

JOB SATISFACTION OF PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE GHANAIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

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Job satisfaction plays an important role in the overall productivity of any given industry. Despite its importance, little attention has been paid to white collared construction workers. This paper reports on a descriptive study that investigated the job satisfaction of construction based professionals within the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. Data was collected using a sample survey from 35 construction firms, 11 consulting firms, 2 client organisations, 3 management consultants and 5 construction management firms within the Ghanaian construction industry. Response data was subjected to descriptive statistics and subsequently ranking analysis were used to examine the relationship between age and job satisfaction. The results indicated that 'relationship with supervisor' and 'relationship with workmates' as the highly ranked factors leading to positive worker satisfaction whereas 'quality of life' and 'personal health' were the least ranked. The factors leading to negative job satisfaction were 'lack of motivation' and 'job dissatisfaction'. On the other hand, 'lack of alertness' and 'lack of confidence' were deemed to have minimum effect. The research limitation of this study is that the survey population consists of construction professions drawn from Greater Accra Region only; as such the findings may not be representative of all construction professions. The originality and value of this study is that little is known about the job satisfaction of the white-collared workers or construction professionals within the context of the Ghanaian construction industry. Given that the success and productivity of the construction industry is linked to the workforce and general 'quality of life', identification of factors affecting job satisfaction can therefore be used by construction organisations in shaping their human resources practices for construction professions. Furthermore, the results of this study can help management in general on how to minimise the negative job effects arising from lack of job satisfaction

Keywords: construction professions; job satisfaction; Ghana

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry plays a critical role in the national economy. In addition to accounting for approximately 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), and being one of the largest employment providers in the developing world, according to Ahadzie (2009), the construction industry in Ghana contributes to the

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economic socio-economic development by providing significant employment opportunities at both non-skilled and skilled levels. Despite the important role the industry plays in the nation, decent working conditions and resulting improved worker satisfaction are key to sustainable productivity in the industry. Cotton *et al.* (2005), states that the industry is also one of the least safe industries, with a high frequency of accidents resulting in financial losses, injuries, disabilities and deaths. It can thus be argued that the success (productivity) of the industry can be linked to the workforce and the general 'quality of life' and identification of job satisfaction.

The job satisfaction plays an important role in the overall productivity of any given industry. Given the growing concern within the Ghanaian construction industry about the aspect of the performance, quality of work, and workforce issues, little attention has been paid to younger workers especially those based on site. More so given the importance of the industry to the GDP, the 'quality-of-life' of all the workers is an important dimension for productivity. Job satisfaction is also an issue of importance for both the employer and employee. This is because many studies have shown that employers immensely benefit from satisfied employees because they are more productive. As observed by Uwakweh (2005), foremen occupy critical positions in construction operations as they are the link between management and the workforce.

The aim of this research is to investigate the job satisfaction of professional staff working within the construction industry. The specific objectives are to: (1) establish the level of job satisfaction that professionals working for constructional-related organisations have; and (2) evaluate whether the age of the workers influences their perceptions of the job satisfaction. This research focuses on the current perception of job satisfaction of constructional professions based within the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. The study does not include the site based or blue collared works such as bricklayers, electricians, joiners, plumbers, labourers or steel fixers.

The paper is structured as follows: The literature is reviewed to identify to provide background information on job satisfaction, and establish the gap in knowledge through the number of studies prevailing within the international and Ghanaian context. The research methodology adopted, and the theoretical conceptualized framework is discussed thereafter. The sample characteristics, survey results and discussions follow after the research methodology. In the end, the summary, conclusions, theoretical contributions, summary of the findings, practical limitations and implications for future studies are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

General review of job satisfaction studies

A number of studies in developing and developed economies, on job satisfaction have been undertaken. These are summarised in Table 1. Despite the wealth of the selected studies on job satisfaction, little research has been undertaken within the African and construction industry specific context. In particular, only four Ghanaian specific studies were identified. These are as follows: Bennell (2004); Fugar and Salaam (2007); Obeng-Odoom and Ameyaw (2011). Of these studies, the existing literature on job satisfaction in Ghana is largely concentrated on the educational sector Bennell (2004), Bennell and Akyeampong (2007). No study to date has focussed solely on the job satisfaction of professionals (white collared) within the Ghanaian construction sector. Its worth noting that a study by Obeng-Odoom and Ameyaw (2011), while, undertaken among the surveying professions, its aim was focused on the process of

becoming a surveyor in Ghana. According to Wan and Leightley (2006), job satisfaction directly influences an organisation's competitive advantage. This implies that every organisation that wants to excel, must ensure that they put in the right measures to ensure employee satisfaction.

