The moderating effect of human resource flexibility on the relationship between autonomy or feedback and faculty satisfaction

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between autonomy and feedback with respect to faculty’s job satisfaction, as well as the moderating effect of human resource flexibility on the previous relationships. The research problem is posed in the following question: will the moderating effect of human resource flexibility affect on job satisfaction of university teachers? Data to test our hypotheses were collected through questionnaires administered to university professors in the Faculty of Economics and Finance at Juan Misael Saracho Autonomous University (Tarija, Bolivia). Results indicate that both autonomy and feedback are positively related to job satisfaction, which has a positive impact on organizational commitment. Furthermore, human resource flexibility does not affect the relationship between autonomy and faculty satisfaction, but it has a positive moderating effect on the relationship between feedback and faculty satisfaction. Then human resource flexibility is compatible with feedback, this combination is recommended considering its benefit for organizational management, in terms of the positive impact on job satisfaction. These findings could be important inputs for the designing and implementation of human resource policies and flexible work practices, in order to improve the satisfaction of teachers at work and their contributions to the optimal organizational performance.

Key Words: job satisfaction, autonomy, feedback, human resource flexibility, faculty management.

Resumen

Nuestro objetivo es explorar la relación entre la autonomía y la retroalimentación con respecto a la satisfacción laboral de los profesores universitarios, así como el efecto moderador de la flexibilidad de recursos humanos en dichas relaciones. El problema de investigación planteado es: ¿afectará el efecto moderador de la flexibilidad de recursos humanos a la satisfacción docente? Los datos fueron recolectados a través de cuestionarios administrados a profesores de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Financieras de la Universidad Autónoma Juan Misael Saracho (Tarija, Bolivia). Los resultados indican que tanto la autonomía como la retroalimentación están positivamente relacionadas con la satisfacción, que a

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Carlos Eduardo Jijena Michel.

Resumo

Em um mundo com impostos, há uma pequena discrepância entre o WACCDef WACC deflacionado e o wacc real. Isto se deve ao fator (1-T) que se encontra na expressão padrão para o WACC aplicado ao fluxo de caixa livre (FCF). Comparamos diferentes enfoques para a valoração dos fluxos de caixa nominais e reais com o 1) Custo Nominal Médio Ponderado de Capital, WACC, 2) com o WACC real, wacc, 3) com o WACC sem deflacionar, WACCInf e 4) com o WACC deflacionado, WACCDef. Os fluxos de caixa se derivam dos estados financeiros que foram construídos com os preços nominais. Como conclusão geral ou consistência na valoração, temos que usar o WACC deflacionado em vez do WACC real
Introduction

The objective of this research is to propose an empirical model to estimate the level of faculty satisfaction with their teaching role, through the link with autonomy and feedback. We also analyze the moderating effect of human resource flexibility on the relationship of autonomy and feedback with respect to job satisfaction. The research problem is posed in the following question: will the moderating effect of human resource flexibility affect job satisfaction of university teachers? Additionally, we check the influence of the job satisfaction on organizational commitment in order to figure out the organizational relevance of job satisfaction. This study is based in the organizational behavior approach with emphasis in job satisfaction, as one of the main dependent variables of this theoretical approach.

The limited resources of the system, the demanding expectations of society and the possible mismatch between the system and the market often give rise to a new state in the educational system, justify the need for research on human resources in this sector. Considering the central role of teachers in achieving educational and social purposes of the University, Simo et al. (2008) highlight the importance of influencing specific university policies to ensure high levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, in order to improve the performance of teachers and reduce costs associated with staff turnover.

su vez presenta un efecto positivo sobre el compromiso orga-

nizacional. Además, la flexibilidad de recursos humanos no influye en la relación automonía-satisfacción, pero sí posee un

efecto moderador positivo sobre la relación retroalimentación-
satisfacción. Entonces, la flexibilidad de recursos humanos es compatible con la retroalimentación, esa combinación es recomendable considerando su beneficio para la gestión orga-
nizacional, dado el impacto positivo sobre la satisfacción. Estos resultados podían ser importantes insumo para el diseño e implementación de políticas de recursos humanos y prácticas de trabajo flexible, con el fin de mejorar la satisfacción docente y su contribución al óptimo desempeño organizacional.

Palabra clave: satisfacción laboral, autonomía, retroalimen-
tación, flexibilidad de recursos humanos, gestión docente.

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importance according to the educational context. In that

sense, it is important to be cautious when gene-

ralizing results of theories and models applied to a

particular culture or society. Experts urge to research on faculty job satisfaction in the international context,
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nisons can be made to contribute to the empirical
generalization7. The analysis of the moderating effect of

human resource flexibility is a contribution in the

analysis of the relationship between autonomy or feedback

and faculty satisfaction.

Theoretical background and research model

Job Satisfaction

Lozano et al. (2007) indicate that today we can understand job satisfaction as a subjective aspect of the individual, which is characterized by cogni-
tions (beliefs, opinions and thoughts) and feelings (emotions) in relation to different elements of his or her work. As a component of the quality of working life, job satisfaction is considered in many ways, but most definitions include the idea of a positive attitude toward a work situation. This means that derivates from the extent to which intrinsic (labor challenges, professional responsi-
bility, work-family enrichment, etc.) and extrinsic factors (salaries, regulatory environment, organizational flexibility, etc.) meet their objectives8.

