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Effects of Age Differences on Job Satisfaction Evaluations of Employees in China

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Abstract: This study investigated factors that influence employees' job satisfaction in China and whether they differ across age groups. Analysis was conducted using the 2014 China Labor-force Dynamics Survey, which included 6,249 employees in three age groups: 634 aged 55 and older; 2,569 aged 40-54; and 3,046 aged 18-39. The results indicate that when gender, age, marital status, living community type and education levels are controlled, total job satisfaction was associated with positive evaluations of income, job security, working environment, working time, promotion opportunity, job enjoyability, colleague relationships, ability and skills utilization, respect from others, and opportunities to express opinions. Regression analysis results indicate that age has positive effects on total job satisfaction. The older employees had the highest evaluations for job security, working environment, working time, income, job enjoyability, and total job satisfaction. The middle-aged employees had the highest evaluations for respect from others. The younger group had the highest evaluations for colleague relationships, ability and skills utilization, opportunities to express opinions, job enjoyability, promotion opportunity, and respect from others. Additionally, the older group did not value promotion opportunity, opportunities to express opinions, colleague relationships, ability and skills utilization, and respect from others. The findings highlight the importance of examining age related needs regarding how to improve employees' job satisfaction. The results suggest that employers should consider age-related challenges and needs in the workplace.

Keywords: job satisfaction, Chinese employees, age difference

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Background and Review of Literature

Chinese society is aging. There are more than 202 million adults aged 60 and above in China and this number is estimated to double by 2040 (Wu, Smit, Xue & Odden, 2018, pp. 102-108). This demographic change has raised concerns regarding meeting the needs of long-term care and health among older adults (Tang, Chen, Zhang & Mui, 2018, pp. 1-8); and economic development in an aging society due to the decreasing numbers of the working-age population (Chen & Chen, 2017, pp. 805-824). Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, and Sherraden (2001) pointed out that the engagement in employment and volunteering may be one of the interventions to enhance physical and mental health among older adults. Additionally, Chen and Chen (2017) suggested that keeping older workers employed will “facilitate an adequate supply of labor.” Several factors may influence the determinations of work among older adults, such as personal characteristics (e.g. gender, health, education, etc.), family factors (e.g. marital status), and institutional factors (e.g. pension & insurance; Ling & Chi, 2008, pp. 126-133). Above all, job satisfaction plays a significant role in older adults’ willingness to work beyond retirement (Axelrad & Mcnamara, 2018, pp. 503-519).

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the concept of job satisfaction was first developed in the Hawthorne studies by Elton Mayo. The Hawthorne studies found that employees’ job satisfaction and productivity can be influenced by their social relationships and psychological factors (Robbins, 2002, pp. 85-146). From then on, job satisfaction has been a highly debated subject both in academia and industry, and has been frequently investigated in different professional sectors, such as management, sociology and psychology. Because worker’s job satisfaction and their identification with the organization are key variables to adaptation and retention in organizations (Joan & Angels, 2013, pp. 1068-1079), topics such as employee commitment, along with perception and opinion of their jobs has an important impact on the organization’s success by influencing factors such as employee attendance, turnover reduction, organizational efficiency and business performance. Literature in this area showed that satisfied employees may be more creative, productive and innovative, and less stressful, absent and accident prone, all of which lead to superior organizational performance, higher profitability and the achievement of organizational goals. Employees with low job satisfaction may have low levels of service quality and commitment along with higher burnout and turnover which may affect customer loyalty, market share, company performance, and the achievement of organizational goals (Sadegh & Azadeh, 2012, pp. 91-100).

According to one of the earliest and most cited definitions of job satisfaction, Hoppock (1935) described job satisfaction as “any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that causes a person truthfully to say, I am satisfied with my job.” Since then, the definition of job satisfaction has been continually expanded. Locke (1976) identified Job satisfaction as the pleasurable condition of a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences. Spector (1997) referred to job satisfaction

as a person's evaluation of his/her job and work context, *i.e.* an attitude reflecting how well people like or dislike their job. Overall, job satisfaction is "an affective and emotional response to various facets of one's job" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004, pp. 187), and has also been defined as the pleasure a person gets from their job, the feeling of satisfaction and the quality of life (Fidan, Ercan, Yilmazer & Şehirli, 2016, pp. 110-124).

