

Working Environment, Employee Motivation and Job Satisfaction among Retailers in Klang Valley

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Abstract

Retail sector have been facing various challenges including employee retention, turnover and had difficulties in maintaining organizational performance which relies heavily on the job satisfaction of the employee. Job satisfaction encompasses a collection of factors that contribute to an individual's sense of fulfillment with their work. Work environment and employee motivation are closely associated to job satisfaction of the employee. This study aimed to examine the associaton between working environment and employee motivation with overall job satisfaction among retailers in Klang Valley. Work environment was measured using the Work Environment Questionnaire (WOE). Employee motivation was measured using Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS). The job satisfaction were measured using Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). These three instruments were included in the questionnaire which was then distributed to 103 respondents through purposive samping and snowball samping. Descriptive analysis reveal that work environment quality perceived by the retailers were high while the level of overall job satisfaction among retailers were moderate. The multiple regression analysis revealed that only working environment, external regulation and amotivation significantly predict job satisfaction of retailers in Klang Valley. This study is meant to benefit individual and organizations in retail sector.

Keywords: Work Environment, Employee Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Retail Sector, Klang Valley.

Introduction

The retail sector is one of the socio-economic system that gathers people for the purpose of exchanging goods and services in small quantities to meet consumer needs. The overall impact of the retail industry on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of United States contributes as much as 18.7% (3.9 trillion USD) in 2018 (National Retail Federation, 2020) can be seen as the significance of retail industry for economic growth and advancement. In Indonesia, the Indonesian Retail Entrepreneurs Association reported that the progress of the retail industry reached 10% in 2010 (Raharja et al., 2021). The retail industry in Malaysia has

also shown significant progress. Therefore, the Retail Group Malaysia (RGM) anticipates a growth rate of 3.5% in the Malaysian retail industry in 2023 (Rafee, 2023). Based on these statistics, the retail sector can be regarded as a crucial sector in the economic growth of most countries, including Malaysia.

In the retail sector, individuals engaged in retail activities are commonly referred to as retailers or retail workers (Hameli, 2018). Retail workers are often associated with long working hours, physically demanding tasks, repetitive routines, and non-traditional work arrangements (Rhoads et al., 2002). Moreover, they are required to consistently perform well, particularly during peak hours, while also meeting customer expectations and managerial requirements (Arnold et al., 2009; Babin & Boles 1996). According to Jamaluddin and Zawawi (2015), employees play a crucial role in determining the success of an organization, particularly in a competitive environment. Effective employee management is essential to achieve performance improvement, effectiveness, productivity, and attendance.

Numerous studies indicate that job dissatisfaction is a major factor contributing to higher turnover rates in the retail industry (Chung et al., 2012; Khan, 2021). The challenges associated with retaining employees and reducing turnover rates are closely linked to the level of job satisfaction among workers, as highlighted by Rahim (2015) and Tripathi & Shukla (2019). The retail sector in Malaysia is not exempt from facing challenges such as employee retention and turnover rates. The industrial sector is highly active in Klang Valley region due to rapid retail center development (Hor & Ng, 2019). The perceived unattractiveness of retail sector jobs has also led to a shortage of human resources in this sector (Tiwari, 2021). Job satisfaction among employees is a crucial foundation and key to organizational success (Terera & Ngirande, 2014). Although there have been numerous studies examining job satisfaction, job satisfaction among retail workers is an area of research that has received less coverage compared to other sectors (Chung et al., 2012).

Biason (2020) discussed Hoppock's (1935) approach to job satisfaction, emphasizing the influence of internal feelings closely associated with the employee's emotions, despite the various external factors that contribute to job satisfaction. This explanation suggests that in addition to the measurable aspects of job satisfaction, there are other internal and external factors that impact employee job satisfaction. Organizations often overlook the workplace environment, which can significantly affect employee performance. A safe and recognized workplace tends to foster employee commitment and job satisfaction, while less motivated employees may disrupt administrative processes and show lower engagement (Azlinda Jaini, 2013). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors contribute to organizational performance and have a substantial impact on job satisfaction (Edrak et al., 2013).

Literature Review

The self-determination theory, as described by Deci and Ryan (1991), outlines a motivation continuum encompassing intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation, which impacts goal achievement through psychological and cognitive responses. When individuals have their basic psychological needs met, they become autonomously motivated, leading to increased voluntary engagement in work-related activities, with positive effects on well-being, job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2013; Forner et al., 2020; Van den Broeck et al., 2021). On the other hand, the social exchange theory, as discussed by Redmond (2015), examines reciprocal interactions between various factors in interpersonal, organizational, or group relationships. The theory explains how individuals exchange motivational incentives for behavior and attitudes within an organization. One party provides

benefits, which are reciprocated with appropriate rewards, creating mutually beneficial interactions (Wikhamm & Hall, 2012).

