Individual factors affecting military forces’ job satisfaction

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Abstract

Aims: Job satisfaction is one of the most challenging organizational concepts and the basis of many policies and guidelines of management for promoting the efficiency and productivity of organization. This research was conducted to determine the personal factors that affect soldiers’ job satisfaction.

Methods: This research was a descriptive-analytical study and its participants were 165 soldiers that were selected according to stratified proportional sampling design from military forces. In order to assess job satisfaction, Visoky & Crom job satisfaction questionnaire was used after some revisions and modifications in its items. The obtained data were analyzed at descriptive and inferential levels.

Results: In the domain of personality characteristics positive, decisive and active individuals had higher job satisfaction in contrast with the other two groups (i.e. Inactive, negative and aggressive). The education level, months being in service as a soldier, the kind of membership in Basij, and the class of job had a significant relationship with job satisfaction.

Conclusion: Job satisfaction is a variable which is affected by personality characteristics and factors such as the education level, months being as soldier, the kind of membership, and the class of job and these factors are effective in increase of soldiers’ satisfaction and thereby their increased performance.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Duty Soldiers, Personality characteristics

Introduction

Job satisfaction is among the issues which had been frequently studied since 1920's in various organizations. According to many experts’ opinion, it is one of the most challenging organizational concepts and the basis of many policies and guidelines of management for promoting the productivity and efficiency of organization [1]. Job satisfaction consists of the extent of positive feelings and attitudes that people have towards their job [2].

Victor Vroom defines job satisfaction as the mental tendencies of individuals towards the role they play in their job. In this definition, considering the role concept that includes the efficiency in performing a duty by a person, it can be said that employees find themselves beneficial in the organization and this gives them the sense of satisfaction [3]. Fisher and Hannah consider job satisfaction as a psychological factor and think of it as a kind of emotional compatibility with the job and employment conditions. In other words, if a job gives the desired enjoy to an individual, he/she would be satisfied with it. In contrast, if the given job does not fulfill the desired satisfaction, the individual would start blaming it and seeks change [4].

Locke defines job satisfaction as a kind of feeling and believes that job satisfaction includes four following factors: salary, promotion conditions, occupational field (job conditions and benefits), human factors and relationships with colleagues and managers as well as occupational and professional characteristics [5]. In addition to these factors, personal characteristics of employees also affect their job satisfaction level. Age is considered as one of these characteristics. Older employees are often more satisfied. Intelligence also affects job satisfaction. Thus if intelligence is compatible with job requirements, they will have greater satisfaction if the employee’s intelligence is more or less than the task requisites, it will cause unhappiness [6].

Those with negative attitudes always complain about anything that is related to the job. No matter how important the job is, they always look for excuses to complain about. Age, seniority and experience have a considerable effect on job satisfaction. It is expected that older staffs and those with higher experience have more satisfaction with their jobs. Also, some personality traits cause increased job satisfaction [2]. Job satisfaction is to some extent a function of genetic factors and personal characteristics. Individual differences are important in job satisfaction as much as environmental characteristics. In confirmation of this hypothesis, a recently conducted comprehensive analysis has proved that job satisfaction is highly correlated with the situational characteristics such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, internal control and the stability sense. Other studies have also shown that the
job satisfaction is associated with personal characteristics in the time course of two to fifty years [7].

Research has shown that attitudes affect not only the individual’s performance, but also the performance of work team. For example, groups working with positive attitude weight (i.e. the average positive attitude) works more productive than a working team with negative attitude weight. Overall, studies show that people’s tendency toward positive or negative feelings play an effective role, not only for the individual, but also for the organization [8]. Research shows that people with inner self-control have more work motivation, job satisfaction and greater acceptance of error and higher income and productivity. These people believe that they can take the control of environment or that they can have a decisive role in relation to it. But those with external control with structured jobs have more efficiency and show more compliance [7].

The value theory claims that job satisfaction is explained by finding that whether the job gives the person the possibility of maintaining private and personal values or not [9]. Moreover, according to the Super theory, the first factor affecting the path of choosing a profession and job is the opinion and beliefs of the individual about him/herself [4]. Job satisfaction generally increases with age. Studies show that satisfaction is lower among younger workers [10]. People with type "A" personality, in spite of much irritability, have higher job satisfaction [11]. Studies conducted on middle and higher ranked managers, has shown that the scores of people with type "A" personality have negative relationship with external source of control, and positive relationship with job satisfaction. Some research also shows that younger managers have more job satisfaction. In addition, some studies have shown that job satisfaction is a function of individual’s freedom in selecting the desired job, the correspondence of education level and specialty with job, the correspondence of degree and occupational status of individual compared to their colleagues and the psychological atmosphere governing the organization and people with bachelors and higher degrees and junior officers have expressed the lowest job satisfaction [12]. The present study aimed to evaluate the effect of some personal characteristics of soldiers (personality, education, marital status, previous military service and history of military service in Basij and service category) on their satisfaction, in order to provide suggestions for increasing the satisfaction of soldiers during the military service.

