



## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND JOB SATISFACTION

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**Abstract:** Job satisfaction is an attitude toward the job and the work context that has been in the centre of attention of theoreticians, researchers and practitioners for many decades. Past researches confirm that job satisfaction is related to employee's job performance, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, life satisfaction, and health. These job-related outcomes are also the main goals of HR function. The aim of the paper is to theoretically and empirically describe the role of HR practices in the area of HR development: training and education, career development, performance management and reward management, on job satisfaction.

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### Introduction:

The importance of being satisfied with the job is known for more than 50 years. Job satisfaction is positively related to employee productivity (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985), organisational citizenship behaviour (Farh, Podsakoff & Organ, 1990), life satisfaction, subjective well-being (Bowling, Eschleman & Wang, 2010), physical and mental health (Faragher, Cass & Cooper, 2005). Moreover, job satisfaction is positively related to more complex job related attitudes, such as organisational commitment (Farkas & Tetric, 1989) and job involvement (Babnik, 2010), which are necessary in present times, where all firms are looking for competitive advantage and especially through their people (Galanou, Georgakopoulos, Sotiropoulos & Dimitris, 2010, p. 102). Although job satisfaction is one of the most studied variables, not only in the field of work and organisational psychology, the foundations of this psychological construct are largely unresolved (Babnik, 2010; Spector, 1997). Job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept that encompasses personality traits and environmental factors (Roelen, Koopmans & Groothoff, 2008). The power of both groups of determinants is still less clear, because of the inconsistent results of different studies and various variables employed to represent the personal and environmental nature of job satisfaction. One of the problems of the study of environmental

factors is their perceptual nature. Perceptions have a historical component (Mandler, 1982), that is they are determined by individual experiences; by personal and personality variables.

Studied "environmental" determinants of job satisfaction can be grouped in four groups: i) immediate work environment, ii) leadership, iii) organisational characteristics and iv) societal level determinants. The immediate work environment is as an antecedent of job satisfaction best characterized by work characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Bos, Donders, Bowman-Brouwer & Van der Gulden, 2009). Leadership and leader member exchange are important correlates and determinants of job satisfaction (Lapierre & Hackett, 2007). The role of organisational characteristic in job satisfaction is studied through variables, such as organisational or psychological climate (Patterson, Warr & West, 2004), organisational culture (Vandenberghe & Peiró, 1999), human resource management practices (Brown, Forde, Specer & Charlwood, 2008; Jiang, Sun & Law, 2011; Kaya, Koc & Topcu, 2010; Petrescu & Simmons, 2008). The role of societal culture in job satisfaction is less clear. Hofstede (1980) reported that overall job satisfaction is most strongly associated with satisfaction with the level of challenge at work and pay, and that this relationship with regard to societal culture and professional culture does not change significantly. Similarly, Souza-Poza and Souza-Poza

(2000) found a fixed pattern of relationship between overall job satisfaction and perception of interesting work and good relations with management. The results of these studies suggest that job satisfaction is a more culturally universal phenomenon (Judge, Parker, Colbert, Heller & Ilies, 2001).

The role of human resource (HR) management practices in job satisfaction is rooted in the purpose of the HR function. The aim of the paper is to describe and explain the relationship between HR practices and job satisfaction. Even though perceptions of HR practices are implicated in a direct relationship with job satisfaction, only a few empirical studies have actually explored this relationship (Byrne, Miller & Pitts, 2010, p. 452).

### **Definition and components of job satisfaction**

Initial interest in job satisfaction has been marked by diversity of ideas and research methods. In 1976, Locke proposed one of the most important definitions of job satisfaction: "a pleasant or positive emotional state resulting from the individual's assessment of the work or work experience" (p. 1300). Job satisfaction is therefore described as an individual's affective reaction to work. Organ & Near (1985) have extended the concept of employee satisfaction on cognitive and affective component, and have called into the question the adequacy of former measures of job satisfaction, with the regard of their sensitivity to both components (Kaplan, Warren, Barsky & Thorensen, 2009). In the nineties, the authors have developed a more comprehensive and balanced interpretation of job satisfaction. The definition of job satisfaction that is the closest to the explanation of job satisfaction as an attitude is the definition of Weiss (2002, p. 6). He defines job satisfaction as a positive (or negative) evaluation of the job or the job situation. Job satisfaction can be studied as an overall attitude toward the job or as evaluation of different aspects of the job (facets of job satisfaction). Measures of overall satisfaction is primarily used for determining the global attitude to work and its change over time, facets of job satisfaction (satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with co-workers, satisfaction with leadership etc.) are used by researchers and practitioners to get more accurate prediction of behaviour, and to identify areas that need improvement within the organisation (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983).

