

# Employee Characteristics and Job Satisfaction

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**Abstract:** *The effect of employee characteristics on job satisfaction is an area that has been given consideration by scholars without an agreement. It is becoming undoubted that this relationship varies from firm to firm based on working conditions. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of employee characteristics on job satisfaction of private security guards in Western Kenya. Using a sample of 385, findings reveal that pay, education, years of experience, expectations and gender have significant effect on job satisfaction while age, marital status and professional training do not significantly affect job satisfaction. The findings thus contrast other studies suggesting that for different organizations, different employee characteristics affect job satisfaction.*

**Keywords:** characteristics, job satisfaction, effect

## 1. Employee Characteristics

Employee characteristics are the worker dispositions (Jex, 2002). Employee characteristics include several aspects of a person which may not be the same for all employees. Individuals are unique in all aspects, and the way they perceive and interpret different conditions may differ. Differences in individuals are also depicted in their way of perception of job satisfaction. People demonstrate different personality types which, in most cases, dictate how they behave. Personality of individuals is determined by their experiences (Mullins, 2010) and it is prone to changes depending on the environment. Motivation is another cause for individual differences. Definitions of motivation capture it as a personal factor, intentional, multifaceted and a factor that influences action. Motivation is influenced by needs and expectations at work. Mullins (2010) explains that extrinsic motivation is related to tangible rewards such as salary and fringe benefits, security, promotion, contract of service, the work environment and conditions of work. These factors are beyond control of individual employees but determine their level of job satisfaction.

Intrinsic motivation is related to psychological rewards such as opportunity to use one's ability, sense of challenge and achievement, receiving appreciation, positive recognition and being treated in a caring and considerate manner (Mullins, 2010). The psychological rewards are those that can be determined by individual managers. The existence of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation influences people differently. The higher set of motivational needs work together with other elements such as economic rewards, intrinsic satisfaction and social relationships. Mullins (2010) says that a person's motivation, job satisfaction and work performance will be determined by the comparative strength of these sets of needs and expectations and the extent to which they are fulfilled.

A Major component of organizational environment is the organizational culture. Armstrong (2009) defines culture as a unique configuration of norms, values, beliefs and ways of behaving that characterize the manner in which groups and individuals combine to get things done. Furham and Guanter

(1993) describe culture as social glue which generates unity in a group. To them, organization culture offers a shared system of meaning which is the basis for communications and mutual understanding among members of an organization. Organizational culture may also influence job satisfaction.

Theory indicates that there are several employee characteristics that influence their job satisfaction which are; age, education and training, experience, work culture, interests pay and sex (Karacan, 2011). Employee's education, training and development are meant to improve job performance (Sababu, 2010). He asserts that training helps people develop high level of discipline and also solve problems which would otherwise be difficult. Training allows for upward promotion of employees which causes job satisfaction. An employee who has training for the job is likely to be satisfied than one who has no training at all. An employee's experience is a function of the environment under which an organization operates and it affects job satisfaction of its employees.

In most cases an organization is considered to comprise of the operating component consisting of people and the administrative component which is supervision and coordination. All these have been confirmed to contribute to job satisfaction (Herzberg *et al.*, 1967). For purpose of this study, only employee characteristics that are measurable will be used and not interests and culture as they cannot be easily measured.

## 2. Job Satisfaction

Locke (1976) define job satisfaction as the pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience. Job satisfaction is a result of employee's perception of how well their job provides those things that are viewed as important. According to Mitchell and Lasan (1987), it is generally recognized in the organizational behavior field that job satisfaction is necessary for any employee at work. The level of job satisfaction is affected by a wide range of variables (Mullins 2010); these can be broadly grouped as individual, social,

cultural, organizational and environmental. Individual variables are personality, education and qualification, intelligence and abilities, age, marital status and orientation to work. The social factors include working groups, norms, opportunities for interaction and informal organization. Cultural factors are the attitudes, beliefs and values. Organizational factors include size and nature of the organization; the structure and management, while environmental factors entail socio technical elements.

