



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF MEMBERS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA

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#### ABSTRACT

Academic staff is an essential and the most important component in the process of achieving the mission and vision of an educational institute. Because academic staff members are the first line of contact with students and requires complex work in an increasingly demanding environment (Fang-Mei Tai, 2014). At present satisfied academic staffs form the sources of competitive advantage. To meet the required standards of education sector the academic staff members need a working environment that allows them to work freely without problems that may restrain them from performing up to the level of their full potential. This study has made an attempt to identify the job satisfaction among the academic staff members in state universities in Sri Lanka. This study is based on both primary and secondary data. A cross-sectional survey among university teachers was conducted from May 2016 to July 2016 in Sri Lanka. For this study, ten universities were selected out of 16 state universities and 30% of the full-time academic members were randomly sampled from each university selected. Anonymous self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 880 academic staff members after obtaining their written consent. Out of this a total of 720 effective responses were obtained (effective response rate: 78.5%). The study procedures were in accordance with ethical standards. A questionnaire was developed with variables in two dimensions to analyze job satisfaction i.e. 12 intrinsic job satisfaction items and six extrinsic job satisfaction, with each item being rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied). The distributions of job satisfaction in categorical variables were examined by the Student's t-test and one-way ANOVA. Pearson Correlations method was used to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Hierarchical linear regression analyses were performed to explore the factors associated with job satisfaction. Statistical significance was defined as  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed). The field survey revealed that Sri Lankan university academics have an average level of satisfaction (the average score of job satisfaction was,  $SD = 59.5$ ). Over-commitment was found to have a negative association with job satisfaction. Perceived Organizational Support was found to be associated with overall job satisfaction among Sri Lankan university academic staff members. Specially, academic staff members expect a high level of organizational support and it tends to feel confident and hopeful about their desired job goals and are able to have both the motivation and plans to achieve their goals. Psychological Capital was also found to be positively associated with job satisfaction. As a recommendation it is suggested that measures such as establishing flexible work schedules for academic members, introducing rewarding methods on the basis of their academic and administrative contribution, provide more funds for scientific research and higher education, increasing opportunities for career advancement and encouraging them for administrative involvement of department/faculty in decision-making might increase academic members' job satisfaction. Furthermore, improving Psychological Capital might be more effective for enhancing the overall job satisfaction.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study has made an attempt to identify the job satisfaction among the academic staff members in state universities in Sri Lanka. Academic staff is an essential and the most important component in the process of achieving the mission and vision of an educational institute. Because academic staff members are the first line of contact with students and requires complex work in an increasingly demanding environment (Fang-Mei Tai, 2014). At present satisfied academic staffs form the sources of competitive advantage. To meet the required standards of education sector the academic staff members need

a working environment that allows them to work freely without problems that may restrain them from performing up to the level of their full potential. Job satisfaction is the degree to which employees feel personally fulfilled and content in their roles. According to Rashid and Rashid (2011), satisfaction has been extensively studied in the management literature due to its importance to the physical and mental well-being of the employee. It is an important organizational variable that should be understood and constantly analyzed for efficient working of any organization. Zeinabadi in 2010 stated that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are antecedents (origin) of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) of academic staff. It is recognized that education requires not only diligence but also commitment, so it is more important to have mental commitment and loyalty than

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physical presence alone. The purpose of this study was to provide empirical evidence as to the job satisfaction levels of academic staff members in state universities and to determine what job factors are reliable predictors of their job satisfaction. According to Ribbins *et al.* (2003), job satisfaction has been defined as the difference between the amount of rewards the workers receive and the amount they believe they should receive. According to Arnold and Feldman (1983), job satisfaction is the amount of overall positive effort of feelings that individual has towards a job. According to Vroom (1964), job satisfaction is an orientation of emotions that employees' possess towards the role they are performing at the work place. Therefore, job satisfaction is the essential component for employee motivation and encouragement towards better performance. Normally work place environment is divided into two areas, namely, Physical and Psychological. Physical environment is concerned about the Materials, Equipment, Machineries, Structures, buildings etc. in work place. Those are created and placed in work place to support and utilize in day today operation in work place. The said Physical surrounding influences performance and job satisfaction of individuals as well. It is a key factor which decides the satisfaction and performances of employees. It has been declared that "Physical layout of work place can also affect the behavior of organizational members" (Arnold and Feldman, 1983). In modern days, employees spent most of their time in work place due to high competition among rivals. Therefore, physical environment should be designed to provide comfort for such individuals. Psychological environment has been defined as an individual's positive psychological state of development such as self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience (Bochen Pan *et al.*, 2015).

