JOB SATISFACTION PREDICTORS AMONG POLICE OFFICERS: SITUATIONAL VS. DISPOSITIONAL APPROACH

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Abstract: The study is focused on the issue of job satisfaction predictors' identification in the specific working environment of police forces. The target group comprises of state police officers in active service (N=255; M=29.89; 20-52 years). We used the Job Satisfaction Scale questionnaire to measure the levels of job satisfaction and the Job Diagnostic Survey to measure the characteristics of the job, while NEO-FFI and Core Self-Evaluation Scale were used to measure the respective personality variables. The regression analysis results suggest that the feedback from agents variable plays a significant role in forming the police officers' job satisfaction, explaining more than 55% of its variance. Our findings indicate a close relationship between the job characteristics and police officers' job satisfaction.

Keywords: job satisfaction, predictors, job characteristics, personality, Core Self-Evaluations, police, police officers.

1 Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the most frequently researched phenomena in the work and organizational psychology. However, the research efforts have been merely aimed at supporting the activities in the sphere of business organizations (Judge, Heller, Mount, 2002), rather than on workplaces in the government sector, such as police or armed forces. The reason lies in the quasi-militaristic nature typical for most of the police forces in the past (most of the policemen are trained to do what they are told and not ask questions if they want to survive), as well as in low interest of police executives and superior workers in this issue (Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009). The attention of superiors has been devoted mostly to the tangible outcomes of police officers' work, resulting to considerable overlooking of the intrinsic aspects of police officers' lives and the police work. Only the gradual introduction of psychological approaches into the police forces and law enforcement agencies practice lead to discovering the importance of paying attention to job satisfaction also in the very specific environment of police forces. In case of police officers' profession it is often overlooked that, similarly to any working individuals, also police officers actively form their attitudes towards their professional roles, duties and tasks, evaluate and consider them, and form certain relational positions to them and their context (Kovařík, 2012). Police officer's relationship with his/her job and his/her coping with the existing situation within this job forms an important mental state, referred to as the job satisfaction.

In former academic literature, the police officers' job satisfaction has been investigated either as an independent or as a dependent variable. In the first case, the job satisfaction has been evaluated as a factor determining the organizational level outcomes, such as work-related stress and burnout syndrome (Morash et al., 2008; Martinussen, Richardsen, Burke, 2007; McCarty, Zhao, Garland, 2007), productivity, effectiveness and engagement of workers (Chang, Lee, 2006), or negative forms of behaviour – violent behaviour, alcoholism, absenteeism, fluctuation (Lindsay, Shelley, 2009). In the latter case the former studies have been aimed mainly at identification of predictors from among demographic and organizational variables (Buker, Dolu, 2010; Brough, Frame, 2004) while in fewer cases the attention has been devoted also to personality variables (Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009; Thomas, Buboltz, Winkelspecht, 2004).

Academic literature aimed at studying the job satisfaction predictors offers two main approaches. The situational approach emphasizes that the job satisfaction is conditioned by the nature of the job itself and by the workplace environment (Judge, Locke, Durham, 1997). The situational approach theories place importance mainly at job design, which can be used to create working conditions more suitable or satisfactory for employees. Through the character of the work the employees gain awareness about importance and usefulness of performing their profession and related activities, as well as the necessary organizational background. Jobs that contain intrinsic motivational characteristics will lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, together with further positive work-related results, such as higher job performance or lower employee fluctuation (Judge, Klinger, 2007). Hackman a Oldham (1974) have created the Job Characteristics Model comprising the characteristics that lead to various mental states. Combination of three characteristics (in particular, skill variety, task identity, task significance) indicate experiencing the job significance. Further, autonomy leads to feelings of responsibility, while feedback on one's work contributes to knowing the results of the performed tasks. Several research studies (Sultan, 2012; Ercikti et al., 2011; Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009) confirmed that the nature of the job itself, as one of the job satisfaction aspects, indicated the strongest relationship with the overall job satisfaction. Therefore, if we want to understand the main job satisfaction drivers, the job characteristics should be the first object of our focus.

