

Job Satisfaction and Mental Health Among Employees in Higher Education Institutions: A Thematic Review Analysis

Neha Arora, Chandra Prakash Verma
ARNI University, Indora, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh

Roopali Sharma
Amity University, Noida

Job satisfaction plays a crucial role in influencing the psychological well-being and overall health of individuals. This paper examines the intricate relationship between job satisfaction and mental health among employees in higher education organizations. It seeks to examine the several aspects that affect job satisfaction and how they influence the mental well-being of employees in a higher education institution. The study employs a thematic review analytic approach to examine the different elements, both positive and negative, that impact the mental well-being of these professions. By conducting a thorough analysis of the available literature and qualitative data, it reveals significant themes that elucidate the influence of job satisfaction on mental health. Additionally, the study offers recommendations for enhancing the general well-being of individuals in this regard. The results illuminate the intricate relationship between job satisfaction and mental health in the specific setting of higher education institutions. The findings emphasize two main themes: a) the good effects, such as improved psychological well-being, higher resilience, and a sense of control and autonomy; and b) the negative effects, including stress, anxiety, burnout, and low self-esteem. The findings also demonstrate the impact of job satisfaction on organizational characteristics and job-related behaviours. Conclusively, it is imperative for higher education institutions to recognize the importance of establishing secure and nurturing work environments for their staff to promote positive mental health outcomes.

Keywords: Higher education, Job satisfaction, and Mental health.

Job satisfaction can be defined as an evaluative metric that assesses the level of motivation, contentment, and overall satisfaction experienced by a person in relation to their work. Job satisfaction is the outcome experienced by an employee when they see their employment to be secure, their professional trajectory to be advancing, and their ability to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between work and personal life. The amount of job satisfaction experienced by an employee may be influenced to a greater extent by factors such as the company's environment, culture, and workload, rather than by monetary

compensation, benefits, or other tangible assets provided by the employer. All employees aspire to achieve robust professional growth and maintain a healthy equilibrium between their work and personal lives. When an employee has satisfaction with both their employer and job, they are inclined to exert considerable effort in order to contribute to the success of the organization. An employee that experiences a positive emotional state, such as happiness, is consistently advantageous to an organization due to their inclination to exert optimal effort in their performance. There exists a correlation between the psychological state

of an employee and their level of job satisfaction. An employee who experiences satisfaction and positive emotions in their workplace is consistently motivated to enhance their performance. In contrast, an employee who expresses discontentment exhibits reduced productivity, increased likelihood of making mistakes, and poses a potential risk to the overall functioning of the organization. The psychological well-being of employees, as reflected by their mental health, is a significant determinant that directly influences their impression of job satisfaction (Warszewska-Makuch, M., 2020). The following are the elements and factors that affect job satisfaction: Workplace compensation and conditions, work-life balance, recognising and respecting job stability, career advancement, etc.

Jobs are vital to people's lives. Their jobs affect their social lives and lifestyles. Every company needs a happy team. Job happiness is a complex topic with many feelings and circumstances. Job satisfaction and employee performance grow increasingly important as the workplace becomes more competitive and complex. Workplace atmosphere boosts job happiness. Companies must recognize the importance of a healthy workplace since poor working circumstances hinder employees' ability to perform at their best. Many companies struggle at work because they don't grasp how important a supportive workplace is for employee job satisfaction. Employees help a company realize its goals and vision. Employees must meet company performance criteria to ensure work quality. Employees need an independent, barrier-free workplace to meet company needs. Interpersonal communication and job performance are both hampered by poor mental health (Nadinloyi et al., 2013). The relationship between job satisfaction and employees' mental health in higher education. The job satisfaction of university

professors was found to have a substantial correlation with various internal psychological resources, with the sense of calling emerging as the most influential predictor (Gradišek & Habe, 2020). In order to enhance employee satisfaction within the context of higher education, it is imperative to implement HRM (human resource management) strategies, including recruiting and hiring, development and training, and pay systems (Slaviæ, et al., 2018). Academic staff members are more satisfied and motivated at work when the university environment is positive and healthy (Gordana, et al., 2017). According to a meta-analysis of 485 studies, workers who are highly dissatisfied with their jobs experience more burnout, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of anxiety and depression (Faragher et al., 2005). Tahmasbi (2020) conducted a study which found that self-esteem in the workplace and psychological resilience play a moderating role in the association among job burnout and employees' mental well-being. Setati (2014) employed a cross-sectional survey methodology to assess the correlation between job insecurity, cohesiveness, and employee health inside a higher education institution in South Africa. The study indicates a correlation between job uncertainty and diminished health outcomes.

