



# Interpersonal trust at work, intrinsic motivation, work-related tension and satisfaction in Egypt

Mike Leat

*Operations Management and Business Strategy Group,  
Plymouth Business School, University of Plymouth, Plymouth, UK, and*

Ghada El-Kot

*College of Management and Technology,  
Arab Academy for Science & Technology & Maritime Transport,  
Alexandria, Egypt*

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationships between job satisfaction, interpersonal trust, intrinsic motivation and job-related tension in this non-Western context. And to establish whether there is evidence of similarity in the nature of the relationships between these variables and those found in Western contexts.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data collected from different employees who are working in deterrent organizations in Egypt ( $N = 140$ ). Reliability test is computed for the measures used in the research. Descriptive statistics, inter-correlations and regression analysis are computed for the variables used in this research to test the research hypothesis.

**Findings** – The findings indicate that employees are satisfied, intrinsically motivated, trust their peers and managers and suffer from relatively low levels of job tension. The significant predictors of job satisfaction are intrinsic motivation, confidence in the competence of management and the lack of work-related tension.

**Practical implications** – Some tentative conclusions regarding the policies and practices that should be pursued in order to maintain or enhance levels of job satisfaction among employees in the Egyptian context.

**Originality/value** – There are no reported studies examining the relationship between these variables in Egypt. The findings of this research would help deriving conclusions concerning employees' likely perceptions and responses; which is not available up-to-date.

**Keywords** Trust, Interpersonal relations, Motivation (psychology), Job satisfaction, Employee behaviour, Egypt

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we report the findings of a study undertaken in Egypt which examines the responses of a sample of employees to questions concerning their overall levels of job satisfaction, interpersonal trust, intrinsic motivation and perceptions of job-related tension. The respondents were employed in a range of manufacturing and service organizations. Additionally, we examine the responses in order to establish whether there are observable relationships between these variables, their strength, nature and significance. We also specifically examine the responses to establish whether variances in the level of overall satisfaction can be explained by the other variables. The findings are



---

examined for evidence of similarity with evidence from studies in Western contexts and also against expectations derived from an examination of the Egyptian national context.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Egyptian context

There is still relatively little knowledge about employee behaviour, their expectations of work and their perceived outcomes of and from work in the Middle East. There is a similar dearth of research study evidence concerning management behaviour and style and about HRM. Egypt was one of the Middle Eastern countries to pursue an open door policy to foreign investment and exhibits many of the characteristics of Middle Eastern countries. A number of recent studies, for example; Sadler-Smith *et al.* (2003) and Leat and El-Kot (2007) have examined the socio cultural, religious, economic and institutional context in Egypt and some of the implications for employee behaviour, their expectations of work, work outcomes and preferences for certain HRM practices.

Budhwar and Mellahi (2007) identify a number of studies that have been undertaken in relation to HRM in particular countries. Some of these have sought to identify the extent to which HRM practices in particular countries can be perceived to be context specific and the implications that this may have for the approach to be adopted by incoming multinationals and the extent to which they may need to be sensitive to local values, expectations and ways of doing things. Others have sought to ascertain the influence of Western management approaches and practices in Middle Eastern countries as they open themselves up to inward investment, as they become more involved in and subject to the pressures of international business and increased competition and as the indigenous population become more aware of alternative management theories and practices through going abroad to study and obtain management qualifications. Budhwar and Mellahi conclude from the relatively limited evidence available that Middle Eastern countries appear to have management systems similar to most other developing countries and that these emphasise sensitivity to local cultural norms, which influence values, expectations, attitudes and behaviour, and restricted participation in decision making. They also identify the considerable influence of Islamic work ethics (IWE) and principles. However, they caution against an over reliance upon culture and Islamic principles as a base for understanding and predicting expectations, attitudes and behaviour at work. They acknowledge also the multi dimensional nature of national contexts to include government policies towards liberalization of the economy, privatizing the public sector and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the implications of these policies for employment security and unemployment and other national institutions. They might also have added the educational and vocational training systems. They eloquently make the case for further research into these areas in Middle Eastern countries and it is in this context that this study is presented.

In the following sections of this research paper we focus on previous studies investigating relationships between employees job satisfaction, interpersonal trust, intrinsic motivation and work related tension in Western and Arab contexts. As far as the authors of this study are aware there are no reported studies examining the relationship between these variables in Egypt.

