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TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF JOB SATISFACTION

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1. Introduction: Why study job satisfaction?

One of the basic assumptions underlying studies of job satisfaction is of course that it is important. The question is, however, important to whom?

Many studies have taken as their point of departure an expected relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. As this relationship does not show up, the study of job satisfaction is turned down as being of limited importance.

And in fact, that may be so if the reason for studying job satisfaction lies primarily in the alleged relationship with performance and productivity (Barbash 1976).

However, assuming that more than performance and productivity also is of importance to employers, as for instance a stable work-force showing up for work when they are scheduled to do so, the study of job satisfaction may still be of importance to employers.

But work, and thus work satisfaction, is not only the concern of employers.

Assessing the amount and distribution as well as the causes and consequences of job satisfaction is namely of importance from at least two other perspectives, namely that of society and that of the individual workers.

Seashore (1973) suggests some of the reasons for concern about job satisfaction on the societal level which seem fairly obvious.

- "1) Pathological accommodations to job dissatisfaction, if sufficiently persistent and widespread, can threaten the stability of the society and its accomplishments of its goals.
- 2) The societal costs arising from the side effects of delayed or pathological accommodation can be a serious drain on the resources of the society.
- 3) In a changing world, a high value must be placed upon the societal capacity to accommodate quickly and easily to events that alter the kinds of work that need to be done, and therefore the structure of jobs, organizations and occupations. This accommodation must be accomplished largely by individual workers through their ... actions, and the dynamics of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction come into play.
- 4) Every society needs to have an early alert capacity for detecting system dislocations and considering corrective programs, and social indicators regarding job satisfaction provide one (among many) resources for this purpose."

As to the workers' perspective, which will be given most attention in this paper, there are a number of reasons why the study of job satisfaction is of importance.

Work is probably the most important structuring element in most people's lives. To the degree then, that people do have a need for structure, the possibility and ability to work will be of prime importance.

Further, work is prevalent also because it occupies a large part of the available time of adults, and it has ramifications affecting virtually all other aspects of life (Seashore, 1973; Strauss, 1974).

Apart from the need for structure, there are of course a number of outcomes to be wanted from the participation in working life on behalf of the workers, such as sufficient economic return, job security etc. However, there is the possibility that when such more or less lower level needs, as presented in Maslow's need-hierarchy have been met, other outcomes from participation in working life will be more highly valued. (Similar points of views are discussed for instance in Campbell, 1972.)

What this mounts up to, is saying that from the workers' perspective, the more qualitative aspects of working life will be growing in

importance. Job satisfaction is one such aspect and therefore one of the outcomes workers may want to attain through their participation in working life.

Further, as Lawler (1973) has pointed out, job satisfaction is one measure of the quality of working life, also indicating that job satisfaction is important not only in and of itself, but also as an indicator of this broader concept. This aspect is further more important, because a significant correlation exists between quality of working life and quality of life in general.

There is evidence that the satisfactions the worker gains from the work situation may influence her or his overall satisfaction with life (e.g. status and prestige), and that the work situation is one of the variables that determine an individual's overall life satisfaction (Locke, 1976). This also means that the importance of job satisfaction may rest primarily outside the work situation, again emphasizing its prime importance to society and the individual, rather than to the employer.

2. What is job satisfaction? The need for conceptualization and operationalization

When it comes to the empirical investigation of job satisfaction, the operationalization of the concept will be of utmost importance. Different methods have been used, both to measure global and facet specific job satisfaction. Different scales have been developed and different aspects of the job have been taken into account. (For a very competent example of work in this field, see Smith et al. 1968.)