Currently, job satisfaction is generally defined as the positive employee affect or attitude towards their jobs or job situations. Nevertheless, factors contributing to job satisfaction are complex, including employee's individual features (*i.e.*, age, gender, marital status, family, and general health) (Spector, 1997, pp. 34-91), job rewards (availability of pay and fringe benefits), the nature of the work (physical security, promotion potential and working autonomously and creatively), valued social position, working conditions (environmental clarity and comfort) organizational atmosphere, and interpersonal contact with superiors and colleagues (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959, pp. 24-67).

Effects of Age on Job Satisfaction

It is wise to emphasize the effects of age on workers' emotional states regarding their jobs because age covers changes that vary among individuals in physical, mental, social conditions, perceptions and expectations. As one of the most important demographic factors, age as a determining element of job satisfaction has been examined frequently. Indeed, literature shows mixed findings regarding the influence of age. Among contradictory results, some researchers believe that job satisfaction increases with age, results of relevant studies indicate that the satisfaction of older employees is higher than younger ones (Kumar & Giri, 2009, pp. 28-36; Boumans, Jong & Janssen, 2011, pp. 331-350). Due to long careers that are almost always accompanied by higher levels of work experience, higher salaries and better benefits (Frances, 2015), more job involvement and greater organizational commitment (Kooij, Lange, Jansen & Dijkers, 2008, pp. 364-395) are seen in the work place. On the contrary, new entrants tend to be less satisfied on account of the larger gap between ideal and reality. Other studies revealed that job satisfaction decreases with age (Bustos & Carrizosa, 2010). Other studies also found that the relationship between age and job satisfaction is U-shaped (Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996, pp. 57-81; César, María, María & Carmen, 2013, pp. 1314-1320) or inverted U-shaped or inverted J-shaped (Saleh & Otis, 1964, pp. 425-430), and yet others suggest that age does not play a significant role in job satisfaction (Kwangho, Jae & Sung, 2013; Carolina, 2014).

Income

The effects of income on job satisfaction have been revealed by many studies. Income is often considered to be a primary determinant of satisfaction. Normally, employees are apt to be satisfied if they think their income matches their efforts and is in line with their expectations. For example, Lewis, Brazil, Krueger, Lohfeld and Tjam (2001) determined that pay and

benefits have a substantial impact on people's job satisfaction. Luthans (2006) argued that salaries could also serve to meet higher demand levels. Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2003) assumed that most employees want to seek equitable, transparent payment systems consistent with their wishes. If the remuneration appears to be fair and equal to job requirements, personal skills, and community remuneration standards, the employees may be pleased with the results. One study conducted among adults aged 50 and above from 11 European countries indicated that income and job satisfaction was positively related, but only when other job characteristics were not controlled (Bonsang & Soest, 2012). Nevertheless, Brainard (2005) found that job satisfaction is less likely to be related to pay and welfare. Lee and Sabharwal (2016) surveyed recent college graduates across the public, non-profit, and for-profit sectors, and discovered that wage increases in the public and non-profit sectors do not compensate for job satisfaction losses caused by poor education-job matching, as they do in the profit-making sectors. Thomas, William, and Matt (2017) found that pay-for-performance had no significant effect on overall job satisfaction or 12 other work-life indicators in either the short or long term.

Job Security

Job Security, which is usually measured by the perceived risk of job loss in the near future, is a significant determinant of job satisfaction. Benjamin and Ilker (2014) used difference-in-differences analysis of the 1997 and 2008 waves from the National Study of the Changing Workforce to show that the impact of job security on job satisfaction depends on the likelihood of unemployment and the likelihood of finding another job. A study of pharmaceutical companies conducted by Mosammad and Nurul (2011) indicated that job security is more important to male employees than to female employees as an aspect of job satisfaction. Compared with employees in small and medium-sized organizations, employees in larger organizations tend to regard job security as an important contributor to job satisfaction. Hastings (2012) cited new Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) research results and pointed out that job security is no longer a top driver of satisfaction.

Working Environment

Typically, people value having a comfortable, orderly, and tidy physical workplace, which contributes to their health and safety. Therefore, such a working environment may lead to an increase in employee satisfaction and attitudes. Abdul and Raheela (2015) collected data from 210 employees by using simple random sampling and found a positive correlation between work environment and job satisfaction. Ruchi and Surinder (2014) also studied the work environment and work culture of the Domino's pizza in Jaipur city (Rajasthan, India), and pointed out that good working conditions, refreshment, recreational, health and safety facilities along with fun at the workplace would increase the degree of job satisfaction. Raju and Sarang (2015) understood the relevance of the working environment in service sectors, including banks,

insurance companies, education systems, hotels, tourism, communications, and other pure customer-oriented service industries. They found that the organizational work environment is positively correlated with employee job satisfaction and job involvement.

