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**Job Satisfaction of Unionized Employees: Does it Varies Across Different Aspects  
of the Job and Membership Period**

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**Abstract**

*Job satisfaction of union member employees has been on the focus of researchers over the past decades. The general notion in this regards is that unionized employees are found to be dissatisfied with their jobs in most cases. Few evidence is available that stand counter to this general nation and they point to the fact that job satisfaction of unionized employees varies across job aspects and union membership period. However, relatively little attention has been paid to examine this phenomenon in more detail. Therefore, this study was purposed to study the job satisfaction of unionized employees across four aspects of the job and union membership period. A sample of 380 union member employees were selected from some selected public sector organizations. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) of short form was used to assess the job satisfaction level of the sample respondents while union membership was assessed with a four time scale. This study supported the claim that job satisfaction of unionized employees varies along the each aspects of the job and on the period of their membership.*

**KeyWords:** *Employee Unionization, Job Aspects, and Job Satisfaction.*

**Introduction**

Job satisfaction of unionized employees has been subjective to the scrutiny of many researchers over the past decades (Guis,2012). The general acceptance among the union scholars is that union members report less job satisfaction than their non-unionized counterparts in organizations (Garcia-Serrano 2009; Artz 2010). Several theoretical explanations have been presented over the dissatisfaction of unionized employees on their jobs (Guis,2012). However, it seems that most of researchers have considered the overall job dissatisfaction of unionized employees, but not on the individual aspect of the job. Since there is some empirical evidence that union member employees are satisfied with some aspects of the job and dissatisfied with others (Lincoln & Booth, 1990; Bender& Sloan, 1998).It will be an impetus for the theory if attempts are made to examine the job satisfaction of unionized employees on individual aspects of the job rather than on overall job and on how it varies over union membership period. The objective of this study was to examine the job satisfaction of the unionized employees on four aspects of their jobs namely, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, recognition/authority and social utility and to explore how it differs across union tenure period. By doing so, this study made a significant contribution to the knowledge

development by presenting rather more elaborative explanation on the relationship between unionization of employees and job satisfaction.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Employee Unions***

Unions are generally considered as employees organizations representing them in labor related issues. Noe, (2007) defined employee unions as “organizations formed for the purpose of representing employees interests in dealing with employers” (p.459) while Bashir and Nasir (2013) claim that “unionization symbolizes association of employees that signify the interest and benefits of employees”. Further, unions are viewed as organizations established to help protect the interests of employees and foster pleasant relationships between employees and employers (Napathorn and Chanprateep, 2011).

Several reasons operating in organizations tend to promote employees to join with or form employee unions. Nature of the job or job context has been identified as one of such factor (Duncan and Stafford, 1980). The general consensus is that employees join unions for higher wages, better benefits, job security, better working conditions etc. (Belmaa and Voos, 2006).

It is said that when the employees find that their job or job context is more dangerous or unpleasant, they tend to form a union in order to bargain over them (Premack & Hunter, 1988). Attitudes, work stress and work situation dissatisfaction were reported to be determinants of union membership (Sarkar, 2012). The author found that collectivism is positively related with union membership while individualism is negatively related. Further, perceived work stress and work situation dissatisfaction are positively affecting on pro-union attitude. Perceived distribution equity is reported to be negatively related to the union propensity in Chinese context (Wang, 2011). Wang claimed that distribution justice on pay, rewards and job outcomes will reduce the employees' tendency to join with union. Napathorn and Chanprateep (2011) reported that compensation, safeguard against dismissal and legal consultations are the main reasons for employees to be member of unions in Thai context. Overall, failure of employers to fulfill its obligations for employees can be the major reason for employees' frustration and their subsequent unionization (Bashir & Nasir, 2013).

### ***Job Satisfaction of Unionized Employees***

The general acceptance among the researchers on the relationship between unionization of employees and their job satisfaction is that job satisfaction of unionized employees is less compared to that of non-unionized employees (Davis, 2013). However, given the fact that union member employees enjoy more job related benefits such as improved job security (Boyer, 1998), increased wage level (Baird, 1981), protection from arbitrary and unfair treatments (Zalesny, 1985) than nonunion employees, it is worth exploring why they are dissatisfied with their jobs. Cohen (1993) posited that understanding of job satisfaction is highly important given that work dissatisfaction may leads to higher level of union commitment and union participation of employees. Several theoretical explanations have been proposed in these aspects.

