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The effect of workplace relationship on job satisfaction of employees: School context

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ABSTRACT

Building good work relationships can have a huge impact on job satisfaction. The study explored the workplace relationship of employees and employers of Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos Region, Philippines, and its effect on job satisfaction. Related literature and studies were reviewed, and questionnaires were used to gather data. The respondents of the study are employees of the Divine Word Colleges of Ilocos region which include Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte. The study used a descriptive correlational research design where weighted mean and Pearson r ascertained the level of workplace relationships and their correlation with job satisfaction. The study found that workplace relationships and job satisfaction were significantly correlated.

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Introduction

Undeniably, business performance depends on working relationships (Ramjee, 2018). Job satisfaction is a result of working relationships that can affect organizational performance (Bakotic, 2016). Organizations or businesses that fail to establish good working relationships tend to have high turnover. It can also affect the mental health of employees causing them not to be able to perform their job well (Nadinloyi, Sadeghi, & Hajloo, 2013). People or employees tend to avoid stressful workplaces and look for a better place where they can be happy and work comfortably. High turnover will always affect business productivity.

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Motivation to work is not all caused by money, it also depends on the workplace environment. National Business Research Institute (n.d) argues that employee engagement is positively altered when there is a good working relationship with other employees. Hence, employees are happy to work and even do the extra mile. Further, when they are comfortable with each other, problems at work would not become a burden as they believe other employees can help. Based on research findings, this study found out the condition of the work environment in terms of the employer-employee relationship, employee–employee relationship, and how it affects job satisfaction. The results would help the administrators and employees to improve their working conditions through the identified factors that affect employer-employee, and employee-employee relationships.

The study is divided into five parts. The first part is the introduction providing the background of the study. The second part is the literature review which explains further the theories of the study as the basis for the investigation. The third part is the research methodology which explains the research design, population, locale of the study, research instruments, data gathering procedures, ethical review procedures, and the statistical treatment of data. The fourth part is the data analysis and interpretation which leads to the final part, the presentation of the results and the conclusion of the study.

Literature review

The purpose of the literature review is to deepen the theories of the study based on the study. The thematic presentation of literature is under the heading of the theoretical and conceptual framework.

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks

Understanding workplace relationship

Work relationships certainly matter in the workplace. These affect their feeling, energy, and work performance. The level of mood would determine the level of performance as emphasized by Hosie et al 2006, p44 as cited in Essays, 2013, para. 1). Job satisfaction is one of the results of a working relationship, and not by salary alone (Ram, 2013). Creating such an environment is the job of every worker as Patricia (2015, pp. 115-125) claimed that management intervention can help create friendship at work through social activities inside and outside of the workplace.

Consequently, Ramjee (2018) classified three types of workplace relationships and they are management flexibility, co-worker relationship, and social relationship. Management flexibility refers to the effort of management to balance work and family life or personal life. While co-worker relationship pertains to a harmonious working relationship. Social relationship denotes group bonding such as coffee group, breakfast or lunch group, or team building.

Edward (2015) claimed that workplace satisfaction is crucial to increase productivity. The

management should give importance to leveraging workplace satisfaction that consequently improves performance. His recommendations to improve workplace satisfaction were listed such as, listening to employees, avoiding hovering, allowing creativity and personalization, providing competitive benefits, and respecting employees.

Scholarly works revealed that most employees' difficulties in performing their jobs are products of the working relationship between employee and supervisor. Specifically, the studies of Childress & Childress (2007, p23 as cited in Essays, 2013), concluded that most supervisors are not aware of the impact of their working relationship on the employees' effectiveness. Their study confirmed the importance of building a good working relationship not only with the supervisors but also with co-employees.

