Employee Job Search Motivation factors: An evidence from electricity provider company in Malaysia

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Abstract

Having unpleasant feelings about job may lead individuals to search alternative mechanisms in order to reduce the dissatisfaction. This study aims to investigate the motivation factors that influence the employed employees to search for a new job. The data were collected from a well-known Malaysia electricity provider company. Three hundred observation was used to test the hypothesis. The data were analyzed by using Correlation Bivariate analysis. The results illustrate that the environment is the most influential job search motivation factor.

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Keywords: Motivation factors, employed employees, electricity provider, correlation bivariate analysis, the environment.

1. Background

Recruitment has a crucial impact on decision-making within the organizations and by individuals (Momin, & Mishra, 2015; Breaugh, 2012). Job dissatisfaction is an important issue for many people including managers, customers and employees, as well as a matter for organizations. This is because, in general, job dissatisfaction probably contributes to several issues such as mental and physical health, lower level of turnover and absenteeism (Jha & Bhattacharrya, 2012). Voluntarily turnover has been detected as the serious problem for some companies in Asia such as Malaysia, Taiwan, etc (Ahmad & Bakar, 2003). Ramlal (2004) views that job hopping has become a culture for many employees in Asia. These show the employees that are having unpleasant feelings about job may lead individuals to search alternative mechanisms in order to reduce the dissatisfaction (Jha & Bhattacharrya, 2012).

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Rosse & Saturay (2004) claim that the more dissatisfied an individual is, the more likely he will engage in negative reactive behaviours, such as quitting, rather than adaptive behaviours, such as problem solving or adjusting expectations. The conclusion is that quitting is a possible behavioural outcome from job dissatisfaction.

Job dissatisfaction in a current job leads to the search for a new job (Ito et al, 2014). Job search can be used as a means of improving employment conditions in one’s current organization (Wallace & Tauber, 2014). Job search behaviour can occur in a variety ways, depending on employees’ needs, motivations and/or expectations (Liu et al, 2014). In theory of motivation, previous researchers relate the influence of motivation in deriving job satisfaction or decreasing job dissatisfaction (Jha & Bhattacharyya, 2012); which will make an employee motivated at workplace (Tyagi, 2015), motivated to do work (Hayati & Caniago, 2012).

2. Understanding job search motivation in recruitment context

Motivated employees are needed to ensure the operational health of each organisation. This is because motivated employees help businesses to succeed, as they are more productive (Almacik et al., 2012). Hence, motivated employees can contribute to making an organisation more valuable and profitable (McKenzie-Mohr & Schultz, 2014).

From a job search view, motivation is an encouragement for employees to search for a new job (Altman et al, 2015). This is because the employees expect that their expectation can be fulfilled in the new place perhaps. The expectations can be viewed in terms of 1) a new expectations (after they started or they have experienced for sometimes in their existing job) or 2) the expectations that they expected since day one they started their existing job. Employees are motivated to search a new job due to job dissatisfaction that faced in the existing organization (Bickford, 2005). Dissatisfaction leads to the question of what job attributes employees seeking a change are most likely to be looking for in alternative employment. If one assumes that job seekers are motivated to shift jobs because of dissatisfaction with the characteristics of their current position, what then might be the most important characteristics they will be hoping to find in advertisements for positions elsewhere?, and how will these impact their decision to apply?

In relation with the above discussion, job search motivation does reflect the preference of job characteristics within job search context; the right job characteristics able to attract a range of quality job applicants (Costello, 2006). In contrast, failure to attract the right job applicants indicates the unsuccessful results of recruitment (Swider et al, 2015) This is crucial to ensure the retention of quality employees and the financial success of the company in the long run (Momin, & Mishra, 2015). Substandard recruitment results in an organization failing to hire the right potential employees (Swider et al, 2015). This may incur the cost of further recruiting for the organization and may contribute to a decreasing level of job satisfaction of new employees (Delfgaauw, 2007).

Recruitment from the employee’s perspective is about an employee’s attempts to match his/her knowledge, skills and ability with the opportunities offered by the employer (organisation) (Kristof, 1996); it is more about an employee’s desire to satisfy their desires and needs. Similar to Kennedy (2005), Kristof (1996) found that experienced employees are much more concerned with fulfilling their unmet expectations. Thus, from an employee's perspective, a job search is concerned with the fit between the individual and the opportunities and resources offered by the organization. Clearly, goodness-of-fit is important to the employee when engaging in the recruitment process.