Methods

This descriptive-analytical study was conducted in 2008 on the military forces. 165 subjects of this population were selected using stratified sampling method.

The main data collection tool was the closed response questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted of three parts of personal characteristics, job satisfaction and personality. The job satisfaction assessment part of the questionnaire was developed based on Visoky and Crom job satisfaction questionnaire by the taking the experts’ opinions and making the necessary changes in the questionnaire proportionate with the subject of research and the required information in five fields (direct supervisor, duties, health and welfare facilities, side benefits and appropriate rewards and other soldiers) [2]. The personality assessment part of this questionnaire has been taken from the Dobrin study in which some questions were modified after taking feedback from several psychological professors according to the research subject. This questionnaire consists of 29 instrumental questions for evaluating the personality of individuals from three aspects (passive, decisive and aggressive) [2]. The reliability of the mentioned questionnaire and its main components was significant at alpha 0.01 and had high validity (satisfaction with direct supervisor with 11 items; 0.87, satisfaction with assigned duties with 10 items duties; 0.79, satisfaction of health facilities with eight items; 0.85, satisfaction of the side interest and appropriate rewards with six items; 0.66, satisfaction with the other soldiers with 10 items; 0.93 and job satisfaction with 45 items; 0.91).

Data analysis was done at two descriptive and inferential levels. At the descriptive level, statistical indexes such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and at the inferential level, independent t-test, LSD post hoc test and correlation coefficient were used.

Results

Satisfaction of individuals with assigned duties, facilities, other soldiers and job satisfaction based on the personality type had significant differences (p<0.5; Table 1).

Satisfaction with facilities and their components in terms of education level of soldiers had a significant difference (p<0.05). Soldiers with under diploma education were more satisfied with the facilities compared with those with associate degree and bachelors’ degree and above. Soldiers’ satisfaction
with facilities was significantly different based on the category of service place (p<0.05). Satisfaction of facilities based on duration of being in service had significant difference (p<0.05; Table 2).

Table 1- Satisfaction with different aspects based on personality type (LSD post hoc test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics → Satisfaction ↓</th>
<th>Personality type</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assigned Duties</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>-4.77</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>-3.92</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>0.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Soldiers</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Soldiers</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>15.40</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfaction and its components had no significant difference between married and single soldiers (p>0.05; Table 3).

Table 3- Satisfaction according to marital status (T test; df=163)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics → Satisfaction ↓</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>Level of significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct supervisor</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>0.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned Duties</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>-1.180</td>
<td>0.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>-0.339</td>
<td>0.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side benefits</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>0.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other soldiers</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>10.93</td>
<td>-1.098</td>
<td>0.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>-0.763</td>
<td>0.446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Soldiers satisfied with their direct supervisor, were satisfied with all components except for the facilities of service place. In general there was a significant correlation between their overall job satisfaction, and satisfaction with the direct supervisor. On the other hand, the only significant correlation between soldiers’ satisfaction and personality characteristics was related to satisfaction with the assigned duties (Table 5).
soldiers and general occupational satisfaction. This finding means that passive people are less satisfied with their assigned duties compared to active people, and active individuals have had more consent of welfare facilities. To sum, job satisfaction of active people was more than passive and aggressive individuals. Therefore, it can be said that job satisfaction and personality are correlated and according to George, optimism of individuals and their tendency toward positive emotions, can be very effective not only for the individual and the state of happiness or well being, but also for the organization [8]. It is evident that individuals have different personalities and jobs possess the same characteristics as well. Accordingly, many attempts have been done to place people at the fitting jobs [13]. Findings about the relationship of education and job satisfaction indicate that there has been significant difference between the levels of satisfaction with facilities in terms of soldiers’ education level. Thus, soldiers with elementary school education have been more satisfied with the facilities. In other words, whenever the level of education is lower, job satisfaction will be higher. This result is consistent with Hardman study because in the mentioned study, people with bachelor and higher education, have expressed the lowest job satisfaction [12] and is also consistent with the theory of equality, stating that whenever the person feels the equality of inputs and outputs, the satisfaction feeling will be created in him/her [8]. It is likely that the forces with higher education feel inequality. Therefore, this issue could decrease their satisfaction or based on the expectancy theory, the type and amount of expectations of forces with higher education may be higher, therefore they achieve satisfaction with more difficulty [2]. According to the Vroom's theory of reductive and multiplicative model, when the total difference of needs is higher, the satisfaction will be lower [14]. So it can be concluded that forces with higher education feel that their needs have been less satisfied and thus less satisfaction is obtained.

