

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Job satisfaction among selected workers in St Lucia, West Indies

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**The aim of this study was to investigate the level of job satisfaction among supermarket workers. A self administered questionnaire survey was conducted from July-September 2007. Data were collected from 111 supermarket workers in a major supermarket located in Vieux Fort, Saint Lucia. Respondents were asked to complete a 10-item job satisfaction questionnaire. The response rate was 74%. The percentage of satisfied workers was 70%. There were no significant satisfaction differences between genders or between age groups. There was positive correlation between job satisfaction with understanding the goals and objectives of the management and sense of belonging. There was no significant correlation of job satisfaction with other factors such as knowledge about workplace, work stress, relationship with colleagues, but negative correlation of job satisfaction with salary. There is a need for review of workers salaries in view of rising cost of living as well as periodic quality assurance programme to monitor job satisfaction among the workers.**

**Key words:** Workplace, satisfaction, St Lucia, salary, workers.

## INTRODUCTION

Effectiveness of an organisational structure has been closely linked to the level of job satisfaction among the workers (Kaya, 1995). Job satisfaction is an important organizational variable which can either be an independent or dependent one (Knight, 2004). The dependent factors include the individual characteristics (values, interests, needs, attitudes); the characteristics of the organisation (reward practices, physical work environment, colleagues, immediate supervisor) and the characteristics of the job (types of intrinsic rewards, the degree of autonomy, the amount of direct performance feedback, the variety of tasks). Some of the independent variables that have been found to affect job satisfaction are employee motivation and performance (Ostroff, 1992), employee absenteeism (Hackett and Guion, 1985) and turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000). Diener et al. (1999) gave an explanation to what determines job satisfaction

By using two social theories: The “bottom-up theory” and the “top-down theory”. The bottom-up theory basically states that individuals have needs and that they will be happy if their needs are met. The sum of positive and negative factors related to job will determine the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of an individual on a job. In contrast, top-down theory states that there is a global propensity to experience things in a positive way. In other words, all individuals have a desire to be happy and this attitude will be the major influence in their lives. Thus, feelings about job satisfaction are generated in one of the two ways: From the bottom-up by adding positive effects and subtracting negative ones, or from the top-down by the diffusion of one’s desire to be happy.

The bottom-up theory was further supported by a study done by Sousa-Poza and Sousa-Poza (2000) which suggests that job satisfaction is determined by finding a balance between work-role inputs (level of education, workload and type of occupation) and outputs (level of perceived job security, opportunities for advancement, amount of independence at work). This is in agreement with Herzberg’s (1969) contention that job satisfaction should be analysed in terms of two separate factors,

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which he called "satisfiers" (or motivating factors-include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and "dissatisfiers" (or hygiene factors) which include salary, working conditions (in addition to relationships with peers and supervisors and company policy. When applied to staying on a job, it will be perceived that workers leave because of issues related to dissatisfiers and remain in the job due to issues related to satisfiers. Dissatisfied workers are more likely to seek other employment or change jobs than those more satisfied with their jobs. Because individual elements do not result in job satisfaction, job satisfaction can be viewed as the total sentiments related to a person's job which according to Kaya (1995) include an atmosphere of peace and stability. Satisfaction within a job has been shown to create confidence and loyalty among workers and ultimately improve the quality in the output of the employed (Tietjen and Myers, 1998). It has been said that employers (whether in the supermarkets environment or elsewhere) who understand the significance of factors affecting the well being of employees are more likely to gain improved performance from the employees such as engaging them in decision making and problem solving process (Durham-Taylor, 2000).

Supermarkets form a vital aspect of community life, especially in St Lucia where there is a heavy reliance on imported basic needs of life. St Lucia is part of the Windward Islands group of the Lesser Antilles and lies between the former British island of St Vincent to the south and the French island of Martinique to the north. The island gained her independence from the British in 1979, but before becoming a British colony in 1814, St Lucia changed hands 14 times between the French and the English, hence the way of life and mannerisms among the French and the British are seen among the people (Spartan Directory, 2005). Vieux Fort is the second largest city, located on the southern part of the island with two outlets of a major supermarket in the city which offer a wide variety of food and household merchandise.

