

# Chapter 3

## Attitudes and Job Satisfaction

### Chapter Overview

PPT 3.2

This chapter examines attitudes, their link to behavior, and how employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs affects the workplace.

### Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, the student should be able to:

1. Contrast the three components of an attitude.
2. Summarize the relationship between attitudes and behavior.
3. Compare the major job attitudes.
4. Identify the two approaches for measuring job satisfaction.
5. Summarize the main causes of job satisfaction.
6. Identify three outcomes of job satisfaction.
7. Identify four employee responses to dissatisfaction.

PPT 3.3

### Suggested Lecture Outline

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In this chapter, we look at attitudes, their link to behavior, and how employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs affects the workplace.

#### II. ATTITUDES

- A. Attitudes: evaluative statements—either favorable or unfavorable—concerning objects, people, or events. They reflect how one feels about something.

PPT 3.4

1. Attitudes are complex and the rationale behind them may not be obvious. To fully understand attitudes, we must explore their fundamental properties or components.

- B. What Are the Main Components of Attitudes?

PPT 3.5

1. There are three main components of attitudes (Exhibit 3-1):
  - a. **Cognitive.** The statement "My pay is low" is the cognitive component of an attitude—a description of or belief in the way things are.
  - b. **Affective.** Affect is the emotional or feeling segment of an attitude and is reflected in the statement "I am angry over how little I'm paid." Finally, affect can lead to behavioral outcomes.
  - c. **Behavior.** This describes an intention to behave in a certain way toward someone or something—to continue the example, "I'm going to look for another job that pays better."

Exhibit 3-1

- d. Viewing attitudes as having three components—cognition, affect, and behavior—is helpful in understanding their complexity. Keep in mind that these components are closely related, and cognition and affect in particular are inseparable in many ways.
  - e. Exhibit 3-1 illustrates how the three components of an attitude are related.
  - 2. In organizations, attitudes are important for their behavioral component. If workers believe, for example, that supervisors, auditors, bosses, and time-and-motion engineers are all in conspiracy to make employees work harder for the same or less money, it makes sense to try to understand how these attitudes formed, their relationship to actual job behavior, and how they might be changed.
- C. Attitudes and Behavior.
- 1. While attitudes may seem to be directly causal, Leon Festinger argued that attitudes follow behavior. People change what they say, so it does not contradict what they do. PPT 3.6
    - a. Cognitive Dissonance. Situations where attitudes follow behavior illustrate the effects of cognitive dissonance. The theory is that dissonance between what people say and what they do makes people uncomfortable and that they will take whatever actions they can to reduce that discomfort, such as changing their attitudes or behaviors.
      - 1) **Cognitive Dissonance:** refers to any incompatibility that an individual might perceive between two or more attitudes, or between behavior and attitudes.
      - 2) The desire to reduce dissonance depends on three moderating factors:
        - a) including the importance of the elements creating it and
        - b) the degree of influence we believe we have over them.
        - c) A third factor is the rewards of dissonance; high rewards accompanying high dissonance tend to reduce the tension inherent in the dissonance.
  - 2. Moderating Variables. The most powerful moderators of the attitude-behavior relationship are: PPT 3.7
    - a. Importance of the attitude: Important attitudes reflect fundamental values, self-interest, or identification. The greater the importance, the stronger the link between attitude and behavior becomes.
    - b. Correspondence to behavior: The more closely the attitude and the behavior are matched, the stronger the link between them.
    - c. Accessibility: The easier an attitude is to recall, the stronger the link. The more frequently an attitude is expressed, the more accessible it is and therefore the stronger its link becomes to behavior.
    - d. Social Pressures: Exceptional social pressures can override personal attitudes and may have a stronger relation to behavior than do the attitudes. This subservience of personal attitude to social pressure is often found in organizations.
    - e. Direct Experience: Predictions of behavior tend to be more accurate when the person whose behavior is being predicted has some experience regarding the situation.
- D. Job Attitudes.

