A COMPARATIVE AND CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS ON TRAIT OPTIMISM AND JOB SATISFACTION AMONG COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS

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Abstract

The researchers investigated two significant concepts: job satisfaction and trait optimism. Comparative and correlational design were utilized to assess the significant difference between high, moderate, and low optimism on the overall job satisfaction of college instructors in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the relationship between trait optimism and job satisfaction were examined. ANOVA showed no significant differences in job satisfaction across all levels of optimism, $F(2,71) = 1.39$, $p = 0.26$, $\eta_2 = 0.04$, implying that satisfaction is equal among groups, and it exists despite the optimism level of 74 college instructors. Additionally, correlation analysis revealed a non-significant weak correlation between trait optimism and job satisfaction ($r = 0.19$, $n = 74$, $p = 0.10$), signifying no significant positive relationship between these variables. The study results suggest that an employee's optimism level does not significantly indicate an increase or decrease in their overall job satisfaction in the workplace.

Keywords: Trait Optimism, Job Satisfaction, Covid-19 Pandemic, College Instructors

Introduction

The educational sector in the Philippines is no stranger to the changes and effects brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a fact, this field adjusted and followed the new normal to maintain the quality of education given to students, thus, the implementation of online learning. According to Ali et al. (2021), the unprepared shift to online learning has a significant negative impact on the psychological state of teachers (i.e., depression, anxiety, and stress), where this psychological distress lessens the level of satisfaction among employees. Indeed, the pandemic has caused negative effects since teachers are less satisfied at work in online education compared with traditional teaching

(Suganya, 2020). In addressing these negative consequences, a specific trait was proven essential as the study of Biron et al. (2020) suggested that optimism is necessary for effective work from home adjustment during the current pandemic situation, since the latter depends on the former. While it was stated earlier how this phenomenon caused stress, even emotional exhaustion, it was discovered by Özdemir and Kerse (2020), that optimistic employees had reduced stress and emotional exhaustion compared to those who are low in optimism. This personality trait, as stated in Akhtar and Saleem (2020), could be predicted by happiness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability; wherein, happy educators, who are conscientious and emotionally stable, are optimistic.

Several scholarly articles have proven the relationship between trait optimism and job satisfaction and how the mentioned personality trait predicts satisfaction at work. Ahmed (2012), Desai and Thakur (2017), Murphy (2014), Bibi et al. (2017), and Zhang et al. (2019) found out that trait optimism is significantly and positively related to job satisfaction. Ahmed (2012) and Sarwar and Hasan (2015), in specific, concluded that teachers in universities who have a positive outlook and confidence about the future are more likely to be satisfied with their job. Hence, optimism significantly predicts satisfaction at work among employees, including university faculty members (Sarwar and Hasan 2015; Mishra et al., 2016; Mincu, 2014). Accordingly, Mishra et al. (2016) stated that job satisfaction, brought about by optimism, can improve employee retention. Thus, optimism, as suggested by the cited scholars, can be assessed by organizations and companies to acquire employees as it can become an advantage for them since this trait cannot be easily reproduced or taken from someone who possesses it.

Conversely, in the study of Rauf (2010), it was discovered that there is a non-significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and optimism, which is inconsistent with the available literature; optimism was concluded to be not the only possible predictor of satisfaction at work as there are other variables to consider. Moreover, Desai and Thakur (2017), pointed out that although there is a relationship between the concerned variables, there is still job satisfaction among university teachers even without the consideration of the optimism scores. Through these foreign studies regarding the above-mentioned variables, the researchers are interested in examining a new approach to analyze the possible significant difference in the overall job satisfaction among high optimistic, moderate optimistic and low optimistic (pessimistic) college professors, especially considering the condition of work amidst the pandemic. Furthermore, to acquire a broader knowledge on trait optimism and job satisfaction, the researchers will be evaluating the correlation between these two variables. Conducting this study will provide new understanding, taking into account the minimal investigation on a professor's degree of trait optimism and their job satisfaction, which will benefit both the field of psychology and education.