### 2.2 Job satisfaction

Much of the interest in the subject of job satisfaction has been prompted by a belief that satisfied employees are more loyal (McCusker and Wolfman, 1998), more committed

(Vandenberg and Lance, 1992; Brewer, 1996; Lum *et al.*, 1998) and more productive. Some researchers argued that high levels of satisfaction would be a precursor to high performance (Grey and Gelfond, 1990; Bruce and Blackburn, 1992; Cully *et al.*, 1998; and Hackman and Oldham, 1975). Crossman and Abou-Zaki (2003) also assert that job satisfaction is one criterion for assessing the health of an organization which would affect the level of service offered by the employees. Some attention has also been paid to the concept because of the perceived detrimental effects of low levels of satisfaction upon increasing employees' turnover and absenteeism (Greenberg and Baron, 1997; and Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

Job satisfaction has been defined in a number of ways and is generally examined either as a global construct or as one which has multiple component facets associated with aspects of the job itself and other situational variables, for example; the work itself, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, co-workers (Cranny *et al.*, 1992).

Additionally the concept has been linked with the concept of intrinsic motivation; as Hackman and Oldham (1974) suggested if a job is highly motivating to an individual then he/she will experience high levels of job satisfaction. Connell *et al.* (2003) also reviewed a number of studies which have identified positive relationships between trust and job satisfaction and they also point up the influence of trust in determining organizational success. Koustelios *et al.* (2004) found that work-related tension that arises from both role conflict and role ambiguity was a significant predictor of job satisfaction.

### *2.3 Interpersonal trust*

The concept of trust within organizations and between employee and management and employee and employee has attracted considerable attention in recent years. Cook and Wall (1980) defined interpersonal trust as the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to others and to have confidence in their words and actions. Mayer *et al.* (1995) argued that trust in interpersonal relations implies a willingness to be vulnerable; to place yourself at risk, and this is based in convictions that the other party is competent, concerned and reliable. Bijlsma and Koopman (2003) also refer to definitions which emphasize a belief in the probability that another's actions will be beneficial rather than detrimental to one.

Relationships have been found between high levels of trust and various dimensions of individual and organizational performance. Connell *et al.* (2003) found positive relationships between trust and individual well being, job satisfaction and commitment and they referred to the influence of trust in determining organizational success. Cook and Wall (1980) found positive relationships between interpersonal trust and overall job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. They also found a negative relationship between interpersonal trust, and self, rated anxiety. Staples (2001) found that employees trust in their manager was associated with both higher levels of job satisfaction and low job stress. Bijlsma and Koopman (2003) refer to studies which have found that trust between organizational members can promote voluntary cooperation, extra role behaviours and performance as well as individual and team satisfaction and both organizational and decision commitment.

### *2.4 Intrinsic motivation*

Warr *et al.* (1979) defined intrinsic motivation as the degree to which a person wants to work well in his job in order to gain intrinsic satisfaction. They found a relationship

---

between this construct and overall job satisfaction. It is a concept that encompasses being motivated by a desire to do your job as well as you can and deriving personal pride from doing so. In a later study Cook and Wall (1980) found a relationship between this concept and interpersonal trust at work. In the same direction; Hackman and Oldham (1974) found a relationship between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Quigley and Tymon (2006) in reviewing much of the literature suggested that intrinsic motivation is based on positively valued experiences that a person gets directly from their work tasks. They also added that at its heart it is about passion and positive feelings that people derive from their work. They suggested four component elements of intrinsic motivation which are; meaningfulness, choice, competence and progress. They also asserted that research has found the concept to have significant relationships with both job satisfaction and reduced stress levels.

### 2.5 Work related tension

Job satisfaction may result from the removal of work related tensions and it seems intuitively appealing that there might be a negative relationship between the experience of tension or stress at work and overall job satisfaction. Similar negative relationships have also been identified between trust and self rated anxiety and trust in management has been associated with low stress. Personal experiences of tension or stress in the workplace and in relation to one's job can be the product of many factors; however, two of the more common factors are role conflict and role ambiguity. Kahn *et al.* (1964) identified both role conflict and role ambiguity as potential sources of job-related tension and a number of studies have highlighted the relationship between these sources of work based tension and job satisfaction. Yousef (2002) in a study in an Arabic context found that both role conflict and ambiguity directly and negatively influence job satisfaction. Koustelios *et al.* (2004) found that both role conflict and ambiguity were significant predictors of job satisfaction. Role conflict is likely to occur when people or groups with whom the role occupant has to interact have conflicting expectations about the performance of and behaviour in the role. Whereas role ambiguity arises when the occupant of the role is uncertain about what the key requirements of their jobs are, about what is expected of them, what appropriate standards of behaviour and performance might be, where there is uncertainty about how the role is to be performed and where there is inadequate role definition.

Fairbrother and Warn (2003) argued for strong relationships between work place factors, stress and job satisfaction (based on the work of; Burke, 1988; Leong *et al.*, 1996; Sullivan and Bhagat, 1992). Nelson and Burke (2000) in Fairbrother and Warn (2003) and Fairbrother and Warn (2003) referred to the link that might be found between some aspects of the work itself and stress such as work overload, role ambiguity and role conflict.