2.1 Job search motivation factors

Helipota (2005) defines motivation as “a person’s active participation and commitment to achieve the prescribed results”. This suggests that individual motivation is important in order for organisations to function well. Without motivation, employees cannot offer their best, resulting in the company’s performance being less efficient. To be effective, managers need to understand what motivates employees within the context of the roles they perform. Of all the functions a manager performs, motivating employees is arguably the most complex. This is due
in part to the fact that what motivates employees changes constantly (Bowen & Radhakrishna, 1991). For example, when an employee’s income increases, money becomes less of a motivator (Kovach, 1987). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the factors (intrinsic and extrinsic) that may cause the changes in employee motivation.

Many previous researchers (Almacik et al., 2012; Hayati & Caniago, 2012; Helepota, 2005; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gallagher & Einhorn, 1976; Herzberg, 1966) noted that intrinsic motivation factors contribute to the improvement of job tasks completed by the employees. In addition, Herzberg (1956) argues motivation is derived from the intrinsic motivation factor. In addition, intrinsic motivation also contributes to the individual having fun and enjoying creativity in doing the work/job (Schmidhuber, 2010). With respect to the prior finding, intrinsic motivation also results in happiness among employees due to job satisfaction (Gruenberg, 1980). This seems to be a winning formula; intrinsic motivation causing satisfaction (Herzberg, 1956; 1966), subsequently leading to good job performance (Hayati & Caniago, 2012). The relationship between job performance and job satisfaction has been supported by the work of Hancer and George (2003), Iaffaldano and Muchinsky (1985), and Springer (2011). Job performance and job satisfaction generate positive attitudes (Linz & Semykina, 2012), the end result of which is the success of recruitment because of the best fit between the employee and the organization (Breaugh, 2012).

Extrinsic motivation can only be driven by external sources such as rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and in contrast to intrinsic motivation (as discussed in the previous section). Intrinsic motivation is driven by an interest and exists within an employee. Extrinsic motivation also seems to relate to employee social development (Chard et al., 2012).

The discussion above leads to the identification of factors generating extrinsic motivation as those that surround the job. These include wage, peer relationships, supervision, workplace conditions and company policy. In addition, there appears to be a relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. For example, Deci and Ryan (1985) and Ryan and Deci (2000) stress that extrinsic factors are able to increase intrinsic motivation. Thus, extrinsic motivation as well as intrinsic motivation are seen as necessary components of the current research framework.

Ryan and Deci (2000) recognise intrinsic motivation as a crucial construct in motivating people to do a particular job. Extrinsic motivation is seen as an external control reflection or true self-regulation. The above two points show that employees with job interest are able to invite joy and happiness while they are performing the task. Motivation comes from outside and employees are able to create focus and momentum in job delivery. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are connected to the basic human needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness.

In most of the prior research, different job types or job levels were used as construct components for measuring intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. For example, Armstrong (1970) found that engineers were happy with the intrinsic motivation factors, while assemblers were happy with the extrinsic motivation factors. Similarly with Nujjoo and Meyer (2012), a higher ranking technical employee was more motivated by intrinsic values, compared to the lower ranking technical employees who were more likely to identify extrinsic values as predominant in generating their job satisfaction. In contrast, Kaufman (1980) found that both higher ranking and lower ranking accountants emphasised intrinsic and extrinsic factors to the same degree when reporting on their motivations related to both job satisfaction and job performance. Therefore, the argument here is that it cannot be generalised that intrinsic motivation is more salient for employees in higher ranking positions, and that extrinsic motivations are for lower ranked employees.

