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Evaluating Job Satisfaction in Relation to Effort and Salary Among Teaching Staff

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Abstract. This research aims to assess the professional satisfaction of teaching staff in relation to their efforts and salary satisfaction. We aim to determine if there are differences between teachers in the private and public sectors regarding the methods used for job satisfaction, the evaluation of efforts at the workplace, and satisfaction with salary. The study is conducted on a sample of 63 teachers, both from the private and public sectors, utilizing the Salary Satisfaction Questionnaire, the Job Effort Scale, and the Job Satisfaction Subscale of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. The results do not confirm significant differences between private and public sector teachers but rather reveal a significant correlation between their efforts and professional satisfaction.

Keywords. job satisfaction, teaching staff, salary, workplace effort.

Introduction

No other incentive or motivational technique comes close to money. Such a quote reflects the prevailing opinion in the managerial accounting literature that performance-based incentive systems have a motivational effect. In fact, some authors argue that the primary purpose of incentives is to enhance extrinsic motivation by indirectly satisfying an employee's individual needs through salaries and bonuses (Anthony and Govindarajan, 2007; Kunz and Pfaff, 2002). The link between performance-based compensation and extrinsic motivation is explicit in the specialized literature on agency theory. Extrinsic motivation emphasizes the importance of external rewards, such as bonuses and promotions (Van Herpen et al., 2005), or the threat of salary reductions or dismissal (Frey, 1997). In the context of agency theory, incentive contracts designed to encourage extrinsic motivation are considered indispensable (Osterloh et al., 2002). Similarly,



expectancy theory argues that tying performance incentives motivates employees to increase their effort and performance (Jenkins et al., 1998; Lawler, 1973; Vroom, 1964).

1. Scientific foundation

The literature has indicated that compensation-related aspects play a critical role in organizations; however, there have been few guidelines that companies could use regarding when certain incentive system models were more (or less) suitable (Heneman et al., 2002a; Merchant, 1989; Merchant et al., 2003). The need for broader theoretical development is significant, as the use of performance-based compensation plans is on the rise (Broadbent and Cullen, 2005; Lawler, 2000), and there is a growing trend in variable compensation as a percentage of total compensation (Heneman et al., 2002b). Another gap in the specialized literature is that most research on economy-based incentives has been conducted at the CEO level, with few studies examining incentives at the business unit level or for frontline employees (Kominis and Emmanuel, 2005; Merchant et al., 2003; Prendergast, 1999).

A challenge to the view that compensation increases motivation comes from the cognitive evaluation theory, which argues that incentive payments have a negative effect on intrinsic motivation - a „crowding-out” effect (Gagne and Deci, 2005). However, research findings on the „crowding-out” effect have been mixed (Kunz and Pfaff, 2002). To explain the mixed results of crowding-out studies, self-determination theory suggests that it depends on the extent to which individuals feel autonomous (i.e., their actions are self-determined) or controlled, such as when salary is tied to specific outcomes (Ryan, 2008). There are also implications for performance-based compensation plans when compensation is perceived as unfair (Adams, 1965), as individuals continuously compare themselves to others (Festinger, 1954).

Understanding the implications of incentive system design is important for our understanding of employee motivation and whether these incentive systems are linked to job satisfaction. The motivation for this micro-research stems from the contextual reality addressing three aspects. Firstly, we are challenged to examine the design implications of performance-based compensation plans at the organizational levels (Kominis and Emmanuel, 2005, 2007; Merchant et al., 2003). Secondly, we seek to better understand the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Thirdly, we draw inspiration from the organizational psychology and human resources literature to further develop the existing literature in management accounting (Kominis and Emmanuel, 2005).

