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## **JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES OF THAILAND**

**Sarunya Tarat**

*Naresuan University International College, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand*  
[sarunyat@nu.ac.th](mailto:sarunyat@nu.ac.th)

**Manassaphorn Wongsawat**

*Naresuan University International College, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand*  
[manassaphornw58@nu.ac.th](mailto:manassaphornw58@nu.ac.th)

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### **Abstract**

*This study focused on job satisfaction in various aspects: day – to – day activities, work environment, compensation, and communication. In addition, the study investigated the factors leading to potential problems such as absenteeism and turnover. All participants were from Social Sciences Cluster academic staff aged between 25 to 60 years old in the public universities situated at the lower northern region of Thailand. The survey questionnaire was applied as research instrument to collect the quantitative data. The findings revealed that the overall job satisfaction of the academic staff was high. Day – to – day activities was ranked as the highest and compensation was ranked as the lowest. Additionally, the most influential factors that led to the problem at work belonged to work overload, lack of communication and lack of professional growth and development, respectively.*

### **Keywords**

Job Satisfaction, Academic Staff, Factors of Job Satisfaction, University Level, Public University, Thailand

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## **1. Introduction**

Job is an activity often performed in exchange for payment for a living. A person can resume a job by becoming an employee, a lecturer, a volunteer, or even starting one's own business. The duration of job may range from temporary (e.g., part-time job) to a lifetime. Job life is one of significant parts of our daily lives that causes a large amount of stress. Due to the competitive nature of the job environment, most of the people are spending most of their time on working (Ahsan et. al, 2009). The efficiency, quality of their work and behaviors depend on their satisfaction on jobs. Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as "an emotional state related to the positive or negative appraisal of job experiences". It might be linked to performance, organizational productivity and other issues, including turnover and absenteeism (Toker, 2011). A person who is satisfied with his or her job holds a positive attitude towards it, whereas the one who is dissatisfied holds a negative attitude (Robbins, 1993). For example, if people are satisfied with their jobs owing to day-to-day activities, work environment, compensation and communication, positive effects on the organization tend to arise. Employee satisfaction can improve productivity, reduce staff turnover and enhance creativity and commitment (Ahsan et. al, 2009). On the other hand, if they are dissatisfied with their jobs, this may leave negative impacts to the organization. They may not perform tasks well and their work quality might not be effective.

University is one of education sectors that runs about facilitating learning and providing knowledge, skills and experience to learners or members of the public. It is regarded as the highest source of knowledge and awareness production institutions which train the subject in different fields of life (Stankovsk et. al, 2017). Machado-Taylor et al. (2010) found that job satisfaction and motivation among lecturers play a significant role in contributing to positive outcomes in the quality of the institutions and the students' learning. A positive and healthy university structure increases lecturers' job satisfaction and better job motivation (Stankovsk et. al, 2017).

However, understanding whether lecturers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their work can result in improvements and innovations in their teaching (Duong 2013). For example, if lecturers are satisfied with their jobs, they are more likely to show up for work, have higher levels of performance and remain in their profession (Daft, 2005). Conversely, job dissatisfaction arises, job performance will be decreased and affect the contribution to education sector (Masum, Azad, & Beh, 2015). For instance, if lecturers are dissatisfied with their jobs due to various factors such

as day-to-day activities, work environment and compensation, their effectiveness of teaching might be low and students will also be affected from their job dissatisfaction. In worse case, it might lead to turnover.

There are also others factors such as salary, benefits, working environment, or workload, but, according to my reading, it is co-workers and students that may have the most influence. In a case of co-workers, teachers are required to interact with one another in order to get their job done as well as to exchange the ideas for professional development. If they lack of communication or interactions, this might cause less professional insight resulting in low teaching efficacy, motivation to stay in their professions to obtain academic promotion. In a case of students, students develop their thinking abilities through interaction with other students, adults, in this case, lecturers and the physical world (Wertsch, 1997). The absence of communication or interactions with teachers may impact negatively on students' attitude towards their study and learning capabilities leading to undesired academic achievement. Consequently, it may decrease both of teachers and students' satisfaction.

