

THE RELATIONSHIP OF OPTIMISM AND JOB SATISFACTION IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

Khalida Rauf
Department of Management
College of Business Management, Karachi

Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate the relation of optimism and job satisfaction. A random sample of 80 permanent faculty members of Business schools of the Defense region was selected. It was hypothesized that there will be a positive correlation between optimism and job satisfaction. In order to measure Optimism Scheier and Carver (1985) 12- item, 5- point Likert type Optimism subscale of Life Orientation Test was utilized, whereas, employees' job-satisfaction was measured by Oldham and Hackman (1980) a 3- item , 7 point Likert type scale. For quantitative analysis, Pearson product moment correlation was calculated. Findings reveal an insignificant inverse correlation between job satisfaction and optimism.

Key words: Optimism, Job Satisfaction.

JEL Classification: Z0000

Introduction and Literature Review

“An optimist sees an opportunity in every calamity; a pessimist sees a calamity in every opportunity” – Winston Churchill

Job satisfaction has been defined by Srivastava (2004) as “an appraisal of perceived job characteristics and emotional experience at work.” People evaluate their life experiences as positive or negative on the basis of their experiences and observations.

Cognition and emotion as an integral component of job satisfaction i.e., how do we view our job and how do we feel about it, determines our level job satisfaction (Hosie et.al.2005). Attitudes are evaluative statements that we make about events and people. When our attitude about something is classified as “good” or “bad” reflects the cognitive component of attitude, if we happen to like something or don’t like something, this reflects the affective component of attitude, and if our attitude about something is categorized as an “intention to do it” or “not do it” this is regarded as the behavioral component of attitude (Robins, 2008).The affective component seems to affect both the other components, because if we do not agree to an idea, we do not like it if we do not like it we do not practice it unless we are compelled to do so. Our feeling component influences our thinking and action component.

Attitudes have been widely studied but the attitude of optimism is emerging as a core concept in positive psychology. Optimism is also a societal value and optimism is desirable in all communities, Seligman’s (1991) study corroborates this idea. He applied his CAVE* technique (content analysis of verbatim explanation) for analyzing speeches of candidates for US presidential elections from 1900 to 1984, which covers 22 elections. Out of 22 elections Americans chose those candidates 18 times whose speeches were rich with optimistic vision.

Tiger (1979) identified optimism as an adaptive characteristic. He viewed optimism as a driver of human evolution, since optimism gives rise to thinking about the future. When people start anticipating the future they anticipate either good or bad outcomes. According to this view optimism is inherent in human nature. The same concept has been defined as “Evolved Psychological Mechanism” by modern psychologists (Buss, 1991). Just like cognitive abilities optimism also evolves over a period of time.

Lightsey (1996) reviewed literature on optimism and concluded that an optimistic outlook leads to lesser incidence of psychological dysfunctionalities and greater incidence of overall well being. In addition to this, optimism and goal setting plus achievement have been positively correlated.

Stein and Book (2001) view the optimistic approach as essential for enhancing resilience, the capacity to bounce back in the face of adversity. Why do optimists experience life’s inevitable downturns so differently from the way pessimists do? Both over the long haul probably encounter the same number of defeats. The answer to this question lies in the self talk of the optimists about themselves.

Over the past few years there has been a shift in the relationship between personality variables and job outcomes. Previously, researchers tended to focus on understanding of variables such as honesty, confidence and dependability (Conley, 1984), whereas, modern researchers tend to focus on dispositional affects, which consist of variables like optimism, depression, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, warmth, happiness, neuroticism and the like. The most common job outcomes are those of job satisfaction and job commitment. In this paper, job satisfaction is the point of concern, which is multifaceted. The most commonly studied facets of job satisfaction are pay, supervision, coworkers, work, and promotion opportunities. According to individual differences theory, differences in job satisfaction might be due to an individual’s tendency across situations to enjoy what she does. That is why

certain types of people are generally satisfied and motivated regardless of the type of the job they are doing (Weaver1978).

As Goleman(1995) has stated that personality has a strong influence on job satisfaction and he proposed that managers should make the work environment conducive to bringing out the best in the employees. We can trace the manipulation of these variables as far back as Weitz (1952), who proposed that the individual's general statement of dissatisfaction with his job should be evaluated in terms of his tendency to "gripe".