Since the effect of job satisfaction on the mental health of employees in higher education institutions has been studied in the literature, there are still several research gaps that indicate a need for more research. Most of the literature in this field uses cross-sectional data, which restricts our ability to establish causal links between job satisfaction and outcomes related to mental health. To provide a more thorough understanding of the temporal dynamics of this relationship, longitudinal studies that monitor changes in job satisfaction and mental health over an extended period among employees in higher education institutions are required. Roles in higher

education institutions range widely, from teaching faculty to administrative staff. It is important to find out whether the effects of job satisfaction on mental health vary by job role or department within these institutions since research frequently lumps all employees together. Even though previous studies have found a link between job satisfaction and mental health, more research is needed to understand the underlying mechanisms. For creating focused interventions, it is essential to comprehend how job satisfaction affects particular facets of mental health, such as stress levels, burnout, or overall wellbeing. There hasn't been much research done on how institutional policies and practices affect outcomes related to job satisfaction and mental health. The impact of policies on workload, support services, work-life balance, and promotion opportunities on employees' experiences should be studied. Comparative studies that compare the effects of job satisfaction on mental health across higher education institutions in various nations or regions can shed light on cultural and contextual differences. A more thorough understanding of the connection between job satisfaction and mental health among employees in higher education institutions will result from filling in these research gaps. Additionally, it will assist in the creation of focused interventions and policies to improve the wellbeing of this vital workforce.

Rationale of the study

Upon conducting a thorough examination of the relevant literature pertaining to the aforementioned variables, it has come to our attention that a significant gap exists. In order to address this gap, the present research endeavors to investigate the various positive and negative themes associated with job satisfaction and their impact on the mental well-being of employees. It is worth noting that previous studies with similar objectives were not identified during the literature review

process. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the scarcity of research conducted within the Indian context regarding these variables. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that a considerable amount of research has been conducted in the fields of management and healthcare institutions. However, the present study specifically focuses on the realm of higher education institutions.

Objectives

1. To ascertain the aspects that contribute to job satisfaction among employees among higher education institutions.
2. To investigate the impacts (positive and negative) of job satisfaction on the mental well-being of employees among higher education institution.

Method

Sample

All the research that was relevant and was based on employees in higher education institutions ranging from 2013 to 2023 was included in the analysis.

Procedure

To fulfil the objectives of the present study, literatures related to it were thoroughly investigated. The database preferred for this procedure were Google Scholar and SCOPUS. The keyword used were 'job satisfaction'; 'mental health'; 'employees', 'educational institutions'; and 'India education institution'.

Result analysis and Discussion

In this study, a theme analysis was conducted because to the limited availability of literature specifically focused on employees at educational institutions in India. A systematic approach was employed to identify both positive and negative themes. The guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were utilized.

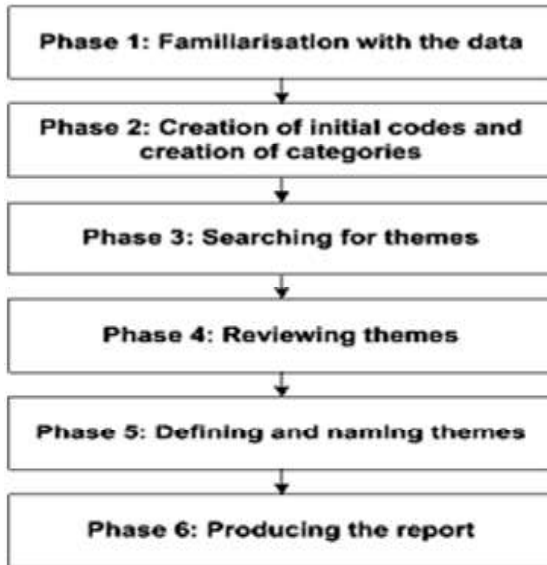


Figure 1: Thematic analysis steps adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006

