



Management

## **THEORETICAL CONCEPT OF JOB SATISFACTION - A STUDY**

**D. Thiagaraj <sup>\*1</sup>, Dr. A. Thangaswamy <sup>2</sup>**

<sup>\*1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Economics, S.T.Hindu College, Nagercoil, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor & Head of Commerce, Pioneer Kumaraswamy College, Nagercoil - 3, India



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### **Abstract**

Job satisfaction is one of the important factors that have drawn attention of the organization as well as academicians. In view of the rising competition as a result of globalisation, managers have placed great importance on the construct of job satisfaction. This may be due to the findings of many studies that job satisfaction is a significant determinant of organizational commitment. Highly satisfied employees will exert extra effort and contribute positively to the effectiveness and efficiency of their organizations. Job satisfaction will lead to better performance and the employees will be more committed towards their organization. Hence, this study is focused to consolidate the theoretical concept about job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Employees; Job Satisfaction; Theory.

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### **1. Introduction**

Job satisfaction refers to an individual's complex attitude towards his job. It is a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving as facilitating the achievement of one's job value. According to Vroom (1964) the term 'job' refers to workers' immediate work task and work role in a particular work organisation.

As a generic concept, satisfaction may be described in a behavioural perspective. Individual or organisational behaviour is believed to be goal directed. Each human action has a primary motivation and most actions are attempts to maximise satisfaction by fulfilling multiple motivations, some of which are identified by Maslow (Maslow, 1943). Accordingly the meaning of satisfaction in common usage, satisfaction occurs when one gets what he needs, desires, wants, expects, deserves or deems to be his entitlement.

According to Hoppock (1935), “Job satisfaction is any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person truthfully say I am satisfied with my job”. Such a description indicates the variety of variables that influence job satisfaction. Blum (1968) conceptualised job satisfaction as “an attitude which results from a balancing and summation of many specific likes and dislikes experienced in connection with the job”. Vrom (1964) observes that job satisfaction is, “the positive orientation of an individual towards all aspect of the work situation”.

Locke (1969) defines job satisfaction as a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s or job experiences”. On the basis of these definitions it may be concluded that job satisfaction is a complex set of variables governed to a large extent by perception and expectations of the employees. In the present study, job satisfaction is conceptualised as, “a positive attitude or a pleasurable emotional state which results from specific work related experiences”.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the present study is,

- To study about the various theories of job satisfaction

## **3. Theories of Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has been treated as a complex set of variables. There have been various attempts to explain job satisfaction in different ways A reflection on these theories will show that in the discussion it is very difficult to consider motivation different from job satisfaction, even though there are both theoretical and practical differences between the two concepts. Nevertheless, the two are closely related and as the procedures used in the analysis of work motivation are remarkably similar to these used in the studies of job satisfaction.

The various theories of job satisfaction are subsumed under two categories namely content theories and process theories. The former category emphasises the specific factors which motivate the individual towards job, while the latter category deals with dynamics of this motivational process. Even-though criticisms were raised against these theories they represent foundation for the development of later theories. So any discussion of job satisfaction will be incomplete and inadequate if a glance at the contributions of the important theorists is not made. So a very brief evaluation of the important-theories is attempted in the following section.

### **3.1. Content Theory**

The content theories are concerned with identifying the needs/drives that people have and these needs/drives are practiced.

#### ***3.1.1. Abraham Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory (1943)***

Abraham Maslow proposed his hierarchical theory of five important needs more than 74 years back in 1943. The theory gained ground over the years and because of its innate logic it became

widely accepted and part of compulsory reading for every management student and Human Resource Professional. Over the years it has been questioned, analysed and thought by later thinkers to be inadequate in certain respects but there is no denying its basic merit in understanding human and employee behaviour in the workplace. His basic premise concerns the meeting of human needs which progressively move up the value chain as simpler and more basic needs are met.

Maslow's theory opines that indicated have five progressive sets of needs, the first set being purely physical needs, also called Physiological needs. These include all the needs a person needs first to stay alive like, food, water, air, the maintenance of body temperature and the necessity of voiding of natural human waste. It is only when this basic need set is satisfied that the next set of needs will be thought of for satisfaction.