1. There are three important attitudes toward work that organizational behavior (OB) has traditionally studied: job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment. There are two other work-related attitudes that are attracting attention: perceived organizational support and employee engagement.
2. Job Satisfaction and Job Involvement.
  - a. **Job Satisfaction:** A positive feeling about one's job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics.
  - b. **Job Involvement:** The degree to which people identify psychologically with their jobs and consider their perceived performance level important to self-worth.
  - c. **Psychological Empowerment:** Employees' beliefs in the degree to which they influence their work environment, their competence, the meaningfulness of their job, and the perceived autonomy in their work.
3. Organizational Commitment.
  - a. **Organizational Commitment:** A state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals and wishes to maintain membership in the organization.
    - 1) Employees who are committed are less likely to engage in work withdrawal even if they are dissatisfied because they feel a sense of loyalty or attachment to the organization.
4. Perceived Organizational Support.
  - a. **Perceived Organizational Support (POS):** The degree to which employees believe the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being.
    - 1) Organizations are considered supportive when they:
      - a) Fairly provide rewards,
      - b) Give employees a voice in decision making, and
      - c) Provide supervisors who are seen as being supportive.
  - b. POS is a predictor of employment outcomes, but there are some cultural influences.
    - 1) POS is important in countries where the power distance—the degree to which people in a country accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally—is lower.
    - 2) In low power-distance countries like the United States, people are more likely to view work as an exchange than as a moral obligation, so employees look for reasons to feel supported by their organizations.
    - 3) In high power-distance countries like China, employee POS perceptions are not as deeply based on employer demonstrations of fairness, support, and encouragement.
    - 4) The difference is in the level of expectation by employees.
  - c. Employee Engagement.
    - 1) **Employee Engagement:** An individual's involvement with, satisfaction with, and enthusiasm for, the work he or she does.
    - 2) Conditions that can increase engagement include:
      - a) Opportunities to learn new skills,
      - b) Important and meaningful work, and
      - c) Positive interactions with coworker and supervisors.

- 2) Highly engaged employees have a passion for their work and feel a deep connection to their company; disengaged employees have essentially checked out—putting time but not energy or attention into their work.
- 3) Promising research findings have earned employee engagement a following in many business organizations and management consulting firms. However, the concept generates active debate about its usefulness, partly because of the difficulty of identifying what creates engagement.
  - a) The two top reasons for engagement that participants gave in a recent study were: (1) having a good manager they enjoy working for and (2) feeling appreciated by their supervisor.
  - b) Another reviewer called engagement “an umbrella term for whatever one wants it to be.”

### III. MEASURING JOB SATISFACTION

A. As mentioned earlier, this attitude is one of the oldest and most critical attitudes examined in OB studies.

B. Measuring Job Satisfaction.

1. Our definition of job satisfaction—a positive feeling about a job resulting from an evaluation of its characteristics—is clearly broad. Jobs require interacting with coworker and bosses, following organizational rules and policies, meeting performance standards, living with less than ideal working conditions, and the like. An employee’s assessment of his satisfaction with the job is thus a complex summation of many discrete elements.

PPT 3.9

C. Approaches to Measurement.

1. There are two widely used approaches to measuring this attitude:
  - a. Single Global Rating Method. This method uses responses to a single question about the job to determine job satisfaction.
  - b. Summation Score Method. This method identifies key elements in the job and asks for the employee’s feelings about each element. Respondents’ answer on a standardized scale and their responses are tallied to create an overall job satisfaction score.
2. Is one of these approaches superior? Intuitively, summing up responses to a number of job factors seems likely to achieve a more accurate evaluation of job satisfaction.
  - a. Research, however, doesn’t support the intuition. This is one of those rare instances in which simplicity seems to work as well as complexity, making one method essentially as valid as the other.
  - b. Both methods are helpful.
  - c. The single global rating method isn’t very time consuming, thus freeing time for other tasks, and the summation of job facets helps managers zero in on problems and deal with them faster and more accurately.

