

## INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AS A FACTOR OF JOB SATISFACTION

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### ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction is positive emotional state, which is result of evaluation of some work experience. It is a multidisciplinary phenomenon, which is influenced by multiple internal and external factors. In this paper, employee satisfaction or job satisfaction was observed as a dependent variable, while interpersonal relationships are defined as influencing factor, i.e. independent variable. Interpersonal relationships imply establishment of social relations and connections between individuals at work. Interpersonal relationships can be defined as the

subjective experience of employee in interaction or connection with another person (colleagues or superiors). Factors such as gender, age, education, work experience and job position are included in the analysis as control variables. Main hypothesis in this paper states that positive interpersonal relationships have impact on employee satisfaction. The independent variable is divided into three segments, namely: communication and work climate, relationship with superiors and relationship with colleagues. Each segment of interpersonal relationships was separately tested in relation to the dependent variable. The base of this paper is an empirical research conducted in 2019. Based on the survey questionnaire, data from 143 employees in the surveyed company were collected. Data processing was performed on the basis of statistical software for social sciences-SPSS. Descriptive and correlation analysis were applied in the data analysis. All hypotheses tested were confirmed. Testing the hypotheses confirm that there is a statistically significant relationship between observed variables and that there is a moderate positive correlation, which implies that interpersonal relationship is a factor of job satisfaction. Main limitation of this research relates to the observation of relationship between variables in a single business entity. However, the coverage of all employees in the conducted research and the high response rate of employees (82%) provide a good basis for data analysis and giving some general conclusions. Detailed description of research methodology enables its repetition in other organizations.

**Keywords:** interpersonal relationship, communication skill, superiors relationship, colleague relationship, job satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Regarding concept of job satisfaction, there are many existing definitions that can be found in the existing literature. Hence, a large number of authors believe that job satisfaction refers to the feeling that employees have about their work (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1985; Dormann, & Zapf, 2001), or to the attitudes and feelings that people have towards work (Armstrong, 2017), expressed through employee reactions to what they get from work (Gordon, 2011). The observed concept is also defined as an emotional response to various aspects of work (Kinicki, & Fugate, 2016), a positive or negative value judgment about the job or situation at work (Weiss, 2002) or as an individual attitude towards work resulting from the sum of positive and negative emotions experienced at work (Weiss, 2002). Job satisfaction includes cognitive assessment of the work environment (Organ, & Near, 1985), personal assessment of work and work context, or an attitude that reflects the extent to which people like or dislike their job (Spector, 1997). However, job satisfaction is most often defined as a positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of work experience (Mathis, & Jackson, 2011), or as a satisfactory or positive emotional state resulting from job evaluation or work experience (Locke, 1969; Locke, 1976).

Based on the above definitions, it can be observed that most authors believe that job satisfaction essentially includes job-related feelings that are expressed through employee reactions to various aspects of work (Muterera, Hemsworth, Baregheh, & Garcia-Rivera, 2018). The consequences of job dissatisfaction (Kakkar, Dash, Vohra, & Saha, 2020) can be economic consequences, social consequences, and consequences related to the mental health of employees that manifest as stress, anxiety, depression and fear of losing a job (Cherif, 2020). The term job satisfaction refers to a concept developed as part of organizational theory (Moore, Tetlock, Tanlu, & Bazerman, 2006) and represents one of the most important and most researched attitudes that

employees have regarding their work (George, & Jones, 2012; McPhail, Patiar, Herington, Creed, & Davidson, 2015). Thus, job satisfaction is a popular research topic in the fields of management and psychology (Shiu, Hassan, & Parry, 2015), i.e. in the field of organizational research related to organizational behaviour and human resource management (Van Der Westhuizen, Pacheco, & Webber, 2012; Yahyagil, 2015; Shiu et al., 2015).