The five need sets that are in sequential order are physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belonging needs, status and prestige needs and actualisation needs. Humans work to satisfy these needs and as people and societies move up in life their need set also changes. This is true of all people, it could apply to the situations, individuals in progressively larger groups and also to whole countries as well. Growth of the individual or group causes the needs to shift upwards whereas the opposite causes downward movement in need fulfillment desire. The safety needs can be broken up into physical safety, family security, monetary security and employment security and love; belonging needs can be broken up into parental love, love between partners, sibling and children. It is easy to understand why these needs were classified as hierarchical, with physiological needs at the base and actualisation needs at the apex of a hierarchical pyramid.

Using this classification Maslow reasons that as a person moves up in life his need changes and if a person is unable to access needs appropriate to him he will basically be dissatisfied, even though he may not know it.

### ***3.1.2. Clayton Alderfers Erg Theory (1969)***

Alderfer reformulated Maslow's need hierarchy into three basic human needs simplifying it to make it more in tune with data obtained from empirical research. He kept Maslow's hierarchical structure but reduced the levels to three on the basis that a certain overlap existed in the middle layers and call them Existence, Relatedness and Growth, in short ERG Existence is the lowest level need which is concerned with physical survival and includes the obvious needs for food, water and shelter which can be satisfied through salary, fringe benefits, safe working environment and some measures of job security. Relatedness needs involve interaction with other people and the satisfaction they can bring in the form of emotional support, respect, recognition and sense of belonging. These needs can be satisfied on the job through coworkers and off the job through friends and family.

Growth need focuses on the self and includes need for personal growth and development which can be satisfied only by using ones capabilities into the fullest. ERG theory sees different needs from different levels existing in a sort of continuum where while there is a hazy precedence for a lower level need, it can still very well exist in the presence of a higher level need.

### ***3.1.3. Frederick Herzberg Two Factor Theory (1959)***

Frederick has tried to modify Maslow's need Hierarchy theory. His theory is also known as two factor theory or Hygiene theory. He stated that there are certain satisfiers and dissatisfiers for employees at work. Intrinsic factors are related to job satisfaction while extrinsic factors are associated with dissatisfaction. He devised his theory on the question: "What do people want from their jobs?" He asked people to describe in detail such situations when they felt exceptionally good or exceptionally bad. From the responses that he received, he concluded that opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction. Removing dissatisfying characteristics from a job does not necessarily make the job satisfying. He states that presence of certain factors in the organisation is natural and the presence of the same does not lead to satisfaction. However, their nonresponse leads to dissatisfaction. In similar manner there are certain factors, the absence of which causes no dissatisfaction, but their presence has motivational impact.

### ***3.1.4. Douglas McGregor Theory X and Theory Y***

McGregor proposed theory X and Y underlying the behaviour of employees. Theory X holds that men who are basically lazy dislike work; one has to force him to do work. Later, McGregor noticed that these patterns of behaviour are the result of management action. An average worker can be motivated by low level incentives such as money, security and the like only for certain period of time. When a worker strives to achieve higher level needs and when management denies this, he becomes distrustful and adopts an apathetic attitude, which may be interpreted as laziness. So in Y theory McGregor postulates that man is creative and has the power of self discipline to work. The important function of management, therefore, should be to make the best use of the creative potentiality of employees by providing adequate means for the satisfaction of their higher order needs. The implication of McGregor theory in the context of job satisfaction is that when there are opportunities in the job to satisfy the needs of workers at different levels, they will become satisfied.

### ***3.1.5. David McClelland's Needs Theory***

David McClelland's, an American behavioural psychologist who taught at Harvard and Boston, in his book on "The Achieving Society" in 1961 wrote of three basic human needs which motivated people to strive and succeed. These were the need for achievement, N-Ach, the need for power, N.Pow, and the need for affiliation, N.Aff. These need levels would vary from individual to individual and again from society to society. It was inconceivable that each individual would have the same levels for all three needs, which would vary with the background, society, culture and education of the individual.

McClelland's theory came to be known as the three need theory and is also referred to as the learned needs theory as it stipulates that most of these needs are shaped over time and depend upon the experiences of the particular individual. The results at the workplace depend upon a proper matching of job requirements and putting in a person with high achievement needs in a slot ideal for a person with high affiliation needs is going to result in a mismatch and possible underperformance. People with high affiliation needs, for example, will be ideally suited in

cooperative and people environments and tend to do very well in customer service and public relations.