Personality variables are fundaments of the so-called theories based on dispositional approach to studying the job satisfaction. These theories suppose that roots of job satisfaction lie in disposition or personality structure of the working individual (Judge, Klinger, 2007; Judge et al., 2001). Unlike in the sphere of business (Rošková, Poláková, 2012; Zhai et al., 2011; Judge, Heller, Mount, 2002), the disciplines focused on work-related issues and activities of police officers currently offer relatively few published studies attempting to identify and explain the share of personality on forming the overall job satisfaction level (Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009). Due to heterogeneity of former studies on dispositional sources of job satisfaction, various research designs, methodological approaches, measurement strategies or types of statistical analyses have been applied. In the recent years, however, more and more studies have been employing the three theoretical approaches: positive / negative affectivity, five-factor personality model and Core Self-Evaluation (Judge, Heller, Klinger, 2008). Our decision to include the last two mentioned approaches to our investigation was motivated, on one hand, by their significance resulting from the theoretical background, and also, on the other hand, by the lack of empirical evidence supporting this relationship in the specific environment of police forces. The findings of a meta-analysis reviewing 163 independent studies (Judge, Heller, Mount, 2002) identified that four out of five characteristics – neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness - are related to job satisfaction, while the strongest relationship was indicated in case of neuroticism. In general, the academic literature does not provide unambiguous findings. Despite the significant correlations the identified predictive power does not reach similar levels, compared to e.g. job characteristics, as they explain only around 10% of job satisfaction variance (Ercikti et al., 2011; Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009).

The aim of the presented research study is to identify the share of situational and dispositional variables on explaining the police officers' job satisfaction, and to contribute to explanation of importance of the respective approached for investigating the job satisfaction in the specific working environment of the police forces.

2 Materials and methods

2.1 Sample

Based on the aim of our examination, two main criteria were set for including the participants in our sample, particularly (1) active service in the police forces and (2) affiliation to the state police.

Total of 255 police officers participated in our study, out of that 213 men and 41 women (1 participant did not indicate gender), with an average age of 29.89 years (the youngest being 20 years old and the oldest being 52 years old) with an average length of service of 7.28 years (minimum 0.5 year, maximum 32 years). As for the marital status, 142 police officers in our sample were single, 98 were married, 8 were divorced, while 7 participants did not provide information about their marital status. As for the position, 228 police officers had executive positions, 24 officers had managing positions, while 3 participants provided no indication.

2.2 Methods

The job satisfaction was analysed using the Job Satisfaction Scale (Dantzker, 1993), a foreign questionnaire method that has been adapted for the environment of the Slovak police forces (Karasová, 2013a). This questionnaire was selected due to its specific focus on the police working environment. The adapted version comprises of 25 items. While testing the factorial structure, the author (Karasová, 2013a; Karasová et al., 2013b) identified three factors: social and material security, support from superior officers and job meaningfulness. The questionnaire as a whole as well as its three factors achieved satisfactory levels of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Entire questionnaire: 0.90, respectively the 1st factor: 0.86, the 2nd factor: 0.78 and the 3rd factor: 0.66.

Job characteristics were examined employing the Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman, Oldham, 1974) foreign questionnaire method, using the Job Rating Form, which is its separate part. This particular part was selected because of its ability to identify the job provisions in a way that enables elimination of shortcomings perceived by employees and influencing their satisfaction with the performed job. The questionnaire contains 21 items divided into two sections, in which it recognizes seven dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback from the job itself, feedback from agents, dealing with others. Participants indicated their level of agreement with different items characterising their job on a 7-point Likert-type scale.

The description of personality traits was based on a Slovak language version of the NEO-FFI (Ruisel, Halama, 2007), which has been constructed on a five-factor personality structure model. The inventory comprises of 60 items organized into five sub-scales: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The participants indicated their level of agreement with different statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

The Core Self-Evaluations concept, as a part of personality disposition, was analysed using the Core Self-Evaluations Scale (Judge et al., 2003), a foreign research instrument. The scale had been adapted for its usage in the environment of Slovak police forces in a series of several studies (Selecká, Holienková, 2016; Selecká, Holienková, 2015; Holienková, Selecká, 2014; Karasová, Očenášová, 2014). The Core Self Evaluations Scale represents a 12-item scale that is understood as one-dimensional variable. The internal consistency analysis of the questionnaire provided satisfactory values of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.80).

