

JOB SATISFACTION AS A MEDIATOR OF LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG MIDDLE-AGED CAREER WOMEN

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Abstract

Job satisfaction has been defined as the amount of overall positive effect that individuals have toward their jobs in relation to a series of aspects such as pay, promotion opportunities, management style and working conditions. Middle-aged women are working longer hours and spending less time with their families, which has led to family crisis, burn out, and depression. Thus, this study helps to determine the predictors of life satisfaction. The role of job satisfaction as a mediator was also assessed. Social support and job satisfaction have been found to influence life satisfaction. Moreover, job satisfaction was proven as the mediator in the relationship between social support and life satisfaction. This result indicates that life satisfaction of middle-aged career women rely significantly on job satisfaction. Job satisfaction can intervene the direction and the level of life satisfaction of middle-aged career women. This finding could be used as an input for any intervention programs and policies to uplift the well- being and quality of life for middle-aged women.

Keywords: job satisfaction, life satisfaction, middle-aged, career women.

Introduction

Life satisfaction is the way a person perceives how her life has been and how she feels about her future (Raina & Balodi, 2013). In the life of middle-aged career women, life satisfaction has acquired supreme significance as they are undergoing multiple life

changes, loses, health issues, role conflicts and so on. Thus, life satisfaction is manifested through health, economic, marital satisfaction, family attachment, and job satisfaction. Lack of satisfaction may be reflected in physical and mental health complaints. Middle-aged women who are still working in any sectors are at high risk to have lack of life satisfaction because of burn out, stress at workplace, financial constraints and so forth (Jennings, 2008). This present study was conducted to determine the indicators of life satisfaction and identified the mediator in the analysis.

According to Diener (1984) satisfaction with specific aspects of life are regularly used in subjective well-being literature. The strongest indicators of life satisfaction are identified based on how close that aspects to the individuals' personal lives. There have been various attempts to study job satisfaction and its relationship with other aspects such as job performance (Ostroff, 1992), employee turnover (Koch & Steers, 1978) and work-family relationship (Bruck, Allen & Spector, 2002). Job satisfaction was also found to contribute to overall life satisfaction (Iverson, 1999). It also mediated the impact of promotional opportunity, work overload, family isolation and community participation on life satisfaction (Iverson, 1999). The impact of job satisfaction on life satisfaction is stronger than vice versa. The present study attempts to analyse the predictive power of job satisfaction to life satisfaction of middle-aged career women. Job satisfaction is predicted to mediate the impact of social support, family attachment and achievement motivation on perceived life satisfaction.

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between various types of social support and health. Researcher revealed that quality of life and sense of quality of life have increased among patients with oncological diseases (Sek, 2003) and multiple sclerosis (Motl & McAuley, 2009) in relation to social support that they received. It also helps in reducing tension caused by stress (Knoll & Schwarzer, 2004) and allows them to play their paternal roles in the family (Isacco, Garfield, Rogers, 2010). Buffer hypothesis suggests that social support helps to reinterpret our life situation, for example from threat to challenge (Sek, 2004). Thus, it enables us to cope with difficult life situations in positive ways and enhance life satisfaction. Such assumption has also been made by the researchers of this study to support this stand.

Relationship closeness, relationship satisfaction and extent of the relationship can also influence life satisfaction (Kasprzak, 2010). Life satisfaction is correlated with positive social relation, especially with one's spouse and one's family. The closest bond is usually formed in the marriage and family. This current study has selected family attachment as one of the predictors of life satisfaction. The feeling of emotional closeness would stimulate happiness and raise life satisfaction. The theory of attachment shows that it is not the amount of social contact, but it is their quality that accounts (Kasprzak, 2010). Nevertheless, family relationships have shrunken in this modern age, but social relationship and friendship grow, especially when they do not have families living nearby.