Table 1. Summary of selected studies on job satisfaction

No	Focus of study	Authors
1	Exploring the relationship between job satisfaction and demographic factors	Abdulla <i>et al.</i> (2011); Bowen and Cattell (2008); Chileshe and Haupt (2010); Clark <i>et al.</i> (1996); Okpara, (2004); and Oshagbemi (2000a)
2	Impact of mentoring on employees' job satisfaction	Ameyaw (2011); Lo and Ramayah (2011); Obeng-Odoom and Ameyaw (2011)
3	Specific studies on construction workers and job satisfaction	Ogunlana and Chang (1998); Fugar and Salaam, (2007); Chileshe and Haupt (2010); Huang and Lu, (2011),
4	Motivational levels of professionals	Bowen and Cattell (2008); Onukwube (2012); Oyedele, (2010)
5	Effect of foremen on construction apprentice	Uwakweh (2005)
6	Specific linkages between practices such as human resources (HR), total quality management (TQM) and job satisfaction	Groot and van den Brink (1999); Grund and Sliwka (2005); Lim and Bing (2012); Ooi <i>et al.</i> (2007).

Kim (2001) also noted that employees' satisfaction with their jobs may have strong implications for improving the quality of work produced. A study by Ooi *et al.* (2007) aimed at exploring the linkages between TQM practices and job satisfaction revealed that teamwork, organizational trust, organizational culture and customer focus are positively associated with employees' job satisfaction. Lim and Bing (2012) found that organisations Human Resource (HR) practices such as career opportunities, nature of their jobs and overall working environment to significantly influence the job satisfaction of professionals. Earlier studies such as Groot and van den Brink, (1999) which aimed at analysing the relationship between allocation, wages and job satisfaction established that satisfaction with the job content as the main factor explaining overall job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is an issue of importance to the construction industry where construction processes involve various kinds of people with various ideas, experience and skills with different interests (Dey and Ogunlana, 2004).

Job satisfaction studies within the African context

The construction industry can justifiably claim to be one of the most important industries that play a vital role in maintaining the infrastructure which underpins our current civilisation (O'Reilly, 1993). Unfortunately, not much attention is given to construction site workers (Abdullah *et al.* 2011), although the success of projects that lead to national development depends on them to a large extent. The construction workers in Nigeria as stated by Abdullah *et al.* (2011), in a survey, ranked satisfaction with co-workers as the highest job satisfaction factor, and the pay package as the lowest. Personal characteristics such as age, gender, income, education and experience have been found to be strong predictors of job satisfaction (Okpara, 2004; Onukwube, 2012). However, the study by Okpara (2004) although conducted within an African context, and Nigeria to be more specific, was based on a sample of managers drawn

from the information technology (IT) sector. The differences between the working environment of IT and the specific labour intensive nature of the site-based construction work requires separate studies to ascertain the factors and effects of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction studies within the Ghanaian context

In Ghana, not much research has been done on Job satisfaction in the construction industry. A study by Fugar and Salaam (2007) aimed at investigating the job satisfaction of construction workers on construction sites on the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) campus in Kumasi; found that they [workers] were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied when all aspects of the job were considered. They observed the same neutral result when the intrinsic satisfaction of workers was assessed. However, their results indicated a slight positive feeling on the extrinsic satisfaction of the construction workers on the KNUST site. These results although very useful cannot be generalised because all the projects considered were from one source and in one location, KNUST. A lot of construction firms are not based in Kumasi unlike Accra where most of the construction firms are based and major construction works take place.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate the impact of job satisfaction among the professionals within the Ghanaian construction sector, the following research methodology was employed in the study.

Research Conceptual Framework

Job satisfaction as defined by Wan and Leightley (2006) is how much employees like or dislike their work and the extent to which their expectation concerning work has been fulfilled. According to Kim (2001), job satisfaction is an emotional reaction to an employees work situation. Understanding job satisfaction is therefore critical to every organisation’s success and this continuous to be a major topic of research interest. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables.

