

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG IRANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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Abstract

Investigation of factors that contribute to job satisfaction of the Iranian principals will be, it seems, a good guideline to the present educational planners and policy makers in the country. In this study a stratified random sample was drawn from the secondary school principals in the Province of Khuzestan. A sample of 105 principals responded to the questionnaire which was designed to test the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. The findings supported the theory and revealed that Iranian principals were highly motivated by achievement, recognition and work itself. Policy and administration, supervision, and working conditions were found the factors resulting in dissatisfaction to the principals in relation to their job

Introduction

Despite the fact that the most recent steps taken in attempt to decentralize education in Iran, the present system of Iranian education remains one of the world's highly centralized systems. Elementary and secondary education is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. In all the provinces, the formal structure of the schools is similar: the time table is uniform; the Ministry develops the uniform curricula, issues plans, and supplies textbooks to all the schools. A series of nationally administered examinations contributes to the uniformity of the curricula. At the end of fifth grade (the last year of elementary education), a district-wide examination finalizes elementary education, and at the end of twelfth grade, the nation-wide examinations precedes the graduation from secondary schools, furthermore, University Entrance Examinations screen the potential college freshmen. Educational policies are made in the capital city, Tehran, by the experts in the

Ministry, and in some occasions, by the Provincial Offices of Education.

Procedures for personnel employment are also laid down centrally. Every year the Provincial Offices report the openings to the Ministry, and it is the task of the highest office to make the necessary decisions. Although in some circumstances the Ministry authorizes the Provincial Offices to hire the elementary teachers, the final decision on appointments rests with the Ministry. All graduates of the Teacher Training University (the main campus in Tehran) along with graduates of Teacher Training Institutes of the nation are hired immediately after their graduation. As the need for teachers expands throughout the country, the ministry provides employment for all the university graduates majoring in education, counselling, psychology, and for the graduates in fields of science, and literature who have some orientation in education. Typically, high school (1-12 grades) teachers hold a

B.A / B.S.; and guidance cycle (6-8 grades) teachers, an A.A.

Excluding a few recently established non-profit schools, in Iran all the educational institutions which are under sponsorship of the Ministry are free of tuition charge. The schools are funded through the General Budget. A uniform compensation structure has been developed and implemented. Academic preparation and years of experience are two important criteria in salary index of the employees. Compared with semi-professional or professional employees in the private sector or in some of the public organizations (such as Plan and Budget Organization, Oil Industry, Water e Power Organizations, Steel Industry, and so on) Iranian teachers commonly believe that they are underpaid, even though a high school teacher teaches 24 hours a week (the same as his counterpart at guidance cycle). They are paid for the extra hours if they wish to teach.

Initiation of university programs in educational administration is a very new trend in Iran. They started in the mid-70's. These programs lead to a Master's degree in educational administration. Programs leading at the doctoral level have just been initiated in the Teachers Training University, Tehran, and the University of Tehran.⁽¹⁾ Since such programs are so new, the quality of administrative ability of current principals results from experience rather than formal professional education in principalship. School administrators usually are ex-teachers who are promoted to the position on the basis of experience (occasionally not much experienced), personal desire, and in some cases, their intimacy with the higher office holders. Compared with their counterparts in societies having decentralized school systems, the principals are more like bureaucratic supervisors. They supervise the implementing of policies and procedures rather than formulate rules and exercise directive leadership. Furthermore, a study indicates that they are very often involved in some non-administrative activities-student counselling, co-curricula supervising-which could be handled by counselors and co-curricula coordinators.⁽²⁾

Since the principals are promoted from teaching positions, basically they share in the compensation structure of teachers on the basis of 24 hour teaching week. They also receive a position pay, though it is not large in size when compared to their base salary, and it is subject to type of school (guidance cycle, high school) and to their level of academic preparation. The administrative domain of Iranian principals which has been pictured in the preceding paragraphs provides a pertinent background to this: What motivates Iranian principals to work effectively? What dissatisfies them? Do the satisfiers and dissatisfiers correspond to those of

their counterparts in other societies?

