



Research Paper

Job Satisfaction among Employees: A Review of Theories

E. MUWANGUZI¹, * E EZATI¹, *C. B. MUGIMU¹*
College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University

Abstract. Job satisfaction is a multi-dimensional variable that denotes a pleasurable or positive emotional state of workers, an attitudinal response that measures how a person feels about one's job as well as an affective reaction to one's job. One goal of research on JS is to identify its factors, which may in turn be manipulated to positively influence JS. In deriving the factors of JS, several theories can be considered. Of these theories, this paper reviews five of them, with a view to isolating gaps for future research. Herzberg (1959)'s Two Factor Theory, Affect Events Theory, Adams (1963) Equity Theory, Hackman and Oldhams' Job Characteristic Model as well as Smerek and Peterson assessment model of Job Satisfaction (2007). The review is chronological. Though the paper may be of interest to identifying the main predictors of JS, it also arose as part of a study in higher education.

Key words: JS, Job Satisfaction; AET, Affect Event Model

Received 07 Mar, 2022; Revised 20 Mar, 2022; Accepted 22 Mar, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. Introduction

Several authors (Dugguh& Dennis, 2014; Man, Modrak, Dima&Pachura, 2011; Velickovic, Visnjic, Jovic, Radulovic, Sargic, Mihajlovic&Mladenovic,2014) have defined the concept of job satisfaction. In particular, Digguhand Dennis (2014) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience. Velickovic et al. (2014) observed that like other emotional judgment, job satisfaction arises from a variety of feelings related to the characteristics of the job, like feelings about the working conditions. Man et al. (2011) defined job satisfaction as a general expression of workers' positive attitudes built towards their jobs. On the other hand, managers want satisfied workers, who will have a positive attitude to the job, who will be committed, and emotionally involved with their job.

The attitudinal type of job satisfaction suggests that an individual would attempt to stay with a satisfying job and quit a dissatisfying job (Jehazeb, Rasheed, Rasheed&Aamir,2012).On their part, Lambert, Qureshi, Hogan, Klahn, Smith and Frank (2015); Paul and Phua (2011) defined job satisfaction as an employee's affective reaction to a job based on comparing actual outcomes with desired outcome (Cranny, Smith and Stone,1992). Affective job satisfaction is defined as a person's emotional feelings towards his or her work as a whole (Velickovicet al., 2014). Thus when we talk of job satisfaction, we are talking of a multi – dimensional variable that denotes, a pleasurable or positive emotional state of workers;an attitudinal response that measures how a person feels about one's job as well as an affective reaction of workers to one's job.

The importance of job satisfaction is well captured by authors such as Paul and Phua(2011) who stressed that satisfied employees are more productive, creative and are more likely to be retained by the organization. Sayadi(2016) observed that if the employees find their job fulfilling and rewarding, they tend to be more satisfied. In addition, Lopez- Cabarcus, De-Phino and Rodriguez (2014) stressed that job satisfaction enhances both affective and normative commitment of employees in a given work situation. According to Mugizi,Bakkabulindi andBisaso(2015) affective commitment refers to an emotional attachment to and involvement with an organization while normative commitment refers to the felt responsibility to support and remain a member of the organization. Jiang, Lambert, Jin and Xiang (2016) pointed out that job satisfaction has important behavioural consequences such as: increased employee commitment to the organization, organizational citizenship, retention and performance. Mustafa and Ghee (2013) stressed that job satisfaction will help the institution to find mechanisms in order to retain academic talents, lower absenteeism and turnover, as well as attracting new brains into the academic line.

II. Purpose and Method

Given the importance of job satisfaction, one goal of research on JS is to identify its factors, which may in turn be manipulated to positively influence JS. In deriving the factors of JS, several theories can be considered. Of these theories, this paper reviews five, with an understanding of isolating gaps for future research. Herzberg (1959)'s Two Factor Theory, Affect Events Theory, Adams (1963) Equity Theory, Hackman and Oldham (1976) Job Characteristic Model as well as Smerek and Peterson Assessment Model of job satisfaction (2007). The review is chronological. In order to achieve this objective, we sourced for the seminal article for a given theory, which we used to introduce the theory. Then we sought at least one recent literature (or indeed, theoretical) review and/ or meta-analysis on the theory to use it to give the trend of past researches on the theory and the gaps left for future studies.