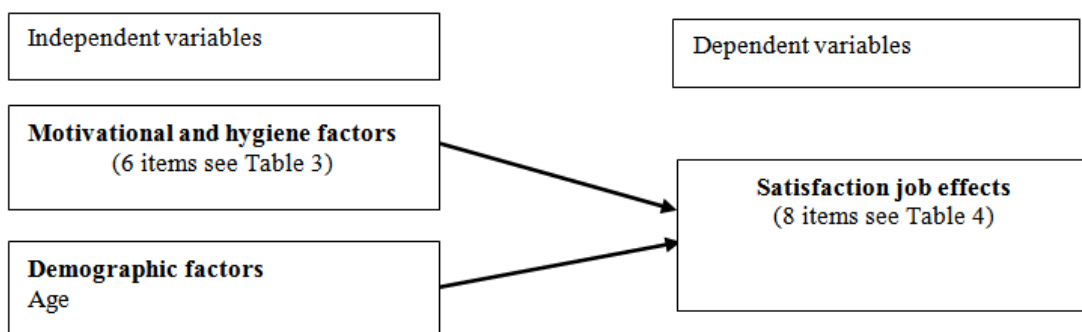


Figure 1. Research Model

Measurement Instrument

The data collection instrument used was a self-administered structured questionnaire. A pilot survey as advocated to be necessary by (Gill and Johnson, 2010) was made by administering the questionnaire to construction professionals in Ghana. Based on the feedback, the necessary corrections were made. The data collection instrument as used

in Chileshe and Haupt (2010) is grounded in Herzberg's *et al.* (1959) work of two factor theory.

The questionnaire was divided into three main parts, as follows: demographics, job satisfaction survey and job effects. The first part which is the demographics, sought information pertaining to age, type of work, years of service in construction and current employment position whereas the second part was the job satisfaction survey which was designed to measure job satisfaction of construction workers. Each item in the job satisfaction instrument was measured on five-point Likert-type scale that varied from a range of (1) representing very poor satisfaction to (5) representing very excellent satisfaction. Thus, (3) on the scale of measure represented indifference, i.e. neither poor nor excellent. Oshagbemi (2000a) used the same approach in his study which sought to investigate the impact of length of service on job satisfaction. It comprised six items, namely: (1) personal health; (2) quality of life; (3) personal development; (4) relationship with workmates; (5) relationship with supervisor; and (6) satisfaction with occupation.

The third part of the questionnaire sought to measure the effects of job satisfaction. Each item in the job satisfaction effects instrument was measured from a range of (1) representing minimum (never) to (5) maximum (all the time). It comprised eight items, namely: (1) poor recognition of abilities; (2) job dissatisfaction; (3) indifference; (4) lack of alertness; (5) lack of motivation; (6) dejection; (7) lack of confidence; and (8) poor self-image. Usage of likert-type scales is highly recommended. According to Hartley and MacLean (2006), these scales offer an efficient method for capturing a wide range of variance in self-reported attitudes and behaviours (as is the case in this study).

Data Analysis

This paper seeks to investigate job satisfaction of construction based professionals within the Greater Accra Region in Ghana and to identify the variables affecting the relative aspects of work in the Ghanaian construction industry. The method of data analysis adopted for this research was as used in Chileshe and Haupt (2010). While the Chileshe and Haupt (2010) adopted the analysis of variance (ANOVA), and separate independent t-test, in addition to descriptive statistics, as the focus was to ascertain the impact of age on the job satisfaction, this study only used the descriptive statistics which included the standard deviation, frequency and mean ranking analysis because of the limitations of the sample size, as no statistical conclusions could be drawn based on the age as out of 56; only 15 respondents indicated their age as greater than 40. Uwakweh (2006) used a similar approach in arriving at a decision not to use gender-based analyses in the examination of the motivational climate of construction apprentice. The *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) computer program was also used to analyse the data generated by the research questions.

The overall reliability of the process factors, namely the job satisfaction factors comprising the six items as measured by the coefficient cronbach alpha was 0.807, and the eight items representing the effects of negative job satisfaction had the value of cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.890. Both values exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.7 as suggested by Nunnally (1978), thus indicating the high internal consistency of the questionnaires.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE

100 questionnaires were sent to white collared (professionals) construction workers in the Greater Accra Region. A total of 56 respondents completed and returned the

questionnaires with response rate of 56 per cent. The response rate was therefore deemed adequate for the purpose of data analysis. Akintoye and Fitzgerald (2000 cited in Odeyinka *et al.* 2008) argue that this is way above the norm of 20-30 percent response rate in most postal questionnaire of the construction industry.