Working Hours

Working hours are often closely linked to workload. Appropriate or inappropriate working time may generate positive or negative employee feelings towards the organization. Akinori (2017) conducted a community-based cross-sectional study involving 2,375 full-time non-shift Japanese employees in 296 small and medium sized businesses. The results showed that participants who worked more than 12 hours a day were significantly more likely to develop depressive symptoms than those who worked 6-8 hours a day. However, Holly and Mohnen (2012) used a large, representative set of panel data from German households (GSOEP) to show that high working hours and overtime usually do not lead to a decrease in satisfaction. Their research proposed that increased working hours and overtime have a positive impact on life and job satisfaction, while the desire to reduce working hours had a negative impact on satisfaction. So there is a complex relationship between working hours and job satisfaction.

Promotion Opportunity

Job satisfaction is also affected by personal perceptions of fair promotion opportunities (Rogelberg, Allen, Shanock, Scott & Shuffler, 2010, pp. 149-172). Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013) pointed out that promotion opportunity has been described to be positively related with employee energy (desire to work hard on tasks), dedication (enthusiasm for work), and concentration (focus on work activities). Noraani (2013) investigated the influence of promotion opportunity on job satisfaction among 320 lecturers within the Malaysian university system and found that there was a significant positive correlation between promotion opportunities and job satisfaction ($R = 0.590$, $P = 0.000$). Gu *et al.* (2017) focused on 1,413 male train drivers in China and reported that job satisfaction scores were positively correlated with promotion opportunities, pay, job stability, and negatively correlated with sleep disorder, effort, and role conflict.

Job Enjoyability

Previous studies have shown that job enjoyability created higher levels of motivation and job involvement (Pratibha, Anil & Everett, 1989, pp. 365-370). Researchers have long held that if a job is interesting and enjoyable, it is likely to contribute to greater productivity. Conversely, if a job is boring or tedious, it will not stimulate workers' satisfaction. Nie and Sousa (2017) used data from the 2012 China Labor-force Dynamics Survey and 2010–2012 China Family Panel Studies and reported that many jobs were less interesting than expected, which hindered employees' awareness of their perceived potential. However, Justin, Fritz, and James (2018)

stated that a meta-analysis failed to demonstrate a significant relationship between employee interest-job fit and overall job satisfaction. In addition, Kevin, Colin, Chelsea, Wei, and James (2018) indicated people overemphasized the relationship between interest and satisfaction. In fact, job satisfaction should be best predicted with interests in combination with work values. That is to say, if the job has value and people are interested in it, it may lead to higher job satisfaction. On the contrary, if the job is not valuable, even if there is interest, job satisfaction is not necessarily high.

Colleague Relationships

People are usually satisfied with their colleagues when their goals, values, and views are compatible. In such situations people are motivated to connect with each other forming group cohesiveness and harmonious organizational related interactions. Nicholas and Theodore (2010) suggested that overall job satisfaction is influenced by satisfaction with peers' behavior. Wadhwa, Verghese, and Wadhwa (2011) found in their study that if employees are treated equally and fairly and they are properly supervised, satisfaction increases. Khan, Ramzan, and Butt (2013) conducted a study that suggested job satisfaction of staff workers in Islamic banks was strongly influenced by organizational climate. Additionally, they indicated that the relationship between organizational climate and occupational stress had a significant impact on job satisfaction.

Utilization of Abilities and Skills

In most cases, people will be more satisfied when their abilities and skills match the characteristics of their jobs. According to a SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management) 2015 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement Survey, more than one-half (55%) of employees rated "opportunities to use abilities and skills at work" as a significant contributor to their job satisfaction. The research report said:

In recent years, opportunities to use abilities and skills account for the highest value of very satisfied employees in the context of career development. This high level of satisfaction puts opportunities to use job abilities and skills in the second place on the list of factors affecting employee devotion to work (SHRM, 2015:112).

The greater the ability for workers to apply their knowledge, skills and abilities while working, the more autonomy, responsibility and diversity of tasks workers will have. Kooij, *et al.* (2008) explained older employees are more inclined to remain active and creative inside the workplace and find more to enjoy in their careers than younger workers.