III. Theoretical of Job Satisfaction

3.1 Herzberg (1959)'s Two Factor Theory. Herzberg (1959) developed the Herzberg's two factor theory depicted in Figure 1.

Hygiene factors

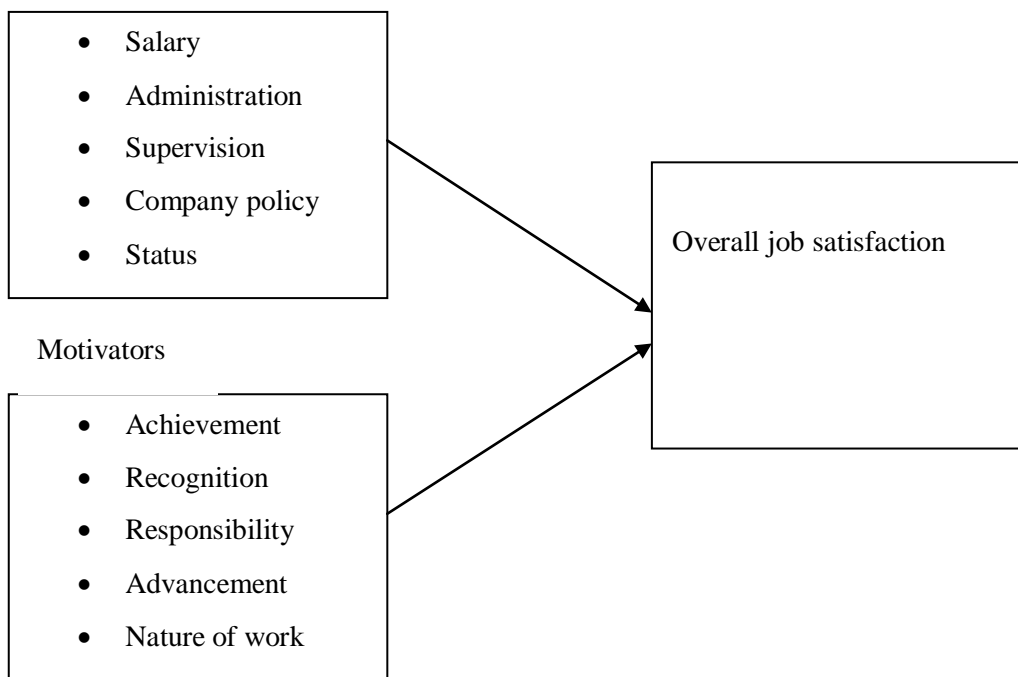


Figure 1: Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

Source: Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1960).

Figure 1 proposes that, in order to have an overall job satisfaction in an organization, the organization should provide both motivational and hygiene factors respectively. Hygiene factors according to Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1960) are defined as those factors that do not motivate or satisfy but rather prevent dissatisfaction. These factors in regards to the model include; salary, administration, supervision, company polices and employee status. Motivational factors are defined by Herzberg, et al. (1960) as those aspects of the job that make people want to perform and provide people with satisfaction. These factors include: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and the nature of work.

A theoretical review of Herzberg's Two Factor Theory on job satisfaction is captured by Ozsoy (2019). For instance, Ozoy (2019) stressed that there is a need for a valid measurement tool which can test Herzberg's Two Factor Theory in different samples and cultures. According to Ozsoy (2019), every single study applied different approaches while testing Herzberg's Two Factor Theory and this makes it harder to compare the empirical findings of all these researches. The theory should then be tested in different sample groups most preferably by comparing the low, medium and high-income profession groups most probably within the same country. Ozsoy (2019) recommended that one of the other critical points that needs to be taken into consideration in future research in order to examine the differences in personality traits of the participants involved in the research, as motivation and job satisfaction are closely related to personality traits.