The underlying concept of optimism is self-efficacy and happiness, which gives an individual a belief that he can successfully complete tasks and meet objectives (Goleman, 1999). Diener et al's study (2002) is in line with Goleman's idea. They are in agreement that positive affectivity (cheerfulness) influences job outcomes such as job satisfaction. According to them cheerful individuals are highly motivated. They readily anticipate success and tackle difficulties and challenges and consider obstacles as temporary feature of the situation. Even when cheerful individuals lose their jobs they view unemployment as a temporary condition. Another implication is that they are adept at social skills due to their good mood therefore they are offered desirable positions in teams and projects. Another conclusion arrived at by the study was that personalities having pleasant and positive appearance are likely to receive favorable performance ratings. However, there were also some moderating variables operating like parental income which provided them opportunities to gain higher levels of education which consequently provided them with good employment positions.

Staw and Ross (1985) measured job satisfaction on two different occasions, once in 1966 and again in 1971, despite the changes in pay rate and change in occupational status over a period of time, the 1966 job satisfaction was a strong predictor of 1971 job satisfaction. The results strongly supported the relative importance of "dispositional effects" in the determination of job satisfaction.

Staw extended his work in collaboration with Bell and Clausen (1986) and correlated affective disposition with various indicators of job satisfaction during early, middle and late adolescence. They found that job satisfaction was significantly and positively related to dispositional affect measured as far back as early adolescence.

Luthans et al (2008) attempted to study the effect of positive mood in health care services. Among other variables studied were optimism and its relation with job performance. Results were indicative of positive relationship between measured state of optimism and supervisory performance appraisal.

Seligman (1998) while studying optimism in life insurance agents discovered that optimism leads to higher productivity and lower turnover in the workplace.

Fredrickson's (2001) research showed that positive mood facilitates problem solving skills and increases performance, adaptation and well being. At another place, Wright (2005) states that the development of psychological resources like hope, optimism and resilience leads to enhanced job performance. These results support the well established conjecture that happy workers are productive workers.

Optimism also fosters a sense of ownership of work. Once we take ownership of our work, we tend to feel an increased sense of responsibility for achievement of organizational goals, which in turn, promotes increased productivity.

In the present study, we will focus on whether these factors operate in our culture particularly during the period of recession.

Method

Sample:

The sample consisted of 80 full time faculty members, randomly selected from Business schools of the Defense region in Karachi. The sample size was calculated through following formula

$$\begin{aligned} 1.33.\log N \\ N = \text{Population} \\ 1.33.\log 320 \\ 3.33 \\ 320/3.33=96 \end{aligned}$$

Out of the population of 320, 96 faculty members were contacted. 80 members filled the forms carefully, whereas, remaining gave either incomplete information or did not respond.

Scores on Optimism were gathered through the administration of Scheier and Carver's (1985) 12- item, 5 point Likert type Optimism subscale of Life Orientation Test. Job-Satisfaction was measured through the administration of Oldham and Hackman's (1980), a 3- item, 7- point Likert-type scale. The scales have been attached in appendices.

A letter stating the purpose of research was attached to the questionnaire. Participants were assured of confidentiality regarding their identity and the usefulness of data.

After completion of data collection, all the test protocols were scored according to the instructions given. The responses were scored in such a direction that high scores are indicative of higher optimism and higher job satisfaction. For finding the relationship between two variables product moment correlation was calculated through SPSS 10.0.

Results and Analysis

It was almost 60 years back when Maslow (1954) spoke of the need for shift in the focus of psychological studies of

human behavior. He emphasized that instead of rectifying abnormalities, psychology should focus on promoting positive states among human beings, which in turn prevent the promotion of negativity and abnormality.

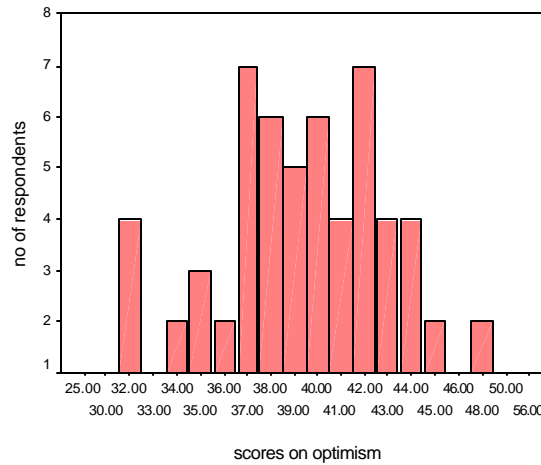
The present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between optimism and job satisfaction. Optimism is viewed as a cognitive characteristic of expecting positive outcomes whereas; job satisfaction is viewed as an affective reaction towards one's job.