Employee-employer relationship

The working relationship starts when an employer hires a new employee and signs a contract. All Answers Ltd (2018) as cited in Black's Law Dictionary page 471 (5th ed. 1979) defines an employee as a "person in the service of another under any contract of hire, express or implied, oral or written, where the employer has the power or right to control and direct the employee in the material details of how the work is to be performed". It is also pointed out that a contract does not create productivity or high performance but motivation. Wood et al. (2004, p 355) asserted that employers must balance interests such as decreasing wage constraints with a maximization of labor productivity to achieve a profitable and productive employment relationship. Stone, 2005, p 412 and Dubin, 1958, p 213 noted motivation as "something that moves a person to action, and continues him in the course of action already initiated." It is the most difficult factor for employers to effectively manage the employment relationship.

In recent developments, particularly in human resources management, the concept of the employer-employee relationship has changed, it is dependent upon the interaction of formal legal regulations (Beardwell and Claydon 2007, whereby collective bargaining shifted to a more individualized method of bargaining ((Henderson 2008, cited by Essays, 2018).

According to Marchington and Wilkinson (2008), the employer-employee relationship indicates employee involvement as this forms part of the success of an organization. Some of these are satisfactory productivity, motivation, and morale of employees; loyalty, ensuring sufficient revenue and profits, and conflict reduction (Task Management Guide, n.d., O'Brien, 2014). Schreiner (2018) agreeably stated that managing relationships between employer and employee is vital to business success, as strong relationships can lead to greater employee happiness and even increased productivity. Halsal (2014, para. 1) suggested other points in promoting good working relationships: mutual respect, mutual reliance, support or nurturing, gratitude and appreciation, open communication, consistent feedback, and following through in which the employer delivers what is promised to employees.

Employee-employee relationship

Healthy relations among employees go a long way in motivating them and increasing their confidence and morale (MSG, n.d). One enters a friendship voluntarily because one has a similar goal (Patricia, 2015). These goals may include feelings of belongingness, affection, and intimacy (Lee, 2005, pp. 1-44). According to Maxwell (2004) developing personal relationships is a serious business that yields dividends to those committed to it. According to the Social Exchange Theory, those feelings must be reciprocated, both must nurture, and invest their time and energy in such a relationship (Homans, 1961). Social exchange theory posits that human relationships are formed using a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives.

There are several suggestions on how to improve employee-employee relations at the workplace. These include forming teamwork, encouraging individuals to share their ideas, assigning targets to each team, promoting bonding activities, encouraging open communication among employees, scheduling a common meeting or general assembly, and organizing Christmas parties or birthday celebrations (MSG, n.d). Further studies claim that a positive climate of employee relations with high levels of employee involvement, commitment, and engagement can improve business outcomes as well as contribute to employees' well-being (CIPD, 2018).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects the simple feeling accompanying the attainment of goals or the feeling accompanying the attainment of objectives (Green & Heywood, 2008, pp. 710-728). Moreover, Hoppock (1935) explained job satisfaction as a combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that cause a person to be satisfied. He identified three major theories of job satisfaction such as Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, Need Fulfillment Theory, and Social Reference Group Theory.

Kendal and Hulin (1969) have identified factors that are affecting job satisfaction, and these are first work conditions. It is the environment provided by the organization which may include amenities, degree of safety, and health and well-being (Bockerman & Ilmakunnas, 2006, pp. 290-302). Furthermore, these are the environmental conditions that affect directly the feeling of employees toward the job. Working conditions may include training, working time, and work-life balance (Majid, 2001, pp. 271-291).

The second is pay which refers to the remuneration given to the employees for the work done. Vermandere (2013) emphasized that employees who are not paid fairly for their workload harm motivation to work. It elaborates that the employees who were not happy were more inclined to change jobs than happy employees. The study also identified facts that employees were prepared to trade off lower salaries against certain benefits, including a higher retirement payout, a particularly interesting job, a job near home, extra holidays, a (better) company car, extra job security, and feeling less controlled at the workplace.

The third is promotion, which refers to the advancement in a hierarchy. An employee is shifted to a higher significance and higher compensation (Lazear, 2000, pp. 1346-61). There have been many studies whereby job satisfaction is correlated with promotion opportunities (McCausland, Pouliakas & Theodossiou, 2005, pp. 636-59).

