

Attitude Theory, Measurement and Change¹²

Work attitudes is a broad term that can encompass a number of job-related constructs, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, stress, and job involvement (Conte, Dean, Ringenbach, Moran, & Landy, 2005; Zicker, Gibby & Jenny, 2004)). When considering attitude theory, measurement, and change, the notion of a discrepancy between *what one has* compared to *what one wants* plays a very prominent role. This discrepancy approach is evident in many of the major theories of job satisfaction (Rice, McFarlin & Bennet, 1989). Though there are other employee attitudes (e.g., commitment, engagement), job satisfaction is the most notable for research and practice.

One of the earliest theories of job satisfaction is Motivation-Hygiene (M-H) theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). *Motivator* factors include recognition for achievement, work itself, responsibility, and growth, whereas *hygiene* factors include supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and status (Grigaliunas & Wiener, 1974). M-H theory proposed that satisfying hygiene factors could not lead to job satisfaction, but could result in avoiding job dissatisfaction. However, satisfying motivator needs could lead to job satisfaction, but the absence of such factors could not lead to job dissatisfaction. Thus, M-H theory envisioned job satisfaction as consisting of two separate dimensions.

Most of the other theories of job satisfaction conceptualize it existing on one bipolar continuum, with job dissatisfaction at one end and job satisfaction at the other. For instance, Porter's (1961) Need Theory predicted that job satisfaction results when the needs of an individual are congruent with the characteristics of the job. Porter believed the best approach to measuring one's level of congruence was to ask three questions: 1) How much of the characteristic is there now? 2) How much should there be?, and 3) How important is this characteristic to you? In contrast, Discrepancy Theory, which may be best illustrated in Holland's (1973) Person-Environment (PE) Fit model, simply states that job satisfaction is the difference between what one currently perceives as having and what one *desires* (but not necessarily *needs*) to have of some job facet, like pay or supervision. Locke's Value Theory (1976) combines elements of both Need and Discrepancy Theories by proposing that job satisfaction is the difference between what one has in one's job compared to what one wants, and then multiplying that difference by the importance of that job facet. Finally, Adams' (1963) equity theory states that a person compares a ratio of his/her inputs to outcomes to that of another person. If this comparison between an individual's ratio is unequal to another person's ratio, then perceptions of inequity result and feelings of dissatisfaction follow.

Overall, these job satisfaction theories are complementary. For instance, a *need* is defined as something necessary for survival, whereas a *value* is something that is desired. Consequently, it may be that Need Theory describes a different set of circumstances than Discrepancy or Value Theory, but the foundational process is the same. For the measurement of such workplace attitudes the issue is that simply computing the difference between what one has and what one wants (or needs) is fraught with mathematical limitations. One such limitation is that the frames of reference used may be different when comparing what one has compared (e.g., present) to what it should be (e.g., future); hence, calculating a difference score comprised of two questions with different frames of reference would be inappropriate. Another limitation is that, at least in terms of job satisfaction, employees rarely state that there should be less of something than there is already (Wall & Payne, 1973). This occurrence would result in restricted range

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which would attenuate the reliability of the measures and, ultimately, the validity of the assessment (Johns, 1981).

Despite these limitations, the measurement of job satisfaction, as well as other work attitudes, has led to a number of important associations that are ultimately related to organizational performance. For instance, job satisfaction has been significantly positively related to job performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), turnover (Steel, & Ovalle, 1984), absenteeism (Scott, & Taylor, 1985), organizational commitment (Mathieu, & Zajac, 1990) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Whitman, Van Rooy, & Viswesvaran, 2010).

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