



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE ROLE OF STATUS IN THE JOB SATISFACTION LEVEL OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN  
NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

If low job satisfaction or dissatisfaction exists amongst Academics then the goals of higher education cannot be accomplished. The purpose of this study was to provide empirical evidence as to the job satisfaction levels of Academics in Southwest-Nigeria and to ascertain as to whether academic status is a reliable predictor of their job satisfaction. The study instrument used was the short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) which measures job satisfaction using 20 facets of the job. The population for this study consisted of Academics in Southwest-Nigeria. A total of 412 Academics (69% response rate) agreed to take part in the study. Data analysis consisted of the computation of descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings showed that Academics indicate only a moderate level of overall job satisfaction. The job facets advancement, compensation, co-workers and variety were found to be statistically significant with academic status indicating that academic status affects the satisfaction associated with 4 out of the 20 facets of the Academics' job examined. In general, it can be said that the results of this study indicate the extent of the low to moderate satisfaction levels that exists among Academics in Universities of the Southwest-Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Satisfaction has been widely studied in the management literature (Spector, 1997) due to its relevance to the physical and mental well-being of the employee, as well as its implications for such job-related behaviours as productivity, absenteeism, turnover and employee relations. Job satisfaction also plays an important role in improving the financial standing of organizations (Aronson et al., 2005). In this respect, job satisfaction today still is a topic of major interest for many researchers and is an organizational variable that should be understood and constantly monitored for the welfare of any organization. In fact, understanding the job satisfaction of employees is an important organizational goal of any organization (Aronson et al., 2005) and indeed, has been a matter of growing interest for those concerned with the quality of working life and organizational efficiency (Maghrabi, 1999). As Johnes and Taylor (1990) state, the goals of higher education are to provide in-depth knowledge, seek academic development, educate students, as well as to coordinate national development demands (cited in Chen *et al.*, 2006). None of these goals can be accomplished efficiently if low satisfaction or dissatisfaction exists amongst the Academics in higher education organizations. Thus the study of job satisfaction of Academics seems inevitable for several reasons. Firstly, an understanding of the factors involved in job satisfaction is crucial to improving the happiness of workers

(Okpara *et al.*, 2005). This influences the mental and physical wellbeing of the Academics in their work, as well as the quality of their teaching, which is important in the attraction of quality students and the quality of the Academics' research and academic development. Secondly, understanding whether Academics are satisfied or dissatisfied towards their work can lead to improvements and innovations in their teaching. This will help in retaining Academics resulting in lower absenteeism and turnover, as well as helping in attracting new competent staff to the organization as well as meeting national demands. Furthermore, job satisfaction has serious implications for relations between the Academics and the management of the higher educational organizations they belong to. Most of the research that has been conducted in the field of job satisfaction has been done so in the business sector with less interest in higher education. However, in recent years, a clear increase has been observed in the number of studies related to the job satisfaction of Academics. One probable reason for this increasing interest is the reality that higher education institutes are labour intensive and their budgets are predominantly devoted to personnel and their effectiveness is largely dependent on their employees (Kusku, 2003). Additionally, the vast majority of research conducted in the field of job satisfaction has been conducted in North America, the UK and other parts of Western Europe. Evidence from developing or less developed nations is unfortunately seriously lacking and is a gap which needs to be filled. In a service system, customers are not the only ones who may experience problems, with the job satisfaction of employees