Thus, theoretically, a few landmarks can be mentioned. Firstly, we have identified some arguments suggesting that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be complementary. Almost all employees highly value elements of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This combination of high intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, coupled with the negative association between salary and extrinsic motivation, questions the agency theory argument that extrinsic rewards are necessary to ensure employees do not minimize their effort (i.e., shirking) (Bonner and Sprinkle, 2002). The potential for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to be complementary is discussed in the management and accounting sphere (Dermer, 1975; Kominis and Emmanuel, 2005, 2007; Kunz and Pfaff, 2002; Ronen and Livingstone, 1975). Secondly, a case can be made for the positive association between



compensation and intrinsic motivation, suggesting that the „crowding-out” literature may have overestimated the case where extrinsic rewards have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation (Kunz and Pfaff, 2002). The third landmark assumes that intrinsic motivation increases job satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation decreases job satisfaction. This is in line with the „crowding-in” argument (Frey, 1997), and finally, it can be noted that perceptions of salary injustice transcend motivation levels, age, and gender and are generally based on comparisons with other employees or the feeling that salary does not reflect an individual's effort.

Motivation and Salary Satisfaction

The philosophy underlying performance-based compensation plans is based on reinforcement theory, suggesting that compensation is linked to performance by setting specific goals and then rewarding individuals for achieving these goals (Heneman, 1992; Skinner, 1953). Agency theory relies on compensation contracts designed to balance the trade-offs between risks and incentives for individuals and groups, aligning the interests of managers and shareholders. Agency theory focuses on tangible and quantifiable extrinsic rewards (Merchant et al., 2003). Actions are rewarded and punished, thus shaping employees' actions, efforts, and performance (Jensen and Murphy, 2004; Kreps, 1997). Therefore, compensation is a powerful lever to influence extrinsic motivation (Locke et al., 1980). This gives rise to the following idea: the association between salary satisfaction and extrinsic motivation is positive.

The other form of motivation, intrinsic motivation, captures aspects related to doing work for its own sake, providing psychological benefits of well-being, accomplishment, increased responsibility, self-actualization, and is self-sufficient. Several authors argue that money is a weak motivator and can actually hinder intrinsic motivation, such as reducing creativity and innovation. In fact, a specific focus on extrinsic motivation can distract from the task; this has been termed the "hidden cost of rewards" (Lepper and Greene, 1978). This view has been incorporated into the "crowding-out" theory. When an activity is intrinsically attractive (e.g., challenging), positive effects can be undermined if extrinsic rewards are also tied to the activity and erode intrinsic motivation (Lee and Whitford, 2007). This exclusion has been further elaborated in the cognitive evaluation theory, proposing that payment (extrinsic motivation) can erode intrinsic motivation, which, in turn, reduces performance. The conclusion we reach is as follows: the association between salary satisfaction and intrinsic motivation is negative.

Motivation and Job Satisfaction

Now, we examine the relationship between an employee's motivation and job satisfaction. Several researchers (Heneman et al., 1988) concluded that work motivation and job satisfaction should be treated separately, making it easier to identify influencing factors and allowing better understanding. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory (2003) identifies intrinsic motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition, the work itself) and hygiene factors that tend to be extrinsic factors (e.g., company administration, supervision, salary). Herzberg's view is that these motivators lead to job



satisfaction because they satisfy an individual's self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1954; Tietjen and Myers, 1998).

Expectancy theory, developed by Porter and Lawler (1968), argues that a performance-based compensation system influences job satisfaction. Supporting this view, Pool (1997) examines the relationship between professional motivation and job satisfaction, finalizing a significant positive association, indicating that as professional motivation increases, job satisfaction also increases. Regarding extrinsic motivation, a positive association with job satisfaction has also been found (Moynihan and Pandey, 2007).

While the dominant argument has favored a positive association between extrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, Frey (1997) argues for a "crowding-in" effect. Intrinsic motivation can increase as a result of job improvement programs that have increased morale at work (Frey, 1997). When employees' enjoyment of their work increases, intrinsic rewards can undermine extrinsic motivation (Frey, 1997). Supporters of self-determination theory argue that performance-based compensation can have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation by supporting and encouraging employees' autonomy and self-esteem. However, self-determination theory remains silent on whether extrinsic motivation will decrease if intrinsic motivation increases. As a consequence, the association between extrinsic motivation and job satisfaction is positive.

