

Self-Esteem As A Determinant Of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract:

This research paper investigates the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction, exploring how individual levels of self-esteem influence employees' perceptions of their job satisfaction, using a sample of 60 individuals aged between 35 and 59 years working in the field of asphalt mixtures. The main goal is to identify how self-esteem acts as a determinant of the level of job satisfaction as well as to identify gender differences in terms of job satisfaction. The research method involves the use of Rosenberg's self-esteem scale and Spector's Job Satisfaction Evaluation questionnaire. Statistical analysis revealed that self-esteem is an important determinant of employee satisfaction, as well as the absence of gender differences in job satisfaction. The findings suggest that self-esteem is a significant predictor of job satisfaction, that both men and women can experience job satisfaction equally, and that interventions to improve the work climate should be addressed to all employees, regardless of gender. These findings can serve as important directions for future research in organizational and managerial psychology.

Keywords: *Job Satisfaction, Self-Esteem, Organisation, Gender Differences*

1. Theoretical aspects

1.1. Conceptualization

Baumeister (1993) defines self-esteem as "the subjective evaluation of one's own worth and competence, reflecting confidence and respect for oneself." This can be influenced by a variety of factors, including childhood experiences, social feedback, and success in achieving personal and professional goals (Rosenberg, 1965: 1297–1349). On the other hand, job satisfaction is defined as the degree to which employees perceive their psychological and social needs to be met within the organization (Locke, 1969: 309-336). This concept encompasses aspects such as

professional recognition, positive interpersonal relationships, decision autonomy, and a sense of personal accomplishment (Spector, 1997: 92-99).

Self-esteem and job satisfaction are interdependent and complex. Individuals with high self-esteem tend to have a positive self-attitude and feel more confident in their ability to handle professional challenges (Judge and Bono, 2001). This can lead to a more positive perception of the work environment and an increase in job satisfaction (Brown and Marshall, 2006).

On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem may experience difficulties in feeling valuable and competent within the organization, which can negatively affect their perception of job satisfaction (Judge and Bono, 2001).

Moreover, the degree of satisfaction regarding the job performed can significantly impact an individual's level of self-esteem. According to Lin (2017: 54-67), recognition of efforts and personal achievements within organizations can bolster self-respect and confidence in one's abilities. In contrast, negative experiences and disappointments in the workplace can undermine self-esteem and lead to a decrease in job satisfaction, having detrimental effects on mental health and professional performance (Deci and Ryan, 2008).

Judge and his colleagues (2017) argue that understanding the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction is crucial for the development and effective management of human resources in organizations. Promoting healthy self-esteem and job satisfaction contributes to increased employee engagement, performance, and well-being, having a positive impact on long-term organizational success (Judge et al., 2017).

The specialized literature highlights that respect for human rights within the family and school environments represents one of the fundamental bases for the formation of personal and social identity, directly influencing the development of self-esteem and the sense of personal value. Early socialization in contexts characterized by respect, equality, emotional support, and recognition of individual dignity contributes to the consolidation of positive self-perceptions, which are later reflected in how individuals relate to the professional environment and their level of job satisfaction. When fundamental rights are internalized through everyday experiences - both within the family and educational institutions - individuals develop a sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging, elements frequently associated with higher levels of self-esteem and more favorable evaluations of social and professional environments (Otovescu, 2013). Thus, the analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction can be enriched by integrating a human rights perspective, which emphasizes the role of socialization contexts in shaping psychosocial resources that subsequently influence organizational adaptation and individual well-being (Otovescu, 2013).