2.3 Statistical analysis

Considering the sample size and type of the variables used, the Pearsons correlation coefficient was employed to identify the relationships between the investigated variables, and the multiple linear regression to assess the influence of different independent variables on job satisfaction. Also, we used the estimate of internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficient to test the psychometric characteristics of the questionnaires employed. Finally, to identify the factors we used the factor analysis with Varimax rotation method.

3 Results

The data obtained through questionnaires were applied into the SPSS 17.0 statistical package where the multiple regression analysis and other statistical tests were executed. Before the testing itself, we carefully explored the data to make sure they follow all important requirements for entering the variables into regression analysis (Rimarčík, 2007).

In the first step of our analysis we focused on identifying which variables are significantly related with job satisfaction. An ENTER method was used to analyse this assumption. The results of regression analysis (Tab. 1) indicate that the independent variables included in our analysis explain 60.2% of job satisfaction variance.

Tab. 1 Regression results using the ENTER method

VARIABLE	B	Beta	Sig.	R^2	Sig.
skill variety	-0.461	-0.145	0.027		
task identity	-0.187	-0.055	0.308		
task significance	0.201	0.063	0.979		
autonomy	0.306	0.103	0.075		
feedback from work	0.447	0.131	0.037		
feedback from agents	4.012	0.706	0.000		
dealing with others	-0.162	-0.045	0.442	60.2	0.000
neuroticism	-0.151	-0.053	0.459		
extraversion	-0.105	-0.031	0.604		
openness to experience	-0.051	0.019	0.721		
agreeableness	-0.045	-0.012	0.838		
conscientiousness	-0.269	-0.073	0.237		
CSE	0.141	0.070	0.339		

Dependent variable: job satisfaction

The closer look at our results unveils that only three variables that achieved the level of statistical significance (lower than 0.05) are relevant for explaining the job satisfaction: skill variety, feedback from work and feedback from agents. Further look at the beta coefficients indicate that the "feedback from agents" variable shows the strongest influence on the job satisfaction level (0.706) - i.e. the higher is the degree to which a police officer receives information from his/her superiors and colleagues about effectiveness of his/her job performance, the higher is the job satisfaction level. The second relatively strongest effect was identified for the "skill variety" variable (-0.145) - the lower is the extent to which various skills are required from the police officer at the workplace, the higher is his/her job satisfaction. Finally, the third strongest influence was observed for the "feedback from work" variable (0.131) - the greater is the extent of feedback information about effectiveness of police officer's work results, the higher is his/her job satisfaction level.

The regression analysis provided an interesting finding related to personality variables, which have been found to play no significant role in police officers' job satisfaction (their significance is higher that 0.05 and the standardized beta coefficients achieve low values). The results of regression analysis therefore suggest that the overall job satisfaction score is affected mainly by the job characteristics of feedback from agents, skill variety and feedback from work. Personality variables are not significant in explaining the job satisfaction.
In the second step of the analysis our goal was to find out which variables are the most significant contributors to the overall level of police officers' job satisfaction, i.e. to identify the best regression model. The "skill variety" variable was eliminated from the analysis, so we included only two variables, namely "feedback from agents" and "feedback from work".

Tab. 2 Regression results using the STEPWISE method

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Change Statistics	
				R^2 Change	Sig. F Change
1	0.747	0.559	0.556	0.559	0.000
2	0.758	0.574	0.569	0.015	0.010

a. Predictors: (Constant), feedback from agents
b. Predictors: (Constant), feedback from agents_feedback from work
c. Dependent Variable: job satisfaction

The "feedback from agents" variable was the first to enter the regression as it exhibited the highest value of beta coefficients in the first step of the analysis, and it also explains the highest share of variance of the job satisfaction (55.6%). The "feedback from work" variable was added in the second step of the regression, which resulted to an increase of R^2 by 1.3% to the total of 56.9%, a statistically significant increase (p=0.010). Thus, the results suggest that "feedback from agents" and "feedback from work" are two best variables for predicting the job satisfaction. It is especially interesting that a single variable (feedback from agents) explains more than a half of police officers' job satisfaction.