Respect from Others

According to Schultz and Schultz (2006) and Sudha (2010), technical, professional and managerial jobs, instead of jobs in service industries, wholesale and retail businesses, could

produce a higher level of job satisfaction. This is because technical and professional type jobs command more respect than service industry type jobs. Kristin and Mukta (2012) explored how respectful treatment mediates the links between constructive performance feedback and job satisfaction. The results concluded that employees whose supervisors used constructive feedback felt more respected by their supervisors, which in turn was a better predictor of greater job satisfaction.

Opportunities to Express Opinions

It is believed that opportunities to express opinions and participatory decision-making can help employees gain greater autonomy, responsibility, increased creativity and organizational awareness especially when decisions are closely related to the jobs at hand. The existing literature indicates that high job satisfaction is often associated with increased decentralization in decision-making and psychological empowerment which can drive employee innovation and intrinsic control over their work environment which helps the company to move forward (Samita, 2015, pp. 44-52; Hechanova, Regina, Alampay & Franco, 2006, pp. 72-78). Zaid and Lily (2017) collected questionnaires from 300 non-managerial employees in one of Jordan's largest private organizations and tested the positive correlation between employee voice and job satisfaction. The research concluded that employee voice recognition created an incentive environment that improved job satisfaction levels.

The ten factors mentioned above have been tested in western countries. However, the related studies focusing on factors influencing job satisfaction among Chinese employees are rare. Existing literature in China mainly focuses on analytical studies of employee job satisfaction related to employees' interests, protections of labor rights (He & Xu, 2014) and turnover intentions (Jiang, Chen and Che, 2016). Job satisfaction is considered to be of great practical value and holds great significance to enterprise development which is a primary focus in schools and other organizations relating to social stability and economic growth in China. Therefore, it is important to clearly and accurately understand the levels and elements of job satisfaction in the Chinese workforce. Our goal is to contribute to the study of employee satisfaction by investigating what variables are associated with job satisfaction and whether these variables differ across age groups.

We gathered and analyzed data relevant to the following research questions.

- (1) When demographic variables are controlled, which of the ten factors are related to job satisfaction?
- (2) Do older employees have higher job satisfaction than middle-aged employees and younger employees?
- (3) Are there statistically significant differences between the various levels of job satisfaction in different age groups?

Research Methodology

Data and Variables

Our study used secondary data from the 2014 China Labor-force Dynamics Survey (CLDS), which is a national longitudinal social survey launched by Sun Yat-Sen University. The aim of CLDS is to accumulate labor force data in China. It used a multi-stage, multi-level probability sampling method, which is proportional to the scale of labor. The representative sample of the workforce covered 29 provinces, 401 villages, 14,214 households, and 23,594 individuals. Our analyses selected the data from employees who are hired by employers and engaged in paid jobs. Among all of the participants in the survey 6,249 employees completed valid questionnaires with the assistance of interviewers.

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of (1) personal features: i.e., gender, age, current household registration type (*Hukou*), marital status and education levels; (2) employees' satisfaction facets: i.e. income, job security, and working environment etc.; (3) employees' total job satisfaction.

Gender was coded as 1 for "male" and 2 for "female." Age was measured by actual age, and the respondents were divided into three categories based on age: "older employees" (aged 55-74), "middle-aged employees" (40-54), and "younger employees" (15-39). Current household registration type designates that the respondent has agricultural, non-agricultural registered permanent residence, conversion of agricultural accounts to non-agricultural accounts, conversion of non-agricultural accounts to agricultural accounts, or other. Marital status was categorized as unmarried, in the first marriage, remarried, divorced, widowed, or in cohabitation. Respondents' level of education was measured along a scale from "never went to school," "primary school / private primary school," "junior middle school," "senior middle school," "vocational senior high school," "technical school," "special secondary school," "college," "university," "master," to "doctorate," or other.

Ten items constituted the questionnaire we used to measure the different dimensions of job satisfaction, which were based on variables commonly used in the literature to identify job satisfaction. The independent variables related to job satisfaction were measured by the questions: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your job income, job security, working environment, working time, promotion opportunity, job enjoyability, relationship with superiors and colleagues, utilization of abilities and skills, respect from others, and opportunities to express opinions?" The response alternatives for all questions varied from 5 "completely satisfied" to 1 "completely unsatisfied." Higher scores correspond to greater satisfaction.

