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# Job satisfaction among the Multigenerational Professional Librarian Workforce of Sri Lankan Universities

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## Abstract

*This paper discusses findings of a study that has been launched to identify the level of job satisfaction of library professionals by generational cohorts. The general objective of the study is to evaluate the level of job satisfaction among three generations (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) of the professional staff of the university libraries of Sri Lanka in terms of five job satisfaction parameters namely; work, coworkers, compensation, promotion and supervision. The population of the current study consisted of 125 library professionals of 15 universities under University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka. A semi structured questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument. The results of the study indicated that there are some differences and similarities of job satisfaction of university library professionals in perceptions associated with three generations. There is a significant difference of job satisfaction in perception of both "work" and "supervision" among three generations.*

**Keywords:** Job satisfaction, Library professionals, Generations

## 1. Background

Job satisfaction has been correlated with enhanced job performance, positive work values, high levels of employee motivation and lower rates of absenteeism, turnover and burnout (Ram, 2013). In other words, job satisfaction is one of the key factors that determine performance, quality of the service and productivity of any organization particularly in service entities like libraries.

Therefore, it is essential to maintain a high level in job satisfaction among the library professionals in order to provide commendable library service to the user community.

Several research studies (Sultana and Begum, 2012; Somvir and Kaushik, 2012; Hsu, 2009; Karim, 2008) had been carried out on the job satisfaction of university library professionals with the relationship of sex, age, tenure, education, etc. It has been revealed by researchers that job satisfaction of library professionals was affected by the generational cohorts. Some researchers (Morris, 2011; Curry, 2007) have investigated that there are some distinctions and similarities among the generations and their association with job satisfaction and some researchers (Lynch and Verdin, 1983; Van Reenen, 1998; Thornton, 2000; Berry, 2007) declared that older library professionals are more satisfied than young. Therefore, the level of job satisfaction of library professionals among generations is questionable and there is also a risk for declining status of job satisfaction among the multigenerational professional librarians in universities.

There are only a handful of studies (Thirunavukarasu, 1994; Amarakoon, 1995; Kuruppu, 1998; Wijeweera, 2004) that investigate the job satisfaction of professional staff of university libraries of Sri Lanka. Among these researches, two studies (i.e. Amarakoon, 1995; Wijeweera, 2004) have taken "age" as a dependant variable to evaluate the job satisfaction of university librarians with limited sample size. Both studies had not evaluated the impact of generational cohorts on job satisfaction. In addition, a lot of changes have been taken place since that time.

The current study aims at identifying the impact of age considering three generations based on five parameters (i.e. work, coworkers, compensation, promotion and supervision), which have not been attempted by the previous researchers. Work performed by employees is one of the major factors that offers the job satisfaction. Employees tend to prefer jobs which afford them the opportunity to apply their skills, abilities and offer them freedom as well as jobs where they get constant feedback on how well they are doing (Robbins, 2005). The other factor that influences job satisfaction is the extent to which coworkers are friendly, competent and supportive (Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt, 2003). Compensation is the total amount of the monetary and non-monetary pay provided to an employee by an employer in return for work performed as required. Compensation refers to salary, wages, allowances, bonuses, benefits, etc. provided by the employer. Promotion is composed with areas far growth, advancement, professional development and the fairness associated with promotional opportunities (Morris, 2011). It is a very important area for the employees, because it is more significant for them to move through the ranks of the profession. The supervision includes assignments, helpfulness, evaluation process, encouragement and feedback. In this study, the sample group was subdivided into three categories according to Shantay (2010); Baby boomers (BB) born between 1946-1964, Generation X (X) born between 1965-1980, and Generation Y (Y) born between 1981-2000.

## 2. Methodology

The study aims at identifying the level of job satisfaction of all professional staff (125) of the libraries in all 15 Universities under the University Grants Commission (UGC) in Sri Lanka. Survey method has been used for this study and a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire has been used as the data collecting instrument. The main survey was conducted from 12th December 2013 to 21st January 2014. The data was organized and analysed using Excel 2013 and SPSS Version 16. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to estimate the measure of internal consistency and reliability, and One Way ANOVA was used for statistical testing to compare data across the three generations. Post-hoc Bonferroni adjusted two-sample t-tests were performed to determine the differences among the three groups.

## 3. Results and discussion

Out of the 125 University library professionals 80 individuals responded to the semi-structured questionnaire at the rate of 64%. Out of 80 respondents of the current study, 19 (23.75%) respondents are Baby Boomers, while 48 (60%) are in Generation X and 13 (16.25%) are in Generation Y. Cronbach's alpha values of all variables are above 0.6. Therefore, the instrument used to measure each variable in the study is acceptable (George and Mallery, 2003) and all the items are positively correlated to one another.

### 3.1 Level of job satisfaction

Figure 1 shows that the level of job satisfaction among generations.

