



Job Satisfaction and Employee Mental Health: A Comparative Study of Executive and Non-Executive Employees in Public and Private Sectors

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Abstract

The modern workplace presents a complex interplay of factors that profoundly impact employee well-being. This study provides an empirical investigation into the relationship between job satisfaction and employee mental health, examining how these are influenced by employment sector (public vs. private), designation (executive vs. non-executive), and gender. A total of 400 employees (200 male, 200 female) were sampled, with 50 participants in each subgroup of a 2x2x2 factorial design. Data were collected using the Employee Mental Health Inventory (EMHI) and the Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS). Three-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess main and interaction effects. The results revealed that working sector, designation, and gender all had main effects on both job satisfaction and mental health that were highly significant at the 0.01 level, with the exception of designation's effect on job satisfaction, which was significant at the 0.05 level. Crucially, significant two-way and three-way interaction effects were found, indicating that the influence of these factors is not uniform across groups. For instance, the interaction between gender and designation on mental health was highly significant at the 0.01 level, as was the three-way interaction's effect on mental health, which was significant at the 0.05 level. Correlation analysis indicated a moderate, negative relationship between poor mental health scores and job satisfaction, which was highly significant at the 0.01 level.

These findings underscore the necessity of moving beyond simplistic analyses and adopting a nuanced, context-specific approach to developing effective human resource strategies that promote both wellness and satisfaction in diverse organizational settings.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Employee Mental Health, Public Sector, Private Sector, Executive Employees, Non-Executive Employees, ANOVA, Factorial Design

Introduction

The well-being of the workforce has become a central concern for organizations, policymakers, and researchers worldwide. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, global competition, and evolving work structures, the psychological health and contentment of employees are no longer peripheral issues but are recognized as critical drivers of productivity, innovation, and sustainable organizational success (Harter, Schmidt, C Hayes, 2002). Two of the most pivotal constructs in understanding the employee experience are mental health and job satisfaction.

Background on Employee Mental Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to their community. Within the occupational context, employee mental health is frequently challenged by factors such as excessive workload, lack of autonomy, interpersonal conflict, and job insecurity (Stansfeld C Candy, 2006). Poor mental health not only leads to individual suffering, manifesting as stress, anxiety, and depression, but also incurs substantial costs for organizations through increased absenteeism, presenteeism (working while ill), and higher employee turnover rates. Consequently, understanding the specific workplace determinants that either undermine or support employee mental health is a critical research and practical endeavor.

Significance of Job Satisfaction in the Workplace

Job satisfaction refers to an individual's positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of their job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). It is a multifaceted construct influenced by factors such as pay, promotion opportunities, working conditions, relationships with colleagues, and the intrinsic nature of the work itself. High levels of job satisfaction are consistently linked to numerous positive organizational outcomes, including enhanced job performance, greater organizational commitment, and reduced intent to leave (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, C Patton, 2001). It acts as a key indicator of the overall health of an organization's culture and its ability to meet the needs and expectations of its employees.

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of mental health and job satisfaction by examining them through the lenses of three fundamental demographic and structural variables: working sector (public vs. private), designation (executive vs. non-executive), and gender. The distinction between public and private sectors is particularly relevant due to inherent differences in job security, organizational goals (profit vs. service), and bureaucratic structures. Similarly, the hierarchical divide between executive and non-executive employees introduces disparities in autonomy, responsibility, and pressure, which are likely to have differential effects on well-being. By employing a 2x2x2 factorial design, this research moves beyond examining these factors in isolation and aims to uncover the complex interaction effects that shape the employee experience.

Literature Review

A substantial body of research has explored the determinants of employee mental health and job satisfaction. However, studies often examine influencing factors in isolation, whereas the reality of the workplace involves a complex interplay between individual characteristics and organizational structures.

