

## THE IMPACT OF CAREER CHOICE ON JOB SATISFACTION AMONG EMPLOYEES IN GHANA

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### ABSTRACT

*This research was designed to investigate the relationship that exists between career choice and job satisfaction among employees in Ghana. Data was collected from 280 employees working in different organisations including Banking, Telecommunication, Education and Health sectors. The relationship between Career choice and Career satisfaction was tested using chi-square. It was found that employees who make the right career choice are more likely to be satisfied with their job. The relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance was also tested using chi-square. The results provided direct evidence that employees who are satisfied with their job are more likely to perform well on the job. Also, the results support the view that internal and external factors including personality type should be considered in making career decisions. Accordingly, employees are encouraged to have a sober reflection on their core interests and abilities before making a career choice. They should ensure that the fundamental factors that will guarantee job satisfaction and positive performance, serve as motivators in the career decision making process. Likewise, employers should be interested in interest tests as a selection tool for new employees.*

**Keywords:** Career choice, Job satisfaction, Job performance, Ghana.

### Introduction:

A career is one of the most important aspects of a person's life. Most people build a career to help them satisfy certain goals, such as earning a living, developing an interest, helping society, gaining social status and respectability. Careers are one of the key means by which individuals seek meaning, self-fulfillment and satisfaction in life. Without a meaningful career, most people become unfulfilled, lacking self esteem, social respect and acceptability.

Gomez-Meja et al (2007) observe that career development has changed in recent years largely because career opportunities and paths are less structured and predictable than they were three decades ago. Instead of job security and career-long tenure with one organisation, downsizing and rapid technological change now characterise the business world. The result is frequent change in careers due to changes in the individual's interest, abilities, values, opportunities, and changes in the work environment.

Research shows that career choice to a large degree determines the extent to which one achieves career and job satisfaction (Brown 2002). Job satisfaction relates to happiness with one's current work situation and is dependent on many factors, including the marketplace, work conditions, job location, and other dynamic influences. According to Zingesser (2004), an individual may feel very certain of having made a correct career choice but be experiencing an unsatisfactory current work experience. A study by the Arizona State University Career Services (2004) found that about 75% of individuals in the overall workforce are satisfied with their career choices, yet a Wall Street Journal reported an ABC News poll that indicates that nearly 50% of all USA workers would choose a new type of job if they had the chance (cited in Osei-Tete, 2010). So the question is; why do so many people feel dissatisfied with their job?

Clark (2000) contends that instead of listening to internal signals like aptitudes, interest, values etc, many individuals make career choices based on external factors like income

potential, status and opinion of others. Though individuals may achieve career success, they may not have job satisfaction because the jobs are not aligned to their core self. A research carried out in an Australian college indicates that about 73 percent of the students in their senior year are seeking one career or the other for the wrong reasons (Department of Education, Edith Cowan University, 2009). It appears a lot of people are not satisfied with their jobs as a result of making the wrong career decisions. This study seeks to examine the extent to which career choices affect job satisfaction among employees in Ghanaian firms guided by the following specific objectives: to find out the factors and situations that influence individuals to choose a career, the kind of impact their career choice has on their performance at work, and finally, the type of relationship that exists between career satisfaction and job performance.

### Literature Review:

A number of career theories that explain people's career experiences, how important career choices are made and how those choices impact the job satisfaction of the individual have been identified in the literature. Holland (1991) vocational personalities and environments theory classified personality types and work environments into six types and suggested that "people can function and develop best and find job satisfaction in work environments that are compatible with their personalities" (pg 15). Holland's congruence theory maps the relationship between vocational interests–vocational environments on one hand and job satisfaction on the other. The main proposition of this theory is that there are six personality types and their corresponding work environments - Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional, depending on whether one works with objects, ideas, information or people.

Holland's theory is based on several assumptions: (a) people tend to choose a career that is reflective of their personality, skills and abilities, (b) because people tend to be attracted to certain jobs; the environment reflects this personality, (c) people who choose to work in an environment similar to their personality type are more likely to be successful and satisfied. Close matches between the two is closely related to career success, and (d) for any personality type, the career most aligned with that type is most likely to be enjoyable and satisfying.

Krumboltz (2002) proposed the Social Learning Theory and contends that people's personalities and behavioral repertoires can be explained most usefully on the basis of their unique learning experiences. Krumboltz (2002) suggests that much growth takes place as a result of learning and imitating the behaviour of others. Hence, people choose their careers based on what they have experienced and learned in society.