However, I tend to agree with Russell (1975) who points to the need for more attention toward a conceptualization of the term of job satisfaction. The reasons are that conceptualization must precede operationalizations and that a theoretical definition will ease the operationalization of the concept. I think, however, that the following definition offered by Locke (1976) is a step in the right direction. According to Locke,

"Job satisfaction results from the attainment of values which are compatible with one's needs. Among the most important values or conditions conducive to job satisfaction are: 1) Mentally challenging work with which the individual can cope successfully, 2) personal interest in the work itself, 3) work which is not too physically tiring, 4) rewards for performance which are just, informative, and in line with the individual's personal aspirations, 5) working conditions which are compatible with the individual's physical needs and which facilitate the accomplishment of his work goals, 6) high self-esteem on the part of the employee, 7) agents in the workplace who help the employee to attain job values such as interesting work, pay, and promotions, whose basic values are similar to his own, and who minimize role conflict and ambiguity."

In this definition Locke lists factors that are of importance for a job in relation to job satisfaction, mostly taking his point of departure in the work itself and in working conditions. Although such factors are of course important, it is known that different individuals react differently to the same working conditions and/or similar to different working conditions. Even if this to some extent is taken care of by Locke in his reference to needs and values, I think there is a need for some elaboration of this point.

According to Locke's definition, job satisfaction is an individual reaction to work and working conditions, moderated to some extent by needs and values, and is as such a psychological construct. However, if the focus

is not as much on what job satisfaction "really is", but more on what accounts for individual differences in job satisfaction, the perspective has to be extended to also taking sociological factors into consideration. That is, no individual acts in a social vacuum, and the social structure in which an individual is located, both on and off the job are of importance (Whyte, 1969). That is, the social processes involved in determining individual reactions have to be taken into account.

Further, the time perspective is also of importance. Job satisfaction is a dynamic concept, influenced both by earlier experience and future expectations (Seashore, 1973).

Finally a note on the relationship between job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. In contrast to Herzberg et al. (1959) I think that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction should be conceived as a continuum with maximum satisfaction as one end-point and maximum dissatisfaction as the other end point. According to this it would be more appropriate to talk about levels of job satisfaction instead of just satisfaction.

3. Previous Research: Empirical studies Reviewed

When trying to develop further the concept of job satisfaction, it seems necessary to present some of the previous studies on job satisfaction. To do so, I have checked all journal articles listed under "job satisfaction" in the library of the New York State School of Industrial and Labour Relations at Cornell University for the years 1974-1975.

Emphasis will be put on the kinds of relationships examined and the kinds of variables that are taken into account.

The following kinds of factors/variables have been used in explaining differences in job satisfaction.

3.1 Personal variables:

Differences in age, tenure and sex seem to be related to differences in job satisfaction (Hunt, J.W. and Saul, Peter N., 1975).

Structural characteristics of individuals (rank, tenure, etc.) seems to be more directly linked with job satisfaction than personality traits (Reilly, Ch.A.D. and Roberts, K.H., 1975).

Need-type is seen as an intervening variable between job characteristics and job satisfaction by Pinto, R.R. and Davis, T.C. (1974) while Sinha, D. and Gupta, N. (1974) regard need satisfaction as leading to job satisfaction.

Parek (1974) regards need strength as an important variable in predicting job satisfaction, and need for achievement is also considered as an important factor (Steers, R.M., 1975).

3.2 Working conditions:

The relationship between job structure, that is, the degree of constraint or discipline demanded because of the job design, and job satisfaction has been investigated (Baker & Hansen, 1975). No relationship was found, until the worker's tolerance for structure was introduced as an intervening variable.

Individual characteristics were also used as intervening variable between job characteristics and job satisfaction by Wanous (1974).

Supervisory behaviour is also important (Singh and Pestonjee, 1974).

The impression is, from those studies that it is difficult to establish a direct relationship between objective working conditions and the perception of them.

3.3 Organizational variables:

DiMarco, N. and Norton, S. (1974) found a correlation between organization structure (degree of bureaucratization) and personal life style and job satisfaction. The greater congruence between the two independent variables, the greater the job satisfaction.

There is also a relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity and job satisfaction (Schuler, R.S., 1975, Killer, R.T., 1975).