Theoretical framework

According to Scheier and Carver (2018), having positive expectancies encourage people to pursue their goals, while negative expectancies lead to disengagement in achieving these goals. Optimism is a variable that can impact an individual's expectations in such a way that these result to better outcomes despite certain obstacles. In light of this, this study is grounded on the expectancy theory of motivation by Victor Vroom (1964), which postulated that an individual's perception can influence motivation. In this theory, valence, instrumentality, and expectancy are believed to explain an employee's task-related effort. Valence referred to how much an employee values the outcome or consequence given by the organization. In contrast, instrumentality is the degree to which individuals believe that their performance will result in specific consequences. Expectancy, on the other hand, relates to the expected outcome of the individual with the amount of effort they exert. An employee who believes that their effort will offer desirable outcomes may have increased motivation, which would lead to job satisfaction. Additionally, this theory suggests that school administrators and officials should consider expectancy values to ensure job satisfaction in the workplace (Ahmed, 2012). The expectancy theory of motivation will help the researchers in assessing the possible difference in the overall job satisfaction among high, moderate, and low optimistic college instructors and professors in the Philippines. This theory also supports their intention to conduct a correlation analysis between trait optimism and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant difference between high, moderate, and low optimism on the overall job satisfaction of college instructors.
Ha1: There is a significant difference between high, moderate, and low optimism on the overall job satisfaction of college instructors.
H02: There is no significant relationship between trait optimism and job satisfaction of college instructors.
Ha2: There is a significant relationship between trait optimism and job satisfaction of college instructors.

Conceptual Framework

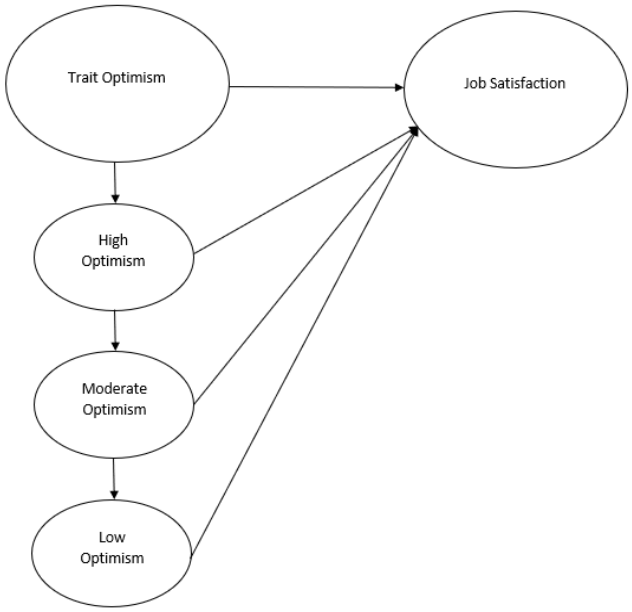

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Trait optimism and job satisfaction are important concepts in the realm of Psychology, which exist in the field of work, as evidenced by the literature presented above. To provide a better overview of this study, Figure 1 depicts a comparison of the three levels of optimism: high optimism, moderate optimism, and low optimism on job satisfaction. Along with this, a correlational analysis would be conducted between trait optimism and satisfaction at work among college instructors and professors.

Methods

Research Design

For the attainment of this study, the researchers used Comparative and Correlational Design. It was the appropriate research design to utilize since this study aimed to determine: (1) the significant difference between high optimism, moderate optimism, and low optimism in terms of job satisfaction, and (2) the significant relationship between the overall trait optimism and job satisfaction among college professors. This design allowed the examiners to arrive at a conclusion about the objectives of the study, which in return, was able to provide information about the involved constructs.

