THE EFFECT OF GENDER, AGE AND TENURE ON SATISFACTION TOWARDS CO-WORKERS AMONG ACADEMICS IN MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Kesan Jantina, Umur dan Tempoh Pelantikan Jawatan Ke atas Kepuasan Kerja Terhadap Rakan Sekerja salam Kalangan Ahli Akademik di Universiti Awam Malaysia

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Abstract

An understanding of job satisfaction, is a prerequisite to an integrative explanation of workers behavior at the workplace. This article analyses academics in higher education institutions satisfaction on co-workers and its differences based on demographic backgrounds. Using a simple random sampling technique, the researchers drew a sample of 1078 academics from three participating public universities. The findings indicated that the level of satisfaction with co-workers among academics was at the moderate level and there are differences of satisfaction based on demographic differences. The implications of the findings on co-workers satisfaction among academics in higher education institutions are discussed.

Keywords: co-workers, job satisfaction, academics, higher education.

Abstrak

Pemahaman berkenaan kepuasan kerja adalah satu pra-syarat kepada pemahaman bersepadu berkenaan tingkahlaku pekerja di tempat kerja. Artikel ini terfokus kepada analisis kepuasan terhadap rakan sekerja dalam kalangan ahli akademik di institusi pengajian tinggi (IPT) awam dan perbezaannya berdasarkan latar belakang demografi. Melalui teknik persampelan rawak mudah, pengkaji mendapat 1078 responden daripada tiga universiti yang terlibat. Hasil kajian mendapati tahap kepuasan terhadap rakan sekerja adalah pada tahap sederhana dan terdapat perbezaan kepuasan terhadap rakan sekerja berdasarkan umur, jantina dan tempoh

pelantikan jawatan tetap. Hasil kajian ini akan menambah nilai kepada kajian berkaitan kepuasan terhadap hubungan dengan rakan sekerja, terutamanya dalam kalangan ahli akademik di institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: rakan sekerja, kepuasan kerja, ahli akademik, pengajian tinggi.

THE OVERTURE OF ACADEMICS SATISFACTION

In Malaysia, the development of higher education institutions has been rapid commencing with the establishment of the University of Malaya in 1962. Malaysia has experienced increasing numbers of public and private universities, intense growth of student enrolments, the expansion of courses in various fields especially science and technology, and an increase in the internet and web-based teaching (see Ahmad, 1998; Hassan, 2001). Also, reforms have been experienced by university academics such as the implementation of a more stringent assessment system, additional government and private funding and accompanying research opportunities, and a substantial increase in the number of student enrolments. These changes have arisen from a variety of drivers such as pressures of demand, a cultural shift in the way in which higher education is viewed, financial pressures, structural and managerial diversity, and an assortment of changes in university mission or emphasis (Oshagbemi, 1997a). All of these changes illustrate the complexity of academic work in an increasingly demanding environment (Houston, Meyer & Paewai, 2006:17). Hagen (2002) asserts that universities are the largest 'knowledge based' institution in the region; hence they are urged by the industry and policy makers to transform their traditional roles of teaching and research by adding an additional pivotal role in economic regional development. This means that university academics are expected to aid economic regeneration by disseminating their knowledge and expertise through industry linked partnerships (Hagen, 2002).

However, each party (e.g. government, policy makers, university management and society) should know that too many demands on academic staff could contribute to uncertainty in terms of academic roles and work conflicts among them. Briggs (2005:257) proposes that a lack of clarity about roles introduces role ambiguity and role conflict that have significant impact on the achievement of personal and organisational goals, resulting in employee anxiety, dissatisfaction and lack of organisational effectiveness. Multiple workplace roles by university academics alongside organisation and community pressures are likely to be viewed by the academics as significant triggers that influence several antecedents of satisfaction and as a whole affect their state of job satisfaction. This will then influences their occupational attitudes such as organizational citizenship behaviour, organisational commitment and intention to leave the organisation. Co-workers satisfaction and its

function as one of the factors of overall job satisfaction has been studied over several decades which in turn contributed to the findings of the positive and negative aspects of co-workers satisfaction. Spector (1997) deems co-workers as one of the key antecedents that impact an individual worker's overall job satisfaction. Also, as evidenced by a mixed-method study on the antecedents of job satisfaction conducted by Khairunneezam (2013), co-workers is one of the most significant and important indicators of job satisfaction. The paper is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the literature on co-workers satisfaction. The second section confers the methodology used to investigate the state and level of co-workers satisfaction among academics in higher education institutions. The third section discusses the findings of the study and the last section manifests the conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