Table No 1 showing mean of the optimism and job satisfaction

Variables	N	Mean	Maximum score
Optimism	80	38.57	60
Job satisfaction	80	14.67	21

Table No 1 shows mean scores of job satisfaction and optimism. The scores of job satisfaction range from 3 to 21 with mean of 14.67, which means that response category of respondents cluster around 14 and 15. The scores of optimism range from 12-60 with mean of 38.57, which means that response category of respondents, cluster around 38 and 39. These results are also supported by the analyses of figure 1 and 2.

Figure No 1 showing distribution of scores on the variable of optimism



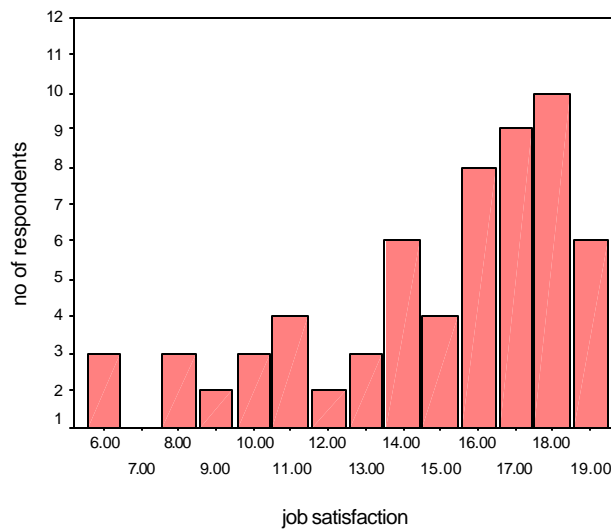
Analysis of Figure no 1 shows that high scores of optimism cluster in the middle and dispersed at the ends. The curve appears to be platykurtic. The y axis shows number of respondents and x axis shows distribution of scores along the normal curve.

Table No 2 showing correlation of optimism and job satisfaction

Variables	Job satisfaction
optimism	Pearson Correlation -.034
Sig (2-tailed)	.255 p>.05
N	80

Table No 2 shows that correlation of job satisfaction and optimism is -0.034 , which is statistically insignificant inverse relation between the two variables. The result is inconsistent with researches reported in literature like Frederickson (2001) and Wright (2005) which stated that positive resources like optimism, hope and resilience lead to good performance and well being. Munayan (2009) reports that according to EecuNet survey, during recession most IT executives view their job as source of satisfaction rather than having “NO” job at all. According to these research executives in marketing, human resource, consulting and finance reported high level of job satisfaction during recession people generally appreciate their jobs. As people become optimistic about the economy, their ability to find new jobs also becomes greater. The sample was taken in the mid 2009, when condition of the labour economic market was relatively tight.

Figure No 2 showing distribution of scores on the variable of job satisfaction



Analysis of Figure No 2 reveals that scores of job satisfaction cluster around 16- 19 which makes the curve negatively skewed , which means that respondents have reported more job satisfaction than optimism. The y axis shows number of respondents, and x axis shows distribution of scores on the variable of job satisfaction.

Table No 3 showing correlation of components of optimism and components of job satisfaction

		JOB satisfaction	SATIS worthwhileness	FACTION Specific job
O	Variables			
P	Uncertainty	-.010 p>.05	-.071 p>.05	.164 p>.05
T	Relaxation	-.278* p<.05	-.302* p<.05	-.56* p<.05
I	Low tolerance	-.299 p=.05	.102 p<.05	.001 p>.05
M	Optimism	.018 p>.05	-.117 p>.05	.018 p>.05
I	Future	.051 p>.05	.102 p>.05	.130 p>.05
S	Friends	.038 p>.05	-.117 p>.05	-.042 p>.05
M	Busy	-.0111 p>.05	-.069 p>.05	.117 p>.05
	Negative Expectations	.044 p>.05	.142 p>.05	.062 p>.05
	Pessimism	-.026 p>.05	.027 p>.05	.039 p>.05
	Control	.009 p>.05	-.139 p>.05	.032 p>.05
	Hopefulness	.222 p>.05	.043 p >.05	.073 p>.05
	hopelessness	.227 p=.05	.259* p<.05	-.109 p>.05

*Significant at .05 level ** Significant at .01 level

Table No 3 shows item wise analysis of the relation of job satisfaction and optimism. When 12 scale component of optimism measure were correlated with 3 items of the job satisfaction measure, these variables make 36 pairs of correlation. It is evident from table No 3 that items of optimism which have negative connotation such as uncertainty correlate negatively with job satisfaction (p>.05), whereas, all the items of job satisfaction have positive connotation . Low tolerance seems to be negatively related to satisfaction (p=.05), implying that people with low tolerance fail to experience job satisfaction, they seem to give up in face of adversity, this might be attributable to their low scores on negative expectation , item no 8 of the optimism scale , which has weak correlation with all the items of job satisfaction p>.05.

