

THE IMPACT OF EMAIL USAGE ON JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Communication through email is becoming common at workplace. It affects employees' attitudes positively or negatively. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between communication through email and employees' job satisfaction. The sample has been chosen from the ministry of education in Oman as it adopted a new policy which is using email for communication among all employees instead of paper based documents. PLS based SEM has been used to analyze the data and the results revealed a significant positive relationship between email usage and employees' job satisfaction. Limitations and implications of the study have been discussed.

Keywords: Communication, Email, Job Satisfaction, PLS based SEM

INTRODUCTION:

Spector (1997) considers job satisfaction as an individual's attitude towards one's job and he is more likely to achieve organization goals if he has a positive attitude. Employees' job satisfaction is a very important factor in increasing job performance (Žemgulienė, 2012; Hira, 2012; Judge et al., 2001), productivity (Bataineh, 2011), and reducing employees' turnover (Mobley, 1977). Miller (2007) insisted that job satisfaction correlates negatively with employees' intention to leave. Weikel-Morrison (2002) also confirms the importance of job satisfaction in employees' retention. Wu (2011) stated that organizations can compete globally through job satisfaction as it increases the retention of employees. Malhotra and Mukherjee (2004) argued that job satisfaction affects significantly the service quality delivered to employees. Therefore investigating factors that leads to job satisfaction is valuable.

Recently ministry of education in Sultanate of Oman integrates usage of email as a way of communication among the ministry employees and stops using paper-based documents. Therefore, use of email becomes inevitable. Every employee has an organization email account. All services are submitted electronically and yet there is no empirical evidence that examined the impact of email usage at the workplace and its influence on employees' job satisfaction. Therefore, this study aims to find out if communication through email would increase employees' job satisfaction.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT:

Employees' job satisfaction is a cornerstone for achieving a satisfactory level of organizational management (Veličković et al., 2014). Pan (2015) argued that employees' job satisfaction increases their organizational citizenship behavior and leads to high ratio of revenue per employee. Therefore, he conducted a study to explore the most important factors that raise employees' job satisfaction in an international tourist hotel. Analysis of 474 employees' responses revealed that compensation is the most important factor, followed by work environment, interpersonal relationship, and supervision. Wright and Bonett (2007) investigated 112 managers from an organization located on the west coast of the United States to find out that job satisfaction has a significant negative path with employees' turnover and employees' well-being weakens the relationship. Yoo and Han (2013) surveyed 226 employees from a food service firm in South Korea and found that employees' attitudes affect their uses of E-learning at the workplace. Therefore, it seems that there is a mutual relationship between communication mean and employees' job satisfaction.

There are many studies provided evidence for the importance of communication in organizations. Wrench (2013) states that "Communication in organizations is as important as breathing is to human. Organizations have many stakeholders (an individual or group that has an interest in the organization), and each different set of stakeholders require different communication strategies. Ultimately, communication is one of the most basic functions of any organization". Communication is considered a key element in reducing uncertainty, ambiguity, and promoting discussion and building self-esteem (Rajesh & Suganthi, 2013).

Recently communication technology has a great influence on the way information is transmitted and displayed and consequently on the economic growth (Papaioannou and Dimelis (2007). Chedid et al. (2013) assert that communication technology fosters professional development and decreases professional, travel, geographical isolation. Using email at the workplace revolutionizes the communication process. Employees can send and receive any document and image and forward it to workmates. Morgan and Symon (2002) highlighted the usefulness of using email to manage remote or isolated employees. Email can be used with employees who work in other time zones all the time.

Sometimes, employees sweep unethical information and images through the organization email account which affect its reputation negatively. However, email would bring great benefits for an organization if used properly. For example email users can connect with their colleagues after work hours and resolve urgent issues. Adams (2002) states that using email at the workplace can hurt companies and affect employees' performance negatively. He argues an organization is advised to have certain policies related to using email at the workplace. Similarly, Belanoff et al. (1999) argued that an employee should be signed on a statement of policy before granted using an organization email.

EMAIL USAGE AND JOB SATISFACTION:

A strong theory to explain the influences of email usage on job satisfaction is conservation of resources theory. When employees communicate with supportive colleagues and supervisors, they are more likely have more energy and be satisfied at work. Resources such as email helps employees deal effectively with demands of the job. They can exchange ideas and information quickly and enquire about ambiguous issues and roles. That makes employees more satisfied.