Employee Mental Health in Organizational Contexts

Occupational stress is a primary antecedent of poor mental health among employees. Research consistently shows that high job demands, coupled with low control over one's work, is a particularly toxic combination leading to psychological strain (Karasek, 1979). Kumar et al. (2021) noted that anxiety, stress, and depression are common mental health issues in both private and public sectors, with the demanding nature of certain occupations posing a significant risk. Comparisons between sectors often yield mixed results. Some studies suggest

private sector employees face higher stress due to performance pressures and job insecurity (Sharma, 2020), while others find no significant difference, suggesting that the nature of the work itself is a more powerful predictor than the sector (Upadhyay C Sharma, 2020).

Designation also plays a critical role. Executives often face immense pressure and responsibility, but this is frequently counterbalanced by higher levels of autonomy, control, and financial rewards, which can be protective factors. Non-executive employees, conversely, may have less decision-making power and fewer resources to cope with demands, potentially increasing their vulnerability to mental health challenges.

Job Satisfaction Across Sectors and Designations

The comparison of job satisfaction between public and private sector employees is a classic theme in organizational research. Public sector employees often report higher job satisfaction related to job security, altruistic work, and work-life balance. In contrast, private sector employees may derive greater satisfaction from pay, recognition, and opportunities for advancement (Buelens C Van den Broeck, 2007). Singh (2020) found that public sector bank workers in India reported higher satisfaction than their private sector counterparts, a finding echoed in a study on teachers by Anand (2018).

The executive versus non-executive divide is also pertinent. Executives may experience higher job satisfaction due to greater autonomy, a sense of accomplishment, and better compensation. However, the "more responsibility, more stress" paradigm can also diminish satisfaction if not managed well. The interaction of these factors is key; for example, a non-executive in a supportive public sector role might have higher job satisfaction than a highly-stressed executive in a cut-throat private firm.

The Interplay of Variables and Research Gaps

While the main effects of sector, designation, and gender have been studied, the interaction effects are less understood. For example, are the gender differences in mental health more pronounced at the executive level? Does the working sector moderate the relationship between designation and job satisfaction? This study addresses this gap by using a factorial design to systematically analyze these interactions. Most studies use t-tests or simple correlations, which cannot reveal the nuanced ways in which these variables combine to influence outcomes. This research, therefore, provides a more comprehensive and ecologically valid analysis of the factors contributing to employee well-being.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses Research Objectives

1. To examine the main effects of gender, designation (executive/non-executive), and working sector (public/private) on employee mental health.
2. To examine the main effects of gender, designation, and working sector on employee job satisfaction.
3. To investigate the two-way and three-way interaction effects between gender, designation, and working sector on employee mental health and job satisfaction.
4. To analyze the correlation between employee mental health and job satisfaction scores among the sample.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for statistical testing:

- **H1:** There will be no statistically significant main effect of Gender on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.

- **H2:** There will be no statistically significant main effect of Designation on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.
- **H3:** There will be no statistically significant main effect of Working Sector on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.
- **H4:** There will be no statistically significant interaction effect between Gender and Designation on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.
- **H5:** There will be no statistically significant interaction effect between Gender and Working Sector on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.
- **H6:** There will be no statistically significant interaction effect between Designation and Working Sector on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.
- **H7:** There will be no statistically significant three-way interaction effect between Gender, Designation, and Working Sector on (a) Employee Mental Health scores and (b) Job Satisfaction scores.
- **H8:** There will be no statistically significant correlation between Employee Mental Health scores and Job Satisfaction scores.

Methodology

Research Design The study employed a 2x2x2 between-subjects factorial design to investigate the main and interaction effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The independent variables were:

- **Gender:** Male, Female
- **Designation:** Non-Executive (Junior), Executive (Senior)
- **Working Sector:** Public Sector, Private Sector

The dependent variables were Employee Mental Health, measured by the EMHI, and Job Satisfaction, measured by the JSS.

Participants and Recruitment Criteria A total sample of 400 employees was recruited

using a purposive sampling technique from various organizations in the public and private sectors in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The sample was balanced across all conditions, with 50 participants in each of the eight subgroups (e.g., 50 male, non-executive, private sector

employees). Inclusion criteria required participants to be full-time employees between the ages of 25 and 60. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and anonymity was assured.