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being just as important as customer satisfaction in the dimension of organizational performance (Comm and Mathaisel, 2000). Employees are the internal customers of organizations and they satisfy the current and working environment and are willing to cooperate with the organization to accomplish its goals (Chen *et al.*, 2006). However, low job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are barriers to ability utilization and goal achievement. With teachers being the employees of educational organizations, the satisfaction they gain from their work and working environment promotes teaching and research quality (Chen *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, in order for teachers to achieve high standards of teaching, for them to produce quality research and publications and to meet the goals of the higher education, the requirements to improve their work and working environment must be met. Today Academics have to work harder to fulfil the gradually increasing expectations, not only of themselves, but also of the institute (Bilge, 2006) however; this is not possible when satisfaction levels are low or when dissatisfaction may exist. Furthermore, Ostroff (1992) found that most measures of school performance were significantly linked to employee satisfaction with schools with more satisfied teachers being more effective than those with less satisfied ones. In this respect, the main aim of this study is to provide empirical evidence as to the satisfaction levels of Academics in Southwest-Nigeria, a developing nation and to ascertain whether academic status is a reliable predictor of job satisfaction. In doing so, the study will give insight into which facets of the job result in satisfaction and which facets result in dissatisfaction for Academics. The findings will enable university management and higher education authorities to modify their human resource management policies and practices. Furthermore, the study will indicate as to whether results attained hold true for studies conducted in developed countries thus contributing to filling the gap in the area of job satisfaction in developing/less developed countries. In this study "academic status" indicates whether an academic is a Lecturer, Senior Lecturer; Associate Professor, or a full Professor.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the most widely used definitions of job satisfaction include Porter *et al.* (1975) who define job satisfaction as one's reaction against his/her occupation or organization, Locke (1976) who defines job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience and Dawis and Lofquist (1984) who define it as the result of the worker's appraisal of the degree to which the work environment fulfils the individual's needs. As well as the above definitions indicate, a review of published works reveal that there does appear to be general agreement that job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a job that results from the comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired (Oshagbemi, 2003). Most research into job satisfaction has been undertaken in the business sector with attempts often having been made to adapt these findings to higher education (Okpara *et al.*, 2005). Though there has been numerous publications on job satisfaction, there has been relatively little empirical data gathered on the job satisfaction of Academics in general (Okpara *et al.*, 2005). Perhaps this area has not received so much attention because a high level of job satisfaction generally has been presumed to exist in a

university setting (Pearson and Seiler, 1983). The research that does exist focusing on job satisfaction in higher educational organizations does indicate that, on the whole, Academics are generally satisfied with their work. Findings indicate that Academics want work tasks that correspond to their personal interests and allow them considerable autonomy in task selection and decision making; they want a sense of achievement, facilitated by feedback from supervisors; they want clarity as to what is expected of them and harmony among the various people they work with; they want salaries awarded equitably and at a level that meets their expenses and they want promotions to be awarded fairly (Kelly, 1989).

The job aspects that are most frequently perceived as responsible for low satisfaction are pay (Kusku, 2003; Oshagbemi, 1997; Kelly, 1989), university administration policy, availability of resources, working conditions (Kelly, 1989) and promotion systems (Lacy and Sheehan, 1997; Oshagbemi, 1996). The literature also indicates different determinants of job satisfaction. For instance, Oshagbemi (1997) in his study in the UK employed eight scales designed to measure satisfaction with respect to different components of university teachers' overall job satisfaction, namely teaching; research; administration and management; present pay; promotions; supervision/supervisor behaviour; behaviour of co-workers and physical conditions/working conditions. Kusku (2003) measured the job satisfaction of Academics in a university in Turkey using the seven determinants general satisfaction; management satisfaction; colleagues; other working group satisfaction; job satisfaction; work environment and salary satisfaction. Chen *et al.* (2006) measured the job satisfaction of teachers in a private university in China using six satisfaction factors, namely organization vision; respect; result feedback and motivation; management system; pay and benefits and work environment. Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) measured the job satisfaction of academicians in Uganda using nine general elements of their work comprising teaching, research, governance, remuneration, opportunities for promotion, supervision, co-worker's behaviour, working environment and the job in general.

