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Generational Differences and Job Satisfaction in University Library Professionals, Sri Lanka

M. P. L. R. Marasinghe^{1,*}, Anusha Wijayarathne²

¹Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

²OUSL Library, Open University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

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Abstract This paper discusses findings of a study that has been launched to identify the level of job satisfaction of library professionals by generational cohorts. The aim of this study is to evaluate the level of job satisfaction among three generations (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) of the professional staff of the university libraries of Sri Lanka in terms of five job satisfaction parameters namely; work, coworkers, compensation, promotion and supervision. The population of the current study consisted of 125 library professionals of 15 universities under University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka. A semi structured questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument. The results of the study indicated that there are some differences and similarities of job satisfaction of university library professionals in perceptions associated with three generations. There is a significant difference of job satisfaction in perception of both "work" and "supervision" among three generations. Guidelines have been developed to enhance the level of job satisfaction of university library professionals. Job satisfaction of library professionals is essential and a fundamental determinant of the development and organization of the service.

Keywords Job Satisfaction, Library Professionals, Generations, University

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction has been correlated with enhanced job performance, positive work values, high levels of employee motivation and lower rates of absenteeism, turnover and burnout [1]. Lamptey, Boateng and Antwi [2] stated that "Motivation is of enormous importance with regard to enhancing performance in any organization". There are many motivational theories that evolved throughout the last 70 years. These theories are important to build a better workforce of an organization. These include Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, Herzberg's two factor theory,

Discrepancy theories, Adams equity theory and McClelland's need theory, etc.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory it determines the level of job satisfaction and classifies human needs into five different levels such as physiological needs (eating, drinking, resting, etc.), security needs (pension, health insurance, etc.), the need to love (good relation with the environment, friendship, fellowship, to love and to be loved), need for self – esteem (self-confidence, recognition, adoration, to be given importance, status, etc.) and need of self – actualization (maximization of the latent power and capacity, development of abilities, etc.) [3]. In Herzberg's two factor theory job satisfaction was associated with positive intrinsic sources related to the content of the job such as achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement which Herzberg termed motivators. Job dissatisfaction stemmed from negative extrinsic sources relating to the context of the job such as company policy, administration, supervision, salary, recognition and relation with supervisor and peers which were labelled as hygiene factors [4]. Discrepancy theory describes that job satisfaction is a result of a comparison between the perception of the current situation and some standard of comparison [5]. Adams equity theory suggests that persons who work in an organization compare themselves with others in an equivalent position to determine if they are being treated fairly. McClelland's theory has three important needs; achievement, affiliation and power. Achievement is associated with an individual's need to optimize their performance, affiliation is associated with relationships and power is associated with the ability to influence others directly or indirectly [6].

Generation can be defined as an "identifiable group that shares birth, years, age, location and significant life events at critical development stages [7]. For each generation there are particular experiences that mold specific preferences, expectations, beliefs and work style. Different values, beliefs and attitudes can mean misunderstandings, miscommunications and mixed signals impacting work culture, morale and productivity. There is not a fixed length

or number of years to define a generation and it may vary from the 22 years [6]. In this study, the sample group was subdivided into three categories according to the study [8]; Baby boomers (BB) born between 1946 - 1964, Generation X (X) born between 1965 - 1980 and Generation Y (Y) born between 1981 - 2000. Understanding differences and similarities between these generations are fundamental in building successful multigenerational workplace.

Job satisfaction is one of the key factors that determine performance, quality of the service and productivity of any organization particularly in service entities like libraries. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a high level in job satisfaction among the library professionals in order to provide commendable library service to the user community.

Several researches [9-12] carried out on the job satisfaction of university library professionals with the relationship of sex, age, tenure, education, etc. It has been revealed by researchers that job satisfaction of library professionals was affected by the generational cohorts. Some researchers [6,13] have investigated that there are some distinctions and similarities among the generations and their association with job satisfaction and some researchers [14-17] declared that older library professionals are more satisfied than young. Therefore, the level of job satisfaction of library professionals among generations is questionable and there is also a risk for declining status of job satisfaction among the multigenerational professional librarians in universities.

