

# JOB SATISFACTION AMONG NON-ACADEMIC STAFF IN KUWAIT

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** *The aim of this study was therefore threefold: (i) to measure the level of job satisfaction among non-academic staff in a not-for-profit university in Kuwait, (ii) to identify the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction, and (iii) to identify the influence of several demographic variables on their job satisfaction.*

**Design/methodology/approach:** *A quantitative study was conducted to achieve the study objectives utilizing the short version of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire.*

**Findings:** *Results showed that non-academic staff had high level of general satisfaction. Specifically, they had high level of intrinsic satisfaction, while they had medium level of extrinsic satisfaction. Nationality was the only demographic variable that significantly predicted job satisfaction. There were also strong significant differences in the job satisfaction related to nationality of non-academic staff.*

**Research implications:** *Several recommendations were suggested to maintain and improve the job satisfaction among non-academic staff in the educational sector.*

**Originality/value:** *Little research has been devoted to focus on the job satisfaction of non-academic staff in the educational sector particularly in Kuwait. Hence, the significance of this study is derived from the idea that more satisfied non-academic staff can serve the students and academics better.*

**Keywords:** Job satisfaction; Staff; University; Kuwait.

## INTRODUCTION

Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) makes and develops information for building a cutting-edge world. To keep contending effectively in the worldwide economy, HEI need a rapidly changing work environment, which requires a more taught and exceptionally talented labor force contrasted with the ongoing circumstance. As well as meeting the necessities of an HEI, the job satisfaction should be promoted among the staff at each HEI to emphatically affect the staff as well as the organization. Hence, the significance of this study is derived from the idea that more satisfied non-academic staff can serve the students and academics better.

Job satisfaction was broadly concentrated on in the management field (Spector, 1997) because of its importance to the physical and mental prosperity of the employees. Low job satisfaction increases absenteeism and turnover (Avram et al., 2015). These days, job satisfaction still an intriguing subject for some scientists and an idea that ought to be perceived and observed for the welfare of any organization. Job satisfaction as a concept developed by Taylor in 1911 who stated that earnings of the job, incentive payments, promotion, appreciation and opportunities for progress could lead to the increased job satisfaction (Ahmed et al., 2010).

Job satisfaction is characterized as the degree to which an employee is content or even

satisfied with their work. It is a measure of the degree to which an individual likes their work (Fields, 2002). Herzberg's two-factor theory 1966 is one of the most outstanding known job satisfaction theories. Herzberg distinguishes between motivators or intrinsic factors including achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth; and hygiene factors or extrinsic factors including company policy, supervision, relationship with boss, work conditions, salary, and relationship with peers. In other perspectives, job satisfaction has three dimensions: intrinsic, extrinsic, and general reinforcement elements (Gunlu et al., 2010). Intrinsic job satisfaction assesses elements such as success in the job and the ability to use one's abilities as well as self-defectiveness, authority, and activity (Gunlu et al., 2010). Advancement, business policy, supervisor-human, and supervisor-technical relations, salary, and recognition are all important in determining extrinsic satisfaction. Job satisfaction is measured by adding together intrinsic and extrinsic variables (Gunlu et al., 2010).

In HEI, there are two sorts of labor forces, which are academic and non-academic. They are interdependent and it is important to know their satisfaction towards their jobs. Non-academics are important for the HEI and their satisfaction can influence student satisfaction and the academic staff as well (Al-Hanhanah & Al-Harethi, 2019). They are responsible for the daily activities of the HEI (Smerek & Peterson, 2007). Accordingly, the commitment of non-academic staff exceptionally influences the students experience at the HEI. In the educational field, most studies focused on the satisfaction of the academic staff (e.g., Olorunsola, 2012, Hong et al., 2012, AL-Mutairi, et al., 2017, Tahir & Sajid, 2019; Szromek & Wolniak, 2020) while other few studies solely focused on non-academics (e.g., Yapa et al., 2014; Seng & Wai, 2015; Wan Ahmad & Abdurahman, 2015, Alias et al., 2017, Al-Hanhanah & Al-Harethi, 2019).