Table no 4 showing regression analysis Job Satisfaction as dependent variable

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Stanrdard error of estimate
1	.131	.017	.004	3.5858

a Predictors: (Constant), OPTIMISM

In order to ascertain the role of other variables contributing to job satisfaction, regression analysis of job satisfaction was carried out as shown in table 4. The adjusted R squares is found to be .004 which means that there are 96% chances that there are other predictors of job satisfaction other than optimism. According to the work of Akhter, Muniruddin and Sogra (2008) teaching has been regarded as a very challenging job due to its impact on students therefore it requires mental commitment and loyalty and if teachers are not satisfied they will not be able to perform well.

As Ali and Asghar (2009) report this dimension of job satisfaction appears to be very clear but they do not appear to be very clear about determinant of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is dependent upon several factors specially in academic profession.

Pervaiz et al (1970) and Quin et al (1974) identified organizational characteristics as a major determinant of job satisfaction. Private sector business schools do provide facilities and infra structure which facilitate the teaching process, such as multimedia, overhead projector, white boards, stationary, clean washrooms, politics free environment which faculty members may not find otherwise in public sector institutions.

The academic profession also allows teachers to have last quarter of the day free which allows them to expand their earning and find time for leisure or creative activities.

Conclusion:

The study examines the relation of optimism and job satisfaction. Out of 320 permanent faculty members of business schools of the Defense region in Karachi, 80 were asked to rate themselves on scales of job satisfaction and optimism. Results showed statistically insignificant weak negative correlation between job satisfaction and optimism ($p > .05$). The item wise analysis of optimism and job satisfaction revealed that items of

optimism having negative connotation correlate negatively with items of job satisfaction having positive connotation ,but these estimated coefficients are also insignificant at .05 level. The results are consistent with Ahn & Gracia's (2004) study. According to them during periods of high unemployment people generally appreciate their jobs irrespective of their psychological variables.

The regression analysis of optimism revealed that there are 96% chances that other variables are operative behind job satisfaction. Bonner (1997) discovered benefits, bonus, overtime, transport and medical allowance as having positive relationship with job satisfaction of employees. However, Clark and Keating's (1995) study shows that job satisfaction can exist in absence of optimism because interaction with students is identified as the most satisfying aspect for teachers. Future research is required involving the inclusion of other variables in order to provide clear insight about factors promoting job satisfaction.

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APPENDIX "A"

Operational Definition:

Optimism:

Optimism is defined as the cognitive disposition to expect favorable outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

OPTIMISM SCALE

Instructions: Below are statements with which you may agree or disagree. Read each statement, and using the scale shown below, please select the number that best describes how you think about yourself right now and put that number in the blank before each statement. Please take a few moments to focus on yourself and what is going on in your life at this moment. Once you have this "here and now" set, go ahead and answer each item according to the following scale:

SCALE: 1= Strongly agree
2=Disagree
3=Neutral
4=Agree
5= Strongly agree

- 1. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best
- 2. It's easy for me to relax
- 3. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
- 4. I always look on the bright side of the things.
- 5. Right now I am optimistic about my future
- 6. I enjoy my friends a lot.
- 7. It's important for me to keep busy
- 8. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
- 9. Things never work out the way I want them to.
- 10. I don't get upset too easily.
- 11. I'm a believer in the idea that "every cloud has a silver lining".
- 12. I rarely count on good things happening to me.

The following is the description of items of optimism

Item #1 relates to uncertainty

Item #2 relates to ability to relax

Item #3 relates to low tolerance

Item #4 relates to optimistic outlook Item #5 relates to
future orientation

Item #6 relates to friends

Item #7 relates to being busy

Item #8 relates to negative expectations

Item #9 relates to pessimism

Item #10 relates to being in control

Item #11 relates to hopefulness

Item #12 relates to hopelessness

APPENDIX “B”

Job satisfaction:

The term job satisfaction refers to a collection of feelings that an individual holds towards his and her job (Robins, 2006).

JOB SATISFACTION SCALE

Please answer each of the following statements by circling one number:

1. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

2. I am generally satisfied with the feeling of worthwhile accomplishment I get from doing this job.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

3. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

Following is the description of items of job satisfaction

Item #1 relates to feelings of satisfaction

Item #2 relates to ability to feelings of being worthy

Item #3 relates to satisfaction with specific job