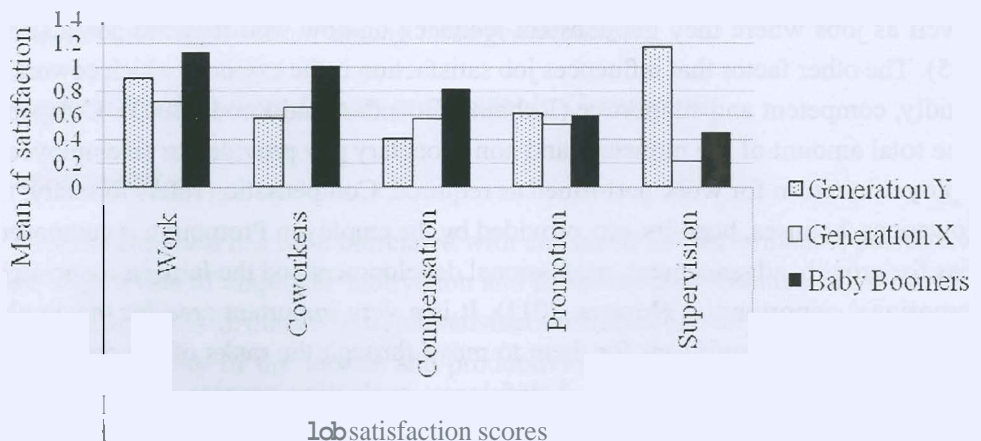


Figure 1. Mean satisfaction scores under each aspect of satisfaction among generations



**Table 1. Summary of satisfaction of generational cohorts in the five parameters examined.**

Aspect	Highest satisfied	Least satisfied
Work	BB	X
Coworkers	BB	Y
Compensation	BB	Y
Promotion	Y	X
Supervision	Y	X

Table 1 indicates that BB are more satisfied on the work they do. X is the least satisfied generation on this aspect. It also shows that the level of job satisfaction regarding coworkers is higher in BB than X and Y. The highest mean value of the job satisfaction - compensation score is in Baby Boomers (0.8263) while the lowest value is in Generation Y (0.4000). Generation Y has the highest mean value (0.6154) for promotion while the lowest for Generation X (0.5208) and Baby Boomers (0.5965) fall in between. The highest mean value for supervision is in Generation Y (1.1744) than Baby Boomers (0.4649) and Generation X (0.2188) respectively. According to the results of ANOVA, it indicates that there is no significant difference in the level of job satisfaction with the *Coworkers*;  $f(2,77) = 1.946$ ;  $p = 0.150$ , *Compensation*;  $f(2,77) = 1.690$ ;  $p = 0.191$  and *Promotion*;  $f(2,77) = 0.105$ ;  $p = 0.901$  aspects among the three generational cohorts, because all  $p$  - values are less than the value of 0.05, but the  $p$  - values in work and supervision are less than the value of 0.05. It concludes that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of job satisfaction with the *Work*;  $f(2,77) = 3.737$ ;  $p = 0.028$  and *Supervision*;  $f(2,77) = 3.921$ ;  $p = 0.024$  aspects among three generational cohorts.

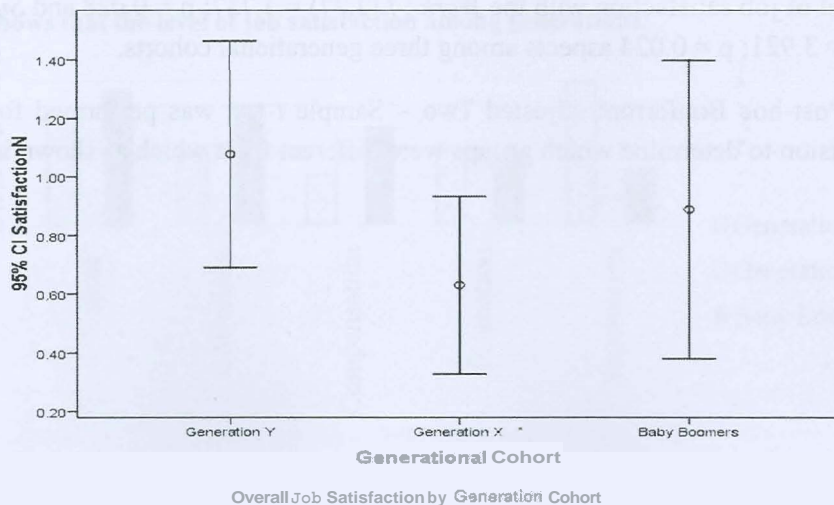
Post-hoc Bonferroni adjusted Two - Sample  $t$ -test was performed for Work and Supervision to determine which groups were different from which as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Bonferroni adjusted Two-Sample t-tests to compare the average job satisfaction – Work and supervision score among the three generational cohorts**