The assessment of Herzberg factors varies with the different business cultures and the develop-
ment level of countries, in that sense, it is important to contrast these factors in different contexts. Dessel

and Conklin mentioned that management strategies to create an academic department or an institutional environment conducive to satisfaction, commitment and retention of teachers, require evidence-based approaches. That’s why the study of faculty satisfac-
tion and its factors is a prerequisite for positive change in an institution or university. These authors indicate that the evidence suggests that job satisfaction of faculty members is an important mediator of organizational commitment, staff turnover and productivity.

Moreover, there is a lack of studies on job satisfaction in social economy enterprises, such as higher educa-
tion institutions9. In the extent that satisfaction and commitment of stakeholders and competitiveness in this kind of organizations are guaranteed, then exists a contribution to the economic and territorial development10. Anyway, there is little research on job satisfaction in developing countries, although the literature mentions that the components of job satisfac-
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7. Ibid., pp. 471-487.
10. Ibid., pp. 35-53
job satisfaction. Acuña et al. (2009) assess the auto-
nomy, as the main characteristic in tasks that involve
interaction and relationship with others (coworkers
and/or customers). Autonomy is considered by social
psychologists as the most important of the charac-
teristics in this kind of work, as Mollmann et al. (2004)
stated in their research. Although there are other job
characteristics, such as feedback, several research
papers have revealed that the main characteristic that
influences this kind of work is the autonomy13.

According to the literature review of Katsikea et al.,
research in this area is mainly focused on the implica-
tions of job characteristics on the results of employee
behavior, such as job satisfaction and organi-
nizational commitment. Particularly, higher levels of
autonomy and feedback, improve the level of intrinsic
motivation of employees, by increasing their sense of
decision-making and control at work14. Dreyer and
Gronhaug (2003) in their work, show how the context of high corporate performance in a dynamic
environment by managing employee’s behavior at the
individual, group and organizational level15.

Organizations manage many work policies and prac-
tices (formal or informally) in the human resource
area in order to help their employees manage the
demands of their work and personal life16. These
kinds of policies or practices create a sense of security
at work for employees that their organization cares about their
welfare, needs and problems (Lewis, 2003). According
to the Theory of Perceived Organizational Support and
Social Exchange Theory, this feeling of supporting
increases positive attitudes toward the organization
and promotes innovation, participation and a felt obli-
gation to give extra effort in exchange of such benefits
(Lambert, 2000). These approaches suggest that when
a party perceives a favorable treatment, the other party
feels obliged to reciprocate17. Human resource flexi-
bility is a strategic tool that helps to meet individu-
als and organizational goals, because it can be useful for
employees and employers. In this case, when employ-
ees perceive that their organizations promote human
resource flexibility, combined with feedback or auto-
nomy in their work, the rule of reciprocity requires
returning the favorable treatment, usually translated
into positive attitudes and feelings toward the job and
the organization. Then, we also pose that:

H1: Perceived autonomy is positively related to faculty’s job satisfaction.

Human Resource Flexibility and its moderating effect

Given that the flexibility of human resources is one
facet of organizational flexibility, it is therefore an
organization’s specific skill to deal appropriately and
timely manner to competitive and dynamic envi-
ronments, situations, or experiences related to the
management of people that work in the organization.
Human resource flexibility refers to the manage-
ment and use of the work force and can be defined as
the ability of the organization to change the use of
labor factor (in terms of volume, qualification and
time), against fluctuations and changes in the levels
and structure of demand (Blyton and Morris, 1992). Huma-
n resource flexibility is derived from a series of
flexible policies and practices that are managed in the
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in this way, indicators are highly correlated. There are two instruments widely used in organizational science to analyze the internal consistency of the scale: Cronbach’s Alpha statistic and item-total correlation. Cronbach’s Alpha statistic is the most often used parameter to analyze the internal consistency of the scale and its reliability. In general, it is possible to ensure the reliability of the scale if the value of this indicator is greater than 0.8; although in exploratory studies, a value greater than 0.6 is already considered acceptable. Reliability indicators of the constructs show acceptable values, the Cronbach’s Alphas are greater than 0.8 in all cases.

Table 1 also shows descriptive information for each latent variable or construct, the most important measure of central tendency (M: mean) and dispersion or variability of data (SD: standard deviation). Finally, it provides information about the correlation of each construct with respect to job satisfaction (dependent variable of the model). Note that job satisfaction is positively and significantly correlated with all variables in the study.

Table 2 presents the statistics of global fit goodness of the model and the recommended acceptance levels (Schumacker and Lomax, 2006). The study of the overall fit for the proposed model is based on analysis of the different, and most notable robust indicators in the literature. The statistics are: Robust Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI), Robust Normal Fit Index (NFI) and Robust Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Bentler, 1995; Jöreskog, 2000).