LITERATURE ON CO-WORKERS SATISFACTION

For one to know the meaning of job satisfaction is not difficult. Researchers and scholars had searched for the meaning of job satisfaction through systematic investigations, field works, and meta analyses. However, 'even though many researchers define job satisfaction, the definitions vary' (Brown, 2008: 19). As argued by Brown (2008), 'to grasp the meaning of construct like job satisfaction, it seems logical to look at how it is defined in the literature' (p.19). There is a high level of agreement amongst management scholars on the meaning of job satisfaction. Typically, job satisfaction is conceptualized as a general attitude toward an object (Oshagbemi, 1999). Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state, resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences'. Job satisfaction describes how comfortable a person is with his or her job. It is an attitudinal variable 'that reflects how people feel about their jobs overall as well as various aspects of their jobs' (Spector, 1996:214).

Locke (1976) asserts that job satisfaction can be considered as 'a global feeling about the job or as a related constellation of attitudes about various aspects or facets of the jobs'. Job satisfaction is 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job and job experience' (Graham and Messner, 1998). Job satisfaction is also perceived as 'a favourableness or unfavourableness with which employees view their work' (Castle, 2006). According to Spector (1996), job satisfaction is 'an attitude toward the job and involves affective, cognitive and behavioural components about various related aspects such as pay, promotion, work tasks, co-workers, supervisors, and others'. Spector (1997) defines job satisfaction as the psychological disposition of people toward their work. Vroom (1995: p39) asserts the concept of job satisfaction as interchangeably with job attitudes where he explains: 'The terms job satisfaction and job attitudes are usually used interchangeably. Both refer to affective orientations on the part of individuals toward

work roles that they are presently occupying. Positive attitudes toward the job are conceptually equivalent to job satisfaction and negative attitudes toward the job are equivalent to job dissatisfaction'.

Collegial relationships or interpersonal relations with co-workers interpreted by Brown (2008:17) as pleasant or unpleasant interactions with persons at the same level of the organisational hierarchy and is regarded as key to job satisfaction. Based on the interpersonal relations among co-workers, scholars and researchers tend to justify it as one of the critical and relevant factors that could impact on one's job satisfaction (see Spector, 1997; Tu et al., 2005).

The above findings of co-workers satisfaction among higher education institutions academics globally and in Malaysia particularly, reveal the importance of having a thorough investigation among Malaysian higher education. Also, as evidenced by a meta-analysis on the antecedents of job satisfaction conducted by Brown and Peterson (1993), and the descriptive analysis of job satisfaction among university academics in Pakistan by Bashir et al. (2011) and Khairunneezam (2013), co-workers is one of the most significant and important indicators of job satisfaction.

Hence, these findings had initiated two questions to be answered:

1. What is the level of academics' overall satisfaction with co-workers?
2. Are there any differences in co-workers satisfaction among academics by different type of demographic backgrounds of gender, age and tenure in current university?

METHODOLOGY
The population for the study comprised academics from three public higher education institutions of Malaysia. Using a simple random sampling technique, the researchers drew a sample of 1078 from the estimated 2900 academics in the three participating universities. These respondents represent 37.2 per cent of the overall samples. The respondents included a wide range of university faculties, departments and academic units in each participating university. The Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Registrar of all Malaysian public universities were contacted and invited by the researchers to encourage academic staff members' participation in the study. Consent for conducting the study had been given by three public universities in Malaysia. Deans and head of each department, faculty and school in the participating universities were contacted through phone calls and emails to obtain their assistance on disseminating the cover letter of invitation to participate in the study, participation information sheet, and hyperlink for the online survey designed for the study to their academic staff members. The procedure of contacting those key

persons was repeated three times, by no other mean, to keep reminding academics about the survey.

The scale of 'Co-Workers Satisfaction' was used in the study in order to investigate academics' satisfaction with co-workers. Four items included in this measure were adapted from Spector (1997)'s Job Satisfaction Survey and the instrument of Khairunneezam (2013), which measure co-workers satisfaction. Each respondent's completed survey was then automatically computed and saved, and the results were downloaded into SPSS 20.0 for quantitative analysis. Some items in these scales were negatively worded in order to maintain reliable answers from respondents. These negatively worded questions were then reverse-coded before doing the reliability checking. All instruments except for demographic questionnaire were answered using a 5-point Likert scale of disagree very much (coded as 1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4), and agree very much (5). The researchers created a questionnaire in order to collect data on the personal characteristics of the respondents. Measures of gender, age and tenure in the university were included.

Descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentage and mean are used to explain the level of each of the variables included in the online study. To determine the level of co-workers satisfaction, frequencies and percentages of responses were calculated and mean and standard deviation results of satisfaction were analysed. The mean value of responses were computed and categorised into 3 interval level of responses accordingly to the work of Khairunneezam (2004, 2013). The interval level of responses were 1= low (mean score of 1.00-2.33), 2= moderate (2.34-3.67) and 3= high (3.68-5.00).

The usage of mean comparison is to identify the demographic influence on the responses. In this study, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test are used to test whether there are significance differences on the level of co-workers satisfaction and the levels of the satisfaction between different demographic backgrounds of academics. Post-hoc tests were conducted after ANOVA was run in order to compare the differences of all investigated variables by different demographic backgrounds. For the purpose of comparing findings based on demographic backgrounds, the demographic variable was divided into several sub-groups. Gender was divided between male and female, age were divided into five groups according to their age (Group 1: 25 and under; Group 2: 26 to 35; Group 3: 36 to 45; Group 4: 46 to 55; Group 5: 56 and over). Respondents were also divided into four groups according to their tenure in the current university (Group 1: 10 years and under; Group 2: 11 to 20 years; Group 3: 21 to 30 years; Group 4: 31 years and over).

FINDINGS

Academics' Overall Satisfaction with Co-Workers

Table 1 presents the frequencies, percentages, and mean scores for each of the five questions on co-workers satisfaction responded to by survey respondents. All responses for negatively worded questions (Question 2 and 4) were reverse-coded. The majority of the respondents responded that they like the people they work with (Question 30; f= 837, %= 77.7). Also, they found that they enjoy working with their co-workers (Question 32; Mean= 3.87, SD= 0.69). The answer given by respondents for these two questions showed that mostly, co-workers are regarded as those who contributed so much towards academics' job satisfaction.

On the other hand, respondents were moderately satisfied when they need to work harder because of the incompetence of their co-workers (Question 31; Mean= 3.08, SD= 0.99). Although most of the academics regarded co-workers as a factor that contributed to satisfaction, nearly one third of the respondents thought that their co-workers are incapable of getting jobs done, and they have no choice other than to multiply their work effort.

Respondents were also responded that the working atmosphere at their workplace was fine with not much bickering and fighting among co-workers (Question 33, Mean=3.25, SD=1.11). However, the fact that 293 respondents (27.2%) argued that they agreed and agreed very much that there was too much bickering and fighting at workplace cannot be ignored. This finding mirrored that not all academics thought of co-workers as an indicator towards 'happiness' in the workplace, and clashes and misunderstanding can always happen among colleagues at workplace.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages and Mean Scores for Questions on Co-Workers Satisfaction (N=1078)

Responses (n=1078) / Question	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Question 1: *I like the people I work with.* (Mean= 3.84, SD=0.70)	9	0.8	40	3.7	192	17.8	710	65.9	127	11.8
Question 2# : *I find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with.* (Mean= 3.08, SD=0.99)	42	3.9	314	29.1	296	27.5	371	34.4	55	5.1
Question 3: *I enjoy my co-workers.* (Mean= 3.87, SD=0.69)	7	0.6	34	3.2	190	17.6	711	66.0	136	12.6
Question 4# : *There is too much bickering and fighting at work.* (Mean= 3.25, SD=1.11)	69	6.4	224	20.8	284	26.3	369	34.2	132	12.2

Note: n=total respondents, SD=standard deviation, f=frequency, % =percentage, 1=disagree very much, 2=disagree, 3=neither disagree nor agree, 4=agree, 5=agree very much. #= Negatively worded question.

Based on the findings in Table 1, a further analysis was undertaken to investigate the overall level of satisfaction with co-workers. The result shows that the quantitative study respondents had a moderate level of satisfaction with co-workers (Mean= 3.51, SD=0.62). This finding supports the outcome of Ghazi et al. (2010), where

university teachers in the North West frontier province of Pakistan had a moderate level of satisfaction with co-workers. The current study's finding also reiterates the findings of Oshagbemi (1997) who found higher education institution academics in the UK had a moderate level of co-workers satisfaction. Conversely, this is different with the finding of Akpofure et al. (2006) among educators in Nigeria and with the finding of Ward-Warmedinger and Sloane (1999) among academics in traditional Scottish Universities, where they found that their respondents had a high level of satisfaction with co-workers.