There are only a handful of studies [18-21] that investigate the job satisfaction of professional staff of university libraries of Sri Lanka. Among these researches, two studies [19,21] have been taken "age" as a dependent variable to evaluate the job satisfaction of university librarians with limited sample size. Amarakoon [19] investigated the level of job satisfaction of Health Sciences Librarians and Non-Health Science Librarians in Sri Lanka. The target sample size is 40 composed with 20 in-charge of Health Sciences Libraries and 20 in-charge of Non-Health Science Libraries. Job satisfaction has been determined considering 7 variables; age, location and type of the library, sex, job title, years of experience, educational qualifications and professional qualifications. According to the measurement of "age" the data revealed that 53.3% of Health Sciences Librarians who were 40 years or above wish to remain as librarians, but 20% of the Health Sciences Librarians and 21.5% of the Non-Health Sciences Librarians who were 40 years or above, did not wish to remain as librarians or were dissatisfied with their job. Wijeweera [21] has studied the level of job satisfaction of professionals and paraprofessionals in agricultural libraries in Sri Lanka. The target groups of this study belonged to thirty agriculture libraries who are members of the Council for Agricultural Research Policy (CARP). The study revealed that majority of professionals and paraprofessionals preferred to work in the same library where they were working and a lesser trend of leaving the service of the libraries when the employees became old. The study further revealed that there was no

significant difference between the levels of job satisfaction of professionals and paraprofessionals with regard to any variable identified in the survey. The most satisfied group of professionals and paraprofessionals were 30-34 years and job satisfaction has decreased gradually with the age. The study recommended that a well-planned system of promotions, career opportunities such as overseas training and overseas employment opportunities would increase job satisfaction with the age of employee and a special program should be implemented to make the readers aware of the untiring efforts of library personnel. This study further suggested that subject specialists should be encouraged to take over higher position in library profession in Sri Lanka and to share experiences of migrated library personnel.

Both studies had not evaluated the impact of generational cohorts on job satisfaction. In addition, a lot of changes have been taken place since that time. The current study aims at identifying the impact of age considering three generations based on five parameters which have not been attempted by the previous researchers. Haque *et al.* [22] described through his study that the factors affecting job satisfaction can be categorized into personal and organizational factors and personal factors are age, gender, religion and race. Leadership, organizational change and technological innovation, continuous professional development (CPD), recruitment, rotation, retention, working environment, communication and commitment, salary and stress are the organizational factors.

In this current study as a personal factor, age or the generational cohort is used as the independent variable to evaluate the job satisfaction of university library professionals with five dependent variables named as work, co-workers, compensation, promotion and supervision. Work performed by employees is one of the major factors affecting the job satisfaction. Employees tend to prefer jobs which afford them the opportunity to apply their skills and abilities, offer them variety and freedom as well as jobs where they get constant feedback on how well they are doing [23]. Employees, who find their work interesting, are more satisfied and motivated than employees who do not enjoy their jobs. The other factor influences job satisfaction is the extent to which coworkers are friendly, competent and supportive [24]. Aamodt [25] stated that employees who have supportive coworkers will be more satisfied with their jobs. Compensation is the total amount of the monetary and non-monetary pay provided to an employee by an employer in return for work performed as required. Compensation refers to salary, wages, allowances, bonuses, benefits, etc. provided by the employer. Benefits might include health care packages, dental and life insurances, and paid time off. High compensation and appealing benefits attract employees to the work place. Compensation of an employee depends on the type of the workplace that he or she works. Compensation mostly depends on the employee's work performance. Promotion is composed with areas for growth, advancement, professional development and the fairness associated with promotional opportunities [6].

Moving through the ranks of the profession is very important area of the employees. The supervision includes assignments, helpfulness, evaluation process, encouragement and feedback. Leadership is considered as the organizational factor and leadership and supervision are not synonymous, but some of the same attributes should be considered when reviewing research as the study [26].

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the level of job satisfaction among three generations of the professional staff of the university libraries of Sri Lanka and the specific objectives are to examine the impact of the generation gap on the level of job satisfaction among the professional staff of the university libraries of Sri Lanka and to develop a set of guidelines to enhance the level of job satisfaction of the professional staff of the University libraries of Sri Lanka

The research questions addressed in this study are: what is level of impact of selected five parameters (i.e. work, coworkers, compensation, promotion and supervision) on the job satisfaction among three generations (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) university library professionals of Sri Lanka?; what are the differences and similarities among Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y of university library professionals of Sri Lanka?.

The following null hypotheses are tested in this study.

Ho1: There is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce.

Ho2: There is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce in the perception of the work performed.

Ho3: There is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce in the perception of co-workers.

Ho4: There is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce in the perception of compensation.

Ho5: There is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce in the perception of promotion.

Ho6: There is no difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce in the perception of supervision.

