





## **BSc in Psychology**

# A Relation Between the Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

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Foreword

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the BSc Psychology degree, Reykjavik University, this thesis is presented in the style of an article for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

### Abstract

A positive relation between the work environment and job satisfaction seems to be an important factor of how employees feel about their jobs. For instance the working days can be long and people spend most part of the day at the workplace so it's important that they experience positive environment and job satisfaction. The purpose of the study was to examine what the main factors were that affects the job satisfaction. A questionnaire was sent out by email to 30 different workplaces in Iceland. The participants were 156 total, 112 women and 44 men, therefore women were 71.8% and men 28.2%. The age span ranged 18-66 years old. The results showed that there was a relation between the work environment and job satisfaction of employees. Participants working in a school had the lowest level of job satisfaction and the participants working in a service job had the highest level of job satisfaction. Between the work environment groups there was a significant difference,  $F(3, 143) = 5.040, p = .002$ . Furthermore, the results suggest that it is essential for companies to understand the importance of the social factors and a good working conditions to maximize job satisfaction at the workplace.

*Keywords:* Job satisfaction, work environment, job burnout, gender difference

### Útdráttur

Starfsánægja virðist vera mikilvægur þáttur í því hvernig starfsmönnum fyrirtækja líður með starf sitt. Vinnudagar geta verið langir og fólk ver meirihluta dagsins á vinnustaðnum og er því mikilvægt að umhverfið á vinnustaðnum sé jákvætt. Tilgangur rannsóknarinnar var að kanna hvaða meginþættir hafi áhrif á starfsánægju fólks. Spurningalisti var sendur með tölvupósti til 30 mismunandi vinnustaða á Íslandi. Þátttakendur voru 156 alls, 112 konur og 44 karlar, þar af voru konur 71,8% og karlar 28,2%. Aldur þátttakenda var á bilinu 18-66 ára. Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar sýndu að tengsl voru á milli starfsumhverfis og starfsánægju starfsmanna. Einstaklingar sem unnu í skólum höfðu lægstu starfsánægjuna en þeir sem unnu í þjónustufyrirtæki höfðu mestu starfsánægjuna  $F(3, 143) = 5.040, p = .002$ . Bendir rannsóknin því til þess að nauðsynlegt er fyrir fyrirtæki að skilja mikilvægi félagslífs og jákvæðs starfsanda til að hámarka starfsánægju á vinnustað.

*Efnisorð:* Starfsánægja, starfsumhverfi, kulnun á vinnustað, kynjamunur

### A Relation Between the Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

According to Spector (1997) job satisfaction is an important indicator of how employees feel about their jobs. Job satisfaction can be defined in more than one way. It is mostly the experience and well being of employees and it is a very important factor at the workplace. He found that salary, assignments and exhaustion can play a major role in job satisfaction within a company and in general for well being in everyday life and is, therefore, important that individuals feel good at the workplace so that they are generally happy (Spector, 1997). The working day can be long and people spend most part of the day at the workplace so it's important that they experience positive environment and job satisfaction (Do Monte, 2012). Job satisfaction also says a lot about how well people perform their jobs and how much ambition they have. According to Do Monte, there may be more chance of decreased job performance, which may lead to exhaustion and job burnout if job satisfaction is insufficient.

Sauter, Murphy, and Hurrell (1990) found that stress was one of top ten health problems related to work in the United States. Subsequently, discussions on work-related stress increased both publicly and within the government. They also found that work-related stress is a negative physical and mental reactions that occur due to mismatch between the demands of the job itself and what it does to the individuals and the capabilities, needs and characteristics that the individuals possess. For example, when individuals experience the demands in the work environment more than they think they can handle.

