

## JOB SATISFACTION OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN SAUDI ARABIA

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This article examines the levels of and relationships between overall job satisfaction and facet satisfaction of female school principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

**Research Method:** The study is a quantitative exploratory study of 160 randomly selected female principals.

**Findings:** The results indicated female principals as satisfied with their job in general, the work itself, supervision, co-workers; and dissatisfied with their pay and promotional opportunities. All facet variables significantly correlated with overall job satisfaction. However, only work and supervision facets significantly predicted female principals' overall job satisfaction.

**KEYWORDS:** Job Satisfaction, Female Principals

### INTRODUCTION

In an attempt to address the androcentric bias found evident in educational administration literature (see Epp, SackneyKustaski, 1994; Blackmore & Kenway 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989), a number of scholars have responded to the call for research that is more inclusive of women's perspective (e.g. Eckman 2000; Mertz & McNeely, 1998). However, till date, very little is known about the experiences and perspective of a unique female principal operating in what Doumato (2002) termed as "all-women workforce". Saudi Arabia, as the epicentre of sex segregation, separate men and women at work place, women have their own schools with women as leaders and teachers, and girls as students. Hence, the challenges and experiences of female principals in this sex segregated society may be different from experiences of female principals operating in mixed societies. Female principals in mixed societies were reported as sometimes earning more than half of the administrative degrees and licenses in educational preparation programs but yet underrepresented and underutilized in leadership positions (see Young and McLeod 2001; Eckman, 2000; Bell & Chase 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989). This is contrary to the Saudi female principal who has no competition with her male counterpart for jobs in schools and for principalship positions (Fakhro, 1996). The purpose of this is to put forth a body of literature that reflects female principals' experiences in Saudi Arabia by exploring female principals' overall and facet job satisfaction. Currently, there is a significant dearth of literature on overall and facet job satisfaction in Saudi Arabia (Maghrabi 1999; Alsinani 2003; Al-Rubaish, Rahim, Abumadini, & Wosornu 2011).

### Background to the Study

Job satisfaction has been a matter of growing interest for those concerned with the quality of working life and organizational efficiency (Maghrabi, 1999) with more than 12,400 studies published on the topic by 1991 (Spector, 1996). The consequences of job satisfaction are very important to an organization in terms of efficiency, productivity, employee relations, absenteeism and turn over; to employees in terms of mental and physical health (Quarstein, McAfee &

Glassman1992) and to the economy in the prediction of labor market behaviour and wage model (Long, 2005).

While job satisfaction is considered one of the most widely researched topics in the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology (Judge & Church, 2000), “studies of job satisfaction in the educational arena have not been as prolific” (Lombardo 2005, p.6). In their examination of 474 articles published in the first 26 volumes of the Educational Administration Quarterly, Thompson, McNamara and Hoyle (1997), found that only 41 articles addressed the issue of job satisfaction. Out of those 41 only 3 articles studied the job satisfaction of educational administrators. More recently, researchers such as Sodoma& Else (2009); Sablatura (2002) and Mack (2000), also lament that little attention has been given to the job satisfaction of school principals.

With the recent leadership crisis of teachers not taking up principalship position, due to their perception that principals are underpaid, overstressed and overworked (Fraser & Brock, 2006) and the issue of principals leaving the profession, and beginning new career with some returning to the classroom (Haines 2006) studies of principals’ job satisfaction became ever more necessary. Several researchers attribute the disinterest in principalship to the changing role of the school principal (Fraser & Brock 2006; Sodoma& Else 2009; Norton 2002). The role of the principal continues to expand. From the “principal teacher” ( Matthews& Crow 2003, p. 18), the principal is now an instructional and transformational leader, a politician, an advocate, a manager, supervisor and a mentor (Matthews & Crow 2003; Leithwood& Duke 1999). Further, the principal is expected to sustain good interpersonal relations with parents, teachers, students as well as with community leaders and social service personnel (Richford & Fortune, 2001). Although social, political, and national context may vary, the challenges facing principals each day are common and quite frightening (d’Arbon et al., 2001). In her study of female principals in Saudi Arabia, (Mathis, 2010, p.87) reported female principals as describing their role as a “huge responsibility”. The female principals reported their roles to include: managerial, supervisory and leadership responsibilities, maintaining school safety and student behaviour problems, maintaining good relationship with parents; teachers and students, checking students’ weaknesses and making plans for improvement, planning extra-curricular activities for the students, providing a safe and convenient environment for learning and at the same time implementing the goal of the Saudi Ministry of Education in all area including educational, academics, and behavioral.

