

Research on Job Satisfaction of Grass-roots Administrators in Colleges and Universities--Based on a Questionnaire Survey in Ten Universities in Beijing

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Abstract: Based on a questionnaire survey in 10 universities in Beijing, this paper investigates the job satisfaction of grass-roots administrators in colleges and universities from seven dimensions: work itself, salary and welfare, work relationship, work stress, working conditions, job status and organizational atmosphere. The findings of the survey are discussed and recommendations are proposed.

1. Introduction

Grass-roots administrative work is an important part and plays a very important role in the working order in the management of colleges and universities. However, colleges and universities have focused much more attention on scientific research and full-time teachers than the administrative staff, and the phenomenon that the administrative staff in colleges and universities is given more work and gets less training is prominent. The academic research on job satisfaction of college staff is mostly focused on “teaching staff”, there are few studies on administrative staff, and there is very little research on grass-roots administrative staff. There are differences in the nature and content of work between teaching staff and administrative staff in colleges and universities. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the job satisfaction of grass-roots administrative staff in colleges and universities in Beijing, with a view to supplement the personnel structure and geography of job satisfaction research on university staff.

2. Literature Review

It can be found through literature search that domestic researches on job satisfaction of college staff were mostly focused on the specific role of “teacher”, but had different views on the structure and influencing factors of job satisfaction (Peng Yun ^[1], Xin-cheng Zhu, Yi-zhou Zhuo, ^[2], Bo-lin Feng ^[3], Li-guo Fan, Fan-di Zhang ^[4]). The researches on job satisfaction of university administrators focused on different work levels, multi-dimension or specific job categories. Yi-hu Cui studied the job satisfaction of mid-level managers from seven aspects: work itself, management system, salary, training, interpersonal relationship, welfare and promotion, and found that their satisfaction on work itself, interpersonal relationship, promotion and the duty mid-level managers’ satisfaction on salary is significantly lower than those of other ranks ^[5]. Xu-li Li studied the job satisfaction of grass-roots administrative staff in Jinan University from seven dimensions: institutional factors, leadership factors, interpersonal relationships, work environment, income and welfare, self-efficacy, and work stress, and found that all dimensions and overall job satisfaction were significantly positively correlated ^[6]. Wei-fen Chen studied the job satisfaction of administrative staff of different ranks in colleges and universities in Ningbo district, and found that managers were satisfied with the working relationship, working conditions, work itself, organizational atmosphere, work pressure and dissatisfied with salary, welfare and job status ^[7]. Chu-yu Huang studied the job satisfaction of the administrators whose main task is postgraduate management ^[8].

3. Samples of the survey

The questionnaire survey of job satisfaction mainly adopts the questions designed by Wei-fen Chen in her research paper^[7] and investigates the job satisfaction of grass-roots administrators in colleges and universities from seven dimensions, which are work itself, salary and welfare, work relationship, work stress, working conditions, job status and organizational atmosphere. The items in the questionnaire adopt the Likert five-level scale, which is divided into very agreeable, more agreeable, uncertain, less agreeable and very disapproving. The questionnaire was published online and the subjects were mainly from 10 universities in Beijing. The universities are "985 Project", "211 Project" and ordinary undergraduate universities. A total of 205 valid questionnaires were collected, including 6 directors, 16 deputy directors and 183 grass-roots administrators. The samples from the 183 grass-roots administrators are the focus of the analysis in this paper.

Table 1: Basic information of samples

Gender	Male		Female	
	31.69%		68.31%	
Age	Under 30	31—40	41--50	Over 50
	22.41%	55.73%	13.66%	8.20%
Academic degree	others	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	PhD
	2.19%	10.93%	72.13%	14.75%
Years of administrative work	0-5	6-10	11-15	more than 16
	34.43%	38.25%	12.02%	15.30%

4. Main findings of the survey

This study used SPSS19.0 to analyze the data.

4.1 Overall evaluation of job satisfaction

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

dimensions	samples	minimum	maximum	mean	standard deviation
work itself	183	1	5	3.2921	0.7459
salary and welfare	183	1	4.83	2.7514	0.6966
organizational atmosphere	183	1	5	3.2842	0.7607
job status	183	1	5	2.8626	0.8132
work stress	183	1	4.8	2.7880	0.6788
work relationship	183	1	5	3.5792	0.7362
working conditions	183	1	5	3.4254	0.6812
valid N (list status)	183				

The survey results show that the overall situation of job satisfaction of grass-roots administrators in colleges and universities is not optimistic. It can be seen from Table 2 that the scores of the seven dimensions of job satisfaction from high to low are work relationship, working conditions, work itself, organizational atmosphere, job status, work pressure, salary and benefits. The average values of work itself, organizational atmosphere, work relationship, and working conditions are slightly higher than the median; it is in a general satisfaction state. The average values of salary and welfare, job status and work stress are below the average, showing that the respondents are in the status of dissatisfaction.

