



## Job Involvement and Job Satisfaction – are They Synonymous?

### KEYWORDS

Employee Motivation, Job Involvement, Job Satisfaction, Semantic, Work Attitude

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**ABSTRACT** Several researches have supported the notion that employee who is satisfied with and involved in the job is likely to exhibit higher motivation and also feels a sense of pride in work. Considering this, Job Involvement and Job Satisfaction are the two primary work/job related attitudes in which organizations are showing increasing interest now-a-days. But, the problem of semantic seems to be prevailing in case of these two widely researched work attitudes also. Earlier empirical researches reveal varied and inconsistent results regarding the role and place occupied by job involvement in terms of its relationship with the other job attitude – job satisfaction. Even though, several researchers have tried to identify job involvement as a distinct work attitude, the problem of delineating job involvement from other seemingly similar work attitude namely job satisfaction, has still remained. The present Conceptual Paper, analyzing the plethora of available literature with a practical orientation, highlights the nature of job involvement and job satisfaction, the similarities and differences between them, and more importantly their interrelationship. It clearly explains that job involvement and job satisfaction are different constructs and should not be confused as if they are synonymous.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

With increased recognition of the fact that people can only be the long term competitive advantage in this post-globalized era, organizations are showing keen interest in ensuring higher levels of job satisfaction and job involvement among their employees. Here, one must understand the fact that job/work occupies an important place in the total life space of an employee; affecting him/her in variety of ways. Realizing this, since times immemorial, organizations have been concerned about what employees think about their working life, whether they are satisfied, and how much involved they are in their job. This may be because of expected interrelationships of employee feeling satisfied with the job, getting highly involved in the job, displaying greater work motivation, performing at a benchmark level and thereby augmenting organizational efforts in achieving the strategic goals.

But, while trying to boost employee morale and motivation by focusing on their job satisfaction and job involvement; one faces the issue of whether job involvement and job satisfaction are similar in some ways or entirely different or one job attitude leads to the other; and if it is so, which one precedes the other. Considering this, present Conceptual Paper throws realistic light on this problem of semantic on the basis of careful review and analysis of earlier research studies.

### 2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF JOB INVOLVEMENT:

Taking clue from the term 'Job Involvement' itself, we can say that 'Job Involvement' is an indicator of how much an employee is involved in the job. Conceptually, job involvement is an employee's work related attitude which is reflected in his/her enthusiasm, zeal and interest in job.

In the opinion of Lodahl & Kenjer (1965), who developed the most celebrated and widely used measure of job involvement, job involvement affects people for whom job constitutes the most important portion of life. Thus, job involvement can be conceptualized as "the degree to which a person identifies psychologically with work or the importance of work in his total self image." So, in a way, job involvement refers to the internalization of values about the goodness of work or the importance of work in the total worth of the person, and thereby it provides an insight about the ease with

which the person can be further socialized by the organization, in the organization.

Supporting the same notion, Agarwala (1978), who has done pioneering research for developing the scale to measure job involvement in Indian context, refers to job involvement as an individual's willingness to invest himself/herself in pursuit of job activities perceived to be meaningful. In his opinion, a highly job-involved person is sure to demonstrate a strong desire to be at work, would be willing to exert himself/herself to cope with the demands of the job, consider the work activities as self-rewarding etc. So, job involvement can be considered as an indicator of an individual's commitment towards his/her own work/job.

Saleh & Hosek (1976) put forward four different interpretations of job involvement, as follows. In their opinion, an individual is job involved:



- When work to him/her is a central life interest;
- When he/she actively participates in the job;
- When he/she perceives performance as consistent with his/her self-concept;
- When he/she perceives performance as central to self-esteem.

Gorn & Kanungo (1980) have conceptualized the notion of job involvement as having two components:

- The degree to which an individual actively participates in a particular job, and
- A psychological state of identification relative to other activities (family, leisure), i.e., the importance of work in the person's self image.

Thus, job involvement also reflects one's emotional attachment to one's job (Cheloha & Farr, 1980). Brooke, et al; (1988) considers job involvement as the degree to which an individual is absorbed in or preoccupied with his/her job.

All the above definitions have a common thread or are centered around a common theme that a job involved person is the one for whom work is a very important part of life and who is affected very much personally by his/her whole job situation; the work itself, his/her coworkers, the company and such others. Thus, employees with high level of job involvement strongly identify with and really care about the kind of work they do (Robbins & Sanghi, 2006).

Thus, the amount of job involvement an individual will have with his/her job will depend upon the affirmative strength with which he/she psychologically perceives the various facets of his/her job and job environment; while the non-involved employee does his/her living off-the-job. In other words, work is not as important a part of his/her psychological life, his/her interests are elsewhere, and the core of his/her self-image, the essential part of his/her identity, is not greatly affected by the kind of work he/she does or how well he/she does it.

### 3.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF JOB SATISFACTION:

Taking clue from the term 'Job Satisfaction' itself, we can say that 'Job Satisfaction' refers to an employee's feeling of satisfaction on the job. It is an indication of how content an individual is with his or her job. It refers to the total relationship between an employee and the employer in terms of employees' expectations and its fulfillment by the employer.