Organizational climate is seen as a factor influencing job satisfaction in a number of studies (Smart, J.C., 1975; Schneider & Snyder, 1975; Lafolette, W.R. & Sims, H.P., 1975; Newman, J.E., 1975) while organizational structure and job satisfaction is investigated by Ivancevich, J.M. and Donnelly, J.H. (1975).

The role of the unions has also been discussed (Mire, J., 1974).

3.4 Environmental factors:

The only environmental factors outside the work organization that I have found being considered is the urban-rural dimension and its relation with job satisfaction (Fossum, J.A., 1974).

When it comes to the consequences of job satisfaction, the following relationships have been investigated empirically in the articles I have reviewed:

Turnover, work related tension, performance (Kraut, A.J. and Ronen, S., 1975).

Performance (Steers, R.M., 1975, Wanous, J.P., 1974 b).

Anxiety-stress and Performance (Ivancevich, J.M. and Donnelly, J.H., 1975).

As is always the case, the relationship between job satisfaction and performance is not clear, and it seems as if other job related variables are of more importance than job satisfaction. Turnover and work-related tensions seem to be relatively well predicted by job satisfaction, which is also in line with other research.

It is also worth mentioning that most of the studies have concentrated on the consequences of job satisfaction from the employers perspective, that is, the relationship between job satisfaction and performance and turnover. Other studies - not reviewed here - have also included absenteeism in this list.

The consequences of job satisfaction on the individual workers or from the society's perspective have not up to now received much interest.

3.5 Limitations of Previous Research

Most empirical studies of job satisfaction have had a very limited and "isolationist" concept of both job and work. Although the two terms have often been used interchangeably, distinctions appear to exist between the two. In addition there appears to be dissension regarding just what

"job" means; studies have variously defined and used it as anything from the individual facets of the job to the "all-inclusive" work (as opposed to job) situation.

Most populations surveyed have been mostly small, often homogeneous occupational groups or groups within the same organization.

The studies have usually treated job satisfaction as a static concept with a limited number of factors. Rather than trying for a comprehensive view of job satisfaction, most researchers have attempted to determine how one or two factors relate to job satisfaction, all other things being equal. The studies have also assumed a narrow scope of relevant factors with relevancy defined by reference to the "job" (as opposed to working life or career) and to the present attributes of the person compared with his changing and potential attributes as he progresses through his life span. They offer a limited time perspective and ignore consideration of past conditions or future consequences. Researchers have viewed job satisfaction as an entity rather than as a process and have further assumed that the job is an adequate entity for description and analysis of the person's working life despite the obvious fact that jobs occur in sets, in sequences, and in interdependency with other jobs as well as with non-job roles (Seashore, 1973 and 1975).

4. Towards an integrated model of job satisfaction

As has been shown in the previous section, the literature abounds in studies of job satisfaction, but the results are somewhat inconclusive and it is difficult to generalize the findings.

The lack of a more comprehensive theoretical model may probably explain this fact to some extent. This section of the paper will try to outline a theoretical model. In such a model it will be important to identify the factors, both on and off the job that are effective in producing job satisfaction. The extent to which such factors are "manipulative" should also be taken into consideration (Geare, 1974).

Further, there is a task for experimental and analytic research to determine a) the social conditions that produce a phenomenon and/or b) its behavioural or other consequences.

Those statements should set the stage for this part of the presentation. As indicated in previous sections, the objective working conditions must of course be taken into account, and they are of course of importance when it comes to the production of level of job satisfaction. However, based on empirical research, Seashore (1973) found that about 40% of the variation in job satisfaction can be explained by such factors, leaving around 60% of the variation unexplained. What this boils down to is that there is no one-to-one relationship between objective working conditions and attitudes towards work. Other factors have to be taken into account.

A few attempts have been made lately to develop a more inclusive view on factors causing individual differences in job satisfaction. I will take as my point of departure two such models, namely one presented by Seashore and Taber (1975) and another presented by Lawler (1973).

To my mind it seems as if those two models can be integrated, to account for both the psychological and social processes involved in the production of level of job satisfaction. In Seashore and Taber's model also some outcomes of level of job satisfaction are outlined.