In higher education, most studies emphasize on students as "customers", and evaluate their level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their programs of study (Comm & Mathaisel, 2000), yet they generally neglect teachers' job satisfaction. While many employees satisfaction have been performed, very few associate with university professors or academic staff in general (Ward & Sloane, 1998). Therefore, the researchers investigated the level of job satisfaction among academic staff who are teaching in Social Sciences cluster academic staff at the public universities in the lower northern area of Thailand since the number of academic staff has been increasing continuously. On the other hand, there has also been turnover due to several factors. According to this circumstance, it may affect student's development. Also, the researchers studied the factors affecting the potential problems such as absenteeism and turnover.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Day-to-Day Activities**

Many people might see that undergraduate teaching is only a lecturers' job. However, that is not true. Lecturers' jobs are more than that. Their jobs include doing research, grant writing and academic service. One major satisfaction of being a lecturer is work itself. According to Marston and Brunetti (2009), professors' source of satisfaction comes from their being able to learn and grow themselves. They see that teaching is like gardening because every year they

receive a new chance and also meet challenges that keep them growing in different ways. Also, they pointed out the passion and joy for subjects could drive the relationships with students and dedication in teaching. Furthermore, they state in their study that “Professors' love of their subject had a powerful impact on their remaining in the classroom” (p.328). They stay in the classroom that they teach because they have got conversations and shared inquiring with students. Students have questions to ask professors and professors have got a chance to share their ideas and knowledge to students; that’s what they love.

Apart from their teaching, professors also spend their time in their research, grant writing and academic services. An increasing in number of work assignment and a hectic day results in emotional exhaustion. According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011), workload and hectic workday cannot be separated since both of them can be referred as time pressure. The increasing workload or work assignment result in less time for rest and recovery leading to emotional exhaustion. The increasing workload is due to multiple cases such as an increasing demand for documentation with parents, the administration and scoring of achievement tests, frequent changes of the curriculum, and participation in a number of school development projects. Additionally, Bozeman and Gaughan (2016) suggested that faculty members spend most of their time on research (18.65 hours per week), undergraduate teaching (9.76 hours), and grant writing (4.28 hours) respectively.

## **2.2 Work Environment**

Work environment is very significant since it retains lecturers in the long run and motivates them to work harder. Poor communication, lack of relationship with co-workers and recognition, and a disregard for lecturer health can greatly reduce job satisfaction. On the contrary, if the workplace is friendly and collaborative, it leads to higher job satisfaction. In this case, a healthy university environment will not only enhance the job satisfaction of lecturers, but it will at the same time develop the learning environment and increase the productivity of the university (Osakwe, 2014). According to Masum, Azad and Beh (2015), positive working conditions diminish employee turnover and induce a lower degree of job stress. Undesirable outcome on employees’ dedication is prone to arise if they are dissatisfied with the working conditions. As a consequence, it may result in turnover decision. In addition, Bozeman and Gaughan (2016) stated that lecturers’ satisfaction heavily depends on one’s views about co-workers’ perception of oneself and one’s work. This means if they are perceived in a good way, their satisfaction tends to be high. In contrast, if they are perceived in an undesirable way and

lack of relationship with co-workers, they are more likely to be dissatisfied. Marston and Brunetti (2009) said that that having good relationships with co-workers appears to have been considerably more significant than relationships with administrators in lecturers' decision to continue their teaching at the university.

Apart from co – workers, students are also the main of satisfaction. According to Grayson and Alvarez (2008), academic staff were more likely to stay motivated and enthusiastic in their teaching if they succeeded in keeping a positive relationship with their students. In addition, facilities in the faculties are considered as one component of work environment as well. Facilities in this case means computers, projectors, microphones, library, and rooms. Fabunmi (1997) stated in the study that that when facilities were provided, they assisted in teaching and learning programs resulting in better academic achievement of students.

### **2.3 Compensation**

Compensation is one necessary factor that attracts and retains lecturers in their teaching. It refers to “all forms of financial returns, tangible services, and benefits employees receive as part of their employment relationship” (Milkovich and Newman, 1999, p. 6). Compensation includes monetary and non-monetary components and it is a major factor of satisfaction. Another study by Armstrong (2006) stated that employee allowances, which are considered as one component of compensation, include pensions, sick pay, insurance cover, and other many perks. Perks include something that could help employees perform their job better. The traditional perks at work are a company car, which employees can use as a personal vehicle, and additional time off, and tickets to event. On the other hand, the new common perks in the organization can be gym membership and Summer Fridays. Muguongo et. al., (2015) also said that some benefits are mandated by law such as social security, unemployment compensation and worker compensation. In addition, benefits can be treated as the payment or entitlement, such as insurance policy and employment agreement.