Although Johnson & Holdaway (1994; 1991) stressed the need for job satisfaction of principals in view of the changing role of the school principals, they assert that there remains several reasons for continued research into the job satisfaction of school principals. These include: concerns about declining satisfaction in the education profession, the desirable condition of job satisfaction in itself as it is closely related to the overall quality of life in a society, the nature of modern work with its increasing emphasis upon technology and accountability, its higher stress levels, and associated feelings of alienation indicate a need for greater attention to the nature and causes of job satisfaction.

Despite the need for principals’ job satisfaction studies, current literature on Saudi school principals mainly focused in the domains of principals’ leadership role, behaviour, skills and beliefs, for example, principals’ behaviour (Mathis, 2010; Aldarweesh, 2003; Badawood, 2003; Alsufyan2002; Al- Askar, 2002), principals’ perceptions of the school counsellor role (Al Ghamdi& Riddick, 2011; Al-Rebdi, 2004), principals’ perception of their role in the implementation of middle school characteristics (Hadi, 2002), and principals’ attitudes toward cooperative learning methods (Basamh, 2002). A few studies were carried out on the principals’ selection policy (Al-Kheshaiban, 2002). The relatively few studies that

dealt with job satisfaction of employees in the education sector in Saudi Arabia focused mainly on colleges and university faculty members, for example, job satisfaction of faculty members in Saudi universities (Almahboob, 1987), job satisfaction of faculty members in the Saudi teacher education colleges (Al hakheem, 1995), and job satisfaction of faculty members in college of technology (Alsinani, 2003). . Further, a review was conducted based on a computerized search - Springer, Proquest, SAGE, Emerald, EBSCOHost, and Science Direct. Several related keywords to job satisfaction were identified and searched. Not a single study that examined the job satisfaction of Saudi female principal was found. Hence, Saudi literature on school management does not contain a substantial detailed discussion specifically on female principals' job satisfaction.

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

Questionnaires were administered to 225 randomly selected public school female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia via an online link by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education, Planning and Development Department (PDD). Of those issued, 160 were completed sufficiently for analysis (response rate: 71.1 percent). The survey packet sent to the female principals contains a demographic data sheet that captures respondents personal and professional attributes, and the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) including the Job In General (JIG). The JDI measures satisfaction with five facets of the job namely pay, supervision, co-workers, work itself, and promotional opportunities. While, the JIG measures overall job satisfaction. Respondents were asked to evaluate adjectives and phrases that assess their satisfaction with the five facets of their jobs and their overall job satisfaction. Respondents mark "yes" if the adjective or phrase describe their job situation, "no" if it doesn't and "?" if they cannot decide. The JDI including the Job in General was translated into Arabic in accordance with the international guidelines for translational studies (Sousa & Rojjanasrirat, 2011; Wild, Grove, Eremenco, McElroy, Verjee-Lorenz & Erikson, 2005). Cronbach alpha for all the scales in this study were above 0.7 (work,  $\alpha = 0.92$ ; pay,  $\alpha = 0.82$  promotion,  $\alpha = 0.75$ ; supervision  $\alpha = 0.90$ ; co-worker  $\alpha = 0.92$ ; job in general  $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this study was to determine (1) the level of overall job satisfaction among female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia (2) the levels of facet satisfaction in terms of pay, promotional opportunities, supervision, co-workers and the work itself (3) relationship between overall and facet satisfaction of female and lastly (4) to determine which the five facets of the job is the best predictor of female principals' overall job satisfaction in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

Hence descriptive statistics in terms of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to describe female principals' overall job satisfaction and facet satisfaction, Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between overall and facet satisfaction and multiple regression was used to determine which of the five facets is the best predictor of female principals' overall job satisfaction.