3. The measurement of job search motivation

The literature mentions a variety of ways for using motivational factors in job search research. For example, firstly, Herzberg (1968) uses motivational and hygiene factors for measuring the impact of motivation towards satisfaction. Motivational factors refers to factors that are derived from inside of the job itself, while hygiene factors refers to factors that are outside of the job itself. Secondly, other researchers (Hayati & Caniago, 2012; Lundberg et al., 2009; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kufman, 1980;) have treated motivation factors in terms of extrinsic factors (external) and intrinsic factors (internal). From the discussion above it can be seen that job search motivation factors are factors that are of concern to the internal and external conditions of the job itself. Thus, this research divides job search motivation factors into three sections: (1) salary; (2) the environment; and (3) job characteristics.
Salary is reviewed in terms of good salary, better salary, and satisfied salary, and how salary is able to influence employees’ motivation in searching for alternative employment. The environment refers to factors outside of the job itself such as supervision, interpersonal relationships, company policies, and working conditions. It examines the perspectives of employees when identifying their job search motivation factors. Finally, the job characteristic is also considered in this section of research analysis and is evaluated in terms of responsibility, recognition, achievement, advancement, and the nature of the job. It is measured in order to understand the employees’ perspectives towards behaviour involved while information seeking. The question regarding the degree of consensus has been asked in order to evaluate employees' perspectives towards the behaviour of information seeking. The degree of consensus is examined using the five-point Likert scale which ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

4. Data collection

A sampling frame for this research is taken from a list of employees of an electricity provider company in Malaysia. The organization has ranges of job categories, level and job supervision responsibility. The employees were randomly selected and restricted to only who has or less than three years working experience in the organization. This is to ensure that they still remember on what they have wanted and desired in their early process of searching for a new job. Then, the questionnaire attached with a letter asking them to voluntarily participate in this study were administered. Due to this study is a voluntarily basis, then selected employees have right to refuse to answer the questionaire. As a result, considering the employees’ schedule conflicts and absenteeism, only 300 completed the questionnaire. Nineteen incomplete questionnaires were discarded.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Reliability for job search motivation factors

Measuring reliability using Cronbach’s alpha has been extensively used by researchers. Opinions differ however, with regard to the ideal threshold alpha value.

Table 1 shows the reliability analysis results for job search motivation factors and specific job-related information.

Firstly, the twelve research constructs of job search motivation factors were tested. Cronbach’s alpha for all research constructs are above 0.7, which indicate that all research constructs under job search motivation factors are reliable and acceptable to be used in the next research analysis.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Motivation Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The environment</td>
<td>0.831</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with co-workers</td>
<td>0.903</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with supervisor</td>
<td>0.883</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Content Validity for job search motivation factors

Content validity was emphasised during the development phase of the questionnaire. Crano and Brewer (2002) note that a more secure means of assuring content validity is through the use of expert panels. In this study, content validity of the measurement instrument was assessed by seeking expert opinions from two experienced members of the Human Resources staff at Tenaga Nasional Berhad.

Face validity was also examined. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) note that unlike content validity, face validity is determined after the measure has been developed. Consequently, opinions were also obtained from people directly involved with the job-search process, as they presumably have a better understanding of the job search motivation factors through their greater job searching experience. Therefore a group of 20 people were asked to review the questionnaire. Changes were made according to their recommendations.

5.3 Job Search Motivation Factors

Table 2 illustrates the mean job search motivation factors when compared within each of the four supervision responsibility levels. The comparison shows that the most influential factor that motivates employees to search for an alternative job is the environment, followed by salary and finally the job characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Supervision Responsibility</th>
<th>Mean Salary</th>
<th>Mean Environment</th>
<th>Mean Job Characteristics</th>
<th>Standard deviation Salary</th>
<th>Standard deviation Environment</th>
<th>Standard deviation Job Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No supervision</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervise and Plan</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that the environments play a role in influencing employees to search for alternative employment, and indicates that it is important for employees to have comfortable working conditions, a good relationship with supervisors and peers, and company policies for security for the employees. Even though there are only minor mean differences between salary, the environment and the job characteristics, the information can still be considered useful information for an organisation when dealing with employees’ job search motivation issues. Table 3 below shows the summary of job search motivation factors ranking.
Table 3: A Summary of job search motivation factors ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank of job search motivation factors</th>
<th>1. The environments</th>
<th>2. Salary</th>
<th>3. Job characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5.4 Examination of Backgrounds of Employees with Respect to Job Supervision Responsibility Levels in order to Identify Relationships with Job Search Motivation Factors

In this section, three hypotheses (H1, H2, H3), the backgrounds of employees with respect to the levels of job supervision responsibility were compared in order to determine the relationships with job search motivation factors. Different levels of supervision responsibility had different impacts on job search motivation factors. The results are shown in Table 4 (see table below).