## 3. Method

### 3.1 Aims

The aim of the research is to investigate, in this non-Western context, overall levels of, and relationships between, job satisfaction, interpersonal trust in peers and management in terms of faith in others intentions and confidence in their competence, intrinsic motivation and job related tension due to role conflict and ambiguity. We also seek to establish whether there is evidence of similarity in the nature of the relationships between these variables and those found in Western contexts and already referred to briefly above.

### 3.2 Hypotheses

As far as the authors of this study are aware there are no reported studies examining the relationship between these variables in Egypt. We developed our research hypotheses from three main sources: the studies in non-Western contexts which found significant relationships between interpersonal trust at work, intrinsic motivation, work, related tension and employees' satisfaction; a review of the literature on the Egyptian and Arab context; and a review of previous studies investigating relationships between employees job satisfaction, interpersonal trust, intrinsic motivation and work, related tension in Arab contexts.

This allowed us to develop tentative research hypotheses to test the relationships between the variables in the Egyptian context.

*3.2.1 Interpersonal trust at work.* In their contribution to an understanding of work in the Arab context; Hickson and Pugh (1995) cited Al-Faleh (1987) in asserting that organizations in the Arab Middle East are characterized by low trust relationships and to the extent that trusting implies a willingness to put yourself at risk. These low trusting relationships would be supported by the evidence of Hofstede in relation to a moderately strong desire to avoid uncertainty; which implies an unwillingness to take risks along with feeling uncomfortable with ambiguity. Aycan *et al.* (2007) reported findings which also tend to lend support to this view since they found that there was a belief among employees in the lower occupational levels that humans by nature are evil and this implies that employees are unlikely to trust both their fellow employees and their employers.

Yet as Leat and El-Kot (2007) identify the low individualism found by Hofstede and the IWE, both emphasise loyalty to the group and the importance of social relationships at work with both colleagues and supervisors. Parnell and Hatem (1999) also confirmed the importance of relationships over the task and the importance of loyalty to the group.

The IWE also emphasizes cooperation and consultation at work (Leat and El-Kot, 2007) yet the high power distance score found by Hofstede would tend to encourage the expectation of hierarchical structures and relationships, Nydell (1996) referred to the respect for authority characteristic in Arab cultures and Parnell and Hatem (1999) noted that employees often tended to agree with their supervisors and that seeking subordinate participation is regarded as weak management. Hickson and Pugh (1995) referred to a paradox between the authoritarian approach that one might expect from management given Hofstede's evidence and the cooperation and consultation encouraged by the IWE. They suggest that consultation in this context is not power sharing but wise consultation by those in authority and it may be that the nature of the relationship between supervisor and subordinate is more paternalistic than authoritarian with management being expected to be responsible for those working for them:

- H1.* There is a positive relationship between interpersonal trust and employees' satisfaction.

*3.2.2 Intrinsic motivation.* In the case of both job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation we might expect positive responses from employees since as Yousef (2001) has pointed out the Islamic Work Ethic is likely to encourage commitment to hard work as a virtue and that this hard work is a means through which sins can be resolved, a means of achieving personal growth, self-fulfillment and self respect and would be a source of individual satisfaction. In a study of Omanis context; Aycan *et al.* (2007) also examined

---

cultural orientations and preferences using the cultural orientations framework of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and the results of the study indicated that in relation to the activity orientation there was a strong preference for the doing orientation which tends to be associated with the belief of a society in living to work, that hard work is always commendable and rewards are based on work accomplishments. In such a society, influenced by the IWE it would not be surprising for employees to be motivated to do their best at their job, to derive personal pride from doing their best and for this to be a source of satisfaction:

*H2.* There is a positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and employees' satisfaction.

*3.2.3 Work related tension.* Leat and El-Kot (2007) pointed out that the combination of high power distance and moderately strong uncertainty avoidance leads to the conclusion that ideally in Egypt reporting relationships and tasks should be clearly defined and explicit, employees will expect to be told what to do, and their results demonstrated support for explicitly defined job descriptions. Employees are unlikely to be comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity or conflicting expectations of them at work and therefore any role conflict and ambiguity are likely to be perceived negatively:

*H3.* There is a negative relationship between work related tension and employees' satisfaction.

### *3.3 Measure*

Four scales were used in this research, three of them were adapted from seven point Likert response scales to five point scales. This was done partly because the subtleties of the distinctions were not relevant in the Egyptian context and partly because the norm in Egypt is for five point scales (Appendix for items).

The first scale used in this research is interpersonal trust at work: a 12 item instrument to measure two aspects of trust with respect to both peers and superiors. It was developed by Cook and Wall (1980). The scale comprises four three-item sub-scales, which may be treated separately or combined into a single score; in this study we examine the four dimensions separately. Items covered: faith in peers, faith in management, confidence in peers and confidence in management. In the context of the instrument a distinction is made between faith in the intentions of others and confidence in their ability. The coefficient alphas of the sub-scale were as follows: Faith in peers 0.77; faith in management 0.78; confidence in peers 0.74 and confidence in management 0.79. Respondents were asked to read the scale and express their opinions on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Two items are reverse-scored.