Huang, Chen, Du, and Huang (2012) found that excessive demands in work could lead to decrease in mental health and a chronic stress, which can lead to job burnout. According to Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach (2009) the characteristics of the

burnout could begin by the individual's working capacity, the individual's performance decreases, and the situation can lead to exhaustion. The main reason for the job burnout is a long-term stressful environment where an individual has had to struggle for a long time and is now beginning to affect health, job satisfaction, and wellness. They also found that burnout is associated with feelings such as helplessness, hopelessness, depression, isolation and disappointment.

Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) found that the strongest factor that had an effect on job satisfaction seemed to be exhaustion, at least the most commonly, referred to as associated with job burnout. If an individual is unable to cope with this distress, he/she may be unable to do his/hers job. They found in their study, that job burnout could show negative effects on behavior at work, such as more absenteeism, more employee turnover, and poorer performance at work. According to Swider and Zimmerman (2010), those who are experiencing burnout are more likely to engage in negative behavior but Maslach (1978) found that it can also lead to negative consequences of unemployment, such as drinking, substance abuse, mental problems and even problems within a marriage or family. Therefore, it is clear that job burnout can have negative effects on mental well being and is worth noting that these relations can go both ways, but bad mental well being can also push the person to experience a burnout at work (Wright & Hobfoll, 2004). Job burnout is, according to Wright and Hobfoll (2004), a serious problem that has both negative effects on the workplace and on individuals. To prevent job burnout to occur it is, therefore, important that managers of the workplace learn to know the characteristics of the burnout in order to intervene if something indicates that burnout has occurred. They also found that it is important that employers find out what ways can be used as a precautionary measure for individuals at work, for example, to avoid excessive workload on employees and

to encourage them to report in case of dissatisfaction. According to them, employers can monitor burnout and stress of employees with systematic monitoring, regular staff interviews and anonymous survey, where they can submit comments.

The first person to use the term job burnout, for scientific purposes, was the psychiatrist Herbert. J. Freudenberger. According to Freudenberger (1974), symptoms of burnout can be many and vary between individuals. This usually takes place about one year after an individual starts a new job at a new location, but until that point, there are usually many different factors that affect the burnout. One of the main reasons, according to Freudenberger, seems to be a loss of charisma from the employer, which can lead to disappointment with the workplace and work environment. He also said that physical symptoms may be included in job burnout, such as menstrual headaches, insomnia, and indigestion. There are also behavioral symptoms such as frustration, irritation, and cynicism.

### **What Affects Job Satisfaction**

There are many factors, according to Saari and Judge (2004), that can affect job satisfaction and it is different with every individual, for example, some individuals think the salary is the key to job satisfaction, while other's think the relationship between coworkers is the most important factor. As the Hawthorne research showed, the relationship between a boss and an employee has the greatest impact on job satisfaction and how the job is by nature (Saari & Judge, 2004).

A positive job satisfaction can have an impact on those around us and it is, therefore, important for companies to take good care of their employees and to do everything in their power to make them feel comfortable in the work environment (Islam, Mohajan, & Datta, 2011). They also found it important that companies let their employee's know how well they are doing their job and that they are

accomplishing good things for the company. This motivation promotes a better attitude, thoughts and behavior, which causes the employee to show more interest in the work and is more determined to succeed. If a company lacks this motivation, a lack of interest, punctuality and apathy can be seen from employees. Hawthorne's research (Islam, Mohajan, & Datta, 2011), one of the best-known job satisfaction research, took place from 1924 to 1932. In this time there was generally little attention that was given to the feelings and needs of employees in factories. So the positive attention that was given to the employees during the research could possibly be considered to be more valuable than before. In addition, the employees got a feedback for the first time on their performance along with increased freedom from their directors. In the meantime, it is believed that the atmosphere in the workplace improved, the motivation of the staff to be successful had improved and performance improved as a result. The results showed that the social factor is the main factor in the employee's satisfaction because if the employee finds that he is not part of the whole, it can cause exhaustion.

