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Job Satisfaction among Women in the United Arab Emirates

By Musa Shallal¹

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that contribute to job satisfaction for employed Emirati females in the United Arab Emirates. Survey data were collected from 1272 workers in both private and public sectors in all seven emirates of the UAE. Almost 50% of these women were married, 45% single, 4% divorced and 1% widows. Regression results indicated three prominent factors that enhance job satisfaction – age, education, and income. There is a positive significant relationship between job satisfaction and age. Second, employed females with education beyond the secondary level are more satisfied with their jobs than those with less than the secondary level (p-values less than 0.05). Third, the employed females with high incomes are more satisfied with their jobs than those who earn less (p-value=0.034).

Keywords: women's job satisfaction, United Arab Emirates, women in United Arab Emirates

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one of the fastest growing economies in the Middle East. It is often described as an open society compared to other countries in the Gulf region, one where women have more freedom. The recent 2010 World Economic Forum annual gender gap index ranked UAE at 103 of 134 countries, making it the region's best-placed nation. Kuwait was next at 105th, followed by Bahrain at 110th, Qatar 117th, Oman 122nd, Saudi Arabia 129th and Yemen last at 134th. (<http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Gender%20Gap/index.htm>).

A leading global management consulting firm Booz & Company (2010) reported women's participation rate in the UAE (59%) is the highest among the other neighboring countries: far ahead of Qatar's 36.4%, Bahrain's 34.3%, and Saudi Arabia's 14.4%. Earlier, the UAE 2005 census reported women account for 49.3 percent of the national population; and that their participation in the country's business community has grown steadily from 5.2% in 2002 to 7.3% in 2003, 9.1% in 2004, 13.5% in 2005, and 14.7% as of 2006 (Al Gurg, 2006).

This progressive change is explained in part by the increase in educational achievements and the society's relative evolving attitude towards women working outside the home. More than 90% of the respondents strongly believe or to some extent strongly

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agree that the society's attitude is positive towards working women, Although working women contribute about US\$3.4 billion to the UAE's economy (Glass, 2007), their average number is nonetheless small compared to the overall labor force. This is due to a number of factors, such as companies' restrictions on the numbers of females employed; many women lead by conservative cultural attitudes; restriction on women's geographic mobility; limitations in career and occupational choices leading to take the option to marry and stay home to raise children. In addition, within the culture of the UAE certain kinds of jobs are considered inappropriate or undesirable for females, such as work in the hotel industry and nursing. In striking contrast to worldwide demographics of the health care industry; only 3% of the total numbers of nurses working in Ministry of Health (MOH) facilities (Nelson, 2004; EL-Haddad, 2006) are female.

For El-Haddad (2006) the low status of nursing in the UAE is due to the "variations in basic nursing programmes in the country; the lack of Arabic educational resources; the affluent life style of UAE nationals as well as the strict cultural norms; and religious values by which they live". It is reasonable to infer cultural factors are largely responsible for slowing down the speed of employment of Emirati females in the UAE; usually social values take longer to change to catch up with the speed of the economic development (Gallant et al, 2008).

There is growing research interest about almost all issues concerning working women in the Arab region, and in particular in the UAE about the phenomenon of women working outside their homes. This may be because the UAE society is in a state of flux, and the country has experienced significant social, economic, and cultural changes in almost all aspects of life over the past thirty or so years. The wealth created by huge oil revenues enables the people of the UAE to radically transform their older traditional desert life style into an urbanized existence.

The state likewise has evolved, now increasingly supportive of women in a variety of different work fields and offering wider educational opportunities. The late President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan was committed to the ideal of equality, saying "Nothing could delight me more than to see the woman taking up her distinctive position in society ... Nothing should hinder her progress ... Like men, women deserve the right to occupy high positions according to their capabilities and qualifications (Swaroop, 2007)". At present 22.5% of the National Council's members are women, and about 66% of government jobs have female incumbents, of which about 30% are decisions making posts (Table 1).

Table 1. UAE Labor Force and Employment (millions) 2005-2008

Years	Population	Labor Force (15 years and above)	Employment
2008	4.765	3.043	2.930
2007	4.488	2.840	2.742
2006	4.229	2.647	2.563
2005 census	4.106	2.560	2.480

Source: UAE Ministry of the Economy Population Estimates

It is hoped these trends will enable employed Emirati women to progressively enjoy more flexible rules and regulations that can give them further freedom from discrimination and more equality in the workplace. The Emirates Foundation's initiative Tawteen (nationalization) which has been established in the UAE can be one of the important tools that can help bring the changes needed to advance the role women in the workplace. 'Tawteen' is an initiative designed to empower young Emirati men and women to make a valuable contribution to the economic growth of their country (Table 2).