RMSEA and SRMR are lower than 0.05 and 0.08 respectively; GFI, AGFI and NFI are closer to 0.9 and greater than 0.8, CFI has a value closer to 1 and greater than 0.9. Then, the model fit is acceptable.

Table 3 shows the β coefficients and their robust t statistics of the proposed model emerged through structural equations. Autonomy and feedback have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction (β: 0.341 and 0.325 respectively), at 99% of confidence level. This means that the variation of one additional unit in the perception of autonomy or feedback positively influences the level of job satisfaction by varying this latter directly in 0.341 or 0.325 perceptual units, respectively. These results provide empirical information to accept H1 and H2. In addition, feedback has a significant positive indirect effect (β: 0.071) on organizational commitment through job satisfaction, at 90% of confidence level. Gender and employment status are not related to job satisfaction. Finally, job satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with organizational commitment (β: 0.219), at 95% of confidence level.

Table 4 presents the fit statistics of structural models based on the moderating scenarios of human resource flexibility for each kind of job characteristic (autonomy and feedback), taking into account information of the latent variables and without considering the interaction term (as the Latent Variable Score Approach indicates). The fit statistics are acceptable in both cases of moderation.
other words, at this stage of analysis what matters is the significance of the coefficient that belongs to the interaction term in order to determine the existence or not of the corresponding moderating effect.

So, the results presented below indicate that human resource flexibility moderates the relationship between feedback and job satisfaction. In this case, the interaction between autonomy and feedback is not significant, whereas the interaction between autonomy and human resource flexibility is statistically significant. This means that while feedback positively influences job satisfaction, the effect of autonomy on job satisfaction is mediated by human resource flexibility. More specifically, the effect of autonomy on job satisfaction is stronger when human resource flexibility is high, and weaker when human resource flexibility is low. This suggests that human resource flexibility plays a role in determining the magnitude of the effect of autonomy on job satisfaction.

**Table 5: ß coefficients of the structural models that include the interaction term between human resource flexibility and autonomy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction (Autonomy, HR flex, feedback, interaction term)</th>
<th>coefficient</th>
<th>HR Flexibility (HRF)</th>
<th>Moderating Effect</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β coefficient (autonomy, HR flex, feedback, interaction)</td>
<td>0.385</td>
<td>(4.090***)</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β coefficient (autonomy, HR flex, feedback, interaction)</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>(4.209***)</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>β coefficient (autonomy, HR flex, feedback, interaction)</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>(2.399***)</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
<td>-0.175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Conclusions**

The goal of estimating an empirical model was achieved in order to measure the level of faculty satisfaction with their teaching role, through the link with autonomy and feedback. It was also possible to analyze the moderating effect of human resource flexibility in this previous relation. These job characteristics - autonomy and feedback - are intrinsic factors, i.e., they are directly linked to the performance of the task and generate job satisfaction (satisfaction or motivators). In that sense and in order to optimize the scarce resources of the organization, it is recommended to allocate efforts and strategies to effectively manage these characteristics which impact on job satisfaction, directly and significantly.

As for the flexibility of human resources, it is an extrinsic factor that revolves around the work activity, such as wages, working conditions, job security, among others. These are hygienic factors that prevent dissatisfaction, but do not generate satisfaction by themselves. However, this organizational flexibility can have a moderating effect and an indirect influence on job satisfaction. In this particular case of academics, human resource flexibility has no effect on the relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction, although a positive and significant influence on the relationship between feedback and job satisfaction is possible.

It is possible that human resource flexibility is minimized by perceived job autonomy, in terms of its moderating effect on the relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction. Autonomy may be a consequence of policies and practices in human resource management, typical in such academic environments. Therefore, autonomy would be integrated in human resource flexibility for being a result of it; as a result, the moderate weight of such flexibility on job satisfaction would be overshadowed. Empirical results show that university teachers perceive job autonomy, and indeed, it is highly significant to job satisfaction. So if human resource flexibility is just an added benefit and the origin of this job characteristic is understandable, then it is understandable that such flexibility is eclipsed when moderates the relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction. Rather, autonomy could be a mediating element of human resource flexibility on job satisfaction.

It is observed that human resource flexibility is compatible with feedback. Then, this combination is recommended considering its benefit for organizational management, in terms of the positive impact on job satisfaction. In this specific case, such organizational flexibility is a useful management tool that benefits both - employees and employers - by improving their overall welfare. It could be helpful to align and meet individual and organizational goals, one of the most important dilemmas in human resource management.

**Limitations and future research**

Our research uses cross-sectional data, helpful to test our model. However, dynamic relationships could also be studied using longitudinal information. One single organization was analyzed, so larger samples could be considered with overcoming budgetary constraints. Samples with diverse organization and sectors will allow establishing data comparisons and generalizations. It could be interesting to study organizational culture and values in the perception of autonomy, feedback and human resource flexibility. This is because the assessment of the different factors could change according to the culture and the peculiarities of each context. Future research could develop more comprehensive models that also include job performance, productivity or profitability, as dependent variables, in order to study the contribution of autonomy, feedback and human resource flexibility on other organizational outcomes.

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**Bibliografía**