D. Measured Job Satisfaction Levels.

1. Research shows satisfaction levels vary a lot, depending on which facet of job satisfaction you’re talking about.
2. As shown in Exhibit 3-2, people are, on average, satisfied with their jobs overall, with the work itself, and with their supervisors and coworker.

PPT 3.10

Exhibit 3-2

3. However, they tend to be less satisfied with their pay and with promotion opportunities.
  4. It's not really clear why people dislike their pay and promotion possibilities more than other aspects of their jobs.
  5. While the concept appears relevant across cultures, there are still cultural differences in job satisfaction.
  6. Exhibit 3-3 provides the results of a global study of job satisfaction levels of workers in 15 countries, with the highest levels in Mexico and Switzerland.
- E. What Causes Job Satisfaction?
1. Job Conditions.
    - a. Interesting jobs that provide training, variety, independence, and control satisfy most employees.
    - i. A strong relation exists between how well people enjoy the social context of their workplace and how satisfied they are overall. Interdependence, feedback, social support, and interaction with coworker outside the workplace are strongly related to job satisfaction even after accounting for characteristics of the work itself.
  2. Personality.
    - a. Job satisfaction is not just about job conditions. Personality also plays a role. Research has shown that people who have positive core self-evaluations—who believe in their inner worth and basic competence—are more satisfied with their jobs than those with negative **core self-evaluations**.
  3. Pay.
    - a. Pay, once above a given level, does not increase satisfaction. While money may be a motivator, it does not necessarily make people happy—at least once they have enough to live comfortably.
  4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
    - a. An organization's commitment to **corporate social responsibility (CSR)**, or its self-regulated actions to benefit society or the environment beyond what is required by law, increasingly affects employee job satisfaction.
    - b. Organizations practice CSR through environmental sustainability initiatives, nonprofit work, charitable giving, and other globally attuned philanthropy.
    - c. CSR is good for the planet and good for people. Employees whose personal values fit with the organization's CSR mission are often more satisfied.
    - d. Organizations need to address a few issues:
      - i. First, not all projects are equally meaningful for every person's job satisfaction, yet participation for all employees is sometimes expected.
      - ii. Second, some organizations require employees to contribute in a prescribed manner.
      - iii. Last, CSR measures can seem disconnected from the employee's actual work, providing no increase to job satisfaction.
- IV. Outcomes of Job Satisfaction.
- A. Job Performance.
    1. Satisfaction and productivity research data for the organization as a whole, shows that more satisfied employees tend to be more effective than organizations with fewer satisfied employees.
  - B. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs).

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Exhibit 3-3

PPT 3.12

1. It seems logical to assume job satisfaction should be a major determinant of an employee's organizational citizenship behavior (OCB).
    - a. Satisfied employees would seem more likely to talk positively about the organization, help others and go beyond the normal expectations in their job.
    - b. They might go beyond the call of duty because they want to reciprocate their positive experiences.
  2. Consistent with this thinking, evidence suggests job satisfaction is moderately correlated with OCBs; people who are more satisfied with their jobs are more likely to engage in OCBs.
- C. Customer Satisfaction.
1. Satisfied employees increase customer retention and loyalty because satisfied employees tend to be upbeat and helpful.
- D. Life Satisfaction.
1. Until now, we've treated job satisfaction as if it was separate from life satisfaction, but they may be more related than you think.
    - a. Research in Europe indicates that job satisfaction is positively correlated with life satisfaction, and our attitudes and experiences in life spill over into our job approaches and experiences.
    - b. Furthermore, life satisfaction decreases when people become unemployed, according to research in Germany, and not just because of the loss of income.
    - c. For most individuals, work is an important part of life, and therefore, it makes sense that our overall happiness depends in no small part on our happiness in our work (our job satisfaction).
- E. The Impact of Job Dissatisfaction.
1. There are consequences both when employees like their jobs and when they dislike them.
  2. The Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect Framework. This model is helpful in understanding the consequences of dissatisfaction. The framework has four responses that differ from one another along two dimensions: constructive/destructive and active/passive.