Differences in Satisfaction with Co-Workers by Gender
Table 2 shows the *t*-test results for satisfaction with co-workers among academics by gender. *t*-test results indicated that there was a significant difference in scores for male academics (Mean=3.59, SD=0.61) and female academics [Mean=3.41, SD=0.62; t (1041)= 4.72, p<0.05]. Thus, we can conclude that male academics are significantly more satisfied in terms of co-workers compared to female academics. The finding is different to Ward-Warmedinger and Sloane's (1999) and Saygi et al.'s (2011), findings among academics in Scottish universities and Turkish universities where females have a higher level of satisfaction with colleagues than males.

Table 2: *t*-Test Result for Satisfaction with Co-Workers among Academics by Gender

Variable	Group				Levene's test for equality of variance		df	*t*-test for equality of means	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Male (*n=533*)		Female (*n=510*)						
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	F	Sig.		*t*	*p*
Co-Workers	3.59	0.61	3.41	0.62	0.12	0.73	1041	4.72	0.00**

Note: n=total respondents, M=Mean, SD=standard deviation, F= Value for Levene's test for

equality of variance, *df*= Degree of Freedom, t= *t*-test value, *p*= significant value.

** Significant at *p<0.05*

Differences in Satisfaction with Co-Workers among Academics by Age

Table 3 below shows the ANOVA results for satisfaction with co-workers among academics by age groups. The ANOVA test indicated that there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in satisfaction with co-workers among the five different age groups [$F(4, 905) = 5.597$, $p < 0.05$].

Table 3: One-Way Analysis of Variance for Satisfaction with Co-Workers among Academics by Age

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.81	4	2.20	5.597	0.00**
Within Groups	356.25	905	0.39		
Total	365.06	909			

Note: *SS*= Sum of Squares, *df*= Degree of Freedom, *MS=Mean Square*, *F*=F-Value,

Sig= significant value. ** Significant at *p<0.05*

Table 4 below shows the results of post-hoc analysis for satisfaction with co-workers among academics by age groups. It is observed that the highest mean value of satisfaction was shown by the group of 46 to 55 years old (M=3.71, SD=0.68), while the lowest mean was scored by the group of 26 to 35 years old (M=3.43, SD=0.63). Post-hoc comparison using Tukey HSD test indicated that academics between 46 to 55 years old were significantly have higher mean of satisfaction compared to those between 26 to 35 years old and 36 to 45 years old. No significant difference existed between academics in any of the other groups of age.

This might be so because, older academics have a longer experience working with others and that experience taught them on judging the significant contribution of their colleagues towards their own job satisfaction. Evidenced by responses given by several 'senior academics' in a qualitative study by Khairunneezam (2013), they were inclined to talk about their satisfaction with co-workers based on their own vast working experience. For instance, a senior lecturer (KP3) asserted that based on her experience working as an academic, 'good relationship among colleagues really impacted her satisfaction specifically and the academics generally'.

Table 4: Post-Hoc Analysis for Co-Workers among Academics by Age

Age Groups	n	Mean	SD	25 & under	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 & over
25 & under	47	3.49	0.45	-				
26-35	442	3.43	0.63	NS	-			
36-45	255	3.49	0.62	NS	NS	-		
46-55	142	3.71	0.68	NS	*	*	-	
56 & over	24	3.64	0.63	NS	NS	NS	NS	-

Note: *n*=total respondents, *SD*=standard deviation, NS= not significant.
* indicates significance at *p<0.05*

Differences in Satisfaction with Co-Workers among Academics by Tenure
Table 5 below shows the ANOVA results for satisfaction with co-workers among academics by tenure groups. The ANOVA test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference at the p<0.05 level in satisfaction among the four different tenure groups [F(3, 898)=1.72, p=0.16]. Hence, there is no difference of satisfaction with co-workers between different subgroups of tenure. This finding is a significant and important attempt on improving the work of Hunt and Saul (1975) and Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006) in investigating the differences of satisfaction with co-workers by different groups of tenure in the current university.