The importance of job satisfaction is evidenced by numerous studies conducted in different countries around the world, in which the observed concept is studied as a dependent or as an independent variable (Schermerhorn, Hunt, Osborn, & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Authors who studied job satisfaction as a dependent variable showed that there are a number of different factors that can affect the level of employee satisfaction (Pan, 2015), which include various demographic factors that focus on personal attributes and characteristics of employees, and organizational or external factors related to the work itself or the work environment (Crossman & Harris, 2006). On the other hand, authors who studied job satisfaction as an independent variable showed that job satisfaction leads to a number of positive and desirable outcomes (Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001), such as: improving performance and productivity, increasing organizational commitment, reducing absenteeism and turnover (Davis & Newstrom, 2003). The general view is that satisfied workers are more motivated and more productive than those who are not satisfied (Rai & Maheshwari, 2021). Thus, numerous authors have proven that job satisfaction is related to the behaviour and results of employees that ensure productive functioning of the organization (Gómez-Mejía, Balkin, & Cardy, 2016).

Interpersonal relationships refer to the establishment of social relations and the connections of individuals. They can be defined as the subjective experience of an individual in repeated interaction or connection with another person (Reich, & Hershcovis, 2011). In an organizational context, interpersonal relationships are

treated as an inevitable reality, and positive interaction between people helps employees meet their need to belong to some group. Positive interpersonal relationships at work lead to a number of benefits at the individual and organizational level, such as increased motivation, organizational commitment and employee satisfaction. In this paper, research problem is related to employee satisfaction, while interpersonal relationships are viewed as one of the factors of job satisfaction. Scientific goals are intended to reveal new scientific facts and insights into the impact of interpersonal relationships on job satisfaction. Research assumption in this paper is following: adequate interpersonal relationships have a positive impact on employee satisfaction. In order to look at this relationship in more detail, the independent variable in the work is divided into three segments, namely: communication and work climate, relationships with superiors and relationships with colleagues. All three segments of interpersonal relationships are tested separately and in relation to the dependent variable. Basic socio-demographic variables, gender, age, education, work experience and work position, were introduced into the analysis as control variables.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Main problem considered in this paper could be expressed in the form of the following question: Do interpersonal relationships affect employee satisfaction? From the posed research problem, two basic research variables can be identified. The independent variable is interpersonal relationships (IR), while job satisfaction (JS) is a dependent variable.

Employee satisfaction is a set of feelings and attitudes that employees have in relation to the work they perform. In order to identify and eliminate the causes of employee dissatisfaction, i.e. negative feelings and attitudes of employees, organizations are developing various systems for measuring employee satisfaction. Because of the above, it can be concluded that there is no universal way to

measure employee satisfaction. Two basic approaches are most commonly applied. The first approach involves a general assessment of satisfaction, which means that employees assess how satisfied they are with the job as a whole. The second approach involves the use of standardized scales that are aimed at assessing employee satisfaction in relation to specific aspects of work (for example, tangible and intangible compensation, the nature and content of work, development opportunities, etc.). The first approach is applied in this paper. For the evaluation of the dependent variable, it was used general satisfaction rating, measured by a five-point Likert-type scale: 1. I strongly disagree, 2. I disagree, 3. neither agree nor disagree (I am neutral), 4. I agree and 5. I completely agree.

In this research, interpersonal relationships were observed through three basic aspects: 1. Communication and work climate (CWC); 2. Superiors relationship (SR); 3. Colleague relationship (CR). A questionnaire with a total of 20 items related to defined aspects of interpersonal relationships was used to evaluate the independent variable. The first aspect of interpersonal relationships (Communication and work climate) was measured using a subscale that has three (3) items. An example of an item that aims to help understand this aspect of interpersonal relationships is: "I am informed about what is happening in the organization." Another aspect of the independent variable considers employees' relationships with superiors. Employee relationships with superiors were measured using a subscale containing ten (10) items. An example of an item in this subscale reads: "The superior shows interest in solving employee problems." The third aspect of the independent variable is relationships with colleagues. Relationships with colleagues were studied and measured using a subscale containing seven (7) items. An example of an item from this part of the survey questionnaire reads: "My colleagues are ready to help me and to help each other." As in the case of the dependent scale, a five-point Likert-type scale was applied in which the answers varied from "I

strongly disagree (1)” to “I completely agree (5)”. Factors such as gender, age, level of education, work experience and current job position were included in the analysis as control factors.