As indicated by Nawi et al. (2016), both academic and non-academic staffs assume a significant part in the HEI. The strength of the HEI is not just subject to the nature of educating and learning, yet the management likewise assumes a significant part in dealing with all matters connected with the organization of the HEI. There are several studies that emphasis on job satisfaction among non-academics (e.g., Yapa et al., 2014; and Seng & Wai, 2015; Alias et al., 2017, Al-Hanhanah & Al-Harethi, 2019). In this regard, the most noteworthy predictor variable of job satisfaction is the opportunity for growth, followed by the nature of work, meaningful work, and recognition for accomplishment respectively (Al-Hanhanah & Al-Harethi, 2019). Alias et al. (2017) found that knowledge management and training are highly influenced general non-academic staff satisfaction. In addition, job satisfaction is a multidimensional construct, and various variables gain significance in various settings, consequently yielding conflicting outcomes (Al-Haroon & Al-Qahtani, 2020). Thus, the variables that influence job satisfaction have not extensively been examined especially in the educational field in Kuwait.

Although many researchers have increasingly studied the concept of job satisfaction of non-academic staff, little research has been devoted to focus on the job satisfaction of non-academic staff in the educational sector particularly in Kuwait. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the job satisfaction in this sector. Taking this into account, this study intended to achieve the following three aims:

1. To examine the level of job satisfaction among non-academic staff in in a not-for-profit university in Kuwait.
2. To identify the factors that contributes to their job satisfaction.
3. To identify the influence of several demographic variables on their job satisfaction.

## METHODS

This quantitative cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in a not-for-profit university in Kuwait to achieve the study objective. A questionnaire was distributed to all non-academic staff (90 employees) between March and April 2022. The first part of the questionnaire focused on the data related to demographic characteristics of the respondents: this covered gender, marital status, nationality, educational level, age, years of experience and years of service. The second part of the questionnaires utilized the short version of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Weiss et al., 1967) to measure the job satisfaction of the non-academic staff. MSQ is made of twenty features with every feature addressed with only one satisfaction item. It is one of the most widely used instruments in the measurement of job satisfaction and its validity and reliability has been proven over the 40 years that it has been in use (Olorunsola, 2012). It has been used to measure job satisfaction in a variety of sectors, including education. Its features 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. It therefore measures three satisfaction scales, namely intrinsic satisfaction (i.e., how individuals feel about their work duties), extrinsic satisfaction (i.e., how individuals feel about the aspects of their working conditions that are external to the work itself), and general satisfaction (Weiss et al., 1967). Responses to each item were recorded on a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Job satisfaction levels were calculated by summing the corresponding sub scale item scores. A total of 12, and 6 items measured intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, respectively. The general job satisfaction score was calculated by summing the individual scores of all the 20 items.

The questionnaire was distributed through the internal email system in the university. The participants were explained the purposes of the study and asked to complete the questionnaire. The instructions for completing the questionnaire were given on a cover page to avoid any misunderstanding about the issue. Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality, and participation was voluntary. The data that obtained from the study were analyzed using various statistics in SPSS program. Descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages) were computed. Independent-samples t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to examine demographic differences in job satisfaction. Regression analysis was used to identify the predictors of overall job satisfaction. Results with a p-value <0.05 considered to be statistically significant.

### Data Analysis and Findings

Fifty-one employees participated in this study. A summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Two thirds of participants (66.7%) were males and third (33.3%) were females. Approximately half of participants (47.1%) belong to the age range of 41 years and above, while third of them (31.4%) belong to the age range of 31 to 40 years. More than two thirds of respondents (69.4%) were married. More than three quarters of participants (82.6%) had bachelor's degrees. Two thirds of participants (66.7%) were Kuwaiti. More than third of participants (38.5%) had 6 to 15 years and 16 years and more of experience. Approximately 40% of participants had 11 years and more of service and 33% of them had 6 to 10 years of service.

| <b>Demographic characteristics</b> | <b>Categories</b>  | <b>Freq.</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Gender                             | Male               | 34           | 66.7%             |
|                                    | Female             | 17           | 33.3%             |
| Age range                          | 20 to 30 years     | 11           | 21.6%             |
|                                    | 31 to 40 years     | 16           | 31.4%             |
|                                    | 41 years and above | 24           | 47.1%             |
| Marital status                     | Married            | 34           | 69.4%             |
|                                    | Single             | 15           | 30.6%             |
| Education level                    | Bachelors          | 38           | 82.6%             |
|                                    | Masters            | 8            | 17.4%             |
| Nationality                        | Kuwaiti            | 14           | 33.3%             |
|                                    | Non-Kuwaiti        | 28           | 66.7%             |
| Years of experience                | 5 years and less   | 9            | 23.1%             |
|                                    | 6 to 15 years      | 15           | 38.5%             |
|                                    | 16 years and more  | 15           | 38.5%             |
| Years of Service                   | 5 years and less   | 12           | 27.9%             |
|                                    | 6 to 10 years      | 14           | 32.6%             |
|                                    | 11 years and more  | 17           | 39.5%             |

Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of participants' responses to the MSQ. The 5-point rating scale was transformed into a three-point scale by recoding 'very satisfied' as 'satisfied' and 'very dissatisfied' as 'dissatisfied'. The following scale is used to facilitate reporting the rest of the results.

- High satisfaction: Satisfied percentage >75%
- Medium satisfaction: Satisfied percentage between 50% to 75%
- Low satisfaction: Satisfied percentage <50%

Regarding the items that assessed intrinsic satisfaction, as shown in Table 2 participants were highly satisfied with achievement, activity, social services, and moral values; while they were moderately satisfied with independence, variety, ability utilization, responsibility, security, authority, creativity, and social status. In relation to the items that assessed extrinsic satisfaction, participants were highly satisfied with supervision-human relations and technical supervision, while they were moderately satisfied with recognition and company policies and practices. On the other hand, there was low satisfaction on advancement and compensation. Regarding other two items, participants were moderately satisfied with working conditions and co-workers' relationships.

The internal consistency of the MSQ was determined by computing Cronbach's alpha coefficients (i.e., reliability analysis) (Table 3). The alpha coefficients that emerged for the MSQ and its two subscales ranged from 0.958 to 0.893. To explain the level of satisfaction, the following scale is used:

- High satisfaction: Calculated mean ( $M \geq 2.5$ )
- Medium satisfaction: Calculated mean ( $1.87 \geq M < 2.49$ )
- Low satisfaction: Calculated mean ( $M < 1.87$ )

The mean score of general satisfaction and intrinsic satisfaction are 2.51 and 2.57 respectively, which imply high level of satisfaction among participants. On the other hand, the

mean score of extrinsic satisfaction is 2.39, which imply medium level of satisfaction among participants.

The t-test and ANOVA were conducted to look for significant differences in the level of satisfaction of participants identified in the study in terms of four background variables that have two groups (i.e., gender, marital status, nationality, and educational level) and three background variables that have more than two groups (i.e., age range, years of experience, and years of service) respectively. Results are summarized in Table 4. When the mean score of features was compared across the seven background variables, there were strong significant differences in the job satisfaction mean scores for nationality only. Non-Kuwaiti participants had high level of intrinsic ( $M=2.78$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), extrinsic ( $M=2.63$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), and general ( $M=2.72$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) satisfaction while Kuwaiti participants had medium level of intrinsic ( $M=2.26$ ), extrinsic ( $M=2.04$ ), and general ( $M=2.18$ ) satisfaction. On the other hand, no significant differences in the job satisfaction identified in the study can be related to the other six background variables of the participants.

