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THE PERCEIVED QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE AND JOB FACET SATISFACTION

by

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ABSTRACT

To improve our understanding of the influence of the domains of the quality of working life on job satisfaction, recent research suggests that job facet satisfaction may be more strongly related to specific job domains than to overall job satisfaction. This study examined the relationships between job facet satisfaction, in eleven specific job facets, overall satisfaction and the perceived quality of working life. The results supported the hypothesis. Similar results were obtained after factor analysing the specific job facets indicating the use of studying specific job domains and their respective job facet satisfactions.

OPSOMMING

Ter uitbreiding van ons begrip van watter uitwerking die domeine van die gehalte van werklewe op werkbevrediging het, dui onlangse navorsing daarop dat werkfasetbevrediging moontlik 'n sterker verband met spesifieke werkdomeine as met algemene werkbevrediging toon. In hierdie studie is die verhouding tussen werkfasetbevrediging t.o.v. elf spesifieke werkfasette, algehele bevrediging en die waargenome gehalte van werklewe ondersoek. Die bevindinge ondersteun die gestelde hipotese. Soortgelyke resultate is verkry na faktoranalise van die spesifieke werkfasette, wat daarop dui dat dit nuttig kan wees om spesifieke werkdomeine en die ooreenstemmende werkfasetbevrediging daaraan verbonde te bestudeer.

Research into the quality of working life (QWL) has for the past two decades enjoyed prominence, judging by the frequency of reviews and other published material. Examples of these are: Davis and Cherns, (1975); Quinn and Staines, (1979); Champoux, (1981) and Rice, (1984). Despite the popularity of the concept, there continues to be confusion about the term ''quality of working life'' (Nadler & Lawler, 1983). Furthermore there is the absence of a theory that can integrate the diverse activities embodied in the concept (Rice, McFarlin, Hunt & Near, 1985). To overcome the gap in the theory Rice et al. (1985) have proposed a model of the perceived quality of working life (pQWL) which largely derives from the work of Andrews and Withey (1976), Campbell (1976, 1981) and Locke (1969, 1976).

In essence the model postulates that the totality of life consists of many specific domains in which the individual participates. Such domains include: family, work, friendships, religion, and free time. Central to this perspective is the attitudinal component ''affect'' which is a variable psychological condition or feeling of pleasure, happiness, well-being or satisfaction (Naylor, Pritchard & Ilgen, 1980). Taking the above into consideration regarding the perceived quality of life (pQL) and its domains, a specific domain is proposed for the indefinite number of work experiences which may be combined additively to yield an overall index representing the perceived quality of working life for a particular individual. This may be represented as

$$pQWL = \Sigma\ (pQWL{:}D_i) \qquad \text{(Equation 1)}$$

where pQWL refers to the overall perceived quality of working life and $pQWL{:}D_i$ refers to the perceived quality of working life for each of the domains.

Equation 1 also suggests that within any domain there may be multiple outcomes that can be summed to yield a value for that domain. Each outcome represents a position in the value hierarchy of a particular individual. Rice et al. (1985) propose that individuals evaluate each outcome against a personal standard which in its turn is weighted by its importance to the individual. Equation 1 may thus be expanded to include outcomes, standards and weights as follows:

$$pQWL{:}\ D = \Sigma\ (w_j)\ (o_j - s_j) \qquad \text{(Equation 2)}$$

where w_j refers to the importance weighting, o_j is the outcome and s_j is the standard for that outcome within the domain. By using equation 2 it is theoretically possible to determine the perceived quality of life for the domain of work by summing across all weighted $o_j - s_j$ discrepancies for all the relevant outcomes. Flanagan (1978) and Michalos (1980, 1982) provide strong support for this additive view of the quality of life.

In reviewing the literature, Rice (1984) concludes that organisational work can have important effects on the quality of life. One of the outcomes of work is the person's appraisal of happiness, represented by the term ''job satisfaction'', which is an affective or emotional response.