The basic hypothesis tested in this paper is:

H<sub>1</sub>. Good interpersonal relationships have a positive effect on job satisfaction.

In order to gain a more detailed insight into the observed relationship between the dependent and independent variables, each of the three aspects of interpersonal relationships (Communication and work climate, Superiors relationship, Colleague relationship) were analysed individually. Therefore, the following hypotheses were tested in this paper:

H<sub>1.1</sub>. Satisfactory communication and work climate have a positive effect on employee satisfaction.

H<sub>1.2</sub>. Good relationships with superiors have a positive effect on employee satisfaction.

H<sub>1.3</sub>. Good relationships with colleagues have a positive effect on job satisfaction.

The data necessary for testing the set hypotheses were obtained through empirical research. Empirical research was conducted in 2019. The subject of the analysis was employees in the company from petroleum product trade sector, and which at the time of the research employed 178 workers. All employees were included in the survey. The main research instrument used for the purpose of collecting data on interpersonal relationships and employee satisfaction was a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to all employees via e-mail. In the process of collecting empirical data, the respondents were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of collected data regarding interpersonal relationship and individual perception of job satisfaction. Statistical data processing was performed with the help of the statistical software package SPSS. Appropriate descriptive statistics techniques were used to study relationship between defined variables. For

the purpose of testing the hypothesis set, correlation analysis was used. As both the dependent and independent variables were evaluated using a Likert-type scale, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation (Spearman's Rho) was selected as the appropriate statistical tool.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were collected from 143 respondents. When this number of employees is put in proportion to the total number of employees in the observed organization, it is obtained that the response rate of employees in the survey was 82%, which is fully acceptable for organizational surveys of this type.

If we analyse the sample from the aspect of demographic characteristics of the respondents, we can conclude that 86% of the sample is men. When it comes to the age of the respondents, only 0.7% of the sample consists of persons less than 20 years of age. The three age categories (21-30; 31-40; 41-50) are almost equally represented in the sample. However, the largest percentage of respondents belong to the category of employees over 50 (39%). In terms of education, in the sample dominate employees with secondary school. They make up 65% of the sample. The analysis of the collected data from the aspect of work experience shows that the majority of employees have between 20 and 30 years of work experience (29.4%).

Before testing the hypotheses, the reliability of the created scales, which are applied in the research, was assessed. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was used to calculate the reliability of the entire scale used to assess interpersonal relationships in the observed organization. The values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the created scales (the whole scale and the three subscales), which were calculated on the basis of the collected data, are shown in table 1.

The data presented in the previous table show that the calculated values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole scale and individual subscales range from 0.788 to 0.917. This implies that the created

scale has an appropriate level of reliability. Also, based on the obtained values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, it can be stated that there is an internal reliability of the statements, both in the overall scale and in the individual subscales of the independent variable. Thus, the created scale is reliable enough to assess the adequacy of interpersonal relationships, as

well as the adequacy of its elements: Communication and work climate, Superiors relationships and Colleague relationships.

After calculating the Cronbach's coefficient, descriptive statistics were made for all observed variables. The results of this segment of data analysis are shown in the table 2.