After examining extrinsic motivation, our attention shifts to intrinsic motivation. Results from self-determination theory suggest that favorable work environments that encourage intrinsic motivation will result in increased job satisfaction and more efficient performance (Kunz and Pfaff, 2002). When performance-based compensation systems establish a link between individual and organizational performance, employees can see that their work is meaningful, thereby increasing job satisfaction as they can fulfill higher-order needs such as self-esteem (Wright and Kim, 2004). Consequently, the association between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction is positive.

Two more aspects need to be considered: salary equity and goal clarity.

Salary Equity and Goal Clarity

Salary equity is an important issue in designing performance-based compensation systems. Equity theory (Adams, 1965) is based on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), and research suggests that perceptions of equity are often based on social comparisons (Austin et al., 1980). Employees often make fairness judgments based on comparisons with other individuals who may be colleagues or based on other similarities, such as organizational status (Greenberg et al., 2007). The issue is that an individual's perceptions of salary inequities can have a negative impact on the motivation and performance of that individual. For example, the perception that someone is overpaid or underpaid decreases intrinsic motivation. However, only a few studies have examined intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in relation to salary equity.

Another important element in designing performance-based compensation systems is goal clarity. Goal clarity has been considered important as it leads to increased motivation (Latham and Baldes, 1975). However, it is challenging to formulate clear objectives that are both ambitious and relevant. The combination of well-specified and clear objectives is crucial because employee



behaviors associated with specific organizational goals can enhance the firm's performance and, moreover, provide greater intrinsic meaning to an individual's job.

2. Research methodology, results, and their interpretation

2.1. Research objectives

The purpose of the research is to analyze and evaluate a highly significant aspect of the current education system, namely, the job satisfaction of teachers in both private and public sectors, in relation to salary conditions and work efforts. The state education system in our country has faced numerous challenging periods (teacher strikes, the Covid-19 pandemic), and these phenomena leave their mark on the professional satisfaction of teachers. In contrast to public education, private education allows teachers a certain degree of flexibility in their teaching approach and activity planning.

- The specific objectives investigated in this research are:
- Identifying the level of job satisfaction among teachers in the private and public sectors.
- Identifying the level of salary satisfaction among teachers in the private and public sectors.
- Identifying the level of efforts exerted by teachers in the private and public sectors.
- Exploring the relationship/differences between job satisfaction and efforts exerted by teachers.
- Exploring the relationship/differences between job satisfaction and salary benefits for teachers.

2.2. Research hypotheses

I. It is presumed that there is a significant difference in job satisfaction between teachers in the private and public sectors.

II. It is presumed that there is a significant difference in work efforts between teachers in the private and public sectors.

III. It is presumed that there is a significant difference in salary satisfaction at the workplace between teachers in the private and public sectors.

IV. It is presumed that there is a correlation between job satisfaction and work efforts.

V. It is presumed that there is a correlation between job satisfaction and salary for teachers.

2.3. Participant sample

This study was conducted with a sample consisting of 63 teachers, including 34 from the public sector and 29 from the private sector. The gender distribution is unequal, with 38 female participants and 25 male participants. The teachers participating in the research work across all education levels, including preschool, primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and university. The sample is randomly selected, with respondents volunteering for the research.

2.4. Research instruments

Regarding the qualitative research, data were collected, retained, and analyzed using the Salary Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Heneman and Schwab in 1979/1985, the Job Effort Scale designed by De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, Jegers & Van Acker in 2009, and the Job Satisfaction Subscale of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire developed by Lawler, Camman, Nadler & Jenkins in 1975.



3. Analysis and interpretation of results

Hypothesis I: It is presumed that there is a significant difference in job satisfaction between teachers in the private and public sectors.