### 3.2. Process Theories

Sensing the fact that it is the motivation of an employee that contributes to the perception and experience of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of workers, the process theories attempt to trace the process involved in the development of different motivations. They explain the employee motivation from the initial energization of behaviour through the selection of behavioural alternatives, to actual effort. The important theories having relevance in the context of job satisfaction are mentioned in the following sections.

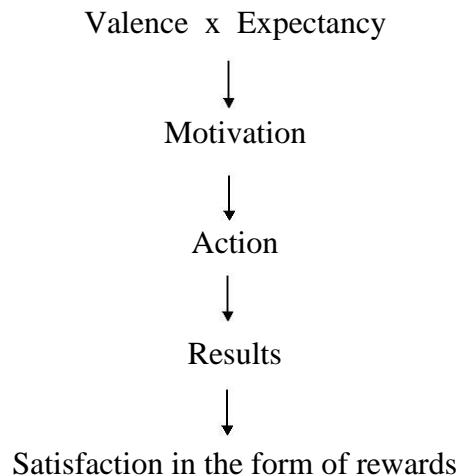
#### 3.2.1. Vroom's Valence Expectancy Theory

The most widely accepted explanation of motivation has been propounded by Victor Vroom. His theory is commonly known as expectancy theory. The theory argues that the strength of a tendency to act in a specific way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual. To make this simple, expectancy theory says that an employee can be motivated to perform better when there is a belief that the better performance will lead to good performance appraisal and that this shall result into realization of personal goal in the form of some reward. Therefore an example is:

$$\text{Motivation} = \text{Valence} \times \text{Expectancy}$$

The theory focuses on three things:

Efforts and performance relationship  
Performance and reward relationship  
Rewards and personal goal relationship



### 3.3. The Equity Theory

In the equity theory Adams argues that people are motivated by inequity and keep on comparing their efforts with that put in by others around them in the workplace as also the rewards being meted out to them.

Equity is likened to a perception of fairness involved between efforts and rewards given to co-workers in the work place. A fair situation where all employees are treated with equality obviously envisages similar outcomes for similar inputs; and if some employees feel that others are being given higher rewards for similar work they will obviously hold back some of their efforts. In case an employee putting in hard work happens to see an inefficient and unproductive colleague being rewarded with the same salary may probably feel demotivated to put in the same level of work continuously. Motivation is thus very difficult without the establishment of fairness in the appraisal and reward process.

### ***3.3.1. Goal Setting Theory of Edwin Locke***

Instead of giving vague tasks to people, specific and pronounced objectives help in achieving them faster. A goal orientation also avoids any misunderstandings in the work of the employees. The goal setting theory states that when the goals to be achieved are set at a higher standard, the employees are motivated to perform better and put in maximum effort. It revolves around the concept of 'self-efficiency' that is individual's belief that he or she is capable of performing a hard task.

### ***3.3.2. Porter and Lawler Model***

Lyman W.Porter and Edward E. Lawler developed a more complete version of motivation depending upon expectancy theory. It relates to perception, effort reward and satisfaction. An employee's individual effort is dependent on the value of expected reward and the perception of the effort involved in performing and obtaining reward. Thus performance is the result of effort, a person's abilities and an accurate role of perception. The performance or accomplishment will provide other intrinsic and extrinsic reward. The employees compare the perceived equitable reward with the reward actually received. This will result in employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. If the difference between the perceived equitable reward and the actual reward is less the satisfaction is high. A failure to receive the perceived equitable reward will create a feeling of dissatisfaction.

## **4. Conclusion**

Job satisfaction is an important issue to be addressed to get better result in any organisation. Different issues which are needed to be clarified for a research in job satisfaction are presented in brief in this study. Job satisfaction, job attitude and morale are the related terms clarified in detail. Job satisfaction affects productivity, employee turnover, absenteeism, safety, stress, unionisation and other issues. There are different measures for job satisfaction. They are rating scales, job descriptive index, minnesota satisfaction questionnaire, critical incidence, interview and action tendencies. There are several theories explaining job satisfaction. They are Abraham Maslow's need hierarchy, Clayton Alderfers ERG theory, Frederic Herzberg two factor theory, Douglas McGregor theory X and theory Y, David McClelland's Need theory, Vroom's valence expectancy theory, Equity theory, Goal setting theory and Porter and Lawler model.



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