Job satisfaction parameters	(I) Generational Cohort	(J) Generational Cohort	Mean Difference (I-J)	Significance or P-value
Work	Generation Y	Generation X	.20364	.790
		Baby Boomers	-.21812	.893
	Generation X	Generation Y	-.20364	.790
		Baby Boomers	-.42176*	.026
	Baby Boomers	Generation Y	.21812	.893
		Generation X	.42176*	.026
Supervision	Generation Y	Generation X	.95561*	.020
		Baby Boomers	.70945	.226
	Generation X	Generation Y	-.95561*	.020
		Baby Boomers	-.24616	1.000
	Baby Boomers	Generation Y	-.70945	.226
		Generation X	.24616	1.000

\* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The results indicate that the Baby Boomers have a statistically significant larger average job satisfaction – work score than the Generation X group,  $p = 0.026$ . Generation Y group has a statistically significant larger average job satisfaction – supervision score than the Generation X group,  $p = 0.020$ . Figure 2 shows the mean of overall job satisfaction by generational cohorts.



**Figure 2. Mean of overall job satisfaction by generational cohorts**



Generation Y has the highest mean value (1.0769) for the overall job satisfaction while the lowest value (0.6304) is in Generation X and the **Baby Boomers** (0.8889) fall in between.

#### Enhancing the level of job satisfaction of University Library Professionals

Identifying these variations is fundamental in building successful multigenerational workplace and guidelines have been developed from the findings of the study through the peer comments to enhance the level of job satisfaction of university library professionals.

Since there is not much difference in the level of job satisfaction among the three categories except the slight difference observed in areas of "work" and "supervision", in general university library professionals in Sri Lanka can be motivated by introducing and facilitating more opportunities; scholarships, overseas and training programs, workshops, seminars and conferences to sharpen the skills and knowledge, They should be encouraged to carry out researches leading the academic publications for their professional development. They should also be encouraged to conduct workshops, seminars, lectures, training programs and etc. to show that they play an important role and they also have skills and talents that other academics have in the university.

University authorities should recognize the achievements of subordinate staff based on professional performance, innovations and general contributions which they make on the job. The recognition would especially depend on the administrative style of the University Librarian. Such recognition could be expressed not only through written ways, but also could be expressed verbally to the deserving individual by giving them more opportunities to interact with the parent organization. It would encourage librarians to work harder and achieve more for the university and it will automatically send to the society especially within the university about the importance and the necessity of the university library professionals. It will also result in getting the support from the university administration to perform their duties well and for their promotions too. The university administration should treat the library professionals in the university like other academic staff in all occasions. The university administrators should take steps to provide good working environment, appropriate facilities and resources to the university library professionals in order to carry out their job effectively and efficiently.

Rotation of jobs of university library professionals and non-academics can be recommended as a good technique for developing their potential in new areas. The relationship with coworkers seem to influence the level of job satisfaction and training programs can be conducted to train the staff on how to get well along with each other.

The library professionals in the university should manage their workgroup better and pay attention for their work performance daily. The library professionals should frequently discuss their problems, barriers or difficulties that they face in their working environment. It will create good communication and cooperation with university library professionals and among members of the workgroup in the library. Regular feedback and good communication flow is essential in improving the job performance of non-professional library personnel in the university.

Supervisors need to be acknowledged about the modern methods of human resource management. They should frequently hold meetings and discuss the problems, barriers that they face and assess the performance and appreciate the sincere efforts made by the professionals. Encouragement, better guidance and feedbacks from the supervisors are essential for better performance of the university library professionals.

#### 4. Conclusion

There are some distinctions and similarities of job satisfaction in perceptions among generations and the level of satisfaction for job satisfaction scores is also different even within a generation.

There is a significant difference of job satisfaction in perception of both **work** and **supervision** among Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Statistically the university library professionals in Baby Boomers have a significantly larger average job satisfaction– work score than the Generation X and Generation Y tend to be more satisfied with the supervision aspect than the Generation X. Generation Y has the highest overall job satisfaction while the Generation X has the lowest job satisfaction and Baby Boomers fall in between.

Understanding these differences between the generations is fundamental in building successful multigenerational workplace, because job satisfaction may lead to improved job performance with the contribution of the production of the organization. The data generated of this study will be helpful for librarians and administrators to understand the level of job satisfaction of the university library professionals based on the generation and the reasons for it. The set of guidelines that have been desired based on the findings would be useful to develop a motivated and productive workforce for organizational success by enhancing the level of job satisfaction of the professional staff of the university libraries in Sri Lanka.



## 5. Direction for future research

Additional researches can be carried out to evaluate the job satisfaction of university library professionals using other variables such as gender, working experience, job title and the level of educational qualifications. The same research can be carried out for the librarians who work in non UGC universities, institutions, school and public libraries in Sri Lanka. The study can be extended to investigate the job satisfaction of librarians with related to other job satisfaction parameters that have been not used in this study such as working environment, policies, job security, status, achievement, responsibility, advancement, etc.

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