The second scale is the intrinsic Job motivation scale developed by Warr *et al.* (1979). It comprises six items, with a coefficient alpha of 0.82, to determine the degree to which a person wants to work well in his or her job in order to achieve intrinsic satisfaction. Respondents were asked to read the scale and express their opinions on a five-point Likert scale; (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

The third scale is the Job-related tension scale developed by Kahn *et al.* (1964). It comprises fifteen items, with a coefficient alpha of 0.84 and focuses upon role conflict and ambiguity as sources of tension. Respondents were asked to read the scale and express their opinions on a Five-point Likert scale; (never, rarely, sometimes, rather often and nearly all time; scored from 1 to 5, respectively).

The fourth scale is a measure of overall satisfaction as perceived by employees and was developed by Hoppock (1935). Four items were included to measure the overall satisfaction level of the employees. The coefficient alpha ranged from 0.76 to 0.89 with different samples. Respondents were asked to choose one of the statements that tell them how well they are satisfied in their jobs.

### *3.4 Sample and procedures*

The questionnaire survey forms were administered to randomly chosen sample of organizations located in Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt. The used questionnaire was distributed and collected back via one of the researchers with no time limit for completing them. Respondents were asked to read the questionnaire items carefully and express their opinion towards each item. The questionnaires were in English language and distributed between January 2006 and July 2006. Of 200 distributed questionnaires; 140 were completed and returned and employed in this study, with a 70 per cent response rate; this high response rate is due to the follow-up procedures used in collecting the questionnaires. Of the 140 usable questionnaires 65 were from employees working in manufacturing organizations and 75 were from employees in the service sector. The demographic characteristics for the sample were as follows:

- mean years in job: 10.56 years (SD = 6.03);
- gender: majority are males; there were only 48 females in the sample and the rest are males; and
- organizational size: three sizes were in the chosen sample; small, medium and large based on the number of the employees in each organization (number of the organizations are 69, 60 and 11 for small, medium and large size, respectively).

## **4. Findings**

### *4.1 Reliability*

The internal consistencies (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ) for the scale used in this study were as follows: Interpersonal trust at work for the whole scale items (0.65), Intrinsic motivation scale (0.60), Work tension (0.65) and Overall, job satisfaction (0.74). The alpha coefficient of the sub-scale items are as follows: a coefficient of alpha of 0.64 for Faith in peers, 0.61 for Faith in management, 0.59 for Confidence in peers and 0.63 for Confidence in management. These are considered to be acceptable alpha compared with previously internal consistency found by the developers of the scales and also as suggested by Finkelstein (1992).

### *4.2 Descriptive statistics and correlations*

Table I shows means, standard deviations and inter-correlations for interpersonal trust at work (faith in peers, faith in management, confidence in peers and confidence in management), intrinsic motivation, work-related tension and overall job satisfaction.

The means indicate that this sample of Egyptian employees experience relatively high levels of intrinsic motivation (4.29), faith in peers (4.00), job satisfaction (3.66) confidence in management (3.58) and peers (3.57) and faith in management (3.36) and reasonably low levels of job related tension (2.43).

The relationship between overall job satisfaction and the other variables were found to be statistically significant except for faith in peers and confidence in peers ( $r$  ranges from 0.29-0.35). There were also statistically significant correlations between

confidence in management and all the other dimensions of the trust scale ( $r$  ranges from 0.21 to 0.38). There was also a significant correlation between faith in peers and confidence in peers ( $r = 0.33$ ). The correlations between work related tension and the other variables were all negative and with the exception of job satisfaction relatively weak though statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) with faith in peers, faith in management and confidence in management ( $r = -0.19, -0.17, -0.12$ , respectively). The correlations between intrinsic motivation and the other variables, with the exception of overall satisfaction, were both weak and not significant with the exception of faith in management at  $r = 0.17$  ( $p < 0.05$ ).