Job satisfaction is a key factor at the work place; such research has been conducted all around the world. In Pakistan (Razig, 2015), a survey was conducted of 210 individuals working in educational institutions and the financial industry, which included a questionnaire about job satisfaction. The study showed a positive relation between the work environment and job satisfaction of employees, and researchers found that it was essential for companies to understand the importance of the social factors and a positive environment to maximize job satisfaction at the workplace.

Kabir (2011) conducted a research on job satisfaction in similar pharmaceutical companies in Australia. The results were the same in all companies,

salary, efficiency in work, and the relationship between colleagues were the most important factors that contributed to job satisfaction.

It's a common stereotype, according to Puranova and Muros (2010), that women are more likely to experience job burnout than men. Their research showed that people generally think that women are more likely to experience stress at work and are more likely to experience job burnout than men. However, they say that there are theories about that this is simply because women talk more about their problems while men often hide their feelings, and, therefore, job burnout may be more hidden with men than with women.

Work environment and job satisfaction seem to be an important factor of how employees feel about their jobs. The working days can be long and people spend most part of the day at the workplace so it's important that they experience positive environment and job satisfaction. There has not been any research on this subject in Iceland. The aim of this study was to see if there was a relation between the work environment and job satisfaction, and who the main factors are that affect the job satisfaction.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Those who participated in this study worked in banks, schools, airlines, car sales and rentals, media, nursing homes, hospitals, home appliances stores, and for the city of Reykjavik. The participants could answer at any time during a two-week period. A questionnaire was sent to a total of 200 individuals. The response rate was 68% or a total of 156 individuals (see Table 1), 112 women and 44 men; therefore, women were 71.8% and men 28.2%. The age span ranged from 18 to 66 years old.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percentage Between Genders and Between in Age Groups of All Participants*

	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	44	28.2
Female	112	71.8
<b>Age</b>		
18-25 years	24	15.4
26-35 years	21	13.5
36-45 years	44	28.2
46-55 years	45	28.8
56-65 years	21	13.5
66 years or older	1	0.6
Total	156	100.0

### **Measures**

A questionnaire (see appendix A) was made online in Google forms. It consisted of ten questions regarding job satisfaction; such as “How important do you think these factors are when it comes to job satisfaction?” and “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” this was the dependent variable. It also consisted of few questions about general information’s, such as age, gender, and the type of company. Beside this general information the researcher put down 10 statements regarding job satisfaction and the participants had to rate them, based on how they experienced the work place, on the scale “I strongly agree, I agree, neither

nor, I disagree, and I strongly disagree” An example of this job satisfaction scale were, “I believe my work contribution is important within the company”, “I am generally happy at work”, “I feel good in my work environment”, and “I have good relations with my colleagues” and those were the independent variables.

### **Procedure**

To begin with, the researcher had to find questions that were appropriate for the study and then translate them from English to Icelandic with help of the supervisor. When the questions about job satisfaction and the general information about the participants were ready, the questionnaire was sent by email, 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2019, to the participants and they got two weeks to answer the questions but the questionnaire was short and it took about 1-3 minutes to answer it. The researcher closed for participation on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2019. The researcher emphasized that responses could not be traced to participants and that personal information was not processed. Similarly, the research report would not identify the companies. Because the questionnaire was sent out by email the researcher did not have to have control of the experimental conditions so the conditions for participants were not the same.

When a total of 156 participants had answered the questionnaire, the researcher started the data analysis processing in SPSS.

### **Data analysis**

All data analysis processing was conducted in SPSS. ANOVA was used to see if there was a significant difference between genders, between in age groups, and between different type's of job's, in job satisfaction. Regression was used to see who the main factors were that affect the job satisfaction; such as taking the work assignments home after a long day at work.

### Results

To get results for job satisfaction, a factor analysis was conducted where ten statements, for example, “I am generally happy at work”, “I feel good in my work environment” were unified into one factor. All variables had  $h^2 > .300$  in communalities. The factor loadings were between .394, which was “I believe my work contribution is important within the company” and .853, which was “I feel good in my work environment”. The factor explains about 62.6% in the variables. In that factor a Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for internal consistency, which indicates that the job satisfaction scale was very reliable. Therefore, these statements were unified into one dependent variable; job satisfaction.