There are some studies that investigate communication in an organization in relation to job satisfaction. For example, Miles et al. (1996) confirmed that communication in an organization increases employees' job satisfaction. Likewise, Farahbod et al. (2013) aimed to investigate the relationship between organizational communication and job satisfaction. They chose 263 employees from Gilan Maskan bank in Iran and the result confirmed the impact of organizational communication on job satisfaction. Awad and Alhashemi (2012) surveyed 104 individuals from top and middle management and supervisory positions from 3 organizations in Bahrain. The results showed that communication with supervisors and coworkers increases satisfaction with jobs. Similarly, Vinnicombe (1984) and Carriere and Bourque (2009) found that organizational communication leads to job satisfaction. Bakanauskienė et al. (2010) found that communication satisfaction correlates positively with job satisfaction as well. Žemgulienė (2012) concluded that communication moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and job performance.

There are some studies that relate communication technology with job satisfaction. For instance, Limbu et al. (2014) argues that communication technology influences job satisfaction positively. Wright et al., (2014) surveyed 168 individuals from 30 companies in Midwestern and concluded that communication technology decreases work-life conflict which in turn increases job satisfaction. McKinley and Perino (2013) investigated the influence of communication competence on job satisfaction. The result confirmed that advanced communication competence levels enhance employees' job satisfaction. Çetin et al. (2012) study showed that communication competency of deposit banks managers in Turkey impacts employees' job satisfaction. Butts (2010) studied job satisfaction based on communication style. He surveyed 627 individuals from a U.S. governmental organization and the result found that managers' communication style did not influence employees' job satisfaction significantly.

The application of technology like email becomes so common in organizations but it has been found no significant relationship between email usage and employees' job satisfaction (Sussan & Recascino, 2006; Recascino, 2005). However there are some studies that provide evidence for the importance of email usage in raising job satisfaction. For example, Demirel and Tosuner-Fikes (2014) found that email usage correlates positively and significantly with flow of information and job satisfaction. Iaojun and Venkatesh (2013) surveyed 104 employees from a large telecommunication company in the United States and found that workplace communication networks influence employees' performance.

Mark et al. (2014) observed 32 individuals from an organization in USA to find out the influence of social media and email on individuals' mood at the workplace. The results showed that reading emails and replying to them disturbs employees' work, causes stress for them, and enhances their negative affect. Similarly, Kushlev and Dunn (2015) chose 124 individuals from a Canadian organization to investigate the consequences of email usage at work. The experiments lasted for two weeks; the first week the samples are only allowed to use email three times. The second week they are allowed to use email unlimited times. They found that when samples use less email, they experience less stress; however, when they use email for unlimited times, they experience stress which is reflected on their well-being and productivity.

Tafao-Helsham (2002) study revealed that when employees are allowed to communicate openly with their workmates, and take part in decision-making and strategic planning, they are more likely to be satisfied at work and perform well. Kojima et al. (2010) clarified that training through electronic email at the workplace improves employees' feelings and alleviates their depression.

Based on the above discussion, the studies yielded inconsistent results regarding the influence of email usage at the workplace regarded as positive or negative. Therefore, empirical evidence is needed to clarify the relationship between email usage and employees' job satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H: Email usage influences job satisfaction positively.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE:

The study samples are chosen from Batinah North region employees from the ministry of education in the Sultanate of Oman because this region introduces Electronic Educational Portal where employees are supposed to use email to communicate with all stakeholders. The researcher appointed a representative in each school he took his samples from. The total number of participants are 550, but 67 questionnaires are not complete, so 483 questionnaires are employed for analysis.

MEASURES:

Email: Email usage is identified through a scale constructed by Mano and Mesch in 2010. It includes 5 items and the Cronbach's alpha for it is 0.82. Based on experts' opinion, one item has been added to the scale so the total items of the scale used are 6 items and the Cronbach's alpha for this study scale is 0.923 indicating a good internal consistency of the items. The sample's subjects were asked to respond on a 5 likert-scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is measured by a job in general scale (JIG) constructed by Rothbard, Phillips and Dumas in 2005. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.88. Cronbach's alpha is also calculated for this study and found to be 0.861 indicating a good internal consistency of the items. The sample's subjects were asked to respond on a 5 likert-scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

RESULTS:

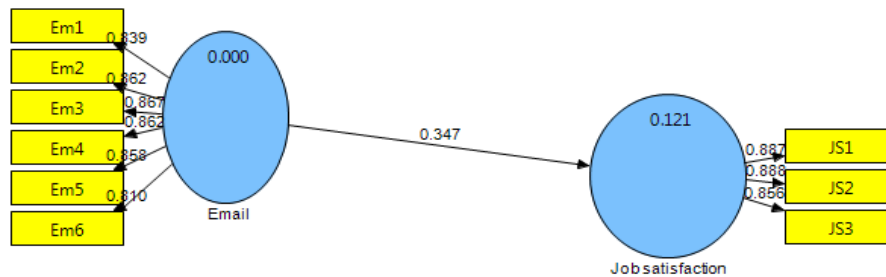
CONVERGENT VALIDITY:

There were 9 items used to measure the study constructs (email usage and job satisfaction). The loadings of all items range between 0.810 and 0.887 (table 1).