Job satisfaction is probably one of the most extensively researched subjects in the field of industrial and organisational psychology. For reviews see Griffin and Bateman (1986) and Locke (1976, 1984).

Job satisfaction has been viewed as a global concept (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951) and as a multifaceted composite of affect (Smith, Kendal & Hulin, 1969). In their review of the relationship between overall satisfaction and job facet satisfaction, Wanous and Lawler (1972) concluded that job facet satisfaction was the appropriate way to study job satisfaction based on the assumption of linearity. Locke (1969, 1976, 1984) has similarly proposed a theory of job satisfaction according to which satisfaction with the whole job is determined by the sum of facet satisfactions. According to Locke's range of affect hypothesis, the importance of the facet determines the range of affect for that facet. Research by McFarlin, Rice, Schweizer and Paullay, (1987) indicated differences in the prediction of overall and facet satisfaction using importance weightings which suggests that facet satisfaction may yield stronger relationships with specific domains of the perceived quality of working life than overall satisfaction would. This study focusses on the comparisons of predicting job facet satisfaction and overall satisfaction from the perceived quality of life. The following hypothesis is offered:

Hypothesis: The perceived quality of working life (pQWL), as stated in equation 2, is a better predictor of job facet satisfaction than of overall satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Seventy-seven male and forty-six female full-time employees in a large computer bureau participated in the study (n = 123). The mean age was 31 years (standard deviation 8 years). The sample included all levels of the organisational hierarchy as defined by the Paterson job grading system (A to E bands).

Measurements

A questionnaire consisting of items measuring overall job satisfaction (facet free satisfaction) and four measures relevant to eleven specific job facets, was used in this study.

Overall job satisfaction (Facet free job satisfaction)

The five-item scale developed by Quinn and Staines (1979) for the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan was used to measure overall job satisfaction. The Cronbach alpha reliability was 0.76 for the present sample.

Job facets

The eleven job facets used in the present study are listed in Table 1. These facets were selected for their appropriateness given the nature of employment of the subject sample. For each facet four types of data were collected.

Facet amount (outcome)

Respondents were asked to report the amount of each job facet they were currently experiencing on their jobs. A five-point scale with the following verbal anchors was used: none at all (1), very little (2), a moderate amount (3), very much (4), an extraordinary amount (5). On the basis of magnitude estimation analyses, Bass, Cascio and O'Connor (1974) concluded that verbal anchors provide minimal overlap between scale points and form approximately equal interval values.

Perceived have-want discrepancy (standard)

These questions asked respondents to compare their current situation with what they wanted. For every facet, a five-point scale was used to report this discrepancy. The five alternatives were: want much more (1), want somewhat more (2), want no more no less (3), want somewhat less (4), want much less (5). The scores were transformed to reflect a perfect match between facet amount and wanted amount, i.e. want no more or less (0), a moderate discrepancy i.e., want somewhat more or less (1), and a large discrepancy score, i.e. want much more or less (2). This reduced the five-point scale to a three-point scale.

Importance (weight)

Respondents were asked to report on a seven point scale "how important" each of the job facets was to them individually. This scale had two verbal anchors at each end: "not at all important" and "extremely important".

Job facet satisfaction

Using the Delighted-Terrible scale developed by Andrews and Withey (1976), respondents were requested to report their satisfaction with each job facet. The seven-point scale uses the following verbal anchors: delighted (7), pleased (6), mostly satisfied (5), mixed: about equally satisfied and dissatisfied (4), mostly dissatisfied (3), unhappy (2), terrible (1).

The four job facet measures were set out on separate pages of the questionnaire. Other sections of the questionnaire aimed at collecting data beyond the scope of the present study preceded and followed the four sets of questions described here.

Procedure

Respondents completed the questionnaire in small groups (10-20 people at a time) during office hours in the presence of the researcher who could clarify any difficulty encountered with the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were returned at the end of the session in a sealed envelope to emphasise the confidentiality of the data.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the four scales relevant to the eleven job facets: facet amount, perceived have-want discrepancy, importance, job facet satisfaction and the composite perceived quality of working life scale calculated as described in equation 2.

TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE RELEVANT JOB FACETS

Job facet	FA		PD		I		FS		pQWL	
	X	s	X	s	X	s	X	s	X	s
Opportunity for action	3,1	1,1	0,9	0,7	5,5	1,3	4,4	1,3	12,2	9,4
Freedom to work own way	3,1	0,9	0,8	0,7	5,4	1,3	4,5	1,3	12,9	9,2
Goal involvement	2,9	1,0	1,0	0,7	5,3	1,4	4,0	1,3	10,1	8,1
Learning opportunities	3,0	1,0	1,2	0,7	5,9	1,4	4,1	1,4	10,7	9,2
Suggesting new ideas	3,0	1,0	0,9	0,6	5,6	1,3	4,1	1,3	11,8	9,1
Promotion opportunities	2,5	0,9	1,4	0,6	6,1	1,4	3,4	1,5	6,1	8,4
Problem solving	3,5	1,0	0,8	0,7	5,6	1,4	4,6	1,2	16,0	9,6
Mental effort	3,8	0,8	0,7	0,7	5,8	1,3	4,7	1,2	18,5	8,5
Performance feedback	2,6	0,9	1,2	0,7	5,6	1,5	3,8	1,3	7,7	8,0
Authority to do things	2,9	0,9	0,9	0,7	5,6	1,2	4,1	1,3	11,4	8,3
Responsibility	3,4	0,9	0,9	0,7	5,8	1,2	4,3	1,4	14,7	8,7

Note N = 119-123. FA = facet amount; PD = perceived have-want discrepancy; I = facet importance; FS = facet satisfaction; pQWL = perceived quality of working life.

TABLE 2
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN pQWL AND JOB FACET SATISFACTION AND OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION

Job facet	Correlations between *pQWL and FS*	*pQWL and JS*
Opportunity for action	0,58	0,45
Freedom to work own way	0,61	0,51
Goal involvement	0,56	0,46
Learning opportunities	0,58	0,49
Suggesting new ideas	0,59	0,41
Promotion opportunities	0,54	0,42
Problem solving	0,58	0,38
Mental effort	0,52	0,37
Performance feedback	0,68	0,33
Authority to do things	0,67	0,41
Responsibility	0,50	0,43
mean r	0,58	0,42

Note: With minimum n = 119, r > 0,256, is significant at p < 0,01 (two tailed). pQWL = perceived quality of working life; FS = job facet satisfaction; JS = overall job satisfaction.

As shown in table 2, the results support the hypothesis that the perceived quality of working life is a better predictor of facet satisfaction than of overall job satisfaction. Each correlation coefficient between pQWL and job facet satisfaction was substantially higher than that between pQWL and overall job satisfaction. R-squared accounted for 33% of the variance in the case of the former as opposed to 17% in the latter.

One of the objectives implicit in the current conceptualisation of pQWL is to identify specific domains which together contribute to the pQWL. To this end the pQWL scores were subjected to a factor analysis with varimax rotation. The rotated factor solution is presented in table 3. Two factors were extracted using Kaiser's criterion (retaining factors with eigenvalues > 1). The two factors accounted for 67% of the variance in the sample. Stevens (1986) suggests that the Kaiser criterion will accurately determine the number of factors when the number of variables is less than 30 and the communalities are in the order of 0,70. The mean communality for this sample was 68,5 which closely satisfies this condition. Factor scores were calculated for each individual.

TABLE 3
ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE pQWL DIMENSIONS

pQWL dimension	Factor 1	Factor 2
Opportunity for action	0,88	0,11
Freedom to work own way	0,83	0,04
Goal involvement	0,64	0,40
Learning opportunities	0,34	0,71
Suggesting new ideas	0,76	0,34
Promotion opportunities	0,02	0,86
Problem solving	0,79	0,21
Mental effort	0,69	0,24
Performance feedback	0,38	0,66
Authority to do things	0,80	0,26
Responsibility	0,81	0,29

Note: With n = 119-123 r > 0,256, is significant at p < 0,01 and r > 0,19 is significant at p < 0,05.