4.2 Correlation analysis between dimensions

It can be seen from table 3 that the correlation between salary and welfare and job status of the grass-roots administrative staff in colleges and universities is the strongest, they are highly positively correlated. The correlation between salary and benefits and work pressure is the weakest,

they are lowly positively correlated. When the significant level value is less than 0.05, the correlation between work status and work pressure reaches a statistically significant state, and the correlation between the other dimensions does not reach a significant state. It should be specially stated that work pressure is only positively correlated with the dimension of salary and welfare; it is negatively correlated with the other five dimensions. The relationship between other dimensions is positively correlated.

Table 3: Correlation matrix between 7 dimensions

	work itself	job status	work relationship	salary and welfare	working conditions	organizational atmosphere	work stress
work itself	1.000						
job status	.560*** (R ² =.314)	1.000					
work relationship	.672*** (R ² =.452)	.555*** (R ² =.308)	1.000				
salary and welfare	.487*** (R ² =.237)	.756*** (R ² =.572)	.375*** (R ² =.141)	1.000			
working conditions	.388*** (R ² =.151)	.551*** (R ² =.304)	.501*** (R ² =.251)	.569*** (R ² =.324)	1.000		
organizational atmosphere	.619*** (R ² =.383)	.742*** (R ² =.551)	.649*** (R ² =.421)	.595*** (R ² =.354)	.486*** (R ² =.236)	1.000	
work stress	-.237*** (R ² =.056)	-.150 (R ² =.023)	-.280*** (R ² =.078)	.042 (R ² =.002)	-.067 (R ² =.004)	-.133 (R ² =.018)	1.000

*<0.5 ***p<.001 in brackets is coefficient of determination

4.3 The effect of gender on job satisfaction

The results of the T test (Table 4) show that the variable of gender varies in the six factors of work itself, job status, working relationship, working conditions, organizational atmosphere and work stress, but it does not reach statistical significance. In addition, the results show that there is a significant difference in the factor of salary and welfare between male and female samples. Further observation shows that the average value of male on salary and welfare is 2.836, that of female is 2.712. The items corresponding to the factor of salary and welfare in the questionnaire are positive questions, the higher the mean value is, the higher the salary and benefits is. Therefore, it can be considered that the salary and welfare of male grassroots administrative staff colleges and universities is higher than that of female staff.

Table 4: T-test of gender on job satisfaction

dimensions	gender	samples	mean	standard deviation	t
work itself	M	58	3.516	0.703	2.814***
	F	125	3.188	0.745	
job status	M	58	2.934	0.811	.803***
	F	125	2.830	0.815	
work relationship	M	58	3.702	0.695	1.542***
	F	125	3.522	0.750	
salary and welfare	M	58	2.836	0.651	1.163*
	F	125	2.712	0.716	
working conditions	M	58	3.330	0.665	-1.293***
	F	125	3.470	0.687	
organizational atmosphere	M	58	3.362	0.765	.944***
	F	125	3.248	0.759	
work stress	M	58	2.848	0.744	.818***
	F	125	2.760	0.648	

*<0.5 ***p<.001

4.4 The effect of age on job satisfaction

Table5: Summary of variance analysis of age on job satisfaction

age	samples	work itself	job status	work relationship	salary and welfare	working conditions	organizational atmosphere	work stress
under 30	41	3.5632	3.2404	3.7282	2.9553	3.4042	3.5024	2.5463
31-40	102	3.1907	2.7465	3.5084	2.7157	3.4748	3.2373	2.8196
41-50	25	3.4509	2.8629	3.6971	2.7333	3.28	3.272	3.024
over 50	15	2.9758	2.619	3.4571	2.4667	3.3905	3.0267	2.84
F		3.887	4.316	1.230	2.140	0.581	1.856	2.933
P		0.010*	0.006*	0.300	0.097	0.628	0.139	0.035*

*<0.05

According to the results (table 5) of one-way variance test, samples of different ages have different feelings about the seven dimensions of job satisfaction. The differences between different age groups in work itself, job status, and work stress reach a significant level, and there was no significant difference in the factors of work relationship, salary and welfare, working conditions and organizational atmosphere. Specifically, samples under the age of 30 score the highest in the factor of work relationship, which is 3.7282, and samples over the age of 50 score the lowest in the factor of salary and welfare, which is 2.4667. In general, the overall average shows a high-low-high-low curve among the factors except working conditions and working pressure.

4.5 The effect of working years on job satisfaction

Table 6: Summary of variance analysis of working years on job satisfaction

Years of work	samples	work itself	job status	work relationship	salary and welfare	working conditions	organizational atmosphere	work stress
less than 5	63	3.4026	3.0567	3.6485	2.8519	3.4286	3.3270	2.6317
6-10	70	3.2182	2.7571	3.4714	2.7452	3.4122	3.3314	2.9000
11-15	22	3.3554	3.0584	3.8182	2.8485	3.6818	3.3182	2.7909
more than 16	28	3.2159	2.3393	3.3750	2.3750	3.0714	3.1750	2.6000
F		0.722	2.924	1.260	1.696	1.457	0.916	1.818
P		0.578	0.023	0.288	0.153	0.217	0.456	0.127

*<0.05

According to the test results of the variance of the working years (Table 6), the p value on the factor of work status of the samples in different working years is less than 0.05, reaching a level of significant difference, the p value on the other six factors are all more than 0.05, showing no significant difference, which indicates that the variable of working age has a limited impact on job satisfaction. Specifically, samples who have been working for 11-15 years score the highest on the factor of working relationship, and those who have been working for more than 16 years score the lowest on the factor of job status.