Understanding self-esteem solely as an individual psychological trait risks overlooking the broader social and cultural contexts in which self-perception is constructed and negotiated. Sociological research highlights that identity formation is shaped through processes of socialization, belonging, and interaction with institutional environments that provide symbolic frameworks for self-evaluation and personal meaning. Studies on identity reconstruction within ethnic communities demonstrate that individuals develop perceptions of competence, autonomy, and personal value through continuous engagement with collective narratives and social

structures (Otovescu, Păsătoiu & Cioacă, 2020). From this perspective, self-esteem can be interpreted not only as an internal psychological resource but also as a socially mediated construct that influences how individuals interpret professional roles, organizational expectations, and ultimately their level of job satisfaction.

1.2. Self-Esteem

Self-esteem, defined as "the subjective evaluation of one's own worth and competence, plays a crucial role in individual functioning and well-being" (Orth and Robins, 2014). This psychological construct influences attitudes, behaviors, and performance in various domains, including interpersonal relationships, professional success, and mental health. Recent research has paid special attention to the role of self-esteem in interpersonal relationships. According to Crocker and Park (2004), individuals with high self-esteem have more satisfying and healthier relationships, characterized by trust, effective communication, and emotional support, while those with low self-esteem may struggle with positive interpersonal relationships. Those with high self-esteem often make statements like "I am a person of value, equal to others" and "I am satisfied with myself" (Rosenberg, 1965, cited in Pierce and Gardner, 2004).

Most of our understanding of self-esteem in general, and self-esteem in the context of work and organizations, comes from research focused on global self-esteem (Brockner, 1988: 239–261). Organization-based self-esteem is seen to be predicted by organizational structure sources, signals from the organization regarding one's value, and the circumstances of one's workplace success. Additionally, in the organizational environment, self-esteem is associated with other significant attitudes and behaviors, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, motivation, citizenship behavior, role performance, and organizational turnover intentions (Nikita, Sharad, Ajay, Singh and Nandal, 2023).

Self-esteem plays a significant role in the organizational environment, influencing how employees perceive and carry out their activities within the organization. It is defined as the subjective evaluation of one's own worth and competence, reflecting confidence and respect for oneself (Judge and Bono, 2001). Within organizations, self-esteem can influence attitudes towards work, level of engagement, and individual performance.

Experiences within the organization, such as managerial feedback and interactions with colleagues, can influence employees' self-esteem (Judge, Bono, 2001). Additionally, professional recognition and success in achieving professional goals can bolster employees' self-esteem in the organizational environment (Lin, 2017: 54-67).

1.3. Job Satisfaction

According to Broeck and his colleagues (2010), "job satisfaction represents the individual's subjective evaluation of job experiences, including aspects such as relationships with colleagues, work environment, recognition of efforts, and achievement of professional goals. Job satisfaction is crucial as an indicator of psychological well-being and can influence commitment, productivity, and retention in the organization." Locke (1976: 1297–1349), one of the foremost scholars of this construct, views job satisfaction as "the pleasant emotional state resulting from an

employee's appraisal of his or her job and the realization that this appraisal allows the fulfillment of important values." The concept is multidimensional, involving both overall evaluation and appreciation of various job-related factors (Carloto and Câmara, 2008). As emphasized by Tamayo (2000: 37–47), these factors include salary and benefits, colleagues, supervision, working conditions, job nature, career advancement, job stability, personal development, and workload.

According to Hoppock (1935), job satisfaction refers to the feeling of physical, psychological, and social satisfaction associated with professional activity. This satisfaction is essential for job performance, health status, and career decisions. It can be divided into two main categories: intrinsic satisfaction, which refers to individual pleasure derived from the completed work, and extrinsic satisfaction, which involves the benefits and conditions of the work environment (Kalleberg, 1977; Porter et al., 1974).

Literature on job satisfaction indicates many antecedents that include job characteristics such as task autonomy, task significance, skill variety, participation, influence over standards, required innovation, job involvement, value congruence, and pay (Fecerer et al., 1982). Generally, higher job satisfaction seems to be associated with more significant, challenging, and varied tasks, with greater participation and involvement, common values, and higher salaries.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Objectives of the Study

- The aim of this research is to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction, exploring the influence of self-esteem on employees' level of job satisfaction.
- This study intends to analyze whether there are differences between men and women regarding their job satisfaction.