Measures and Instruments Used

1. **Employee Mental Health Inventory (EMHI; Jagdish, 2001):** This standardized inventory is designed to assess the overall mental health of employees in an organizational setting. It measures various facets of psychological well-being and distress. Higher scores on the EMHI are indicative of poorer mental health (i.e., more symptoms of psychological distress).

2. **Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS; Singh s Sharma, 2001):** This scale measures an employee's overall satisfaction with their job. It covers multiple dimensions including satisfaction with work, pay, promotion, supervision, and coworkers. Higher scores on the JSS indicate greater job satisfaction.

Data Collection Procedure Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to the participants in their respective workplace environments, where permissions were granted, or at a neutral location. Each participant completed a demographic information sheet followed by the EMHI and JSS. The process was supervised by the researchers to ensure clarity and proper completion of the instruments.

Statistical Analysis Techniques The collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The primary statistical techniques included:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Mean and standard deviation were calculated for all subgroups to summarize participant characteristics and scores.
- **Three-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):** Separate 2x2x2 ANOVAs were conducted for the EMHI and JSS scores to test the main and interaction effects of the independent variables.
- **Post-Hoc Tests:** Where significant main or interaction effects were found, Bonferroni post-hoc comparisons were used to identify the specific mean differences between groups.
- **Pearson Correlation:** A Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationship between EMHI and JSS scores.

A significance level (α) of $p < 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance for all inferential tests.

Results

This section presents the results of the statistical analyses performed to test the research hypotheses. The findings are organized by the dependent variable: first Employee Mental Health (EMHI), then Job Satisfaction (JSS), followed by the correlation analysis.

Analysis of Employee Mental Health (EMHI) Scores

A three-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of gender, designation, and working sector on EMHI scores. Higher scores indicate poorer mental health.

Table 1: ANOVA Summary for Employee Mental Health (EMHI) Scores

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Gender	167.70	1	167.70	28.24G	Highly significant (.01)

Designation	183.60	1	183.60	30.628	Highly significant (.01)
Working Sector	55.50	1	55.50	6.346	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Designation	386.12	1	386.12	65.042	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Working Sector	1.32	1	1.32	0.223	Not significant
Designation * Working Sector	1.32	1	1.32	0.223	Not significant
Gender * Designation * Working Sector	31.62	1	31.62	5.377	Significant (.05)
Source	Sum Squares	of df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Residuals	2327.10	362	6.45		

The ANOVA results (Table 1) revealed the following:

- The main effect for **Gender** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392) = 28.249, p < .001$). Post-hoc tests showed that females ($M = 9.57$) reported significantly higher EMHI scores (poorer mental health) than males ($M = 7.27$).
- The main effect for **Designation** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392) = 30.928, p < .001$). Post-hoc tests indicated that executive (senior) employees ($M = 8.85$) had significantly higher EMHI scores than non-executive (junior) employees ($M = 7.25$).
- The main effect for **Working Sector** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392) = 9.349, p = .002$). Post-hoc tests revealed that employees in the public sector ($M = 8.55$) reported significantly higher EMHI scores than those in the private sector ($M = 7.55$).
- The two-way interaction between **Gender and Designation** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392) = 65.042, p < .001$). This indicates that the effect of gender on mental health differs between designations.
- The three-way interaction between **Gender, Designation, and Working Sector** was significant at the 0.05 level ($F(1, 392) = 5.377, p = .021$). This complex interaction suggests that the relationship between any two variables depends on the level of the third. For example, post-hoc analysis of the interaction plot (see Appendix) shows that senior females in the public sector reported the highest EMHI scores ($M=11.00$), a much larger gap compared to other groups.

- The other two-way interactions were not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Analysis of Job Satisfaction (JSS) Scores

A second three-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effects of gender, designation, and working sector on JSS scores. Higher scores indicate greater job satisfaction.