### **HR function and HR practices**

The interest in the HR function and HR practices has emerged from two sources. The first source is the economic theory, which emphasizes the role of human resources as added value (Huselid, 1995). The second source is mainly psychological: i)

HR practices became popular as planned activities to achieve an optimum contribution of employees (Babnik, 2010), ii) HR practices became recognised as formal organizational policies, practices and procedures that through rewards and expectations, inform employees about the goals that are important for the organisation and the proper means to achieve them (Kopelman, Brief & Guzzo, 1990; Yeung, Brockbank & Ulrich, 1991). Accordingly, we can find HR practices as a part of the concept of organizational culture (e.g., van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004; Quinn, 1989) and as a source of perceptions of organizational climate (e.g., Ferris, Arthur, Berkson, Kaplan, Harrell-Cook & Frink, 1998; Van Muijen et al., 1999). The objectives of HRM function are (Armstrong, 2009): ensuring that the organisation is able to achieve success through people, increasing organisational effectiveness and capability, concerning with the rights and needs of people in organisations through the exercise of social responsibility. In the literature various models of HR system and areas of HR management can be found. Based on theoretical and empirical models (Armstrong, 1993; 2009; Bae, Chen & Lawler, 1998; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, Jackson & Schuler, 1997; Mescon, Albert & Khedouri, 1985) the most common HR areas can be identified: i) organisational design, ii) HR planning, recruitment and selection, iii) performance management, iv) training and development, v) reward management, vi) communication and employee relations, vii) health and safety.

### **HR practices and their impact on organisational and individual results**

The first studies on the role of HR practices in performance observed this relationship at the individual's level; the studies were focused on the relationship between a specific HR practice and worker's productivity and attitudes toward their job (e.g. Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Locke & Latham, 1990). Later, the research interest transferred to the organizational level. Recent interest was directed toward the impact of HR management systems on organisational results (e.g. Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid & Becker, 1996; Wood & de Menzes, 1998) and the more subjective measures, such as employee turnover (Huselid, 1995). Such studies identified two types of HR management systems that have a potential impact on organisational results: technical and strategic system (Huselid et al., 1997), and bureaucratic and organic system (Bae et al., 1998). Technical and bureaucratic system "meet" the basic needs of human resources, and at the level of "basic needs" such organisations deal with their staff. The strategic HR

system or organic HR system are aimed to identify and manage people as organisational values. Such systems are known also as high-performance work systems (Becker & Huselid, 1998). The core characteristics of an high-performance work system are (Armstrong, 2009): it links the firms selection and promotion decisions to validate the competency models; it is the basis for developing strategies that provide timely and effective support for the skills demanded to implant the firm's strategies; it enacts compensation and performance management policies that attract, retain and motivate high-performance employees. Development in accordance to the organisational and individual need is therefore the crucial difference between the technical HR system and the strategic approach to HR management.

### **The psychological processes underlying the role of HR practices**

In the field of research of the impact of HR practices on individual and organisational performance, a systematic explanation of mediating factors and processes that explain the impact is still lacking (Bacharach, 1989). One of the identified mediating variables is organizational climate (Kopelman et al., 1990; Ferris et al., 1998; Rogg, Schmidt, Schmitt & Shull, 2001). Organisational climate or psychological climate, on individual level of analysis, represent psychologically meaningful descriptions or contingencies and situational influences that individuals use to apprehend order, predict outcomes, and gauge the appropriateness of their organizational behaviours (Kopelman et al., 1990, pp. 294–295). Through individual interpretations of the immediate working environment, described by HR practices, employees develop more or less stable cognitive and affective states in the relation to their job and organisation, that in accordance to the models explaining the role of attitudes in individual behaviour (e.g. Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000), guide their job-related behaviour. Relatively independently of the organisational climate theory, a concept, based on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), has been developed. Perceived organisational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986) is a general belief that employees develop on the basis of their experience at work, about how the organisation values their contribution in achieving its goals and how much it concerns about their welfare. Employees evaluate various organisational practices and give them meaning; they attribute the motive and the level of sincerity of their employer. Perceived organisational support is strengthened by HR practices in the area of reward management, work design (work characteristics such as autonomy), training and

development, and HR practices aimed to the promotion of health, safety and well-being of employees (Fister, 2004). Perceived organisational support has several positive effects for the employer and employees; it promotes organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction and lower the levels of job related stress (Fister, 2004).

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