A comprehensive examination was conducted on previously published material, encompassing exploratory research, review studies, and other relevant sources. The primary objective of this investigation was to discover and extract recurring themes. The articles that were deemed most pertinent were collected using predetermined criteria for inclusion. During this phase, numerous topics were derived. Upon conducting a thorough examination and eliminating redundant themes, inadequately described concepts, and those unrelated to the stated objectives, a subset of positive and negative impacts was chosen. Each theme exhibits a distinct correlation between job satisfaction and mental health. The current study examines both the positive and negative effects. Several themes have been identified from a survey of previous literature:

Theme 1: Positive Impacts and their sub-themes

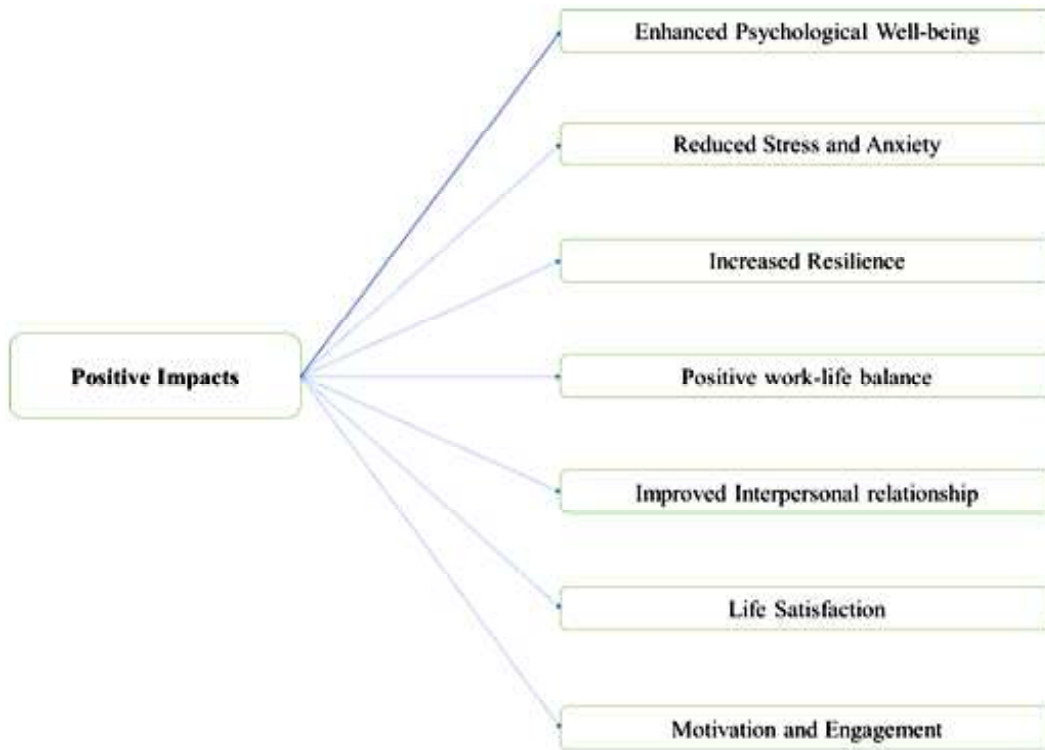


Figure 2: Themes extracted from the review of literature (Arora et al., 2023)

Enhanced psychological well-being:

Job satisfaction is linked to enhance levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, and a favourable self-image among individuals in the workforce. This theme underscores the significance of experiencing job satisfaction in relation to one's overall psychological well-being. A substantial correlation ($r = .357^{**}$) was observed between psychological well-being and job satisfaction among school and college teachers (Jacob et al., 2021).

Reduced Stress and Anxiety:

Job satisfaction act as a buffer against workplace stress and anxiety. Employees who are satisfied with their work tend to experience lower stress levels, leading to better mental health. According to the findings of research as the job satisfaction of the teachers' increases, their occupational stress and anxiety will decrease (Aftab, et al., 2015; Vyas, R., 2019).

Increased Resilience:

Satisfied employees often demonstrate higher levels of resilience, which helps them cope better with challenges and setbacks. This theme explores how job satisfaction can build psychological resilience. The study conducted by Karpagavalli (2017) found a statistically significant relation between resilience and job satisfaction.

Positive Work-life balance:

Job satisfaction can facilitate a healthier work-life balance, reducing the risk of burnout and mental health issues. This theme delves into how job satisfaction supports a harmonious life outside of work. The maintenance of a work-life balance holds significance for an individual's psychological well-being, as it contributes to heightened self-esteem, job satisfaction, and an overall sense of harmony in life (Punia & Kamboj, 2013).