Based on the information collected and processed using the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 3.1), which assesses statistical differences between two groups of the sample, the results do not indicate a significant difference in job satisfaction between teachers in the private and public sectors, considering that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.798.

Regarding the mean scores obtained by the two categories of teachers, the difference is almost imperceptible, with teachers in the private sector having an average of 15.45, and those in the public sector having an average of 15.45.

Table 3.1. Mann-Whitney U - Hypothesis I

	S.E.L. M Total
Mann-Whitney U	474.500
Wilcoxon W	909.500
Z	-.256
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.798

a. Group Variable: Work environment

Therefore, both in the private sector and in the public education system, teachers report a similar level of job satisfaction. The absence of a difference may be due to the small sample size used in the research. Additionally, teachers may be motivated by similar factors regardless of their employment environment. These factors may include a passion for teaching, relationships with students and colleagues, and satisfaction derived from fulfilling the educational mission.

Contrary to this finding, a study on the Romanian population has shown that those who have exclusively built their careers in the public sector express greater job satisfaction compared to those in the private sector (Comşa, Rughiniş, & Tufiş, 2008).

Hypothesis II: It is presumed that there is a significant difference in the efforts made at the workplace between teachers in the private and public sectors.

Based on the information collected and processed using the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 3.2), which assesses statistical differences between two groups of the sample, the results do not indicate a significant difference in the efforts made at the workplace between teachers in the private and public sectors, considering that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.139.



Table 3.2. Tast Statistics. Mann-Whitney U – Hypothesis II

	S.E.L.
Mann-Whitney U	M Total 386.000
Wilcoxon W	821.000
Z	-1.487
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.139

a. Group Variable: Work environment

Both public and private schools share a common educational mission of providing quality education to students. This shared mission may motivate teachers to exert similar efforts in achieving educational objectives, regardless of the employment sector. Teachers may have a collective commitment to the success of their students, regardless of the school environment. This commitment can be a motivating factor in consistently putting efforts into teaching and support.

It is important to note that there is variability in these aspects, and individual experiences may differ. However, these explanations provide possible perspectives on why efforts at the workplace do not show significant differences between teachers in the public and private sectors. Additionally, the relatively small sample size may also contribute to the absence of differences.

When there is a strong commitment from teachers within an institution, the results are evident in how they collaborate and contribute ideas that enhance the instructional-educational process and outcomes. Employees feel empowered to propose innovative ideas and demonstrate a high level of vitality, making them more productive. Teachers who authentically demonstrate a high organizational commitment feel more confident in a professional environment, engage in transformative activities, aim for success and professional achievements, thereby contributing to the improvement of the quality of education (Potâng and Şargu, 2020).

The average results obtained on the Work Effort Scale are 57.18 for teachers in the public sector and 53.48 for teachers working in the private sector. Although teachers in the private sector exert less effort in their work, the difference is not significant. However, both environments exhibit high scores, indicating a high level of perseverance and intensity in the efforts made at the workplace by teachers.

Hypothesis III: It is presumed that there is a significant difference in job satisfaction with salary between teachers in the private and public sectors.

From the information collected and processed using the T-test (Table 3.3), which evaluates the statistical differences between two groups of the sample, the results do not indicate a significant difference in job satisfaction with salary between teachers in the private and public sectors, given that the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.758.

The results obtained from the Salary Satisfaction Questionnaire show that teachers in the public sector have a slightly higher average, 60.06, while the scores for those in the private sector are 59.34, with the difference being minimal. The scores recorded by both categories of teachers are moderate, indicating that they are not highly satisfied with their salary benefits.