## **RESULTS**

### **Description of Respondents**

From the collected data, respondents were aged either in 36 – 45 years category or above 45. With regards to years of their experience in principalship, majority of the respondents 45.0% (72) were in 1 – 5 years of experience

category. The result revealed that, most of the respondents 43.8% (70) work in schools with 300 – 600 students. Lastly, in terms of the respondents' schools type, respondents who works in elementary schools are the majority based on their higher percentage of 47.5 (see Table 1.).

### **Overall Job Satisfaction**

Out of 160 respondents majority of them( 81.3%) were reported as satisfied with their job in general. Regarding facet satisfaction, respondents were most satisfied with co-workers (87.5%). Supervision ranked second (84.4%) and work ranked third (72.5%). Respondents were neutral ( $M = 25.06$ ) regarding their pay and dissatisfied ( $M = 14.11$ ) with their promotional opportunities. None of the 160 respondents indicated satisfaction with promotional opportunities (see Table 2.).

### **Overall Satisfaction Regression on the Five Facets**

In order to determine the degree to which overall job satisfaction was predicted by the individual facets; Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient were computed for each of the five facet with overall job satisfaction. All predictors were significantly correlated with overall job satisfaction ( $p < 0.01$ ), with correlation ranging from 0.248 to 0.673. The highest correlation coefficient between overall satisfaction and facet satisfaction was obtained with work itself facet (0.673), followed by supervision (0.568) then co-workers (0.544), pay (0.398) and promotion (0.248) (see Table 3). This shows absence of multicollinearity.

The five facets were then simultaneously entered into a regression model as predictors using overall job satisfaction as the criterion. The analysis revealed that the five facets combined accounted for a significant proportion of the variability in overall job satisfaction,  $R^2 = .551$ ,  $F(5, 154) = 37.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . As Table 5 shows, only work ( $\beta = .440$ ,  $t = .077$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and supervision ( $\beta = .276$ ,  $t = 4.132$ ,  $p = .000$ ), statistically contributed to overall job satisfaction of female principals.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The results in this study showed female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia as satisfied with their jobs. This result is expected. In fact, according to Eckman (2000), a number of researchers have found women administrators as having high degree of job satisfaction and at the same time viewing themselves as effective in their jobs. Picton (2001, p.7) asserts that “many school administrators truly love what they do and have a great deal of job satisfaction. In an earlier study conducted by Paddock (1981), it was reported that 80% of the female principals in her study were satisfied and would choose the same career if given the chance again. Newby (1999) compared male and female middle school principals and reported female principals as having slightly higher level of job satisfaction than their male counterparts. Similar result was reported by Brown (2009) in his study of high school principals. Even in situations where females were argued as having poorer job quality, they report equal or greater job satisfaction compared to men. This phenomenon is well-known among social scientists, and is termed as the ‘paradox of the contented female worker’ (Robinson, 2003). In an attempt to give a possible explanation to female principals’ high level of job satisfaction, Newby (1999), suggest that the high job satisfaction in female principals can be attributed to the fact that females may consider principalship to be the highest step in their career ladder.