To facilitate the interpretation of factors, Stevens (1986) recommends that the sample size be considered in determining the significance of factor loadings. Only factor loadings > 0,50 will be considered in interpreting the factors (n = 123, p < 0,01).

The variables loading highest on factor 1 indicate the importance of a stimulating job content. This factor is well documented in other research such as Hackman and Oldham (1980) as an important core dimension of work. Locke (1984) notes that individuals value work that is important to them and which they perceive to be significant in the context of their value systems.

Job dimensions such as responsibility, autonomy and mental challenge contribute significantly to this factor. Factor 2 reflects a growth/development dimension. Variables loading on this factor clearly indicate the significance of individual's desire to learn new skills and to have promotional opportunities. The need for feedback on performance is also included in this factor. Employee growth need strength is described both by Hackman and Oldham (1980) and Herzberg et al. (1959) as important motivational issues in job performance.

The hypothesis was tested using the two factors as independent variables and job facet and overall satisfaction as dependent variables. The results are reported in table 4.

TABLE 4
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN pQWL FACTORS AND JOB FACET SATISFACTION

Job facet satisfaction	Factor 1	Factor 2
Opportunity for action	0,62	0,18
Freedom to work own way	0,58	0,09
Goal involvement	0,43	0,41
Learning opportunities	0,24	0,43
Suggesting new ideas	0,44	0,36
Promotion opportunities	0,12	0,52
Problem solving	0,55	0,22
Mental effort	0,51	0,29
Performance feedback	0,32	0,45
Authority to do things	0,53	0,26
Responsibility	0,53	0,24

Note: With n = 119-123 r > 0,256, is significant at p < 0,01 and r > 0,19 is significant at p < 0,05.

The correlation between factor 1 and overall job satisfaction was r = 0,41 and with factor 2, r = 0,42.

The results indicate that the correlation between the pQWL factors and job facet satisfaction is improved only in respect of those variables with significant loadings on the respective factors. In the case of factor 1, the coefficients of the following job facet satisfactions were higher than for overall satisfaction: opportunity for action, freedom to work own way, goal involvement, suggesting new ideas, problem solving, mental effort, authority to do things and responsibility. For factor 2, the following job facet satisfactions were more strongly correlated with pQWL than overall job satisfaction: learning opportunities, promotion opportunity and performance feedback.

DISCUSSION

There is a substantial body of literature reporting positive relationships between work experiences and overall satisfaction (see Michalos, 1986a, 1986b). These studies focus on affective reactions to work. To enhance our understanding of job satisfaction it is necessary to consider the prediction of job facet satisfaction. Following the theory of job satisfaction presented by Locke (1984), in which he proposes that satisfaction with the job as a whole is determined by the sum of the satisfactions associated with each job facet constituting that job, the challenge in this study has been to extend this hypothesis to include the pQWL as proposed by Rice et al. (1985).

The results obtained in this study support the hypothesis that the specific domains of the perceived quality of working life are better predictors of job facet satisfaction than of overall job satisfaction. This suggests that individuals are better able to associate specific affective responses to the corresponding pQWL domain than with an overall assessment of their feelings toward their jobs. This result was obtained either when

correlating the specific pQWL component with its affective response or when the pQWL components were reduced to psychologically meaningful domains of work life.

This study suggests that using the conceptualisation of pQWL may enhance the implementation of such programs as it is possible to relate employees affective responses directly at the domain of work life addressed rather than at an overall measure which the individual may perceive as psychologically distant. The impact of ensuing interventions may consequently be more accurately evaluated and energy expended where job facet satisfaction is unacceptable.

Limitations of this study are that only a limited number of work domains were addressed. Future research needs to extend the list to include not only work domains but also non-work domains as suggested by Rice et al. (1985). Furthermore the methodology employed in this study was limiting as respondents were restricted in the choice of work domains. Again future research needs to employ a more individualistic approach allowing greater flexibility in determining the relevant domains pertinent to individuals' quality of working life.

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