3.2 *Affect Event Theory (AET)*. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) developed the Affect Events Model as depicted in Figure 2. This model proposes that employees react emotionally to things that happen to them at work and that this reaction influences their job performance and satisfaction. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) defined job performance as work related activities expected of an employee and how well those activities are executed. Job satisfaction has been defined by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) as a general expression of a worker’s positive attitude. Emotions are defined Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) as natural instinctive state of mind that is derived from one’s circumstances, moods or their relationship with others.

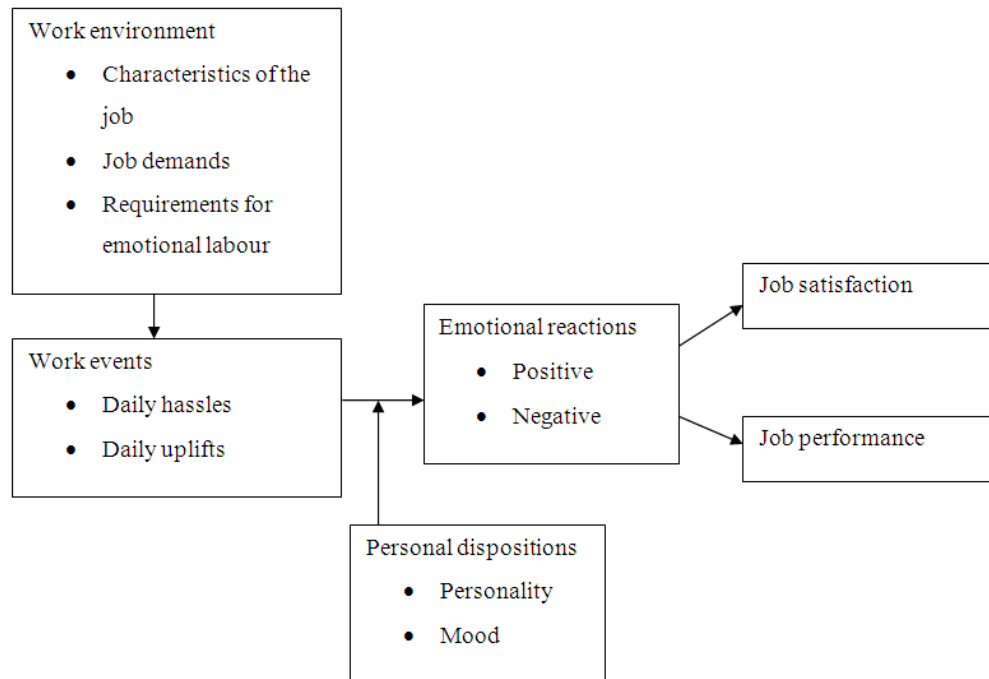


Figure 2: Affect Events Theory.

Source: Weiss and Cropanzano (1996)

Figure 2 further recognizes that emotions are a response to an event in the work environment. Working environment according to Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) refers to working conditions and all existing circumstances affecting labour in the work place including job hours, physical aspects, legal rights and responsibility, organizational climate and workload. The work environment includes everything surrounding the job, the variety of tasks and degree of autonomy (characteristics of the job) and the requirements for expressing emotional labour. This environment creates work events that can be hassles, uplifts, or both. Examples of hassles are colleagues who refuse to carry their share of work, conflicting directions by different managers, and excessive time pressures. Examples of uplifting events include: meeting a goal, getting support from a colleague, and receiving recognition for an accomplishment.

Figure 2 further illustrates that the work events trigger positive or negative emotional reactions. But employees’ personalities and moods predispose them to respond with greater or less intensity to an event. For instance, people who score low on emotional stability are more likely to react strongly to negative events. And their mood introduces the reality that their general Affect cycle creates fluctuations. So a person’s emotional response to a given event can change depending on the person’s mood.

