

THE IMPACT OF POSITIVE ATTITUDES ON JOB SATISFACTION

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to find the relation of positive psychology and job satisfaction. A convenient sample of 132 corporate 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) scale was utilized, whereas, employees' job- satisfaction was measured by Oldham and Hackman (1980) scale. For quantitative analysis, Pearson product moment correlation was calculated. Findings reveal a high correlation of job satisfaction with calmness, hopefulness and belief in future dimension of optimism with job satisfaction. A weak correlation was gauged for the dimension of, uncertainty, being busy and friendship with job satisfaction Whereas, a negative correlation was found for the dimensions of low tolerance, negative expectation and pessimism with job satisfaction.

Key words: Positive psychology, optimism, job satisfaction.

JEL Classification: Z0000

Introduction

The concept of “Positive Psychology” was talked of by Maslow (1954). According to him psychology should focus on developing positive qualities rather than repairing negative aspects of life.

Lucas and Benson (1930) studied the effect of positive and negative impact of advertisement on sales; results showed that positive appeals were not as effective as negative appeals. Whereas, Isen (2003) has shown positive results of positive emotional states on problem solving and decision making. This proactive approach to organizational research is called “Positive Organizational Psychology”, concepts such as growth, optimism, contentment, humility, kindness and many more. Fredrickson (2001) considered these positive feelings as fundamental human strength.

Out of these concepts, the effect of optimism on workplace outcomes has been found to be very positive. Number of researches has shown that optimism leads to higher productivity and lower turnover. According to Harter et al (2002): Rose et al (2006) optimism leads to a sense of ownership which works like upward spiral and leads to an increased sense of achieving the organizational goals thus increases productivity.

Moreover, the effect of positive workplace relation is known to lessen the adverse effects of stress on productivity (Mc Mansen et al, 2004; Salovey et al 2000). Lavoie (2004) and Cummings (2004) identified colleagues’ support as the most important factor in preventing burnout and maintaining organizational productivity.

Extensive review of literature reveals that effect of optimism on work related attitudes such as job satisfaction has been very positive. Job satisfaction has been defined by Srivaster (2004) as “an appraisal of perceived job characteristics and emotional experience at work.” People evaluate their life experiences as either positive or negative on the basis of their experiences and observations.

Moreover, Hosie et al(2005) regarded cognition and emotion as an integral component of job satisfaction ie; how do we view our job and how do we feel about it.

Optimism is not just an attitude rather it is also a societal value and optimism is desirable in all communities, Seligman's (1991) study is in line with 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 visions.

Optimism has been viewed as a forerunner of other psychological resource capacities. Stein and Book (2001) view optimistic approach as essential for enhancing resiliency, 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.

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. The sample included 78 nurses from healthcare services. The participants' state of optimism was measured through self report method and performance outcomes were measured through supervisory performance appraisal. They calculated Spearman correlation and one-way ANOVA to analyze the data. Results were indicative of positive relationship between measured state of optimism and supervisory performance appraisal.

In another study, Seligman (1998) concluded that optimistic life insurance agents sold 37% more during the initial two years than their less optimistic counterparts. Moreover it was also discovered that optimism leads to higher productivity and lower turnover in the workplace, a positive relationship between optimism and workplace outcomes was identified.

Fredrickson's (2001) research discovered that positive mood enables the individual to display a wide array of problem solving skills and increase the performance, adaptation and well being. Another study yielding similar results is that of Wright (2005). According to this study the development of psychological resources like hope, optimism and resiliency leads to enhanced job performance. These results support the old conjecture that happy workers are productive workers. Chakravarthy (1986) emphasized the importance of employees' satisfaction. Later, Judge, Higgins, Thoresen and Barrick, (1999) and Ilies et al, (2006) found supporting results stating that conscientiousness and emotional stability are positively related to job satisfaction. Ilies et al, (2006); Knovosky and Orgar, (1999); Organ and Konovosky, (1989); Organ and Ryan, (1995); concluded that job satisfaction is a predictor of organizational citizenship behavior.

In current study, we will focus on whether these factors operate in our culture.

Hypothesis

There will be positive relationship between optimism and job satisfaction.

Method

Sample:

The sample consisted of 166 male managers, conveniently selected from banking and industrial sector, age ranging from 30 to 55, with minimum experience of five years.

