Global Job Satisfaction and Facet Description: The Moderating Role of Facet Importance

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Summary: Recent research supports Locke’s (1976) model of facet satisfaction in which the “range of affect” of objectively defined facet descriptions is moderated by subjective evaluations of facet importance (McFarlin & Rice, 1992). This study examined the utility of Locke’s moderated model of facet satisfaction for the prediction of organizationally important global measures of job satisfaction. A large dataset of two groups of workers allowed testing over different time periods and across a broad range of satisfaction measures. The hypothesis derived from Locke’s model, that global satisfaction would represent a linear function of facet satisfactions (i.e., facet description × facet importance), was not supported. Instead, a simple (have-want) discrepancy model (operationalized as facet description) provided the most consistent set of predictors. The results suggest that workers, when providing global measures of job satisfaction, may use cognitive heuristics to reduce the complexity of facet description × importance calculations. The implications of these data for Locke’s model and directions for future research are outlined.

Several models of job satisfaction have been proposed and investigated over the past 30 years. Attention has been directed to global job satisfaction measures (e.g., Blood, 1971; Ewen, 1967; Jackson, Potter, & Dale, 1998; Mobley & Locke, 1970; Quinn & Mangione, 1973), as well as to satisfaction with individual facets of the job (e.g., Butler, 1983; Locke, 1976; McFarlin & Rice, 1991; McFarlin & Rice, 1992; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1983; Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991; Rice, Markus, Moyer & McFarlin, 1991; Rice, McFarlin, & Bennett, 1989; Wanous & Lawler, 1972). However, the relationship between facet and global measures of job satisfaction are still in need of clarification.

Locke’s (1976) model of job satisfaction postulates that facet satisfaction (FS) is determined by two components: facet description (FD), which is an affect-free assessment of the facet; and facet importance (FI), which is the subjective evaluation of the importance of the facet. This model predicts that facet description is moderated by facet importance, with the latter variable determining the “range of affect” that defines the causal influence of facet description upon facet satisfaction: Only those facet descriptions that are considered important by workers are hypothesized to have the power to lead to satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Facet description can be measured in three distinct ways, for example, by using direct reports of facet amount or by a comparison of facet amount versus an established standard (with the latter sometimes entailing the calculation of a difference score, representing the subtraction of facet amount from the standard of comparison). Rice, Gentile, and McFarlin (1991) noted...
that direct reports of facet amount are closer in meaning
to an affect-free perception of facet description than are
other methods. Facet importance is usually measured by
asking workers to provide subjective evaluations of the
importance of particular facets (e.g., amount of pay).

The analytical procedure used to test Locke’s theory
has two stages:

1) The two independent measures (facet description and
facet importance) are entered into a regression model.
2) Then the cross-product of facet description and facet
importance is entered.

If the interaction term is significant, after having par-
tialed out the main effects of description and importance,
it is concluded that facet importance moderates the rela-
tionship between facet description and facet satisfaction
(Zedeck, 1971).

The moderated regression model of facet satisfaction
was proposed in response to the flaws identified in the
simple discrepancy (have-want) model of job satisfac-
tion, which despite its “seductive face validity” (Johns,
1981, p. 443) has been discredited on both theoretical
and statistical grounds (Cronbach & Furby, 1970; Evans
This moderated regression approach is now widely ac-
cepted as a valid model of facet satisfaction (e.g., Butler,
1983; Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991; McFarlin &
Rice, 1992; Rice, McFarlin, & Bennett, 1989), despite
some limited criticism on statistical grounds (Morris,
Sherman, & Mansfield, 1986).