Theoretical reviews of the Affect Events Model have been captured by scholars such as Alniacik, Alniacik, Erat and Akcin (2013). For instance, Alniacik et al. (2013) observed that the model has feedback loops whereby employees oscillate between attitudes and emotion-driven behavior. Alniacik et al. also noted that there are cross-cultural differences in the emotions expressed in the complaint process of the Affect Event Theory. However, despite its’ shortcomings, Alniacik et al. (2013) observed that the Affect Events Theory is good in so far as it assumes that employees who are high in positive affectivity are more prone to be satisfied in their lives. This is reflected in terms of high productivity rates, low absenteeism and increased task accomplishment.

3.3 *Equity Theory*. Adams’ (1963) Equity Theory as depicted in Equation 1 stipulates that individuals, in a cognitive manner make decisions about the state of their satisfaction. According to this theory, individuals compare the ratio of their inputs and outcomes to the input-outcome ratios of another person. The Theory argues that a major input into job performance and satisfaction is the degree of equity or inequality that people perceive in their work situations. Adams Equity Theory suggested that inequality exists for a person whenever he or she

perceives that the ratio of his or her outcomes to inputs and the ratio of other's outcomes to another's inputs are unequal.

$$\frac{\text{Person's outcome}}{\text{Person's input}} = \frac{\text{Others' outcome}}{\text{Others' inputs}} \dots \text{Equation 1}$$

The Equity Model suggested that if inequality is seen in this equation, the individual worker will act to reduce the perceived deprivation or overpayment by either altering his/her inputs or outcomes, or attempting to alter the comparison of the other person's inputs or outcomes; or the person may cognitively distort any of these four factors identified in the equation. Inputs according to Locke (1969) are defined as the qualitative and quantitative contribution of an employee's work. These inputs include; time, effort, hard work, commitment, ability, adaptability, flexibility, tolerance, determination, enthusiasm and personal trust. On the other hand, outputs (outcomes) are defined as the positive and negative consequences that an individual (employee) perceives a participant has incurred as a consequence of his/ her relationship with the other. Outputs (outcomes) include; job security, esteem, salary, employee benefits, expenses, recognition, reputation, responsibilities and a sense of achievement among others. According to Locke (1969), the Equity Theory hypothesizes a direct positive relationship between the level of job satisfaction and the perceived difference between what is expected or perceived as fair and what is actually experienced in the job situation.

Theoretical reviews of the Equity Theory such as Hofmans (2012) have been highlighted. Hofmans observed that the equity theory was concerned with the artificial laboratory conditions in which the theory has been tested. He stressed that traditional research on equity theory only measures whether the work effort increases or decreases, but fails to test whether the magnitudes of these increases or decreases are in line with what the equity theory would predict. According to Hofmans(2012) the Equity theory predicts a decrease (increase) in work effort in a situation of underpayment (overpayment), with the exact decrease (increase) in work effort depending on the person's valuation of the effort and the underpayment (overpayment).yet the theory does not put into perspective the role of other variables.

3.4 *Job characteristic model (JCM)*. Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) developed the Job Characteristic Model as depicted in Figure 4.