4.3 Regression analysis

Table II shows the regression analysis for the relationship between perception of employees' satisfaction (as a dependent variable) and Interpersonal trust at work, intrinsic motivation (as independent variables) and work related tension (as moderated variable). First, a linear regression model in which perception of employees satisfaction was the dependent variable was run with interpersonal trust (faith in peers, faith in management, confidence in peers, confidence in management) as independent

Scale	M (N = 140)	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Faith in peers	4.00	0.71	1	0.13	0.33**	0.21**	0.01	-0.19*	0.07
2. Faith in management	3.36	0.78		1	-0.03	0.29**	0.17*	-0.17*	0.34**
3. Confidence in peers	3.57	0.66			1	0.38**	0.02	-0.13	0.02
4. Confidence in management	3.58	0.52				1	0.03	-0.12*	0.35**
5. Intrinsic motivation	4.29	0.48					1	-0.04	0.29**
6. Work related tension	2.43	0.49						1	-0.30**
7. Satisfaction	3.66	0.72							1

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table I.** Descriptive statistics (M & SD) and scale inter-correlations for interpersonal trust at work (faith in peers, faith in management, confidence in peers and confidence in management), intrinsic motivation, and work-related tension and overall job satisfaction

Independent variables	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Constant	2.25** (0.47)	0.68 (0.65)	1.99** (0.74)
Faith in peers	0.04 (0.09)	0.05 (0.08)	0.09 (0.08)
Faith in management	0.19* (0.08)	0.13 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)
Confidence in peers	0.03 (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)	0.01 (0.08)
Confidence in management	0.23* (0.09)	0.26** (0.09)	0.27** (0.08)
Intrinsic motivation	-	0.40** (0.12)	0.39** (0.11)
Work related tension	-	-	0.37** (0.11)
$R^2$	0.16	0.22	0.28
$F$	0.000	0.001	0.001
$\Delta R^2$	0.15	0.07	0.06
df	4, 134	1, 133	1, 132

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; unstandardized regression coefficients are reported; standard errors are in brackets

**Table II.** shows Regression analysis of employees' satisfaction

variables (Step 1) and the regression was run again with interpersonal trust and intrinsic motivation as independent variables (Step 2) and the regression was run again with the same variables and with work-related tension as moderated variable (Step 3). The table shows the unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors and level of significance.

Table II shows the coefficient of faith in management and confidence in management were only significant on its effect on employees' perception of their satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the first model, while, only confidence in management and intrinsic motivation were significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) in the second model. This means that the effect of the intrinsic motivation and interpersonal trust factor (confidence in management) seemed to have the most effect on employees' perception of their satisfaction ( $p < 0.01$ ). In the third model, the coefficient of intrinsic motivation, work-related tension and confidence in management were significant and seemed to have the most effect on employees' perception of their satisfaction ( $p < 0.001$ ). From these results it could be concluded that confidence in management and intrinsic motivation and work-related tension are related to employees perception of their satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.28$ ;  $F_1 = 0.001$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).

## 5. Discussion of findings

### 5.1 Job satisfaction

The findings indicate that in this sample employees are satisfied with their jobs. To the extent that job satisfaction is an indicator of organizational health (Crossman and Abou-Zaki, 2003) and if satisfied employees are more loyal (McCusker and Wolfman, 1998), more committed (Vandenberg and Lance 1992; Brewer, 1996, Lum *et al.*, 1998) and more productive (Grey and Gelfond, 1990; Bruce and Blackburn, 1992, Cully *et al.*, 1998, Hackman and Oldham, 1975) then these results are positive for the organizations in which the employees work.

### 5.2 Interpersonal trust

The findings in relation to the four dimensions of interpersonal trust do not appear to support those researchers who have found that Arab cultures are characterized by low trust relationships (Hickson and Pugh, 1995; and Aycan *et al.*, 2007). However, the instrument used addresses trust in terms of faith in others intentions and confidence in their ability rather than as a willingness to put yourself at risk and it may well be this that explains the difference between the findings of this study and those of Hickson and Pugh and Aycan.

The findings indicated greater faith in the intentions of their peers than in management, though the confidence in ability means are almost the same for each. Here, the work of Leat and El-Kot (2007) and Parnell and Hatem (1999) may be more relevant in pointing up the importance in Egypt, an Arab culture influenced by Islam, of loyalty to the work group, cooperation and social relationships at work which may explain the relatively high levels of trust in peers. While the respondents exhibit lower levels of faith in management, than in peers, they do seem to have both faith in their intentions and confidence in their ability.

### 5.3 Trust and job satisfaction

In examining the correlations we found that there are moderately strong positive and significant relationships between faith and confidence in management and job

---

satisfaction while the relationships between trust in peers and job satisfaction are positive; they are not significant. *H1* is therefore supported.

While the findings of this study indicated trusting relationships between employees, their peers and managers, the regression analysis identifies the dimension of confidence in management as the one dimension of trust making a significant contribution to these employees' perceptions of their overall job satisfaction. These findings then support previous research findings in other national contexts of positive relationships between trust and job satisfaction (Cook and Wall, 1980) but suggest that it is employees trust in their managers which is significant (Staples, 2001) rather than trust in their peers (Bijlsma and Koopman, 2003). We can only speculate as to why it is the quality, competence and efficiency of management which plays such an influential role as a predictor of job satisfaction but it is consistent with a desire for certainty and a belief in the value of expertise which are characteristics of societies with a strong desire to avoid uncertainty. It is also arguable that in societies demonstrating a high power distance index employees do not expect or want to share power, they want their managers to be responsible for decision making and when this decision making is perceived to be competent this acts as a source of satisfaction.