As pointed out by Wanous, Reichers and Hudy (1997) and Sackett and Larson (1990), if the

structure of the measurement is narrow enough or there is no ambiguity for the respondents, a single-item measure of overall job satisfaction is acceptable. In addition, overall job satisfaction has a long history of single-item measurement, which began more than 60 years ago with the introduction of the Faces Scale (Kunin, 1955). It was concluded that a single-item measure of overall job satisfaction was better than the summation scale based on specific job satisfaction aspects (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983, pp. 577-600). Therefore, the dependent variable, “the total job satisfaction,” was measured by the question: “Please evaluate your current / last job status.” The response alternatives vary from 5 “completely satisfied” to 1 “completely unsatisfied.” Referring to Sadegh & Azadeh (2012), if the mean value of job satisfaction is between 1-2.33, it can be seen as low satisfaction. Similarly, a mean value between 2.34-3.67 is medium satisfaction; and 3.67 or more is high satisfaction.

Analysis Strategies

The data were coded and analyzed using the SPSS program, version 22.0. Cronbach’s alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency. Since existing literature suggests that an alpha value between 0.65 and 0.95 is satisfactory (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, pp. 147-150), our obtained Cronbach’s alpha, with a value of 0.862, indicated high reliability. Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine the frequency of job satisfaction. Correlation analyses were conducted among total job satisfaction and ten facets of job satisfaction (job income, job security, working environment, working time, promotion opportunity, job enjoyability, colleague relationships, utilization of abilities and skills, respect from others, and expression opportunity). Regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the controlled variables (gender, age, current household registration type, marital status, education levels), the ten aspects of job satisfaction, and overall job satisfaction.

Results

Table 1 indicates the descriptive statistics of the study population. 6,249 employees included 3,585 males (57.4%) and 2,664 females (42.6%). Their age range was 15 to 74 years, with a mean of 39.62 years (SD=11.215). There were 634 (10.1%) older employees, 2,569 (41.1%) middle-aged employees, and 3,046 (48.7%) younger employees. *Hukou*^① was also considered. There were 3,048 people (48.8%) with an agricultural registered permanent residence and 2,257 people (36.1%) with a non-agricultur aol registered permanent residence. Among all the respondents, 14.5% were unmarried, 80.0% were in first marriages, others were remarried / divorced / widowed / cohabitation. Except for eight people (missing value=0.1%) who did not

① *Hukou* is the household registration system in China and defines a legal fixed residence with a stable occupation or stable source of income as the basic conditions for settlement.

answer, 2,777 people (44.4%) had junior middle school diplomas or below, 1956 people (31.3%) had college diplomas or above.

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

Demographic information	Classification	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	3,585	57.4%
	Female	2,664	42.6%
Age	55-74 (Old)	634	10.1%
	40-54 (Middle-aged)	2,569	41.1%
	15-39 (Young)	3,046	48.7%
Current household registration type (<i>Hukou</i>)	Agricultural	3,048	48.8%
	Non-agricultural	2,257	36.1%
	Converted from agricultural to non-agricultural	450	7.2%
	Converted from non-agricultural to agricultural	471	7.5%
	Other	19	0.3%
	Missing value	4	0.1%
Marital status	Unmarried	904	14.5%
	First marriage	4,997	80.0%
	Remarried	110	1.8%
	Divorced	110	1.8%
	Widowed	43	0.7%
	Cohabitation	85	1.4%
Education levels	Never been to school	156	2.5%
	Primary school / Private primary school diploma	728	11.6%
	Junior middle school diploma	1,893	30.3%
	Senior middle school diploma	878	14.1%
	Vocational senior high school diploma	118	1.9%
	Technical school diploma	91	1.5%
	Special secondary school diploma	421	6.7%
	College diploma	905	14.5%
	University degree	945	15.1%
	Master degree	96	1.5%
	Doctor degree	10	0.2%
	Missing value	8	0.1%
<i>Note:</i> N=6,249			

Correlation analysis was conducted for the 10 items representing different aspects of job satisfaction. Table 2 showed that with regard to the total number of employees, total job satisfaction was significantly correlated with income ($r=0.428$, $p=0.01$), job security ($r=0.496$, $p=0.01$), working environment ($r=0.516$, $p=0.01$), working time ($r=0.468$, $p=0.01$), promotion opportunity ($r=0.217$, $p=0.01$), job enjoyability ($r=0.442$, $p=0.01$), colleague relationships ($r=0.410$, $p=0.01$), ability and skills utilization ($r=0.458$, $p=0.01$), respect from others ($r=0.542$, $p=0.01$), and expression opportunities ($r=0.460$, $p=0.01$). The correlation between these 10 dimensions and total job satisfaction, in order from strong to weak is: respect from others, working environment, job security, working time, expression opportunities, ability and skills utilization, job enjoyability, job income, colleague relationships, and promotion opportunity.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis of Job Satisfaction Facet