One such thesis is what is known as “exit-voice hypothesis (Freeman & Medolf, 1984). It says that unionized employees tend to exhibit or report job dissatisfaction over their

job related matters in order to negotiate for more benefits with the management (Borjas, 1979). Another proposition on the dissatisfaction of unionized employees is the member mobilization proposition. That is union leaders particularly communicate more negative aspects of the job (Heywood, Seibert & Wei, 2002; Barling, Kelloway & Bremerman, 1991) in order to mobilize more members around the unions and sustain their membership. As a result, employees tend to develop negative attitudes on these aspects of the job, resulting in job dissatisfaction. However, the most recent explanation for the dissatisfaction of union member employees is based on the nature of the industrial relation (Heywood, Seibert & Wei, 2002; Kleiner, 2002). This school of thought claims that if the employees perceive the industrial relation situation negatively, they tend to feel high job dissatisfaction particularly in unionized organizational contexts.

The point worth considering here is the question whether unionized employees are dissatisfied with the overall job or are dissatisfied only with some aspects of the job. Some studies have pointed out that union employees are found to be satisfied with pay, benefits and job security, but dissatisfied with supervision, relationship with management and promotions (Kochan & David, 1980). Lincoln and Boothe (1990) found that job satisfaction of unionized employees over job quality, complexity and work autonomy and promotion, is relatively lower than non-union employees while Bender and Sloan (1998) reported a negative relationship for overall job satisfaction but a positive relation for pay, job security, and promotion opportunities. This implies that job satisfaction of unionized employees may vary from context to context. This is in congruence of the argument of Davis (2013) that work context and job characteristics influence job satisfaction of employees particularly in the public sector. Therefore, in order to understand this fully, an empirical investigation is need to look into what are the job related aspects that union member employees are satisfied with and dissatisfied with. This study was purposed to examine this issue in the selected public sector organizations in Sri Lanka. Therefore, based on the above empirical account, it was hypothesized that

H1: Job satisfaction of unionized employees varies alone intrinsic aspect, extrinsic aspects, recognition/authority and social utility of their job

#### ***Job Satisfaction and Union Membership***

Researchers have pointed out that the relationship between employee unionization and job satisfaction varies along with the union tenure. Borjas (1979) suggested that accumulated union experience have an increasing negative impact on job satisfaction on present union members. However, union members who feel that they have more control over their work situation and are more involved in union activates feel more job satisfaction (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1990). Bengemin (2010) found that job satisfaction of new union members are high than that of senior union members. He further claimed that senior union member employees tends to be less satisfied given that unions failed to keep their promises over long run. In this light, it can hypothesize that

H1: The job satisfaction of unionized employees varies along the union tenure

## **Research Methods**

### ***Sample***

A sample of 380 union member employees of the public sector organizations that belongs to Clerical and Related Worker category were selected for the study. Proportionate random sample technique was used to select the sample respondents, ensuring the proportional representation of the each organization in the sample. 65.7% of the sample was male while 34.3% are female employees. The sample respondents represent mostly the middle age category which is 74.2% of the sample. Further, the sample is consisted of employees with diverse educational background. The majority (45.8%) had G.C.E. (A/L) qualification; 27.6% and 10.5% of the respondents had a graduate and postgraduate qualification respectively. Large percentage of the sample (58.7%) had a work experience of ranging from 5 to 10 years. The proportion of respondents' with less than 5 years work experience was 24.4% and 16.6% had 10 to 15 years work experience.

### ***Measurements***

Unionization and job satisfaction are the two variables concerned with this study. Unionization was assessed by looking at the membership and the duration of membership of the respondents. The union tenure was measured on four categories namely, less than one year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years and more than 10 years.

Job satisfaction of the respondents was measured by a questionnaire adapted from the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) short form Williams and Anderson (1991). It mainly captures the intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction of respondents. The questionnaire items were rated to five scales from 1 (Not satisfied) to 5 (Extremely satisfied). Though MSQ is largely based on two dimensions namely extrinsic and intrinsic, some studies have reported finding of more dimensions. For instance, three dimensions namely, intrinsic, extrinsic and general (Schriesheim et al., 1993), four dimension of working condition, leadership, responsibility and extrinsic rewards (Mathieu 1991), and four dimensions of Igalens and Roussel (1999) namely, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, recognition and authority and social utility. The present study assessed the job satisfaction of respondents in line with four aspects of Igalens and Roussel's (1999) conceptualization.

### ***Data Analysis***

First, descriptive statistical method was used to understand both the nature and the distribution of the data collected. Then, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied for hypothesis testing with parallel model testing and multi group analysis so that differences of job satisfaction alone both job aspects and union tenure can be examined.

### ***The Results***

First, the differences of union membership period of respondents were analyzed. Table I depicts the frequencies of the union tenure of respondents.