Herzberg (1959) proposed the two factor theory of job satisfaction; Motivation-Hygiene theory. The Hygiene factors include the organization, its policies and administration, working conditions, salary, interpersonal

relations, status, and job security. These factors do not lead to higher levels of motivation but without them there is dissatisfaction. The motivation factors include achievement, recognition, growth/advancement, and interest in the job. Thus career satisfaction or dissatisfaction is directly related to the motivators as well as the hygiene factors of the work environment.

Maslow (1943) proposed a theory of needs arranged in a hierarchy of importance from the lowest physiological needs, through safety needs, love needs, and esteem needs. Once a lower need has been satisfied, it no longer acts as a strong motivator and the needs of the next higher level in the hierarchy demands satisfaction. As Maslow asserts, only unsatisfied need motivates a person. The highest in Maslow's hierarchy, the need for self actualisation is the need to maximise one's potential whatever it may be. It is the desire to become what one is capable of becoming. As Maslow expressed it, "What a man can be, he must be (Mullins, 2005: 417). Thus people choose careers to meet these fundamental human needs. Career satisfaction therefore results from the extent to which these needs are met.

The Range of Affect Theory by Locke, (2001) also suggests that satisfaction is determined by a discrepancy between what one wants in a job and what one actually derives from a job. This leads to a special degree of satisfaction when expectations are met or dissatisfaction when they are not met.

### Factors most people consider before making career choices:

Brown (2002) outlined several factors to be considered in choosing or planning a career, namely: (a) the nature of the work, as regards whether one will be required to work with objects, ideas, people or information, (b) the working environment, (c) special abilities required, (d) physical demands of the job, (e) preparation needed in terms of the amount of learning and training required with the cost involved, (f) the chances of getting employment, (g) probable earnings (h) opportunities for advancement, and (i) the social status attached to the job. According to Brown, "job satisfaction depends on how well the various characteristics of a job satisfy employees' interests and values" (p 23).

In order to survive, most people have to find gainful employment for a period of forty to fifty years. The desire to make life increasingly better for oneself and the next generation would make people opt for high paying jobs they may have no interest in at all. This is likely to lead to dissatisfaction on the job. Most people often consider external factors. For instance salary, location of the job, family and friends. These factors alone cannot ensure a good career choice.

### Causes of Career dissatisfaction:

Career dissatisfaction results when people make career decisions on external factors alone. Webber (1998)

robustly argues that some people base their career choices on aptitudes alone and that means you will be ignoring your deep interests. Making Career choices based on one's circumstances at a particular point in time and ignoring deep interests, values and other internal factors is a sure way of an employee's dissatisfaction on the job.

Employee job satisfaction generally leads to career success (Judge, 2001). This is because; the love for the job would encourage him or her to work harder since they have the desire to see it succeed. The success alone is enough to make the employee forge on even when the going gets tough. This is because; job satisfaction provides a person with inner motivation and self encouragement to give his or her best to the job.

A study by Greene (2005) revealed that sources of job dissatisfaction for nurses under the age of 32 included work/personal life balances, an organization not focused on patient needs, outdated medical equipment, and insufficient development opportunities. Ostroff (1992) also demonstrated a close association between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reduced turnover, and the clear influence that job satisfaction had on the turnover intentions of engineering staff. Rambur et al., (2005:1) also found that employees who "scored significantly higher in job satisfaction related to: (a) opportunity for autonomy and growth, (b) job stress and physical demands, and (c) job and organizational security". Studying the generational preferences for work environment fit, Westerman & Yamamura (2006) indicated the importance of goal orientation and system work environment fit for younger generation workers on satisfaction and intention to remain.

According to Ayushveda (2009), job satisfaction plays a great role in defining employee efficiency and productivity. An employee who is satisfied and happy with his job will have higher productivity than an employee who looks at his job only as a means for monetary benefits. A satisfied employee helps in creating a positive work environment and helps boost the morale of his or her colleagues and helps in creating a harmonious relationship at work. A research conducted by Aldirman (2007) revealed that specialty, length of employment, salaries, and continuing education opportunities significantly affect job satisfaction positively.

Gallup (2004) reports that highly satisfied groups of employees often exhibit above-average levels of customer loyalty, productivity, employee retention, safety records and profitability. High levels of customer loyalty and productivity are as a result of an increase in the level of performance by employees due to their satisfaction on the job. An increase in the level of employee retention, safety records and profitability will have a positive impact on a company's output, not only financially, goodwill for example is enhanced and a good corporate image of the company is built.

PricewaterhouseCoopers reported in 2002 that 47 percent of surveyed executives from multinational companies cite employee satisfaction and decreased turnover as major contributors to long-term shareholder return. Unhappy or dissatisfied employees are less productive and more likely to have high absence rates while satisfied employees are more productive, innovative and loyal. Increases in job satisfaction lead to increases in employee morale, which lead to increased employee productivity.