PPT 3.13

    - a. **Exit.** This response involves directing behavior toward leaving the organization. It includes both looking for a new job, as well as resigning.
    - b. **Voice.** This response involves actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions. Includes making suggestions and union activities.
    - c. **Loyalty.** This response involves passively, but optimistically, waiting for conditions to improve. It involves trusting the organization and its management to "do the right thing."
    - d. **Neglect.** This response involves passively allowing conditions to worsen. Includes chronic absenteeism, reduced effort, and increased error rate.
  3. This model includes both typical performance variables and constructive behaviors that allow individuals to tolerate unpleasant situations.
- F. Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB).
1. Substance abuse, stealing at work, undue socializing, gossiping, absenteeism, and tardiness are examples of behaviors that are destructive to organizations. They are indicators of a broader syndrome called **counterproductive work behavior (CWB)**; related terms are
- PPT 3.14

deviant behavior in the workplace, or simply withdrawal behavior; see Chapter 1).

2. If we can identify the predictors of CWB, we may lessen the probability of its effects. Generally, job dissatisfaction predicts CWB. People who are not satisfied with their work become frustrated, which lowers their performance and makes them more likely to commit CWB.
3. One important point about CWB is that dissatisfied employees often choose one or more specific behaviors due to idiosyncratic factors.
  - a. One worker might quit. Another might use work time to surf the Internet or take work supplies home for personal use.
  - b. In short, workers who don't like their jobs "get even" in various ways.
4. As a manager, you can take steps to mitigate CWB.
  - a. You can poll employee attitudes, for instance, and identify areas for workplace improvement.
  - b. If there is no vocational fit, the employee will not be fulfilled, so you can try to screen for that to avoid a mismatch.
  - c. Tailoring tasks to a person's abilities and values should increase job satisfaction and reduce CWB.
  - d. Furthermore, creating strong teams, integrating supervisors with them, providing formalized team policies, and introducing team-based incentives may help lower the CWB "contagion" that lowers the standards of the group
5. Absenteeism: There is a weak-to-moderate negative relationship between job satisfaction and absenteeism. Generally, when numerous alternative jobs are available, dissatisfied employees have high absence rates, but when there are few alternatives, dissatisfied employees have the same (low) rate of absence as satisfied employees.
6. Turnover: The relationship between job satisfaction and turnover is stronger than between satisfaction and absenteeism.
  - a. Employees' **job embeddedness**—connections to the job and community that result in an increased commitment to the organization—can be closely linked to their job satisfaction and the probability of turnover such that where job embeddedness is high, the probability of turnover decreases, particularly in collectivist (group-centered; see Chapter 4) cultures where membership in an organization is of high personal value.
  - b. The satisfaction–turnover relationship also is affected by alternative job prospects.
    - i. If an employee is presented with an unsolicited job offer, job dissatisfaction is less predictive of turnover because the employee is more likely leaving because of "pull" (the lure of the other job) than "push" (the unattractiveness of the current job).
    - ii. Similarly, job dissatisfaction is more likely to translate into turnover when employment opportunities are plentiful because employees perceive it is easy to move. Finally, when employees have high "human capital" (high education, high ability), job dissatisfaction is more likely to translate into turnover because they have, or perceive, many available alternatives.

#### G. Understanding the Impact.

1. While there is much evidence that job satisfaction can affect organizational outcomes, many managers still are unconcerned about the job satisfaction of their employees or they falsely believe employee satisfaction is high.
2. Job satisfaction must be a managerial priority and managers must measure it to manage it.
3. Regular surveys can reduce gaps between what managers think employees feel and what they really feel.

