

Research Design of Job Satisfaction in an East African Medical Research Center

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INTRODUCTION

In previous studies, I-O Psychologists have researched job satisfaction in a number of different western workplaces.

Variables that have been linked to job satisfaction include:

- Occupational position
 - Defined as the level of skill and education required to perform the occupation (Kawakami et al., 2004). In previous studies, occupational position has been a predictor of job satisfaction (Kawada & Otsuka, 2011). The higher an individual's occupational position, the more likely he/she is to have a greater level of job control (Kawakami et al., 2004).
- Job control
 - Defined as an individual's amount of intellectual discretion and personal schedule freedom within in his/her position (Karasek et al., 1981).
- Support level
 - Defined as the amount and quality of information and feedback an individual receives from his/her supervisor. Support level has been shown to be a predictor of job satisfaction (Pohl & Galletta, 2017). Supervisor support has been said to be a predictor of employee satisfaction (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001).

CURRENT STUDY

In the summer of 2018, our research team conducted interviews and administered surveys at the National Institute of Medical Research, Amani Centre in Muheza, Tanzania.

The purpose of the study was to investigate job satisfaction, typically associated with western workplaces, outside of this context to close knowledge gaps. We used questions associated with job control, occupational position, and support level in their relation to job satisfaction. By using variables associated with job satisfaction that are relatively concrete, we were able to properly investigate a measure that can be considered ambiguous and does not translate well in East Africa.

Before our team went to this site, we spent countless hours reviewing the literature, deciding on an approach, developing knowledge of the employees and the site, translating English to Swahili, and consulting professionals for advice. The research design of this project allowed us to effectively address the underexplored question of what job satisfaction looks like in East Africa. We specifically researched job satisfaction at a government funded medical research center in the East Africa region. This poster explains the research design process that lead to effective data collection.

METHODS

Initial Research

- We first reviewed literature of both job satisfaction and the few papers similar to the I-O psychology field that were in the East African context. Reviewing these papers enabled us to better understand job satisfaction and how we could best investigate the East African context.
- Then, we gathered information regarding the interpersonal dynamics of the employees at NIMR-AC and the culture of the region's workplaces to further direct our research. This information aided us in determining what words and phrases would be properly comprehended when translating to Swahili. Since we conducted the interviews and administered the surveys in Swahili, we paid careful attention to the translation of the instrumentation.
- Lastly, and repeatedly throughout the design process, we looked to experts in seemingly unrelated fields for advice.

In the Field

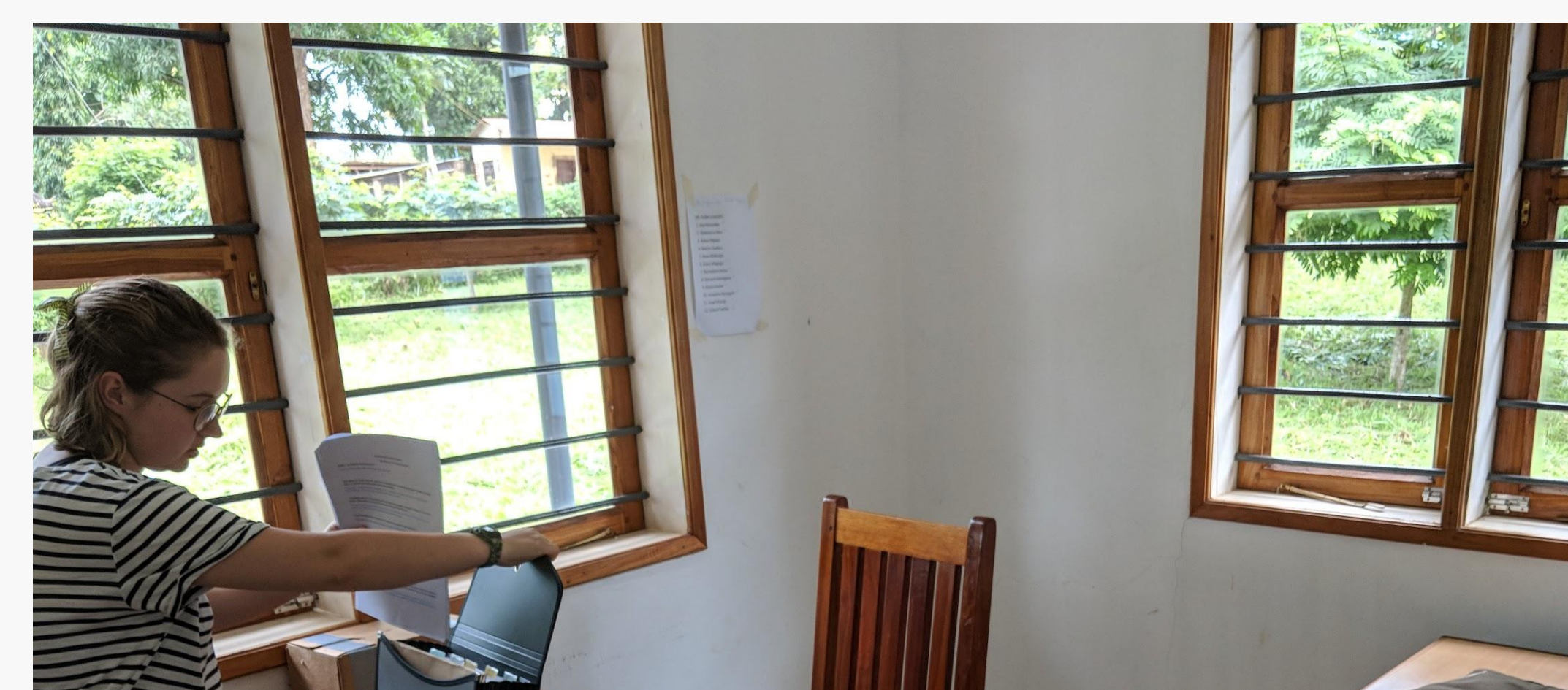
- One-on-One Interviews
 - Questions about each employees' job control, job satisfaction, occupational position, and support levels.
 - Obtained questions for the interviews from previous studies conducted on job satisfaction in the western setting and created based on our research into East African workplace dynamics and our job satisfaction measures.
- Surveys
 - Administered Likert-type and open-ended questions with scales pertaining to issues raised in the interviews.
- Focus Group
 - Held with twenty-two of the thirty-six employees after all qualitative and quantitative data was gathered.
 - Asked five questions rooted in some of the responses received from the one-on-one interviews.
 - Allowed us to gather more data in a setting of openness and honesty that was aligned with cultural expectations when discussing a nuanced topic like job satisfaction.
- Throughout the project we edited, deleted, and replaced questions asked in our interview in order to obtain more precise results. By using a mixed methods design and an inductive approach, we were able to comprehensively investigate job satisfaction in a context that had not been heavily researched within the I-O field in the past.



