Measuring job satisfaction

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Core ideas

Job satisfaction can be measured with rating scales and questionnaires that ask workers to report how they feel about specific parts of their job.

The Job Descriptive Index measures satisfaction as separate facets rather than one vague overall feeling.

The JDI focuses on work itself, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision and co-workers.

Walton's Quality of Working Life model is broader than job satisfaction because it considers pay, safety, growth, rights, work-life balance and social value.

Psychometrics matters because a useful job-satisfaction measure should be reliable, valid and sensitive enough to detect meaningful differences.

Questionnaires can produce comparable quantitative data, but they may miss individual reasons unless open questions or interviews are also used.

Key terms

Rating scale: A fixed response scale used to show the strength of a person's attitude or judgement.

Questionnaire: A set of written or online questions used to collect self-report data.

Job Descriptive Index: A job-satisfaction questionnaire that measures satisfaction with several job facets.

Facet measure: A measure that breaks a broad attitude into separate parts.

Quality of Working Life: A broader evaluation of how work affects employees' wellbeing and life at work.

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Psychometrics: The study of how well psychological tests and scales measure what they claim to measure.

Reliability: The consistency of a measure across items, time or raters.

Validity: The extent to which a measure actually measures the intended concept.

Constitutionalism at work: Protection of employee rights, fair procedures, privacy and expression.

Further detail and evidence

Walton's quality of working life (QWL) includes eight conditions and evaluation of them, extending beyond enjoyment of immediate tasks.

The eight conditions are: adequate/fair compensation; safe/healthy working conditions; opportunity to use/develop human capacities; continued growth/security; social integration; constitutionalism; work and total life space; social relevance of work.

Constitutionalism concerns rights, fair treatment, privacy and opportunity to express views. Work and total life space concerns balance with family and non-work life.

Social integration concerns belonging/supportive relationships; social relevance concerns organisational responsibility and the value of work to society.

QWL evaluation uses questionnaire/rating-scale items covering these conditions. Examine each domain: a high overall average can conceal unsafe work or unfair treatment.

The 2027 syllabus names a QWL evaluation scale but does not prescribe one question count or universal cut-off. State the response scale and scoring for the version used.

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JDI facets are the work itself, pay, promotion, supervision and co-workers. Descriptor responses indicate satisfaction with each facet; versions/scoring rules must be identified. A separate overall satisfaction measure is not interchangeable with the facet profile.

Walton's eight conditions broaden the focus: compensation; safe/healthy conditions; use/development of capacities; growth/security; social integration; constitutional rights; work-life balance; social relevance. Distinguish fair treatment/voice from belonging and from the organisation's social responsibility.

A QWL evaluation scale turns conditions into clearly worded items with response anchors and a scoring scheme. A researcher should explain the version and whether scores are domain-specific or combined. Confidential collection matters because employment relationships can influence candour.

Applying the ideas

A worker can enjoy colleagues while being dissatisfied with promotion. Two equal overall QWL averages may conceal opposite safety and work-life profiles. Report facet/domain scores before recommending a change, then use interviews to understand particular problems.

Evaluation and connections

Evaluate self-report bias, confidentiality, reliability and cultural validity; distinguish broad QWL assessment from the JDI's narrower satisfaction facets.

Test-retest checks stability when conditions should be unchanged; internal consistency examines related items; construct validity asks whether the intended facet is measured. High reliability does not guarantee truthful responding. Translation, cultural expectations and fear of employer access affect validity. Change after an intervention may represent real improvement rather than unreliability.