Table 5: One-Way Analysis of Variance for Satisfaction with Co-Workers among Academics by Tenure

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.05	3	0.68	1.72	0.16
Within Groups	357.82	898	0.40		
Total	359.87	901			

Note: *SS*= Sum of Squares, *df*= Degree of Freedom, *MS*=Mean Square, *F*=F-Value, *Sig*=significant value. ** Significant at *p<0.05*

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings in the quantitative study, respondents showed a moderate level of satisfaction with co-workers. This finding supports the outcome of Ghazi et al. (2010), where university teachers in the North West frontier province of Pakistan had a moderate level of satisfaction with co-workers. The current study's finding

also reiterates the findings of Oshagbemi (1997) who found higher education institution academics in the UK had a moderate level of co-workers satisfaction. Conversely, this is different with the finding of Akpofure et al. (2006) among educators in Nigeria and with the finding of Ward-Warmedinger and Sloane (1999) among academics in traditional Scottish Universities, where they found that their respondents had a high level of satisfaction with co-workers. Evidenced from the comparisons with the findings in the past studies, it is obvious that co-workers is not a factor that is based on national context. Based on the findings of Khairunneezam (2013), mixed commentaries of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among academics demonstrate that satisfaction with co-workers is derived from the relationship and connection between the academic staff members. For instance, a key-person in higher education in Khairunneezam (2013)'s study, asserted that relationships with the other academics in the university really impacted his satisfaction, He added that academic staff members should work as a team and need to support each other, hence, good relationship will help maintain high job satisfaction.

Moreover, pertaining to satisfaction with co-workers, males were more satisfied than females and the finding is different to Ward-Warmedinger and Sloane's (1999) and Saygi et al.'s (2011), findings among academics in Scottish universities and Turkish universities where females have a higher level of satisfaction with colleagues than males. The current study finding shows the impact of Malaysian context that is different to the culture of the other countries. In this context it may be that males have better relationships with higher status workers, or have less family –work conflict or have better opportunities for promotion and hence are not so concerned about co-workers as a threat.

Older academics were also more satisfied with their co-workers than younger academics. This might be so because, older academics have a longer experience working with others and that experience taught them to see co-workers as colleagues rather than threats. Evidenced by responses given by several 'senior academics' in Khairunneezam (2013)'s study, they were inclined to talk about their satisfaction with co-workers based on their own vast working experience. For instance, a senior lecturer in Khairunneezam (2013)'s findings asserted that based on her experience working as an academic, good relationship among colleagues really impacted her satisfaction specifically and the academics generally. There was no significant difference between senior and junior academics in terms of satisfaction with co-workers. This finding is significant and is an important attempt to build on the work of Hunt and Saul (1975) and Rad and Yarmohammadian (2006) in investigating the differences of satisfaction with co-workers by different groups of tenure. Furthermore, this finding addressed the gap between satisfaction with co-workers and tenure in the Malaysian context.

In Islam, to find happiness or satisfaction in working life, one should understand that human has no control over our genetic set-point, and hardly any control over his or her circumstances at the workplace. The happiness in Islam is called by several Muslim scholars as *ridha bi al-qadha'*, or being content with our lot in life. This means that as believers if we truly love Allah SWT and put our trust on HIM, we are satisfied with what Allah SWT has decreed for us. As Rasulullah SAW had supplicated with his words that highlight the importance of satisfaction with our fate: "O Allah, make me content with what you have provide me, send blessings for me therein, and place for me every absent thing with something better" (narrated by Bukhari). To work with others in an organization means that one should build a feeling of part of a larger group. It gives a sense of security and a safety net to fall into on occasions of happiness and hardships. The concept of brotherhood and sisterhood is one of the central themes in Islam. Rasulullah SAW once said, "The (example of) believers (in their mutual love, care and concern) is like a single person; if his eye complains of pain his whole body complains of pain, and if his head complains of pain his whole body complain of pain" (narrated by Muslim).

The study through this paper was done on the job satisfaction of academics in three participating public higher education institutions in Malaysia. Discussion of variables related in this paper such as demographic backgrounds and co-workers satisfaction is confined to the respondents' feedback on the study. Thus, in regards to generalizability of the results, all the findings from the paper were confined only to academics in the participating universities and cannot be generalised to academics in any other public universities in Malaysia. Further studies in the similar framework should be conducted to determine the other antecedents of job satisfaction, among academics in all 20 public universities in Malaysia. Additionally, it is recommended for the future studies to extend the same framework of the paper into the private sector of higher education in Malaysia which then could compare differences of job satisfaction factors, between private and public universities academic staff, or in a broader setting, between local Malaysian university academics and other regional countries.

It is worth future studies determining any other important antecedents that may have a significant influence on academics' job satisfaction particularly among academics in the public higher education institutions. Finally, a similar study should be conducted using a different mixed-methods research design other than the surveys which has been implemented in the paper. For example, future studies can incorporate interviews, case study, observation and others, in order to use additional enriched information on the job satisfaction and its antecedents together with its consequences variables among academics of Malaysian public higher education institutions.

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