

## **A Qualitative Study on Job Satisfaction among Blind and Visually Impaired Employees**

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### **ABSTRACT.**

Studies related to job satisfaction among employees with Blind and Visual Impairments (BVI) had been given less attention by researchers either locally or internationally. The objectives of this study were to investigate how employees with BVI perceived their job satisfaction, examine factors that lead to job satisfaction and causes of job dissatisfaction. A total of 12 respondents working in public sector, semi-government, private and NGO in the Klang Valley took part in this qualitative study. The data collected were through semi-structure and phone interview. Overall, the results demonstrated that BVI employees generally satisfied with their work. The research finding also indicated that factors which could lead to job satisfaction were relationships with colleagues, salary, benefits, recognition, physical conditions at work place, and working conditions within the company., Finally, the study found that causes of job dissatisfaction include feeling lonely and isolated; the management likes to see their disability rather than their abilities, no promotion opportunities, co-workers felt that they just need a job and salary, and no training is given.

### **Introduction**

The study on employee job satisfaction has drawn a great amount of interest from many researchers due to its relevance in helping organizations to achieve their business goals and objectives. According to Bowen & Schneider (1992), job satisfaction could affect organizational success such as customer satisfaction and financial performance. They further elaborated that if an employee is satisfied with their job duties and responsibilities, then they will form a positive sense of well-being that stimulates harder work efforts.

Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberg (2004) highlighted that individuals who are more satisfied with their jobs will be more motivated to accomplish organizational goals. This meant that when an employee is happy, they become more motivated to achieve their optimum level of performance. They are motivated to work harder because they perceive a great sense of value from their organization. Therefore, it became important for employers to know the levels of job satisfaction in conjunction with their strategic planning (Cocheo, 2004).

Bencsik & Nagy (2007) stated that job satisfaction tended to evolve around the factors of the individual's relationship to his or her salary, work conditions, the direction in which their work was moving, their advancement in the organization, and their social network within the organization. When employees perceived that an organization supported them as individuals as well as workers, there was a high level of satisfaction on the job (Poon, Salleh, & Senik, 2007). Although salary has always been considered a source of satisfaction or dissatisfaction for employees, the study carried out by (Cline, Reilly

& Moore, 2003; Yafang & Shih-Wang, 2008) showed that while it was an important variable, after a certain stage, it was not the most important one. In fact, working conditions had recently been seen as a significant factor for job satisfaction.

### **Problem Statement**

The literature studies indicated that the issue related to job satisfaction has become a key concern for management. Research found that there is a well-established relationship between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and organizational performance (Lee, 2002; Measure, D. 2003; Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). If employee satisfaction has a co relational relationship with so many critical outcomes, it is necessary to understand what correlates with employee satisfaction including the employees with special needs such as blind and visually impaired (BVI) employees.

Despite laws and business practices prohibiting discrimination against those with disabilities, people with disabilities are consistently underutilized in organizations (Sandra E. Spataro, 2007). In such situations, it is important for employers, particularly in Malaysia, to find out whether their BVI employees are satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs.

According to Simons and Enz (1995), employees have different job expectations and motivations. In order to motivate them effectively, it is beneficial to know how to deal with employees' personal characteristics. As such, this is even crucial when having the BVI employee because they are always considered as totally different compared to their colleagues. In addition, no research had been conducted in the area of job satisfaction among the BVI employees in Malaysia. Therefore, it is important for employers who hire the BVI employees to understand their needs and also to find out their job satisfaction.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study has four major objectives. These are:

1. To investigate how BVI employees perceived their job satisfaction.
2. To identify factors that lead to job satisfaction among the BVI employees.
3. To examine causes which can lead to the job dissatisfaction among the BVI employees
4. To forward recommendation to improve job satisfaction for BVI employees.

### **Research question**

This qualitative research is to answer the following questions:

1. How BVI employee perceived their job satisfaction?
2. What factors could contribute to job satisfaction among the BVI employees?
3. What are the causes leading to job dissatisfaction among the BVI employees?

### **Significance of the study**

This study will be able to provide employers and government agencies with useful data and knowledge in the areas of job satisfaction of BVI employees. Based on the research findings, many parties, especially the employers who hired the BVI employees may have a better understanding on their BVI employees. Besides that, the findings may provide employers or the Ministry of Human Resource with valuable information to come out with an effective programme to improve not only job satisfaction, but also performance of the BVI employees in future.

### **Definition of the terms**

#### **a. Job satisfaction**

It is referring to a work attitude that represents a sense of inner feeling or pride when performing a certain task or job (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000).