Participants

The impacts of Coronavirus disease in the educational field, including in higher education, were not only experienced by the country where the disease originated from. Different higher educational institutions from 118 nations were also affected (Toquero, 2020). In the Philippines, colleges and universities have adapted to the changes brought about by the pandemic. In relation to this, college instructors and professors who are currently working in their respective institutions amid the pandemic participated as the respondents of the study. The respondents were chosen since this research will examine overall job satisfaction as one of the variables, where the satisfaction that will be measured is based upon the new normal in the field of education.

To acquire the needed participants, the researchers utilized convenience sampling under the non-probability sampling technique. Due to the limitations caused by the pandemic, respondents who were readily available and capable of participating have been selected. A total of 74 college instructors and professors from any university or college institution in the Philippines completed the tests. After the computation of scores in the tool for optimism, three groups were drawn: 11 high optimism, 42 moderate optimism, and 21 low optimism professors.

Materials

In this study, the researchers administered two questionnaires, namely Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) and Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). Respectively, they measure trait optimism and job satisfaction among the participants.

Life Orientation Test –Revised (LOT-R)

Michael F. Scheier, Charles S. Carver, and Michael W. Bridges developed the questionnaire Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) in 1994. This tool, which consists of 10 items, measures optimism on a five-point Likert scale. The self-report instrument includes three items for optimism, three items for pessimism, and four filler items to at least conceal the main objective of the test. In answering, examinees can choose from: I disagree a lot (0), I disagree a little (1), I neither agree nor disagree (2), I agree a little (3), and I agree a lot (4). Respondents are asked to rate how much they agree with the statements in LOT-R, such as "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best," and "If something can go wrong for me, it will." By adding the numerical equivalents of each response, the total score will be obtained. Scores vary from 0 to 24, with 0 to 13 showing low optimism, 14 to 18 implying moderate optimism, and 19 to 24 indicating

high optimism. Items 3, 7, and 9 must be reversed, whereas items 2, 5, 6, and 8 will not be scored.

To discuss the psychometric properties of LOT-R, Scheier et al. (1994) acquired a Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 in determining the scale's reliability, indicating an adequate level of internal consistency. Consequently, test-retest correlations of .68, .60, .56, and .79 were computed, revealing that the scale was reasonably stable over time. Moreover, item-scale correlations of .43 to .63 show that items are not redundant even though they measure the same underlying construct. According to Tusaie & Patterson (2006), the life orientation test-revised has been widely used in research because it allows findings to be compared to other studies.

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)

Paul E. Spector established the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) in 1985. This instrument comprises 36 items, which measures nine facets of job satisfaction in a six-point Likert scale. The JSS consists of four (4) items for each facet of the scale, which covers pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent awards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work, and communication. Test takers can choose from the following options when answering the survey: Disagree Very Much (1), Disagree Moderately (2), Disagree slightly (3), Agree slightly (4), Agree moderately (5), and Agree very much (6). Sample statements in JSS include “I feel I am being paid a fair amount for the work I do.” and “There is really too little chance for promotion on my job.” Among the 36 items of the test, 19 of which must be reversed, which are statements 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 26, 29, 31, 32, 34, and 36. In scoring the JSS, all items will be summed after reversing the previously mentioned items. The scores can range from 36 to 216, where 36 to 108 shows dissatisfaction, 144 to 216 imply satisfaction, and between 108 and 144 indicate ambivalence.

This instrument has been well-established and has undergone numerous reliability and validity testing. On the psychometric properties of JSS, a Cronbach’s alpha of .91 for the total scale was acquired, indicating that JSS is reliable. Regarding its validity, JSS was supported by several studies using various job satisfaction scales on a single employee. The internal consistency reliability for each subscale was also computed, where alpha levels varied from .60 (co-workers) to .82 (supervision). Additionally, the job satisfaction survey is a tool that can be administered to all types of organizations, both private and public sectors (Spector, 1985). This specific study will provide data on college professors' current job satisfaction levels in the new normal educational system during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Procedure

To attain the objectives of the study, aside from using such materials, the researchers utilized particular techniques, methods, and software. In this portion of the methodology, the data collection method and data analysis are explained.