2. Methodology

This study aims at identifying the level of job satisfaction of the university library professionals including all members of academic staff of the library (i.e. Librarian, Deputy

Librarian, Senior Assistant Librarian Grade I, Senior Assistant Librarian Grade II, and Assistant Librarian) presently in the workforce in terms of five key parameters. These five parameters have been treated as dependent variables and three different generational cohorts are the independent variables. A quantitative methodology was selected for this current study to measure job satisfaction of the respondents relating to five job satisfaction dimensions. Survey method has been used for this study since 12th December, 2013 to 21st January, 2014. The population of the current study consisted of 125 library professionals of 15 universities under University Grants Commission (UGC) in Sri Lanka [27]. The population has been taken as the sample of the current study known as *Census sampling*, because the population size of the study is comparatively low and there should be an adequate response rate for the current study as it is a generational study. Census sampling provides a true measure of the population (no sampling error) and detailed information about small sub groups within the population is more likely to be available. Therefore the sample size (125) of the study is equal to the population size. A self-administered semi structured questionnaire has been used as the data collecting instrument. In addition, a pilot study was carried out with participation of six library professionals in the main library, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka during the first week of December 2013. The data was organized using Excel 2013 and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 16 [28] has been used to analyze the data in order to achieve the research objectives via answering the research questions. Cronbach's alpha's coefficient was estimated to use as the measure of internal consistency indicator of reliability and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for statistical testing to compare data across the three generations and post-hoc Bonferroni adjusted two-sample t-tests were performed to determine the differences among the three groups.

3. Results and Discussion

Out of the 125 university library professionals 80 individuals responded the semi-structured questionnaire at the rate of 64%. Out of 80 respondents of the current study, 19 (23.75%) respondents are Baby Boomers, while 48 (60%) are in Generation X and 13 (16.25%) are in Generation Y.

3.1. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha (α) is the most widely used objective measure of reliability among variables. A commonly accepted range of the Cronbach's alpha value for scale items with the level of reliability (internal consistency) (George and Mallery, 2003) is; $\alpha \geq 0.9$ Excellent; $0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$ Good; $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$ Acceptable; $0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$ Poor; $\alpha < 0.5$ Unacceptable. Cronbach's alpha's were calculated for the job satisfaction scores using the population of the study ($N=80$) as in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of reliability analysis

No.	Variable	Cronbach's alpha (N= 80)	Number of items
1	Job Satisfaction: Work	0.764	8
2	Job Satisfaction: Co-workers	0.864	6
3	Job Satisfaction: Compensation	0.661	5
4	Job Satisfaction: Promotion	0.614	3
5	Job Satisfaction: Supervision	0.963	6

Table 2. Mean of job satisfaction scores with generational cohorts

Generational cohorts	Mean of job satisfaction scores				
	Work	Co-workers	Compensation	Promotion	Supervision
Generation Y(Y)	.9135	.5744	.4000	.6154	1.1744
Generation X (X)	.7098	.6708	.5667	.5208	.2188
Baby Boomers (BB)	1.1316	1.0175	.8263	.5965	.4649

Table 3. Analysis of Variance to compare the average job satisfaction - Co-workers score among three generational cohorts

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance or p-value
Between Groups	2.049	2	1.025	1.946	.150
Within Groups	40.556	77	.527		
Total	42.605	79			

Table 1 denotes that Cronbach's alpha values of all variables are above 0.6 ranged from 0.614 to 0.963. Cronbach's alpha for the supervision score was greater than 0.9 (0.963), indicating an 'excellent' level of reliability (internal consistency) of the results. Cronbach's alpha for the work score was 0.764 and co-workers score was 0.864, indicating a "good" level of reliability of the results. The Cronbach's alpha values of both compensation and promotion were 0.661 and 0.614 respectively and the level of reliability of results is good. The instrument used to measure each variable in the current study is reliable and all the items are positively correlated to one another. Further, it is internally consistent. Hence, the reliability of the job satisfaction scores is not a limitation of the current study.

3.2. Satisfaction with Job Satisfaction Scores

The mean values of the job satisfaction scores in each generation are shown in Table 2.

Figure 1 shows clearly that the level of satisfaction among generations.

Table 2 and Figure 1 indicate that BB is more satisfied on the work they do. X is the least satisfied generation on this aspect. It also shows that the level of job satisfaction regarding coworkers is higher in BB than X and Y respectively. The highest mean value of the job satisfaction - compensation score is in Baby Boomers (0.8263) while the lowest value is in Generation Y (0.4000). Generation Y has the highest mean value (0.6154) for promotion while the

lowest for Generation X (0.5208) and Baby Boomers (0.5965) fall in between. The highest mean value for supervision is in Generation Y (1.1744) than Baby Boomers (0.4649) and Generation X (0.2188) respectively.

Table 3 shows the analysis of variance to compare the average job satisfaction - co-workers score among three generational cohorts.