Several studies were summarized, each exploring different aspects of job satisfaction and its influencing factors. Markan and Sudan (2019) conducted research on job satisfaction among bank employees and found that it was very high, primarily influenced by factors like family support, personal satisfaction, and financial contentment. Berdicchia & Masino (2019) studied job satisfaction among pharmaceutical professionals, reporting that 44% had high job satisfaction, 44% moderate satisfaction, and 11% low satisfaction in the retail sector. Leonardo et al (2023) investigated the impact of work climate on job satisfaction among bank employees in Indonesia, emphasizing the importance of a positive work environment for employee productivity.

A unique finding was highlighted by Kearney et al (2023) suggesting that the physical work environment significantly influences job satisfaction, which differs from previous research (Jing et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2019). Moll-Khosrawi et al (2021) reported that various types of motivation, including autonomous regulation, intrinsic motivation, and amotivation, have correlations with job satisfaction among anesthesiologists. The study suggested that different motivations can coexist within individuals, affecting job satisfaction. Basalamah and As'ad (2021) found that motivation significantly affects job satisfaction, especially when intrinsic motivation is present. Fadzin et al (2020) reported a weak positive correlation between motivation and job satisfaction, indicating that high employee motivation can enhance productivity and job satisfaction.

Research Method

Design and Sample

This is a quantitative cross-sectional study conducted to investigate the relationship between work environment, employee motivation and job satisfaction as well as to study the influencing factors of job satisfaction among retailers in Klang Valley. The study is non-experimental in nature and employs a quantitative research approach through a survey questionnaire. Quantitative research is suitable for studying large populations or groups to gain an in-depth and detailed understanding of the study population by generalizing from the sampled data (Swanson & Holton III, 2005). Surveys were distributed to 103 retail workers in Klang Valley area using purposive and snowball sampling methods. The researcher employed both online and face-to-face approaches to reach the respondents. Social media platforms were utilized to reach potential respondents, and the researcher also physically visited retail areas such as shopping centres and nearby retail stores to gather responses.

Instrument

Work Environment

The Work Environment Questionnaire (WOE) is used to evaluate the work environment. Developed by Nasidi et al (2019), the WOE comprises questions tailored specifically to suit the work environment in the retail sector. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the WOE in this study was found to be 0.947, indicating high internal consistency. The WOE consists of eight items covering aspects such as workspace and facilities, relationships with coworkers and management, workplace services, risk control, and recognition. Items within the instrument are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 point to 5 points, where 1 point represents strongly disagree, and 5 points represents strongly agree.

Employee Motivation

The Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS), developed by Tremblay et al (2010) was used to measure employee motivation in this study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the WEIMS in this research was found to be 0.895, indicating a high level of overall reliability for this assessment tool. Tan (2017) previously used this tool in a Malaysian study, and the WEIMS underwent translation via back-translation by bilingual individuals proficient in Malay and English. Consisting of 18 questions, the WEIMS comprises six subscales, including intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation, and amotivation. There are no negative items within this instrument. It employs a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 point to 5 points where 1 point represents "not at all true" and 5 points represents "very true". Scores for each dimension are summed up for the scoring of this instrument.

Job Satisfaction

The employee job satisfaction in this study was measured using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) developed by (Spector, 1985). The JSS was translated into Malay by (Luan, 2010). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the JSS in this study was 0.960, indicating strong internal consistency. Comprising nine subscales and 36 items, the JSS covers various aspects such as pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication. Among the 36 items within this survey instrument, 19 are negative items. It employs a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 6 where 1 point represents "strongly disagree," and 6 points represents "strongly agree." All items are accumulated by overall scores and according to sub-scales to be tested against other variables. Higher scores indicate higher job satisfaction.

Analysis

The collected data will be analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Based on the research objectives, the gathered data will undergo both descriptive and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis will be conducted to examine the level of job satisfaction. For inferential analysis, multiple regression analysis will be employed to explore the influence of independent variables on the dependent variable in this study. The study findings will be presented in tables to facilitate data presentation and interpretation.

Findings***Level of Job Satisfaction***

Table 1 illustrates the descriptive analysis of the level of job satisfaction among retail sector employees in Klang Valley. Majority of the respondents, comprising 50 individuals (48.5%), exhibited a moderate level of job satisfaction, 27 respondents (26.2%) demonstrated a tendency towards high job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the other 18 respondents (17.5%) reported a high level of job satisfaction. However, the level of job satisfaction for 7 individuals (6.8%) was somewhat low, whereas one respondent (1%) indicated low job satisfaction in this study.