#### **Research Hypotheses:**

1. People who make good career choices are more likely to be satisfied with their job.
2. Employees who are satisfied with their job are likely to perform well.

#### **Research Methodology:**

This research aims to explore the impact of career choice on job satisfaction among Ghanaian workers. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect data in a survey conducted. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to respondents working in the Banking, Telecommunication, Education and the Health sectors. These sectors were selected because it appears most economic activities in Ghana currently revolve around these four sectors. The drop-off mode was applied to deliver questionnaire to the participants with the assistance of two level 400 students of the Central University College. Data was gathered in May, 2011. Out of the 400 questionnaires, 280 were retained, analysed, and the results discussed.

In order to address the research objectives, a set of self-constructed structured questionnaire was administered to elicit information from respondents. The 15-item instrument consisted of three sections namely; demographic data, career choice and job satisfaction.

The data gathered was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Data analysis and interpretation was done using both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. The hypotheses were tested by the use of chi-square ( $X^2$ ). Tables and charts were used to analyze and present the findings of the data collected.

#### **Research Findings:**

##### **Respondent's Profile:**

The research findings revealed that 48.6% were male and 50.4% were female. However, 1.1% of the respondents were silent on their gender status. The research also indicated that overwhelming majority of the respondents 78.2% were relatively young, aged between 20 to 40 years. Most of the respondents (90%) of them had bachelor and master's degrees and 54.4% of them were managers including professionals serving in various managerial capacities in their respective sectors.

**Factors involved in making career choices:**

**Figure 1: Factors that Influenced the Choice of Career**

Factors	Yes (%)	No (%)	Non-Resp. (%)
My personality type influenced my career choice	201 (71.8)	76 (27.1)	3 (1.1)
I was influenced by my interest	251 (89.6)	29 (10.4)	-
I was influenced by my location	35 (12.5)	246 (86.4)	3 (1.1)
Potential for high salary influenced my choice	207 (73.9)	71 (25.4)	2 (0.7)
The challenge offered by the job influenced my choice	222 (79.3)	56 (20.0)	2 (0.7)
I was influenced by family and friends	29 (10.4)	251 (89.6)	-

Source: Field Data, 2011

The most influential factors in career choice of the respondents include interest, the challenge offered by the job, potential for high salary and personality. The results clearly demonstrate that other factors such as the location of the individual, family and friends played relatively a minor role in career choice. The results above revealed that there exist a relationship between personality and career choice. Personality type is one of the contemporary views of career development. This finding supports Holland's (1991) claim that people can function, develop best and find job satisfaction in work environment that are compatible with their personalities. A significant proportion of the respondents (89.6%) were influenced by their own interest. This gives credence to the findings of Alansari (2011) who reported that the two major factors influencing the choice of a particular profession include people who "just drifted into the profession" and also people choosing the profession as a result of their interest.

**Table 2: My skills and abilities are a good fit for my position**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	8	2.9
Partially Agree	3	1.1
Agree	164	58.6
Fully Agree	103	36.8
Non Response	2	.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2011

The respondents believed that their skills and abilities matched with their duties and responsibilities. It can be

deduced that majority of the employees are satisfied with their careers.

**Table 3: I am proud and satisfied with the work I do**

	Frequency	Percent
Disagree	10	3.6
Partially Agree	15	5.4
Agree	180	64.3
Fully Agree	74	26.4
Non Response	1	.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Data, 2011

A large majority of the respondents (90.7%) expressed the feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction with what they do. A minority (9.0%) on the other hand, felt they are dissatisfied with what they do.

**Testing of Hypotheses:**

**Hypothesis 1:**

People who make good career choices are more likely to be satisfied with their job.

**Test Statistic:**

The test statistic is a chi square,  $\chi^2$  with (I-1)\*(J-1) degree of freedom.

$$\chi^2_{\text{value}} = \sum_{i=1}^I \sum_{j=1}^J \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \text{ with df} = (I-1)*(J-1)$$

**Observed Values:**

	Did you make good career choice?			Total
	Yes	No	Total	
Are you satisfied with your job?	Yes	150	50	200
	No	50	30	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>280</b>	

**Expected Values:**

Are you satisfied with your job?	Did you make good career choice?		
		Yes	No
Yes	142.86	57.14	
No	57.14	22.86	

Now the calculated chi square is as follows;

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{(150-142.86)^2}{142.86} + \frac{(50-57.14)^2}{57.14} + \frac{(50-57.14)^2}{57.14} + \frac{(30-22.86)^2}{22.86} \\ &= 0.36 + 0.89 + 0.89 + 2.23 \\ &= 4.37 \end{aligned}$$