Job Satisfaction is the most frequently researched primary work/job attitude in the domains of Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource Management. Many experts distinguish between 'Affective Job Satisfaction' and 'Cognitive Job Satisfaction'. 'Affective Job Satisfaction' is the extent of pleasurable emotional feelings one has about one's job in totality (Thompson & Phua, 2012); and is different from 'Cognitive Job Satisfaction', which is the extent of one's satisfaction with only some particular facets of the job like pay, working hours, superior-subordinate relationship and such other aspects of the job (Moorman, 1993).



According to Hoppock (1935), "Job Satisfaction refers to any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause an employee to say I am satisfied with my job."

Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values.

Job satisfaction is also conceptualized as the general attitude of a person toward his or her job (Robbins & Sanghi, 2006).

Over the years, various theories of job satisfaction tend to assign various degrees of importance to sources of satisfaction, which can be classified into two categories namely Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Intrinsic sources depend on the individual characteristics of the person, such as attitudes. Extrinsic sources are situational, and depend on the environment, such as workplace climate.

### 4.0 JOB INVOLVEMENT V/S JOB SATISFACTION – INSIGHTS FROM PRIOR RESEARCHES:

The problem of semantic seems to be prevailing in case of the two widely researched work attitudes namely – job satisfaction and job involvement also. Prior empirical researches reveal varied and inconsistent results regarding the role and place occupied by job involvement in terms of its relationship with the other job attitude – job satisfaction. Many researchers (Kanungo, 1979; Gorn & Kanungo, 1980; Blau, 1985; Brooke, et al; 1988) opined that Job involvement is both conceptually and empirically distinct from job satisfaction. Even though, several studies (Lodahl & Kenjer, 1965; Weissenberg & Gruenfeld, 1968; Lawler (III) & Hall, 1970; Gechman & Wiener, 1975; Saal, 1978; Kanungo, 1979; Rabinowitz & Hall, 1981) have tried to identify job involvement as a distinct work attitude, the problem of delineating job involvement from other seemingly similar work attitude namely job satisfaction, has still remained.

Over the years, several research studies tried to unearth the distinctions between these two constructs; but the results are confusing. Surprisingly, little empirical evidence of their discriminant validity is reported (Blau, 1985; Morrow, 1983; Mathieu & Farr, 1991). Added to this, research also indicates similar sort of correlations between these two work attitudes and other important job related variables like absenteeism and turnover.

While some studies indicate that job involvement is an index of well-being along with job satisfaction (Morris & Koch, 1979; Dreher, 1980; Sekaran & Mowday, 1981), others suggest that job involvement may be a predictor of job satisfaction (Gechman & Wiener, 1975; Ben-Porat, 1980; Rabinowitz, 1985). A few studies also provide limited support for job involvement as a mediator of the relationship of individual and job situation variables with job satisfaction and other variables (Dailey & Morgon, 1978; Batlis, 1978; Saal, 1978). One study (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977) even reported that job involvement is an outcome of job satisfaction.

So, in the absence of rigorous empirical evidence of discriminant validity between job satisfaction and job involvement; coupled with similarities in their relations with other variables raise the possibility that they may not be distinct. (Brooke, et al; 1988). Even Lodahl & Kenjer (1965) found that in a sample of engineers, job satisfaction and job involvement had roughly the same factorial content.

On conceptual ground, Locke (1976) distinguished job satisfaction as a positive emotional state reflecting an 'affective response' to the job situation, from job involvement, which is defined as a 'cognitive belief' state reflecting the degree of psychological identification with one's job (Lawler (III) & Hall, 1970; Locke, 1976; Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977; Kanungo, 1979). Although both these constructs refer to a specific job only, several researchers (Locke, 1976; Kanungo, 1979) tried to distinguish between the emotional state of liking one's job (job satisfaction) and the cognitive belief state of psychological identification with one's job (job involvement).

In the opinion of Kanungo (1979), satisfaction of needs on-the-job may be a sufficient but not a necessary condition for job involvement. So, in his opinion, satisfaction might increase the likelihood of job involvement, it is not the definition of job involvement itself.

Further, several studies (Lawler (III) & Hall, 1970; Hackman & Lawler (III), 1971; Wanous, 1974; Brief & Aldag, 1975) found that person-job interactions occur in the prediction of job satisfaction; and therefore, job involvement and job satisfaction are distinct work attitudes.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION:

Based on in-depth analysis of the earlier research studies attempting to delineate Job Involvement and Job Satisfac-

tion, we can conclude that even though job satisfaction and job involvement may appear to be the same construct or merely different labels for the same phenomenon of emotional attachment to the job; the fact remains that these two are separate and distinct constructs. People who treat these two constructs as synonymous usually ignore the fact that it is possible for some persons to be highly satisfied, but not involved, and for others to be highly involved, but not satisfied.

Thus, Job Satisfaction and Job Involvement – the two primary work related attitudes – are different from each other; however they both share some commonalities with each other in terms of their positive impact on important work variables.

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