H1: The higher the level of responsibility of the job seeker in his current position, the stronger salary is as a motivator for seeking a new job.

H2: The lower the level of responsibility of the job seeker in his current position, the stronger the environment is as a motivator for seeking a new job.

H3: The higher the level of responsibility of the job seeker in his current position, the greater the job characteristic is as a motivator for seeking a new job.

Table 4: Correlations between Job Supervision Responsibilities and Job Search Motivation Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pearson’s correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Salary (H1)</th>
<th>The environments (H2)</th>
<th>Job characteristics (H3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>.309</strong></td>
<td><strong>.235</strong></td>
<td><strong>.294</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Regarding Hypothesis 1, the result shows that there is a correlation between salary and job supervision responsibility. The relationship was highly significant (p=0.000). The result supports Hypothesis 1, and shows that the higher the level of job supervision responsibility, then the stronger is salary as a motivator for seeking a new job. However, the result did not support Hypothesis 2. The correlation coefficient for this relationship was positive and significant (0.235), but it was tested as a predicted negative. Therefore Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Finally, regarding Hypothesis 3, the direction of the correlations was significant and positive. The result for each item was highly significant and positive and overall this supports Hypothesis 3. The result indicates that those employees who hold higher job supervision responsibilities, strongly consider the nature of the job when seeking new employment, thus supporting Hypothesis 3.

5.5 Summary of Research Objective

Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 were developed to answer current research objective. The objective was to examine the backgrounds of employees with respect to the levels of job supervision responsibility and to identify the relationships with job search motivation factors. The research around Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, shows that when searching for a new job, a high job supervision responsibility level is influenced by salary, the environment and job
characteristics. This research believes there is a difference between levels of job supervision responsibility, towards job search motivation factors, when the search is on for a new employment opportunity. Table 5 illustrates the answer around the present research objective.

Table 5: Summary of Research Objective

| Examination of levels of job supervision responsibility towards job search motivation factors | Those with high levels of job supervision responsibility are motivated by salary, the environment job characteristics, in new-job seeking. |

6. The implications of the Assessment of Job Search Motivation

The theoretical contribution of the current project is in adding a new construct for measuring the potentially influential search motivator. The new variable of job supervision responsibility has been added for a reason. In terms of theory, the construct “level of job supervision responsibility” does not necessarily represent the level of job or job category. Manove (1997) noted that job supervision responsibility can be known only after employees start their job. From cross-tabulation analysis, the current research has found that employees in the lower level job categories are not necessarily holding low levels of supervision responsibility. Further, there are employees in high-level categories with low job supervision responsibility.

From a practical standpoint, the research helps the manager to understand thoroughly the facts behind employee motivation. The consequence of this however is that the organisation either retains or loses quality employees. Firstly, when the manager is able to understand employees’ motivation, this results in him being able to prepare the ideal job design that will encompass the right job characteristics. This is necessary in order to have the best fit. This suggestion agrees with recruitment theory (Billsberry, 2008; Breaugh, 2012).

Secondly, the manager being able to understanding the role of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is very important. This approach helps the manager to prepare strategies for solving decreasing intrinsic motivation problems amongst employees, which occurs when the extrinsic need is greater than the intrinsic motivation. It is important that intrinsic motivation is recognized within employees as such information helps to generate their true motivation. True motivation helps employees feel a sense of belonging towards the organization, which in turn will benefit the organization with its long-term outcomes, such as productivity and profitability. Scholars in motivation have argued that intrinsic motivation is important in generating positive employee attitudes (Cho a & Perry 2012). We must recognise that positive attitudes generate positive job outcomes.

7. Conclusion and Directions for Future Study

This study found that different background employees have different job search motivation, then led to different types of job information sought. However, the current research focuses only within job supervision responsibility context. It would be recommended to expand the focus context, so that can explore the complexity of relationship between job title and category, and organisational level and job supervision responsibility.

The outcome of current research is to improve employees’ satisfaction. At workplace consideration, job satisfaction is an important dimension of employee well-being (Grant et al, 2007). The satisfaction is achieved when the employees have happiness and excitement in performing the task (Russell & Carroll, 1999). Future research could explore information on the employees’ wellbeing, as it would be interesting to examine whether the usage conditions would also work well with current research framework.

References


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