Researchers have also suggested a significant relationship between happiness and achievement motivation among girl and boy students. Studies have also shown that there is no difference between happiness and achievement motivation among these two groups. Achievement motive is a social need including overcoming barriers, achieving high standards, competing with others and overtaking them (Hasanzadeh, 2009). Ghafouri et al. (2008) claimed that individuals with high achievement motive would be more successful in life and career. Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between entrepreneurship and achievement motive when the latter was used as a valid predictor (Shaver & Scott, 1991). Nonetheless, research on the impact of achievement motivation on life satisfaction is still lacking. As this research focuses on career women, achievement motivation is vital to be studied to assess whether achievement motivation is a contributing factor of life satisfaction. There is a possibility that those with high achievement motivation tend to have high life satisfaction.

Thus, this study aimed to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To determine the predictors of life satisfaction (social support, family attachment, achievement motivation and job satisfaction) among middle-aged career women.
2. To identify the mediator in the model of life satisfaction.

Research methodology

Research design

This research has utilized the quantitative research method in the process of data collection. The technique that has been used is questionnaire distribution based on the validated instruments. Examples of instruments that were used are Life Satisfaction Index-Short Form (Barrett & Murk, 2006), MOS Social Support Survey (Stewart & Ware, 1992), Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990) and Job Descriptive Index (Kihm et al., 1997). The scales that were used in this research are life satisfaction, job satisfaction, social support, family relationship and motivational achievement. Researchers done in the past have already proven the reliability and validity of the index used.

Research locations

There are two main locations involved in this study which are Kuala Lumpur and Kelantan. Kuala Lumpur represents the urban area while Kelantan represents the rural area. Both locations were selected based on the demographic factors and the economic activities conducted. The urbanization process that occurs has rapidly changed the lifestyle as well as daily activities of the people residing there. On the other hand, Kelantan is still perceived as maintaining the lifestyle and culture of the traditional rural based residents. The geographical, economic and cultural factors have much contribute in shaping the criteria of the both selected locations.

Sampling

The samples that were selected in this research are career women. The sampling method used was purposive sampling method. This method was selected due to a few criteria that need to be fulfilled which are women with career, age between 40-59 years old, residing in Kuala Lumpur or Kelantan and possessing Malaysian

Citizenship. There were 453 respondents participated in this study which was enough to represent the population of career women in Kelantan and Kuala Lumpur. Two hundred and twenty six respondents participated in the study conducted in Kelantan and another 227 participated in the study conducted in Kuala Lumpur.

Data analysis

The data obtained from this study was analysed using the SPSS software. The data analysed were also utilizing the descriptive analysis, ANOVA, multiple regression and Hayes and Preacher mediation analysis. The reliability and validity of the data were also tested before descriptive statistical analysis and inferential analysis were conducted. Such process is important to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Results

Analysis of Standard Multiple Regression revealed the significant predictors of life satisfaction. The variables tested were social support, job satisfaction, family attachment and achievement motivation. Apparently, results have shown that only two variables were significant in predicting life satisfaction, namely social support and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.413$, $t = 9.79$, $p < 0.01$) is the most significant predictor, followed by social support ($\beta = 0.286$, $t = 6.688$, $p < 0.01$). Family attachment and achievement motivation are not significant predictors of life satisfaction among middle-aged career women. These variables have contributed 37% to the variance of life satisfaction ($R \text{ Square} = 0.368$) and the model is fit according to ANOVA test ($F = 63.31$, $p < 0.01$) (Table 1).

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis

Variables	β	t
Social support	0.286	6.688**
Job satisfaction	0.413	9.798**
Family attachment	0.068	1.676
Achievement motivation	-0.035	-0.890

** $p < 0.01$, $F = 63.31$, $p < 0.01$

Mediation analysis has also been conducted to identify the mediator in the study. Past researches claimed that job satisfaction was a significant mediator of life satisfaction. This present study also revealed that job satisfaction was the most significant predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.413$, $p < 0.001$). Analysis of mediation was conducted to determine the indirect effect of job satisfaction on life satisfaction. Four steps of analyses have been taken, which are analysis of the effect of social support on life satisfaction, followed by the analysis of social support on job satisfaction, analysis of job satisfaction on life satisfaction and eventually, social support (while controlling job satisfaction) on life satisfaction. The results of each analysis are shown in Table 2. All steps of analyses showed significant effect of independent variables on the dependent variables. However, step four of the analysis demonstrated a lower coefficient value (0.223), compared to step one (0.345). This indicates that job satisfaction has mediated the relationship between social support and life satisfaction. Partial mediation takes place in this analysis which means, the relationship of the independent variable to the dependent variable becomes lesser when the mediator is controlled.

