
THE EFFECTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ON JOB SATISFACTION

Branka Zolak Poljašević

Faculty of Economics, University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, branka.zolak-poljasevic@ef.unibl.org

Marija Todorović

Aska Media, Belgrade, Serbia, askamediasocial@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between professional development opportunities and job satisfaction. In this research job satisfaction is dependent variable. Professional development opportunities as an independent variable are divided into seven sub-variables. The following demographic and social variables were observed as control variables: gender, age, level of education, work experience and the currently job position. Quantitative research methodology was applied in the paper. Based on the survey questionnaire, data from 143 employees in the surveyed company were collected. Data processing was performed on the basis of statistical software for social sciences - SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences - SPSS). The main findings indicate positive impact of professional development opportunities on employee job satisfaction. The originality of this paper refers to the acquisition of new scientific facts and knowledge related to the human resource management, and more specific related to the human resource development, motivation and job satisfaction. The research model, created scales related to professional development opportunities, and set of observed control variables can be used to repeat the research in the observed organization, in order to continuously monitor the relationship between individual elements of professional development opportunities and job satisfaction. The five-point Likert type scale which is used in this research is analytical enough to obtain important information on job satisfaction, and can serve managers in the company to adopt corrective activities and measures in order to improve employee satisfaction. The complete model can also be used to conduct comparative research in other organizations in the country and the region. The research limitations refer to the fact that relationship between a defined dependent and independent variable was observed in a single business entity. However, the broad coverage of employees in the observed business entity and their answers provides a good basis for replication of the research construct in other organizations or business branches in order to add significance and universality to the model.

Keywords: professional development, career opportunities, job satisfaction, human resource management

1. INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction reflects what employees think about their job (Elrehail, Alzghoul, Alnajdawi, & Hussein Ibrahim, 2019). It is a multidimensional phenomenon, which is influenced by several internal and external factors such as: values, principles, personality types and individual expectations, as well as the nature of the work itself, opportunities provided, etc. The consequences of job dissatisfaction (Kakkar, Dash, Vohra, & Saha, 2020) can be: 1) economic consequences, that are associated with lower employee productivity, less commitment to work and organization, and higher absenteeism and fluctuation rate, 2) social consequences, which are related to employees' perception of injustice and disobedience of workers, that is sometimes manifested through organizing strikes, and 3) consequences for the mental health of employees that manifest as stress, anxiety, depression and fear of job loss (Cherif, 2020).

Job satisfaction refers to satisfaction with individual job gains (Kulkarni, Mutkekar, & Ingalagi, 2020). The general belief is that satisfied workers are more motivated and more productive than those who are not satisfied (Rai & Maheshwari, 2020).

In addition to the demographic or personal characteristics of employees, changes in the level of job satisfaction can also be caused by organizational elements through which the work environment is shaped (Mickson & Anlesinya, 2020). As the demographic characteristics of employees cannot be greatly influenced, the researchers' attention is usually being focused on a group of organizational factors or characteristics, because their modification can change the existing level of employee satisfaction in the organization.

Employee development can be defined as a systematic increase of the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees in order to perform some new, more complex, jobs in the future (Noe, 2017). Employee development should be considered as comprehensive concept that influences the building of desirable competencies of employees, which are necessary for the successful implementation of business strategy, and for increasing of current and future competitiveness and success of the organization. Furthermore, most successful organizations invest in employee development programs, because the ability to improve their skills and competencies also increases the morale and

productivity of employees (Bahtijarević-Šiber, 1999). Employee development opportunities influences changes in their attitudes, values, motivation, behavior, and not just in terms of the improvement of mechanical skills, but also as a significant factor in employee satisfaction (Goswami & Dsilva, 2019) (Kaye-Essien, 2020). Development opportunities are especially important when it comes to talented individuals and employees with managerial potential, although contemporary organizations strive to build a climate of continuous learning and dissemination of knowledge, which implies the involvement of a large number of employees in development programs (Zolak Poljašević, 2021). Through employee development programs, the organization seeks to build competencies that are difficult to copy, customer-oriented thinking and actions of employees, and acceptance and initiation of change. Furthermore, learning process helps employees to successfully overcome some challenges of the daily tasks (Sparr, Knipfer, & Willems, 2017) (Akdere & Egan, 2020).

In practice, employers used a large number of methods and techniques for employee development, and they can be categorized into four main groups, which are also called approaches in employee development. Those are: formal education, development potential assessment, work experience, and interpersonal relationships (Soomro & Shah, 2019).