Data Collection Method

Due to the limitations brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, the data gathering took place online via Google forms. A formal message has been sent through Google Hangouts, Facebook Messenger, and Gmail to ask if the college professors are willing to take part in the study. Together with the message is a link that will direct the professors to the survey questionnaires. Additionally, the researchers requested permission to conduct the study in a university in the Philippines. A letter of request, signed by the Psychological Assessment 2 and Industrial and Organizational Psychology professor, was sent to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs of that university.

Prior to answering the questionnaires, an informed consent was presented to the participants. This initiative is to inform the participants about their rights, including the right to join or withdraw, and an assurance that all information gathered shall be kept confidential. Also, the details about the deletion of data were conveyed in this consent. After agreeing to the informed consent, the participants proceeded to answer the instruments. First, the respondents completed the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R), followed by the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). Respectively, these questionnaires measured the college professors' level of optimism and job satisfaction. The researchers stopped accepting responses after they reached the target number of participants.

Data Analysis

As mentioned, the primary objective of this research is to determine if high, moderate, and low optimism have a significant difference in terms of job satisfaction. Accordingly, the researchers utilized the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test, a statistical technique applicable in identifying significant differences among three or more independent groups. Thus, the ANOVA test was appropriate to use in this study since three groups were identified in trait optimism based on LOT-R. Furthermore, the secondary objective of this investigation is to examine whether there is a significant relationship between the overall trait optimism and job satisfaction among college professors. Therefore, a Pearson r correlation was conducted in determining a possible significant relationship between the independent and dependent variable.

In analyzing the data, the researchers employed two specific software. Microsoft Excel was used to organize and compute the raw scores with reference to the established scoring system of the tools. In LOT-R, the obtained overall scores from the said software indicated which instructors will be categorized into three groups, namely high optimism (optimism), moderate optimism (moderate), and low optimism (pessimism). Once finalized, the researchers used the statistical software JASP to run the data and compute the ANOVA. Similarly, in calculating for the Pearson r correlation, the total scores for optimism and job satisfaction were summarized in Microsoft Excel before being exported to JASP for the data analysis. The level of significance applied is 0.05.

Results

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviations of Job Satisfaction among the Three Groups

	N	***M***	***SD***
Optimism	11	152.000	26.803
Moderate	42	150.571	23.379
Pessimism	21	140.905	21.288

The 74 college professors were categorized into three groups which are high optimism, moderate optimism, and low optimism based on the interpretation for LOT-R scores. It can be observed in Table 1 that the majority of the respondents show moderate optimism, meanwhile data shows that low optimism (pessimism) was more evident in participants rather than high optimism. The discrepancy between the job satisfaction scores of highly optimistic (M = 152 SD = 26.80), moderately optimistic (M = 150.57, SD = 23.38), and lowly optimistic college professors (M = 140.91, SD = 21.29) was not particularly large.

Table 2. Test for Equality of Variance (Levene's**)**

F	**df1**	**df2**	**p**
0.671	2.000	71.000	0.515

Assumptions for the analysis of variance were checked. The homogeneity of variance was assessed with the Levene's test, which is presented in Table 2. A

non-significant relationship was exhibited (p = .52), implying that the groups are equal in terms of variance.

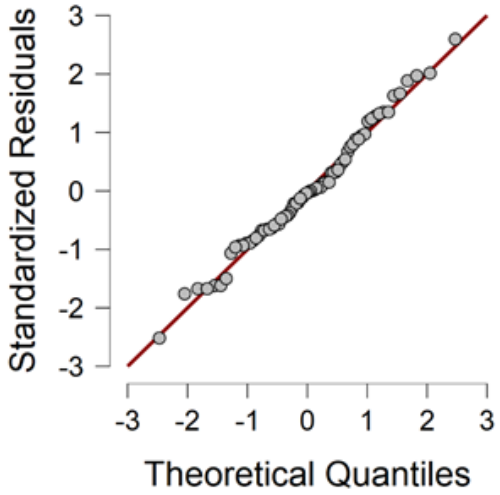

Figure 2. Q-Q plot of residuals for the assumption of normal distribution**.**

A Q-Q Plot was also performed to test if the data was normally distributed, and it was proven in Figure 2. There were no deviations reported and the data appears to be linear.