### 3. Employee Characteristics and Job Satisfaction

Lee and Wilbur (1985) in United States of America studied the effect of personal characteristics on job satisfaction and results showed that job satisfaction increased with age. Younger employees were less satisfied with their jobs, especially with the intrinsic characteristics of the work. Older employees were more satisfied with the extrinsic characteristics than were the younger groups of employees. Research by Karacan (2011) in Turkey on job satisfaction of security guards showed that employees who had job experience of over nine years had a higher satisfaction.

Bilgic (1998) investigated relationship between job satisfaction and the personal characteristics of 249 Turkish workers in different occupations and job positions. The results indicated that monthly payment was the best predictor of overall satisfaction. Age, sex, number of children, and job tenure were significant predictors of different aspects of job satisfaction as measured with different scales( Job satisfaction scale(JSS) and Minnesota satisfaction questionnaire(MSQ)). Marital status and education was not related to any of the measures of job satisfaction. Similar study was done by Alzoubi(2012) in Jordan using 858 employees of both private and public enterprises. Findings showed that job tenure was the best predictor of job satisfaction, followed by sex and that salary least predicted job satisfaction. Salary had acurveilinear relationship with job satisfaction; it varied with different salary levels. The findings however found education and age to be weak predictors of job satisfaction.

Young *et al.* (2014) in Michigan studied the tenuous relationship between salary and life satisfaction. Using online survey of 79 working adults, findings show that there is significant negative relationship between salary and job satisfaction. Mottaz (1984) studied the relationship between education and overall job satisfaction of 1385 workers from different occupations. Findings show that education increases job satisfaction only when it leads to better rewards and that most educated employees show reduced satisfaction.

Studies by Lee and Wilbur (1985) and Bilgic (1998) concur on employee characteristics that have effect on job satisfaction. Younger employees highly educated and less experienced on the job are likely to be less satisfied with their jobs while older employees who are experienced and qualified are likely to be satisfied. Their findings contrast that of Alzoubi(2012) who found that employee's education and age weakly predict job satisfaction. The results of the study indicated that there are differences in the job

satisfaction means depending on the salary range in other words job satisfaction was low with the high and low salaries and it is in the highest level with the medium range salary. Mottaz (1984) observes that education may affect job satisfaction if connected to rewards. Young *et al.* (2014) found that salary negatively affects job satisfaction. This shows that relationship between employee characteristics and job satisfaction will be different in organizations depending on the nature of employees and work environment.

Given the discrepancies of the outcome on the relationship between employee characteristics and job satisfaction, it is difficult to predict this relationship in any work environment. The purpose of this study is to find out the effect of employee characteristics on job satisfaction of private security firms

### 4. Methodology

Data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were 385 guards of private security firms in Western Kenya. The respondents were asked to checklist arrange of monthly salary, education level, years of experience, age, professional training and indicate their gender and their job expectations. The findings from this revealed 83.1 % of respondents were male, 61.3% had achieved secondary education, 69.4 % had between 0-4 years' experience on the job, 82.6 % had a salary of between Ksh(5000-10000), 61.6 % had professional security training and 54 % had no expectations on the job.

Job satisfaction was measurement using a scale adapted from Rusbuilt *et al.* (1988) and tested for reliability and validity before use. The scale captured job safety, security, advancement and independence. The scale was from (1) to (5) representing (very satisfied) to (very dissatisfied) respectively. Relationship between employee characteristics was established through linear regression.

### 5. Results

The regression summary of job satisfaction on employee characteristics (Table 1.) shows that they contribute 22.2% variance in job satisfaction. The model shows that years of experience on the job is the biggest determinant of job satisfaction with ( $\beta=0.275, p=.000$ ), followed by pay per month (income) with ( $\beta=0.259, p=.000$ ), then sex with ( $\beta=0.151, p=0.013$ ), education with ( $\beta=0.123, p=.006$ ) and expectations on the job ( $\beta=0.114, p=0.013$ ). Analysis also reveals that age, marital status and professional training are insignificant in determining job satisfaction for security guards. A unit increase in years of experience on the job causes an increase in job satisfaction by 0.275%, and an increase in gross pay by a unit increases job satisfaction by 0.259%. The fact that a guard is a male increases job satisfaction by 0.151% and an increase in level of education increases job satisfaction by 0.123%, while an increase in job expectations increases job satisfaction by 0.114%.