Table 1

Descriptive analysis for level of job satisfaction among retail employees in Klang Valley (n=103)

Level of job satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	1	1.0
Somewhat low	7	6.8
Moderate	50	48.5
Somewhat high	27	26.2
High	18	17.5

Influence of Work Environment and Employee Motivation towards Job Satisfaction

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the factors influencing job satisfaction among retail sector employees in Klang Valley. As per Table 2, the regression analysis results revealed that the regression model could account for 62.5% of the variance, $R^2 = .625$, $F = 22.067$, $p < 0.01$. The regression analysis identified three factors significantly affecting job satisfaction among retail sector employees in Klang Valley.

The first factor was the work environment, significantly impacting job satisfaction ($B = 1.879$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that a positive perspective regarding the work environment influences increased job satisfaction among retail sector employees. Subsequently, regulations emerged as the second influential factor affecting job satisfaction significantly ($B = 2.754$, $p < 0.05$). Higher scores in external regulations were associated with increased job satisfaction among retail sector employees. Lastly, amotivation was the third factor influencing job satisfaction significantly ($B = -5.141$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that lower scores in amotivation are linked to increased job satisfaction among retail sector employees.

However, four other dimensions of employee motivation, namely intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, identified regulation, and introjected regulation, were not included in the regression model. The regression analysis indicated that these variables did not hold significant regression coefficients, with values of $B = 0.079$, $p > 0.05$ for intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation ($B = 1.219$, $p > 0.05$), identified regulation ($B = -0.114$, $p > 0.05$), and introjected regulation ($B = 0.952$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 1

Regression model for factors influencing job satisfaction

Factors	Job Satisfaction			
	B	β	t	Sig.
Constant	77.059			
Work Environment (WOE)	1.879	0.382	4.083**	0.000
External Regulation (ER)	2.754	0.187	2.000*	0.048
Amotivation(AM)	-5.141	-0.507	-6.712**	0.000
R^2	0.625			
F value	22.607			

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Therefore, the regression equation resulted from the regression model is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + BX + e$$

$$JS = 77.059 + 1.879 (\text{WOE}) + 2.754 (\text{RL}) - 5.141 (\text{AM}) + e$$

Discussion

Job Satisfaction Level

The descriptive analysis revealed that the majority of employees (50 respondents) reported a moderate level of job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with a study conducted by Berdicchia and Masino (2019) among pharmacists, reporting moderate (44%) and high (44%) levels of job satisfaction. The congruence of these outcomes may be attributed to the utilization of the same Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) questionnaire in both studies, coupled with similar work cultures and job natures within the retail sector in both countries.

However, contrasting findings have been observed in studies among pharmacy workers, indicating low job satisfaction levels (Younis, 2023). Factors contributing to this dissatisfaction encompass work overload, inadequate remuneration, poor managerial treatment, unfavorable work environments, lack of autonomy, and limited opportunities for career advancement. These observations align with the Self-Determination Theory, suggesting that fulfilling an individual's psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, fosters a sense of contentment and engagement in work (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Employees experiencing positive organizational environments tend to perceive their workplaces favorably, consequently enhancing their productivity and contributing to the organization's success through improved work performance.

Influence of Work Environment towards Job Satisfaction

Based on the multiple regression analysis, work environment significantly influences job satisfaction among retail sector employees in Klang Valley. Previous studies have similarly established the substantial impact of the work environment on job satisfaction among library employees (Anasi, 2020), agricultural sector workers, pharmacists (Jing et al., 2022), and retail employees (Pandey et al., 2019). However, Brownell (1990) explained that service sector employees, such as those in retail, often face uncertainties and customer interactions, leading to job-related stress within their work environments. Hence, attention from employers and management is crucial to cultivate a conducive work atmosphere (Leonardo et al., 2023) and ensure the quality of the work environment from various aspects (Taheri et al., 2020) to enhance job satisfaction and employee retention.

These findings are aligned with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that meeting an individual's basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness leads to increased work engagement and positive effects on well-being, commitment, performance, and job satisfaction (Van den Broeck et al., 2021; Forner et al., 2020; Deci & Ryan, 2013). Additionally, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) suggests that a positive work environment, including fair treatment, good supervisor relationships, and career development opportunities, fosters reciprocal interactions between employees and the organization. When these aspects of the work environment are fulfilled, employees feel valued and supported, leading to job satisfaction through recognized contributions and achievements within the organizational context.

Influence of Employee Motivation towards Job Satisfaction

Based on the multiple regression analysis, it was found that external regulation and amotivation are types of motivation influencing job satisfaction among retail sector workers in Klang Valley. However, intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, identified regulation, and introjected regulation were not identified as factors affecting job satisfaction in this sector. The analysis indicated that external regulation significantly affects job satisfaction. External regulation is considered a controlled regulation involving external factors like rewards and recognition (Moll-Khosrawi et al., 2021). Research by Wietzel (2009) reported that numerous studies have established a relationship between pay and job satisfaction.