#### *5.4 Intrinsic motivation and satisfaction*

The findings indicate high levels of intrinsic motivation and positive and significant relationships between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. *H2* is therefore supported.

The outcomes of the regression analysis suggesting intrinsic motivation is significant in explaining job satisfaction are consistent with the findings of Yousef (2001) and Aycan *et al.* (2007) which suggested that employees in an Arab culture with the influence of Islam will be motivated to work hard and that this will be a source of pride and intrinsic satisfaction to them. These findings also support previous research in other national contexts which posits that high levels of intrinsic motivation will be a source of job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1975; Warr *et al.*, 1979; Quigley and Tymon, 2006).

#### *5.5 Work-related tension*

These employees' exhibit relatively low levels of work-related tension due to role conflict and ambiguity suggesting that these employees do not generally experience conflicting expectations about their behaviour and performance in their work role and that they are clear about the requirements of their job and the expected standards of behaviour and performance. These findings are consistent with those of Leat and El-Kot (2007) who found support among a sample of organizations for the use of explicit job descriptions.

The relationships between this variable and the others is negative, but with the exception of overall job satisfaction these relationships are weak though statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) with faith in peers, faith in management and confidence in management ( $r = -0.19, -0.17, -0.12$ , respectively). These relatively low levels of tension and statistically significant but weak relationships between dimensions of interpersonal trust and work-related tension lend support to research findings which have found that trusting relationships at work were associated with low levels of tension and stress (Cook and Wall, 1980; Staples, 2001).

### 5.6 Work-related tension and satisfaction

The relationship between work-related tension and job satisfaction is negative and significant. *H3* is therefore supported.

The regression analysis confirms work-related tension as a significant predictor of job satisfaction and these findings lend support to previous studies which have found that role conflict and ambiguity directly and negatively influences job satisfaction, Yousef(2002) and that they were significant predictors of job satisfaction Koustelios *et al.* (2004). These findings are also consistent with the conclusion of Leat and El-Kot (2007) that in Egypt employees are unlikely to be comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity or conflicting expectations and that role conflict and ambiguity were likely to be perceived negatively.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings from this survey indicated that employees are satisfied, they are intrinsically motivated, and they trust their peers and managers and they suffer from relatively low levels of job tension attributed to role conflict and ambiguity. In addition the significant predictors of job satisfaction were found to be: intrinsic motivation, confidence in the competence of management and the lack of work related tension.

Generally, the findings from this study regarding the relationships between the variables and their contribution to overall job satisfaction are consistent with the findings of other studies in different national contexts. The findings also supported the three research hypotheses derived from a review of the literature and the Egyptian national context.

However, we did not find the low trust relationships which the earlier evidence of Hickson and Pugh (1995) Al-Faleh (1987) and Aycan *et al.* (2007) had suggested that Arab Middle Eastern countries were characterized by and trust in peers was not found to be significant as a contributor to job satisfaction, Bijlsma and Koopman (2003) and Cook and Wall (1980).

The findings support the continuing influence of Islam, Budwhar and Mellahi (2007), in terms of its emphasis upon cooperation and the importance of social relationships at work, Leat and El-Kot (2007) and Parnell and Hatem (1999), and also upon commitment to hard work as a virtue which yields the individual benefits in terms of self respect, self fulfillment and personal growth, all of which are likely to encourage strong levels of intrinsic motivation and satisfaction, Yousef (2001).

The employees responding to this survey exhibit symptom of working in a healthy workplace, they are; satisfied, confident in their managers expertise, trusting of both their managers and peers, intrinsically motivated and they experience relatively low levels of role stress. All of which may bode well for the health of the organizations, the loyalty and commitment of the employees and the levels of productivity and service.

## 7. Further research

This research examined only some of the work related variables that studies in other national contexts have found to influence job satisfaction and we used only a global measure of job satisfaction, there is therefore a need for further research to examine the relationships between other variables and job satisfaction, including components of the job itself and reward, in order to establish whether there are other factors which act as a source of satisfaction in an Arab context.

---

In this research we have found a significant positive relationship between confidence in the competence of managers and job satisfaction though we have only been able to speculate as to why this should be so. This and other aspects of the manager – subordinate relationship need to be examined further, including the style of management and the role and influence of consultation and participation in decision making as sources of satisfaction-dissatisfaction. We also did not pursue in this research the posited relationships between satisfaction and organizational outcomes such as loyalty, commitment, employees' turnover and productivity.