Table 2. Labor Force (15 yrs. & over) By Emirates, & Sex 2005

Emirates	Total National and Non National		
	Total	Males	Females
Abu Dhabi	815,356	117,830	697,526
Dubai	998,415	123,385	875,030
Sharjah	442,005	56,806	385,199
Ajman	102,775	12,005	90,770
Umm AlQuwain	26,100	5,106	20,994
RasAl-Khaima	108,498	19,071	89,427
Fujairah	65,392	10,775	54,617
G. Total	2,558,541	344,978	2,213,563

Source: 1975 - 2005 Censuses / Ministry of Economy.

In spite of all the encouraging attempts by the government and the society in general, increasing female participation in the private sector still represents a national challenge. It is argued there are several reasons to explain this phenomenon. First, the number of males between the ages of 15 and 65 years (2.12 million in 2005) far exceeds the female figure (838,941), mainly. This is due to the fact that foreign workers are predominantly male. Second, some companies restrict the numbers of females employed for several reasons, particularly self-interest, because local females expect higher salaries, less flexible working hours, and more privileges than expatriate workers. Third, many UAE women cease working after marriage and bearing children, either due to the insufficient number and quality of childcare centers and/or because maternal care is considered to be more beneficial for their children

These dramatic societal changes created a more complex dynamic society in which sex-roles have attracting regional research. Empirically oriented inquiry has quickly recognized and started asking questions about the immense variety in the types of jobs that women hold. Today's research is focusing on contemporary issues reflecting the ambition of the modern encouraged Emirati women who can now be found working in government, engineering, science, health care, media, computer technology, law, commerce, and the oil industry (Omair, 2009), table 2. One theme which cuts across all of these positions held by contemporary women involves in-depth studies of job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction of employed individuals attracts significant attention from researchers and practitioners alike across the disciplines (Blegen, 1993). Job satisfaction to many workers means being self-content with their work. It is defined as the extent to which individuals are satisfied with their jobs: the happier the workers, the more satisfied they are with their jobs. Job satisfaction is measured in different ways by different researchers and surveys. There is neither consensus about the best measurement nor a standard measurement of job satisfaction (Cabrita et al, 2006). Some researchers ask respondents (among other things) to rate their satisfaction levels with specific facets of their jobs: promotion prospects, total pay, relations with supervisors, job security, ability to work on their own initiative, the actual work itself and work hours (Clark, (1997). Other researchers ask individuals to indicate their agreement or disagreement with some statements using Likert-type or other similar scales. For example, Z. Wan and L.E. Leightley (2006) measured job satisfaction by responses to the question “on the whole, how satisfied are you with the work you do—would you say you are very satisfied, moderately satisfied, a little dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?” Or in other cases answers are sought to several subjective self-reported satisfaction questions (Mora, 2009). Many factors are found to affect job satisfaction, ranging from demographic factors such as age and gender to workplace factors such as organizational involvement and self-esteem. Workers usually look for a workplace that provides acceptable rewards and a proactive work environment. The issue of job satisfaction can be traced back to the classic Hawthorne studies (Mayo, 1933) which showed that positive changes in work conditions temporarily increase productivity. Today, it is understood as empirically well established that people work for many other purposes and reasons beyond just getting paid. It recently has been shown that job satisfaction and general happiness are positively related (Smith, 2007, p 1):

Work occupies a large part of each worker's day, is one's main source of social standing, helps to define who a person is, and affects one's health both physically and mentally. Because of work's central role in many people's lives, satisfaction with one's job is an important component in overall well-being.

These findings and others paved the way for researchers to investigate other factors in job satisfaction. The issue of job satisfaction continues nowadays to be important for workers all over the world, especially for women who are believed to be more easily satisfied than men in the workplace (Dencker, 2008; Bender et al, 2005). The UAE is not an exception (Al-Ajmi, 2001; Al-Otaibi, 1991 and 1992).