Table 2: Mediation analysis

Steps of analysis	β	t
1. Social support \rightarrow Life satisfaction	0.345	10.959**
2. Social support \rightarrow Job satisfaction	0.352	9.345**
3. Job satisfaction \rightarrow Life satisfaction	0.454	13.306**
4. Social support (Job satisfaction) \rightarrow Life satisfaction	0.223	7.206**

** $p < 0.01$

Discussion

Job satisfaction has been defined as the amount of overall positive effect that individuals have toward their jobs in relation to a series of aspects such as pay, promotion opportunities, the job itself, management style, working conditions and the work group (Arnold & Feldman, 1986). The present finding showed a strong association and a predictive value of job satisfaction on life satisfaction. Middle-aged women may derive a sense of life purpose and meaning from their job. The job itself

may give them a sense of identity, especially if they hold important position in the organization. Thus, work has become the end in itself and the centre of many people's life.

Researchers suggested three theoretical models, to explain the linkage between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The models are spillover, compensation and segmentation perspectives (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1991). The spillover model proposed that satisfaction with one domain of individuals' life might spread to other domains of life. In the case of present study, satisfaction with career has led to satisfaction with life. Middle-aged women who are happy with their job would also be happy with their life. Sense of autonomy, supervisory support, job security, pay and promotional opportunity are the important elements in job satisfaction.

The second predictor of life satisfaction in this study is social support. Social support can be defined as available networks of contacts providing a sense of interpersonal relationship, acceptance, security, and the possibility of obtaining various types of help in difficult situations (Sek, 2003). Researchers have found that various types of social support are good for health. Social support increases well-being, quality of life, happiness and life satisfaction (Sek, 2004). Social support lower the tension caused by stress, life changes, illness and so forth. Middle-aged women rely on social support to face life difficulties. Their major sources of support are spouses, family, friends and colleagues. Thus, high social support enhances middle-aged women sense of life satisfaction as it produces positive feelings and mood. Kasprzak (2010) argued that having friends and colleagues itself allows one to feel socially acceptable and attractive, and subsequently uplift self-esteem.

Job satisfaction has been proved to be the mediator in the analysis. The independent variable in the analysis was social support as it was significant in predicting life satisfaction. Analysis showed that job satisfaction partially mediates the impact of social support on life satisfaction. It signifies that, life satisfaction will tend to be low, if the job satisfaction is low, even the social support is good, and vice versa. The domain of job satisfaction did not remove the impact of social support on life satisfaction, but is can deteriorate the relationship. This finding strengthens the

findings of other researchers such as Ostroff (1992) and Bruck, Allen & Spector (2002).

This finding indicates that social support and job satisfaction are two main areas which need to be focused to enhance middle-aged women's well-being and life satisfaction. Policies involved middle-aged women should be sensitive to these two elements. Programs which relate to the development of career and social support should be established. Group counseling, support group and social skills workshop might help women to strengthen their circle of social support. Furthermore, to help them with their career development, middle-aged women may need talent management programs, related job skills training and positive working environment. As middle-aged women are vulnerable to health constraints and physical limitation, the management should be more sensitive to their welfare. Some flexibility may be needed in term of working hours, leave and so on.

Conclusion

Middle age is a critical stage to be highlighted as successful and happy middle age will lead to healthy aging. Psychological and emotional well-being of middle-aged women determines the well-being of the whole family. For career women, they are assets to the organization. Their skills, talents and experience must be utilized and valued to benefit the company and the nation as a whole. Future researches may need to be extended by looking into other factors of life satisfaction which may also contribute to well-being of middle-aged women. Qualitative study can also be conducted to explore their needs and concerns in depth.

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