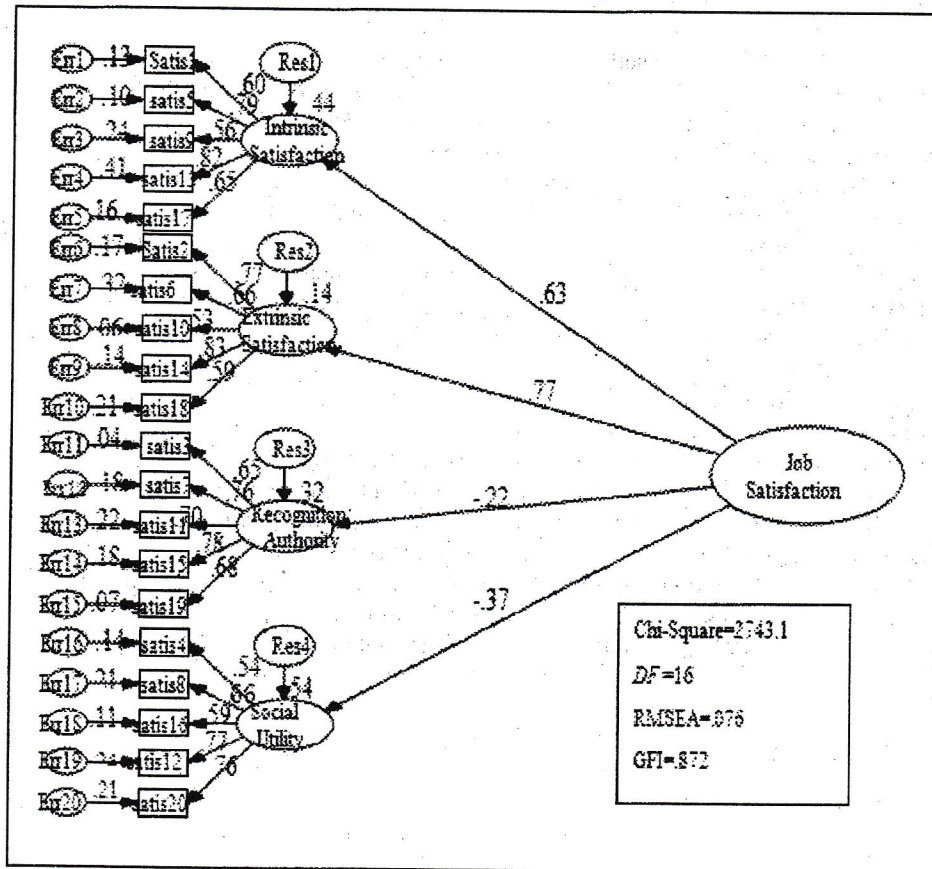
**Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Union Membership Period**

Union Tenure	Frequency	Percentage
Less than one year	55	14.2
1-5 years	187	47.8
6-10 years	137	35.2
More than 10 years	11	2.8

According to Table 1, it is clear that most of the employees (73%) have been active members of the unions for 1 to ten years period. Further, 14.2% of them have a less than one year period of membership while 2.8% records a more than ten years of membership. As a result, the sample gives a divergent distribution over the union membership of employees so that differences of job satisfaction along each stratum can be assessed.

In line with the testing of  $H_1$ , a model was tested to examine the differences of job satisfaction of employees on the four aspects of their jobs namely, extrinsic satisfaction, intrinsic satisfaction, recognition/authority and social utility. The Figure 1 presents the model tested with estimated standard parameters.

**Figure I: The Model of Four Factors on Job Satisfaction**



The model tested for examining the factor weights of the four constructs with job satisfaction, achieved a satisfactory level of model fit ( $\chi^2=2743.1$ ,  $df=16$ ,  $GFI=.872$ ,  $RMSEA=.076$ ,  $AIC=456.1$ ). Therefore, the standard estimates of parameter can be used for hypothesis testing. The Table II contains the standard estimate of factor weights of the model tested.

**Table II: Estimated Standard Factor Loading Weights**

			Estimate	S.E	C.R.	P
Intrinsic Satisfaction	<---	Job Satisfaction	.632	.167	3.784	***
Extrinsic Satisfaction	<---	Job Satisfaction	.771	.145	5.317	***
Recognition/ Authority	<---	Job Satisfaction	-.224	.012	18.666	***
Social Utility	<---	Job Satisfaction	-.372	.049	-7.591	***

According to the above table, intrinsic job satisfaction and extrinsic job satisfaction dimensions are loaded with the job satisfaction of the respondents positively and significantly ( $\beta=.63$  and  $.77$ ,  $P=.000$ ). This indicates that union member employees are satisfied with the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the job. However, the other two factors namely recognition/authority and social utility aspects of the job were loaded with job satisfaction negatively ( $\beta=-.22$  and  $-.37$ ,  $P=.000$ ). This exhibits the fact that responded employees are dissatisfied with these aspects of the job.

