The Effects of Wage Differences on Employee Job Satisfaction in the Lodging Industry

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effects of wage differences on job satisfaction for male and female employees in the Turkish lodging industry. Measures of job satisfaction used in the study were derived from a review of the literature. The data revealed that female employees were more likely to report lower job satisfaction in certain income categories, and that both male and female employees have lower job satisfaction in the lowest income category. This finding is more pronounced for female employees.

Keywords: *wage differences, job satisfaction, lodging.*

INTRODUCTION

Job satisfaction has been a recurring construct in the literature that investigates employee motivation over the past several decades. Studies have shown that hospitality and tourism employees most likely to leave the industry because of low job satisfaction, poor working conditions and the absence of motivating factors (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000). Job satisfaction in the industry is thought to be influenced by a number of factors including long hours, night and weekend schedules, stress, demanding supervisors and duties, lack of personal time and quality of life, routine, and little opportunity for advancement and growth (Pavesic & Brymer, 1990). Among these, wages have been viewed as an important determinant factor for employee job satisfaction and have been shown to influence an employee's decision to leave the organization (Kline & Hsieh, 2007). Researchers have also suggested that the tourism industry tends to pay its employees less than other industries (Thrane, 2008).

Although there is some evidence that contingent wage systems affect performance positively, there is little evidence that wage differences are positively associated with satisfaction (Pfeffer & Langton, 1993). Bai et. al. (2001) reported a consistent relationship between job satisfaction and increasing wage for food service employees. Lam et. al., (2001) investigated employees' job satisfaction in Hong Kong Hotels and their research results specifically showed that wages is the most important category contributing to job satisfaction.

The tourism industry is one of the sectors where the proportion of women in total employment is highest (Santos & Varejao, 2007). Although it offers women better advantages to reach the top (Skalpe, 2007), advancement into a senior-level leadership position is more difficult because of the prevalent ‘‘traditional role’’ assumptions (Schaap, Stedham, & Yamamura, 2008). Skalpe (2007) examined CEO compensation in Norwegian tourism firms and found significant gender differences with females earning less than their male counterparts. In addition, females employees in the Turkish hospitality sector have been shown to earned less than male employees in part because they usually find jobs in low-skilled and low-status positions such as housekeeping (Pinar, McCuddy, Birkan, & Kozak, 2010). McCuddy et.al (2010) reported that although the Turkish male/female earnings gap has been declining in recent years, it still remains quite substantial in favor of men (McCuddy, Pinar, & Birkan, 2010). Educational and experience differences, the propensity of women to work in part-time jobs and occupational segregation may explain gender wage differences.

Job satisfaction is quite important for human resource management and employees working in the tourism industry. Maxham (2003) found that job satisfaction positively correlates with customer satisfaction. He argues that employees who are satisfied in their job will provide better service to customers and customer satisfaction will increase. Therefore, this study is designed to examine the influence of wage differences on job satisfaction of employees with respect to gender in the context of the lodging industry.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 397 hotel service employees participated in the present job satisfaction study. All the lodging properties were located in the city of Ankara, Turkey. Based on the size of the hotel, the number of questionnaires sent to each human resource manager varied from 50 to 100. The participants mailed their questionnaire directly to the author. The average return rate was 20%.

The data questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section of the questionnaire included employees’ demographic properties such as gender, age, marital status, education level. The second part included the scale of satisfaction. In order to measure employee job satisfaction level, the study adopted the short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire which consisted of 20 items and covered three dimension: Intrinsic Satisfaction, Extrinsic Satisfaction and General Satisfaction items (Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967). A five-point response scale was employed, ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

RESULTS

Male and female respondents accounted for 58.9% and 41.1% of the sample, respectively. The majority of the respondents indicated that they were 21-30 in age, single, and earning a monthly income of 1500 Turkish Lira (TL) and less. Forty-seven percent indicated

that they had obtained primary education. The majority of the respondents worked in front office, food and beverage, and housekeeping departments. Most employees indicated that they had changed their job 2 times or less.

Table 1
Respondent Characteristics

Gender	n	%	**Department**	n	%
Female	163	41.1	Front Office	64	16.1
Male	234	58.9	Food and Beverage	99	24.9
			Housekeeping	81	20.4
Age	n	%	Accounting	41	10.3
20 and less	39	9.8	Technical	26	6.5
21–30	210	52.9	Sales and Marketing	30	7.6
31–40	103	25.9	Human Resources	22	5.5
41 and over	45	11.3	Other	34	8.6
Marital Status	n	%	**Task**	n	%
Married	164	41.3	General manager and/or assistant	24	6.0
Single	233	58.7	Department manager	52	13.1
			Chief	64	16.1
Monthly Income Level (TL)	n	%	Other personnel (employee)	257	64.7
1500 and less	268	67.5			
1501 and over	129	32.5			
Education Level	n	%	**Frequency of job changes**	n	%
Primary Education	187	47.1	2 or less	230	57.9
Associate	90	22.7	3-5	115	29.0
College and Graduate	120	30.2	6 and/or over	52	13.1

Chi-square tests were used to analysis the relationship between job satisfaction and wage levels. The results show that female employees reported lower job satisfaction in the lower income category (chi-square=4.76, p> 0.029). The results also indicated that both male and female employees have lower job satisfaction in the lower income category. Furthermore, the difference is more pronounced with female employees.

Table 2
Job Satisfaction for Male and Female Employees by Wage Level

		Job Satisfaction Level				Chi-square	p-value
		Low		High			
Income	Gender	n	%	n	%		
1500 and less	Male	99	63.9	56	36.1	4.760	0.029
	Female	79	76.9	24	23.3		
1500 and over	Male	26	34.7	49	65.3	0.403	0.525
	Female	14	29.2	34	70.8		

A close examination of the Table 2 also reveals that as employees indicate higher wage levels differences between male and female employees on job satisfaction become less, meaning both male and female employees show higher levels of job satisfaction levels in general.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the influence of wage differences on male and female employees' job satisfaction in the lodging industry. We would expect to find no difference in reported job satisfaction between genders within the different levels of reported income. However, this was not the case. The results show that a larger than expected percentage of female employees reported lower job satisfaction than their male counterparts. In Turkish society female employees have different occupational strategies and desires for non-standard work schedules, due to child-care concerns and responsibilities and they may expect to earn less because of family and work accommodation (Burke, Koyuncu, & Fiksenbaum, 2008; Georgellis & Lange, 2007). A vast majority of Turkish people still place women in a traditional role including females themselves. In this situation, they can think that "we have a lot of responsibilities in our life, but we earn less than males". And, they can think "I don't get what I deserved with respect to income". So, they can be more dissatisfied with their wages than their male counterparts.

The goals of wage and salary programs in the organizations are to attract and keep qualified employees, provide equal pay for equal work, reward good performance, control labor costs, and maintain a cost parity with direct competitors (Kline & Hsieh, 2007). Efficient systems are thought to lead to satisfied employees who are productive and committed to the organization. This is particularly important in the lodging sector of a tourism destination such as Turkey where employees are in contact with tourism and provide service on a day to day basis.

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