Although empirical studies have yielded results in
favour of a strong interpretation of Locke’s theory of job
satisfaction at the facet level, the relationship between
facet description and facet importance in determining
global measures of job satisfaction (i.e., broad measures
of overall job satisfaction) is still open to debate (McFar-

From Locke’s theoretical model, and from the empiri-
cal finding of an interaction of facet description and
facet importance in facet satisfaction, it may be inferred
that global job satisfaction measures are a simple linear
function of individual facet satisfaction scores. The intui-
tive appeal of this model rests in the simple decomposi-
tion of global job satisfaction measures into combined
facet satisfaction measures and by inference to facet de-
scription x facet importance interactions. Despite its in-
tuitive appeal, this model has not been adequately tested
and is open to challenge on theoretical grounds. Principal
among these challenges is the supposition that workers
actually engage in a complex process of facet description
x facet importance calculations when giving global mea-
sures of job satisfaction. In contrast to this position, it
could be supposed that when workers give global satis-
faction measures, they employ some form of processing

heuristic designed to reduce the complexity of calculat-
ing a linear equation of multiple facet description x fact
importance interactions. Accordingly, they may not be-
have in a manner consistent with the moderated regres-
sion model of facet satisfaction. Workers may adopt a
simple model that relates facet description (or Locke’s
have-want discrepancy) to global job satisfaction mea-
sures. Confirmation of this hypothesis would suggest
that the moderated regression approach is applicable to
the facet satisfaction level only, whereas the facet de-
scription approach may be more applicable to broader
measures of job satisfaction. Such a possibility has not
been previously tested, although Jackson et al. (1998) did
report evidence in favour of the facet description model.

The present study set out (1) to test the validity of the
moderated regression approach of facet description x
facet importance in determining global job satisfaction
measures, and (2) to examine the predictive power of a
more parsimonious model of global job satisfaction
based upon facet description alone (i.e., the have-want
discrepancy). This study was conducted in a large sam-
ples of workers selected from a UK military organiza-
tion, where the availability of a large number of facet descrip-
tion/importance measures, along with several global job
satisfaction measures, allowed a powerful test of the
moderated regression approach and the simpler discrep-
ancy model of global job satisfaction.

Method

Subjects

Randomly selected subjects from a large military organiza-
tion were sent questionnaires at quarterly intervals
between 1988 and 1993. The response rate varied, but
was approximately 75% (average number returned per
quarter was 959). In total, 6003 officers (mean age = 35
years, SD = 7.2) and 13,721 ranks (i.e., nonofficers;
mean age = 27 years, SD = 6.5) were available for cross-
sectional analysis over the whole time period. Ranks
comprised mainly technical and support personnel, but
also included some noncommissioned officers. Officers
represented commissioned officers who were long serv-
ing and senior personnel within the organization.

Design

Samples of officers and ranks were divided into three
roughly equal time periods, chosen to ensure approxi-
mately equal numbers of subjects in the samples (sample
sizes are shown in Table 1; note that the sample sizes do
Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for measures of overall job satisfaction for officers and ranks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T1 Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T2 Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T3 Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tr>
<td>ENJOY JOB</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENJOY OD</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.82</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.42</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>4.38</td>
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<td>.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>FURS</td>
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<td>.67</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>1456</td>
<td>2037</td>
<td>2510</td>
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<th>Ranks</th>
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<th>SD</th>
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<th>T3 Mean</th>
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<td>1.11</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>1.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENJOY OD</td>
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<td>.82</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>.82</td>
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<td>ENJOY ORG</td>
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<td>.69</td>
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<td>.70</td>
<td>4.07</td>
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<td>FURS</td>
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<td>2037</td>
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</table>

ENJOY JOB = Enjoyment of job
ENJOY OD = Enjoyment of off-duty life
ENJOY ORG = Enjoyment of organization
FURS = Interest in further service

For ranks: T1 = Samples collected in 1988; T2 = Samples collected in 1989 and T3 = Samples collected in 1990/1
For officers: T1 = Samples collected in 1988/89; T2 = Samples collected in 1989/1; T3 = Samples collected in 1992/93

Note: That total sample sizes do not necessarily match numbers used in any particular analysis is due to missing numbers.

