result is shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5. PREDICTION OF OC BY MAIN VARIABLES

Criterion Variable	Predictors	Beta	Sig T	R <sup>2</sup>
OC	EJS1	.350218	.0001*	.31414
	IJS1	.283054	.0000	

\* $p < .05$

It is clear that one of each EJS and IJS groups shows a significant and positive relation to OC, accounting for 31.4% of the variance in OC. Comparing the absolute value of the regression coefficient, it shows that EJS1 (beta = .350218) is higher than that of IJS1 (beta = .283054), indicating a stronger importance than IJS. Therefore, H4 is supported.

## ■ Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between JS and family support, family stress, education and experience, and compare the importance of EJS and IJS, which would be conducive to a better understanding of JS. JS is an extensively discussed topic, and many studies in the literature have focussed on it, while some parts of JS such as EJS, IJS have not been thoroughly studied. Its relation with education, experience, family support and family stress is seldom fully evaluated. Testing these factors in a retail setting has produced some important results. According to the results, together with former literature, we made the following conclusions related to a retail setting:

1. Family stress is not related to family support; however, both are significantly related to JS.

2. Family stress has more effect than family support on JS.
3. Experience is highly related to JS.
4. Education is not related to JS.
5. Dividing JS into EJS and IJS is helpful for analysis. EJS is more strongly related than IJS and accounts for more effect on the job outcome of OC.
6. When constructing a JS model, experience, family stress and family support should be included, while education is not necessary. IJS and EJS analysis might be useful for explaining job outcomes.

## ■ Implications

Our results have some useful implications for sales management with respect to recruiting, motivating and training employees. When screening employee candidates, experience, family background, self-motivation and other traits are worthy to be considered, which means a higher possibility of JS. If the managers intend to improve the employee's JS, they can try to help release family stress by taking measures such as flex time, child and elder care referral service and workshops on family. Interestingly, McCormick (1992) found that companies that ranked as the most respected and profitable are generally considered as the most family-friendly. Also they can take actions to improve the working environment or enhance the communication between supervisors and employees. Providing job autonomy is another useful strategy, according to our results.

## ■ Future Research

In this study, we have made a preliminary attempt to try to study the relationship between family support/stress, work experience and JS (except relationship between education and JS), and dividing JS into four parts (IJ1, IJ2, EJ1 and EJ2) to find out which part is more important with OC. This study was conducted in a retail department store setting. Consequently, there are several limitations, which also imply the future research directions.

1. Further studies should be conducted in other retail settings; we can't conclude the result is generalizable to other retail settings.
2. Further studies could be conducted in other work settings.
3. In the future, the relationship between work stress and family support should be studied.
4. Further research could shift focus on job dissatisfaction.
5. It seems that the relationship between education and JS differs in

different work settings because of the controversial results from literature and from our study. Further research could be done to make clear what the pattern would be in different work settings in terms of the relationship between education and JS.

6. We study managers and sales associates together. In the future, it is necessary to study them separately.

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