A look at the literature show that research designed to investigate whether or not job satisfaction increases with status are few (Oshagbemi, 1997), however most of the evidence that does exist suggests that job status/level/position is a reliable predictor of job satisfaction with workers at higher-status/levels/positions generally being more satisfied with their jobs compared to those at lower status/Levels/positions (Oshagbemi, 2003). Higher-status employees indicate higher levels of job satisfaction because higher-level jobs tend to be more complex and have better working conditions, pay and promotion prospects, supervision and responsibility (Cranny *et al.*, 1992; Robie *et al.*, 1998; Aronson *et al.*, 2005). Dissatisfaction amongst higher-level employees will most likely reflect on lower-level employees thus resulting in economic, financial and morale problems indicating that a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job level conveys certain economic advantages to business organizations Aronson *et al.* (2005). In their study that examined the relationship between age, occupational level and overall job satisfaction Near *et al.* (1978) found that the strongest predictors of job satisfaction were status and age. Holden and Black (1996) indicated clear differences in

productivity and satisfaction by academic status amongst psychologists employed as faculty members in medical school, with full Professors having displayed higher levels of productivity and satisfaction when compared to Associate Professors and Senior Lecturers. Oshagbemi (1997), in his study that examined the effects of academic status on the job satisfaction of UK Academics, found that overall job satisfaction increased progressively with status. De Noble and McCormick (2008), in their study that examined the job satisfaction of primary school staff, found job position to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction and Ssesanga and Garrett (2005), in their study of the job satisfaction of university teachers in Uganda, concluded that status significantly predicted academic job satisfaction. It is thus theorized that:

- H1: Job status will significantly predict the job satisfaction of Academic staff
- H2: Extrinsic factors will be negatively related to the job satisfaction of academic staff with their jobs

## METHODOLOGY

### Research instrument

To measure the job satisfaction of the Academics the short-form Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Weiss *et al.*, 1967) was utilized. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) is one of the most widely used instruments in the measurement of job satisfaction (Scarpello and Campbell, 1983) and its validity and reliability has been proven over the 40 years that it has been in use. It has been used to measure job satisfaction in a variety of sectors, including education. The long-form MSQ consists of 100 items which make up 20 scales/facets of the job (each facet represented by five items). The MSQ facets are ability utilization, achievement, activity, advancement, authority, company policies and procedures, compensation, co-workers, creativity, independence, moral values, recognition, responsibility, security, social service, social status, supervision-human relations, supervision-technical, variety and working conditions. The short-form MSQ is composed of the twenty facets listed above with each facet represented with just one satisfaction item. The response format for both the short-form and the long-form MSQ are the same. The short-form MSQ measures three satisfaction scales, namely intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction and overall job satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction refers to occupational conditions (how people feel about the nature of the job's tasks) and extrinsic satisfaction refers to environmental conditions (how people feel about features of the job that are external to the work).

Respondent Academics were asked to express the extent of their satisfaction with each of the 20 facets of their job on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The original short-form MSQ was used without modification. However, a test-retest method was carried out by administering it on thirty Academics to test its validity and reliability. The internal consistency of the translated questionnaire was 0.85, obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The questionnaire was accompanied with a personal information form in order to determine the demographic variables of the Academics that participated in the study.

### Sample

The population for this study comprises Academics in the five Southwest- Nigeria universities. A total of 600 Academics were randomly approached during their Union meetings in the various Campuses of six Government owned Universities. Only 412 of them agreed to take part in the study after the purpose of the research was explained to them. This accounted for response rate of 69%. The questionnaires were distributed to them and collected back after one week by going round the offices of those academic staff who received the questionnaire during the Union meetings. The use of the short-form MSQ was used as against the long one to engender quick return of the questionnaire as most academic staff unfortunately openly indicated that they do not have time to fill questionnaires. Of the 412 respondents, 67.7% were Lecturers with a master degree, 7.8% were Lecturers with a PhD, 13.3 per cent were Senior Lecturers, 4.6% were Associate Professors and 6.6% were full Professors.