4.6 The effect of academic degree on job satisfaction

According to the one-way variance test results shown in Table 7, the p-values of the seven factors of job satisfaction of the grass-roots administrative staff of different academic degrees are all more than 0.05, they does not reach the level of significant difference, indicating that the academic degrees are not the primary individual variable that affects job satisfaction. Specifically, the average values on the factors of work itself and salary and benefits of the samples who got doctoral degree are higher than those who got master's degree and bachelor's degree. And the average values of the sample who got doctoral degree are lower than the latter two in terms of job status, working

relationship, working conditions, organizational climate and work stress.

Table 7: Summary of variance analysis of academic degrees on job satisfaction

academic degree	samples	work itself	job status	work relationship	salary and welfare	working conditions	organizational atmosphere	work stress
PhD	27	3.3906	2.8307	3.5503	2.7593	3.3333	3.1111	2.7481
Master's degree	132	3.2562	2.8344	3.5563	2.7374	3.4491	3.3197	2.8091
Bachelor's degree	20	3.3909	3.0429	3.7429	2.8167	3.3643	3.2400	2.7400
the other	4	3.3182	3.1071	3.7143	2.8333	3.5714	3.5000	2.6000
F		0.374	0.511	0.427	0.095	0.329	0.688	0.206
P		0.772	0.675	0.734	0.963	0.804	0.56	0.892

*<0.05

5. Discussion and recommendations

5.1 Establishing an incentive management system for administrative work in universities

The results of this study show that the average scores on the factors of salary and welfare, work stress and job status are the three lowest among the seven dimensions that constitute the job satisfaction of grass-roots administrative staff in colleges and universities, their scores are below the average, indicating that the subjects are in the state of dissatisfaction. This has to attract the attention of college administrators; otherwise it will affect the enthusiasm of the grass-roots administrative staff seriously, and thus affect the efficiency of work. To this end, the author suggests to establish an incentive system from the aspects of salary and respect.

Salary incentives are based on the correct evaluation of the effectiveness of grassroots administrative staff, use the principle of “more work and more rewards” and “excellent work and superior rewards” to encourage employees, and use the material benefits such as wages and bonuses to recognize the contributions of grassroots staff, rather than just adopting a binary system such as job title or position to develop an income distribution system.

In the current university administrative system, the grassroots administrative staff is at the bottom of the pyramid, and their appeals are often not heard and resolved, resulting in their lack of self-esteem and self-confidence brought about by work. Therefore, it is necessary to establish an incentive system of respect. Senior managers of colleges and universities should communicate with the grassroots administrative staff, listen to their voices and give them equal opportunities and the same platform in learning, promotion, school management decision-making and award evaluation. This may promote the professional identity and sense of belonging to the school from the grassroots administrative staff, thereby improving their work level and work efficiency.

5.2 Exploring a third career development path beyond the professional and administrative titles

At present, for most grass-roots administrative staff in colleges and universities, they only have two ways of career development, one is the promotion of administrative positions, the other is the promotion of professional technical titles. Due to the limited number of positions, the promotion of administrative positions is a “pyramid” structure, the room for increase is narrower and narrower, and it is affected by many external factors. The promotion of professional technical titles has the requirements for the scientific research papers, projects and so on, there is no necessary correlation with the daily administrative performance of grassroots administrative staff. Due to the busy work, the grassroots administrators can only use their spare time for academic research, they rarely produce truly valuable scientific research results, which has increased the difficulty of promotion to a certain extent. Their career development is constrained by both of the promotion of administrative positions and professional technical titles, which affects their job satisfaction.

Therefore, it is necessary to explore a third career development path, which is closely related to the daily work performance of grassroots administrative staff and takes into account their academic degrees and administrative work years. This may broaden the career development path of grassroots administrative staff, bring hope and motivation for them, and make them achieve career development positioning effectively, thus promoting their job satisfaction.

5.3 Caring for female grassroots administrative staff

The results of this study show that women scored lower than men in terms of work itself, job status, work relationship, salary and benefits, organizational climate, and work stress. The reason may be that there are more women (68.31% of the respondents in this questionnaire are women) engaged in specific and complicated daily administrative work, the day-to-day businesslike work is difficult to bring them a sense of accomplishment. Secondly, many women shoulder a large number of family affairs at the same time in addition to work, which may cause deficiency in their work, and they may have doubts about their ability to work. Thirdly, the probability of promotion for male is greater than that for female, even under the same conditions, which makes women dissatisfied with the current status of work, which in turn reduces their job satisfaction.

Therefore, college administrators should pay attention to the physical and mental adjustment of female grassroots administrative staff, affirm them in their daily life and work, and arrange appropriate positions according to their gender, age and other characteristics, and encourage them to explore effective ways to improve work satisfaction.

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