In this study the dependent variable was the job satisfaction and the independent variables were the age, gender, and the work environment. The purpose of this research was to see if there was a relation between the work environment and job satisfaction. The results from the three variable groups (see Figure 1) work environment, gender, and age showed that the participants working in a school had the lowest level of job satisfaction and the participants working in a service job had the highest level of job satisfaction. Between the work environment groups there was a significant difference,  $F(3, 143) = 5.040, p = .002$ .

To see where the difference in work environment was, a Bonferroni test was used and it showed that there was a significant difference between a job at school and a service job.

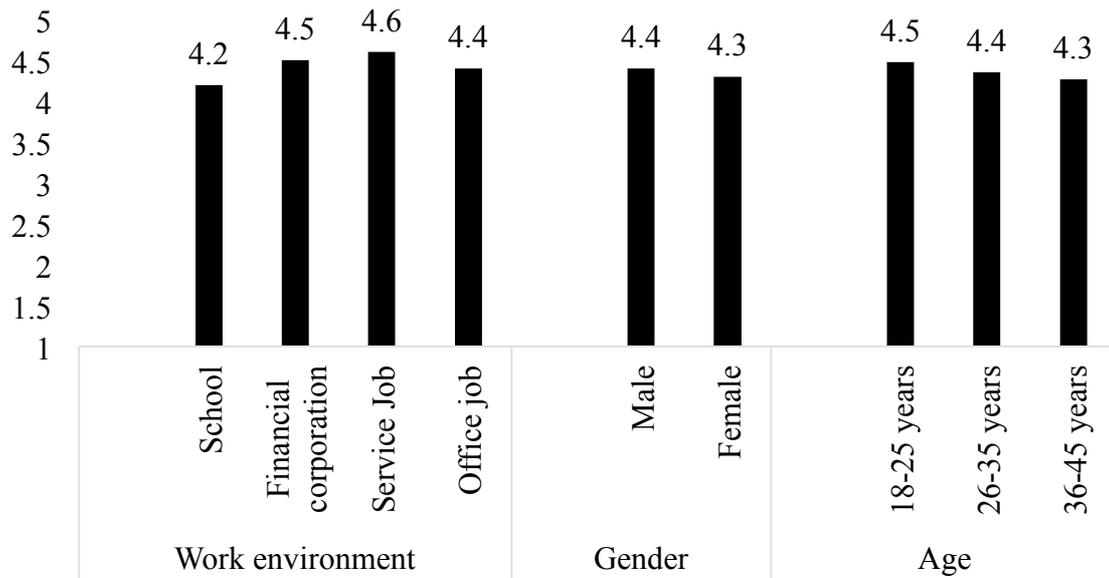


Figure 1 Mean for Work Environment, Gender, and Age in Job Satisfaction

When it comes to gender differences in job satisfaction the results show that man scored higher than women in job satisfaction. The results from ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between genders in job satisfaction,  $F(1, 147) = .768, p = .382$ .

Between in age groups 18-25 year olds scored highest in job satisfaction and 36-45 year olds scored lowest but the results from ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between in age groups in job satisfaction,  $F(2, 146) = 1.967, p = .144$ .

The results from the regression (see Table 2) showed that exhaustion had the most effect on job satisfaction. Taking the work assignments home had the least affect on job satisfaction. The regression showed that there was not a relation between job satisfaction and taking the work home but there was a relation between exhaustion and employee's job satisfaction.

Table 2

*Beta, t-Test, and Significance for Factors That Had an Effect on Job Satisfaction*

	Beta ( $\beta$ )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Taking the work assignments home	.092	.950	.344
Job and private life	-.035	-.371	.712
Employee turnover	-.189	-2.338	.021
To much work load	.051	.435	.665
Exhaustion	-.413	-3.206	.002
Physical symptoms	.063	.672	.503

According to the R squared, the independent variables (see Table 2) explained 18.8% of job satisfaction, and this correlation was significant,  $F(6, 139) = 5.357, p < .001$ .