Education is the most important institutional organization of a nation; it plays a significant role in the development of any country. It enables a country to stand on her feet. The importance of education sector has been recognized even in developing countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives etc. Higher education is especially central to the creation of a knowledge-based society and the development of a country depends primarily on its ability to produce and make use of knowledge for development. In other words, knowledge is becoming the core of a country's competitive advantage and the production and the dissemination of knowledge are parts of the process of development based on an effective Higher Education Policy. Higher Education, in the context of the current developments in Sri Lanka, is of paramount importance for economic and social development. Therefore, the structural reforms of educational institutions are under process at all levels. At primary level, the provincial and local bodies have launched different schemes for the growth and improvement of this sector. On other hand, the government has established an autonomous body named the University Grants Commission (UGC) in Sri Lanka, a regulatory body that oversees the quality of education and working of Universities. Today, there are seventeen state universities, nine Institutes and seven Post-Graduate institutes available in the Tertiary Education system in Sri Lanka. These universities began formally in 1921 with the establishment of colonial-oriented University College, which was later elevated to a fully fledged University in 1942 (Niruba, 2014). Universities are considered as the highest source of knowledge and awareness production institutions which train the specialist manpower in different fields of life. A high quality academic staff is the cornerstone of a successful educational system. Therefore, it is important to pay attention

to job satisfaction among these academic members. A positive and healthy university structure results in increased academic staff's job satisfaction. A healthy university environment will not only increase the job satisfaction of academic staff but it will at the same time improve the learning environment and increase the productivity of the university. The level of individual's job satisfaction is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors such as the quality of supervision, social relationships within the working group and the degree to individual success or failure in their work (Daft, 2005). As is the case with academic staff both intrinsic and extrinsic factors affect their satisfaction. Most studies (Wu and Short, 1996; Place 1997) suggest that academic staff members put more emphasis on intrinsic satisfiers but other studies suggest a mixed finding of intrinsic and extrinsic satisfier are the best predictors of teacher job satisfaction (Dvorak and Philips, 2001). Their intrinsic satisfaction can come from teaching activities, whereas extrinsic factors have been associated with academic staff's satisfaction, including salary, perceived support from supervisors and co-workers, university safety and availability of university recourse among others. When academic staffs perceive lack of support for their work, they are not well motivated to perform their job best in the class room and that when lecturers are not satisfied with their working conditions, they prefer to change institution or leave the profession at once. It is important to study the facets of job satisfaction because it affects teacher's retention and conditions development. Teachers who were planning to leave the profession reported less satisfaction and a more negative attitude toward teaching as a career (Smith, 2007).

## Literature Review

Aida *et al.* (2015) conducted a research on the role of job satisfaction among academic staff at university. The research question addressed the role of job satisfaction at university and illustrated it as a principle positive motivator among academic staff. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The study found that low levels of job satisfaction leads to various difficulties among academic staff. These difficulties appear as some abnormality in organizational behaviors and reactions at educational organization and have insufficient results on university outcomes. The most important abnormal behavior is lowest level of satisfaction that leads to absence, low turnover, burnout, improper relations with others at workplace, reduction in activities among staff etc. According to them the principle role of a university is recognizing needs and desires of academic staff based on the work situation and meeting them according to organization's policies. Furthermore, a conducive work place environment aids the performance of work automatically improves productivity. Therefore, they suggested that the universities should have adequate consciousness and knowledge for preparing and developing appropriate atmosphere among academic staff and realize their tendencies and needs from workplace. Further, they mentioned that all of these educational organizations need to provide appropriate facilities and environment for their staff. Wan and Syarif (2015) conducted a research on job satisfaction among academic staff of the University Utara Malaysia (UUM). The objectives of this survey were two: to describe descriptively level of job satisfaction among higher learning lecturers at one of the public universities in Malaysia, i.e. University Utara Malaysia and to explore the reasons behind it. For this study they applied a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, a term popularly known