The respondents comprise 12 (21.4 per cent) were quantity surveyors, 6 (10.7 per cent) were engineers, 5 (8.9 per cent) were project managers, 4(7.1 per cent) were architects, 2 (3.6 per cent) were managing directors, 4(7.1 per cent) were Site managers, 5 (8.9 per cent) were clerk of works and the remainder, 18 (32.2 per cent) fell into the ‘others’ category comprising various professionals. Structured questionnaires were distributed through purposive sampling. According to Kelly *et al.* (2003), such an approach or technique of purposive sampling is normally appropriate when a specific population is identified, and only its members are included in the survey. This is applicable in this study as the study was confined to specific construction professionals working for organisations within the Greater Accra, Ghana.

Some data relative to the experience and tenure of the respondents was also sought. Experience, being defined as the length of service in the construction industry (number of years) and tenure as the period of time spent in present employment. Relative to the experience, the majority 18(32.1%) of the respondents had worked for less than 5 years; 17(30.4%) worked for more than 5, but less than 10 years; followed by 11-15 years (16.1%, *n* = 9); 16-20 years (8.9%, *n* = 5); and only a minority 2 (3.6%) and 5(8.9%) fell into the 21-25 years and more than 25 years category respectively. In relation to the length of service in present employment (tenure), the majority 28(50.0%) of the respondents had worked for less than 5 years; 14(25.0%) worked for more than 5, but less than 10 years; followed by 11-15 years (10.7%, *n* = 6); 16-20 years (8.9%, *n* = 5); and only a minority 3 (5.4%), more than 25 years category respectively. The importance of ascertaining the construction experience, tenure and professional background of the respondents was to ascertain whether these demographical variables had an impact on the overall job satisfaction.

Profile of respondents by age

Table 2 provides the breakdown of respondents according to the age

Table 2. Breakdown of respondents by age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 40 years	41	73.2
> 40 years	15	26.8
Total	56	100.0

Sector of respondents

Relative to the sector of the industry, the majority 35(62.5%) of the respondents were drawn from contracting firms, followed by 11(19.6%) consulting organisations, 5(8.9%) construction management and 3(5.4%) management consultants. Only a minority 2(3.6%) were from client organisations.

SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Image of age on job satisfaction

In Table 3, means and standard deviations of the six job satisfaction items are also presented for the full sample, older and younger constructional professions. As can be seen from Table 3, the older construction professionals were slightly satisfied with their jobs (mean score = 4.044) when compared with their younger counterparts (mean score = 3.850). The older workers ranked 'relationship with workmate's as the most important job satisfaction factor (mean score = 4.267). The younger construction professionals rated 'relationship with supervisor' as being the most important (mean score = 4.325). This finding is hardly surprising, and it also confirms Uwakweh's (2005) observation, albeit from the blue-collared perspective, that foremen occupied critical positions in construction operations as they were the links between management and workforce (Uwakweh, 2005 pg. 1320). Similarly, a study by Abdullah *et al.* (2011) on the construction workers within the Nigerian context ranked satisfaction with co-workers as the highest job satisfaction factor.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for items on the job satisfaction factors, for the full sample, and by age.

Job satisfaction factors	Total sample <i>n</i> = 56		Older workers (> 40 years old) <i>n</i> = 15		Younger workers (< 40 years old) <i>n</i> = 41		
	Mean ¹	Standard deviation	Rank	Mean ¹	Standard deviation	Rank	
MF ₁ = Personal development	3.786	1.163	4	3.933	1.073	4	
MF ₂ = Personal health	3.393	1.099	5	3.933	1.166	6	
HF ₁ = Relationship with workmates	4.232	.704	1	4.267	.652	2	
HF ₂ = Relationship with supervisor	4.273	.834	3	4.133	.525	1	
HF ₃ = Satisfaction with occupation	4.109	.799	2	4.267	.783	3	
MF ₃ = Quality of life	3.618	1.099	6	3.733	1.129	5	
Overall job satisfaction score	3.901			4.044		3.850	

Notes: MF = motivational factor; HF = hygiene factor; ¹Mean score based on Likert scale where 1 = very poor and 5 = very excellent satisfaction