There must be systematic effort on the part of the employer to measure job satisfaction periodically as part of quality assurance programme which we (the authors) observed is not been done in many establishments in St Lucia, we were therefore prompted by this to carry out this study. The aim of this study was to examine the level of satisfaction supermarket workers derive from their jobs and factors that contribute to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction. To our knowledge, no such study has ever been done in St Lucia.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Survey instrument

The questionnaire was design to measure job satisfaction among our target population. A literature review was conducted to identify

the job satisfaction dimensions among supermarket workers, but we encountered a limitation because we could not find any study done among supermarket workers or low skill workers here in the Caribbean. Therefore, we decided to design the questionnaire modified from studies done among health workers in Estonia (Kaarna et al., 2004)

The questionnaire consists of 10 items: Goals and objectives, relationship with supervisors, knowledge about work place, working conditions, expectations of employers, relationship with colleagues, recognition, sense of belonging, rate of promotion and of course, salary level. The responses to these items were measured with five-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neither agree nor disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree).

### Reliability and validity

A pilot study was done to test the questionnaire. By doing a pilot study the feasibility of the study was investigated (the validity of the measuring tools and the acceptability of the study to the study population) so that potential problems could be identified and resolved before commencing the study. The information gained was used to improve the methods/instrument where applicable. The pilot study was conducted on a small group of people (ten workers at the supermarket). The findings of the pilot study assisted the investigators in the removal of questions that were considered to be vague or unclear to the participants.

### Data collection

A self-administered questionnaire was administered from July-September 2007 to obtain the opinions of staff regarding satisfaction with their jobs. The settings for this study were 2 outlets of a major supermarket in Vieux Fort, St Lucia. At the time of the study, the numbers of workers employed in the supermarket were about 150 on full time basis. The managers of the supermarket outlets took up the responsibility of distributing the questionnaire after briefing them about the aim and goal of this study and obtained verbal consent from the respondents. The questionnaires were stapled by the respondents after filling them with no name or code to suggest any person. Respondents were assured that the questionnaires would be used only for research purpose and individual answers would not be disclosed.

### Statistical analysis

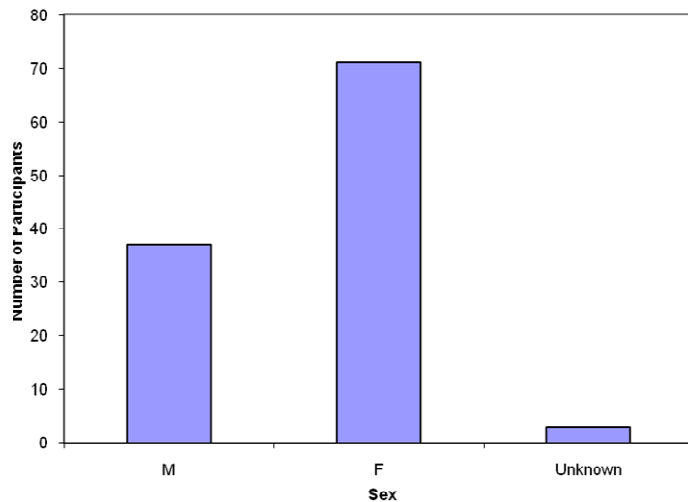
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 13.0) was used to collate and analyse the data. The statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.01$ .

### Ethics

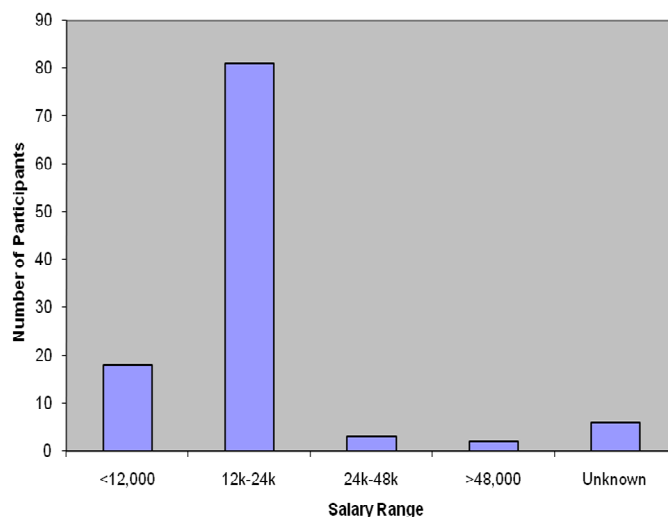
The study was approved by the ethical and academic committee of Spartan Health Sciences University as well as the management of the Supermarket.