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## V. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS

- A. Managers should be interested in their employees' attitudes because attitudes influence behavior and indicate potential problems.
- B. Creating a satisfied workforce is hardly a guarantee of successful organizational performance, but evidence strongly suggests managers' efforts to improve employee attitudes will likely result in positive outcomes, including greater organizational effectiveness, higher customer satisfaction, and increased profits.
  1. Of the major job attitudes—job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, POS, and employee engagement—remember that an employee's job satisfaction level is the best single predictor of behavior.
  2. Pay attention to your employees' job satisfaction levels as determinants of their performance, turnover, absenteeism, and withdrawal behaviors.
  3. Measure employee job attitudes objectively and at regular intervals in order to determine how employees are reacting to their work.
  4. To raise employee satisfaction, evaluate the fit between the employee's work interests and the intrinsic parts of the job to create work that is challenging and interesting to the individual.
  5. Consider the fact that high pay alone is unlikely to create a satisfying work environment.

PPT 3.16

**Discussion Questions**

1. Describe the three components of an attitude. Give an example for each.  
**Answer:** Cognition: what a person thinks about an object, person, or event.  
Affective: the emotional overlay to the cognitive thought. It expresses how we feel about that object, person or event. Behavior: the actual or intended behavior brought about by the first two components of attitude. It is what we will do about that object, person, or event.  
Examples will vary. Ensure the key ideas of thinks, feels, and does are clearly stated.
2. What is the relationship between attitudes and behavior?  
**Answer:** Leon Festinger believed that attitudes followed behavior due to cognitive dissonance. The negative feelings aroused when actions were not aligned with words caused the expressed attitudes to change. More commonly, recent research has shown that behavior follows attitudes. Therefore, it is important for managers to understand employee attitudes, so they may better predict behavior.
3. Compare and contrast the job attitudes discussed in this chapter.  
**Answer:** Job satisfaction is how an employee feels about the job. Job involvement is closely related to psychological empowerment, and describes how much a person "buys into" their job based on the job's worth to that person and how much control the employee has over the job itself. Organizational commitment is similar to job involvement, but it shows how strongly the employee identifies with the

organization rather than with just the job. These three are the traditional attitudes studied by OB.

Two additional attitudes are perceived organizational support (which measures how much an employee trusts the organization) and employee engagement, which measures how deeply involved the employees feel they are in their work. All of these attitudes may in fact be measuring the same basic underlying attitude toward work. To varying degrees, each of these attitudes positively affects job performance and organizational outcomes.

4. How can managers increase job satisfaction and what are the organizational consequences when there are high or low levels of job satisfaction?

**Answer:** Job satisfaction can best be increased through the design of the work itself. Work that is challenging and interesting will lead to increased job satisfaction.

Other factors that increase job satisfaction are good supervisors and coworker, the ability to promote and to a lesser extent, pay. Pay only increases satisfaction to the point where a comfortable lifestyle is reached, after that point pay ceases to increase job satisfaction when pay is increased.

High job satisfaction is linked to better organizational outcomes: lower turnover and absenteeism, higher customer satisfaction, and fewer instances of workplace deviance. Low levels of job satisfaction result in opposite effects.

5. List and describe the four employee responses to dissatisfaction.

**Answer:** This involves the Exit-Voice-Loyalty-Neglect Framework. The framework provides the four responses to employee dissatisfaction.

Exit: involves directing behavior toward leaving the organization, includes both looking for a new job, as well as resigning. Voice: involves actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions, includes making suggestions and union activities. Loyalty: involves passively, but optimistically, waiting for conditions to improve. It involves trusting the organization and its management to do the right thing. Neglect: involves passively allowing conditions to worsen, including chronic absenteeism, reduced effort, and increased error rate.

6. Is job satisfaction a global concept?

**Answer:** It appears to be. While the concept itself is global, there are still cultural issues involved in its expression. Western cultures tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction, perhaps due to the emphasis in the West toward positive emotions and individual happiness.