2.2. Hypotheses

- It is hypothesized that self-esteem is a significant predictor of employees' level of job satisfaction.
- It is hypothesized that there are significant differences between men and women in terms of their level of job satisfaction.

2.3. Presentation of the Sample

The research group consists of 60 subjects, employees of an organization in Bucharest specializing in road paving. The gender distribution is symmetrical: 30 women and 30 men, aged between 35 and 59 years old.

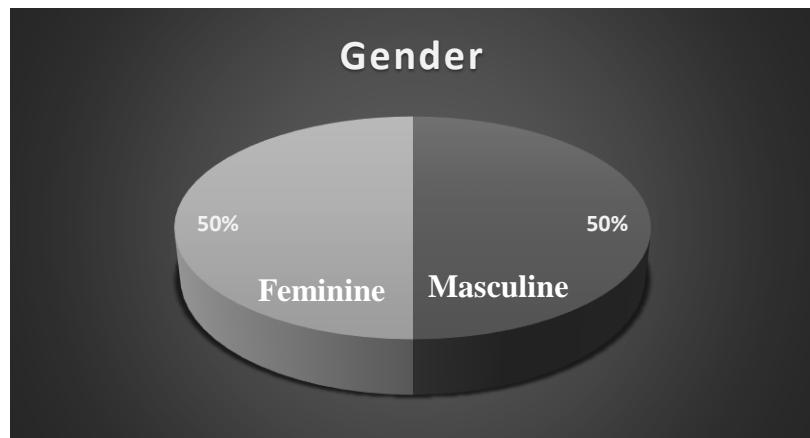


Figure 1. Diagram of Employee Distribution by Gender

2.4. Tools Used

To achieve the objectives and test the hypothesis, we used the following instruments:

✚ Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965)

The scale was developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965 and is still in use today. It measures the overall feeling of personal worth and self-acceptance with 10 items, each rated from strongly disagree (1 point) to strongly agree (4 points). Some items are reverse-scored. The final score ranges from 10 to 40, indicating low or high self-esteem.

✚ Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1994)

The questionnaire was adapted into Romanian by Horia Pitariu and consists of 36 items. Scoring is done on a 6-point Likert scale, where: 1 represents strongly disagree, 2 moderately disagree, 3 slightly disagree, 4 slightly agree, 5 moderately agree, and 6 strongly agree. This instrument measures satisfaction in various aspects of work, such as salary, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, work conditions, coworkers, job nature, and communication within the organization.

2.5. Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1:

Table 1. Regression Model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,866 ^a	,750	,746	22,935

a. Predictors: (Constant), stima.de.sine

From Table 1, the correlation coefficient $R = .866a$ indicates a significant correlation between the variables of the model, in our case between self-esteem and job satisfaction. Additionally, the value of $R^2 = .750$ suggests that

approximately 75% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables included in the model.

Table 2. ANOVA (Variance Analysis)

ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	91737,603	1	91737,603	174,396	,000 ^b	
1 Residual	30509,730	58	526,030			
Total	122247,333	59				
a. Dependent Variable: satisfactia.in.munca						
b. Predictors: (Constant), stima.de.sine						

Both the F value = 174.396 and the Sig. value = .000 indicate a significant difference between the variables. Thus, the ANOVA analysis confirms that the regression model is significant, meaning that the independent variable (self-esteem) is a significant predictor of the dependent variable (job satisfaction).

Table 3. The coefficients of the regression estimation

Model	Coefficients ^a			t	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	31,056	9,745			,3,187 ,002
stima.de.sine	4,087	,309			,866 13,206 ,000
a. Dependent Variable: satisfactia.in.munca					

The unstandardized coefficient (B) is 4.087, indicating that for each unit increase in the predictor "self-esteem", the dependent variable (job satisfaction) increases by approximately 4.087 units. The Sig. value = .000 suggests a highly significant importance of the "self-esteem" coefficient. These results suggest that "self-esteem" as a predictor is significantly associated with the level of job satisfaction, and there is a strong positive relationship between these two variables, confirming our hypothesis.