Measures:

Basic Information Form: Information regarding their age, designation, gender and department was gauged through the administration of basic information forms. Scores on Optimism was gathered through the administration of Scheier and Caver's (1985) 12- item, 5 point Likert type Optimism scale of Life Orientation Test, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" with minimum score of 12 and maximum score of 60,

with Cronbach alpha .78. Job-Satisfaction was measured through the administration of Oldham and Hackman's (1980), 3- item, 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" with minimum score of 3 and maximum score of 21. with Cronbach alpha .87.

Procedure:

A letter stating the purpose of research was attached to the questionnaire. Participants were also provided with the assurance of confidentiality regarding the identity of the participant and the usefulness of data.

Scoring and Statistical Analyses:

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 were calculated through SPSS 10.0.

Operational Definition:

Optimism:

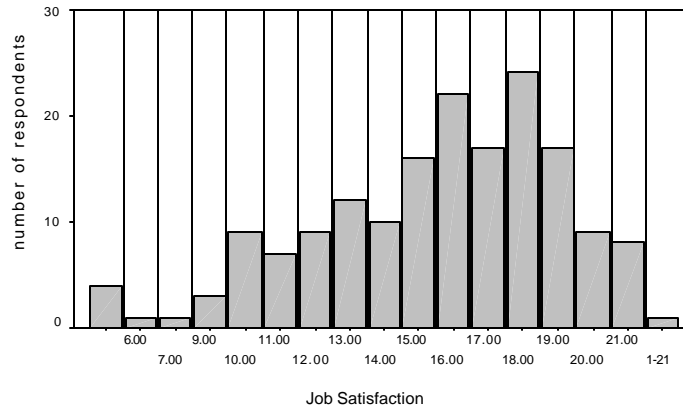
Optimism is defined as the cognitive disposition to expect favorable outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Job satisfaction:

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

Results

Graph No 1 showing distribution of scores on Job Satisfaction



Graph No 2 Showing distribution of scores on Optimism

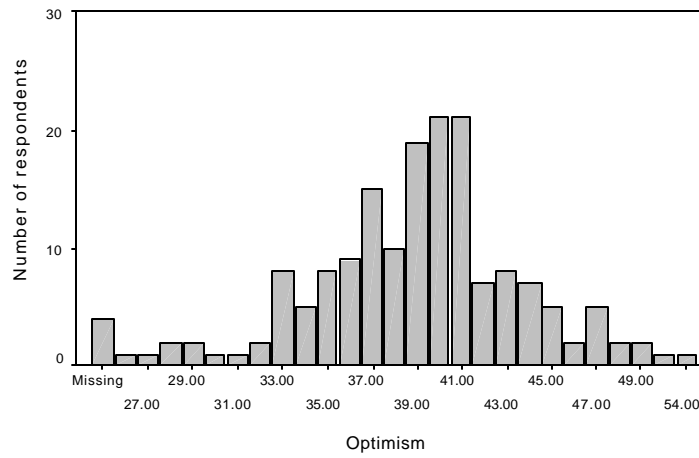


Table No. 1. Showing Correlation of Job Satisfaction and Optimism

Variables	Job Satisfaction
Optimism	-.005
Sig(2-tailed)	.945
N	166

Graph No. 3. Showing Correlation of Job Satisfaction and Optimism

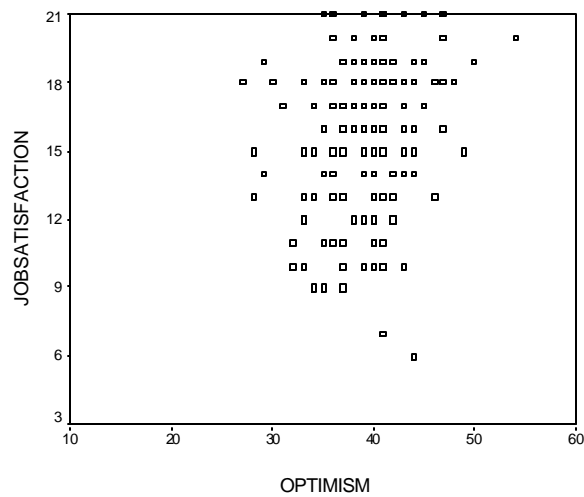
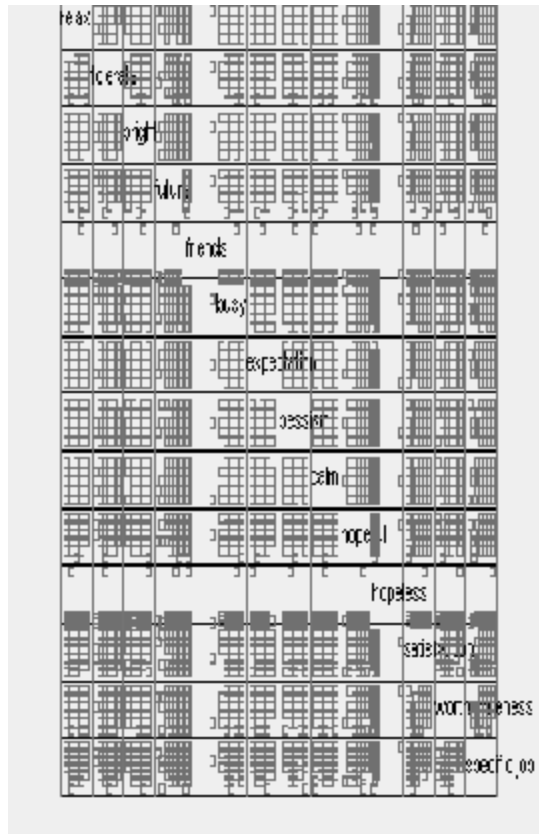


Table No 2 showing correlation of all the criteria of Optimism with all the criteria of Job satisfaction

Variables	Satisfaction	worthwhile	Specific job
Uncertainty	.044p>.05	.053p>.05	.101,p>.05
Relaxation	.183* p<.05	.075,p>.05	.099,p>.05
Low endurance	.060,p>.05	-.052,p>.05	-.159,p>.05
Optimism	.149,p>.05	.104,p>.05	.119,p>.05
Future	.180*,p<.05	.078,p>.05	.180*,p<.05
Friends	.011,p>.05	-.081,p>.05	.034,p>.05
Busy	-.060,p>.05	.124,p>.05	.119p>.05
Negative expectations	-.210*,p<.05	-.255**,p<.05	.189*,p<.05
Pessimism	-.183*,p<.05	-.204,p<.05	-.219*,p<.05
Control	.118,p>.05	-.244,p<.05	-.183*,p<.05
Hopefulness	.116,p>.05	.247,p<.05	-.319**,p<.05
Hopelessness	.050,p>.05	.041,p>.05	.065,p>.05

Correlation matrix showing correlation of all the criteria of job satisfaction and optimism



Discussion

Results indicate that both the variables are independent of each other, showing no correlation between each other.

Further statistical analysis reveals spread of correlation between pairs of criteria related to job satisfaction and optimism.

Instead of focusing on what leads to dissatisfying experience at work, the present study focuses on identifying conditions that enables human beings to experience satisfaction, happiness and other positive feelings (Seligman; 1998).

Analysis of sample reveals that mean scores on job satisfaction is 15.9, (Graph No.1) which clusters around top categories as the curve is negatively skewed. The same has been observed by Konow and Early (2002) that respondents tend to present themselves in socially desirable way. This bias is inherent in the scales; responses are mainly based on the perception of the item since no clear description of satisfaction item is provided leaving the respondents to interpret questions on their own perception. Similar results have been reported by Ahn and Gracia (2004) for underdeveloping countries, where jobs are highly appreciated during times of unemployment and particularly in third world countries where there has always been dearth of jobs.

The present study proceeded with the assumption that there will be positive correlation between job satisfaction and optimism, r is $-.005$, $p > .05$, (Table No.1) depicting that there is no correlation between the variables of job satisfaction and optimism. The results show that all the items of job satisfaction have positive correlation around $p < .00$. The same holds true for all the criteria of optimism, ie; statements having positive connotation correlate with each other positively such as criterion related to negative expectation and criterion related to pessimism $p < .000$, items related to bright future and optimistic outlook correlate significantly with each other $p < .004$, items about being busy and optimism, items related to relaxation and feelings of being in control also correlate highly with each other $p < .010$ and $.001$ respectively. On the other hand, items which have opposite connotation correlate

highly with each other, such as criteria related to pessimism and optimism $p < .005$, pessimism and relaxation $p < .008$ but in inverse direction.

Correlation of criteria of job satisfaction and optimism:

Since all items of job satisfaction have positive connotation consequently correlate positively with items of optimism having positive connotation like relaxation, optimism, being busy, being in control and hopeful. The strongest correlation has been found between feelings of worthwhileness and being in control and hopeful .244 and .247 respectively, the same criterion has negative correlation with pessimism and negative expectation. People who expect negative outcomes in life and those who have low endurance do not consider themselves worthy individuals.