Satisfaction Measures

Facet Description

Facet description has often been operationalized as a single variable representing a (have-want) discrepancy or as the difference between the two variables separately (McFarlin & Rice, 1991; McFarlin & Rice, 1992; Rice, McFarlin, & Bennett, 1989; Rice, Peierce, Moyer, & McFarlin, 1991). Facet description can also be measured as a direct report of facet amount; Rice, Gentile, and McFarlin (1991) believe that this is conceptually closer to the idea of an affect-free perception than other available methods. The direct question "How possible is it for you to achieve..." is therefore an appropriate method of operationalizing facet description and was the preferred choice in this study.

A total of 26 job facets were rated in terms of how possible it is to achieve each (1-5 rating scale). The categories of each scale were: 1 = no possibility at all; 2 = less than average possibility; 3 = average possibility; 4 = better than average possibility; 5 = very good possibility. The subjects were asked the following questions: "How possible is it for you to achieve... [followed by the facet]." The facets were as follows: (1) Adequate job security; (2) Work under consistent and intelligent personnel policies; (3) Have a say in what happens to you; (4) Feel that you are accomplishing something; (5) Do a great deal of travelling; (6) Become proficient in specialized type of work; (7) Be in a competitive situation; (8) Obtain a good salary; (9) Have a definite work schedule; (10) Settle down in a certain area; (11) Be promoted on the basis of ability; (12) Advance at a fairly rapid rate; (13) Spend a lot of time with your family; (14) Be able to retire at an early age; (15) Have competent supervisors; (16) Make a lot of money; (17) Be given recognition for work well done; (18) Fly or continue flying; (19) Do work which your spouse and family can be proud of; (20) Have prestige or social status; (21) Keep very busy; (22) Variety in job activities; (23) Achieve leadership in your field; (24) Have access to and be able to participate in a wide range of sporting and adventurous activities; (25) Have a say regarding postings; (26) Develop further skills.

Facet Importance

The 26 facets listed above were also rated in terms of importance on a (1-5) rating scale. The verbal anchors attached to each category were: 1 = not important at all; 2 = somewhat below average importance; 3 = of average
importance; 4 = somewhat above average importance; 5 = extremely important. The subjects were asked the following questions: "How much are you enjoying your present job?"; (2) "How much are enjoying your off-duty (social, recreational, sporting) life?"; (3) "To date, how much have you enjoyed your life in the (name of organization)"? These scales were rated with categories labelled: 1 = not very much; 2 = not at all; 3 = a little; 4 = Quite a lot; 5 = a great deal. Finally, (4) "Intention of further service" was rated on a 3-point scale: 1 = no; 2 = perhaps; 3 = yes. Summary statistics of these measures are shown in Table 1 (in all cases, high scores indicated positive outcomes and low scores indicated negative outcomes).

Global Satisfaction Measures

The following measures of global satisfaction were taken: (1) "How much are you enjoying your present job?"; (2) "How much are enjoying your off-duty (social, recreational, sporting) life?"; (3) "To date, how much have you enjoyed your life in the (name of organization)?" These scales were rated with categories labelled: 1 = not very much; 2 = not at all; 3 = a little; 4 = Quite a lot; 5 = a great deal. Finally, (4) "Intention of further service" was rated on a 3-point scale: 1 = no; 2 = perhaps; 3 = yes. Summary statistics of these measures are shown in Table 1 (in all cases, high scores indicated positive outcomes and low scores indicated negative outcomes).

Statistical Analysis

First, in order to minimize spurious findings resulting from multiple analyses of correlated facets, a principal components analysis (PCA) was performed on the facet description scores. Separate PCAs were performed on the total samples of officers and ranks. These principal components provided the composite measures of facet description and importance.

Second, all scores were standardized prior to regression analysis. Moderated multiple regression (MMR) was performed on each facet component and the computation of the facet description * importance term. Facet description and facet importance were simultaneously entered into the model (Step 1), followed by the facet description * interaction importance term (Step 2). Regression analyses for each time period and for the whole sample were carried out. In each regression, facet importance, facet description, and facet importance * facet description were regressed against each of the four global satisfaction variables.