## RESULTS

By the end of data collection period, 111 out of 150 respondents had completed the questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 74%. The average age of the respondents was  $27.4 \pm 10.0$  (the youngest being 16 years and



**Figure 1.** Gender distribution among participants.



**Figure 2.** Salary range among participants.

oldest 62 years). Most of the respondents were females—seventy one (64%), as shown in Figure 1 while 3 persons did not indicate their gender. The average rating of job satisfaction was 3.5 out of 5 possible points and the levels of job satisfaction were moderately high (70%). Majority of the workers are secondary school leavers as shown in Figure 2. Eighteen persons (16%) are holders of post secondary school certificate and sixteen (14%) are primary school leavers while four did not indicate their qualifications.

Figure 3 shows the salary distribution among the workers. The monetary note in St Lucia is East Caribbean dollars. One US dollar is equivalent to 2.7 East Caribbean dollars. About 80% of the workers earn between twelve thousand to twenty four thousand East

Caribbean dollars per annum. Figure 4 shows the length of employment years with the mean of 4 years.

The correlation between job satisfaction scores and other related factors can provide valuable information which can provide insight on which actions might be taken to improve satisfaction which in turn might improve recruitment, retention rates and reduce absenteeism. Table 1 reveal the correlation of specific work-related factors with job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was positively correlated with the variables; goals and objectives and sense of belonging. Salary was negatively correlated with job satisfaction, however, no significant correlations with job satisfaction were seen with other variables.

## DISCUSSION

It has been reported that job satisfaction is one of the criteria for establishing a healthy organizational structure in an establishment (Kaya, 1995). It is believed that if job satisfaction level and determinants are identified, necessary action can be taken to increase levels of satisfaction and consequently improve the quality of services offer to the public. The supermarkets are inseparable cornerstones of the society and to render an effective service to customers depends on the human resources available. How satisfied a worker is, will to a large extent affect the quality of the service he or she renders. Job satisfaction among workers is viewed as an indicator of the quality of service rendered (Hasenfield, 1983).

In this study, the average rating of job satisfaction was 3.5 out of 5 possible points. According to McCormic (1974), satisfied workers will promote the organization's vision and goals, therefore; the most important element that indicates the conditions of an organization is the level of job satisfaction of the workers.

In this study, there is no significant correlation of sex, level of education and length of employment to job satisfaction. However, some studies have shown that there is a consistent relationship between professional status and job satisfaction but it was not so in this study probably due to sample size and other inherent factors such as potential bias in self reporting. Age is also seen as a factor that affects job satisfaction with elderly workers more satisfied than younger workers (Newstrom and Davis, 1998). Because employees work harder and perform better if satisfied with their jobs, knowing the factors related to job satisfaction can help prevent staff frustration and low job satisfaction. There must be systematic effort on the part of the employer to measure job satisfaction periodically as part of quality assurance programme which we (the authors) observed is not been done in many establishments in St Lucia.

The positive correlation seen with goals and objectives is related to the management making clear the goals and