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this research was to examine what the main factors were that affects job satisfaction. The hypothesis was that there is a relation between the work environment and job satisfaction. The results from the ANOVA and the post hoc test

showed that this hypothesis was confirmed and the participants working in a school had the lowest level of job satisfaction and the participants working in a service job had the highest level of job satisfaction. Between the work environment groups there was a significant difference.

The greatest difference between this study and another, from Puranova and Muros (2010), there was no significant difference between genders but according to Puranova and Muros, it is a common stereotype, that women are more likely to experience exhaustion at work than men. This study did not show that difference. Another study on job satisfaction, in Pakistan (Razig, 2015), found that job satisfaction is a key factor at the work place. Razig got 210 individuals from educational institutions and the financial industry to participate in his study about job satisfaction. The results from his study showed that there was a relation between the work environment and job satisfaction of employees. There was a positive linear relation between job satisfaction and the work environment, the value of R was 36.3% and the work environment explained 13.2% of variation in job satisfaction.

Participants working in a school could have the lowest level of job satisfaction because there are more negative stimulus in schools, kids running around screaming and not obeying. This could have negative affects on the employees and they could be going home exhausted every day, which could lead to lower job satisfaction. Participants who worked in a service job could have been experiencing less stressful environment and, therefore, experiencing higher level of job satisfaction.

The strength of the study was how many individuals participated, out of 200 individuals the response rate was 68% or a total of 156 individuals. Also the job satisfaction scale was very reliable, a Cronbach's alpha was .90 for internal

consistency. In this study the limitations was that more women took part in the study than men, the women were 112 and men 44.

In conclusion, job satisfaction can be evaluated in many ways. What matters to one person does not necessarily matter to another. Some find pleasure and happiness from good work environment or compliments from the boss while others get happiness from higher salary or more free time. Job satisfaction affects more than just the occupation; it also contributes to well being in the daily lives of individuals. It is important to create a good and positive environment that could increase job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is not only important for individuals, but it is also important for the companies as a whole to have positive satisfaction within their staff because then they show greater capacity. Therefore, it is important for companies to increase and/or maintain job satisfaction within the company by motivating their employees, this motivation encourages better attitudes, thoughts and behaviors, which makes the employee more determined to succeed.

In future studies it would be interesting to see why employees in schools have lower job satisfaction than other employees who work in a service job. Is it because there is more stress or negative stimulus in schools than in service? In addition it would also be interesting to see if the factors, "Taking the work assignments home", "Employee turnover", and "To much work load" do play a small part of the affect on job satisfaction. If the person is already experiencing exhaustion at work, do these factors push him/her further away from the positive job satisfaction? There has not been any research on this subject in Iceland and therefore it would be interesting to see whether job satisfaction is similar in Iceland and in other countries and if the same factors affect job satisfaction in both countries.

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## Appendix A

**1. Hver er starfstíll/starfsheiti þitt innan fyrirtækisins?**

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Hvernig er vinnutími þinn?** Ég er með fastan vinnutíma í fullu starfi Ég er með fastan vinnutíma í hlutastarfi Ég er í vaktavinnu í fullu starfi Ég er í vaktavinnu í hlutastarfi Other: \_\_\_\_\_**3. Hversu lengi hefur þú starfað hjá fyrirtækinu?** Minna en 1 ár 1 - 3 ár 4 - 6 ár 7 -10 ár 11- 15 ár 16 ár eða meira