Results

The average correlation between the facet descriptions of officers was 0.15 (min. = -.11, max. = .64) and for ranks the average correlation was .23 (min. = -.08, max. = .68). The average correlation between a facet description and its respective facet importance was .15 for offi-
Table 2. Varimax rotated principal components analysis (PCA) of facet description scores for officers sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>h2</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Have a say in what happens</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Have a say about postings</td>
<td>.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Settle down</td>
<td>.61</td>
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<td>13. Time with family</td>
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<td>9. Definite schedule</td>
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<td>2. Intelligent work policy</td>
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<td>11. Promotion</td>
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<td>12. Advance</td>
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<td>17. Recognition</td>
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<td>7. Be competitive</td>
<td>.44</td>
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<td>15. Competent supervisor</td>
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<td>21. Keep busy</td>
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<td>22. Variety of job activities</td>
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<td>19. Work spouse can be proud of</td>
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<td>20. Prestige</td>
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<td>.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Accomplish things</td>
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<td>23. Be leader</td>
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<td>6. Proficient</td>
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<td>18. Fly</td>
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<td>5. Do travelling</td>
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<td>26. Develop further skills</td>
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<td>8. Obtain a good salary</td>
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<td>16. Make money</td>
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<td>.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Retire early</td>
<td></td>
<td>.39</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| % Variance | 20 | 9  | 7  | 5  | 5  |
| Cum% variance | 20 | 29 | 36 | 41 | 45 |

Facet descriptions

Mean | 1.6 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.0 |
SD   | .55 | .60 | .56 | .57 | .65 |

Facet importance

Mean | 1.9 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 0.8 |
SD   | .29 | .27 | .52 | .48 | .46 |

Factor names:
I = Personal control
II = Achievement
III = Prestige
IV = Personal development
V = Extrinsic rewards
All factor loadings above 0.35 are displayed.
Facet importance and facet description scores for each factor are derived from the factor loading matrix.

description x facet importance interaction between T1 and T3 was only 18% and 27% for officers and ranks, respectively.

Discussion

The study tests whether facet description x facet importance interactions predict global measures of job satisfaction, or whether a simple have-want model (operationalized in terms of facet description; Rice, Gentile, & McFarlin, 1991) provides a better account of facet influences on global measures of job satisfaction.

The results demonstrate that the moderated regression model of facet satisfaction poorly accounts for global job satisfaction. The facet description x facet importance term was significant only on an irregular basis, in a low proportion of cases, and inconsistently over time. In contrast, across time and with both groups of workers, ranks and officers, the main effect of the facet description was a predictor on almost all occasions (although the percentage of variance not explained by facet description indicates other, yet unidentified, sources of influence).
Table 3. Varimax rotated principal components analysis (PCA) of facet description scores for ranks sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet:</th>
<th>I</th>
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<th>III</th>
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<td>23. Be leader</td>
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<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Fly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.69</td>
<td></td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do travelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.63</td>
<td></td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| % Variance | 27 | 7  | 5  | 5  | 5  | 49 |
| Cum% variance | 27 | 34 | 39 | 44 | 5  |    |

Facet description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>1.8</th>
<th>2.3</th>
<th>1.8</th>
<th>1.8</th>
<th>1.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facet importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>1.9</th>
<th>1.6</th>
<th>1.5</th>
<th>1.8</th>
<th>0.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor names:
I = Career progression
II = Achievement & prestige
III = Structured work schedule
IV = Extrinsic rewards
V = Excitement

All factor loadings above 0.45 are displayed, except for Facet 20, which has a maximum factor loading of 0.40.
Facet importance and facet description scores for each factor are derived from the factor loading matrix.

Whereas Blood (1971) and McFarlin and Rice (1992) point out that, based upon Locke’s model, it is not necessary to weight facet satisfaction by facet importance in predicting overall job satisfaction, the present study suggests that it may not even necessary to weight facet description by facet importance in predicting global measures of job satisfaction.

A feasible explanation for the present set of results is that workers in deriving global measures of job satisfaction use cognitive processing heuristics that do not employ a facet description by facet importance moderating term. It would seem much easier to perform a simple linear sum of facet descriptions, expressed in terms of achievability, rather than multiply facet description and facet importance and then perform a linear summation of resulting facet satisfactions.