Fourth is supervision to provide technical assistance and behavioral support to an employee or subordinates. It has been recognized that supervision plays an important role in the success or failure of the organization. Beaset (1994, pp. 575-600) established that the nature and the level of supervision are factors that may affect the satisfaction of people from their work. The style of supervisory behavior is known to be an important factor leading to the success or failure of an organization (Adebayo, 2007, pp. 7-12, Eseka, 2009). Supervisory behavior ranges from autocratic, with all the decisions made by the supervisor, to more democratic with the decision made by the employee or subordinates at the lowest level (Dubrin & Maier, 1993).

Fifth is co-employees which refers to socially supportive employees. Ramjee (2018) posits that when the employee feels detached socially and emotionally from other employees in the organization, this can cause dissatisfaction. Isolation and loneliness may lead to employee withdrawal from the job and the organization.

Korman (1977) simplifies the five factors presented by Kendal and Hulin (1969) into determinant factors of job satisfaction, and these are occupational variables, job content, considerate leadership, pay and promotional opportunities, and organizational personal variables. First, occupational level, as it is claimed, the higher the level of the job, the greater the satisfaction of the person because it carries prestige and self-control. Second, job content. When the job is challenging, there is greater satisfaction. Third, considerate leadership. This refers to a leadership style where supervisors treat employees with consideration. Considerate leadership leads to job satisfaction among employees. Fourth is pay and promotional opportunities. It has been said that pay and promotion opportunities lead to job satisfaction. Lastly is the interaction with the group or co-worker. Korman (1977) explains that good working relationships with co-workers always lead to job satisfaction.

Factors that affect job satisfaction

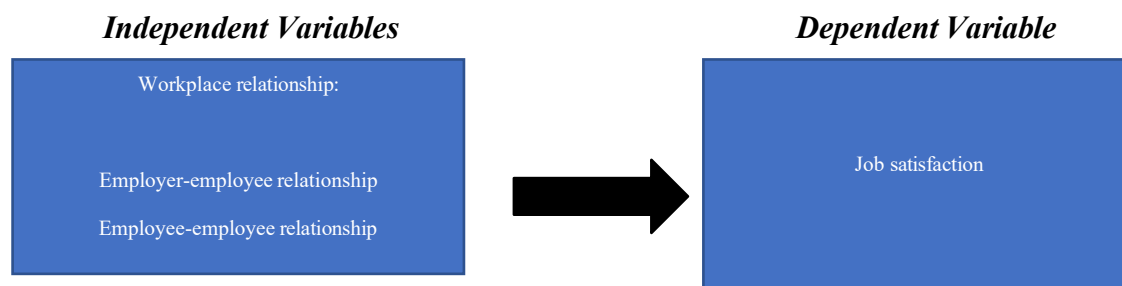
Hong, Hamid, and Salleh (2013, pp 26-40) tried to examine the effect of the working environment, salary, fairness, and promotion criteria on job satisfaction. The study concluded that these determine the job satisfaction of administrative employees. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) also investigated the relationship between the working environment and job satisfaction in the school context. Five variables were identified namely, working hours, job safety, security, relationship with co-workers, and relationship with top management. It was concluded that the working environment affects the job satisfaction of employees. The study recommended that the management should work on the improvement of the workplace environment to increase the job satisfaction level of employees.

Similarly, Nanyak (2013) determined a relationship between work environment, salary, compensation, benefits, services, retirement, organizational climate, and job satisfaction. Along with this finding, Kumari (2011) suggests that there is a need to check out the different factors affecting working conditions to improve the level of job satisfaction of employees. Bakotic and Babic (2013) supported this recommendation as this contributes to job satisfaction. They believe that workers in a good work environment are more satisfied. Tansel (2013) for example, found that there is diminished job satisfaction due to mismanagement, particularly in large firms. This establishes the notion that the number of employees affects their job satisfaction.