Improved Interpersonal Relationships:

Satisfaction with one's job can spill over into improved relationships with colleagues and supervisors. Positive workplace interactions contribute to a supportive social environment, benefiting mental well-being. The investigation reveals a strong correlation between Interrelationship and Job satisfaction among faculty members of engineering colleges in Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh (Preetha & R, 2021).

Life satisfaction:

This broader theme looks at how job satisfaction is interconnected with overall life satisfaction. It highlights how contentment at work can contribute to a happier, more balanced life. Job satisfaction has been found to have a favourable and statistically significant influence on the overall life satisfaction of teachers. (Banerjee., 2015).

Motivation and Engagement:

Employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work. This theme examines how motivation and engagement positively impact mental health. It can be deduced that there exists a substantial correlation between work motivation and job satisfaction. The coefficient R^2 demonstrates that work motivation accounts for 29% of the observed variability in job satisfaction (Sharma & Singh, 2016).

These themes collectively exemplify the diverse mechanisms via which job satisfaction can exert a beneficial influence on the mental well-being of employees. The findings demonstrate that a work environment that fosters fulfilment and satisfaction can have a positive impact on an individual's psychological well-being and resilience, leading to a reduction in stress levels and an overall improvement in quality of life.

Theme 2: Negative impacts and their sub-themes

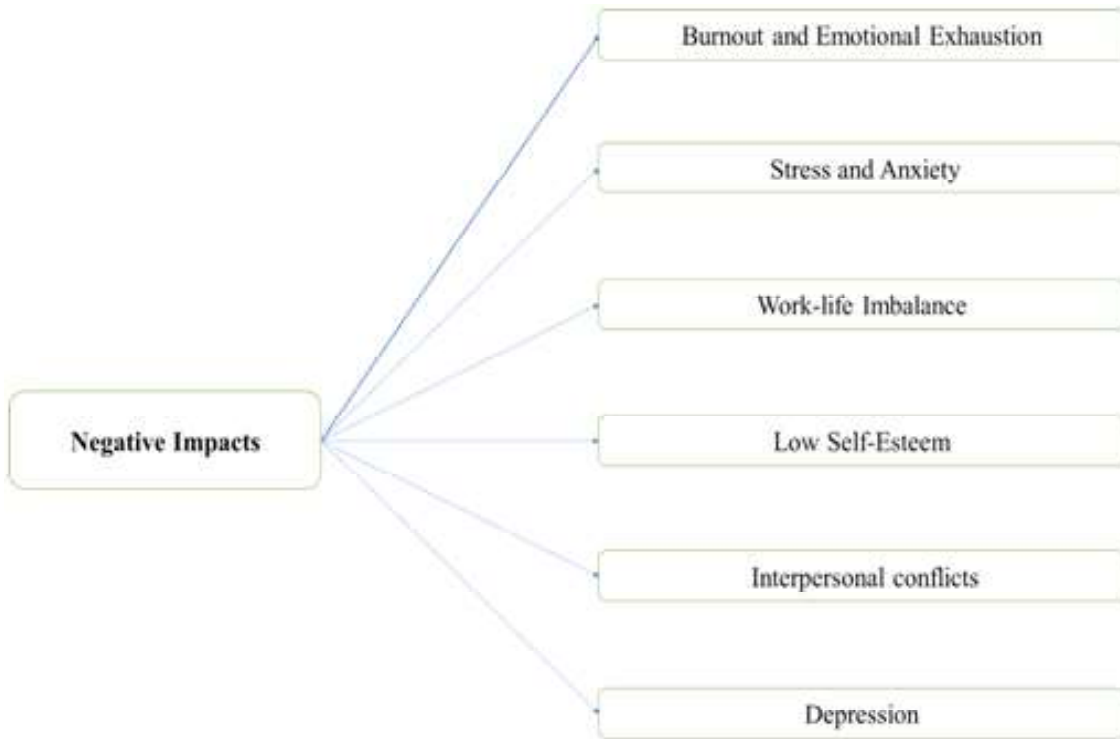


Figure 2: Themes extracted from the review of literature (Arora et al., 2023)

Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion:

Prolonged job dissatisfaction can lead to burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and feelings of hopelessness. According to Annamalai (2022), burnout exerts a substantial detrimental impact on job satisfaction, resulting in a drop in job satisfaction levels and an increased propensity for individuals to voluntarily leave their job.