Table 3. One-way Analysis of Variance of Job Satisfaction of College Professors by Optimism

Source	***df***	***SS***	***MS***	***F***	***P***
Between groups	2	1510.783	755.392	1.387	0.256
Within groups	71	38658.095	544.480		
total	73	40168.878			

A one-way, between-subject's ANOVA was conducted to compare the overall job satisfaction among highly optimistic, moderately optimistic, and pessimistic college professors. Table 3 shows that there was no statistically significant difference between high optimism, moderate optimism, and low optimism on job satisfaction, F (2,71) = 1.39, p = 0.26, η_2 = 0.04. Tukey's post hoc test was performed as supporting data to ensure if all groups did not really differ to each

other, where it revealed that there was no significant difference on the job satisfaction between optimistic (M = 152 SD = 26.80) and moderately optimistic (M = 150.57, SD = 23.38), optimistic and pessimistic (M = 140.91, SD = 21.29), and moderately optimistic and pessimistic college professors. These results suggest that satisfaction in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic is equal among the three groups. Hence, regardless of the degree of optimism they possess, job satisfaction is present.

Table 4. Shapiro-Wilk Test for Bivariate Normality

	Shapiro-Wilk	**p**
Optimism - Job Satisfaction	0.990	0.842

Assumptions for Pearson r correlation were checked. The scale measurement was used to quantify the two variables. In table 4, Shapiro-Wilk Test for Bivariate Normality shows that the data was normally distributed (p = 0.84). A linear relationship was also found using a scatter plot, as seen in Figure 3 below.

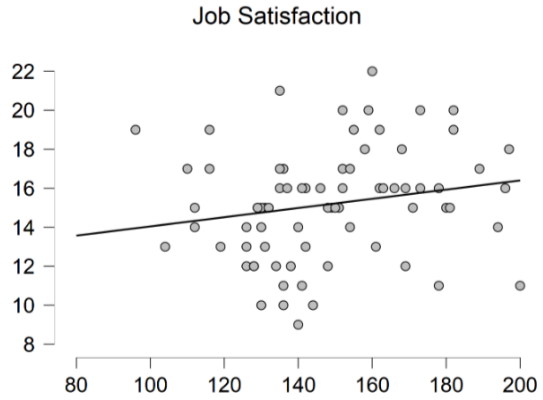

Figure 3. Scatter plot showing a linear relationship between job satisfaction and optimism.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship between trait optimism (M = 15.18, SD = 2.86) and job satisfaction (M = 148.04, SD = 23.46) among college professors. Results denote a non-significant weak correlation between the two variables (r = 0.19, n = 74, p = 0.10). Overall, there was no significant positive relationship between optimism and job satisfaction at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, having a high level of optimism does not increase nor decrease the level of job satisfaction.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2
1. Optimism	15.176	2.864	-	
2. Job Satisfaction	148.041	23.458	0.193	-

N = 74

Discussion

This particular study aimed to provide additional knowledge in both fields of education and psychology, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic was taken into account in this investigation. The researchers analyzed the possible significant difference between high optimism, moderate optimism, and low optimism (pessimism) in terms of job satisfaction among college instructors and professors in the Philippines. One-way Analysis of Variance was conducted, where it was found that there is no significant difference in the overall job satisfaction of the said three groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis must be accepted. The researchers conclude that satisfaction at work is present during this current phenomenon, and it generally exists in college professors with varying degrees of optimism, whether optimistic, moderately optimistic, or pessimistic.