## References

- Al-Faleh, M. (1987), "Cultural influences on Arab management development: a case study of Jordan", *The Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 19-33.
- Aycan, Z., Al-Hamadi, A.B., Davis, A. and Budhwar, P. (2007), "Cultural orientations and preferences for HRM policies and practices: the case of Oman", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 11-32.
- Bjilmsma, K. and Koopman, P. (2003), "Introduction: trust within organizations", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 543-55.
- Brewer, A.M. (1996), "Developing commitment between managers and employees", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 24-35.
- Bruce, W.M. and Blackburn, J.W. (1992), *Balancing Job Satisfaction & Performance: A Guide for Human Resource Professionals*, Quorum Books, Westport, CT.
- Budhwar, P. and Mellahi, K. (2007), "Introduction: human resource management in the middle east", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 2-10.
- Burke, R.J. (1988), "Sources of managerial and professional stress in large organisations", in Cooper, C.L. and Payne, R. (Eds), *Causes, Coping and Consequences of Stress at Work*, Wiley, Chichester, pp. 77-112.
- Connell, J., Ferres, N. and Travaglione, T. (2003), "Engendering trust in manager-subordinate relationships predictors and outcomes", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 32 No. 5, pp. 569-87.
- Cook, J.D. and Wall, T.D. (1980), "New work attitude measures of trust, organizational commitment, and personal need nonfulfillment", *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol. 53, pp. 39-52.
- Cranny, C.J., Smith, P.C. and Stone, E.F. (1992), *Job Satisfaction: How People Feel about their Jobs and How it Affects Their Performance*, Lexington Books, New York, NY.
- Crossman, A. and Abou-Zaki, Bassem (2003), "Job satisfaction and employee performance of Lebanese banking staff", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 368-76.
- Cully, M., Woodland, S., O'Reilly, A., Dix, G., Millward, N., Forth, J. and Bryson, A. (1998), *The 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey: First Findings*, DTI, ESRC, ACAS, and PSI, London.
- Fairbrother, K. and Warn, J. (2003), "Workplace dimensions, stress and job satisfaction", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 8-21.
- Finkelstein, S. (1992), "Power in top management teams: dimensions, measurement and validation", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 35 No. 3, pp. 505-38.
- Greenberg, J. and Baron, R.A. (1997), *Behaviour in Organisations*, 6th ed., Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Grey, R. and Gelfond, P. (1990), "The people side of productivity", *National Productivity Review*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 301-12.

- Hackman, J.R. and Oldham, G.R. (1974), "The job diagnostic survey: an instrument for the diagnosis of jobs and the evaluation of job redesign projects", Technical Report No. 4. Department of Administrative Sciences, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
- Hackman, J.R. and Oldham, G. (1975), "Development of the job-diagnostic survey", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 60 No. 2, pp. 159-70.
- Hickson, D.J. and Pugh, D.S. (1995), *Management Worldwide: The Impact of Societal Culture on Organisations Around the World*, Penguin Books, London.
- Hoppock, R. (1935), *Job Satisfaction*, Wiley, New York, NY.
- Kahn, R., Wolfe, D., Quinn, R. and Snoek, J. (1964), *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity*, Wiley, New York, NY.
- Kluckhohn, F.R. and Strodtbeck, F.L. (1961), *Variations in Value Orientations*, Row, Peterson, New York, NY.
- Koustelios, A., Theodorakis, N. and Goulimari, D. (2004), "Role ambiguity, role conflict and job satisfaction among physical education teachers in Greece", *The International Journal of Educational Management*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 87-92.
- Leat, M. and El-Kot, G. (2007), "HRM practices in Egypt: the influence of national context?", *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 147-58.
- Leong, C.S., Furnham, A., Cary, L. and Cooper, C.L. (1996), "The moderating effect of organizational commitment on the occupational stress outcome relationship", *Human Relations*, Vol. 49 No. 10, pp. 1345-63.
- Lum, L., Kervin, J., Clark, K., Reid, F. and Sirola, W. (1998), "Explaining nursing turnover intent: job satisfaction, pay satisfaction or organizational commitment?", *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, Vol. 19, pp. 305-20.
- McCusker, D. and Wolfman, I. (1998), *Loyalty in the Eyes of Employers and Employees*, Supplement to the November 1998 Workforce, available at: [www.workforceonline.com](http://www.workforceonline.com)
- Mayer, R.C., Davis, J.H. and Schoorman, F.D. (1995), "An integrative model of organizational trust", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 20, pp. 709-34.
- Nelson, D.L. and Burke, R.J. (2000), "Women executives: health, stress, and success", *Academy of Management Executive*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 107-21.
- Nydell, M. (1996), *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Westerners*, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.
- Parnell, J.A. and Hatem, T. (1999), "Cultural antecedents of behavioral differences between American and Egyptian managers", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 36, pp. 399-418.
- Quigley, N.R. and Tymon, W.G. Jr (2006), "Toward an integrated model of intrinsic motivation and career management", *Career Development International*, Vol. 11 No. 6, pp. 522-43.
- Sadler-Smith, E., El-Kot, G. and Leat, M. (2003), "Differentiating work autonomy facets in a non-western context", *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, Vol. 24 No. 6, pp. 709-31.
- Staples, D.S. (2001), "A study of remote workers and their differences from non-remote", *Journal of End User Computing*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 3-14.
- Sullivan, S.E. and Bhagat, R.S. (1992), "Organizational stress, job satisfaction and job performance: where do we go from here?", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 353-74.
- Vandenberg, R.J. and Lance, C.E. (1992), "Examining the causal order of job satisfaction and organisational commitment", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 153-68.