Unlike the interviews, where we relied on our own knowledge of Swahili to comprehend the participant's answers, the focus group utilized a lab member that the participants trusted to translate for us in real time. This allowed us to receive immediate feedback on the questions we were asking and gave us an initial framework to start our analysis.



One of the many challenges we faced at the start of our research in the field was location. We emphasized that the participants needed to be sure of their anonymity to create trust, so the lab supervisors first had us conduct interviews in an old rail car (pictured here). After a wasp sting, however, we were quickly shifted to the office of an out-of-town supervisor.



This is the office where the majority of our interviews were conducted. We believe this location could have been a source of validity issues, as there were large windows facing a high foot traffic area for other employees of the lab.

DISCUSSION

Challenges

- Interview Location
 - The office we conducted the interview in could be a cause of validity issues, as it had large windows facing a high foot traffic area for other employees of the lab.
 - Our design intended for the interviews to be 100% anonymous but this was a variable we could not completely control in the field.
- An unspoken requirement
 - The human resources manager of the lab made it seem like a requirement for employees to participate in our interviews. This was not a part of our original recruitment design.
 - Due to this, we may have obtained biased responses from employees who did not want to participate.
- Translation
 - We translated our survey and interview questions into Swahili that would be understood from the workplace perspective. However, several questions were simply not understood.
 - During analysis we hope to discern when questions were understood and when they were not. Translation is something we accounted for with our research design.

Conclusion

Data analysis is still ongoing, so we will use this section to summarize the methodological actions we took that were successful.

- Mixed Methods Design
 - We were able to triangulate data by comparing the interview and focus group responses to the survey responses.
 - Higher internal validity.
- Inductive Approach
 - Editing questions while interviewing allowed participants to better understand them, leading to more accurate responses.
- Translator aid
 - We did not seek internal help with translation during the interview process. This gave participants a greater sense of anonymity, possibly leading to less biased responses.
 - Cultural and contextual nuances are complex when discussing the workplace and job satisfaction, so various levels of translational input were important.
- Contact and trust
 - The week after we arrived at the site, we held a formal lab meeting, introduced ourselves, and stated the purpose of our presence.
 - We interacted with employees in various ways every day and helped them with tasks.
 - Several participants felt comfortable throughout the interview process, likely resulting in more accurate responses.

Future Research

- The knowledge we gained from conducting research outside of the western context will be useful for further studies in cultures unlike our own.
- Other researchers will learn from our mistakes and improve upon what we did incorrectly. Other researchers can also see what was successful in our project so that they may use similar techniques in future studies.
- The ultimate goal of this presentation is to encourage research in different contexts.