The interpretation of the model is that as employees' job satisfaction increases with increase in years of experience on the job, so management of private security firms should

consider retaining employees on their jobs. Increasing pay for security guards will serve to increase their job satisfaction, and male security guards are more satisfied than their female counterparts. If there are good things expected by the guards then this serves to increase their job satisfaction. Age, marital status and professional training do not affect job satisfaction of the guards.

## 6. Discussions

Other studies on effect of employee characteristics and job satisfaction have yielded varied results. Bilgic (1998) while using two scales, job satisfaction scale (JCC) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) found that monthly pay (income) explained 6% variance in job satisfaction scale ( $\beta = .26$ ;  $R^2 = .06$ ) and even larger amount of the variance in total job satisfaction as measured by the MSQ ( $\beta = .35$ ;  $R^2 = .12$ ). The variables of monthly income, education, and gender explained 17% of the variance for items related to concern for productivity and responsibility while 14% of variance for items related to task-related conflict was explained by the variables of income, education, and years of work experience. Number of children and years of experience on the job explained 12% variance in job satisfaction in response to job while satisfaction with policy income explained 5%. He however found marital status not to be associated with job satisfaction. Findings by Bilgic (1998) are supported by Lee and Wilbur (1985) that job satisfaction increases with age, salary and job tenure. They agree on the fact that job satisfaction increases with the years of experience on the job, an idea supported by Karacan (2011).

The above findings are in contention with Alzoubi (2012) who found that the following demographics had significant relation with job satisfaction: salary ( $r = -0.25$ ), age ( $r = -0.05$ ), tenure ( $r = 0.44$ ), education ( $r = -0.22$ ) and sex (0.30) all at  $p \leq .01$ . Alzoubi (2012) observes that the determinants of job satisfaction are due to various factors such as intellectually challenging tasks, ability to control, feedback, training adequacy, supportive supervision, supportive co-workers climate, financial rewards, and recognition. This is in agreement with findings by Young *et al.* (2014) that job satisfaction had a significant, negative relationship with salary ( $B = -.39$ ,  $R^2 = .14$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Brown *et al.* (2008) found that salary minimally influenced job satisfaction than the job rank within the organization. They however found a strong link between job satisfaction and position. It should be noted that a number of factors interact to create job satisfaction in employees, though factors may not be applicable for different groups of workers.

Studies have not been able to come up with a model of job satisfaction and employee characteristics. While Bilgic (1998) used stepwise correlation making it difficult to have a model, Alzoubi (2012) concentrated on the behavior of satisfaction within different salary levels, furthermore all ignored the effect of professional training on job satisfaction and no such study on effect of employee characteristics on job satisfaction has been done in Kenya. Further, no model for employee characteristics and job satisfaction has been developed for security firms. From this point, one can conclude that salary should not be taken as the single factor

that can increase job satisfaction level in the organization. It is evident that various employee characteristics affect their job satisfaction; however these characteristics are not the same for all organizations. While salary/income/pay has been found to be positively associated with job satisfaction, others have found negative association and others have found weak association. For private security firms in Western Kenya, significant personal characteristics that affect their job satisfaction are gross pay, education, years of experience on the job, sex (gender) and expectations. Managers of security firms need to increase pay to employees, consider education level while recruiting, give them professional training and allow them probation period to get good experience for the job.

## 7. Conclusion

The generalization that has long been held by many that pay increases job satisfaction does not hold. Education, marital status, experience, number of children and age have been found not to universally affect job satisfaction. Different organizations will have different personal characteristics that affect job satisfaction.

## 8. Future Scope

The study was limited to private security firms in Western Kenya. Same study can be done in other parts of the country or elsewhere in the world.

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## Appendix 1

**Table 1.1:** Regression model of employee characteristics and job satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.834	0.238		7.71	0
Age	0.021	0.029	0.037	0.724	0.469
Sex	0.151	0.061	0.12	2.484	0.013
Marital status	0.012	0.051	0.011	0.231	0.817
Pay	0.259	0.043	0.284	6.019	0
Education	0.123	0.045	0.135	2.767	0.006
Proffessional training	0.076	0.049	0.074	1.542	0.124
Experience	0.275	0.046	0.294	5.967	0
Expectations	0.114	0.046	0.12	2.501	0.013
R=O.478					
Adjusted R=0.212					
R square=0.222					

Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction  
Source: Survey data(2015)