The low number of respondents from the academic status of Associate Professor and full Professor is an indication of their relative small numbers in the academic population in Southwest- Nigeria compared to the other status, though this is not surprising for a developing country. However, it is not felt that these percentages have had an effect on the final results as comparable studies conducted have also yielded both similar sampling percentages and similar results. Such studies include Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) and Oshagbemi (1997). Just slightly over half the respondents (53.4%) were male and 46.6% were female and 63.8% were married and 36.2% were not married. The greatest percentage of respondents (37.6%) were in the age range 21 - 30, 34.5% were in the age range 31 - 40, 17.2% were 41 - 50, 6.1% were aged 51 - 60 and the remaining 4.6% were in the age range 61 and above.

### Statistical methods

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 13.0 was used to analyze the data collected. Analysis consisted of the computation of descriptive statistics in order to examine the job satisfaction levels of the Academics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to understand the effects of academic status of the job satisfaction of Academics.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD) for the job satisfaction of Academics in Southwest- Nigeria can be seen in Table 1. With a mean score of 3.79, Academics indicate a higher level of satisfaction for the intrinsic aspect of their job when compared to the extrinsic aspect of their job (M = 3.50). Mean scores below 3.50 are considered to be more on the "dissatisfied" side of the "satisfaction-dissatisfaction" scale with mean scores above 3.50 being more on the "satisfied" side of the scale (Pearson and Seiler, 1983). In this respect, Academics can be said to be satisfied with the intrinsic aspect of their job, however indicating lower satisfaction for the extrinsic aspect of their job. The overall job satisfaction level experienced by Academics (M = 3.69) can be considered as satisfactory, however, only moderately. Of the 20 facets measured in relation to overall job satisfaction, academic status indicated obvious dissatisfaction with 2 of the facets,

**Table 1. Job satisfaction mean scores and standard deviations**

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Intrinsic satisfaction	412	3.79	0.66
Extrinsic satisfaction	412	3.50	0.74
Overall job satisfaction	412	3.69	0.65

**Table 2. Sources of dissatisfaction mean scores and standard deviations**

Variables	N	Mean	SD
University policies and practices	412	2.69	1.22
Compensation	412	3.03	1.29

**Table 3. Sources of satisfaction mean scores and standard deviations**

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Moral values	412	4.16	1.16
Social service	412	4.08	0.93
Creativity	412	4.03	1.00
Achievement	412	4.02	0.98

**Table 4. One way Anova between academic status and significant job facets.**

Variables	Sources of variance	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Advancement	Between groups	26.573	4	6.643	4.808	.001
	Within groups	562.417	407	1.382		
	Total	588.990	411			
Compensation	Between groups	44.921	4	11.230	7.047	0.000
	Within groups	648.603	407	1.594		
	Total	693.524	411			
Co-Workers	Between groups	11.914	4	6.155	4.539	0.001
	Within groups	361.931	407	1.356		
	Total	373.845	411			
Variety	Between groups	24.620	4	6.155	4.539	0.001
	Within groups	551.894	407	1.356		
	Total	576.515	411			

**Table 5. Mean scores and standard deviations for significant job facets according to academic status**

Variables	Advancement		Compesation		Co-workers		Variety	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Professor	4.15	0.95	3.70	1.44	4.04	0.98	4.33	0.73
Associate Professor	3.53	1.22	3.37	1.21	3.87	0.88	3.47	1.22
Senior Lecturer	3.69	0.98	3.49	1.10	4.25	0.72	3.80	1.13
Lecturer (Ph.D)	3.94	1.05	3.44	1.11	3.59	0.93	3.78	1.18
Lecturer (Masters Degree)	3.34	1.24	2.81	1.29	3.53	0.84	3.44	1.20