- 
- Warr, P.B., Cook, J.D. and Wall, T.D. (1979), "Scales for the measurement of some. Work attitudes and aspects of psychological well-being", *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, Vol. 52, pp. 129-48.
- Yousef, D.A. (2001), "Islamic work ethic: a moderator between organisational commitment and job satisfaction in a cross-cultural context", *Personnel Review*, Vol. 30 No. 2, pp. 152-69.
- Yousef, D.A. (2002), "Job satisfaction as a mediator of the relationship between role stressors and organizational commitment: a study from an Arab cultural perspective", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 16 No. 6, pp. 250-66.

### Further reading

- Cook, J.D., Helpworth, S.J., Wall, T.D. and Warr, P.B. (1981), *The Experience of Work: A Compendium and Review of 249 Measures and Their Use*, Academic Press, London.
- Hofstede, G. (1980), *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Value*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Sekaran, U. (2003), *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach*, Wiley, New York, NY.

### Appendix. Interpersonal trust

#### *Faith in peers*

- If I got into difficulties I know my workmates would try and help me out.
- I can trust the people I work with to lend me a hand if I need it.
- Most of my workmates can be relied upon to do as they say they will do.

#### *Faith in management*

- Management at work is sincere in its attempts to meet workers point of view.
- I feel quite confident that my firm will treat me fairly.
- Our management is quite prepared to gain advantage by deceiving the workers.

#### *Confidence in peers*

- I have full confidence in the skills of my work mates.
- Most of my fellow workers would get along in their jobs even if the supervisors was not around.
- I can rely on other workers not to make my job more difficult by careless work.

#### *Confidence in management*

- Our firm has a poor future unless it can attract better managers.
- Management can be trusted to make sensible decision for the firm's future.
- Management at work seem to do an efficient job.

#### *Intrinsic motivation*

- I feel a sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well.
- My opinion of myself goes down when I do the job badly.
- I take pride in doing my job as well as I can.
- I feel unhappy when my work is not up to my usual standard.
- I like to look back at a day's work with a sense of a job well done.
- I try to think of ways of doing my job effectively.

*Work related tension*

- Feeling that you have too little authority to carry out responsibility assigned to you.
- Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of your job are.
- Not knowing what opportunities for advancement and promotion exist for you.
- Feeling that you have too a heavy work load one that you can possibly finish during an ordinary workday.
- Thinking that you will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of various people over you.
- Feeling that you are not fully qualified to handle your job.
- Not knowing that your immediate supervisor thinks of you, how he or she evaluates your performance.
- The fact that you cannot get information need to carry out your job.
- Having to decide things that affect lives of individual's people that you know.
- Feeling that you may not be liked and accepted by the people you work with.
- Feeling unable to influence your immediate supervisors' decisions and actions that affect you.
- Not knowing just what the people you work with expect from you.
- Thinking that the amount of work you have to do may interfere with how well it gets done.
- Feeling that you have to do things on the job that are against your better judgement.
- Feeling that your job tends to interfere with your family life.

*Job satisfaction*

- Choose one of the following statements which tell you how well you like your job: I hate it, I do not like it, I am indifferent, I like it, I love it.
- Choose one of the following to show how much of the time you feel satisfied with your job: all the time, about half of the time, occasionally, seldom, never.
- Choose one of the following which best tells you how you feel about changing your job: I would quit this job at once if I could get anything else to do, I would take almost any other job in which I could earn as much as I am earning now, I would like to change my present job for another job in the same line of work, I cannot think of any job for which I would exchange mine, I would not change my job for any other.
- Choose one of the following to show how you think you compare with others: no one likes his job better than I like mine, I like my job better than most people like theirs, I like my job about as well as most people like theirs, I dislike my job more than most people dislike theirs, no one dislikes his job more than I dislike mine.

**Corresponding author**

Ghada El-Kot can be contacted at: [gsadr@yahoo.com](mailto:gsadr@yahoo.com); [ghada.elkot@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:ghada.elkot@plymouth.ac.uk)