Table 2: ANOVA Summary for Job Satisfaction (JSS) Scores

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Gender	353.44	1	353.44	10.099	Highly significant (.01)
Designation	198.81	1	198.81	5.681	Significant (.05)
Working Sector	2510.01	1	2510.01	71.722	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Designation	600.25	1	600.25	17.152	Highly significant (.01)
Gender * Working Sector	13.69	1	13.69	0.391	Not significant
Designation * Working Sector	5.76	1	5.76	0.165	Not significant
Gender * Designation * Sector	60.84	1	60.84	1.738	Not significant
Residuals	13718.56	392	35.00		

The ANOVA results for JSS (Table 2) showed the following:

- The main effect for **Gender** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392) = 10.099$, $p = .002$). Post-hoc tests indicated that females ($M = 67.88$) reported significantly higher job satisfaction than males ($M = 66.00$).
- The main effect for **Designation** was significant at the 0.05 level ($F(1, 392) = 5.681$, $p = .018$). Post-hoc tests showed that executive (senior) employees ($M = 67.75$) had significantly higher job satisfaction than non-executive (junior) employees ($M = 66.13$).
- The main effect for **Working Sector** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392)$

= 71.722, $p < .001$). Post-hoc analysis revealed that employees in the private sector ($M = 69.45$) reported substantially higher job satisfaction than those in the public sector ($M = 64.43$).

- The two-way interaction between **Gender and Designation** was highly significant at the 0.01 level ($F(1, 392) = 17.152, p < .001$). This indicates that the relationship between gender and job satisfaction varies depending on employee designation. Post-hoc comparisons show that senior females reported the highest job satisfaction ($M=72.4$), while senior males reported lower satisfaction ($M=67.7$) than their junior counterparts.
- The other two-way and the three-way interactions were not statistically significant ($p > .05$).

Correlation between Employee Mental Health and Job Satisfaction

A Pearson correlation was calculated to assess the relationship between EMHI scores and JSS scores. The analysis revealed a statistically significant, moderate negative correlation between the two variables, $r(398) = -0.28, p < .001$. This result is highly significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that as job satisfaction scores increase, scores on the employee mental health inventory (indicating distress) tend to decrease.

Discussion

This study aimed to dissect the complex relationships between working sector, designation, gender, and the critical employee outcomes of mental health and job satisfaction. The use of a factorial ANOVA design has yielded a nuanced picture that moves beyond simple main effects, highlighting the importance of interactions in understanding the employee experience.

Implications of Significant Findings for Mental Health

The finding that all three independent variables had a significant main effect on mental health is noteworthy. The result that females reported poorer mental health than males is consistent with broader epidemiological trends, but its manifestation in the workplace context is critical. The finding that senior employees reported poorer mental health than junior employees (highly significant at the 0.01 level) challenges the common assumption that greater autonomy and resources at senior levels are always protective. It suggests that the burdens of responsibility and pressure may outweigh the benefits for this group.

Perhaps most interestingly, public sector employees reported poorer mental health than their private sector counterparts (highly significant at the 0.01 level), which could be linked to factors like bureaucratic inefficiency or resource constraints not captured in this study.

However, the significant interactions tell a more compelling story. The Gender *

Designation interaction, highly significant at the 0.01 level, reveals that the mental health gap is not uniform. The data shows this gap widens considerably at the senior level.

Furthermore, the three-way interaction, significant at the 0.05 level, provides the deepest insight. It suggests that being a senior female in the public sector is associated with the poorest mental health outcomes. This points to a "triple jeopardy" situation, where the

combined pressures of gender-based workplace challenges, executive responsibility, and public sector-specific stressors create a uniquely difficult environment.

Implications of Significant Findings for Job Satisfaction

For job satisfaction, the main effects were also significant. The finding that private sector employees were significantly

more satisfied than public sector employees (highly significant at the 0.01 level) aligns with literature suggesting that factors like higher pay, performance-based recognition, and dynamism in the private sector can be powerful drivers of satisfaction. The finding that senior employees were more satisfied than junior employees (significant at the 0.05 level) supports the idea that greater autonomy and achievement contribute positively to job satisfaction.