Specifically, Frenkel, Sanders, and Bednall (2013, pp. 7-29) discovered that employer-employee relations affect job satisfaction and quit intentions in ten organizations in Australia. A similar study by Iwu, Xesha, Slabbert, and Nduna, (2014, pp.313-324) suggests that a good relationship between employee and employer is a good predictor of business success and job satisfaction. Harmer and Findlay (n.d) identified two variables such as the individual's workplace relationship, and the direct supervisor relationship. The study concluded that more than half or 52% of employees' job satisfaction is predicted by the quality of workplace relationships such as individual relationships with their co-worker and their supervisor. National Business Research Institute (n.d) supports the finding that quality friendships at work have a direct link to job satisfaction and engagement. According to that report, employee satisfaction skyrockets nearly 50% when a worker develops a close relationship on the job. The study explained further that one's success can be based on the support and involvement of friends in the workplace.

Relatively, money does not solely contribute to job satisfaction (Nunez, 2015), but also the employer-employee relationship and the employer-employee relationship. This concern prompted the researcher to conduct this study and found out different aspects of the working environment, not only in terms of the employer-employee relationship but also the employer-employee relationship.

Conceptual framework



Source: Frenkel, Sanders and Bednall (2013).

Figure 1: The framework reflects the relationship between employer-employee and employee-employee relationship and job satisfaction. Employer-employee and employee-employee relations are the independent variables, and job satisfaction is the dependent variable.

Statement of the problems

The study determined the effect of the working relationship between employer-employee and between employees on job satisfaction. It specifically answered the following questions:

- 1. What is the working relationship of employer-employee of Divine Word Colleges employees in Region I?**
- 2. What is the working relationship between employee and employee of Divine Word Colleges employees in Region I?**
- 3. What is the job satisfaction of employees?**
- 4. Is there a relationship between work relationship and job satisfaction?**

Assumption of the study

The study assumed that work relationship affects the job satisfaction of employees and it can be measured.

Hypothesis

Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) investigated the relationship between the working environment and job satisfaction in the school context. There were five variables identified under the working environment and these were working hours, job safety and security, relationship with co-workers, and relationship with top management. The study concluded that the work environment affects the job satisfaction of employees. Based on such findings, the current study hypothesizes that the employer-employee relationship and the employee-employee relationship have impacts on the job satisfaction of employees.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The study was limited to the employer and employees of Divine Word Colleges in Region I. It limits its investigation only to employer-employee, employee-employee relationship, and job satisfaction.

Research methodology

This chapter presents the research design used in this study, data gathering instruments, population, the locale of the study, data gathering procedures, ethical board review, and statistical treatment of data.

Research design

The study used a descriptive method of research design and fact-finding inquiry to assess and explain the level of the employer-employee relationship, employee-employee relationship, and its

effect on job satisfaction. According to Jewel, et.al (2010), descriptive research is used to organize, and describe the characteristics of the data collected.

Locale of the study

The study was conducted in the Divine Word Colleges in Region I, which includes Divine Word College of Vigan, and Divine Word College of Laoag. These colleges are in Ilocos Sur and Ilocos Norte, respectively.

Population

The population of the study was taken from all employees working in these colleges. There were 270 employees taken as respondents of the study. Total enumeration was used in which all employees of the two colleges were taken as respondents.

Data gathering instruments

The questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part is the employer-employee relationship. The second part is the employer-employee relationship. The questionnaires in the first and second parts were adapted from Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015), while the third part is about job satisfaction. Its content was based on the job satisfaction dimension presented by Kendal and Hulin (1969) and Korman (1977).

Data gathering procedures

In the process of data gathering, the researcher sent letters to the presidents of the two colleges requesting the presidents to allow the researcher to float his questionnaires in his college. The researcher personally met the presidents as well as the employees and requested them to answer the questionnaires.

The retrieval of questionnaires was arranged between the president's representative and the researcher with the help of employees and faculty of the two colleges. Some inquiries were done after tabulation and interpretation of data to validate the finding through research questionnaires.

Ethical board review

Considering the concerns raised in the investigation, they do not involve vulnerable individuals and data privacy, therefore, the ethical review was waived.