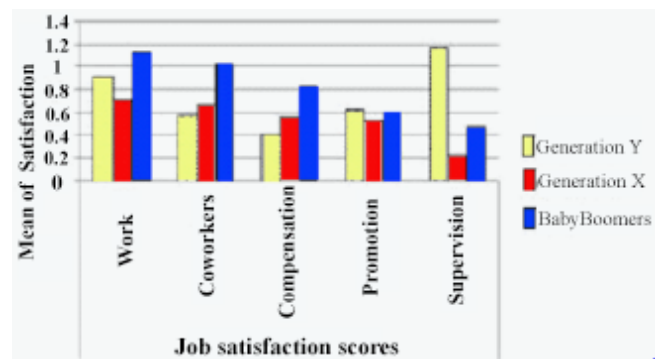


Figure 1. Mean satisfaction scores under each aspect of satisfaction among generations

According to the results shown in Table 3, there is no statistically significant difference in the average job satisfaction - co-workers score among three generations, $f(2,77) = 1.946$; $p = 0.150$. The p - value is higher than the value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected and it is deduced that there is no significant difference in the level of job satisfaction with the Co-workers aspect among

the three generational cohorts.

Tables 4 denotes that there is no statistically significant difference in the average job satisfaction - compensation score among three generations, $f(2,77) = 1.690$; $p = 0.191$. The p – value is higher than the value of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of job satisfaction with the compensation aspect among the three generational cohorts.

The analysis of variance to compare the average job satisfaction - promotion score among three generational cohorts shown in Table 5.

Table 5 indicates a non-statistically significant difference in the average job satisfaction- promotion score among three generations, $f(2,77) = 0.105$; $p = 0.901$. The p – value is higher than the value of 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is

not rejected and it is concluded that there is no significant difference in the level of job satisfaction with the promotion aspect among the three generational cohorts.

According to the results denoted in Table 6, there is a statistically significant difference in the average job satisfaction - work score among three generations, $f(2,77) = 3.737$; $p = 0.028$. The p – value is less than 0.05.

Table 7 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the average job satisfaction- Supervision score among three generations, $f(2,77) = 3.921$; $p = 0.024$. The p – value is less than the value of 0.05.

Post-hoc Bonferroni adjusted Two – Sample t -test was performed for Work and Supervision to determine which groups were different from which as shown in Table 8.

Table 4. Analysis of Variance to compare the average job satisfaction - Compensation score among three generational cohorts

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance or p-value
Between Groups	1.546	2	.773	1.690	.191
Within Groups	35.224	77	.457		
Total	36.770	79			

Table 5. Analysis of Variance to compare the average job satisfaction - Promotion score among three generational cohorts

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance or p-value
Between Groups	.136	2	.068	.105	.901
Within Groups	50.074	77	.650		
Total	50.210	79			

Table 6. Analysis of Variance to compare the average job satisfaction - Work score among three generational cohorts

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance or p-value
Between Groups	2.498	2	1.249	3.737	.028
Within Groups	25.735	77	.334		
Total	28.233	79			

Table 7. Analysis of Variance to compare the average job satisfaction - Supervision score among three generational cohorts

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance or p-value
Between Groups	9.368	2	4.684	3.921	.024
Within Groups	91.972	77	1.194		
Total	101.340	79			

Table 8. Bonferroni Adjusted Two – Sample *t*-tests to compare the average job satisfaction – *Work* and *Supervision* score among the three generational cohorts

Job satisfaction parameters	(I) Generational Cohort	(J) Generational Cohort	Mean Difference (I-J)	Significance or p- value
Work	Generation Y	Generation X	.20364	.790
		Baby Boomers	-.21812	.893
	Generation X	Generation Y	-.20364	.790
		Baby Boomers	-.42176*	.026
	Baby Boomers	Generation Y	.21812	.893
		Generation X	.42176*	.026
Supervision	Generation Y	Generation X	.95561*	.020
		Baby Boomers	.70945	.226
	Generation X	Generation Y	-.95561*	.020
		Baby Boomers	-.24616	1.000

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results indicate that the Baby Boomers have a statistically significant larger average job satisfaction – work score than the Generation X group, $p = 0.026$. Generation Y group has a statistically significant larger average job satisfaction – supervision score than the Generation X group, $p = 0.020$. Figure 2 shows the mean of overall job satisfaction by generational cohorts.