#### **b. Blind and visually impaired**

Anastasiow Kirk and Gallagher (2000: 413) discuss the terms of vision or blind from the perspective of special education. They argued that the visually impaired can be classified into three main categories:

1. Moderate vision  
Moderate vision problems can be corrected with a particular vision device.
2. Vision that makes it difficult (Severe)  
They can still use assistive devices to assist them in learning. Sometimes they are also equated with low vision or blindness.
3. Severe vision (Profound )  
They cannot use visual tools to help their vision. So, they will use their sense of touch and hearing in learning.

## **Methodology**

### **i. Target population**

According to Zikmund (2003:373), the target population refers to a group of specific population elements that are applicable to the research. In this descriptive study, the target populations are BVI employees only and they are working as a full-time employee in their respective organizations.

### **ii. Sampling technique**

The sample or respondents involved in this study are BVI employees while convenience sampling technique will be used. According to Rohana, Noriati and Catherine S.F. (2011), convenience sampling is a non-restricted and non-probability sampling, in which field workers have the freedom to choose whomever they find. It is always the cheapest and easiest to conduct the study. In this connection, the subjects or respondents will be selected based on the convenience of the respondents who are working in the Klang Valley. The total number subjects took parts in this study were 12 BVI employees regardless of their gender and education backgrounds.

### **iii. Interview method**

In this qualitative study, interview method would be used. In order to ensure the smooth running of the interview, semi-structured interviews will be used to interview the respondents. This means that the interviewer may use an interview sequence with predetermined questions. For each interview session, the interviewer would use the same interview sequence to conduct the interview in exactly the same way to avoid biasness that may result from inconsistent interviewing practices.

The qualitative data collected via interview will be transcribed. The data has been categorized into several themes and coded on the basis of how respondents perceived their job satisfaction; factors leading to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

## **Theory and conceptual framework**

In this section, the researcher used the Fedric Herzberg Two Factors Theory to explain the overall job satisfaction and dissatisfaction phenomenon. As we all know, Herzberg's theory or model would provide some conceptual framework for understanding of those factors that could influence an individual's overall satisfaction with his or her job.

Herzberg's theory explained that there are two factors which determined the employee job satisfaction. These are motivation and hygiene factors. Both factors can help human resource practitioners to understand and evaluate employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction within their organizations. To recap the motivation-hygiene theory, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) highlighted that considerable differences existed between those variables that contributed to satisfaction and those that contributed to dissatisfaction. Therefore, Herzberg referred to the satisfying events as motivator factors and the dissatisfying incidents as hygiene factors. As such, this theory provided a thorough conceptual framework that helped to develop the conceptual framework of this research.

## **Findings**

In this section, the discussion would be focus on the interview outcomes. They were a total of 12 respondents who had been interviewed by the researcher. The qualitative data which was gathered from the interview has been analyzed and the data were divided into several sub-themes. The interview outcome can be seen in the section below.

In this paper, there are three research questions which needed to be answered. It includes the following:

1. How employees with BVI perceived their job satisfaction?
2. What factors lead to job satisfaction among the employees with BVI?
3. What causes job dissatisfaction among the employees with BVI?

### 1. How BVI employees perceived their job satisfaction?

Overall, the research findings showed that majority of the respondents perceived positively to their jobs. Among the satisfaction aspect which they express include possessing a secured job, team players, reasonable salary, the remuneration and relationship with colleagues. These are a few of their descriptions:

- (In general, I am happy and satisfied to work in the company. This is because I could contribute myself and be one of the team players in the division.)

“P, M, and 43”

Another respondent said that:

- (Satisfied or not satisfied, I would say that in overall, it is ok. In terms of benefits and salary, it is reasonable.)

“G, F and 34”

Furthermore, the respondents stressed that:

- (I am quite ok to work here. I believed that we have done our best to perform our job and seen everything is ok.)

“P, M, and 52”

Besides that, research finding indicated that they are contented and happy with their jobs. The following statement has supported such claims.

- (I am satisfied with my job. I think a person like us have not much request. We only want the job and earn a living.)

“P, M and 45”

In terms of relationships with their colleagues and superiors, many of them stated that they have a good relationship with them. One of the respondents said the following:

- (I like to work in my company. the working environment here is good. This is because our relationships with other colleagues are close. We already know each other for quite some time and they are very helpful. Then, the benefits given are also good. Therefore, I am satisfied to work here.)

“P, F and 53”

- (I am happy to work here. Our friendship is close and we have worked here for a long time. The sighted staffs are generally helpful.)