as the mixed method. A main justification for using the mixed method is that of comprehensiveness that is, using such method allows an issue to be addressed more widely and more completely because of the strengths of different methods (see, Morse, 2003). The first objective analyzed and described quantitatively, while the second objective described explored qualitatively. To meet these objectives, 21 academic staffs at the psychology and social work program, UUM were chosen conveniently as respondents. A Team of researchers used a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data, while unstructured informal interview was used to gather qualitative data. To determine the level of job satisfaction, respondents were given seven items related to the working environment, i.e. physical environment, salary, staff relations, career development, scope of work, workload, and promotional opportunities. All items were matched with a 5-point Likert scale from very dissatisfied to very satisfied. Unstructured interviews primarily revolved around the reasons why they feel satisfied or vice-versa. According to the field survey, only 38.1% of all respondents have a high level of job satisfaction of their work environment in the university. 61.9% of them have a moderate level of job satisfaction. None of them was included in the low level of job satisfaction. The result showed that the majority of the respondents have a moderate level of job satisfaction. These lecturers felt that the work environment and their job conditions as pleasurable and perceive their job as a happy one. There are four main reasons behind it, i.e. staff relationships, career development, scope of work, and salary. Further, it was identified that the majority of academic members joined the universities because of income, better prospects and social or psychological needs. As the majority of respondents have a moderate level of job satisfaction, there is space for job improvement as well as academic culture in the university.

Fang-Mei Tai (2014) conducted a research on job satisfaction of University staff of public and private universities in Taiwan. The purpose of this study was to explore and compare the levels of job satisfaction among academic staff of public and private universities in Taiwan and how they differ in their satisfaction levels regarding salary, work environment and others. A Questionnaire was used to collect data from randomly chosen university staff in randomly selected universities. They used Five-point Likert-type scales to measure respondents' perceptions. Further, descriptive and inferential statistics and computation of item means and rankings indicated participants' responses. T tests for independent means revealed significantly different job satisfaction ( $p < .05$ ) between public and private staff. A Linear Regression was used by them to analyze whether there is any job element that impacts on staff's job satisfaction. They found that the overall job satisfaction and Self-worth were most satisfied by the public university staff while Organizational decision-making and salary welfare of job satisfactions were satisfied least by the public university staff. The private university staffs were most satisfied with respect to interpersonal relationships and self-worth. Further, the study proved that the public university staff showed a significantly higher job satisfaction than private university staff with respect to salary, welfare and overall job satisfaction and, in general, they showed a higher job satisfaction than private university staff. Bochen Pan *et al.* (2015) conducted a research on factors associated with job satisfaction among university teachers in Northeastern Region of China. The objectives of this study were to assess the level of job satisfaction among university

academic staff members and to clarify the associated factors. They conducted a cross-sectional study between November 2013 and January 2014. Staff members from six universities in Shenyang, China were randomly sampled and the effective respondent rate was 80.7%. They found that the average score of overall job satisfaction was 69.71. Further, they revealed from Hierarchical linear regression analysis that turnover intention, occupational stress and chronic disease all had negative impacts on job satisfaction, whereas perceived organizational support, psychological capital and higher monthly income were positively associated with job satisfaction among the university academic staff members. Finally, they concluded that Chinese university teachers had a moderate level of job satisfaction. Demographic and working characteristics were associated factors for job satisfaction. Perceived organizational support showed the strongest association with job satisfaction. Results of the study indicate that improving the perceived organizational support may increase the level of job satisfaction for university teachers.

### Objectives

- To identify Job Satisfaction among academic staff members in state universities in Sri Lanka
- To recommend the required changes to attain academic staff members' job satisfaction

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey among university teachers was conducted from May 2016 to July 2016 in Sri Lanka. According to UGC Statistical information for the Year 2015, the total number of full-time academic staff members numbered around 5,200. For this study, ten universities were selected and 30% of the full-time academic members were randomly sampled from each university selected for the study. Anonymous self-administered questionnaires were distributed to 880 academic staff members after obtaining their written consent. Out of this a total of 720 effective responses were obtained (effective response rate: 78.5%). The study procedures were in accordance with ethical standards.