Table 1. Cronbach's coefficient alpha values

Scale / subscale	Cronbach's coefficient alpha
Subscale 1: Communication and work climate	0,788
Subscale 2: Superiors relationships	0,850
Subscale 3: Colleague relationships	0,835
The whole scale: Interpersonal relationship	0,917

Source: Data processing in SPSS

Table 2. Descriptive measures for the observed research variables

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>CWC</b>	143	3.6830	.84414
<b>SR</b>	143	4.0371	.65097
<b>CR</b>	143	4.0749	.62151
<b>IR</b>	143	4.03	.676
<b>JS</b>	143	3.88	.622
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	143		

Source: Data processing in SPSS

In order to analyse the data in more detail, Table 3 presents data on the average assessed degree of agreement of the respondents with the statements regarding the three observed aspects of interpersonal relationships, according to the defined control variables. The assessed degree of agreement also shows the attitudes of the employees.

Based on the obtained results, it can be noticed that the respondents from the sample, on average, believe that all parameters of the variable related to interpersonal relationships are adequate or appropriate (the estimated level of agreement with most statements has a value above neutral - 2.50).

To test the set hypotheses, correlation analysis was applied. The results of the

correlation analysis are shown in Table 4. From the table 4, can be seen that in all observed relations, correlation coefficient is positive, and the calculated correlation rate is moderate. In particular, in the case of testing the first auxiliary hypothesis ( $H_{1.1}$ ), the obtained value of the correlation coefficient ( $r_s = .672$ ) and the calculated  $p$  value ( $p = .000$ ) indicate that there is a correlation in the sample and that for any level of significance, there is a quantitative connection between communication and work climate on the one hand, and job satisfaction on the other. Considering that a statistically significant relationship was found between the observed variables, that calculated correlation was moderate, and degree of correlation was positive, it can be stated that respondents who believe that

communication and work climate in the organization are adequate have a higher

degree of job satisfaction, where the reverse is also true.

Table 3. Arithmetic means for subscales and overall scale according to control variables

Variable		CWC	SR	CR	IR	JS
<b>Gender</b>	male	3,72	4,06	4,11	4,06	3,92
	female	3,47	3,90	3,84	3,90	3,65
<b>Age</b>	to 20 years	4,67	3,90	4,00	4,00	4,00
	21-30	3,81	4,17	4,29	4,17	3,96
	31-40	3,72	4,07	4,08	4,07	3,83
	16-50	3,54	4,11	4,16	4,03	3,88
	over 50 years	3,68	3,93	3,93	3,96	3,88
<b>Education</b>	Primary school	4,67	4,40	4,71	5,00	5
	Skilled worker	3,71	3,75	3,84	3,76	3,71
	Secondary school	3,66	4,06	4,12	4,06	3,9
	High-skilled worker	3,33	3,89	3,84	3,88	3,63
	University	4,13	4,14	4,04	4,13	3,88
	University and more	3,67	4,24	4,17	4,13	4
<b>Work Experience</b>	Up to 1 year	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0
	1-5	3,92	4,13	4,22	4,19	3,94
	5-10	3,53	4,20	4,25	4,13	3,93
	10-20	3,59	4,03	4,04	4,03	3,79
	20-30	3,63	4,01	4,10	3,95	3,98
	over 30 years	3,82	3,96	3,93	4,03	3,81
<b>Current position</b>	Managerial	4,21	4,40	4,04	4,15	4,15
	Expert/professional	3,87	4,28	4,23	4,20	4,2
	Administrative	3,27	3,78	3,92	3,91	3,64
	Technical/operational	3,83	3,95	4,06	4,07	3,87
	Sales	3,59	4,03	4,10	4,01	3,86

Source: Data processing in SPSS

This confirmed the first auxiliary hypothesis ( $H_{1.1}$ ). In the case of the second auxiliary hypothesis ( $H_{1.2}$ ), the calculated values of the correlation coefficient in the sample ( $r_s = .670$ ) and the  $p$  values ( $p = .000$ ), it can be concluded that the correlation coefficient is positive, that there is a correlation in the sample and for any level of significance, there is a quantitative correlation of the observed variables, ie that the observed relationship is statistically significant. In other words, respondents who believe that relationships with