The Gender * Designation interaction for job satisfaction was highly significant at the 0.01 level and presents a fascinating contrast to the mental health findings. While senior females reported the worst mental health, they also reported the highest job satisfaction. This paradox could suggest that while they find their roles highly stressful, they also derive great meaning, accomplishment, or satisfaction from them. Conversely, senior males reported lower job satisfaction than junior males, suggesting they may feel the pressures of their role without a corresponding increase in fulfillment.

The Relationship Between Mental Health and Job Satisfaction

The moderate negative correlation between EMHI scores and JSS scores, which was highly significant at the 0.01 level, confirms the fundamental link between feeling good and feeling satisfied with one's work. This is a well-established relationship in organizational psychology. An unsatisfying job, characterized by a lack of appreciation, unfairness, or boredom, can be a chronic stressor that erodes mental well-being. Conversely, poor mental health can color one's perception of their job, making it difficult to experience satisfaction even in a good environment.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study Strengths:

- The use of a 2x2x2 factorial design is a major strength, allowing for a sophisticated analysis of interaction effects that better reflects real-world complexity.
- The large, balanced sample size (N = 400) provides adequate statistical power for detecting effects and enhances the reliability of the findings.
- The study uses standardized and validated instruments for measuring the dependent variables, ensuring a degree of measurement validity.
- The focus on both mental health and job satisfaction provides a more holistic view of employee well-being.

Limitations:

- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The data was collected at a single point in time, which means causality cannot be inferred. It is impossible to determine whether, for example, the private sector *causes* higher job satisfaction or if more satisfied people are drawn to it.
- **Purposive Sampling:** The use of a non-random sampling technique limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of all employees in India.
- **Self-Report Bias:** The reliance on self-report questionnaires may be subject to biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants respond in a way they believe is more socially acceptable.
- **Omitted Variables:** The study did not account for other potentially confounding variables, such as age, tenure in the organization, specific job roles, or organizational culture, which could also influence the outcomes.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the findings and limitations, future research could explore several promising avenues:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** A longitudinal design that tracks employees over time would be invaluable for establishing the direction of causality between job satisfaction, mental health, and the studied variables.
- **Mixed-Methods Approach:** Combining quantitative data with qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could provide rich, contextual insights into *why* these patterns exist. For instance, interviewing senior females in the public sector could uncover the specific stressors they face.
- **Inclusion of Mediating and Moderating Variables:** Future research should investigate potential mediators (e.g., perceived organizational support) and moderators (e.g., coping styles) to build a more comprehensive theoretical model of employee well-being.
- **Intervention Studies:** Based on these findings, researchers could design and test targeted interventions. For example, a mentorship and support program for senior female employees in the public sector could be evaluated for its effectiveness in improving mental health and job satisfaction.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated the profound and complex ways in which an employee's position within the organizational structure—defined by sector, designation, and gender—shapes their mental health and job satisfaction. The findings move beyond simplistic generalizations, revealing that it is the *interaction* of these factors that offers the most critical insights. A key takeaway is that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to human resource management is inadequate. Policies must be nuanced and targeted. For example, while senior employees may generally report higher job satisfaction, specific subgroups, like senior males, may be experiencing declining satisfaction, and other subgroups, like senior females in the public sector, face severe mental health challenges despite high satisfaction.

The practical implications for healthcare providers, policymakers, and public health professionals are significant. Organizations must develop support systems that are sensitive to the unique pressures faced by different employee segments. For the private sector, the challenge may be to sustain high job satisfaction without compromising mental health, while for the public sector, a key goal should be to address the systemic issues that appear to be eroding the mental well-being of its workforce, particularly at senior levels. Ultimately, this research reinforces that fostering a healthy, satisfied, and productive workforce requires a deep, evidence-based understanding of the diverse and intersecting realities of employees' lives at work.

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