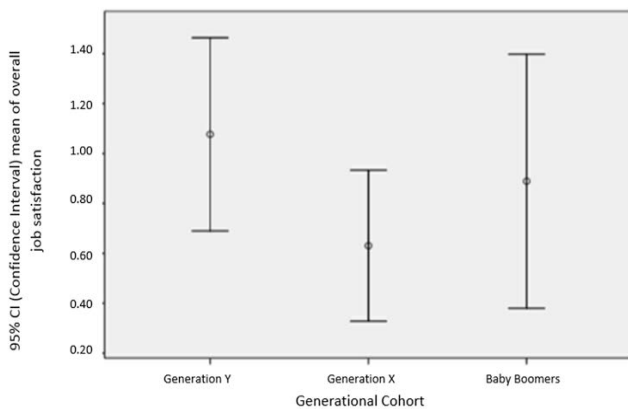


Figure 2. Mean of overall job satisfaction by generational cohorts

Generation Y has the highest mean value (1.0769) for the overall job satisfaction while the lowest value (0.6304) is in Generation X and the Baby Boomers (0.8889) fall in between. Therefore there is a difference in the level of job satisfaction between the three generations of the university library professionals presently in the workforce.

3.3. Enhancing the Level of Job Satisfaction of University Library Professionals

Identifying these variations is fundamental in building successful multigenerational workplace and guidelines have been developed from the findings of the study through the peer comments to enhance the level of job satisfaction of university library professionals.

Since there is not much difference in the level of job satisfaction among the three categories except the slight difference observed in areas of "work" and "supervision", in general university library professionals in Sri Lanka can be motivated by introducing and facilitating more opportunities; scholarships, overseas and local training programs, workshops, seminars and conferences to sharpen the skills and knowledge. They should be encouraged to carry out researches leading the academic publications for their professional development. They should also be encouraged to conduct workshops, seminars, lectures, training programs and etc. to show that they play an important role and they also have skills and talents that other academics have in the university.

University authorities should recognize the achievements of subordinate staff based on professional performance, innovations and general contributions which they make on the job. The recognition would especially depend on the administrative style of the University Librarian. Such recognition could be expressed not only through written ways, but also could be expressed verbally to the deserving individual by giving them more opportunities to interact with the parent organization. It would encourage librarians to work harder and achieve more for the university and it will automatically send to the society especially within the university about the importance and the necessity of the university library professionals. It will also result in getting the support from the university administration to perform their duties well and for their promotions too. The university administration should treat the library professionals in the university like other academic staff in all occasions. The university administrators should take steps to provide good working environment, appropriate facilities and resources to the university library professionals in order to carry out their job effectively and efficiently.

Rotation of jobs of university library professionals and non-academics can be recommended as a good technique for developing their potential in new areas. The relationship

with coworkers seem to influence the level of job satisfaction and training programs can be conducted to train the staff on how to get well along with each other. The library professionals in the university should manage their workgroup better and pay attention for their work performance daily. The library professionals should frequently discuss their problems, barriers or difficulties that they face in their working environment. It will create good communication and cooperation with university library professionals and among members of the workgroup in the library. Regular feedback and good communication flow is essential in improving the job performance of non-professional library personnel in the university

Supervisors need to be acknowledged about the modern methods of human resource management. They should frequently hold meetings and discuss the problems, barriers that they face and assess the performance and appreciate the sincere efforts made by the professionals. Encouragement, better guidance and feedbacks from the supervisors are essential for better performance of the university library professionals.

4. Conclusions

There are some distinctions and similarities of job satisfaction in perceptions among generations and the level of satisfaction for job satisfaction scores is also different even within a generation.

There is a significant difference of job satisfaction in perception of both work and supervision among Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Statistically the university library professionals in Baby Boomers have a significantly larger average job satisfaction – work score than the Generation X and Generation Y tend to be more satisfied with the supervision aspect than the Generation X. Generation Y has the highest overall job satisfaction while the Generation X has the lowest job satisfaction and Baby Boomers fall in between.

Understanding these differences between the generations is fundamental in building successful multigenerational workplace, because job satisfaction may lead to improved job performance with the contribution of the production of the organization. The data generated of this study will be helpful for librarians and administrators to understand the level of job satisfaction of the university library professionals based on the generation and the reasons for it. The set of guidelines that have been desired based on the findings would be useful to develop a motivated and productive workforce for organizational success by enhancing the level of job satisfaction of the professional staff of the university libraries in Sri Lanka.

5. Direction for Future Research

Additional researches can be carried out to evaluate the

job satisfaction of university library professionals using other variables such as gender, working experience, job title and the level of educational qualifications. The same research can be carried out for the librarians who work in non UGC universities, institutions, school and public libraries in Sri Lanka. The study can be extended to investigate the job satisfaction of librarians with related to other job satisfaction parameters that have been not used in this study such as working environment, policies, job security, status, achievement, responsibility, advancement, etc.

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