	Job income	Job security	Working environment	Working time	Promotion opportunity	Job enjoyability	Colleague relationship	Abilities and skills utilization	Others' respect	Expression Opportunity
Job income	1.000	0.371**	0.382**	0.360**	0.248**	0.304**	0.173**	0.241**	0.233**	0.213**
Job security	0.371**	1.000	0.697**	0.528**	0.187**	0.346**	0.288**	0.308**	0.373**	0.307**
Working environment	0.382**	0.697**	1.000	0.565**	0.242**	0.391**	0.285**	0.328**	0.378**	0.340**
Working time	0.360**	0.528**	0.565**	1.000	0.247**	0.387**	0.291**	0.313**	0.339**	0.316**
Promotion opportunity	0.248**	0.187**	0.242**	0.247**	1.000	0.421**	0.264**	0.308**	0.269**	0.419**
Job enjoyability	0.304**	0.346**	0.391**	0.387**	0.421**	1.000	0.435**	0.487**	0.483**	0.475**
Colleague relationships	0.173**	0.288**	0.285**	0.291**	0.264**	0.435**	1.000	0.515**	0.551**	0.457**
Abilities and skills utilization	0.241**	0.308**	0.328**	0.313**	0.308**	0.487**	0.515**	1.000	0.600**	0.517**
Others' respect	0.233**	0.373**	0.378**	0.339**	0.269**	0.483**	0.551**	0.600**	1.000	0.597**
Expression opportunity	0.213**	0.307**	0.340**	0.316**	0.419**	0.475**	0.457**	0.517**	0.597**	1.000
Total job satisfaction	0.428**	0.496**	0.516**	0.468**	0.217**	0.442**	0.410**	0.458**	0.542**	0.460**

** : Significant correlation was found in 0.01 level (bilateral).

The results of regression analysis (Table 3) showed that when demographic variables including gender, age, marital status, living community type, and education levels were

controlled, total job satisfaction for the older group was associated with income, job security, working environment, working time, promotion opportunities, job enjoyability, ability and skills utilization, respect from others, and opportunities to express opinions ($p=.000$).

In order to understand employees' job satisfaction status, descriptive analysis was adopted. The mean value for total job satisfaction of all employees was 3.45 ($SD=0.781$) which indicated that employees were moderately satisfied with their jobs.

Table 3 Regression Coefficients

Model	Non standardized coefficient			Standardized coefficient	T	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Trial version			
1	(Constant)	2.897	0.059		49.169	0.000
	Gender	0.044	0.020	0.028	2.184	0.029
	Age	0.008	0.001	0.117	8.438	0.000
	Current household registration type(<i>Hukou</i>)	0.002	0.002	0.014	1.109	0.268
	Marital status	-0.011	0.014	-0.010	-0.795	0.427
	Education levels	0.036	0.004	0.125	9.580	0.000
2	(Constant)	0.681	0.052		13.076	0.000
	Gender	-0.002	0.015	-0.001	-0.122	0.903
	Age	0.003	0.001	0.039	3.905	0.000
	Current household registration type (<i>Hukou</i>)	0.002	0.001	0.017	1.831	0.067
	Marital status	0.017	0.010	0.015	1.615	0.106
	Education levels	-0.003	0.003	-0.010	-0.997	0.319
	Job income	0.151	0.008	0.189	18.440	0.000
	Job security	0.099	0.012	0.110	8.434	0.000
	Working environment	0.122	0.012	0.138	10.167	0.000
	Working time	0.089	0.010	0.105	9.110	0.000
	Promotion opportunities	-0.037	0.006	-0.072	-6.630	0.000
	Job enjoyability	0.041	0.008	0.063	5.338	0.000
	Colleague relationship	0.043	0.008	0.062	5.388	0.000
	Abilities and skills utilization	0.051	0.009	0.073	5.920	0.000
	Respect from others	0.162	0.010	0.212	16.036	0.000
Expression opportunity	0.075	0.008	0.120	9.700	0.000	

Dependent variable: overall job satisfaction

Table 4 shows that employees were most satisfied with their job security (mean = 3.47; SD = 0.870), followed by respect from others (mean = 3.40; SD = 1.109), working environment (mean = 3.37; SD = 0.878), colleague relationships (mean = 3.34; SD = 1.131), working time (mean = 3.30; SD = 0.923), abilities and skills utilization (mean = 3.29; SD = 1.101). However, employees were less satisfied with opportunities to express opinions (mean = 3.10; SD = 1.239), job income (mean = 2.99; SD = 0.976), and job enjoyability (mean = 2.90; SD = 1.207). What employees were most discontented with was opportunities for promotion (mean = 2.15; SD = 1.546).