Surprisingly, despite the reported fact that “principals are overworked, overstressed underpaid, and overloaded with administrative details” (Fraser & Brock, 2006, p. 426), studies of principals’ job satisfaction continue to report high satisfaction among school principals. This is paradoxical. However, a possible explanation to this is the fact that principals find their satisfaction in social service. Principals were found dedicated to educating students with a strong desire in serving students, parents and their community (Newby, 1999; Stemple, 2004). Moreover, so many studies of school principals showed social service as the highest contributor to principals’ job satisfaction. Haines (2005) contends that employees in the field of education tend to be more intrinsically motivated. The same was reported by Bolger (2001). In addition, the meaning of work for educators was found associated with benevolence, spiritual life and an opportunity to express concern for others in social relations (Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss 1999). Therefore, we can conclude that since principals are satisfied with their jobs they are likely to remain in their jobs and serve as the best advertisement for aspirants. Hence, the recent leadership crisis of shortage of aspirants, lack of interest in principalship and principals’ attrition may therefore not be attributable to principals’ dissatisfaction with their jobs. Within this context, Fraser and Brock (2004), reported in their study that principals’ attrition is not as a result of principals’ job dissatisfaction. Principals in their study reportedly enjoyed the challenges of the principal’s job, and attributed leaving the position only when they sought the excitement and challenges of a new environment, That is when they perceive they are not learning anything new.

Regarding facet satisfaction, female principals in Saudi Arabia were most satisfied with co-workers, then supervision, the work itself, pay and lastly promotional opportunities. This finding is consistent with Fansher & Buxton (198) who found very similar result in their survey of all full time secondary school principals in the United States. The fact that female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia were found satisfied with co-workers and supervision is not surprising. People in collectivist cultures, such as Saudi Arabia are known for maintaining harmony with group members (Hofstede, 1991) thus a higher possibility of having a good relationship with co-workers and supervisors. Female principals were found dissatisfied with their pay, this finding is consistent with several findings in the literature. The literature consistently reported insufficient compensation as a source of dissatisfaction for principals (Fraser & Brock, 2006; Border, 2005; Haines, 2006; Newby, 1999, Stemple, Sodoma). Only work and supervision were found as significant predictors of female principals’ overall job satisfaction.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings of this research provide insight into the job satisfaction of female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. However, despite the satisfied level of job satisfaction found among the female principals, state legislators, district administrators, boards of education and superintendents should work hard to either maintain this high level of job satisfaction or increase it. There is also need to look into the salaries and promotional opportunities of female principals in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

Further studies should be conducted using qualitative methods to interview principals and gain more in-depth insight regarding their job satisfaction. These studies may further reveal to us how female principals in Saudi Arabia speak and think about their own world and in their own terms thus filling concerns and issues not addressed in this study.

## TABLES

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age Group</b>		
35 years or less	0	0
36 – 45 years	94	58.8
46 and more	66	41.3
<b>Experience in Principalship</b>		
1 – 5 years	72	45.0
6 - 10 years	33	20.6
11 years and more	55	34.4
<b>School Size</b>		
300 and less students	61	38.1
301 – 600 students	70	43.8
601 and more	29	18.1
<b>School Level</b>		
Elementary	76	47.5
Intermediate	53	33.1
High	31	19.4

Table 2: Levels of Overall Job Satisfaction and Facet Satisfaction

Job Facet	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Mean
Co-workers	5.6% (9)	6.9% (11)	87.5% (140)	44.43
Supervision	6.3% (10)	8.8% (14)	84.4% (135)	41.75
Work	16.3% (26)	11.3% (18)	72.5% (116)	38.31
Pay	45.6% (73)	19.4% (31)	35.0% (56)	25.06
Promotion	79.4% (127)	29.6% (33)	0% (0)	14.11
Overall Job Satisfaction	7.5% (12)	11.3% (18)	81.3 (130)	42.56

Table 3: Overall Satisfaction Regression with the Five Facets

Job Facet	Correlation With Overall Satisfaction	B	T	P
Work	.673**	.440	6.077	.000
Pay	.398**	.095	1.514	.132
Promotion	.248**	-.010	-.176	.861
Supervision	.568**	.276	4.132	.000
Co-workers	.544**	.114	1.580	.116

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