The chi square calculated is equal to 4.37 and the critical value is equal to 3.84. Since the chi square calculated is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis, H0 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence the conclusion that People who make good career choices are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

When people make a careful assessment of their abilities, skills and potential, they are likely to heed to the right career call. Making the right career choice involves both internal and external factors. Clark (2000) stated that instead of listening to internal signals like aptitudes, many individuals make career choices based on external factors like income potential status and opinions of others. Other external factors include family and friends, social status and opportunities available at the job market. Duane, (2002) also added that people thinking about choosing a career should determine the internal characteristics that drive their decisions. He describes these internal characteristics as aptitudes, skills, abilities, interests and values. It is important to also note that people who have made the right career choice took their personality type into consideration. Findings from this study show that majority of the respondents' career decision was influenced by their personality. Additionally, they are highly motivated in terms of salary, on the job training, supervision and feedback. This is in line with the findings of (Jiang, Klein and Balloun, 2000) posited that if an employee is to remain satisfied; there must be personal motivation (internal career anchors) as well as a favorable perceived external (organizational) career situation. Many students make unrealistic occupational choices as a result of inadequate, incomplete, inaccurate and sometimes distorted occupational information (Fottler and Bain, 1999). Many studies indicate that young people leaving an educational system and entering a work organization experience reality shock in relating to the day to day activities and problems of the work environment (Hall, 1997). Therefore, it is important to make the right career choice to ensure job satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 2:**

Employees who are satisfied with their job are likely to perform well in their organizations.

**Test Statistic:**

The test statistic is a chi square,  $\chi^2$  with (I-1)\*(J-1) degree of freedom.

$$\chi^2_{\text{value}} = \sum_{i=1}^I \sum_{j=1}^J \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \quad \text{with df} = (I-1)*(J-1)$$

**Observed Values:**

Are you satisfied with your job?				
Do you perform well in your organization?		Yes	No	Total
	Yes	145	45	190
	No	55	35	90
	Total	200	80	280

**Expected Values:**

Are you satisfied with your job?			
Do you perform well in your organization?		Yes	No
	Yes	135.71	54.29
	No	64.29	25.71

Now the calculated chi square is as follows;

$$\begin{aligned} \chi^2 &= \frac{(145-135.71)^2}{135.71} + \frac{(55-64.29)^2}{64.29} + \frac{(45-54.29)^2}{54.29} + \frac{(35-25.71)^2}{25.71} \\ &= 0.64 + 1.34 + 1.59 + 3.36 \\ &= 6.93 \end{aligned}$$

The chi square calculated is equal to 6.93 and the critical value is equal to 3.84. Since the chi square calculated is greater than the critical value, the null hypothesis, H0 is rejected and the alternative hypothesis, H1 is accepted hence the conclusion that employees who are satisfied with their job are likely to perform well in their organizations. It is interesting to note that organizations that have recorded excellent performance from their employees also report that those employees are satisfied with their job. According to Jiang *et al.*, (2000) internal career desires and the better the external career opportunities provided by the organization, the higher one's career satisfaction. Another study by Greenhaus, Parasuraman (1999) suggested that employees whose career orientations are well-matched with their job setting reported higher career satisfaction. If an employee is to remain satisfied, there must be personal motivation (internal career anchors) as well as a favorable perceived external (organizational) career situation (Jiang *et al.*, 2000).

The results from the tested hypothesis affirm that there is a relationship between career choice and job satisfaction. The researchers also found that employees in the various sectors are satisfied with their jobs because they are well paid. It was also observed that employees' career choice was influenced by the right factors in addition to having the requisite skills and abilities to carry out their tasks.

**Conclusion:**

The study has been useful in providing basic information on career choice and job satisfaction in Ghana. The results of the study revealed that employees make the right career choices when their skills and abilities fully match their tasks and duties and when they consider their personality

type before arriving at a career decision. Also, it is important to consider both external and internal factors in making career decisions. Individuals need intrinsic motivation in career selection if they want to succeed. They should not allow their families and friends to play significant roles in their career decisions. It is worth emphasising that individuals who make the right career choice are satisfied with their job. Essentially, individuals who make the right career decisions do experience job satisfaction and also perform well. It is recommended that educational institutions in Ghana particularly institutions of higher learning should incorporate career guidance in their training programmes to provide adequate information to assist students make informed decisions in selecting their preferred profession. This will enable students to have practical knowledge about the various career options available in the labour market.

The study is limited in the following ways: First, the study used convenient sampling procedure to collect data. Second, this study was confined to only four main sectors of the Ghanaian economy. Third, the study failed to perform comparative analysis between the sectors studied. Further study is needed to cover all sectors of the Ghanaian economy and to do a comparative inter-sector analysis.

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