Table 4 Levels of Employees Job Satisfaction Facet

Job satisfaction facet	Total interviewees		Older		Middle-aged		Younger	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Job income	2.99	0.976	3.20	1.010	3.01	0.983	<u>2.93</u>	0.956
Job security	3.47	0.870	3.57	0.896	3.47	0.877	<u>3.46</u>	0.857
Working environment	3.37	0.878	3.50	0.875	3.37	0.894	<u>3.34</u>	0.862
Working time	3.30	0.923	3.41	0.946	3.32	0.921	<u>3.26</u>	0.917
Promotion opportunity	2.15	1.546	<u>1.75</u>	1.674	1.98	1.577	2.38	1.453
Job enjoyability	2.90	1.207	2.90	1.426	<u>2.89</u>	1.235	2.90	1.132
Colleague relationships	3.34	1.131	<u>3.14</u>	1.409	3.35	1.170	3.38	1.025
Abilities and skills utilization	3.29	1.101	<u>3.15</u>	1.335	3.29	1.146	3.33	1.003
Respect from others	3.40	1.019	<u>3.34</u>	1.226	3.40	1.048	3.40	0.944
Expression opportunity	3.10	1.239	<u>2.88</u>	1.506	3.06	1.291	3.18	1.120
Total job satisfaction	3.45	0.781	3.59	0.824	3.47	0.761	<u>3.39</u>	0.784

Among the 3 groups, the highest mean is presented in bold and the lowest mean is underlined.

From the perspective of age, older employees had the highest level of total satisfaction (mean = 3.59; SD = 0.824) followed by the middle-age group (mean = 3.47; SD = 0.761) and the younger group (mean = 3.39; SD = 0.784). The older group showed the maximum satisfaction with job security (mean = 3.57; SD = 0.896), working environment (mean = 3.50; SD = 0.875), working time (mean = 3.41; SD = 0.946), job income (mean = 3.20; SD = 1.010), job enjoyability (mean = 2.90; SD = 1.426). This group was least satisfied with promotion opportunities (mean = 1.75; SD = 1.674), expression opportunity (mean = 2.88; SD = 1.506), colleague relationships (mean = 3.14; SD = 1.409), abilities and skills utilization (mean = 3.15; SD = 1.335), and respect from others (mean = 3.34; SD = 1.226). Middle-aged employees and young people generated the highest satisfaction through respect from others (mean = 3.40; SD = 1.048). Younger staff obtain the highest satisfaction of colleague relationships (mean = 3.38; SD = 1.025), abilities and skills utilization (mean = 3.33; SD =

1.003), expression opportunities (mean = 3.18; SD = 1.120), job enjoyability (mean = 2.90; SD = 1.132), and promotion opportunities (mean = 2.38; SD = 1.453).

Discussion and Conclusion

This study provides empirical results that accurately measure the job satisfaction of Chinese employees. First, data suggests that the ten items chosen were influential in determining job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. According to the Two-Factor Theory of job satisfaction developed by Herzberg *et al.* (1959), respect from others, expression opportunities, ability and skills utilization, job enjoyability and promotion opportunities are intrinsic “motivational” factors, arising from inherent conditions of the job itself, such as recognition, achievement, or personal growth, which can give positive satisfaction (Hackman, Richard, Oldham & Greg, 1976, pp. 250-279). In contrast, working environment, job security, working time, job income, and colleague relationships are attributed to extrinsic “hygienic” aspects, which cannot give positive satisfaction or lead to higher motivation, although discontentment comes from their absence. These include ideas such as corporate policies, regulatory practices and income.