Job satisfaction is considered by some as the “the most frequently studied outcomes in the work–family conflict literature” (Grandey et al, 2005, p, 305). Work–family conflict occurs when family roles interfere with an individual's work life, e.g. the presence of young children, primary responsibility for children, elder care responsibilities, and unsupportive family members. It is believed work–family conflict is widespread and has serious consequences (Allen et al, 2000; Bond, 1997). Research confirms that it has more serious consequences for women because they combine the caregiver roles of worker, spouse, and parent (Krouse et al, 2007).

There is an ongoing contemporary debate about family-work conflict and its relationship with job satisfaction. It was recently found in the USA that “a majority of individuals report that work interferes with their home and leisure time” (Schieman et al, 2009). Herzberg, a pioneer in the research tradition exploring job satisfaction and employees motivation, claimed in his classic “Two Factor Theory” (1959) that employees’ satisfaction depends on two major factors – hygiene and motivation. Hygiene factors are responsible for satisfaction when they are not there, whereas when motivation factors are absent they are responsible for dissatisfaction. Herzberg argued, on the one hand, that when employees have a good feeling towards their work and have a sense of achievement, recognition, responsibility, promotion, and growth, they experience increased job satisfaction. On the other hand, the absence of pay and benefits, company policy, relationships with co-workers and job security directly lead to job dissatisfaction. In the United States the Career Woman Organization (2003) conducted a survey on American working women investigating those factors resulting in job satisfaction. They found nearly half of the polled women stay in jobs that are not satisfying. Women’s job dissatisfaction results from many sources, among which the quality of a person’s working relationship with their boss is the most significant. It was found dissatisfied women stay in the workplace for different reasons, such as gaining more experience, skills and growth; or being responsible for some work achievement and not wanting to give it up; or don’t want to quit work because they’ve become accustomed to working outside the home; or to continue to have their own careers; or because the job is in part insurance against the possible adverse financial effects of a divorce (Koretz, 1997; Jalilvand, 2000). Women greatly value rapid personal growth and constant learning, and this helps them stay at a workplace in spite of their dissatisfaction with numerous work related issues (Lindsey, 2000). The most interesting survey finding was that job compensation is not the essential factor (66%) for them at the work place; rather, they were motivated by respect (94%), service (74%) and challenge (71%).

This pattern of priorities was subsequently corroborated by Sangmook Kim (2005) who surveyed 55,128 public women employees in Seoul, Korea, and found women are more satisfied with their jobs than men. The American Conference Board (2005) asked a representative sample of 5,000 U.S. households about the degree of their job satisfaction; they found only 45% of those surveyed were satisfied with their jobs. This finding was down from about 61 % in 1987.

The survey conducted by the London School of Economics and the Policy Studies Institute at the University of Westminster (2000) found women and older workers are increasingly discontented with their jobs; and that since the 1990s levels of job satisfaction have declined, especially among the low paid and women with children (Labor Market Trend, 2002). Some researchers have argued this generation of 21st century workers’ failed expectations are due to the fact they have had to face rapid changes in technology, job security, and institutional policies, along with increasing productivity demands to meet global markets and international competition, economic liberalization resulting in unemployment, and general acceptance of worsening wages and conditions (Lee, and Wilbur, 1985; Chiu, 1998; Rose, 2005). Others such as Mesh’al Metle (2002) believe it is the local traditional culture of a given society (the UAE) that has a greater impact on job satisfaction and thus should be central in making predictions

about it. Heilmann (2009) has recently argued that role conflict have an important influence on job satisfaction.

Overall, it appears there is no consensus that there is any a single factor that is responsible for job satisfaction. Charlotte Chiu reviewed more than 30 studies of the role of gender differences in job satisfaction. She found that the current literature repeatedly confirming findings of earlier job satisfaction studies are inconsistent. Some studies find women have higher job satisfaction, while others find that men are more satisfied (Chiu, 1998). However, the current literature suggests job satisfaction is the outcome of different kinds and areas of work being sampled and interpreted, which explains why it is difficult to have one single general theory that applies across essentially very heterogeneous workplaces (Buchanan, 2007). The purpose of this study is to investigate those factors that contribute to job satisfaction among the employed Emirati female population.