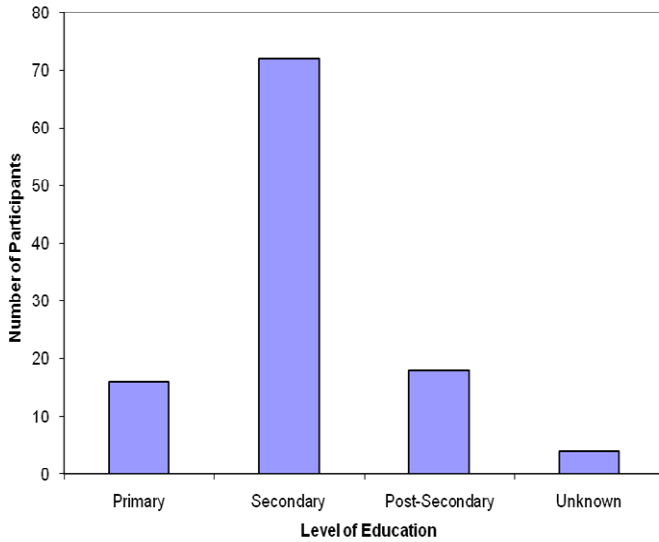


Figure 3. Distribution of level of education among participants.

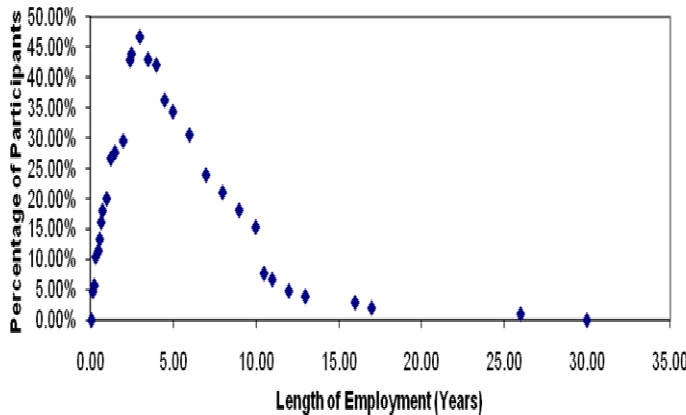


Figure 4. Distribution of length of employment.

objectives of the organisation which in this case is to serve with courtesy and dignity. This lends support to the notion that personal autonomy and understanding plays a large part in determining job satisfaction. Physical and mental exhaustion coupled with high workloads is one of the greatest challenges facing low skill workers, though this factor was not addressed in our survey, but there is a positive correlation in the workers having sense of belonging to the organization (Kahn, 1973). When the employees working in these positions were able to talk to their immediate supervisors, expressed their opinions concerning the results of the work of the subordinates, job satisfaction among workers increased. The ratings of job satisfaction among the managers are usually higher than others, senior executives are most motivated by possibilities for growth and the achievement of objectives, though, this study did not attempt to rate job satisfaction

among highly skilled workers.

A positive correlation between job satisfaction and understanding the goals and objectives of the establishment suggests that the participation level of the workers coupled with confidence in their leaders, the ethical management practices of leaders, an atmosphere of mutual respect, the staffing evaluation process used by leaders and the fairness and equity of workload distribution contribute to their job satisfaction. This is similar to our finding that management that is informed about the expectations and daily work-related problems of their employees is better able to understand the needs of their employees. According to research reports on job satisfaction, a poor relationship with one's boss is often the main reason an employee leaves a job. Loyalty to a supervisor may help combat any lack of loyalty to the establishment (Leppa, 1996).

Interpersonal relationship has been shown to affect the quality of job offered by workers where unhealthy relationship can come from comparison of their achievements with fellow workers receiving more awards than others with the same job done. Adams, (2000), Blegen (1993) and Leppa (1996) in different studies done among health workers, reported a negative effect of interpersonal relationship among workers on job satisfaction, however, in this study we did not find any significant correlation between job satisfaction and relationship with their colleagues. Employers must ensure that internal equity is maintained in which there is relative fairness of the salary for the different types of jobs within one organisation. Jobs that differ in terms of their content and worth (for example, skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions) should have different base wages associated with them and jobs that are similar in terms of their content and worth should have similar wage and salary rates. The job analysis and job evaluation processes are typically used by organisations to generate point totals for different types of jobs, based on estimates and ratings of the relative internal worth or value of the various jobs. The point totals for jobs should then be translated into pay rates. However, the job evaluation process and the resulting pay structure based on internal equity, does not always correspond perfectly to the pay structure based on external equity (market-based pay).