namely university policies and practices and compensation. Table 2 presents the overall mean scores and standard deviations for the two facets. Mean scores for university policies and practices range from 3.03 (SD = 1.06) to 2.58 (SD = 1.24). Compensation reflects some degree of dissatisfaction for all status (except for Professors) mean scores ranging from 3.49 (SD = 1.10) to 2.81 (SD = 1.29). Professors indicate a mean score of 3.70 (SD = 1.43), which can only be considered as moderate satisfaction. It would therefore be true to say that Academics are dissatisfied with university policies and practices, this finding being consistent with Kelly (1989), Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) and compensation, consistent

with Kusku (2001), Koustelis (2001) and Oshagbemi (1997). Table 3 presents the four facets found to be responsible for obvious satisfaction, along with their overall mean scores and standard deviations. These being moral values (being able to do things that don't go against one's conscience), mean scores ranging from 4.44 (SD = 1.05) to 3.95 (SD = 1.39), social service (the chance to do things for others), mean scores ranging from 4.11 (SD = 0.97) to 3.95 (SD = 0.85), creativity (the chance to try out own methods of doing the job), mean scores ranging from 4.22 (SD = 0.94) to 3.84 (SD = 0.83) and achievement (the feeling of accomplishment one gets from the job), from the job), mean scores ranging from 4.16 (SD = 0.88) to 3.68 (SD = 1.38). The facets responsible for satisfaction are also found to be consistent with the literature (Kelly, 1989). Of the remaining 14 facets, 3 are responsible for low satisfaction with 11 being responsible for moderate satisfaction levels.

For the three job satisfaction measures (intrinsic, extrinsic and overall job satisfaction) one way ANOVA results indicate that at a 0.05 significance level only extrinsic satisfaction ( $F = 3.375, p < 0.010$ ) is statistically significant with academic status implying that the extrinsic satisfaction of Academics is significantly dependent on academic status. When the 20 facets of the job are analyzed individually in relation to academic status, 4 of the facets are statistically significant with academic status at a 0.05 significance level. These are advancement, compensation, co-workers and variety, as seen in Table 4. Similar results were obtained by Oshagbemi (1997) who also found advancement and compensation to be significant with the status of UK University teachers as well as the interactive effects of their statuses and gender. Additionally, Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) suggested that promotion satisfaction among Ugandan Academics was dependent on status; however no evidence was adduced to suggest that differences in academic status consistently predicted differences in co-worker satisfaction. As illustrated in Table 5, for advancement, Professors with a mean score of 4.15 are the most satisfied having reached the peak of their academic career and having experienced all the associated benefits. Lecturers with a PhD ( $M = 3.94$ ) are next to Professors on satisfaction with advancement, Senior Lecturers ( $M = 3.69$ ) are third, Associate Professors ( $M = 3.53$ ) fourth and Lecturers with a master degree ( $M = 3.34$ ) being the least satisfied.

Naturally, Lecturers with a master degree are the least satisfied because they are at the beginning of their academic career with a long journey still ahead of them. Lecturers of Associate Professors status coming fourth seems surprising however a probable reason for this may be attributed to Associate Professors may be experiencing some stress with their status in that they are struggling in their efforts to advance, may be due to their lack of academic research and publications which are required for academic advancement. Additionally, many Academics may find themselves in environments with increasing demands for creative intellectual activity brought about by stringent applications of up-or-out and publish or-perish policies (Pearson and Seiler, 1983). Professors with a mean score of 3.70, as expected, are the most satisfied with compensation, followed by Senior Lecturers ( $M = 3.49$ ), Lecturers with a PhD ( $M = 3.44$ ), Associate Professors ( $M = 3.37$ ) and lastly Lecturers with a Master Degree ( $M = 2.81$ ).

Compensation in universities is usually a reflection of academic status with higher status Academics receiving higher levels of compensation when compared to lower-status employees.