According to Seashore and Taber both environmental and personal factors are operating in producing feelings of satisfaction with work. The environment includes both a) the society-wide political and economic conditions, b) occupational prestige and power, c) organization environment, such as climate, promotional opportunities, and d) the job and the job environment, which include both physical and psych-social working conditions. Seashore and Taber ranges environments from macro (society) to micro (job and job environment). What Whyte (1969) calls structural variables are probably included in those environmental factors.

The personal factors are ranged from less stable to more stable, including: a) transient personality traits as anger and boredom, b) perceptions, cognitions, expectations, c) "situational" personality, that is motivations, preferences, d) abilities, e) stable personality that is values, needs, interaction style, and f) demography, e.g. age, sex, education, etc.

Seashore and Taber do not discuss the extent to which some of the personal factors can be seen as intervening rather than independent variables. But I would argue that probably except for the demographic variables, they should be treated as intervening variables.

In this particular model, the time perspective is not explicitly taken into account.

In Lawler's model the time perspective, demographic and skill variables and job characteristics are used as independent variables to explain the presence of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the job. However, in this model the perception both of what has been put into a job, the perceived job characteristics, the perceived outcomes and the comparison with others are taken into account as intervening variables to explain differences in job satisfaction.

That is, in addition to Seashore and Taber, Lawler brings time, perception and comparison into the picture, whereas the environmental, and some of the personal characteristics mentioned by Seashore and Taber are ignored.

Regarding consequences of job satisfaction, Seashore and Taber mention consequences both on the individual, plant, and societal level.

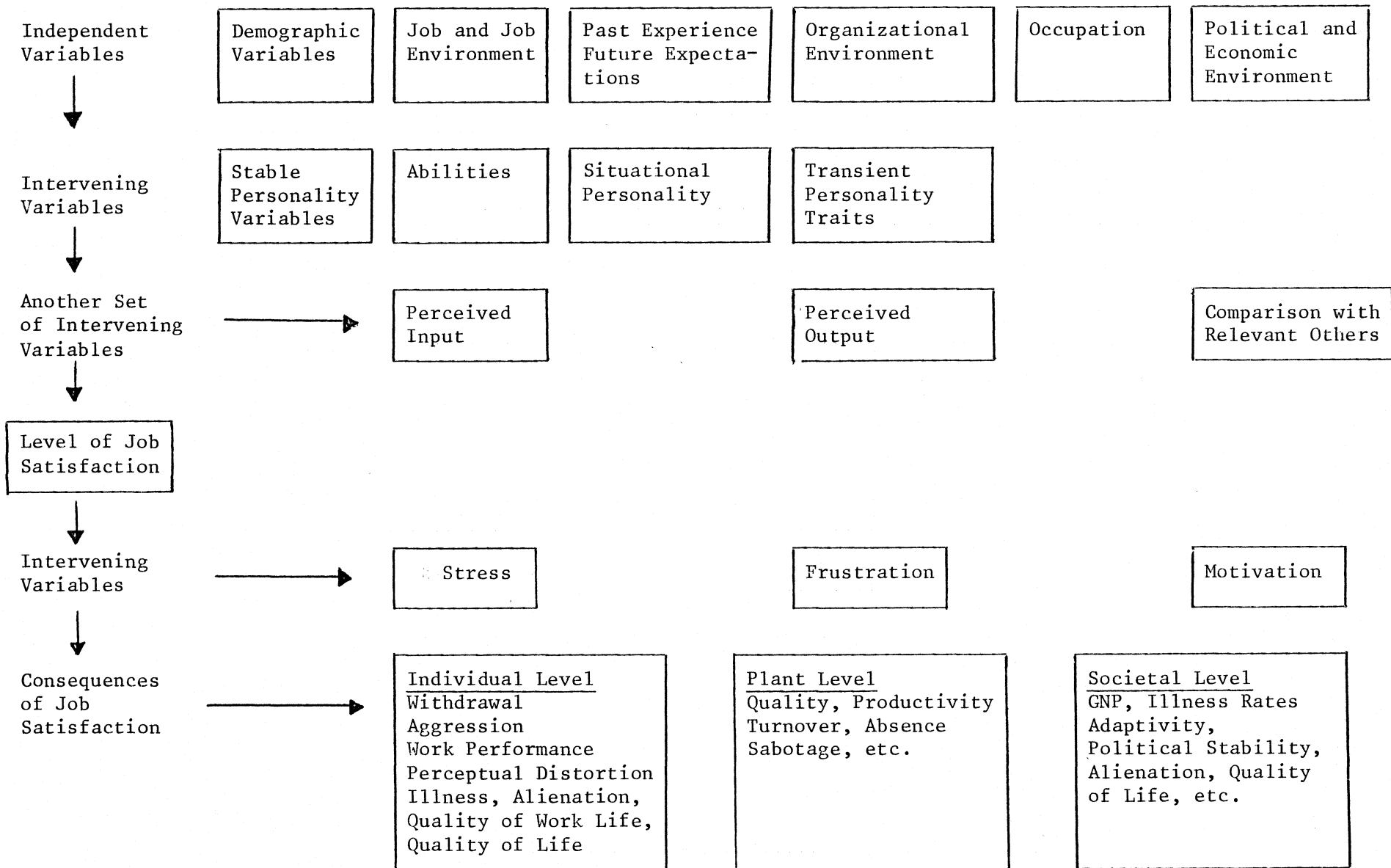
However, Seashore and Taber seem to indicate a direct relationship between satisfaction and behaviour and mental and physical states on the individual level. To the extent that job satisfaction is an attitude, it does not necessarily produce action. I would hypothesize, therefore, that motivation, stress and frustration caused by the level of job satisfaction will be intervening variables between satisfaction and its consequences.