“SG, F and 52”

## **2. What factors lead to job satisfaction?**

In this section, the research finding would address some factors which could lead to the job satisfaction among the BVI employees. Through the interview, many respondents highlighted that factors which could contribute to their job satisfaction such as recognition, good relationship with colleagues, remuneration, support service, working environment etc. This was how they responded to this research question.

- (The most important factor that could lead to our job satisfaction is being recognized by the employer for our hard work. besides that, having a good relationship with our sighted colleagues is also another important factor. Meanwhile, the support services such as providing us with necessary equipment such as computer with JAWS will help us to perform our job effectively. Of course, the pay and benefits is also equally significant to us especially in this high expensed society.)

“P, M, and 43”

Furthermore, working environment and compensation has been identified as one of the factors which could lead to the job satisfaction.

- (I believed that a friendly working environment is the best to us. This is because we can move around easily and without any obstacle. Therefore, we can do more and interact with more people.)

“P, F, and 53”

Some of the respondent did mention on the remuneration factors. One of the respondents said the following.

- (I am satisfied with my job because the salary and benefits is satisfactory. We received increment and a lot of staff benefits especially medical protection and transportation arrangements)

“SG, F and 52”

Other than that, relationship with peers also leads to their job satisfaction.

- (I am happy to work here because our relationship with our colleagues is satisfactory and they are ok to help if necessary.)

“P, M and 43”

Another aspect mentioned by the respondents are being able to work independently. One of the respondents had highlighted this as below:

- (Factors that make me happy to work here is I can work independently, I recognize my work and the good working environment)

“P, M., 35”

## **3. What are the causes that lead to job dissatisfaction?**

Through the interview session, some of the factors which lead to the job dissatisfaction have been identified. It includes fairness treatment, promotion, career path, limited training opportunity, not looking at their ability etc.

- (I think there are several factors which could lead to job dissatisfaction especially for a BVI person. The most important one should be being accepted by colleagues, departmental staffs and our superiors. We wish that we are not being treated differently and labeled as very sensitive persons. We want to be friends with everyone).

“P, M, and 43”

Then, he further elaborated that:

- (There is another factor which always occurs between BVI employees and sighted colleagues. We would appreciate not being neglected or isolated in any kind of activity especially the activity which we can participate in. Of course, we always felt dissatisfaction concerning our management who only saw our disabilities and not value our abilities or our contributions.)

“M, P, 43”

Factors lead to job dissatisfaction is complex. One of the respondents stated the following:

- (There is one thing that always makes me not enjoy my work because my office is located near the big boss's office and this isolated me from others. However, my relationship with the top management is good. As a result, I seldom have interaction with the others and feel quite lonely.

“G, F and 34”

She continued to describe that she is not happy for seldom being given the opportunity to attend training courses.

- (In terms of training, I have not been given any training but I have to take my own initiative to find external training programmes such as in the NGO for me. The office training programme is not suitable for us and that is the reason why the blind is not included.)

“G, F and 34”

Furthermore, another respondent pointed out that there were specific areas that caused their dissatisfaction.

- (What causes dissatisfaction in my work place is that the blind staffs are quite lonely because our room is a bit isolated. Another thing is we never have any job promotion even a grade. This is quite sad. Our sighted friends think that we just need a job and salary. This is their perception.)

“P, M and 52”

Interestingly, research found that many of the BVI employees never had the chance to attend any training programme.

- (I have been working for so many years, my employer never sent me for training. Sighted friends always go for training and I quite admire them.)

“P, M and 45”

- (Dissatisfaction is because the employer is never interested to know what our contribution is. They always think differently about blind staff. This is not fair and they always ignore us.)

“P, M and 53”

This respondent had shared the following:

(We always get the last chance and minimum attention from the management. e.g., career enhancement, different kind of perception on us, trips to overseas and others benefits.)

“P; F: 40”

In terms of support services, some of the respondents described that:

- (One of the things always causing us not able to perform our best in our jobs is because we already asked for a computer numerous times for each one of us here. You see, we have three blind staffs and just one computer. Therefore, we have to share and I believe that we can perform better if every one of us is being provided with a computer.)

“SG, F and 52”

### **Discussions and implications**

This qualitative study finding has provided empirical evidence for employers to have a better understanding on job satisfaction among BVI employees and it is even more significant to those employers who actually hire BVI employees. The study had provided an answer for the three research questions.

To answer the first research question, the finding indicated that the overall job satisfaction among BVI employees were positive. This can be proven when the interview outcome reported that the majority of the BVI employees were generally perceived to be positive, happy and satisfied with their current jobs. They enjoyed good relationships with their colleagues, superior, salary, benefits and working environment. Therefore, the results could be concluded that BVI employees were satisfied with their jobs.