Methodology

Participants

I distributed 1500 questionnaires to employed Emirati women in the United Arab Emirates, of which about 85% were collected. Traditional non-probability methods were used, including both location sampling such as targeted sampling, and chain-referral such as snowball sampling. These involve the selection of samples utilizing insider knowledge and referral chains among Emirati employed women, respectively. These techniques are invaluable because employed women in a conservative Muslim society such as the UAE are considered a hidden population that is extremely difficult to access in the workplace for research purposes. There are three major obstacles that must be overcome: First, it is not easy to formulate a sampling frame; second, there are strong and deeply rooted privacy concerns among the target population; and third, employed women constitute a small part of the general population (Heckathorn, 2002) The collection of information was conducted with the aid of trained Emirati students (male and female) from the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). The study targeted Emirati women working in both private and public sectors from all seven emirates of the country. The vast majority of the participants (64%) were from Abu Dhabi; (10%), Sharjah and Ras Khaima; (7%) Fujairah; (5%) Dubai; (3%) Ajman; and less than one percent were from Umm al-Quwain. The unequal distribution of percentages mirrored the number of student representatives from each emirate among the research team. The age range of participants was from 18 to 55 (mean age 28 years). Nearly half (49 %) of the participants were married and about 45% single. Among the participants 59% were university graduates, 15% held post high school 2 years Technical College Diploma, 13% were high school only graduates and 2% were higher education graduates.

Findings

Variables and Analysis Technique

In this study of employed Emirati females, a standard statistical regression analysis technique is used to identify factors that significantly predict job satisfaction. The response variable job-satisfaction is defined as the average score based on a six item scale. This scale measures the respondent's happiness about the job, and her general level of satisfaction in regards to the suitability of the work to her qualifications and gender, together with the suitability of the place and hours of work. For each interview

item, the respondents reply to a 4-Likert-type scale that ranges from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The reliability of this six item scale in measuring Emirati females’ job-satisfaction was reasonably high, giving a Cronbach’s α of 0.80.

The set of key predictors (independent variables) used in the analysis were the respondent’s age, level of education, income level, type of occupation, marital status and conservatism. Conservatism was intended as a proxy measure aiming to reflect local social norms and the tendency of some Emirati females to work in female secluded work environments. It is an average score based on a two item scale, reflecting the Emirati females’ preference to serve exclusively female clients and work in female secluded environments. The reliability of this conservatism scale was reasonably high, giving an acceptable Cronbach’s α of 0.796.

Keith Bender and associates (using data from the USA) investigated the determinants of overall job satisfaction and the paradox of the contented female workers. Their study (2005) confirmed women are more satisfied than men, and have higher job satisfaction in workplaces dominated by women workers, because they enjoy more job flexibility (Bender, et al, 2005). But in the UAE it is anticipated that holding a job in a work place dominated by men is not something modern women desire due to the local social norms, despite the fact they started to take untraditional jobs that demand them to work side by side with men. That being said, in general it is still far too early for all women to feel comfortable doing that. Many in the UAE who have finished their education have stayed home because they do not want to be in the same workplace as men, or their families will not allow this, or they have failed to get a secure governmental job (Hughes and Chesters, 2003; Abdulla, 2006; Vine, 2008). Table 3 presents summary statistics of all the variables involved in the regression analysis.

Table 3: Summary description of variables used in the regression analysis

Variable	N	Mean	St Dev	Min	Max	α Coefficient
Age	1267	28.2	4.80	18	55	-
Conservative	1287	2.78	0.97	1	4	0.796
Job- Satisfaction	1272	3.21	0.61	1	4	0.800

Variable	Count	%
<u>Education:</u>		
< Secondary (<i>reference group</i>)	29	2.25
Secondary	162	12.56
Diploma	319	24.73
University and above	780	60.47
<u>Income:</u>		
< 3000 (<i>reference group</i>)	78	6.08
3000 to 6000	236	18.41
6000 to 10,000	560	43.68
>= 10,000	408	31.83
<u>Occupation:</u>		
Office work (<i>reference group</i>)	421	33.23
Teacher	347	27.39
Administrator	145	11.44
Other	354	27.94
<u>Marital status:</u>		
Not married (<i>reference group</i>)	650	50.47
Married	638	49.53

Main factors affecting job satisfaction

The result reported in Table 4 indicates a positive significant relationship between employed Emirati female job satisfaction and age. An increase of one year in age correlates with a rise of about 1% in satisfaction. This finding corroborates a number of previous empirical studies that found the same association (Weaver, 1980; Lee, and Wilbur, 1985; Palanivelu, and Muthusamy, 2009; Wan, and Leightley, 2006; and Bonsang, and Van Soest, 2010). However, other researchers are skeptical about this pattern, having found little or no influence of age on job satisfaction (Birdi et.al, 1995; Kessuwan, and Muenjohn, 2010). This is an indication younger employees are less satisfied overall with their jobs while older employees are more satisfied.