superiors are adequate have a higher degree of job satisfaction, and vice versa. This confirms the second auxiliary hypothesis ( $H_{1.2}$ ). The last auxiliary hypothesis ( $H_{1.3}$ ) was set in order to analyse the relationship between colleague relationships and job satisfaction. In this case, the obtained value of the correlation coefficient in the sample ( $r_s = .685$ ) and the calculated  $p$  values ( $p = .000$ ), suggest that the correlation coefficient is positive, that there is a correlation in the sample and that for any level of significance, there is quantitative

correlation of the observed variables, ie that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Considering the obtained result, it can be stated that the respondents who think that the relationship with colleagues are adequate have a higher degree of job satisfaction, and vice versa, which confirms the third auxiliary hypothesis (H<sub>1.3</sub>).

Regarding main hypothesis in the paper (H<sub>1</sub>), the obtained correlation value in the sample ( $r_s = .651$ ) and the calculated  $p$  values ( $p = .000$ ), imply that the correlation coefficient is positive, that there is a correlation in the sample, and that for any level significance, there is a quantitative correlation of the observed variables, i.e.

that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Considering that between the assessed interpersonal relationships and job satisfaction it was found statistically significant relationship, that the calculated correlation was moderate, and the degree of correlation was positive, it can be stated that respondents who consider interpersonal relationships to be adequate have a higher degree of job satisfaction, where the reverse is also true. As it has been proven that there is a correlation between the observed variables in the sample, it can be concluded that interpersonal relationships are an important factor of job satisfaction, which proved the hypothesis.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing

		CWC	SR	CR	IR	JS
<b>Spearman's Rho</b>	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.551**	.539**	.623**	.672**
	CWC Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
	Correlation Coefficient	.551**	1.000	.774**	.816**	.670**
	SR Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
	Correlation Coefficient	.539**	.774**	1.000	.793**	.685**
	CR Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
	Correlation Coefficient	.623**	.816**	.793**	1.000	.651**
	IR Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	143	143	143	143	143
	Correlation Coefficient	.672**	.670**	.685**	.651**	1.000
	JS Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.
N	143	143	143	143	143	

\*\* Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (two-tailed test)

Source: Data processing in SPSS

## CONCLUSION

Employees' satisfaction is a positive feeling regarding job they perform, which arises from the personal perception of each employee. Employee satisfaction is a function of different job values, which can be tangible or intangible. This relationship is complicated by the fact that each employee value different aspects of work in

different ways. Also, the way employees evaluate certain aspects of work is not a static category, it usually changes over time with the personal and professional development of employees. Furthermore, job satisfaction is a reflection of each employee's personal perception, which does not have to be an accurate reflection of reality. It is important for an organization to

measure and monitor employee satisfaction for a number of reasons. First of all, evaluation of employee satisfaction is an instrumentality to valorise and assess the impact of various policies, programs and activities implemented in the organization. Also, evaluation of employee satisfaction can be in the function of reducing various manifestations of withdrawal from work, such as behaviour change, absenteeism, intentional and real fluctuation. In addition to salary, working conditions, job content and role in the organization, relationships with superiors and colleagues are also an important source of employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In this paper, research problem was related to employee satisfaction, while interpersonal relationships are viewed as one of the factors of job satisfaction. Main purpose of this paper was to present results of the research and highlight new knowledge and facts regarding the relationship between interpersonal relationship and job satisfaction in the observed business organization. Positive and moderate correlation was found between the dependent and independent variables. Based on the data processing results it can be concluded that interpersonal relationships, expressed through communication and work climate, and superiors and colleague relationships, affect the level of job satisfaction, which confirmed tested hypothesis. The created research model and defined scales can be used to repeat the research in the observed organization, in order to continuously measure the level of interpersonal relationships and their impact on job satisfaction. It can also be used to conduct comparative research in other organizations in the country and the region. The limitation of this research stems precisely from the fact that the research was conducted in single business entity. Therefore, in further research, it would be it would be desirable to include a larger number of organizations, while a longitudinal approach would certainly improve the quality of empirical findings.

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