Reviews of Related Literature

Though motivation is a term fundamental in the vocabulary of educators in relation to their students, as **SERGIOANNI** and **CARVER** state, the concept has been completely overlooked in relation to educators' job situations.⁽³⁾ In the early 1950's however, **CHASE**⁽⁴⁾ reported a study which was conducted in 200 school systems in 43 U.S states. The study provided some background relating demographic factors concerning background teachers to their administrative policies and practices. Similar descriptive studies have permeated the bulk of research literature on job attitudes in educational settings. Most studies, not only in educational organizations, but also, as **HERZBERG** and his associates have noted,⁽⁵⁾ in business, industry, and the public sectors were designed to explore possible factors of satisfaction not on the basis of a theoretical analysis of the problem, but in the context of examination of one or more independent variables that are correlated with job satisfaction.

The theoretical foundation for studying job satisfaction was stimulated by the development of certain theories. **MASLOW** in the early 1940's presented some propositions which, as he believed, would "have to be included in any theory of motivation that could lay claim to being definitive." This theory, then is "...considered to be a suggested program or framework for future research..."⁽⁶⁾ Maslow's theory of motivation assumes a hierarchical structure for human needs. The lower level needs are biological in nature, and other needs, in ascending order of prepotency, are the safety needs, the belongingness or love needs, the esteem needs (self-esteem, recognition, and status), and the need for self-actualization. According to the theory, when a need is "satisfied fairly well, the next need "... emerges, in turn to dominate the conscious life and to serve as the center of organization of behavior, since gratified needs are not active motivators."⁽⁷⁾ He also assumed deprivation of or dissatisfaction with a need of higher pre-potency will cause the domination of this need over the behavior.

Based on Maslow's ideas, **PORTER** postulated that needs for autonomy and self-actualization are the major prepotent needs of organizational executives.⁽⁸⁾ By utilizing Porter's concept, **GROSS** and **NAPIOR** in an extensive study analyzed intrinsic factors related to job satisfaction of 382 men principals in school systems of 41 large urban communities throughout the U.S. The data were collected in school year of 1960-61, and the final report disseminated in 1967. They also analyzed determinants related to the career satisfaction of the

principals. Findings of the study did not support the prediction that autonomy granted the principals by their superiors and personal support received from their subordinates are correlated with career satisfaction. The study, however, supported the prediction that most of the variables related to organizational structure are correlated to it. The researcher concluded that age, previous teaching experience, formal academic training, and level, region, number of students, and socioeconomic composition of the schools are not associated with the principals' job satisfaction. Religion and race, however, were related to their job satisfaction. The degree of autonomy the principals were granted by their superiors and the degree to which they could gratify their self-actualization needs were determinants of their job satisfaction. (9)

By adapting Maslow's theory as a conceptual basis for his study and utilizing an adaptation of Porter's Management Position Questionnaire, GREEN explored the perceived needs of 514 educational administrators in Ohio School Systems. GREEN found autonomy needs are important to the principals age, sex, administrative experience, academic preparation, and size of schools were not significantly related to their job satisfaction. In this study GREEN noticed that administrative experience is important in the prediction of autonomy needs. (10)

Throughout the 60's and 70's, research literature on job satisfaction has been strongly influenced by a two-factor theory formulated by HERZBERG. According to the theory, job feelings are bi-dimensional. That is, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on one continuum; the opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as HERZBERG stated "are completely separate continua, like hearing and vision... they must be produced by different factors and have their own dynamics." (11) This conceptualization is different from traditional belief that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are opposites.

According to the theory, factors contributing to satisfaction on the job revolve around the content of the job and the actual doing of it, these factors relate to intrinsic aspects of the job and are termed Motivators. They included achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth. Factors which are related to extrinsic conditions of the job or to environmental aspects of it and which are pain-avoiding in nature, were called Hygiene. Hygiene factors include policy and administration, interpersonal relations, supervision, salary, working conditions, status, and security. The Two-Factor Theory, also called Motivation-Hygiene Theory, although it has become one of the most controversial theories in organizational

psychology, has been supported by over 50 empirical studies in different cultures and populations. (12) Originally it was developed based on an empirical study of Herzberg and his associates.