It is reported by the employment website Bayt.com and the research firm You GovSiraj that job satisfaction in the UAE rated "considerably low". The study which was conducted relied on a large sample, some 9,760 respondents aged between 20 and 62 from the Gulf States. It was found that about 73% of all employees in the UAE were unhappy with their work, with the remaining 27% reporting high satisfaction. Among all the nationalities under study, only 26% of the Gulf nationals reported a high level of satisfaction in their work. (Maceda, 2008).

There are a number of reasons why young Emirati (males and females) are not satisfied with their jobs: 1. Due to the high family incomes some of the young Emirati do not need jobs, so they often accept the first job offer on a temporary basis and wait for the right job opportunity and move on. 2. Many young Emiratis are simply not equipped with the necessary skills to enter the labor market. 3. The classic welfare state, providing free healthcare, subsidized utilities, no-interest loans for homes, etc. contributes to weakening the motivation to work. 4. Lack of childcare in workplaces is a factor leading to job dissatisfaction. 5. Some believe available jobs for young Emirati are unsuitable because salaries are too low, the working hours are unsuitable or involve demanding working conditions. 6. The perception the private sector has poor job security, does not offer proper retirement packages, offers only limited prospects for career development, and does not provide paid time off work to pursue private studies. 7. Some young people believe the offered jobs are unrewarding, dull or lack inspiring team work. 8. Some believe the private sector has a bias against their local region, i.e. where they grew up and live. Badreya Al Jenaibi (2010) in her study of two UAE municipalities found that the major causes of job dissatisfaction are work volume, disorganized work flow, and the heavy responsibilities placed on the employees. Her findings confirm that Young Emirati employees are not satisfied with their work because of the fear that they may lose the job for any reason, or the positions they hold do not match their educational qualifications, or because of low salaries (Al Jenaibi, 2010).

Other studies such as those by Charles Weaver examined job satisfaction among American workers in the USA in the 1970s, using more than four thousands annual national surveys. He confirms a positive association between job satisfaction and age (Weaver, 1980). Younger women employees' lower satisfaction levels may also be attributed to the lower expectations that women have when entering the labor market, or to the high turnover rate among younger workers (Clark, 1997; Wan, and Leightley, 2006; Mora, 2009). This generalization also has comparative support in both older and more recent regional studies in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (Al-Otaibi, 1992; Al-Otaibi, 1993; Bader, 1883; Vidyasagar, 2004).

Employed females who are educated beyond the secondary level are more satisfied with their jobs than those below the secondary level. About 60% of the respondents had finished university studies, and about 25% had attained post secondary diplomas. Previous literature reported those who are highly educated seem more satisfied than those less educated. This may be because highly educated people tend to land better jobs with higher pay and prestige, and consequently have higher self-esteem. Workers with lower levels of education are typically expected to have unchallenging, non-stimulating work; these qualities are of course not positively related to job satisfaction (Weaver, 1980; Martin and Shehan, 1989; Koustelios, 2001; Gini, 2001; Bender and Heywood, 2006).

This finding that education positively correlates with job satisfaction supports some regional findings in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other countries. For female graduate respondents, their jobs are associated with intellectual satisfaction, personal fulfillment, escape from boredom at home, and a meaningful utilization of time. This is no doubt the same pattern just stressed, that highly educated workers are more likely to access jobs with characteristics that provide greater satisfaction (Fabra et al, 2009; Al-Ajmi, 2001; Metle, 2001; Saud, 1993; Al-Otaibi, 1991; Glenn and Weaver, 1982). It is reported in the

USA that the distribution of income over a persons' lifetime is strongly correlated with educational attainment: the average high school graduate earning \$1.2 million over his or her lifetime, but with the bachelor degree \$2.1 million, the master's degree \$2.5 million, the doctoral degree \$3.4 million, and the professional degree \$4.4 million (Longley, 2010; Rzdakiewicz, 2010).