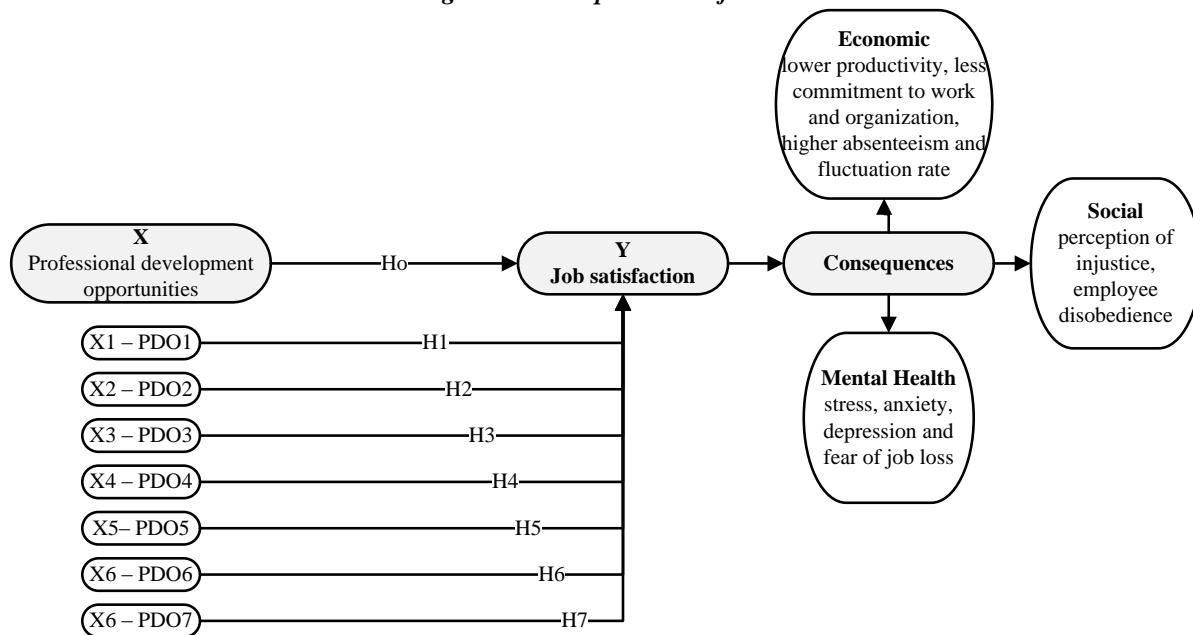
The research problem relates to determining the level of employee satisfaction in observed business entity. The scientific goal of this research is to reveal new scientific facts and knowledge about the impact of the professional development opportunities on job satisfaction. In the hypothesis, we assume that the professional development opportunities have a positive impact on job satisfaction.

2. METHODS OF WORK

To test the hypotheses defined on the basis of theoretical research, an empirical research was conducted, which included the collection of primary data using a survey questionnaire. The demographic and some job related characteristics of employees are listed as control variables. Quantitative research methodology was applied in the paper.

The conceptual framework of the paper is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual work framework



Source: Authors

The dependent variable related to job satisfaction was measured by a five-point Likert type scale: 1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree, 3. Agree / Disagree (Undecided), 4. Agree and 5. Strongly Agree.

Independent variables refer to the professional development opportunities (PDO), and the following variables are listed: PDO1 - Employees have opportunities to participate in some development programs, PDO2 - Employees have opportunities to get scholarship for further education, PDO3 - The company invests enough in education and development of employees, PDO4 - Employees have enough opportunities to implement the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities and improve their work, PDO5 - Employees have opportunities to improve their skills, PDO6 -

Employees have opportunities to use modern work equipment, PDO7 - Employees have opportunities to participate in relevant training programs (for example seminars).

The control variables are related to: gender, age, level of education, length of service and work performed by employees.

Empirical research was conducted in 2019 in the company from petroleum product trade sector which currently employs 178 workers. Based on the survey questionnaire, data from 143 employees were collected. Data processing was performed in the SPSS program.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents data on the average level of agreement of respondents with the claims regarding the professional development opportunities in the observed business entity. The assessed level of agreement also shows the attitudes of the employees. Based on the obtained results, it can be noticed that the respondents, on average, believe that most of the parameters of the independent variable are adequate or appropriate (the assessed level of agreement with most statements is above neutral). If the observed parameters are ranked according to the assessed level of agreement, the collected data show that the respondents expressed the highest level of agreement with the sixth parameter, i.e., the claim that employees have the opportunity to use modern work equipment. In this parameter, the answers of the respondents, on average, deviate the least from the arithmetic mean. On the other hand, respondents expressed the lowest level of agreement with the seventh parameter, which refers to the possibility to participate in relevant training programs (for example seminars), and there is also the largest deviation in the answers of respondents.

Table 1. Descriptive measures related to the professional development opportunities

Variable	Sample Size	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation
PDO1 - Employees have opportunities to participate in some development programs	143	3,29	1,137
PDO2 - Employees have opportunities to get scholarship for further education	143	3,03	1,204
PDO3 - The company invests enough in education and development of employees	143	3,06	1,093
PDO4 - Employees have enough opportunities to implement the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities and improve their work	143	3,27	1,152
PDO5 - Employees have opportunities to improve their skills	143	3,32	1,111
PDO6 - Employees have opportunities to use modern work equipment	143	3,56	1,052
PDO7 - Employees have opportunities to participate in relevant training programs (for example seminars)	143	3,03	11,237

Source: SPSS

In order to determine whether the average level of agreement of the respondents with each parameter of the professional development opportunities differs by groups of employees, it was calculated arithmetic means according to the defined control variables. The data presented in Table 2 give us a more detailed insight into the structure of respondents' responses according to control variables.