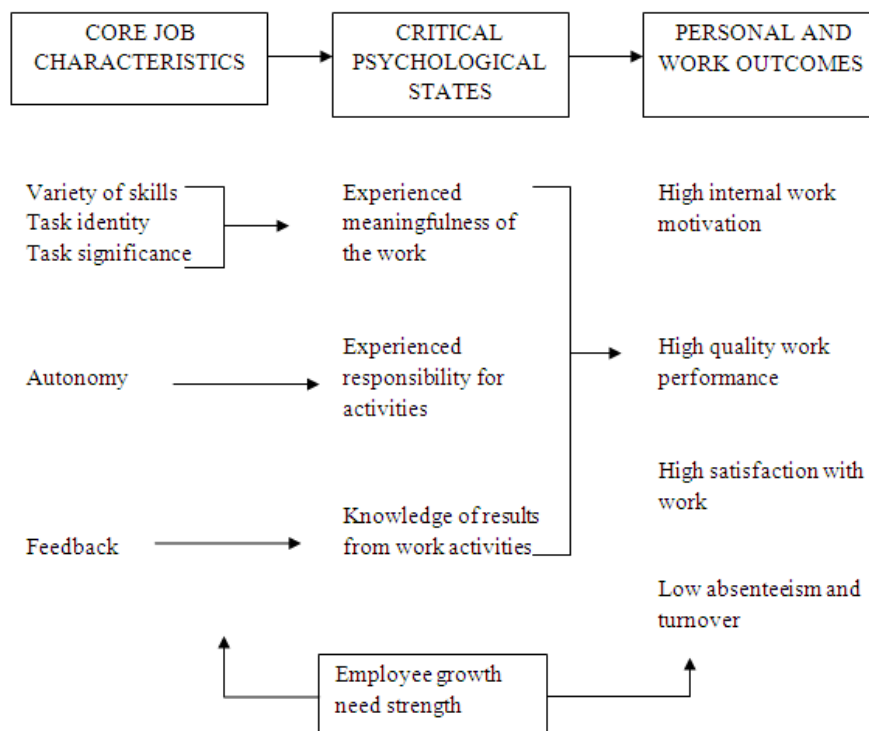


Figure 3: The Job Characteristics Model
Source: Hackman & Oldham (1975).

The Job Characteristic Model proposed that high work satisfaction was a positive personal and work outcome that can be obtained when three critical psychological states are present for a given employee (experienced meaningfulness of the work, experienced responsibility for the outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the results of work activities). All the three psychological states must be present for the positive outcomes to be realized. The Job Characteristic Model further proposed that these critical psychological states are created by the presence of five core job dimensions of skill variety, task identity, task significance, skill variety and feedback. Experienced meaningfulness of the work is enhanced primarily by three of the core dimensions: skill variety, task identity, and task significance.

Skill variety has been defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975) as the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work and involves the use of different skills and talents of the individual. Task identity has been defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975) as the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work—that is one that involves doing a job from the beginning to the end with a visible outcome. Task significance has been defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975) as, the degree to which the job has substantial impact on the lives or work of people in other departments in the organization or in the external environment.

Figure 3 also states that experienced responsibility for work outcomes is increased when a job has autonomy. Job autonomy has been defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975) as the degree to which the job gives the employee substantial freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out. In addition, knowledge of results is increased when a job is high on feedback. In regards to Figure 3, feedback has been defined by Hackman and Oldham (1975) as the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information on the results of his performance. Therefore individual growth need strength is shown in figure 4 as a moderator of the other theory-specific relationship.

A Meta-analysis on JC Model was conducted by Fried and Ferris' (1987) whose study undertook a meta-analytic procedure of Hunter and Schmidt as it was used to control statistical artifacts such as; sampling error, predictor and criterion unreliability, and range variation. Yet there a number of procedures that can be used for the artifacts variation. Fried and Ferris (1987) observed that the job characteristic model analysis was based primarily on published studies. A few unpublished studies familiar to the authors were also included; however, a thorough search for unpublished results was not undertaken. Yet, unpublished studies tend to differ in results from published studies. In addition, Fried and Ferris suggested that some of the studies have reported on-the-job characteristics-satisfaction relationships for high and low GNS groups but not for the combined sample. In such cases each GNS group was treated as if it were a separate study, hence the need for a comprehensive study of groups with high and low GNS.

3.5 Assessment Model of Job Satisfaction. Smerek and Peterson (2007) developed the assessment model for job satisfaction as depicted in Figure 4.