According to Ngidi and Ngidi (2017), fringe benefits and pay are job satisfaction factors that were ranked the lowest, respectively. This means that monetary and nonmonetary fringe benefits as well as pay and remuneration are the key factors that contributed to their low level of job satisfaction. Similarly, Ping Du et. al., (2010) stated that academic staff generally feel a lack of financial support, and they usually do not have time to take part in higher education research activities. Additionally, they also suggested that an increase in professors' enthusiasm and job satisfaction depends on the nature of their work and motivation for development.

## **2.4 Communication**

Communication is tremendously significant in the workplace since lecturers need to interact with one another in order to get jobs done effectively and to understand students' needs. They have to communicate with their co-workers, students and also their parents. However, communication can affect satisfaction in both positive and negative ways. Good communication can increase satisfaction while poor communication does the opposite. Hence, it results in a decrease in productivity and dissatisfaction in the workplace. According to Rosenfeld (1983), when lecturers communicate with their students in a defensive manner, they create a hostile classroom climate in which students feel uncomfortable and threatened, so they react by engaging in resistance and rebellion. On the contrary, the findings of Darling and Civikly (1987) shown that when lecturers communicate with their students in a supportive manner, they establish a good healthy classroom climate which results in effective communication. In addition, communication also helps find out the needs of students which results in better academic achievement.

In addition, the findings of Da Luz (2015) presented that 57% of lectures are always emotionally aware and sensitive to the needs of the students, because they feel that they are in charge of students' future. Students need supports from lecturers to accomplish their goals. Another main thing in the organization is employee voice, or in this case, lecturer voice. Alfayad and Arif (2017) mentioned that employee voice is a form of communication and expression of ideas. It can be regarded as a motivational factor, which leads to job satisfaction. Once lecturers have a chance to express their opinions and ideas at the workplace, they tend to feel more valued and appreciated resulting in higher motivation and satisfaction in the job.

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1 Participants**

The participants of this study were Social Sciences Cluster academic staff aged between 25 to 60 years old in the public universities situated at the lower northern region of Thailand.

### **3.2 Design**

Yamane's formula technique with the confidence level at 95% with the acceptable sampling error 0.05 was utilized to get the number of 208 participants from 433 people. Simple random sampling was used to choose 208 Social Science Cluster academic staff in the region.

### **3.3 Instrument**

The survey questionnaire was applied as research instrument to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire comprised of three parts: general information, the satisfaction in various aspects and the factors leading to problems at work.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The questionnaires were distributed randomly to Social Sciences Cluster academic staff and they had 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires. After they finished answering, they were required to put the questionnaire into a box provided by the researcher.

### **3.5 Data Source and Analysis**

The quantitative data analysis was conducted with data obtained from the survey questionnaires. Descriptive statistic was employed to analyze the data obtained. In addition, percentage and frequency method was used to analyze the general information such as age, gender and length of teaching as well as the factors that led to problems at work.

## **4. Results**

In this study, the researcher investigated the level of career satisfaction focusing on day-to-day activities, work environment, compensation, and communication among Social Sciences Cluster academic staff in the public university situated at the lower northern region of Thailand. Also, the researcher analyzed what factors led to potential problems. The results gained from 208 participants were analyzed as follows:

According to Table 1, it revealed the numbers and percentage of participants participated in this study in which there were 91 male academic staff (43.8%) and 117 female academic staff (56.3%).

**Table 1:** *The Distribution of Sample according to Gender (N=208)*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
<b>Male</b>	91 (43.8%)
<b>Female</b>	117 (56.3%)

Furthermore, Table 2 showed the range of participants' age. It was found that the majority of participants were between 40 to 44 years old (27.4%), while the minority of participants were between 25 – 29 years old (2.4%).

**Table 2: The Distribution of Sample According to Age (N=208)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>25 – 29</b>	5 (2.4%)
<b>30 – 34</b>	27 (13.0%)
<b>35 – 39</b>	50 (24.0%)
<b>40 – 44</b>	57 (27.4%)
<b>45 – 49</b>	35 (16.8%)
<b>50 – 54</b>	17 (8.2%)
<b>55 – 60</b>	17 (8.2%)

According to Table 3, it was found that most participants or 90 people (43.3%) have been teaching at the public universities for 10 or above 10 years. Followed by 49 academic staff (23.6%) with 4 – 6-year experience. However, there were 35 participants (16.8%) and 34 participants (16.3%) that have been teaching at the public university for 1 – 3 years and 7 – 9 years, respectively.