The model I would suggest for explaining level of job satisfaction and its possible consequences is presented in figure 1. Briefly, the model states that there are a number of independent variables, such as demographic variables, job and job environment, experiences and expectations, organizational environment, occupation, political and economic environment. These independent variables influence the level of job satisfaction through a set of intervening variables, such as stable personality variables, abilities and more situational personality variables.

The consequences of job satisfaction may also be seen as moderated or influenced by a set of intervening variables, like stress, frustration and motivation. These consequences of job satisfaction may be found both on the individual level, plant level and societal level.

There is one more point to be stressed, namely the importance of time.

Fig. 1 A TENTATIVE INTEGRATED MODEL OF JOB SATISFACTION



It should be noted that dissatisfaction, or a low level of satisfaction in the normal case is a transitional or temporary state which prompts some sort of accomodative or adaptive behaviour in the individual. That is, a low level of satisfaction may in some sense be seen as a cause to such accomodative behaviour. (Seashore and Taber, 1975) tend. Most studies tend, however, to ignore the time-factor, analyzing satisfactions at points in time. Though experiences and expectations are included in my model, and though it is emphasized that job satisfaction is not a static phenomena, the role of time must be stressed over and over again. Research has to focus also on identifying causation and relationships over time, rather than to attempt correlations at specific points in time. In other words, longitudinal and panel research approaches should to a larger extent than at present, substitute cross-sectional approaches.

5. Concluding remarks

The model presented here must be regarded as highly tentative and needs further elaboration in the future. However, it should give an indication on how complex the phenomenon of job satisfaction is and what kind of variables that should be included in order to investigate the phenomenon thoroughly.

However, the empirical fruitfulness of such a comprehensive model remains to be tested. Such empirical testing will demand a large number of observations because of the number of variables involved. It will also require the co-operation of different academic disciplines. But even if it turns out to be difficult to include all the variables/factors here

outlined in empirical research, they should at least be taken into account in the interpretation of the obtained results.

It may also be stressed that such an approach as presented here would make the research on job satisfaction more theoretically relevant, tying this research to other types of research concerning the complex influences and interactions between the individual and her/his environment.

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