Demographic and job-related characteristics collected included gender, age, marital status, educational levels, monthly income, professional positions, physical exercise, turnover intention and chronic disease. Marital status was categorized as single, widowed, divorced and married/cohabiting. Educational levels were divided into Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral. Professional positions were classified into Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturers, Doctors and Professors. Monthly income was divided into <Rs. 50,000, Rs. 50,000–Rs. 100,000, Rs. 100,000– Rs. 150,000 and  $\geq$  Rs.150, 000 groups. Participants were categorized as having chronic disease if they responded "yes" to ever receiving a diagnosis of any listed diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, gout, cardiovascular disease, chronic gastritis or back pain. Turnover intention was judged to be present if participants answered "yes" to the question, "Do you consider leaving the current institution?" Physical exercise (doing exercise at least once every week) was classified into "no" and "yes". A questionnaire was developed with variables in two dimensions to analyze job satisfaction i.e.12 intrinsic job satisfaction items and six extrinsic job satisfaction, with each item being rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 5 (strongly satisfied).

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Participant's Characteristics and Job Satisfaction**

Variable	Sub- variable	Number of Participants	%	Job satisfaction		P Value
				Mean	SD	
Gender	Male	252	35	77	± 13.15	0.001
	Female	468	65	59	± 12.10	
Age	≤ 30	118	16.4	78	± 11.10	< 0.001
	31 - 45	255	35.4	49	± 13.10	
	46 - 55	319	44.3	46	± 14.10	
	≥ 56	28	03.9	82	± 11.10	
Marital status	Single/Widow/Separated	138	19.1	79	± 13.10	0.005
	Married/cohabitation	582	80.9	65	± 12.90	
Education level	Bachelor	190	26.4	59.51	± 13.90	<0.001
	Masters	386	53.6	53.40	± 14.20	
	Doctoral	144	20.0	66.23	± 12.30	
Profession	Assistant Lecturer/Lecturer	225	31.3	70.20	± 14.06	<0.001
	Senior Lecturer	330	45.8	58.03	± 12.66	
	Doctor	110	15.3	64.30	± 13.01	
	Professor	55	07.6	74.53	± 11.32	
Monthly Income	≤ Rs.50000	38	05.3	48.02		<0.001
	Rs. 50,000 – Rs.100,000	219	30.4	51.30		
	Rs. 100,001 – Rs.150,000	319	44.3	66.78		
	Rs. 150,001 – Rs.200,000	76	10.6	75.35		
Physical exercise	Yes	354	49.1	69.35		<0.001
	No	366	50.9	58.69		
Turnover intention	Yes	478	66.4	53.21		<0.001
	No	242	33.6	78.23		
Chronic disease	Yes	593	82.4	56.38		<0.001
	No	127	17.6	69.36		

Source: Field Survey (2016)

The overall satisfaction level is indicated by the sum of score of all those items which ranges from 20 to 100. A score of 55 indicates neutral attitude, a score ranging from 56 to 69 indicates being moderately satisfied and a score of 75 indicates being highly satisfied. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall job satisfaction was 0.947. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) also was assessed by using 5-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher values indicating higher levels of POS. Occupational Stress experienced by university academic staff members was measured by using items such as targets, rewards and commitments and they were scored on a five-point Likert scale from completely disagree to strongly agree. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the targets, reward and commitment sub-scales was 0.817, 0.877 and 0.764, respectively. The level of Psychological Capital (PsyCap) was measured by using four factors such as self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism. These four factors were also evaluated by using 5 Likert ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For the total scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.901. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for self-efficacy, hope, resilience and optimism were 0.895, 0.714, 0.851 and 0.731, respectively. Data analysis for the proposed research has been performed with the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The distributions of job satisfaction in categorical variables were examined by the Student's t-test and one-way ANOVA. Pearson Correlations method was used to measure the relationship between independent and dependent variables. Hierarchical linear regression analyses were performed to explore the factors associated with job satisfaction. Statistical significance was defined as  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The basic characteristics of the selected sample and mean scores of job satisfaction in the selected variables are shown in Table 1. Among the 720 participants, 252 (35%) were male