Table 3.3. T-Test - Hypothesis III

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
C.S:C: Total	Equal variances assumed	1.204	.277	,309	60	,758	1,380	4,468	-7,558	10,318
	Equal variances not assumed			,305	53,896	,762	1,380	3,531	-7,704	10,464

Salary satisfaction can reflect how employees perceive the recognition of the value of their work. Adequate remuneration can contribute to the feeling that their efforts are appreciated and that they are appropriately rewarded. At the same time, differences between public and private educational institutions may be relatively small in certain regions or contexts, leading to uniformity in terms of salary satisfaction. In some cases, teachers may benefit from additional advantages such as paid leave, health insurance, and other benefits, which may be similar in both sectors. These benefits can contribute to overall job satisfaction.

Hypothesis IV: It is presumed that there is a correlation between job satisfaction and efforts at the workplace. – confirmed

In Table 3.4, it can be observed that there is a correlation between the two variables, job satisfaction and efforts at the workplace, with a correlation coefficient of 0.660, indicating a strong correlation. The Sig. (2-tailed) index is 0.000, meaning that this correlation is statistically significant.

Therefore, when a teacher puts more effort into their work, they will be more satisfied with their workplace. Overall, this result indicates that changes in one of the variables are associated with significant changes in the other, and the direction of this association is moderately positive according to the correlation coefficient value.



Table 3.4. Correlation – Hypothesis IV

		S.L.M Total	S.E.L. Total
S.L.M. Total	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.660**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	63	63
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	.660**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	63	63

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

One of the determinants for the superior efficiency and productivity of some organizations compared to others lies in the quality and intensity of efforts made by their employees, efforts that are closely linked to their level of motivation. To achieve outstanding performances, employees must be deeply involved in their activities and show the desire to achieve various goals, from the simplest to the most complex, and beneficial for the organization (Losii, 2020).

Hypothesis V: It is presumed that there is a correlation between job satisfaction and salary for teachers.

In the table below (Table 3.5), it can be observed that there is a very weak correlation between the two variables, job satisfaction, and salary satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient of 0.088, indicating a very weak correlation. The Sig. (2-tailed) index is 0.493, meaning that this correlation is not statistically significant. Consequently, there is no significant correlation between these two variables, and their association is considered very weak, so the hypothesis is not confirmed.

Similar research, supported by its results, suggests that there is no statistically significant correlation between the level of salary income and job satisfaction. Despite common beliefs and previous research suggesting a correlation between income and efforts made and job satisfaction, this relationship is not confirmed in this study (Ivas, 2017).



Table 3.5. Correlation – Hypothesis V

		S.L.M Total	S.C.S Total
Spearman's rho	S.L.M. Total		
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.088
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.493
	N	63	63
	S.C.S Total		
	Correlation Coefficient	.088	1.000
Spearman's rho	Sig. (2-tailed)	.493	.
	N	63	63

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

An adequate level of salary satisfaction can influence employees' motivation and commitment levels. When salaries are perceived as fair and equitable, employees are more likely to dedicate their energies and actively engage in the workplace.

Conclusions

This research assesses the professional satisfaction of teachers concerning their efforts at the workplace and salary benefits. From the obtained results, we can conclude that there are no significant differences between teachers in the private and public sectors regarding the tested variables.

The hypothesis suggesting significant differences in job satisfaction between teachers in public and private schools was not confirmed, as the data did not indicate a significant difference.

The hypothesis suggesting significant differences in the efforts made by teachers in the private and public sectors is not supported by statistical results, as it was refuted.

Similarly, the hypothesis testing differences in salary satisfaction among teachers was not confirmed.

The only hypothesis in this research that was confirmed is the existence of a correlation between efforts at the workplace and professional satisfaction. Thus, when a teacher's efforts increase, their satisfaction with the workplace automatically increases.

The last hypothesis, which suggests a correlation between salary satisfaction and professional satisfaction, was not confirmed.

The current literature lacks many studies on these specific aspects applied to teachers, and this work can serve as a starting point for future research in the field.

In conclusion, we would like to mention the methodological limitations of this study, namely the small sample size and the possibility of inaccuracies in the responses provided by participants.



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