| <b>Scale of Job Satisfaction</b> |                              | <b>Dissatisfied</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Satisfied</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>Intrinsic satisfaction</b>    | Achievement                  | 2 (3.9%)            | 4 (7.8%)       | 45 (88.2%)       |
|                                  | Activity                     | 3 (5.9%)            | 4 (7.8%)       | 44 (86.3%)       |
|                                  | Social service               | 2 (3.9%)            | 7 (13.7%)      | 42 (82.4%)       |
|                                  | Moral values                 | 3 (5.9%)            | 9 (17.6%)      | 39 (76.5%)       |
|                                  | Independence                 | 5 (9.8%)            | 10 (19.6%)     | 36 (70.6%)       |
|                                  | Variety                      | 7 (13.7%)           | 9 (17.6%)      | 35 (68.6%)       |
|                                  | Ability utilization          | 9 (17.6%)           | 7 (13.7%)      | 35 (68.6%)       |
|                                  | Responsibility               | 10 (19.6%)          | 10 (19.6%)     | 31 (60.8%)       |
|                                  | Security                     | 13 (25.5%)          | 8 (15.7%)      | 30 (58.8%)       |
|                                  | Authority                    | 3 (5.9%)            | 19 (37.3%)     | 29 (56.9%)       |
|                                  | Creativity                   | 7 (13.7%)           | 15 (29.4%)     | 29 (56.9%)       |
| <b>Extrinsic satisfaction</b>    | Social status                | 12 (23.5%)          | 11 (21.6%)     | 28 (54.9%)       |
|                                  | Supervision-human relations  | 5 (9.8%)            | 3 (5.9%)       | 43 (84.3%)       |
|                                  | Supervision-technical        | 3 (5.9%)            | 9 (17.6%)      | 39 (76.5%)       |
|                                  | Company policies & practices | 9 (17.6%)           | 7 (13.7%)      | 35 (68.6%)       |
|                                  | Recognition                  | 14 (27.5%)          | 6 (11.8%)      | 31 (60.8%)       |
|                                  | Advancement                  | 22 (43.1%)          | 6 (11.8%)      | 23 (45.1%)       |
|                                  | Compensation                 | 20 (39.2%)          | 9 (17.6%)      | 22 (43.1%)       |
|                                  | Working conditions           | 8 (15.7%)           | 6 (11.8%)      | 37 (72.5%)       |
|                                  | Co-workers                   | 12 (23.5%)          | 6 (11.8%)      | 33 (64.7%)       |

| <b>Scale and subscales</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> | <b>No. of items</b> | <b>Reliability coefficient</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Intrinsic Satisfaction     | 2.57        | 0.509     | 12                  | 0.934                          |
| Extrinsic Satisfaction     | 2.39        | 0.640     | 6                   | 0.893                          |
| General Satisfaction       | 2.51        | 0.536     | 20                  | 0.958                          |

| Variables           | Categories (N)           | Intrinsic Satisfaction |        |        | Extrinsic Satisfaction |       |        | General Satisfaction |        |        |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------|--------|------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------|--------|--------|
|                     |                          | M                      | t/F    | p      | M                      | t/F   | p      | M                    | t/F    | p      |
| Gender              | Male (N=34)              | 2.61                   | 0.906  | 0.369  | 2.41                   | 0.230 | 0.819  | 2.55                 | 0.865  | 0.391  |
|                     | Female (N=17)            | 2.48                   |        |        | 2.36                   |       |        | 2.41                 |        |        |
| Marital status      | Married (N=34)           | 2.66                   | 1.464  | 0.150  | 2.50                   | 1.411 | 0.165  | 2.61                 | 1.623  | 0.111  |
|                     | Single (N=15)            | 2.44                   |        |        | 2.23                   |       |        | 2.35                 |        |        |
| Nationality         | Kuwaiti (N=14)           | 2.26                   | -3.91  | 0.000* | 2.04                   | -3.34 | 0.002* | 2.18                 | -3.78  | 0.001* |
|                     | Non-Kuwaiti (N=28)       | 2.78                   |        |        | 2.63                   |       |        | 2.72                 |        |        |
| Educational level   | Bachelor's degree (N=38) | 2.57                   | -0.036 | 0.971  | 2.42                   | 0.355 | 0.724  | 2.51                 | -0.016 | 0.987  |
|                     | Master's degree (N=8)    | 2.57                   |        |        | 2.33                   |       |        | 2.51                 |        |        |
| Age range           | 20 to 30 years (N=11)    | 2.61                   | 1.296  | 0.283  | 2.42                   | 1.581 | 0.216  | 2.53                 | 1.516  | 0.230  |
|                     | 31 to 40 years (N=16)    | 2.40                   |        |        | 2.17                   |       |        | 2.32                 |        |        |
|                     | 41 years & above (N=24)  | 2.66                   |        |        | 2.53                   |       |        | 2.62                 |        |        |
| Years of experience | 5 years & less (N=9)     | 2.59                   | 2.406  | 0.104  | 2.39                   | 1.283 | 0.289  | 2.52                 | 1.847  | 0.172  |
|                     | 6 to 15 years (N=15)     | 2.39                   |        |        | 2.17                   |       |        | 2.32                 |        |        |
|                     | 16 years & more (N=15)   | 2.76                   |        |        | 2.53                   |       |        | 2.67                 |        |        |
| Years of service    | 5 years & less (N=12)    | 2.53                   | 0.044  | 0.957  | 2.39                   | 0.111 | 0.895  | 2.47                 | 0.026  | 0.974  |
|                     | 6 to 10 years (N=14)     | 2.56                   |        |        | 2.30                   |       |        | 2.49                 |        |        |
|                     | 11 years & more (N=17)   | 2.58                   |        |        | 2.40                   |       |        | 2.51                 |        |        |

Linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether gender, age, marital status, educational level, nationality, years of experience, and years of service predict general job satisfaction (Table 5). The results showed that gender, marital status, educational level, years of experience, and years of service were not significant predictors ( $P > 0.05$ ) of general satisfaction. Nationality ( $B = 0.634$ ,  $t = 3.737$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ) was significant predictor of general satisfaction. A significant regression equation emerged ( $F = 3.345$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), and the corresponding  $R^2$  value was 0.484. This indicated that 48.4% of the variance in general satisfaction was explained by nationality; conversely, 51.6% of the variance was attributable to other factors.

|                     | Standardized Coefficients (B) | t      | p             |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------|---------------|
| Gender              | -0.220                        | -1.291 | 0.209         |
| Age                 | -0.034                        | -0.110 | 0.913         |
| Marital Status      | -0.167                        | -0.843 | 0.407         |
| Educational Level   | -0.072                        | -0.437 | 0.666         |
| Nationality         | 0.634                         | 3.737  | <b>0.001*</b> |
| Years of Experience | 0.083                         | 0.359  | 0.722         |
| Years of Service    | -0.184                        | -0.748 | 0.462         |

Dependent variable: overall job satisfaction.  $R = 0.695$ ,  $R^2 = 0.484$ , adjusted  $R^2 = 0.339$ . ( $F = 3.345$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ).  $p^*$  indicates significant results.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the level of job satisfaction and the influence of several demographic variables on job satisfaction among the non-academic staff of a not-for-profit

university in Kuwait. According to the findings, non-academic staff had high level of general satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies such as Olorunsola (2012). Specifically, they had high level of intrinsic satisfaction, while they had medium level of extrinsic satisfaction. This indicates that they felt well about their work duties whereas they fairly felt about the aspects of their working conditions that are external to the work itself. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Al-Hanhanah & Al-Harethi, 2019; Herzberg, 1966). Thus, the Herzberg's theory extends its durability. Non-academic staff were also highly satisfied with six features of MSQ namely achievement, activity, social services, moral values, human relations, and technical supervision while they had low satisfaction on two features namely advancement and compensation. On the other hand, they were moderately satisfied with other twelve features of MSQ.

In addition, nationality was the only demographic variable that significantly predicted job satisfaction. There was a significant difference in job satisfaction between Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti staff. Non-Kuwaiti staff had higher satisfaction (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, and general) than Kuwaiti staff. Possible explanation for this finding is that Kuwaiti staff may have high work assumptions, which may not be sufficiently satisfied, and this can unfavorably affect their degree of job satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

Non-academic staff constitutes an important pillar of the education system, and this pillar should be reinforced and strengthened by enhancing their job satisfaction. The study provides insight into factors that impact on job satisfaction using a not-for-profit university in Kuwait as sample area. In this study, the sources of job dissatisfaction were primarily related to compensation and advancement. The results that emerged from this study can help the management in designing effective human resource policies. For example, the management needs to improve the job satisfaction levels among its non-academic staff through increasing payments and incentives and providing opportunities for job advancement. Management could be more responsive to the academic career development programs of the staff for their advancement. Management could also ensure that existing benefits for staff are fairly and competitively allocated to them. In this regard, the remunerating framework should be founded on the tasks done, abilities, knowledge, and assigned responsibilities so staff feels motivated towards their work and fulfilling the compensation feature of their job. Specifically, to improve the general satisfaction of non-academic staff, management should improve extrinsic factors (e.g., increasing staff' wages, providing bonuses for the completion of additional tasks, and facilitating the promotion process). The findings can be used to design strategies to improve and maintain a high level of job satisfaction, commitment, and performance among non-academic staff who work in the educational field sector in Kuwait.

The sample used in the present study consisted of only the non-academic staff who worked at not-for-profit University in Kuwait; therefore, this limits the generalizability of the present study. Further research on the job satisfaction of non-academic staff who works in various universities in Kuwait should be conducted to address the limitations of the present study and extend the present findings.

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