Regarding the relation of marital status with job satisfaction, the results indicate that the score of job satisfaction and its components, had not been significantly different among married and single soldiers, and this finding had been true for all components of satisfaction. Perhaps, among the reasons of the similarity of job satisfaction of single and married soldiers is lack of commanders’ strictness and letting married soldiers leave and observing their condition that have prevented dissatisfaction.

Moreover, the results of the study, regarding the relationship between job satisfaction and months being in service, indicate that the score of satisfaction with facilities in terms of months being in service had significant difference. Therefore, soldiers with service history of less than 7 months were more satisfied with facilities. Perhaps, as individuals’ work history increases, their expectations would also increase and they will be more aware of their rights, so their satisfaction will be lower. This finding is consistent with the expectancy theory [2]. Some research including Chandrabeh et al also showed that younger managers are more satisfied with their job [12].

Regarding the relation of membership in Basij and job satisfaction, results suggest that there was significant relationship between the scores of satisfaction with assigned duties, side benefits and other soldiers and overall job satisfaction in terms of their membership type, so that the score of satisfaction with assigned duties have been significantly higher for active members of Basij compared to the normal members. The active members of Basij have had higher job satisfaction than those who were not members of Basij at all. In addition, people who were not member of Basij at all, compared to those who had been members (active or normal), had been less satisfied with the side benefits and appropriate rewards and other soldiers. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Basij members have better adaptation or compatibility with organization compared with non-Basij soldiers, due to acquisition of required trainings and familiarity with Basij organizational structure and having the mindset of attending military service. Therefore, more satisfaction is observed in this group. The value theory suggests that job satisfaction is obtained when the job offers the possibility of preserving the private and personal values for the individual [9] and therefore confirms that serving in Basij can affect the level of satisfaction.

Furthermore, Super et al. (Super Theory) belief, explains that people enjoy jobs which they are interested in and capable of doing [4] and this is the reason for satisfaction of active Basij members, since they are both interested in serving in Army and Basij and also due to learning of trainings in Basij and acquiring experience, they have obtained the ability to perform the required missions.

Among the other factors associating with satisfaction, is the use of active Basij member soldiers in services provided by Army, including service derogation, exemption from training etc., which is consistent with the equality and expectancy theory and affects the satisfaction.

Among the other results of the study is the relationship
between job satisfaction and soldiers’ service category. Satisfaction with facilities and side benefits in terms of their category of work place has had a significant difference. In general, soldiers who have been serving at the administrative, protective and administrative units have been more satisfied with welfare facilities. Moreover, soldiers of cultural units have been less satisfied compared to those of administrative and security, with the side benefits and appropriate rewards. This is due to the fact that those who are working in the administrative and cultural sections are more educated, and as a result their expectation is higher and thus their satisfaction is less. The second factor, which is effective as an intrusive variable, is working experience. Usually less experienced workforces are employed for security affairs and later will be employed in other jobs such as cultural, administrative and administrative affairs. The staff’s job satisfaction is considered as managerial important topics in the organizations that are effective in occupational success, individual’s efficiency and satisfaction. Every manager and employer somehow seeks to increase job satisfaction in employees and forces under his command, because high occupational satisfaction in an organization can play an important role in achieving the goals and programs of the organization. Commanders and managers’ attention to the satisfaction of the individuals under their command will lead to the increased performance of soldiers.

Conclusion

Using personality and psychological tests before soldiers’ selection, making soldiers’ free time more beneficial, considering facilities and merit allotment with respect to the educational level and individuals’ degree, applying them in service categories regarding their expertise and interest, avoiding unjust confrontations and trying to observe regulations while dealing soldiers, treat them with fatherly manner, establishing counseling centers and introducing aggressive and passive forces to these centers to evaluate their problems can be effective in creating job satisfaction in soldiers during the military service.

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