In the recent years, several researchers have tested the theory with educational administrators in the United States. IANNONE, by using a semi-structured interview technique, tested the theory with 40 elementary and secondary principals. The analysis of data indicated that achievement and recognition contributed with greater frequency to the principal's job satisfaction, while interpersonal relations (with subordinates, superiors, and peers), supervision and school district policy and administration were mentioned as contributors to their job dissatisfaction. (13)

SCHMIDT replicated Herzberg's study with 74 administrators of 25 public secondary schools in a Chicago suburban area by using a modified form of Herzberg's interview technique and also a questionnaire related to characteristics of the administrator's job. Findings of this study supported the theory. Achievement, recognition, and advancement were found motivators to the administrators; interpersonal relations with superior, policy and administration, and interpersonal relations with subordinates were the factors resulting in job dissatisfaction. (14)

Stefansky tested the Motivation-Hygiene theory with 40 comprehensive public high school principals in 39 school districts of Pennsylvania. A modification of Critical Incident Technique used by Herzberg was applied in that study. Also the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire was used to indicate over-all job satisfaction of the principals. Stefansky concluded that based on the interview technique, achievement and recognition were major determinants of job satisfaction, while interpersonal relations constitute the only major indicator of the principals' job dissatisfaction. (15)

Miskel by using a questionnaire upon the theory, found that elementary teachers are more sensitive to work pressure that principals and central office administrators have less desire for security than do elementary teachers. Furthermore, the educators aspired to administrative jobs showed a greater desire for risk and motivator rewards. (16)

The study presented here is aimed to test the validity of the Motivation-Hygiene theory in the cultural and organizational setting of Iranian principals; such settings are different from those of the studies that have been cited in preceding paragraphs.

Methodology

Secondary school principals in the province of Khozestan, Iran, were subjects of this study. They were

selected through a stratified random sampling. An extensive pilot study helped in the development of a relevant questionnaire to serve the purpose of the study. The items were designed to ask each principal to identify and describe job-related events that made him feel exceptionally good (satisfied). 172 questionnaires were mailed to the selected principals. A follow up letter was sent and a telephone call was made to each selected principal. Usable questionnaires were received from 105 principals (61%).

In this study the following hypotheses were formulated: 1) Motivators are significantly greater determinants of job satisfaction than are hygienes. 2) Hygienes are significantly greater determinants of job dissatisfaction than are motivators. 3) Each motivation factor is a significantly greater contributor to job satisfaction. 4) Each hygiene factor is a significantly greater contributor to job dissatisfaction.

The content analysis technique was applied in coding the sequence of events related to the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the principals. The coded events then were categorized in an adoption of the classification that was used in Herzberg's original study, previously identified in this paper as motivation factors and hygiene factors. It should be noted that every item was independently coded by each of three orders: an educator and two graduate students majoring in behavioral sciences. Coding decisions were accepted by a majority choice. Computer facilities of University of Pennsylvania were used in the statistical computation of the data.

Findings and discussion

Table 1 provides sufficient evidence to formulate the conceptualization that Iranian principals were motivated by determinants that fulfilled their psychological needs and were intrinsic to their job. Also, principals were affected by the hygienes which were related to their job dissatisfaction. In other words, in congruence with the Motivation-Hygiene theory, motivators were the greater contributors to the principals' job satisfaction, while hygienes contributed to their job dissatisfaction. For testing hypotheses 1 and 2 a chi-square value beyond .01 level of significance was taken as the critical point; the chi-square value of 137.4 was beyond .01 level, rejecting the null hypotheses. A value of phi coefficient .61 indicated the existence of a strong relationship.

Table 1

Frequency of all motivators and hygiene factors affecting job attitudes of principals in the Province of Khuzestan, Iran*

Factor	Contributing to satisfaction	Contributing to dissatisfaction
All motivators	170	34
All hygienes	37	128

$X^2 = 137.4; p < .001$
phi = .61

*The sequence of events in relation to satisfaction and dissatisfaction are independent.

As illustrated in table 2, for the purpose of examination of these findings in detail, percentage frequency of each motivator/hygiene factor contributing to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction was analyzed and tested independently. Because of the small number or lack of the frequencies that the principals reported, however, some factors (possibility of growth, advancement, status, and job security) were not tested. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested by means of the binomial test of goodness of-fit. A value of the test beyond .01 level of significance was taken as the critical point in the analysis. Table 2 indicates that achievement, recognition, and work itself were the most common factors contributing to the job satisfaction, while working conditions, supervision, and policy and administration were the most common factors resulting in the job dissatisfaction of the principals. These motivator/hygiene factors were significant ($p < .01$) in the predicted direction.