Results do not come up with very high value of correlation, this might be due to the fact that people working in big organizations are generally reported as satisfied only 40% (Goldfarb Consultant;1999).

Just as job satisfaction is the result of many factors, so too job quality is the result of tangible and intangible factors such as personality, attitude and positivity. There are number of different workplace factors that influence overall job satisfaction and these factors may vary from person to person. Employees may be satisfied with few elements of job while simultaneously dissatisfied with others. The same is true of present results where correlation is weak positive.078, $p < .05$, for worthwhileness and future prospects but strongly positive between satisfaction with specific job and future prospects,ie;.180, $p < .05$. a strong positive correlation was observed between worthwhileness, specific job and being in control implying that when the person is in control and peaceful he gains sense of worthwhileness and enjoys his specific job. Interesting work is regarded as an important factor leading to satisfaction (Sinha, 1958).

Employees who have positive perception of workplace are less likely to engage in negative behavior. The same appears

to play its role where all three criteria of job satisfaction i.e; satisfaction, worthwhileness and specific job, are found to be negatively related to negative expectations of the outcomes, which is a sub criteria of optimism, if one increases the other decreases -.210, -.255,-.189. It appears that negativity keeps the person away from experiencing satisfying states. A considerable body of research supports that when perception of the workplace was low, scores on the positive dimensions of personality were also low (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt & Berrick, 2004).

The relationship between friendship and satisfaction with ones job is .011, $p > .05$, Butterworth (2000) explains support from coworkers as a matter of workplace setting, whether they use collaborative management style or they interact outside the workplace. However, the culture cannot be overlooked when considering friendship, as society is moving away from collectivistic to individualistic; people tend to be less supportive. Moreover, the ever increasing rate of unemployment makes people insecure and they become less cooperative with their colleagues so they may not pose threat to them. The relationship also seems moderated by personality, where social abilities and interests come into play. However, Goldfarb Association (1999) reported relationship among employees as second most important variable leading to job satisfaction. Lavoie (2004) and Cummings (2004) concluded that coworkers' support is a major preventive factor of burnout and increasing productivity.

Highly qualified people are reported to be more cheerful and satisfied with regard to their job (Diener et al; 2002), he identified parental income as the most important moderating variable and served as a mediating role for respondents to avail higher level of satisfaction.

Luthans and Youssef (2007) obtained .34 significant correlation $p < .01$ between optimism and job satisfaction. They concluded that 50 million of the average sampled organization's outcomes may be attributable to its employees' positive psychological resource capacities.

On the basis of overall results it can be concluded that negative expectations and pessimism have significant inverse correlation with job satisfaction $p < .05$.

Uncertainty, hopelessness, busy with work and optimism have weak positive correlation with job satisfaction $p > .05$.

Whereas, relaxation, hopeful about future and being in control correlate positively with two dimension of job satisfaction with $p < .05$.

Conclusion:

Results show no significant relationship between job satisfaction and optimism. This might be attributable to the fact that jobs are highly valued in societies where unemployment is prevailing (Ahn & Gracia, 2004). Their high scores on job satisfaction might be attributable to some variables other than optimism, like resiliency, positive thinking and even religiosity. Low scores on few dimensions of optimism may be temporary states which they are going through.

Recommendations:

1. The results show that there is a dire need to promote psychological resource capacities through training and development. Since the concept of optimism has been described as state like variable that can be inculcated and developed (Luthans & Youssef & 2007).
2. Another way to promote optimism is by emphasizing desirable results rather than avoiding undesirable results.
3. By engaging in positive self talk.
4. By developing internalized control.
5. The focus should be on the facilitation of the use of positive explanatory style to promote optimism.

6. There is a need for hiring behavior experts who could provide group as well as individualized program for such improvements.

7. Expansion of sample size may give rise to a clearer picture of relationship between two variables.

8. Furthermore, the variables of age, demographics are to be controlled.

9. Future research should also include other psychological resource variable such as hope, resiliency, wisdom and courage (Youseef & Luthans; 2007).

Limitations:

On the basis of small sample size, a generalized statement is hard to make.

Inclusion of gender was difficult due to scanty availability of women in corporate level because society generally recommends teaching as a feminine profession.

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