In our study, dissatisfaction is expressed in the area of wages which is similar to the study done by Seo et al. (2004) among nurses in Korea. Employees will have difficulties in meeting the needs of the customers if their own needs are not met in terms of financial freedom. Pay satisfaction is an important variable that is linked to some rather significant organizational outcomes with evidence showing that it may lead to decreased job satisfaction, decreased motivation and performance/input, increased absenteeism and turnover and more pay-related grievances and lawsuits (Cable and Judge, 1994; Milkovich and Newman, 2002). There are persons receiving lower salaries who are satisfied with their jobs and salaries, also there are people receiving higher salaries

**Table 1.** Correlation between work environment factors and job satisfaction.

Factors	r
Goals and Objectives	0.367
Relationship with supervisors	0.032*
Knowledge about workplace	0.003*
Work stress	0.016*
Unrealistic expectations	0.006*
Colleagues relationships	0.047*
Salary	-0.317
Recognition	0.016*
Sense of belonging	0.339
Promotion	0.003*

Key: \* Significant.

who are not satisfied with their jobs, this therefore, supports the notion that it is not how much people are paid but how much they make relative to what they feel they should be making that influences job and salary satisfaction. Hence, with comfortable salaries, workers may be less inclined to leave their jobs. It is discovered that there is a growing evidence of relationships between job satisfaction and mental and physical health of the people (Gunnarsson et al., 2007). This can form the basis for a future study.

## Conclusion

Job satisfaction is determined by various factors primarily organisational in nature, which can be manipulated to enhance job satisfaction. This survey was carried out with the assumption that the information on job satisfaction among workers will benefit the labour industry in general. Also the information would serve as a benchmark in labour relations and could be used to improve the level of job satisfaction of low skill workers. The role of material and moral element in determining how satisfied a worker is on his/her job, can not be ignored. This study gives an insight into the status of general and dimension-specific job satisfaction among group of low skill workers in the supermarket. The findings show that the workers are moderately satisfied with their jobs. The salary is the area that the workers show greatest dissatisfaction and this is a signal for change especially with the rising cost of living in the country and globally.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is also a need to create opportunities in area of education. Studies have shown that a well informed worker is satisfied with his or her job and this will further facilitate a good working environment.

Employers should address employees' job dissatisfaction by finding ways to increase staff autonomy while on the job. Supervisors might consider allowing the staff to make decisions and choices freely.

Institution must provide an environment where effective managers can develop and flourish. Most of the managers in our study reached their position of authority because of their technical experience and expertise while having little previous education or experience in management. Educational training in management (especially human resources and conflict management) as an in-service program should be encouraged.

Cultivating a positive and accepting social environment is essential for promoting job satisfaction. Policies allowing supervisors and their staff to invest some of the available resources towards non-work related social activities would help promote a sense of belonging and relatedness that could eventually translate into a sense of commitment to the organization. For good labour relations and to alleviate workers' concerns, it is proposed that the supermarket will modify the compensation and benefit packages they offer to employees to include more security features (job security and protection against dismissal), thereby, improving the relational aspect of workers' satisfaction and performance. To address the needs and motivation of employees, the supermarket (this apply to other organizations as well) need to develop multiple packages of human resource policies and practices for each group of different employee groups. Employees should be offered a human resource package which matches their employment-satisfaction relationships. One fundamental part of the employment labour relationship which determines in part the set of human resource practices for employee, is when they are given a permanent job with very good remunerations. Employees should be encouraged to take up permanent jobs. In addition, the following should be considered: Care for pensioners, wage increase, support for employees prosperity, offering and providing re-training, promoting rationalisation changes and modernisation of company management, arranging employees' recreation, monitoring the employer's compliance with the labour code, organising leisure activities, providing social aid, benefits, loans where necessary, reduce working time, outline scope of work and work procedures, provide incentives for holiday and work leave, social services and benefits provided by the employer, providing adequate care for high-risk work and occupational illnesses.

## LIMITATION

Due to lack of a previously conducted study in this area among St Lucia workers, either changes or trends could not be identified, therefore it is recommended that such study be repeated in the future. However, these findings should be interpreted with caution since the participants were taken from a section of the island and do not

represent all the workers in St Lucia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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