Job satisfaction can bolster self-esteem, and increased self-esteem can enhance job satisfaction. This link is influenced by both individual and organizational factors. Encouraging personal development and fostering a positive work environment are essential for improving employees' self-esteem and job satisfaction.

According to Smith and Brown (2020: 239–261), high self-esteem is linked to increased job satisfaction, influencing how employees handle challenges and rewards. Similarly, White's research (2019) indicates that positive workplace

experiences, such as professional recognition and colleague support, can bolster employees' self-esteem, contributing to their job satisfaction.

Organizational psychology studies have highlighted that an individual's self-esteem can influence not only how they perceive and react to the work environment but also how they interact with colleagues, managers, and job tasks (Roberts and Jackson, 2020). People with high self-esteem may have a more proactive and engaged approach to job tasks, leading to better performance and greater job satisfaction (Judge and Bono, 2019). Additionally, they may be more resilient to work-related stress and better equipped to handle negative feedback or constructive criticism from colleagues and managers (Harter, Schmidt and Keyes, 2018).

People with high self-esteem are more likely to set challenging yet achievable goals for themselves. They have confidence in their ability to reach these goals, leading to a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when achieved. This cycle of goal-setting and achievement contributes to overall job satisfaction (Judge and Bono, 2001). They often also have better interpersonal skills and are more adept at forming positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors. They are confident in their interactions and better able to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, and collaborate with others, leading to a more pleasant and supportive work environment (Robbins and Judge, 2019).

Individuals with high self-esteem tend to experience fewer negative emotions and more positive emotions at work, contributing to overall greater satisfaction. They are also more motivated to pursue career advancement and development opportunities, being confident in their abilities and open to new challenges and responsibilities (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2007).

Low self-esteem among employees can lead to lower job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and poor performance, according to Orth et al. (2015). Additionally, Twenge et al.'s research (2004) suggests that individuals with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to negative experiences such as aggression, discrimination, and interpersonal conflicts at work, which can intensify psychological stress and affect organizational cohesion.

However, the impact of self-esteem on job satisfaction can be moderated by factors such as organizational culture, job characteristics, and individual differences (Harter et al., 2002). Organizations can significantly benefit from promoting a culture that cultivates and supports employees' self-esteem. This can be achieved through various organizational interventions and leadership practices.

According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), authentic leaders can improve employees' self-esteem and motivation through empathy and transparency. Positive workplace experiences, such as recognition and advancement opportunities, reinforce feelings of self-worth, according to Lyubomirsky, King and Diener's study (2021). Additionally, according to Spreitzer and Porath's research (2019), collaboration and support in personal development at work can increase employees' self-esteem and satisfaction.

The relationship between self-esteem and job satisfaction is complex and interconnected, and understanding this relationship can be essential for human resource management and promoting a healthy and productive work environment. Thus, based on the literature and the results obtained in this research using the IBM SPSS program, our hypothesis is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2:**Table 4.** Data Normality Test

Tests of Normality		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	sex	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
satisfactia.in.munca	feminin	,226	30	,000	,843	30,000	
	masculin	,185	30	,010	,917	30,022	

The significance threshold resulting from applying the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which indicates the normality of the distribution for both women and men, is equal to .000 and .010 respectively. Since the significance threshold $p < .050$, it means that the distribution is non-normal or Non-Gaussian. Therefore, we will apply a non-parametric testing method.

Table 5. U Mann-Whitney Test Results

Test Statistics		satisfactia.in.munca
Mann-Whitney U		379,500
Wilcoxon W		844,500
Z		-1,042
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,297
a. Grouping Variable: sex		

The values obtained for the Mann-Whitney U statistics suggest that there is no significant difference in job satisfaction levels between men and women, as the p-value associated with .297 is greater than 0.05. Therefore, our hypothesis is not confirmed.