The overall picture of this result is that unionized employees recorded satisfaction with two aspects of the job while they are dissatisfied with others. As a result, the hypothesis 1 ( $H_1$ ) which postulates that job satisfaction of unionized employees varies across the job aspects was asserted.

Moreover, it was further hypothesized ( $H_2$ ) that job satisfaction of unionized employees is varying along with their union tenure period. In order to test this hypothesis, four groups of respondents were formed based on the time of their membership. The model depicted in Figure I is then tested across four groups using multi group approach, the result of which is shown in the Table III.

According to the Table III, it is clear that the regression weights on the job aspects loading with job satisfaction is varying between the four groups. For example, intrinsic and extrinsic job aspects recorded lower regression weights ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $p=.000$ ) in the group who has less the one year union membership compared to the rest. Furthermore, union members having six to ten years of membership period recorded the highest loading values ( $\beta = .64$ ,  $\beta = .67$ ,  $p=.000$ ) for intrinsic and extrinsic job aspects. In contrast, for recognition/authority and social utility aspects, group one reported the lowest negative weights ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $\beta = -.26$ ,  $p=.000$ ) while group four with more than ten years of union membership reported the highest negative values ( $\beta = -.44$ ,  $\beta = -.48$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis 2 was supported by this result.

**Table III: Model Fit Statistics on Different Groups**

The Group	Model fit statistics	Intrinsic Job Satisfaction	Extrinsic Job Satisfaction	Recognition/ Authority	Social Utility
<1 year	$\chi^2=1971.1$ , $df=16$ , GFI=.772 RMSEA=.081, AIC=432.2	$\beta = 0.24$	$\beta = 0.28$	$\beta = -0.14$	$\beta = -0.22$
1-5 Years	$\chi^2=1971.1$ , $df=16$ , GFI=.772 RMSEA= .081, AIC=432.2	$\beta = 0.44$	$\beta = 0.64$	$\beta = -0.19$	$\beta = -0.26$
6-10 years	$\chi^2=1971.1$ , $df=16$ , GFI=.772 RMSEA= .081, AIC=432.2	$\beta = 0.64$	$\beta = 0.67$	$\beta = -0.24$	$\beta = -0.34$
>10 years	$\chi^2=1971.1$ , $df=16$ , GFI=.772 RMSEA= .081, AIC=432.2	$\beta = 0.34$	$\beta = 0.39$	$\beta = -0.44$	$\beta = -0.48$

**Conclusions and Implications**

The very objective of this study was to examine whether the job satisfaction of union member employees varies along job aspects and union membership period. It was found that job satisfaction of unionized employees differs based on the aspects of the job concerned. In this regards, it is revealed that unionized employees in the public sector are satisfied with intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the job while they exhibited dissatisfaction over recognition/authority and social utility aspects of the job. The finding of this study that unionized employees are satisfied with extrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the job coincides with the findings others (Lincoln & Boothe, 1990; Bender & Sloan, 1998). On the other hand, the job dissatisfaction of respondents with recognition/authority and social utility is congruence with the claim of Davis (2013) that feeling of dependence and lack of autonomy of unionized employees will result in work place alienation reducing their job satisfaction.

This variation of job satisfaction of union member employees is also evident with respect to the membership period. It was found that union members having less than one year period of membership recorded both less satisfaction and less dissatisfaction on the four aspects of the job. Further, it was the employees who had 6 to 10 years of union membership period that recorded higher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction over the job aspects. This revelation is highly consistence with the claim of Borja (1979) and Bengemin (2010) that accumulated union experiences reduce the job satisfaction of unionized employees. This may be the result of, first, failure of unions to keep up with their promises in long run and second, the most senior member employees may seek for higher order job related needs such as empowerment, autonomy, participation and involvements.

This study highlighted the fact that job satisfaction of unionized employees varies across both different aspects of the job and union membership period. Though unionized employees are found to be satisfied with extrinsic and extrinsic aspects of their job, they recorded job dissatisfaction with recognition/authority and social utility aspects of the job. This has a special implication for the management of the public sector. Managers of the public sector should pay their attention to recognition and social needs of their employees so that it will leads to the overall job satisfaction of them.

Further, it was revealed that senior union member employees experience more job dissatisfaction than the junior member employees on recognition/authority and social utility aspects of their jobs. This may be due to the fact that senior employees have more social and recognitions needs than junior employees. Therefore, special human resource management strategies such as job enhancement, empowerment and job redesign etc. should be implemented for reduce their job dissatisfaction on recognition and social utility in order to enhance their overall job satisfaction.

The conclusions and implications of this study are bounded with some limitations such as selecting a one category of employees for the study, and limiting the scope to a limited number of organizations. Therefore, a further study is warranted to make more broader and inclusive findings and conclusions in this regard.

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