Second, the ten dimensions correlated with total job satisfaction, in order from strong to weak: respect from others, working environment, job security, working time, expression opportunities, ability and skills utilization, job enjoyability, job income, colleague relationships, and promotion opportunities. According to the degree of satisfaction, job security produced the highest satisfaction while opportunities for promotion was the lowest. This situation is closely related to the fact that the newly revised The Labor Law of the People’s Republic of China stipulates that continuous work for ten years can afford employees the right to sign an unfixed term contract with their employers which allows for lifelong employment guarantees.

Third, the results support the fact that the study group’s overall level of job satisfaction was medium, although older employees have higher total job satisfaction than the middle-aged and younger groups. The possible explanation is that senior employees usually have longer lengths of service, more work experience, higher job positions, and deeper interpersonal relationships within the organization, making them more knowledgeable, skillful, comfortable, respected and rewarded. These factors would naturally lead to higher job satisfaction.

Among the three age groups, the older group had maximum satisfaction with the extrinsic “hygienic” factors: job security, working environment, working time, job income, job enjoyability. The reason for this is likely the fact that veteran employees have served in companies for many years; therefore they have formed an open-ended contract relationship with the enterprises and shaped a lifelong employment situation which accords them occupational security. It is not easy to get fired. In the development of Chinese enterprises, the older generation of employees grew up under relatively backward economic conditions. They

have endured difficulties and hardships in the process of the explosive growth of the Chinese economy. Consequently, they have a strong tolerance for a simple working environment, long working hours, heavy tasks, pitiful wages, and monotonous, repetitive work processes. As progress has been made, workplaces have been upgraded from primitive factory buildings and workshops to luxurious buildings, bright offices and modern workshops, and office equipment has evolved from manual documentation to the extensive use of computers and modern machines. The working hours have been reduced from six working days per week before the 1990s to five working days per week. Wage income has risen from several hundred *yuan* in the last century to several thousand *yuan* or more in this century. Naturally, older employees are likely to be satisfied with their present-day working environments, working times and job incomes.

Fourth, the older the employees become, the harder it is to be content with the intrinsic “motivational” factors: promotional opportunities, expression opportunities, colleague relationships, abilities and skills utilization, and respect from others. Reasonable causes are the likelihood that capable, older employees are already in higher positions so there is little room for further advancement while mediocre employees are closer to the lower levels of the organization because their outdated knowledge makes it difficult to be promoted. In this era of rapid technological changes and an explosive growth in the knowledge base, the experience, abilities and skills of the elderly are often out of date. Hence, their right and chance to speak is constantly being attenuated and their techniques are no longer widely used. Although they aspire to be recognized and respected as valuable elements of the organization they are often overlooked or ignored. The gap between their perceptions of themselves and reality causes discontentment with expression opportunities, ability and skills utilization and respectful treatment. China is a society of etiquette and favor and Chinese people are particular about trust, human feelings, “Face, and mutual benefits (Fei, 2012, pp. 15-76). Long-term work experience has allowed older employees to become deeply involved in intertwined interpersonal relationships, and inevitably to accumulate some personal grievances. Because it is often difficult to distinguish between public and private, interpersonal contradictions are easily brought into the workplace, resulting in the lack of harmony among colleagues.”

Meanwhile, middle-aged and younger employees’ careers are more open, easier to integrate into the new environment, and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge is an accepted and realistic part of the job. All these elements contribute to more satisfactory colleague relationships, skills using, and opportunities to express themselves. When choosing a job, young people prioritize their interests. With higher education, more up to date knowledge and the energy of youth the younger group can more easily attract the attention of China’s rapidly growing economic sectors. For the younger groups there is room for growth and promotion.

These results have clear implications for management. First, managers and administrators

can ensure the presence of motivational and hygiene factors, especially pay, attention to factors about respect, working environments, job security, working time and opportunities to express opinions. Second, high levels of job dissatisfaction associated with opportunities for promotion have been exposed, so business owners should seriously consider the possibilities of internal promotions. Third, there is a significant difference in job satisfaction among the different age groups. The managers may consider enhancing intrinsic “motivational” factors, such as promotion and expression opportunity, ability and skills utilization, and respect from others. Additionally, it will be advisable to improve the extrinsic “hygienic” factors of the middle-aged and the younger groups, like income, job security, working environment and working time.

Due to the limitation of time and researching ability, this research is worth improving in the future. In this study, job satisfaction was investigated by questionnaire, while in the coming research, qualitative methods may be integrated to obtain more detailed and accurate results. Moreover, in addition to the 10 factors mentioned in this paper, many other factors may be considered to enrich and optimize research results.

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