4 Discussion

Our research paper is focused on identification of job satisfaction predictors in a specific working environment of police forces. Several foreign research studies indicate that formation of police officers' job satisfaction is significantly affected especially by characteristics of job and working environment (Brady, King, 2018; Abdulla, Djebarni, Mellahi, 2011; Ercikti et al., 2011; Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009; Thomas, Buboltz, Winkelspecht, 2004). Our findings support the importance of the situational approach to job satisfaction investigation.

The results of our regression analysis suggest that the overall level of police officers' job satisfaction is dependent merely from characteristics of job and working environment than from police officer's personality. The findings further suggest that feedback from agents (the extent of feedback information on effectiveness and work results received from superiors and colleagues) can be considered as the most important variable, as it explains the highest percentage of variance of police officers' job satisfaction. Feedback on job performance effectiveness is very important for each worker, which is especially true in the police profession, which is extremely demanding and has an important mission in the society. In case of this profession, feedback from agents seems to be considerably more relevant with this respect (compared to feedback from work). The personality of superior officer, due to greater experience and expertise, seems to be particularly important in the context of police profession. The superior officer can provide his/her subordinates with valuable information and advices for better and quality execution of police profession, especially by providing support in the form of help, encouragement, consultations, feedback, goal setting or problem solving. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that police force is an organization where respecting orders and instructions from superior officers according to the hierarchy is an absolute necessity. Thus, from the job satisfaction perspective, it is important that the police officers' readiness and willingness to respect orders is based not only on the position of the superior officer in the hierarchical structure, but also on his/her personal qualities, abilities and willingness to solve problems and provide help and advice to his/her subordinates. Furthermore, feedback information from colleagues were also found as equally important for the police officers' job satisfaction. For a policeman, his/her peer colleagues represent a close group of people in direct and tight contact with execution of his/her work activities, who can therefore directly react to his/her actual needs and provide information important for executing his/her service. Also, in case of unavailability of the superior officer, colleagues might provide substitute and give suggestions, advices or information that can contribute to higher quality of police officer's service.

The character of the police profession often requires working in teams and cooperation between colleagues, including relying on their abilities and results of their work. Therefore, adequate and quality feedback from colleagues is important not only for sharing information required for executing the work-related activities, but also for developing willingness to cooperate and especially a mutual trust among colleagues.

Finally, our results provide an interesting finding that police officer's personality as a predictor of forming his/her job satisfaction is insignificant. Even though some empirical research findings (Khizar, Orcullo, Mustafa, 2016; Ercikti et al., 2011; Zhai et al., 2011; Miller, Mire, Kim, 2009) indicate the impact of personality traits on job satisfaction variance, in the context of Slovak police forces this variable seems not to be significant. Police officers of Slovak police forces represent, with certain aspects, a homogeneous group of individuals who are not considerably different in their personality characteristics. This finding can be explained by the fact that police profession requires particular personality preconditions from among character and temperamental dispositions (Bilský, 2005) that are necessary for adequate execution of the police work. These are examined during the admission psychological testing. If applicants do not meet the criteria related to characteristics required for police profession, they are not accepted to the police force. This fact will be further analysed in our future research.

5 Conclusions

The regression analysis unveiled that police officers' job satisfaction is significantly influenced especially by the feedback from agents, i.e. an extent of feedback information about effectiveness and work results obtained from superiors and colleagues, which explains more than 55% of job satisfaction variance. Interestingly, personality characteristics were found to be insignificant in predicting police officers' job satisfaction.
Our findings therefore indicate a close relationship between job characteristics and police officers' job satisfaction. Thus, in order to improve job satisfaction, police management should be focused rather on job design efforts than on further developing the staff selection procedures.

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