The UAE started some years back a reform move to reshape the civil service, aiming to reevaluate all the public civil servants' positions and then putting the right person in the right job., At the beginning of the formation of the state, in order to help the people the UAE government had employed individuals for the civil servant positions with less consideration of their experience and educational qualification. This subsequent reform process motivated many employed high school graduates to go back to universities lecture rooms, and to earn higher degrees to help them in changing their socioeconomic status. These young people believed higher education has a positive impact on their lives, professionally, socially, mentally and physically (Rzdakiewicz, 2010). So it is safe to say that jobs with a high degree of influence such as administration and medicine normally also offer higher economic compensation. In other words, highly educated workers are expected to be satisfied with their jobs because attaining an advanced educational degree will lead to a prestigious job with relatively high income, and as a result they may enjoy a comfortable standard of living. However, the current literature in general shows an inconsistency with this line of reasoning regarding the relation of job satisfaction to other variables such as education. There is an abundance of empirical studies (Clark et al, 1996; Bender, 2006; Wan, and Leightley, 2006) which show these other variables, and also Adam Al-Otaibi (1992) who found that education is negatively associated with job satisfaction among the national workers in Kuwait. Furthermore K. Bender and J. Heywood (2006) investigated the relationship between education and job satisfaction using data on 5,000 British workers. They found satisfaction levels strongly decline with higher levels of education.

To the best of my knowledge the relevant literature fails to provide an answer to the question of why education has both positive and negative relationships to job satisfaction. It may be understandable that education is positively related to job satisfaction, as explained earlier. But why education is negatively related to job satisfaction remains an unanswered puzzle in the literature (Fabra et al, 2009).

It is of course no surprise that income generally plays a positive role in enhancing job satisfaction, a relation empirically confirmed in many studies (Weaver, 1980; Clark, and Oswald, 1996; Pouliakas and Theodossiou, 2005; Bender and John Heywood, 2006; Bonsang, and Van Soest, 2010). It was found that Emirati females who earn 10,000 Emirati Dirham (\$ 2,740) or more per month are more satisfied with their jobs compared to those who earn less than 3000 Emirati Dirham (\$ 822) per month. This finding is supported in both older and recent regional studies (Weaver, 1980; Abdel-Khalik, 1981; Clark, and Oswald, 1996; Wan, and Leightley, 2006; Skalli et al, 2007). Because work becomes very essential in people's life, job satisfaction becomes an important element in overall well-being. The current empirical literature confirms the importance of income as a factor that has a positive effect on happiness. It is also considered as a determinant of a subjective sense of individual well-being, helping to define who a person is, affecting their health both physically and mentally, and making life comfortable, (Smith, 2007; Palanivelu, and Muthusamy, 2009; Clark et al, Frijteirs, and Shields, 2008). It is well-

known job satisfaction increases with the level of prestige and social standing of an occupation. Previous researchers (Smith, 2007; Vidyasagar, 2004) found that the most satisfying jobs are in the main professional, such as teaching and more creative work like administration, as shown in table 4:

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Job Satisfaction among Employed Emirati Females

Predictor	Coefficient	SE Coefficient	T	P-value
Constant	2.5539	0.1724	14.81	0.000
Age	0.0089	0.0037	2.39	0.044
Education:				
Secondary	0.2598	0.1287	2.02	0.044
College (Diploma)	0.2880	0.1258	2.29	0.022
University & above	0.2755	0.1262	2.18	0.029
Income:				
3000 to 6000	0.1454	0.0795	1.83	0.067
6000 to 10,000	0.1314	0.0747	1.76	0.079
10,000 & more	0.1671	0.0788	2.12	0.034
Occupation:				
Teacher	0.4906	0.0511	9.61	0.000
Administrator	0.2284	0.0583	3.91	0.000
Other	0.0682	0.0478	1.43	0.154
Marital status:				
Married	-0.0785	0.0356	-2.21	0.028
Conservative	-0.0518	0.0189	-2.74	0.006

F=13.77 with p-value=0.00 $R^2 = 12.4\%$ $R^2(\text{adj}) = 11.5\%$

It has been observed that married females are highly vulnerable to job strain (Vanagas et al, 2004); consequently, marital status as a variable negatively impacts job satisfaction. Married females were found to be significantly dissatisfied with their jobs (p-value= 0.028). The dissatisfaction of the UAE employed women may be attributed to several reasons. First, it is obvious women still have a defined role in the UAE society and are expected to carry out domestic responsibilities, bearing children and looking after their family needs and home. Second, the work places do not offer sufficient childcare centers for working mothers. More than 70 percent of the respondents reported that they lack childcare services in their workplace. Third, the prevailing culture considers motherly care more beneficial for children than professional daycare centers. Fourth, to avoid family-work conflict, Middle Eastern women have a defined role to be obedient and respectful to men, and be efficient in carrying out day to day house responsibilities and bearing children (Al-Tarrah, Ali (2010). Heather Sharp (2005) interviewed a number of UAE young females about their future. The IT graduate Salama, would accept a future husband's demands to stay at home: "It's our religion - what he says, I must do,"