#### 4. Hversu sammála eða ósammála ert þú eftirfarandi fullyrðingum?

	Mjög sammála	Frekar sammála	Hvorki né	Frekar ósammála	Mjög ósammála
Ég er almennt ánægð/ur í vinnunni	<input type="radio"/>				
Ég tel vinnuframlag mitt skipta máli innan fyrirtækisins	<input type="radio"/>				
Ég á í góðum samskiptum við samstarfsfélaga mína	<input type="radio"/>				
Ég á í góðum samskiptum við yfirmann minn	<input type="radio"/>				
Það er tekið eftir því þegar ég vinn vinnuna mína vel	<input type="radio"/>				
Ég veit hvers er ætlast af mér innan fyrirtækisins	<input type="radio"/>				
Það er almennt mjög góður mórall innan fyrirtækisins	<input type="radio"/>				
Það er góð samvinna innan fyrirtækisins	<input type="radio"/>				
Ég þekki samstarfsfélaga mína vel	<input type="radio"/>				
Mér líður vel í starfsumhverfi mínu	<input type="radio"/>				

## 5. Hversu mikilvæga telur þú þessa þætti vera þegar kemur að starfsánægju?

	Mjög mikilvægt	Frekar mikilvægt	Hvorki né	Frekar ómikilvægt	Mjög ómikilvægt
Að verkefni séu áhugaverð	<input type="radio"/>				
Að vinnuaðstæður séu góðar	<input type="radio"/>				
Að laun séu í samræmi við vinnuframlag	<input type="radio"/>				
Að samskipti við samstarfsfélaga séu góð	<input type="radio"/>				
Að starfsmenn innan fyrirtækisins þekkist vel	<input type="radio"/>				
Að samskipti við yfirmann séu góð	<input type="radio"/>				
Að mér sé sýnd virðing innan fyrirtækisins	<input type="radio"/>				
Að vinnuálag sé viðráðanlegt	<input type="radio"/>				
Að framlag mitt í starfi sé vel metið	<input type="radio"/>				
Að fyrirtækið skipuleggi félagslega viðburði fyrir starfsmenn	<input type="radio"/>				

## 6. Eiga eftirfarandi atriði við þig alltaf, oft, stundum, sjaldan eða aldrei?"

	Alltaf	Oft	Stundum	Sjaldan	Aldrei
Átt þú það til að taka vinnuna með þér heim?	<input type="radio"/>				
Finnst þér erfitt að samræma vinnu og einkalíf?	<input type="radio"/>				
Finnur þú fyrir mikilli starfsmannaveltu í þínu fyrirtæki?	<input type="radio"/>				
Ertu undir miklu álagi í starfi þínu?	<input type="radio"/>				
Finnur þú fyrir mikilli þreytu þegar þú hefur lokið vinnudegi?	<input type="radio"/>				
Finnur þú fyrir líkamlegum einkennum að loknum vinnudegi? (t.d. vegna mikillar kyrrsetu eða líkamlega erfiðri vinnu)	<input type="radio"/>				

### 7. Hakaðu við þá valmöguleika sem eiga við um þig.

- Ég deili vinnuaðstöðu/sameiginlegu rými með samstarfsfélögum
- Ég borða hádegismat með samstarfsfélögum mínum
- Ég fæ heitan mat í hádeginu á mínum vinnustað
- Það er frítt kaffi á mínum vinnustað
- Það eru frí bílastæði á mínum vinnustað
- Það er haldin árshátíð fyrir starfsmenn fyrirtækisins
- Fyrirtækið stuðlar að heilbrigðum lífstíl starfsmanna
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### 8. Hvert er kyn þitt?

- Karl
- Kona
- Annað

**9. Hvaða aldurshópi tilheyrir þú?**

- Yngri en 18 ára
- 18 - 25 ára
- 26 - 35 ára
- 36 - 45 ára
- 46 - 55 ára
- 56 - 65 ára
- 66 ára eða eldri

**10. Hjá hvernig fyrirtæki starfar þú? (Hér er leitast eftir svari á borð við skóla, tryggingafélagi, auglýsingastofu, banka o.þ.h)**

Your answer

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