Stress and Anxiety:

Job dissatisfaction is a significant source of workplace stress and anxiety, which can have detrimental effects on employees' mental well-being. The findings indicate that there is no significant correlation between job stress and job satisfaction. This implies that employees experiencing stress are dissatisfied with their job (Chaudhary, 2012).

Work-life imbalance:

It often leads to an unhealthy work-life balance, resulting in strained personal relationships and heightened stress levels outside of work. The issue of work-life imbalance has emerged as a significant concern among teachers, resulting in job dissatisfaction (Apsana, 2017).

Low Self-esteem:

Employees who are unhappy in their jobs may experience a decline in self-esteem and self-worth, which negatively affects their mental health. The test statistics indicated a negative correlation between teachers' self-esteem and job happiness. This study concludes that job dissatisfaction can result in decreased levels of self-esteem among employees (Cherabin et al., 2012).

Interpersonal Conflicts:

Dissatisfaction at work can lead to increased interpersonal conflicts with colleagues and supervisors, contributing to stress and anxiety. The findings indicate that the experience of stress in teaching is associated with a tendency to avoid one's job, while stress arising from work overload and unsatisfactory interpersonal conflicts are linked to feelings of job satisfaction (Banerjee & Mehta, 2016).

Depression:

When someone is consistently unhappy with their job, it can affect their overall mental well-being. Factors such as a toxic work environment, excessive workload, lack of job security, or feeling undervalued can all contribute to these negative emotions. The findings indicated that faculty members who reported higher levels of stress exhibited lower job satisfaction, expressed reduced commitment to their work due to stress, displayed a greater likelihood of job turnover, and demonstrated a decreased ability to adapt to the work environment. These factors ultimately contributed to the depressive symptoms (Senthilkumar, 2019).

The aforementioned themes exemplify the diverse manifestations through which job dissatisfaction can exert detrimental effects on the mental well-being of individuals among the employees. The significance of treating workplace difficulties is emphasized in order to enhance mental well-being and mitigate the negative outcomes linked to job satisfaction.

Suggested Solutions:

- Identifying and mitigating the underlying causes of stress, while equipping teachers with essential tools and support, can effectively manage the adverse consequences of job-related stress and enhance the overall welfare

of educators, as well as the educational standards delivered to students.

- Achieving a work-life balance can be facilitated by implementing job satisfaction factors, including employee-oriented policies, equitable compensation, intellectually stimulating tasks, supportive colleagues, and conducive working environments.
- The role of the workplace in job satisfaction and, by extension, mental health is significant. Positive factors that increase job satisfaction include supportive work environments, fair treatment, recognition, and opportunities for advancement. Employees with better mental health are more likely to work for organisations that prioritise these factors.
- Coping Mechanisms: Positive coping strategies are more effective at helping workers deal with stress at work. Institutions must give staff members the tools and support they need to create and apply efficient coping mechanisms.
- Positive coping and attributional behaviours, rewards, social support, job control, and low levels of depression and anxiety were all linked to high job satisfaction.

These themes and analysis are clearly fulfilling the objectives of the present study that job satisfaction has impact on the mental health of employees in higher education institutions. There are positive and negative impacts also.

Implications

According to the findings, institutions of higher learning should prioritise staff welfare in addition to academics and research. This includes addressing job insecurity, giving employees the chance to advance in their

careers, encouraging a positive workplace environment, and providing tools for stress management.

Future research

This discussion makes clear the demand for more study in this field. Future research could delve further into the specific programmes and regulations that institutions can put in place to improve employee outcomes in terms of job satisfaction and mental health. Along with this empirical and intervention research will also contribute in better future of employees.

Conclusion

The connection between job satisfaction and mental health at higher education institutions is a matter of significant concern. The literature review elucidated that the consideration of these constructs can exert a substantial influence on the overall well-being and productivity of employees. It is imperative for higher education institutions to recognize the utmost importance of establishing secure and nurturing work environments for its employees, in order to promote favourable mental health outcomes.

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Neha Arora, Ph.D Scholar, Arni School of Business Management & Commerce, ARNI University, Indora, Himachal Pradesh

Chandra Prakash Verma, PhD, Professor, ARNI University, Indora, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh.

Roopali Sharma, PhD, Professor, AIPS, Amity University, Noida