The results of this study extend previous findings in other ways. The main effect of facet description was not just a good predictor of global measures of job satisfaction, but also of satisfaction with the organization, satisfaction with off-duty life, and likelihood of further service. There was also little variation in adjusted $R^2$ over time for each of these dependent variables, for each of the three factors. Therefore, the facet description model of job satisfaction seems to have adequate stability over time. In general, the closer the criteria were related to...
Table 4. Number of significant effects (and percentage of instances that the effect was significant) in moderated regression of facet description (FD), facet importance (FI) and FD × FI for Officers and Ranks samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th></th>
<th>Ranks</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>T1, T2, T3</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>T1, T2, T3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>19 (95%)</td>
<td>55 (92%)</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
<td>60 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>11 (55%)</td>
<td>25 (42%)</td>
<td>15 (75%)</td>
<td>33 (85%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD × FI</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
<td>8 (45%)</td>
<td>16 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FD = Facet description, entered in Step 1 of moderated regression model
FI = Facet importance, entered in Step 1 of moderated regression model
FD × FI = Interaction term, entered in Step 2 of moderated regression model
Results are against each of the four criteria for each of the five factors

Immediate enjoyment of work, the better the utility of the facet description model. This model was generally better able to predict Enjoyment of the job and Enjoyment of the organization, as opposed to Enjoyment of off-duty life and Likelihood of further service. Since facets of the job are used to predict these dependent variables, these observations are perhaps to be expected. There was an exception to this, however, in that Likelihood of further service was quite highly related to the first factor for officers. The finding that satisfaction at work is related to satisfaction outside of work is consistent with the notion of a spillover effect between job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Steiner & Truxillo, 1989; Tait, Padgett, & Baldwin, 1989).

It is interesting to note that the principal components analysis structures for officers and ranks are quite different from each other. Factor 1 for officers was more associated with having personal control at work, whereas ranks was more associated with advancement and promotion. The second and third factor for officers was to do with achievement and prestige, whereas these were combined to form a single factor for ranks. The third factor for ranks was to do with having a sensible work structure. The fourth and fifth factors for officers were to do with personal development and extrinsic rewards, whereas for ranks they were extrinsic rewards and excitement. This suggests that officers put control over their job first, followed by advancement, prestige, development, and money, whereas ranks have less interest over obtaining control over their job and instead are more keen on promotion, prestige, structure, and money.

There are several limitations to the present results and some future lines of investigation. First, facet satisfactions were not measured, which prevented the test of the facet description × facet importance model at the level of facet satisfaction. Second, it was not possible to correlate facet and global measures of job satisfaction. Therefore it is not possible to rule out the hypothesis that the lack of consistent effects of facet description × facet importance were the result of the lack of strong correlations between facet and global satisfaction. Were the second possibility true, this would suggest that the moderated regression approach would be of limited utility in practice because most organizations are more concerned with global measures of satisfaction than with facet satisfaction. Nevertheless, further research should be directed to examining the relationship between facet and global measures of satisfaction and their underlying causal bases.

There is a need to conduct further studies on new samples comparing the moderated regression model with simple facet description models in order to test the robustness of the findings reported here. There are also other dependent variables that should be studied, especially the use of "hard" dependent variables (such as actual turnover, absenteeism, and number of grievances). These may provide an even stronger test of the utility of moderated regression models of job satisfaction. In addition, the putative cognitive processing heuristics used by workers when giving global satisfaction ratings call for sustained theoretical and empirical investigation.

In conclusion, relatively high correlations between facet descriptions and global job satisfaction measures, which were stable over time and similar across occupational groups, point to the validity of facet description (or have-want discrepancy) models in predicting job satisfaction. Little consistent evidence was found to support the facet description × facet importance moderated regression model.

Acknowledgment

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References


of jobs: Is a multiplicative model necessary? Psychological Reports, 69, 659–672.