Interestingly, this finding contradicts the earlier studies of Hinzelman and Smallwood (2004) which ranked personal development and quality of life as the two most important job satisfaction factors. The low ranking of 'personal development' by both younger and older professional workers confirms the findings of a study by Obeng-Odoom and Ameyaw, (2011) among the surveying professions. In the main, the study revealed that while professional surveying training in Ghana was effective, nevertheless, it was still narrow. Although senior surveyors were found to provide mentoring to probationers, they still engaged in poor labour practices; and probationers did obtain professional training. The low ranking of 'quality of life' (mean score = 3.733, rank = 6th) can be explained in Dey and Ogunlana's (2004) which linked the uniqueness and complexness of projects, and open environment as contributory factors in controlling the working environment/conditions for the construction workers both on site and in the office.

Effects of job satisfaction

The mean scores and their standard deviations, and rankings of the eight job satisfaction effects are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for items on the job satisfaction effects items, for the full sample, and by age.

Job satisfaction effects	Total sample ² (n=55)		Older workers (> 40 years old) n = 15			Younger workers (< 40 year old) n = 41		
	Mean ¹	Rank	Mean ¹	Standard deviation	Rank	Mean ¹	Standard deviation	Rank
Poor self-image	1.696	6	1.707	0.980	5	1.667	1.047	5
Lack of confidence	1.625	7	1.585	0.921	8	1.733	0.884	4
Indifference	1.709	5	1.675	0.971	6	1.800	0.862	2
Lack of motivation	2.125	1	2.146	1.424	1	2.667	1.280	1
Job dissatisfaction	1.893	2	2.000	1.072	2	1.600	0.986	7
Lack of alertness	1.518	8	1.585	0.805	7	1.333	0.617	8
Dejection	1.768	3	1.756	1.067	3	1.800	0.862	2
Poor recognition of abilities	1.732	4	1.756	1.241	4	1.667	1.113	6

Notes¹: Mean score based Likert scale where 1 = minimum (never) and 5 = maximum (all the time); ²: List wise number of respondents

As can be seen from table 4, the younger and older workers ranked ‘lack of motivation’ as the most important job satisfaction effects. The sample applies to ‘poor self-image’ ranked 5th both groups. Interestingly, the two groups had different views on the ranking of ‘indifference’ with the younger workers mostly affected by that (mean score = 1.800, rank = 2nd), whereas the older construction professionals were slightly satisfied with their jobs when compared with their younger counterparts. When compared to the studies conducted among the construction sited based workers in South Africa (Chileshe and Haupt, 2010), “poor recognition of abilities” (mean score = 2.912) and “lack of alertness” (mean score = 2.615) were ranked as having the most negative impact by the younger and older workers respectively.

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the research need to be acknowledged. The sample size is relatively small (56), comparable to other studies that have looked at worker satisfaction levels within the construction industry (Hinzelman and Smallwood, 2004; Chileshe and Haupt, 2010). The second limitation relates to geographical location of the respondents. These were drawn from a random sample of construction professional based within organisation in the Greater Accra Region, therefore, this study cannot be generalised statistically for the whole of Ghana as it was constrained geographically.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research is to investigate job satisfaction of white collared (professions) construction workers within the Greater Accra Region in Ghana and to identify the variables affecting the relative aspects of work in the Ghanaian construction industry. This research also explored the impact of the job satisfaction on the eight attributes of job effects. Results suggest that based on the overall sample, workers ranked the 'quality of life' and 'personal health' as being poor and 'relationship with supervisor' and 'co-workers' as being excellent. 'Lack of motivation', and 'Job dissatisfaction' were reported to be the negative effects of Job satisfaction. This paper contributes immensely to the knowledge pool of existing literature and it provides insight on the measurement of job satisfaction within the Ghanaian construction sector, an area previously under-researched. Management, managers, professionals, policy makers and academics will find this study useful, as it enriches literature on job satisfaction in the African context, developing economies as well as in the construction industry.

This study contributes to this knowledge gap. The literature review established that, while a lot of research has been carried out in the area of worker and job satisfaction in various industries especially in the developed economies context, unlike the African and developing economies, not many studies have been done on job satisfaction especially in the construction industry. This study should be extended, with a larger sample size to include the effects of the different professions on job satisfaction; secondly the site-based blue collared workers could be included in the sample as well.

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