### Exercises

1. **Self-analysis.** What are your attitudes toward the workplace? How would you describe your level of job satisfaction, and why? Be detailed in your analysis.
2. **Web Crawling.** Find and present an online article on job satisfaction in a country other than the United States. What commonalities are exposed and what differences are shown to exist?
3. **Teamwork.** In small groups meet and discuss attitudes. As a warmup, work backward from behaviors you have evidenced in the past to what your attitude was toward that object, person, or event at that point in time. Then as a group, discuss how your attitudes changed toward various objects, persons, or events as the result of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center of 9/11. Prepare a list of the most commonly changed attitudes held by the group. Discuss how these attitudes were expressed in behaviors. Share your findings with the class.

4. How Have Attitudes in the Work Environment Changed? The purpose of this exercise is to explore the difference in work-related attitudes across generations. The students will develop an interview instrument and use it to interview three to five people who are clearly in different age categories (i.e., work cohorts).
  - a. Put students into small groups. In the group, brainstorm questions for a short interview regarding job satisfaction and attitudes toward work.
  - b. As a class discuss the questions and ideas and narrow them to a list of five to ten questions, something that could be administered in an oral interview in thirty minutes.
  - c. Each group should assign one member to each of the following cohorts.
    - i. Workers who grew up influenced by the Great Depression and entered the workforce from the mid-1940s through the late-1950s.
    - ii. Employees who entered the workforce during the 1960s through the mid-1970s were influenced heavily by John F. Kennedy.
    - iii. Individuals who entered the workforce from the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s reflect the society's return to values that are more traditional but with far greater emphasis on achievement and material success.
    - iv. Generation X has been shaped by globalization, the fall of communism, MTV, and the digital revolution.
  - d. The interviewer should identify an individual and conduct an interview using the questionnaire created in class. Students might consider scouting the local McDonald's or Wal-Mart. These types of businesses hire across the age spectrum, making it easier to find candidates to interview. Be careful to request permission to perform interviews on business properties. Otherwise you may be in violation of local laws.
  - e. Groups should meet and consolidate their information into a report, either a ten-minute oral or a three-to-five page written report. As part of their report, they should discuss the practical implications of any attitudinal trends they discovered among the cohorts.
  - f. Groups should present and discuss their findings in class.
5. Analyzing Your Organization (Cumulative Project). For this part of the project, students are asked to analyze employee attitudes and assess how well those attitudes are perceived by supervisors. This is potentially a very sensitive task, and instructors should review the need for anonymity and sensitivity in situations such as these.

Break the class back down into small groups (use the same groups as in the last assignment or create new ones to increase the diversity of opinion) and have the group brainstorm 5-10 statements regarding work attitudes based on the descriptions in the text. For instance, they may create "I take a lot of meaning from my work" as a measurement of job involvement.

As a class, select the best statements for each of the five job attitudes described in the text. Create a questionnaire with these five questions answered using a modified five-point Likert scale (Very True, Somewhat True, Neutral, Somewhat Untrue, Very Untrue). Assign point values to each of the Likert values (1-5 works best).

Have the students ask five workers at random to answer the survey. Ensure their privacy to get honest responses. Gather the surveys but do not show them to anyone else at the organization.

Give a survey, marked “supervisor,” to the supervisors and ask them to mark where they believe their average employee would be on the scales. Tell the supervisors that the purpose of this survey is NOT to judge that individual supervisor’s ability to assess the employees but to see if the average perceptions are different between workers and supervisors.

Have the small group average the point values of the employee responses and of the supervisor responses. Compare the two. Discuss the following issues:

1. How close were the supervisor’s perceptions to reality?
2. What issues may have concerned employees when they took the survey?
3. What issues may have concerned the supervisors regarding the survey?

**Suggested Assignments**

1. Discuss the small group findings of the cumulative case (No. 5 above) in class. Build up student understanding of the importance of perception in OB and management based on the survey results.
2. After the small group work, have the student write up the findings and the potential impact of those general findings in the firm the student is examining. (It is strongly suggested that the student NOT directly compare the employees of the firm with the supervisor of the firm to prevent potential problems.)