Amotivation was also found to significantly and negatively impact job satisfaction according to the multiple regression analysis conducted. This aligns with Smokrović et al.'s study (2022), reporting that amotivation significantly affects job satisfaction and work performance. The lack of motivation during task execution can lead to a lack of enjoyment while working (Smokrović et al., 2022). Deci and Ryan (1985); Mazyari et al (2012) suggest that a lack of confidence in competence or control over situations may cause amotivation. When employees lack the freedom to control their work environment, they may feel less efficient Vallerand et al (1992), resulting in lower job satisfaction.

However, the analysis showed that intrinsic motivation did not significantly influence job satisfaction. This might be due to the repetitive nature of retail workers' tasks, leading to monotonous work routines. Individuals driven by intrinsic motivation usually perform tasks to experience enjoyment and satisfaction at work (Proenca & Cristina, 2013). Nevertheless, mundane job scopes might reduce the internal motivation to perform these tasks (Chang & Lorenzi, 1983).

The multiple regression analysis indicated that integrated regulation does not significantly influence job satisfaction. This might be because external factors like interpersonal relationships or extrinsic rewards have more impact on job satisfaction than internal factors like values and interests of retail sector workers. According to Nur & Syafawati (2022), employees tend to show job satisfaction when receiving extrinsic or financial rewards.

Even though previous studies found a relationship between identified regulation and job satisfaction (Sdrolas et al., 2014; Yildiz & Kiliç, 2021), this study did not find a significant effect of identified regulation on job satisfaction. Additionally, the analysis showed that introjected regulation does not significantly influence job satisfaction. This corresponds with Moll-Khosrawi et al (2021), which found that high levels of introjected regulation among consultants did not impact their job satisfaction. In the retail sector, employees must adhere to organizational rules and procedures, particularly when dealing with customers, to avoid guilt. However, it's plausible that retail workers' behavior during task execution does not significantly influence job satisfaction.

In summary, based on the study's findings on the relationship between employee motivation and job satisfaction and their influence on job satisfaction, it can be concluded that employee motivation correlates with job satisfaction. However, some types of motivation failed to demonstrate influence on job satisfaction. This can also be explained by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which suggests that the motivation types involved in this study are part of the SDT's continuum. According to Deci and Ryan (2013), human basic psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, need to be fulfilled. The retail work environment often lacks autonomy, competence, or relatedness, as retail workers need to comply with strict rules and procedures, limiting their autonomy. Repetitive and similar job routines might lead to boredom, reducing their competence. There's a

possibility that poor social interaction at work limits the sense of relatedness among workers. Therefore, retail workers tend to be driven by external factors for job satisfaction. However, job satisfaction driven by extrinsic factors tends to be short-term and can lead to fatigue and job dissatisfaction if prolonged.

Conclusion

The theoretical implications of this study focus on applying theories and understanding related to work environment, employee motivation, and job satisfaction within the retail sector, contributing to the expansion of knowledge across various research domains. The practical implications suggest recommendations for enhancing work effectiveness through robust program and organizational planning. Addressing the study's limitations such as sampling techniques and response rates can be achieved by implementing the study's recommendations in future research endeavors. Titled "Study on Work Environment, Employee Motivation, and Job Satisfaction among Retail Sector Workers in Klang Valley," this study, overall, provides insights into the work environment, employee motivation, and job satisfaction. It identifies work environment, external regulation, and amotivation as significant influencers of job satisfaction among retail sector workers in Klang Valley.

This research is a valuable addition to the existing literature, providing critical insights into the factors that drive employee motivation and satisfaction in the retail sector in Klang Valley. It not only enriches our understanding of the theoretical frameworks governing employee motivation and job satisfaction but also offers practical implications for enhancing workplace environments, thus contributing to the broader discourse on employee well-being and organizational effectiveness in the retail industry. It extends established motivational theories, like Locke's and Maslow's, by applying them to the specific context of Klang Valley's retail industry. The findings are instrumental for retail decision-makers and HR professionals in devising policies that enhance job satisfaction and motivation. Studies like those by Arokiasamy (2019); Anderson (1984) provide evidence-based insights into the internal factors and job dimensions that influence employee satisfaction, serving as a guide for policy formulation in the retail sector. This work is pivotal for retail decision-makers and HR professionals in formulating policies that enhance job satisfaction and motivation. Studies within this research also emphasize the impact of internal factors, such as social skills and self-awareness, on job satisfaction, underlining their importance for productivity and positive working environments.

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