Analyzing other available studies of somewhat the same interest, the results of this analysis appeared unique. Given the findings from this study, the researchers considered some factors that led to the outcomes of this investigation. As always being reiterated, the COVID-19 pandemic was taken into account, particularly in the overall job satisfaction among the participants. This construct was measured highlighting the new working conditions in the educational sector, where the shift from traditional learning to online education was evident. The relatively equal job satisfaction that emerged from the study can be possibly explained by the idea that the pandemic had a considerable impact on jobs and working conditions among college instructors and professors, where all of them faced similar adjustments to cope up with the newly implemented protocols. Furthermore, by simply observing the job satisfaction scores among the three groups, if it is to be interpreted using the job satisfaction survey, only two participants were dissatisfied and many were satisfied. From this, it can be inferred that the similarity of having job satisfaction was confirmed through ANOVA.

Nonetheless, although the statistical analysis arrived at a non-significant result, it is still recommended to the participants, including their organizations and the fields of education and industrial and organizational psychology to highlight the essence of having trait optimism among themselves or their employees. Despite the similarities between the three groups in job satisfaction, trait optimism is still most preferred compared with moderate optimism and pessimism, especially that its role and influence on desirable outcomes (e.g., job performance and job satisfaction) were proven by Mishra et al. (2016). Even though there is an equal job satisfaction, optimism could still be a point of consideration than the two other groups (i.e., moderately optimistic and pessimistic employees) since the previously mentioned author had also indicated that this trait could be a basis for selecting employees, as it can lead to employee retention, which will benefit the organization/s.

On the other hand, the researchers also took advantage to acquire further findings in this particular investigation by performing a Pearson r correlation between optimism and job satisfaction. The results showed that there was no significant positive correlation between the above-mentioned variables. This finding suggests that an increased degree of optimism among employees does not significantly relate to increases or decreases in the overall job satisfaction among educators amidst the current situation. Thus, the null hypothesis must also be accepted.

As previously stated, the relationship found was non-significant, which is also unique from other available scholarly articles. The researchers, once again, took into consideration a few factors to explain the result. As already mentioned, among these factors is the fact that this research focused on job satisfaction based upon the new normal in the educational field. Thus, the occurrence of having no correlation might have happened because of the specific context used in job satisfaction, which is the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, in the study of Desai and Thakur (2017), regarding the same variables, although correlated, they indicated how job satisfaction exists even without considering the optimism scores. From this notion, it can be inferred that even without trait optimism, the employee will still be satisfied in their workplace. This view may unite with the result of the present study pointing out that the increase or decrease in job satisfaction has nothing to do with nor is associated with optimism. Examining the job satisfaction scores, satisfaction in the workplace were found even before the correlation analysis. It was also discovered by Rauf (2010), that there was a non-significant negative correlation between job satisfaction and optimism, which entails that there was no statistically significant relationship between the two constructs. This result corresponds to the outcomes of this study that shows no relationship between job satisfaction and optimism. It was also indicated by the aforementioned researcher that predictors of job satisfaction will not only occur with optimism.

In this analysis, the presence of optimism was not essential, but both ANOVA and correlation proved the existence of job satisfaction among college educators.

Conclusion

The researchers suggest that investigations concerning the variables should be further conducted, particularly giving attention to job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is recognized by the researchers that this present study has its limitations, although the results are non-significant, performing further investigations could help in widening the existing body of knowledge in the field of industrial and organizational psychology. It should be acknowledged that the findings of this study is mainly focused on the context of job satisfaction in the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, results from this investigation may not apply to job satisfaction in the absence of a pandemic. Due to the current condition, the researchers only had access to readily available respondents, hence they were unable to compare private and public professors, as well as their demographics, which other researchers may examine. Future researchers may also extend this study to other fields as the results cannot be generalized to other professions since it is limited to the educational sector, primarily at the tertiary level.

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