Advancement and job security were not included in the events that were reported. Possibility of growth was a motivator factor and status was a hygiene factor, both of the least frequency among the group of motivator/hygiene factors. In this study, responsibility, salary, and interpersonal relations, at .01 level nor at .05 level of confidence, were significant indicators of the principals' satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the predicted directions. These findings are different and even, in some respects, are in contrast to the related studies that have been carried out in job situations of the American principals. For instance, interpersonal relations is a contributing, though statistically less significant, factor to job satisfaction for the Iranian principals rather than to their job dissatisfaction. However, according to the Motivation-Hygiene theory it is a contributor to job dissatisfaction.

Table 2

Percentage frequency of factors affecting job attitudes of principals in the province of Khuzestan, Iran*

Motivator factor	Contributing to satisfaction	Contributing to dissatisfaction	Probability of binomial test
Achievement	40	15	.01
Recognition	60	3	.01
Work itself	50	4	.01
Responsibility	10	8	.40
Possibility of growth	2	3	
Advancement	0	0	

Hygiene factor	Contributing to satisfaction	Contributing to dissatisfaction	Probability of binomial test
Policy and administration	1	17	.01
Interpersonal relations	25	17	.14
Supervision	0	32	.01
Salary	5	7	.38
Working conditions	5	50	.01
Status	1	0	
Job security	0	0	

* The percentages total more than 100 percent since more than one factor can appear in any single sequence of events.

The reason for the absence of job security in the reported events stems from the permanent ties that the principals have with the Ministry. One possible explanation for their not reporting advancement and for the few responses to possibility of growth relate to the highly structured system of education within which, as it was pointed out earlier, Iranian principals function as supervisors in implementing uniform policies, rules, and procedures. Obviously, the structure creates an organizational climate that is monotonic and less challenging-even at the higher positions. Further more, because one of the most important criteria in ascending the hierarchy is a principal's formal education, the guidance cycle principals who generally hold an associate degree can expect no further advancement.

Concluding remarks

This study, which provides support for the Motivation-Hygiene theory in a culture other than American culture with relation to principals, also has some implications to Iranian educational planners and decision makers who currently are tackling the decentralization of the educational system. These planners and policy makers should note that achievement, recognition, and the nature of the

principal's job are fundamental sources of satisfaction to Iranian principals, while policy and administration, supervision, and working conditions are important sources of their job dissatisfaction. Participation of the principals in setting the new policies and procedures will help to fulfill their needs for recognition. Creating an adequate structure of evaluation might provide feedback to the principals on their own achievement. Expanding their professional tasks and increasing their authority will make their jobs more challenging.

Working conditions, the most frequent hygiene factor resulting in principals' job dissatisfaction, bears particular attention. In earlier related studies carried out in relation to school principals, this factor was not as critical as it was reported by the Iranian principals. This implies that in the country, teaching and learning facilities are unsatisfactory; curricula are rigid; and educational staffs are not well trained. Therefore, the nation should give a serious consideration in budget allocation to public education and most important, it should develop new trends in administration for its educational system. Supervision and policy and administration appeared to be the other dissatisfies factors to the Iranian principals. The nation-wide uniform educational policies were sources of enormous problems and created fundamental dissatisfaction to the practitioner principals. In formulating new policies at the regional levels, efforts should be geared toward setting those policies which can work in practice. Finally, educational administration is a profession which requires both experience and training. It is the science and art of dealing with people and problems on behalf of a better education for pupils. Any office holder in the Iranian educational system should acquire the necessary skills for this position.

The present study reflects job attitudes of the principals in the Province of Khuzestan; it is not necessarily a reflection of job attitudes of all the principals in the country. A nation-wide research project is needed to generalize the results of this study. Also, it is recommended that the Motivation-Hygiene theory should be tested with Iranian principals by means of the Critical Incident Interview Technique which was used by Herzberg and the other researchers.

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