and 468 (65%) female. Male academic staff members reported significantly higher score of job satisfaction than women academic staff members ( $p = 0.001$ ). Participants whose age ranged from 46 to 55 showed a lower level of job satisfaction than all the other groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). The highest level of job satisfaction was mentioned by the members whose age was above 56 years. Marital status also had significant influence on job satisfaction. Married or cohabiting teachers had lower levels of job satisfaction than those who lived alone ( $p = 0.005$ ). Different professional positions showed a different level of job satisfaction. Assistant Lecturers/Lecturers and Professors reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than senior lecturers ( $p < 0.001$ ). Doing exercise regularly, educational levels and monthly income were shown to be positively related with job satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, participants with turnover intention or chronic disease had significantly lower levels of job satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ). The mean values, standard deviations (SD), and correlations of variables with job satisfaction are presented in Table 2. The average age of the participants was 37.23 (SD = 9.82) years old. POS and PsyCap were positively correlated with job satisfaction, whereas occupational stress and over-commitment were negatively correlated with job satisfaction.

### Factors Associated with Overall Job Satisfaction

The results of hierarchical linear regression analysis for exploring the major factors associated with overall job satisfaction are presented in Table 3. In Block 1, age, monthly income, turnover intention, chronic disease and physical exercise were significantly associated with job satisfaction, explaining 20.5% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. In Block 2, the level of job satisfaction was significantly associated with POS, PsyCap and over-commitment, explaining an additional 40.0% of the variance in job satisfaction. However, gender and education had no significant association with job satisfaction. The contribution of all impact factors to the model R-squared was 59.5%.

**Table 2. Mean values, standard deviations (SD), and correlation coefficient of selected variables with Job Satisfaction**

Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation
Age	37.23	9.82	0.034
Perceived Organizational Support	4.71	2.21	0.781
Psychological Capital	4.03	0.87	0.623
Occupational Stress	0.87	0.49	-0.511
Over Commitment	15.32	4.01	-0.411

Source: Field Survey (2016)

**Table 3. Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis for Exploring associated factors for job satisfaction**

Dependent variable: Overall job satisfaction		
Parameter	Model I	Model II
Gender	-0.030	-0.014
Age	-0.125 **	-0.046 *
Marital status	-0.020	0.036 *
Education level		
Masters vs Bachelors	0.018	0.015
Doctoral vs Bachelors	0.049	0.034
Monthly income		
Scheme I	0.078 *	0.002
Scheme II	0.068 *	0.020
Scheme III	0.088 *	0.031
Scheme IV	0.278 *	0.098
Scheme V	0.300 **	0.102 **
Turnover Intension	-0.254**	-0.041 *
Chronic disease (yes vs. no)	-0.079 **	0.019
Physical exercise ( $\geq 1$ times/week vs. no)	0.057 *	0.015
POS		0.401 **
PsyCap		0.368 **
Over-commitment		-0.051*
F	32.254 **	134.528 **
R <sup>2</sup>	0.202	0.595

\* p &lt; 0.05, \*\* p &lt; 0.01 (two-tailed).

Source: Field Survey (2016)

This research examined the level of job satisfaction and explored its associated factors among university academic staff in Sri Lanka. The field survey revealed that Sri Lankan university academics have an average level of satisfaction (the average score of job satisfaction was, SD =). Over-commitment was found to have a negative association with job satisfaction. In this study, Perceived Organizational Support was found to be associated with overall job satisfaction among Sri Lankan university academic staff members (the standardized regression coefficient was 0.401). This indicates the inadequacy of POS for the academic staff in these universities. Specially, academic staff members expect a high level of organizational support and it tends to feel confident and hopeful about their desired job goals and are able to have both the motivation and plans to achieve their goals. Psychological Capital was also found to be positively associated with job satisfaction (the standardized regression coefficient was 0.368). Academic members with higher levels of Psychological Capital might have more confidence and self-efficacy. Thus, academic members with higher levels of Psychological Capital may be more satisfied with their jobs.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study are important because they provide university authorities with information on the associated factors of job satisfaction among academic staff members. Measures such as establishing flexible work schedules for academic members, introducing rewarding methods on the basis of their academic and administrative contribution, provide more funds for scientific research and higher education, increasing opportunities for career advancement and encouraging them for administrative involvement of

department/faculty in decision-making might increase academic members' job satisfaction. Furthermore, improving POS might be more effective for enhancing the overall job satisfaction.

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