However, various studies found in the specialized literature have identified differences between the two genders regarding job satisfaction.

According to research by Garcia and Perea (2017), gender differences in terms of pay and career advancement opportunities can significantly influence job satisfaction levels. Women tend to be paid less than men for the same work and have fewer chances to advance to leadership positions. These disparities can contribute to lower job satisfaction levels for women compared to men. Studies by Wang et al. (2018) show that women may sometimes have a lower perception of their value in the organization or may be more susceptible to gender discrimination and stereotypes. These perceptions and experiences can affect their job satisfaction levels and sense of belonging to the organization.

According to Williams and Dempsey (2019), women are often responsible for more caregiving tasks within the family, which can lead to difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance. This can negatively affect their job satisfaction compared to men.

Studies have suggested that various job expectations, values, and many other factors can contribute to differences in job satisfaction between men and women. Society often has double standards for women, with most people believing in

traditional gender roles (Miao, Li and Bian, 2017). On one hand, women are expected to perform well in their careers; on the other hand, they are also expected to be good wives and mothers and to take on most household responsibilities. Therefore, career women often face more work-family conflicts, which can lead to lower job satisfaction compared to men (Liu et al., 2021).

One explanation for the differences in satisfaction between women and men is that men place more emphasis than women on extrinsic job benefits, such as pay (Konrad et al., 2000; Sloane and Williams, 2000). Promotion, another extrinsic variable, impacts job satisfaction and also varies by gender, possibly because men are promoted to higher-level jobs earlier and more easily than women (Ng and Feldman, 2010).

According to a study by Andrade, Westover, and Peterson (2019), the paradox that women are more satisfied with their jobs than men, despite earning less, should no longer exist in contemporary society. The fact that women and men are similar in their job satisfaction levels shows that gender differences are becoming less relevant. A significant finding in this study was that men and women seem equally affected by extrinsic rewards. Again, this could be explained by the fact that men's and women's roles are less differentiated than in the past. In recent decades, there has been an assumption that the man was the family's breadwinner, and the woman had a job to supplement the family income. In this scenario, women might not be as concerned if their job provided stability, growth opportunities, or even if a job was stressful, as they could always simply leave if things were negative. However, work today is seen as a shared responsibility, and it makes sense that if men and women have a similar view of their roles as income producers, satisfaction would be driven by the same forces.

Conclusions

The research confirms that there is a significant and positive relationship between employees' self-esteem and their job satisfaction. Self-esteem is an important predictor of job satisfaction and influences the level of professional satisfaction. Employees with higher self-esteem are more fulfilled and satisfied at work, being also more motivated, involved, and loyal to the organization. Promoting a work environment that encourages the development of self-esteem can improve employee satisfaction and organizational performance, bringing benefits such as increased morale, reduced absenteeism, and improved overall results. Investing in programs and practices that support employees' self-esteem can have a significant impact on the organization.

Studying the long-term effects of self-esteem levels on job satisfaction and organizational outcomes could provide valuable insights for managers and leaders in terms of human resource management strategies and long-term performance growth.

The second hypothesis is not confirmed; thus, according to the results obtained, there are no significant differences between genders in terms of job satisfaction. Although our research findings do not confirm gender differences, being valid only for the sample studied in this work, other studies have confirmed the existence of gender differences. It is important to acknowledge that other studies have confirmed the existence of differences between women and men regarding job satisfaction, these differences being influenced by a variety of factors, including pay,

career advancement opportunities, perception of role and value in the organization, work-life balance, and organizational culture.

By addressing these aspects, the research can make significant contributions to understanding and promoting a healthy and satisfying work environment that supports the personal and professional development of employees and maximizes organizational performance.

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