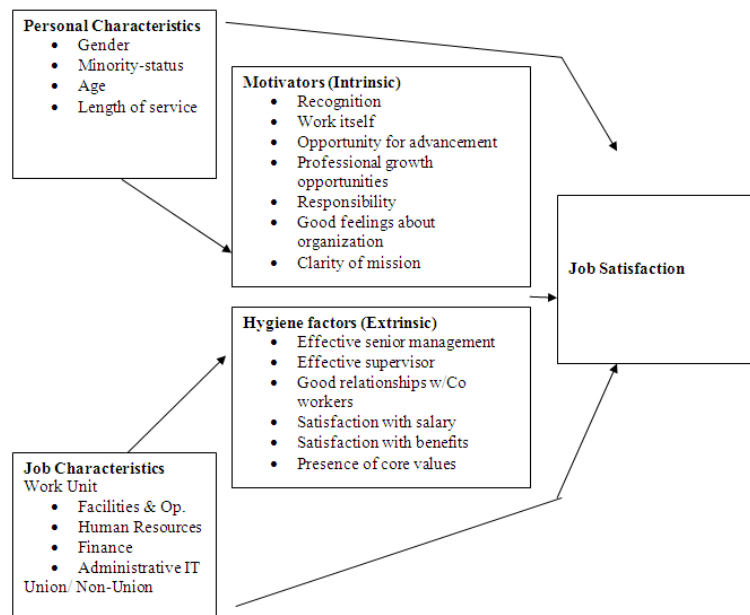


Fig:4 Model for assessing job satisfaction

Source: Smerek & Peterson (2007). p 233: Figure 4

The job satisfaction assessment model of Smerek and Peterson (2007), proposes that in order to obtain job satisfaction in an organization, there should be job characteristics as well as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Smerek and Peterson defined job characteristics as the main core dimensions of the job. Job characteristics in regards to the model are operationalized in terms of task identity, feedback, job autonomy, job variety and task significance. Smerek and Peterson defined intrinsic factors as “those factors that fulfill an individual’s need for psychological growth” p 230. Intrinsic factors in regards to the model include; employee recognition, the work itself, employee opportunities for advancement, professional growth of employees, employee responsibility, a good feeling about the organization as well as clarity of the organizations’ mission. Smerek and Peterson (2007), defined hygiene factors (extrinsic) factors as “those factors that merely serve to prevent an individual from feeling bad about work” p. 230.

Hygiene factors include; effective senior management, effective supervisors at work, a good relationship with co-workers, high satisfaction with salary, employee satisfaction with benefits as well as the presence of core values in an organization. Figure 4 also suggests that there is a significant relationship between personal characteristics and job satisfaction. Smerek and Peterson (2007) defined personal characteristics as sets of individual differences that are affected by the development of an individual. Personal characteristics in regards to the model are conceptualized as the gender of respondents, the educational level of the employees, age of respondents as well as the length of service of an employee.

There are no meta-analysis and Theoretical reviews of Smerek and Petersons’ Assessment model. However, in a study intended to test Herzberg et al.’s (1959) well-known, duality theory of motivators and hygiene factors and the impact of personal characteristics and job characteristics on perceptions of the work environment and job satisfaction, “*The Model of Assessing Job Satisfaction*” was development and in a critical review, a number of observations have been highlighted.

For instance, Smerek and Petersons (2007) noted that one limitation of the assessment model is that the effects of environmental conditions such as state policy and economic climate are not considered. The effect of the external environment was examined by Volkwein and Parmley (2000) who examined whether administrators in public higher education had different levels of job satisfaction from their counterparts at private colleges and universities. By excluding the environment, the model is essentially a closed-system view of the organization. Mitigating this limitation are two considerations. First, this study is primarily interested in the internal aspects of an organization and the psychological states that carry the most predictive weight on job satisfaction, rendering the environment of secondary importance. Second, the population of business operations is not likely to be in direct contact with the external environment compared with development officers, admissions staff, and senior administrators.

Smerek and Peterson (2007) also revealed that the assessment model observed that although demographic differences are examined, the impact of personality on job satisfaction is not included. Therefore, the effect of temperamental predispositions to attitudinal outcomes in a work context is unknown. It is likely that previous life experiences including socialization before entering the labor market as well as past work experience influence a person’s evaluation of their job satisfaction. Smerek and Peterson (2007) observed that most empirical studies on job satisfaction have used Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory.