AVE is more than 0.50 and CR is more than 0.70 indicating convergent validity of the constructs (Table 1).

Table 1: Measurement model results

Construct	Measurement Item	Loadings	AVE	CR
Email	Em1	0.838612	0.722355	0.939766
	Em2	0.862189		
	Em3	0.866590		
	Em4	0.862474		
	Em5	0.858060		
	Em6	0.810176		
Job Satisfaction	JS1	0.886902	0.769430	0.909161
	JS2	0.887994		
	JS3	0.856248		



**CONSTRUCT VALIDITY:
CROSS LOADING:**

Table 2 shows that the items loadings of a construct are highly loaded on that construct and lower on the other construct indicating construct validity of the measures.

Table 2: Cross-loadings of the constructs

	Email	Job satisfaction
Em1	0.838612	0.291003
Em2	0.862189	0.322042
Em3	0.866590	0.304632
Em4	0.862474	0.338232
Em5	0.858060	0.231266
Em6	0.810176	0.259124
JS1	0.299377	0.886902
JS2	0.336544	0.887994
JS3	0.272535	0.856248

DISRIMINANT VALIDITY:

The constructs achieve discriminate validity as the square roots of the AVE scores are all higher than the correlations among the constructs (Table 3).

Table 3: Discriminate Validity

	Email	Job satisfaction
Email	0.849915	
Job satisfaction	0.347443	0.877172

HYPOTHESIS TESTING:

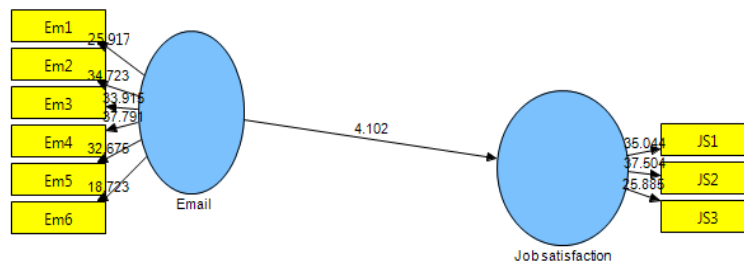
Structural equation modeling (SEM) is used to investigate the relationships between variables by using Smart PLS because it is the best technique for predicting the relationship between variables and eliminating the errors.

STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULT:

The analysis of the result support the hypothesis (beta 0.347443, t value 4.102336, p. 0.05), indicating that email usage at workplace increases employees' job satisfaction.

Table 4: Structural model result

Hypothesis	Beta	Std error	T (value)	decision
Email -> Job satisfaction	0.347443	0.084694	4.102336**	supported



DISCUSSION OF RESULTS:

The result revealed a significant positive relationship between communication through email and satisfaction at work. The result is consistent with results of some studies (Miles et al., 1996; Farahbod et al., 2013; Wright et al., 2014; Demiral & Tosuner-Fikes, 2014) that showed that organizational communication increases employees' job satisfaction.

Another explanation for the result is that application of email at work makes communication process much faster among all ministry of education stakeholders so that they can pass all new circulars and policies faster. Employees can exchange ideas and knowledge required to get job done very easily. They can cooperate easily regardless their geographical locations. They can inquire about any ambiguous roles and duties and have feedback quickly. Further, the exchange of funny clips becomes easier so that they can have positive mood. Therefore, they become engaged.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Organizations should utilize email in order to increase their employees' job satisfaction and enhance their positive attitudes. Employers are advised to support employees and interact with them through email. Telecommuting can be applied for the advantage of employers and employees to save time and money.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH:

One limitation of the study is that the entire sample is bachelor degree holders, so it cannot be generalized to the institutions that have different degree holders. Moreover, there might be some other variables that moderate the relationship between email usage and job satisfaction such as age or experience, so that future researches should address these variables. A future research can relate email usage with the facets of job satisfaction instead of overall job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION:

Email has become prevalent at the workplace recently. The ministry of education in Oman introduces it to replace paper-based communication. Therefore, it becomes very important to investigate its effectiveness at the workplace and how it influences employees' job satisfaction which is considered a fundamental for employees' performance and organizational productivity. A random sample consisting of 483 individuals have been selected to complete the study questionnaires. PLS based SEM was used to analyze the result and it revealed a significant positive relationship between email usage at workplace and employees' job satisfaction. This has significant implications for decision makers and employers to have a policy integrating email during their daily businesses.

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