The second research question is related to what factors could lead to job satisfaction among the BVI employees. The findings indicated that relationships with coworkers, recognition and ability to work independently have been identified as key variables contributed to job satisfaction. Meanwhile, other areas such as the relationship with colleagues, salary and benefits received; physical condition of the work place, the environment in the office, being recognized by employers, good relationship with sighted colleagues and the support services provided also contributed towards job satisfaction to BVI employees.

Then, the third research question is concerning what are the causes that lead to job dissatisfaction among the BVI employee. Through the interview sessions, it is important to note that many respondents reported that there were several factors which led to job dissatisfaction. These includes their office being located at isolated areas causing them to feel lonely, management keen to see their disabilities rather than value their abilities, never have any opportunity for promotions, while sighted friends think that they just need a job and salary and training is not necessary.

The results presented above allowed for better understanding on job satisfaction among the BVI employees. It is important to note that this study provided findings that were not previously identified in the literature studies and would definitely help in adding new information to the body of current research, particularly in the field of employee with special needs. In fact, it became important for employers to know the levels of job satisfaction in conjunction with their strategic planning (Cocheo, 2004).

According to Bencsik & Nagy (2007), job satisfaction tended to evolve around the factors of the individual's relationship to his or her salary, work conditions, the direction in which their work was moving, their advancement in the organization, and their social network within the organization. When employees perceived that an organization supported them as individuals as well as workers, there was a high level of satisfaction on the job (Poon, Salleh, & Senik, 2007). Perhaps, these aspects could be lacking among the BVI employees.

Probably, many challenges as presented particularly related to the causes which lead to job dissatisfaction among the BVI employees can be overcome easily. Shahida Sajjad (2008) stressed that these barriers exist because of lack of concern, and awareness about the special needs of disabled persons. Many of these can

be removed without incurring heavy cost but just through careful planning and a little bit of concern for the persons with disabilities. In fact, according to Shahida Sajjad (2008), human resource management can perform a vital role in formulating policies and procedures in critical Human Resource (HR) matters like equal employment opportunities for the disabled, compensation, promotion, job security, working conditions, career development and advancement, fair treatment, reward systems, and job design.

One of the significant finding from this qualitative study demonstrated that they (BVI employees) were hardly given a chance for promotion. According to Mala D. Naraine (2007), she found that “the employers were not physically, psychologically, or socially ready to accommodate the needs of their BVI employees”. Therefore, employers hardly recognize the BVI employees even though they have performed well at the work place. Consequently, BVI employees were no longer given an opportunity for promotion. This view has been highlighted by Henryhand (2009). To him, the perceptions of employee recognition and employee engagement have a significant impact on overall job satisfaction and intent to leave the organization.

Based on Fedric Herzberg Two Factors Theory, this study found that BVI employees could have an even higher level of job satisfaction if their employers recognized their achievement and enhanced learning opportunity. This was also supported by W. Thomas. To him, intrinsic motivation is crucial in today’s work environment. He suggested that intrinsic motivation makes one’s work fulfilling, thus leading to greater satisfaction and the willingness to stay with an organization.

However, research found that the BVI employees do not have much issue concerning hygiene factors. In fact, the finding indicated that they have good relationships with their colleagues, head, satisfied with their salary, benefits and are happy with their working environment. Therefore, the finding demonstrated that the BVI employees generally were happy and satisfied with their job. Overall, BVI seems to be satisfied with their job except on several issues such as career advancement and training opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

In order to further improve the job satisfaction level among BVI employees, the researcher would like to suggest the following:

1. Ministry of Human Resource should collaborate with NGOs serving the blind to launch a campaign which emphasizes on creating awareness of the employer to value and appreciate their disabled employee as well as to look at their abilities and not their disabilities.
2. Ministry of Human Resource should provide training programmes for employers to learn how to manage and recognized their disabled employees.
3. Human resource department either in the public or private sector should be encouraged to adopt inclusion policy for all including the minority employees within the organization.
4. Employers should provide training opportunity to the BVI employees either internally or externally.
5. Employers should provide equal opportunity to BVI employees for better career advancement within the company just like their others sighted counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative study has been able to help us particularly employers to get a general picture on job satisfaction among the employees with BVI. It is a significant finding and useful to all parties particularly for those who have direct contact with employees with BVI. Finally, human resource departments could plan an effective programme to further enhance the job satisfaction among the BVI employees.

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