IV. Conclusion

When employed correctly, JS will lower employee absenteeism and turnover, as well as attracting new brains into the academic line. Given the importance of job satisfaction, one goal of research on JS is to identify its factors, which may in turn be manipulated to positively influence JS. In deriving the factors of JS, several theories can be considered. Of these theories, this paper reviews five, with a view to isolating gaps for future research. several theories can be considered, this paper has reviewed five of them, and isolated gaps for future research. It is our hope that this review will trigger more researchers in the area of JS in particular.

References

- [1]. Alniacik, E., Alniacik, U., Erat, S., & Akcin, A. (2013). Does person-organization fit moderate the effects of affective commitment and job satisfaction on turnover intentions? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 99, 274 – 281.
- [2]. Cranny, C.J., Smith, P. C., & Stone, E.F. (1992). *Job satisfaction: How people feel about their jobs and how it affects their performance*. New York, USA: Lexington Books.
- [3]. Dugguh, S. I., & Dennis, A. (2014). Job satisfaction theories: Traceability to employee performance in organizations. *Journal of Business and Management*, 16(5), 11-18.
- [4]. Fried, Y., & Ferris, G. R. (1987). The validity of the job characteristics model: A review and meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 287-322.
- [5]. Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(2), 159-170.
- [6]. Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. B. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- [7]. Hofmans, J. (2012). Individual differences in equity models. *Psicologica*, 33, 473-482.
- [8]. Jehanzeb, K., Rasheed, M. F., Rasheed, A., & Amir, A. (2012). Impact of rewards and motivation on job satisfaction in banking sector of Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(21), 272-278.

- [9]. Jiang, S., Lambert, E. G., Jin, D. Z. K., & Xiang, J. (2016). Effects of work environment variables on job satisfaction among community correctional staff in China. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 20(10), 1-12. doi: 10.1177/0093854816633493
- [10]. Lambert, E. G., Qureshi, H., Hogan, N. L., Klahm, C., Smith, B., & Frank, J. (2015). The association of job variables with job involvement, job satisfaction and organizational commitment among Indian police officers. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 25(2), 194-213.
- [11]. Locke, E. A. (1969). What is job satisfaction? *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 4, 309-336.
- [12]. Man, M., Morak, V., Dima, I. C., & Pachura, P. (2011). A theoretical approach to job satisfaction. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 4(1), 7-15.
- [13]. Mugizi, W., Bakkabulindi, F. E. K., & Bisaso, R. (2015). Antecedents of commitment of academic staff in universities in Uganda: A conceptual paper. *Nkumba Business Journal*, 14(1), 218-241.
- [14]. Mustapha, N., & Ghee, W. Y. (2013). Examining faculty workload as antecedent of job satisfaction among academic staff of higher public education in Kelantan, Malaysia. *Business and Management Horizons*, 1(1), 10-16.
- [15]. Ozsoy, E. (2019). An empirical test of Herzberg's two-factor motivation theory. *Marketing and Management of Innovations*, 1, 11-20. <http://doi.org/10.21272/mmi.2019.1-01>
- [16]. Paul, E. M., & Phua, S. K. (2011). Lecturers' job satisfaction in a public tertiary institution in Singapore: Ambivalent and non-ambivalent relationships between job satisfaction and demographic variables. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 33(2), 141-151.
- [17]. Sayadi, Y. (2016). The effect of dimensions of transformational, transactional, and non-leadership on the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of teachers in Iran. *Management in Education*, 30(2), 57-65.
- [18]. Smerek, R. E., & Peterson, M. (2007). Examining Herzberg's theory: Improving job satisfaction among non-academic employees at a university. *Research in Higher Education*, 48(2), 229-250.
- [19]. Velickovic, V. M., Visnjic, A., Jovic, S., Radulovic, O., Sargic, C., Mihajlovic, J., & Mladenovic, J. (2014). Organisational commitment and job satisfaction among nurses in Serbia: A factor analysis. *Nursing Outlook*, 62(6), 415-427.
- [20]. Weiss, H.M., & Cropanzano, R. (1996). Affective events theory: A theoretical discussion of the structure, causes and consequences of affective experiences at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 19, 1-74.