There are (50%) married women among the respondents, (81%) having children, about a third (33%) more than 3. It is known that the Arabian husbands culturally do not

participate in the house work. It is expected the wife takes care of almost all house work regardless of her role as a working mother. For many this situation is a big burden, it being difficult to meet the needs of both roles at the same time without creating a role conflict. Family-work conflict may increase absenteeism and turnover, decrease performance, and create poorer health. The fifth factor is that the huge oil revenues minimize the need for women to work after marriage. In Middle East countries men have traditionally been the family providers. After the discovery and export of oil family income greatly increased, making it possible to depend on one's income to meet the family needs. According to the Statistics Center of Abu Dhabi, the annual average household income in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in 2007 was about \$ 60 thousand, with national household income being about \$ 125 thousand on average, compared to about \$ 47 thousand for non-national households (Table 5).

Table 5: Annual average per capita income by type of household & region 2007 (in Emirati Dirham)

Region	Type of Household			
	National	Non-National	Collective	General Average
Abu Dhabi Urban	72,834	50,765	31,976	53,367
Abu Dhabi Rural	33,720	17,190	18,776	30,186
Al-Ain Town Urban	36,955	25,119	21,048	29,182
Al-Ain Town Rural	27,759	13,516	13,211	21,588
Western Region & Islands	41,560	30,187	19,672	31,717
Emirate of Abu Dhabi	45,030	41,089	23,739	39,510

Source: Statistics Center - Abu Dhabi

In this context women are expected to stay homes and play their traditional domestic role. Sixth, married women have a high level of job strain due to the multiple roles they play in and outside the house (Al-Tarrach, 2010; Krouse, and Afifi, 2007; Kim, 2005; Al-Sayegh, 2001). About 75 per cent of the respondents reported that work makes them nervous and fatigued due to several factors, such as working in a dominant male workplace. In addition, Arab men are less involved in family affairs than their wives, leaving almost all domestic affairs to rest on the women's shoulders. In the Arab region the family has always been the center point for all family members because it is the main social security system for all family groups: sick, disabled, widows, divorced, orphans. It provides economic protection to the children (Rashad et al, 2005). Ueda (2008) found that married Korean women face difficulties in finding full-time positions that bring higher earnings (job satisfaction); and feels pressure to remain home. Similarly, conservatism is significantly negatively related to job satisfaction. As explained above, "Conservatism" is a proxy measure intended to reflect local social norms and the tendency of some Emirati females to take jobs in secluded female work environments. It is also apparent females who prefer to work in a female only environment and/or only serve female clients are dissatisfied with their jobs.

No supportive regional literature has been found to date on conservatism, but literature from non-Islamic cultures such as the United States confirms that "women in female dominated workplaces have higher job satisfaction because they value job

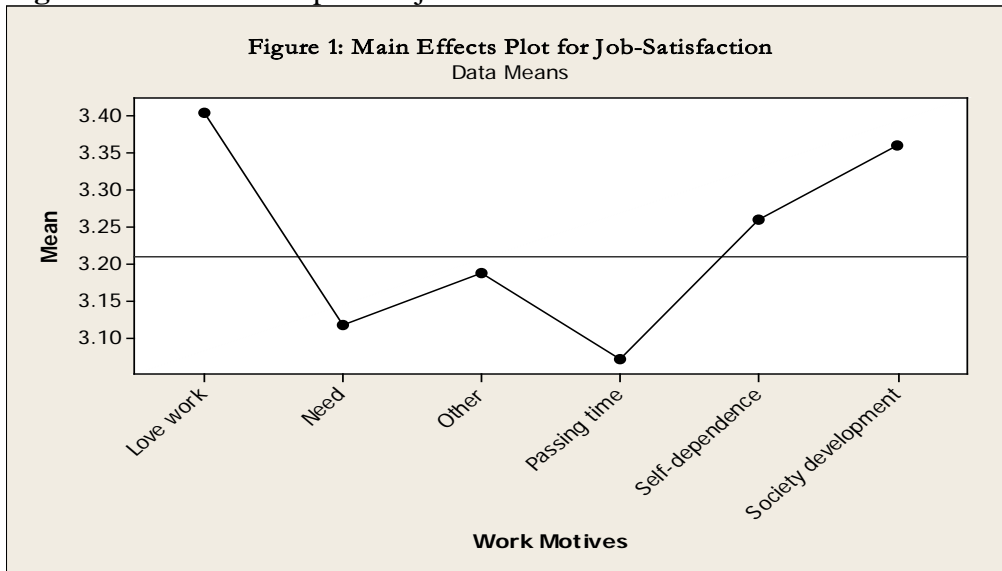
flexibility and so choose to dominate the workplaces that provide job flexibility. This may be because women in the UAE are strongly affected by the local prevailing Islamic culture that calls for gender segregation in work places. However, about 76% of the respondents don't mind having male coworkers; but about 46% do feel uncomfortable with male coworkers. It is generally considered inappropriate for women to speak to men they are neither married nor related to in public. However, it is increasingly acceptable that women may have contact with male work colleagues. However, a study by the International Council on Security and Development found that although cultural factors are important, they are not a priority for young Emirati females. In general, there was evidence that a multi-cultural environment is not a disincentive for young Emiratis to seek employment. This flexibility will make them more attractive to employers; along with their interest in personal development (ICOS Report, 2010).