However, the mean scores for compensation indicate that satisfaction with pay, even though statistically significant with status, does not appear to be a function of an academic's status and maybe be more related to family size and lifestyle (Oshagbemi, 1997). Senior Lecturers with a mean score of 4.25 are more satisfied with their co-workers, Professors (M = 4.04) and Associate Professors following (M = 3.87), Lecturers, with a both PhD (M = 3.59) and master degree (M = 3.53), being the least satisfied. A probably explanation may be that lower-status Academics are at the beginning of their academic career and in order to advance need to be successful in research work and publications. To realize this, lower-status Academics may need to work with higher-status Academics to benefit from their research abilities and publication experience. Lower-status Academics tend to have to take on a greater work load in joint projects and researches. This maybe putting some strain on relationships and creating some frustration for overloaded lower-status Academics, therefore, work on joint projects and researches between higher-status and lower-status Academics may lead to lower satisfaction for lower-status Academics and greater satisfaction with co-workers for higher-status Academics. Findings are consistent with Oshagbemi (2000) who reported that the status of University Teachers, to a certain extent, affects the level of job satisfaction derived from co-workers' behaviour – the higher, the better and Kelly (1989) who concluded that Academics wanted harmony amongst the various people they worked with.

Variety refers to the opportunities that Academics have to try out different things in their job. On variety Professors (M = 4.33) are the most satisfied, followed by Senior Lecturers (M = 3.80), Lecturers with a PhD (M = 3.78), Associate Professors (M = 3.47) and lastly Lecturers with a master degree (M = 3.44). This may be due to Academics at higher status tending to be more concerned with the freedom to work as they please and to use their own methods and techniques, thus emphasizing their status in the university. This finding seems partially consistent with Kelly (1989) who suggested that Academics want work tasks that correspond to their personal interests and allow them considerable autonomy in task selection and decision-making and Lacy and Sheehan (1997) who reported that one of the four facets Academics were satisfied with was the opportunity to pursue their own ideas.

### Conclusion and recommendations

Understanding the factors that contribute to Academics' job satisfaction is vital in order for them to achieve high standard of teaching and for them to produce quality research and publications. With Academics today having to work harder to fulfil the gradually increasing expectations not only of themselves but also of their institutions (Bilge, 2006), this is not possible when satisfaction levels are low or when dissatisfaction may exist. This study examines the satisfaction levels of Academics in a developing nation, Southwest-Nigeria, towards their job. Results indicate that Academics

enjoy only a moderate level of overall job satisfaction. Academics are also found to be more satisfied with the intrinsic aspect of their job compared to the extrinsic aspect. Of the 20 facets of the job examined 2 of them, namely university policies and practices and compensation, are clearly responsible for dissatisfaction, with 4 of the facets, namely moral values, social service, creativity and achievement clearly being responsible for satisfaction. Additionally, the facets advancement, compensation, co-workers and variety, are found to be statistically significantly related to academic status. This implies that academic status affects the satisfaction levels associated with advancement, compensation, co-workers and variety for Academics. On the whole job satisfaction research in North America and Western Europe has produced similar results.

In general, it can be said that the results of this study indicate the extent of the low to moderate satisfaction levels that exists among Academics in Southwest-Nigeria. This should be a topic of immediate concern for University Management and Higher Education Authorities and calls for a closer look at this aspect of academic life. It is suggested that University Management provide Academics with the opportunity to contribute in the decision-making process, especially aspects that have a direct influence on their performance and satisfaction levels. University policies and practices will then, to a certain degree, reflect some of the interests and concerns of the Academics. This may then pave the way to a more trust based relationship between University Management and Academics. After all, the satisfaction of Academics with University Management is surely to the advantage of all involved. Additionally, the introduction of sustainable and self regulated reward/incentive systems for Academics is also suggested in order to fuel motivation and to maintain satisfaction levels at suitable levels resulting in committed Academics. It is hoped that this study will provide some insight into improving relationships so as to uphold an innovative, dynamic and effective educational system in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study can be used as a guide to further research; it may be necessary to understand how other variables apart from academic status, such as gender, age and tenure, as well as the combined effects of status, gender, age and tenure may explain the job satisfaction of Academics in a developing nation.

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