Statistical treatment of data

Descriptive statistics were used to measure frequency distribution and percentage and the weighted mean. The weighted mean was used to assess the employees' perception of work relationships and job satisfaction. To determine the relationships between employer-employee relationship, employer-employee relationship, and job satisfaction, **Pearson r** was used. The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation were used:

Scale	Range Of Weighted Means	Descriptive Interpretation
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree /Very Good/Very Satisfied
4	3.41-4.20	Agree /Good/Satisfied
3	2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree /Somewhat Good/Somewhat/Satisfied
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree/Not Good/Not Satisfied
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree/Not Very Good/Very Dissatisfied

Data presentation and analysis

The findings of the study are presented here below according to the statement of the problems.

1. What is the working relationship of employer-employee of Divine Word Colleges employees in Region I?

Table 1: Employer-employee relationship

	X	DI
1. There is a mutual relationship between supervisors and subordinates	3.92	A/good
2. Supervisors rely on their subordinates and subordinates rely on their supervisors.	3.77	A/good
3. Supervisors communicate openly with their subordinates and likewise subordinates communicate openly with their supervisors	3.80	A/good
4. Supervisors support their subordinates and subordinates support their supervisors	3.70	A/good
5. Supervisors feel free to give feedback to their subordinates and subordinates feel free to give feedback to their supervisors	3.55	A/good
6. Supervisors express gratitude to their subordinates and subordinates also often express gratitude toward their supervisor	3.68	A/good
7. Supervisors follow through with what they have promised to their subordinates and subordinates to follow through with what they have promised to their supervisors	3.66	A/good
8. Supervisors allow subordinates to participate in decision - making and subordinates can make their own decisions	3.60	A/good
9. The supervisor can get the cooperation of subordinates easily and subordinates can get the cooperation of supervisors easily	3.59	A/good
Overall	3.70	A/good

Source: Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015).

Legends:

Range of Weighted Means	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree/ Very Good
3.41-4.20	Agree/ Good
2.61-3.40	Somewhat Agree/Somewhat Good

1.81-2.60

Disagree/Not Good

1.00-1.80

Strongly Disagree/ Not Very Good

The result indicates a good relationship between employer and employees as reflected by its overall mean of 3.70 which is interpreted as agree or good. Taking them singly, there is a good working relationship between employer and employees, particularly in terms of a mutual relationship (3.92), reliance (3.77), communication (3.80), support (3.70), giving feedback (3.55), expression of gratitude (3.68), participation in decision making (3.68), follow up promises (3.66), and cooperation (3.59). This denotes that there are things to work on in terms of the working relationship between employer and employees.

2. What is the working relationship between employee and employee of Divine Word Colleges employees in Region I?

Table2: Employee-employee relationship

Employee-employee relationship	X	DR
1. There is mutual respect among employees	3.91	Agree/Good
2. Employees can depend on each other	3.75	Agree/Good
3. Employees can easily get the cooperation of other employees in community programs or activities	3.76	A/Good
4. Employees can communicate openly with other employees without hesitation	3.61	A/Good/
5. Employees often help one another in solving problems they encounter in the workplace	3.61	A/Good
6. Employees always show respect to their fellow employees	3.77	A/Good
7. Employees support one another whenever there is a need for support	3.73	A/Good/
8. Employees often give feedback to their fellow employees even if it is negative feedback	3.53	A/Good
9. Employees also often express gratitude to their fellow employees after they are helped	3.80	A/Good
Overall	3.72	A/Good

Source: Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015).

A good relationship among employees is clearly shown in its overall mean of 3.72, interpreted as agree or good. Even when taking them singly, all questions under this variable are evaluated as agree or good particularly related to mutual respect among employees (3.91), dependence (reliance) on each other (3.75), cooperation (3.76), good communication (3.61), helping one another (3.61), respect each other (3.77), support one another (3.73), give feedback to one another (3.53), and expressing gratitude toward one another (3.80). Enhancing the relationship may be a good idea.