Table 2. Arithmetic means for items from the sub-scales calculated in according to the control variables

Variable		PDO1	PDO2	PDO3	PDO4	PDO5	PDO6	PDO7
Gender	Male	3,32	3,05	3,08	3,31	3,37	3,54	2,49
	Female	3,15	2,90	2,90	3,05	3,00	3,65	3,05
Age	Up to the age of 20	4,00	5,00	3,00	2,00	5,00	5,00	4,00
	21-30	3,13	3,21	3,17	3,29	3,38	3,50	2,42
	31-40	3,28	2,93	2,79	2,79	3,28	3,28	2,34
	41-50	3,45	3,06	3,21	3,48	3,39	3,67	2,70
	Over 50	3,27	2,95	3,05	3,32	3,25	3,64	2,64
Educational level	Unskilled or Semi-skilled worker	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
	Primary school	5,00	5,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	4,00
	Skilled worker	3,35	2,53	3,24	3,29	3,00	3,47	2,47
	High school	3,29	3,02	3,08	3,31	3,37	3,55	2,51
	High-skilled worker	3,38	3,25	3,00	3,25	3,00	3,38	2,13
	University degree	3,25	3,13	2,50	3,00	3,38	3,50	2,50
	University degree and more (i.e. MSc, PhD)	3,13	3,31	3,06	3,19	3,50	3,88	3,19
Work experience	Up to 1 year	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
	From 1 to 5 years	3,38	3,13	3,44	3,50	3,63	3,50	2,94
	From 5 to 10 years	3,07	3,00	3,13	3,27	3,27	3,47	2,07
	From 10 to 20 years	3,11	3,05	2,76	2,84	3,13	3,32	2,32
	From 20 to 30 years	3,62	3,12	3,21	3,60	3,45	3,74	2,88
	More than 30 years	3,16	2,84	2,97	3,25	3,25	3,69	2,50
	Manager position	3,38	3,23	3,00	3,85	3,85	3,77	2,54
Job Position	Expert position	4,00	4,20	4,40	4,20	4,40	4,40	4,20
	Administrative position	3,09	2,64	2,55	3,00	2,91	3,55	2,73
	Technical position	3,47	3,23	3,10	3,37	3,40	3,60	2,80
	Sales position	3,20	2,90	3,04	3,13	3,20	3,46	2,37
	Something else	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

Source: SPSS

As it was previously determined that the respondents included in the sample, on average, believe that most of the parameters of the variable related to the professional development opportunities are adequate or appropriate, it was expected that most items in the analysis of responses by groups of employees have a value above neutral. However, there are a several items can be in which the value of the arithmetic mean is below or slightly above the neutral mean. These results imply that respondents from a particular group do not agree with the offered claims regarding the possibility of professional advancement. In particular, this refers to the PDO2, PDO3, PDO4 and PDO7 statements.

In the case of PDO2, PDO3 and PDO4 statements, which refer to opportunities to get scholarship for further education, investing in education and training of employees, and possibility to implement the acquired knowledge, skills and abilities and improve their work, it was noticed that only a certain group of respondents did not agree with the offered claims. In the case of PDO7, 12 items show the value of the arithmetic mean below the neutral mean. This implies that a large number of employees from different groups do not agree with the statement of PDO7, opportunities to participate in relevant training programs (for example seminars).

To test the hypothesis, it was used Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation (Spearman's Rho). The results of the correlation analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing

		PDO	JS	
Spearman's coefficient	PDO - Professional Development Opportunities	The correlation coefficient	1,000	.658**
		<i>p</i> -value (two-way test)	.	.000
		Sample size	143	143
	JS – Job Satisfaction	The correlation coefficient	.658**	1.000
		<i>p</i> - value (two-way test)	.000	.
		Sample size	143	143

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (two-way test)

Source: SPSS

Based on the calculated value of the correlation coefficient in the sample ($rS = 0.658$) and the calculated p value ($p = 0.000$), it can be concluded that the correlation coefficient is positive, that there is quantitative correlation between observed variables, and that the observed relationship is statistically significant. Given that there is a statistically significant relationship between professional development opportunities and job satisfaction, that the calculated correlation is moderate, and the degree of correlation is positive, it can be stated that respondents who perceive that professional development opportunities are adequate have a higher degree of job satisfaction, and vice versa. As it has been proven that there is a correlation between the observed variables in the sample, it can be concluded that the professional development opportunities are an important factor of job satisfaction, which confirmed the hypothesis.

4. CONCLUSION

The collected data were analyzed and processed using appropriate statistical analysis methods, such as descriptive data analysis and Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation (Spearman's Rho).

A positive and moderate correlation was established between the dependent and independent variables, which implies that professional development opportunities affects job satisfaction.

The analysis of data related to gender, age, level of education, work experience and job position indicated differences in the level of respondents' agreement with the claims related to the professional development opportunities. The created research model and defined scales can be used to repeat the research in the observed organization, in order to continuously monitor the relationship between the individual elements of professional development opportunities and employee satisfaction. It can also be used to conduct comparative research in other organizations in the country and the region.

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