Motives for work and job satisfaction

To study Emirati females that responded to the survey questions, the motives for work were categorized in six different groups: economic need, desire to participate in society development, love of work, being self-dependent, passing time or a residual category of other motives, such as an excuse to get out of the house on a daily basis; or to show off as modern women. Significant differences were found between these work motives. Emirati females who do their jobs due to their love of work have significantly higher job satisfaction, in comparison to those involved in the job because of economic need or for just passing the time (Figure 1). Similarly, self-dependence and participation in societal development motives generate higher job satisfaction than economic need and passing the time motives (Hodson, 1989).

This general finding corroborates Tait (1995) who found women can face all kinds of work difficulties and discrimination for the sake of love of their jobs, as well as the earlier work of Herzberg (1959). One of Herzberg's principles was that most individuals sincerely want to do a good job and have a good feeling about them self. This study's finding presents evidence about the desire of the job loving respondents to participate in society's development, and keenness to develop, grow and be recognized (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Main Effects plot for job satisfaction



Conclusions

This study focused on investigating the factors that enhance job satisfaction among the employed Emirati female population in the UAE. The fundamental predictors (independent variables) used in the analysis include the respondent's age, level of education, income level, type of occupation, marital status and conservatism. Using standard techniques of statistical regression on survey data indicates a significant positive relationship between employed Emirati female job satisfaction and age; those with secondary level and higher schooling are more satisfied with their jobs compared to those having not completed secondary level; those who earn more are more satisfied with their jobs compared to those who earn less; and occupations such as teaching and administrative work bring more female satisfaction than does routine office work. However, in contrast it was found that being married and conservatism are significantly negatively related to job satisfaction. Finally, females who like to work in a female only environment and only serve female clients are relatively dissatisfied with their jobs.

I began this essay by observing the commonplace that in the UAE and the entire region social values like elsewhere tend to lag behind economic development. The tension between them is real, and made obtaining data for this study difficult. It is hoped this limited sample of information offered by working women has been reliably interpreted via the six item scale of independent variables (age, level of education, income level, type of occupation, marital status and conservatism) used in the analysis to measure Emirati females' job-satisfaction. Nevertheless, given the very limited scope of the present study, I strongly recommend more detailed and sustained assessment of employed Emirati women's job satisfaction and choice of work place. Such research could extend our knowledge of the work environment, activities, role and status of employed women in the UAE. Hopefully this research will draw attention to the woefully insufficient number of broadly based empirical studies of Emirati women in general and of employed women in particular.

For further improvement of the status and work place of employed Emirati women, it is recommended that:

- Women need to be able to find employment in high paid positions that is free from gender discrimination and inequality such as underrepresentation in upper level positions in both government and public sectors.
- The workplaces where there are working mothers need to be provided with infant and child care facilities.
- Women will only increase their earnings by having access to high-quality education and training. This is especially true for those who cannot afford going to school.
- Women need to have access to high-quality career information and tools. This is vital for their mobility, i.e. their potential advancement into satisfying decision-making positions with good pay.
- Barriers that women face in the job markets, whether they come as laws, regulations or common sense prejudices, should be progressively eliminated or substantially reduced, allowing women to fully contribute to the nation's progress and growth of the economy in a competitive world.

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