3. What is the job satisfaction of employees?

Table 3: Job satisfaction of employees

Job satisfaction	X	DI
1. I am satisfied with my supervisors	3.88	Satisfied
2. I am satisfied with my workload	3.97	Satisfied
3. I am satisfied with my job security	3.87	Satisfied
4. I am satisfied with the nature of my work	3.97	Satisfied
5. I am satisfied with my salary	3.11	Somewhat Satisfied
6. I am satisfied with the working hours	3.69	Satisfied
7. I am satisfied with my co-employees	3.85	Satisfied
8. I am satisfied with the treatment from my supervisors	3.74	Satisfied
9. I am satisfied because the job gives meaning to me	4.08	Satisfied
10. I am satisfied because there is an opportunity for a promotion	3.67	Satisfied
Overall	3.78	Satisfied

Source: Kendal and Hulin (1969) and Korman (1977).

The employees are satisfied with their job as reflected by its overall mean rating of 3.78, interpreted as satisfied. All questions were rated within the same evaluation that employees are satisfied with their job, particularly with their superiors (3.88), with their workload (3.97), job security (3.87), the nature of their work (3.97), working hours (3.69), co-employees (3.85), treatment from superiors (3.74), the job itself as a source of meaning (4.08), and opportunity for promotion (3.67). Notably, one question was rated somewhat satisfied along with salary (3.11). The finding indicates that overall, the employees are satisfied with their job, but reviewing the salary may be a good move for the management to explore ways of fine-tuning it.

4. Is there a relationship between working relationships and job satisfaction?

Table 4: The relationship between a working relationship and job satisfaction

	Job satisfaction
Employee-employee	0.5000*
Employer-employee	0.5601*
As a whole	0.5301*

*Significant at .05 level

A significant correlation exists between workplace relationships, particularly between employee and employee and between employer and employee, and job satisfaction at a .05 level of significance. Even when taken singly, the two variables have a significant correlation with job satisfaction.

Results and discussion

The study aimed to examine the correlation between workplace relationships, particularly the relationship between employer and employee, employee and employee, and its effect on job satisfaction. The study found a significant correlation between the two variables. This finding suggests that management needs to pay attention to work relationships, specifically between employer and employees and employees. Overlooking work relationships may affect the performance of the employees. Previous studies such as Suknunan and Bhana (2022), Karihe, Namusonge, and Iravo (2015), Tran, et al. (2018), Brhane and Zewdie (2018), Yao, et al (2022), Bacong Encio (2017) found a correlation between workplace relationship and work performance. Besides affecting performance, it also affects job satisfaction (Hampton, 2019, Raza, et al., 2015, Bulinska-Stangrecka & Bagienska, 2021). Interestingly, job performance and job satisfaction are interrelated. Ouedraogo & Lecler (2013); Ertekin & Avunduk (2021), and Judge & Thoresen (2001) underscored that when job satisfaction declines, job performance diminishes.

The results of this study contribute to the discussion on the essence of promoting workplace relationships to improve job satisfaction and job performance. Though the respondents of the study were limited to employees of the Divine Word Colleges in Region I, Philippines, this can be applied to any kind of business enterprise.

Conclusion

The study aimed to determine the correlation between workplace relationships and job satisfaction. The result found that overall, there is a good workplace relationship between employer and employee and even among employees of Divine Word Colleges in the Ilocos Region. In terms of its correlation with job satisfaction, the study showed that a good workplace relationship is significantly correlated to job satisfaction. Managing good workplace relationships is apparently, a key contributing factor to increase job satisfaction, and consequently, increase performance and productivity. Undoubtedly, building good work relationships can have a huge impact on job satisfaction.

The study recognizes its limitation in population as it covered only the employees of the Divine Word Colleges in Region I. The need for future studies, including many private schools, will provide a vivid picture of workplace relationships and job satisfaction in the educational setting.

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All authors have read and agreed to the published final version of the manuscript.

Institutional review board statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, and

the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

Data availability statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy.

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