**Table 3: The Distribution of Sample according to Length of Teaching (N=208)**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1 – 3</b>	35 (16.8%)
<b>4 – 6</b>	49 (23.6%)
<b>7 – 9</b>	34 (16.3%)
<b>10 or above 10</b>	90 (43.3%)

As shown in Table 4, the overall satisfaction towards the job was in a high level. The results presented that most of the academic staff were satisfied with their job because if they had a chance to choose a job again, they would still choose the teaching profession. Nevertheless, the

findings also showed that those academic staff were least satisfied with opportunities in teaching profession.

**Table 4: Mean and Standard Derivation of Overall Satisfaction**

<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
<b>I look forward to coming to work each day.</b>	208	3.88	0.65
<b>If I have a chance to choose a job again, I will still choose the teaching profession.</b>	208	4.15	0.93
<b>I would still like to be teaching in 5 years.</b>	208	4.00	0.98
<b>I receive many opportunities in teaching profession.</b>	208	3.79	0.99

According to Table 5, it was found that academic staff were satisfied with day – to day activities the most ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.96, S.D. = 0.89). Then, it was followed by work environment ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.01, S.D. = 0.77) and communication ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.75, S.D. = 0.74), respectively. However, the compensation was the only one aspect that was ranked neutral ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.46, S.D. = 0.82).

**Table 5: Mean and Standard Derivation of Each Aspect**

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Day – to – day activities</b>	208	4.17	0.74
<b>Work environment</b>	208	4.01	0.77
<b>Compensation</b>	208	3.46	0.82
<b>Communication</b>	208	3.75	0.74

As seen in Table 6, the highlight factor chosen by most participants was “work overload” or 90 people (43.3%). The following factor was “lack of communication” chosen by 79 participants (38%). The third factor was “lack of professional growth and development” selected by 73 academic staff (35.1%). The next factor was “compensation and benefits” picked by 67 people (32.2%). The following factor was “generation gap” chosen by 54 participants (26.0%) and followed by the factor of “colleagues” which was selected by 46 participants (21.1%). The factor of “personality differences” was selected by 39 participants (18.8%). The factors that

slightly caused a problem at work belonged to “poor working facilities (17.3%) and students’ attitudes (16.8%)”. However, 6 participants (2.9%) chose other factors that led to problems of their work then added additional information such as politics in the organization, unorganized work plans of the faculty, inadequate support from supporting staff, and colleagues’ attitudes.

**Table 6: Frequency and Percentage of Factors Leading to Problems at Work**

<b>Factors Leading to Problems of your Work</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. <b>Lack of communication</b>	79	38.0
2. <b>Work overload</b>	90	43.3
3. <b>Students’ attitudes</b>	35	16.8
4. <b>Compensation and benefits</b>	67	32.2
5. <b>Colleagues</b>	46	22.1
6. <b>Poor working facilities</b>	36	17.3
7. <b>Lack of professional growth and development )i.e., promotion(</b>	73	35.1
8. <b>Personality differences</b>	39	18.8
9. <b>Generation gap</b>	54	26.0
10. <b>Others.....</b>	6	2.9

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The findings revealed that the majority of participants in this research study were female and most of participants have been teaching at the public university for 10 or more than 10 years. According to the results of this study, the academic staff who responded surveys expressed a high level of satisfaction, as indicated by mean scores ranging from 4.15 (SD, 0.93) to 3.79 (SD, 0.99) on the 5-point scale. (Total mean score = 3.96 [SD 0.89]). Overall, the survey data presents that these academic staff were satisfied with their jobs.

In this study, it was found that those Social Sciences Cluster academic staff were satisfied with their job in terms of day – to – day activities, work environment and communication, respectively. However, compensation was the only one aspect that was neutral, which means academic staff were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with it. Besides, the results also presented

that work overload was the highlight factor that led to problems at work the most, and it was followed by the factors of lack of communication and lack of professional growth and development. However, the factors that slightly caused a problem at work belonged to poor working facilities, students' attitudes and other factors such as politics in the organization, unorganized work plans of the faculty, inadequate support from support staff, and colleagues' attitudes specified by some participants.

The study also led to three suggestions. First, future studies should have more participants in order to make this study more general for other clusters. Second, other types of data collection instrument such as mixed method should be used for future studies in order to get more accurate and in-depth information. Finally, future research should include more aspects of job satisfaction for reliable and accurate data.

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